

The Young People's Magazine

Vol 71

September 2006

No 9

Recognising God as Creator

The book in front of me is full of excellent pictures of a beautiful country. It focuses on some of the wildest parts of Scotland – lochs and islands and, most of all, mountains – often spectacularly clad in snow. Time and again, the photographer went to great trouble to be in the right place at the right time. In winter he might leave his hotel long before dawn and tramp for some hours in the freezing cold of a snowy night, in the light of a head-torch. He wanted to have the opportunity of using his camera at daybreak, with the special light it brings to a scene. And in summer he might camp all night at the top of a mountain so that, again, he could take photographs at sunrise.

The photographer describes how, one afternoon in autumn, he and a friend made a successful expedition to a mountain peak. As the sun was about to set, it shone its beautiful light on the surrounding mountains, and many photographs were taken. Then they “descended to camp, supper and a deep sleep”. Now, it is no surprise in this religionless age to find there is no suggestion that they took worship together before they settled down to sleep, or that either of them even opened their Bibles or spent a moment or two in prayer. They had seen what are perhaps some of the most wonderful views in all of God's creation. But it would seem that they ignored their Creator and did not think of giving Him the glory of acknowledging how He had moulded that part of the Scottish landscape into the marvellous form that it has been given.

Presumably most readers of this Magazine have been brought up to recognise God as the Creator of all things and, in particular, to view Him as the One who brought each of us into existence. We should know that, because of how great and glorious our Creator is, we owe to Him the duty of worship. So we are told in Psalm 96 to “give unto the Lord the glory *due* unto His name”.

God has revealed Himself in His creation, but especially in the Bible. The words, “His name”, point particularly to what God has revealed about Himself. The Psalm is reminding us of our duty to worship God in the light of how He has revealed Himself to us. We might think that everyone who sees

the light of the setting sun reflected off a set of majestic hills would go on to recognise God as Creator and worship Him. But no, man has a fallen heart and he does not want to recognise his obligations to God.

In Scotland and many other countries, most people today have been indoctrinated to believe that mankind was not created; he just evolved. So they assume that they do not need to worship their Creator, that they can ignore Him – indeed, that there is no creator to worship. But they are totally wrong. Yet the solemn fact is that they will meet Him when they die, even if they do not turn from this sin of rejecting God. And it will be for them a most unwelcome meeting, for our Creator is a just God and He must punish the guilty in a lost eternity.

Today in Britain very few go to church. Not even once a week – or once a year, for that matter – are most people willing to acknowledge that they have a duty to worship their Creator. And it is likely that very few indeed keep family worship. Yet it is absolutely right that every night and morning, if at all possible, the whole family should gather together, with their Bibles, to worship God. We not only need God's blessing as individuals; we need His blessing as families. And, as families, we should thank God for the many good things we receive from Him.

Those who make some claim to be Christians may be more likely to worship God as individuals than to engage in family worship; they will perhaps take a little time to read some part of the Bible and to pray. And, even if we do have family worship, it is absolutely right to worship God on our own. Indeed it is necessary to do so; so Jesus said, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:6). We have our own individual needs to bring before God; we have individual blessings for which we should thank God; and we must also pray for others.

Besides, we need to study the Scriptures. There we will find out our need as sinners – or discover more about that need. There too we will find out about the remedy, in Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners. We will also discover many more matters that we need to learn about – for instance, how we should live our lives in the world. And if we receive the truths of the Bible in a believing way – which is another duty we owe to God – we will be better able to worship God in an acceptable way.

At the beginning of the book we have been referring to, there is a quotation from the English poet William Blake, which includes the words: "As a man is, so he sees". Blake seems to be referring to the power of imagination. But there is much truth – probably unconscious truth – in what

he says. Those who do not believe in God can have a sense of wonder when they look at the beauty of creation. But those who believe in God will see something more. There is indeed a glory in creation, but their minds will, sometimes at least, run on to think of the glorious power and wisdom of the Creator who fashioned our wonderful world in the way He has. This is to think properly – in the light of God’s Word. And as such people think of the glory of God’s power and wisdom, they will worship Him. And how suitable for expressing ourselves in worship are these words of David: “Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5)!

While the Creator has revealed Himself wonderfully in the world around us, He has given us a far more glorious revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. As we have noted already, He there shows us about sin and salvation. But it is there – and only there – that we can learn all we need to know about God Himself. And we can only begin to worship God properly if we have some true knowledge of Him. If we do not know God – if we do not receive the testimony He has given about Himself in the Bible – we will never worship *Him*; we will just be worshipping a false god, a god who exists only in our imagination.

But what does He tell us about Himself? We will only refer to a few points. (1) He is far above all His creatures in everything. But the Fall has made the difference between us and God a far more serious matter than when mankind was first created – for Adam and Eve were originally perfectly holy. (2) God knows everything, including everything that could possibly happen. But it is specially important that we should remember that He knows everything about *us*. (3) God is perfectly righteous. That means God always does what is right and He deals justly with all His creatures; so He must punish sin. (4) Yet God is good. That means He does good to His creatures. Jesus tells us that God causes the sun to shine on those who are holy *and* on those who are not. But God’s greatest act of goodness was to provide salvation for sinners, by giving His Son to die for them.

This is the God we must worship. He is the true God. And He is the God to whom we must give account at last. We cannot safely enter His presence unless we are holy ourselves, for He is totally holy; there is not one stain of imperfection in His character or in anything that He does. How necessary then that we should be reconciled to Him now, and that the Holy Spirit would work the beginnings of genuine holiness in our hearts and lives. This can take place only on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ for sinners. Let us then, without delay, look to Him as the One who came into the world to save sinners. Then we too will be able, truly and sincerely, to respond to the call: “He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him” (Psalm 45:11).

The Book of Ruth

91. Great Expectations

Rev Keith M Watkins

Ruth 4:15. "And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him."

Great things were expected of Naomi's grandson. He had only just been born, but the women of Bethlehem were confident that he was going to do nothing less than restore Naomi's life and nourish her old age. How could they be so sure? It was this little boy's upbringing that gave them such great hopes. The women explained it to Naomi: "For thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him". The boy had no one less than Ruth for his mother. That would set him head and shoulders above many others. He would be brought up with special privileges – privileges that many children, even in Bethlehem, would not enjoy.

In particular, Ruth's son would be taught to honour and love Naomi, his grandmother. The Fifth Commandment, requiring children to love their grandparents as well as their parents, would often be set before him. Daily, he would see a wonderful example of such family love and respect in his mother, who would do more for Naomi than seven sons would usually do. And the boy wouldn't have just Ruth to teach him and live out the Word of God before his eyes. As someone has said, "He had three great privileges. He had a good father, a good mother, and a good grandmother". The boy had godly Boaz for a father, godly Ruth for a mother, and godly Naomi for a grandmother. No wonder there were such high hopes! Breathing in such an atmosphere as this from infancy could not fail to have some effect on the boy. And the expectations were that he would follow in their steps.

So expectations were great. As he grew, the little boy would start to realise his responsibility to meet those expectations. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48).

Young people reading this article, is it possible that others look on many of you with similar expectations? Yes, and perhaps that surprises you. Can people really have great hopes for your future? Yes! How can that be? It is because of your upbringing, which gives you so much – whether you realise it or not, and whether you value it or not.

Think of the privilege that many of you have, privileges not enjoyed by the vast majority of your age group in these ungodly days. By privileges we do not mean that you have more money than others, or that you live in a

bigger home, or that your family can take you on expensive holidays. No. Rather, we mean your spiritual privileges. And they are great.

For one thing, you have this Magazine in your hands. If you read it from cover to cover, month after month, will you find anything unbiblical in it? Never. It will never lead you astray from sound doctrine. It does not deceive you into thinking that your sins do not matter, but tells you the truth about the wickedness of your heart, the nature of your countless sins, and God's righteous judgement to all eternity against everyone who goes on in his sins. It warns you to flee from the wrath to come. It points you to the need to put your entire trust in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only remedy for sin. It assures you that, if you come to the Saviour in faith and repentance, He will certainly receive you and save you. But this Magazine also reminds you that you are neither able nor willing to do so, until the Holy Spirit gives you the new birth from above. All these fundamental truths breathe through the pages of this Magazine month after month. Are you not privileged beyond many?

And many of you hear the same things preached every Sabbath in church. When others are hearing false doctrine, you hear the truth. Always. Week after week. You have had truth shown to you in so many ways. You have had so many warnings, so many invitations, so many exhortations. At times some of you have perhaps felt that it was not just the preacher speaking, but God Himself, urging you to be reconciled to Him through the blood of His dear Son. Many have never heard even one such sermon. But, young friend, you are wonderfully privileged, for it is through sound and earnest preaching that God loves to save and bless His people.

Perhaps you have been baptised. Ruth's son was no doubt circumcised, assuring him that God's grace and power were sufficient to circumcise his heart. If you have been baptised, what a privilege that is! The name of the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – has been pronounced over you in particular. Baptism with water is not so much a pledge of what sinners have done or will do, but a pledge by God of what He is so able to do – to wash away sin by the Holy Spirit, applying the blood of Jesus Christ to your soul. To you in particular, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are assuring you of the forgiveness of sins if you will believe. You cannot doubt your pardon if you come to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Not many have such a privilege – to be baptised in a Church where baptism's blessing is properly explained.

Many of you see living examples of true godliness, in your church and perhaps even in your own home. Godly people are praying for you – perhaps your grandparents or parents. You are being raised in a home that is like a

little church, where God is worshipped daily, and where every attempt is made to conform the family's life to the standards of the Bible. Like Timothy (2 Timothy 3:15), for as long as you can remember you have been made familiar with the Scriptures, just as Ruth's son would be. Your home has been like a Bible school. How privileged you have been!

Perhaps you are like Ruth's son, and can trace godliness back through the generations of your family. Think of how many prayers were made for you even before you were born. Think how much grace God has poured into your family line. Is it all going to come to a halt with you? Or will you also be godly, to pass on this wonder of grace to the generation to come?

Because of these privileges, there are great expectations of you, just as there were for Naomi's grandson. Timothy met the hopes that were expected of him, for Paul could "call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Timothy 1:5).

"What manner of persons ought ye to be?" (2 Peter 3:11). Your privileges are many. People's expectations are great. Therefore your responsibilities are massive. Hear again the words of Jesus: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48).

Running the Race

1. What Kind of Race is the Christian Life?

Rev Neil M Ross

This is the first part of a slightly-longer version of a talk, sub-titled, "some Bible teaching about the Christian life", which was given at the 2006 Youth Conference of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

My intention is to try to give you some practical guidance about living as Christians. So this talk is based on the words, "Let us run . . . the race that is set before us", which we find in Hebrews 12:1. To live the Christian life is actually to run a race in a spiritual sense.

Our most important source of information about the Christian life is the *Bible*. This is obvious to all of us, I trust, but I make the point because most people today have an idea of the Christian life which is based on merely human ideas of what is decent and right. Of course, there is so much teaching in the Bible about the Christian life that many books have been written on the subject by many godly writers. But, in the short time we have together just now, we can only touch on a few of the main points.

We shall look at five things about the life of the Christian or, in other

words, the Christian race: (1) the *kind* of race it is, (2) the *contestants* in it, (3) the *start* of it, (4) *continuing* in it, and (5) its *finish*.

The Kind of Race which the Christian Life is. This race is not like any other. No other kind of life can be compared to the Christian life. When people are enjoying, say, a relaxing holiday in a beautiful place, they sometimes say, “This is the life!” But the Christian knows that the most wonderful times of lawful enjoyment of the things of this world can never take the place of what is spiritual. The life of the Christian has its difficulties – it is, in fact, a kind of obstacle race – but, for all that, the true Christian says, “Nothing of this world can ever be a substitute for the Christian life”.

The phrase “Christian life” is not in the Bible, but the *life* of the Christian is presented by the Apostle Paul in this way: “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20); and also: “For to me to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). Again Paul advises us that “we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). The Bible also shows that the Christian lives “to the will of God” (1 Peter 4:2); he lives “by faith” (Hebrews 10:38); he lives “unto righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24).

The Christian life is also presented in Scripture under several figures. It is compared to *walking* – that is, a certain way of living: for example, walking in “newness of life”, walking “after the Spirit”, walking “as children of light”, and walking “circumspectly”.

It is compared also to a *journey*. Christians are travellers through this world on the way to heaven. So John Bunyan pictured Christian in his book, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Christian progressed steadily from the City of Destruction to his glorious destination, the Celestial City.

Another of Bunyan’s books, *The Holy War*, shows that the Christian life is one of *combat* against spiritual enemies. So Scripture instructs the Christian to put on “the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:11), “war a good warfare” (1 Timothy 1:18), and fight “the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12).

One of the most striking of the Bible’s pictures of living the Christian life is that of *running a race*. David the psalmist said, “I will run the way of Thy commandments” (Psalm 119:32); and Paul stated, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Paul also directed Hebrew believers to run this race. “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,” he wrote to them, “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1,2).

We may learn from these Bible quotations that the life of the Christian is

a life of *holiness*. To be holy is basically to be *set apart* from the world of ungodliness and to be consecrated to God. The true Christian is one who has taken heed to the command of the Lord: "Come out from among them and be ye separate". Although the Christian is in the world, he is not *of* the world; he knows "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God" and that to be a friend of the world is to be the enemy of God (see James 4:4).

To be holy is chiefly to be *morally pure*. The work of being made holy – sanctification – is a gradual development, carried on in the Christian by the Holy Spirit blessing the Word of God to him. So, as the Shorter Catechism teaches, the believer is "enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness" (answer 35). Although the Christian will never be perfectly holy until the moment of his death, he ever strives to obey God's command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy". In other words, although sanctification is a grace, it is also a duty. Holiness is, in fact, the principal quality of the Christian life.

The Christian life is also a life of *godliness*. The term *godliness* is somewhat similar to, but distinct from, the term *holiness*. A life of godliness has special reference to *God*. So to run the Christian race is, as Paul told Titus, to live "godly in this present world". To live godly is to live to the glory of God, to love Him, to have communion with Him, and to worship and serve Him. To live godly also involves accompanying the people of God as they press towards the full enjoying of God for ever. In short, the Christian life is one in which the Christian commits himself to God and delights in God.

The Christian life is also a *Christ-centred* life. Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). Christ was Paul's very life. He had Christ as his life in that he lived *by* Christ as the One who procured eternal life for him; he lived *to* Christ by giving Him the pre-eminence; he lived *for* Christ by serving Him; He lived *under* Christ by obeying Him as Lord; and he lived *upon* Christ by drawing out of the fullness of blessing that is in Him. And it was by looking in faith to Christ that Paul was running the Christian race.

The Christian life is also very much a life of *hating and forsaking sin*. When Paul wrote to Titus, he spoke of avoiding sin *before* speaking about living godly. He first referred to "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" and then went on to say that we should live "godly in this present world" (Titus 2:11,12). To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts is to detest sin and abstain from it. This has been rightly called, "the denial of sinful self". John Calvin said, "It is an ancient and true observation, that there is a world of vices hidden in the soul of man, but Christian self-denial is the remedy for them all" (*Golden Booklet of the Christian Life*, p 24).

Finally, the Christian life is the only truly *happy* life. The Christian has

joy and gladness to which ungodly people are strangers. It is true, as has often been observed, that God has made us, not so much to be happy, as to be holy – but then again, to be holy is to be happy. The world does not think so: its principle is that of the ancient heathen philosopher: “To live happily is to live according to nature”. But God, who is all-wise, shows us that if we live according to our sinful nature we will have misery and woe, whereas if we follow holiness we will have happiness here and hereafter.

Do *we* run in this good way of hating sin and pursuing holiness? We shall think of this question when, God willing, we look at the next points, the *contestants* and the *start* in the Christian race, in the October issue.

Missionary to India

4. Filling Young Minds with Bible Truths

After suffering shipwreck at the Cape of Good Hope and losing everything, Alexander Duff and his wife arrived in Calcutta. He was now ready to do all in his power to use the gospel to influence India and its people to embrace Christianity.

It was 1830. Duff was 24. He had, if God would spare him, his whole life’s work ahead of him. His long-term aim was to do what he could so that eventually the whole of India would be influenced by Christianity. He was clear as to how he should begin – with education. His school would, he hoped, eventually teach all sorts of subjects, but the most important matter was to have the pupils reading the Bible every day. He believed that, if the Bible was faithfully taught, at least some of his pupils would be turned from their idols to serve the living God. And he hoped that, when they were older, they would be able to influence other Indians in the direction of the truth.

He began his work by visiting every school in and around Calcutta to see what was worth copying and what was not. Last of all, he called on William Carey, the pioneer English missionary, who was now approaching the end of his faithful labours. One scorching July day, Duff sailed along the river to the college where Carey taught. He walked quickly up the steps into what was then considered to be the finest modern building in Asia. Once inside, he turned to his left and found Carey sitting in his study. The old man went over to his visitor, stretched out his hands and solemnly blessed him. After discussing things together, Duff went on his way confirmed that his plan of establishing a school in Calcutta, rather than in some community outside the city, was indeed the correct one.

But where could Duff find suitable premises for his school? This was a serious question in a Hindu country where the people hated the Bible and

imagined that, if they took up the Bible and read any part of it, it would act like a magic spell forcing them to become Christians. The difficulty was solved by an Indian called Rammohan Roy, who had turned from idolatry and had read the Bible, though, sadly, he never fully embraced Christianity. Roy arranged for Duff to rent a building which he had himself been using for some time. Very conveniently, there were also some rooms in this building where he and his wife could live.

Duff had made clear to everyone exactly what kind of education his school would provide – it would have a clear Christian emphasis. But within a few days, five boys appeared at the house where Duff was then staying; they brought a letter from Roy stating that they were ready to attend Duff's school whenever it would open. One of the five, Khettur Mohun Chatterjee, was to become a government official and rise as high as was possible for an Indian at that time. A day or two later some more boys came. And each morning afterwards some others were asking to be admitted to the school.

On the first day of classes, Duff began with the Lord's prayer in the local language, Bengali. He then gave each of them a copy of the four Gospels and asked one of the older pupils to read a passage from it. One of the boys complained: "We are not Christians; how then can we read it? It may make us Christians, and our friends will drive us out of caste." (*Caste* refers to the idea of groups of people in India having a higher or lower standing, according as they are seen to be purer or less pure.) Roy, who was present, explained that their objections were wrong, and most of the boys accepted what he had to say. Besides the various other school subjects that the boys learned, Duff gave part of every day to the study of the Bible. He was anxious, not only that his pupils would learn the facts of the Bible, but that the Holy Spirit would, through what they learned, turn their hearts to God.

The missionary believed that it was important for him to live among the Indians themselves rather than in a European district, so that he would have opportunities to speak to the people on the street. He spent several weeks looking for a suitable house without success. At last he found a suitable two-story house that had lain empty for 12 years because people believed that it was haunted by ghosts. Duff, of course, did not believe in ghosts and it became home for himself and his wife Anne.

Duff was a lively teacher, and the boys were always telling those they met how much they were enjoying the new school. Within just one year after it began, it had become well known among the Indians in Calcutta. Then Duff announced that there would be a public examination of his pupils. Those who came along to watch were impressed, especially with how well these Hindu boys could read the Bible, and how well they answered questions on

it. Not only could they respond correctly to questions on the historical parts but also to those on the doctrines they had studied. Reporters were present from the three daily newspapers printed in English in Calcutta and they wrote enthusiastically about what they had heard and seen. The result was that, in the second year, so many applied to join the school that hundreds of boys had to be turned away because there was no room for them. At that time a second school was opened in a town 40 miles away, to be run on the same principles as Duff used in Calcutta.

That year, 1831, Duff was joined by a second minister from Scotland – William S Mackay, who belonged to Thurso. They had known each other well when studying in St Andrews University, though Duff was a year ahead of Mackay.

Among the passengers on the ship which brought Duff to Calcutta was a man whose name was Clift; he was on his way to work for a trading company in the city. When the firm went bankrupt, he called on Duff for advice. Duff took him on as a teacher and later put him in charge of his second school. At this stage, while he was respectful to Christianity, Clift refused to speak about religion. But some time later, he arrived back at the Duff's home seriously ill with a fever. One day, while he was delirious, he could be heard repeating a line from one of William Cowper's poems: "There is a fountain filled with blood" – referring to the results of Christ's death for sinners. It was perhaps the first suggestion that Clift was thinking seriously about spiritual things. While he was recovering, he confessed to the Duffs that, although he had been brought up by godly parents, he had led a careless life. But, when he returned to work, he was converted. And having seen the change that had taken place in Clift's life, Duff was more convinced than ever of the importance of filling young minds with the truths of the Bible.

How Did It all Begin?

10. The Wonder of Man

S M Campbell

As you are reading this article there are millions of cells along the inside of each eye changing the light waves they receive into electrical impulses – little bursts of electricity. These electrical impulses then travel at about 200 miles an hour to the brain, where they are sorted, organised and analysed. According to Evolutionists, this capacity to see things began with a random mutation of a single cell, so that it was able to sense light. This may not sound too incredible, but what is totally incredible is that millions of other positive

random mutations would have to occur around this first mutation to build the human visual system. And you may remember from a previous article that scientists today are still looking for evidence of even one positive mutation – one that is helpful rather than a hindrance.

So did such a complex system arise out of lots of random mutations by a series of amazing coincidences? No, God designed the eye and created it fully formed. He designed it so that the eyes are protected by being inside bony sockets, so that tear glands keep the eye wet and help to wash out any foreign bodies, and so that eyelids protect the outer area.

Maybe someone is reading this article out aloud to you. You will be able to tell whether their voice is male or female. Maybe they have a cold and you can tell that too. Maybe there are noises in the background: someone turning over the page of a book, or someone else drinking a cup of tea, or maybe you can hear a car outside. You can tell if the sounds are far away or near to you. How does all this happen?

Your ears are designed to pick up all these sounds and the information is passed on to your brain, where the sounds are interpreted. Sound comes to you in the form of sound waves, which are like ripples on a pond. They make their way down our ear canals at tremendous speed – about 340 metres per second. The sound waves then hit our eardrums, which vibrate and in turn pass these vibrations on to three small bones in the middle of each of our ears. These bones make the vibrations stronger and pass them on to a fluid-filled structure called the cochlea. Inside the cochlea there are about 55 000 hairs, each of which has 50 to 100 tiny bristles which stick out and respond to vibrations from the sound waves. Electrical impulses are then passed on to thousands of nerves which combine to form the acoustic nerve going to the brain. This can happen up to 20 000 times a second. Does that sound complicated? It is!

It is a well co-ordinated, amazingly exact mechanism. It works as a unit and problems arise when even a small part of the unit fails. If we were to believe that this process of hearing evolved, we would have some tough questions to answer. For instance, how did the three bones come about? If a random mutation had resulted in the first bone, what good would it have been on its own? What was it about this single bone that made it worth keeping through natural selection? And what would be the likelihood of two further random mutations happening which would lead to two more neat little bones to fit beside the original one? Millions of mutations would have been necessary to evolve the human hearing mechanism and they would have had to be purposeful, not random. Surely it is much more like common sense simply to accept from the Bible that our ability to hear was created by God.

*For Junior Readers***Not Fair?**

One day a group of young girls stood talking outside an open window. They were planning an outing to the woods. They were going to take a picnic lunch and pick berries. They meant to have a fine time together.

“Now, Ellen, run home and ask your mother if you may go”, they told one of the group. “Tell her we are all going and that you want to come too”.

Ellen crossed the road to her home and was away for some time. At last the door opened and she came down the steps. “You’ve got permission? You are coming, are you?” her friends called out.

Ellen shook her head and said that her mother could not let her go. “O,” cried one of the girls, “that’s too bad. Not go! That is really not fair of your mother.” “Why, I would make her let me,” said another. “I would go, whatever she said,” protested a third.

Naturally, Ellen looked a bit sad; she was obviously disappointed not to be going out with the others. But her answer was a very good one: “My mother knows best”. She did not look angry, she did not pout, and she quietly closed the door.

I am sure there are times when your mother or father cannot allow you to go where you wish, or to do what you want. But you should believe that it is for a good reason. Surely then you should accept their decision and not be rebellious or sullen, as that is displeasing to God. The right way is cheerfully to accept what they decide.

“Children,” the Bible tells you, “obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” It may not always be easy to accept. It may not always even seem reasonable to you. But in God’s eyes it is right, and that should be the standard for how you behave.

J van Kralingen

*For Younger Readers***The First Commandment**

How many commandments are there? Yes, there are ten. God gave us the Ten Commandments so that we would know how to live. He wants us to know what we should do, and what we should not do.

Do you know what the first one is? It is this: “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me”. There is only one God. He made us, and we must love Him far more than anyone else. This is the First Commandment, because it is the most important. Ask God to make you able to love Him as you should.

Youth Conference Report 2006

Rev D A Ross

This year's Youth Conference was held at Strathallan School, in the small village of Forgandenny, seven miles south-west of Perth. We had never before used this venue, but it proved to be a suitable choice. The lecture hall is excellent and there are historical sites not far away. The food was of a high standard and substantial servings satisfied young appetites. Although the accommodation is due to be upgraded, it was certainly adequate. The School staff were most helpful, especially the Bursar's Assistant, who did not spare herself to see to our every need. The housemothers, in particular, valued her assistance, while they looked after our young friends with their usual untiring care and affection. We deeply appreciate their work.

The young people were very happy with the place and, during the intervals, enjoyed the facilities for recreation, and the beautiful walks in the grounds of the school. More importantly, they appeared to appreciate the lectures and the times of discussion. We record here our gratitude to the speakers, who spent considerable time preparing for the profitable periods we had together considering spiritual matters. We trust that the questions indicated a genuine interest in eternal realities. Who can tell but that these Conferences may be a stepping stone for some of our young hearers in coming to a knowledge of Christ as the only suitable Saviour, or as the means for them as poor lost sinners to cast in their lot with those who say of Christ: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"?

There were 61 young people present and, along with speakers and housemothers, a total of 70 attended the Conference. There is a small fee for attending, higher for those who are working than for students. However, the bulk of the cost comes from the R W Forsyth Bequest Fund. We have to praise God for making this provision in His providence, and not least that we are able to have these conferences year after year and derive some spiritual good from them.

The first paper, *Running the Race – Some Bible teachings about the Christian life*, was given by Rev Neil Ross. There were five main points: (1) The *kind* of race, highlighting various portions of the Word of God which clearly show that it is the way of holiness. (2) The *contestants* in the Christian race. They are believers, while others also have an obligation to live a Christian life and to run in this race. (3) The *start* of the Christian race. Its importance was shown from the words of the Saviour to Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again". (4) *Continuing* in the Christian race. We very much need to be exercised in the means of grace and in Christian duties, and to

avoid the many sinful pleasures which keep tempting us. But we must ever look to Jesus to give the grace and strength we need to continue in the race. (5) The *end* of the Christian race. There is a glorious finish: heaven at last. The prize is described as a crown – “a crown of glory that fadeth not away”. The paper ended with these words, “Shall we live for the prizes and rewards of this world and lose our souls, or shall we run the Christian race and obtain the everlasting crown of glory?”

Rev Angus Smith presented an interesting paper: *A Wrestler with God and Man – lessons from the life of Jacob*. Even before Jacob’s remarkable experience at Bethel, Mr Smith believed, Jacob feared God. We cannot praise Jacob for his deceitfulness in obtaining the spiritual blessing bound up with the promised Messiah; the blessing would have been Jacob’s had he waited for it. No doubt he suffered for his deceit. Yet, while Jacob is often portrayed as the great villain, little attention is paid to the wrong done by his parents and his brother Esau in this matter.

Jacob is an example of one who valued the blessing of God. Esau did not care for God’s spiritual blessings, which were his birthright, but readily gave them up for the things of this world. Afterwards he joined with the heathen by taking heathen wives. Jacob’s reaction during trying experiences under Laban showed clearly that he was a man of faith; so did his wrestling in prayer for deliverance before meeting with Esau.

The next paper, by Mr A MacLean, described *The life and ministry of Robert Murray M’Cheyne*, with the title, *Chosen not for Good in Me*, a line from one of his poems. He was an able student but was very fond of worldly pleasures such as dancing, card-playing and music. But worldliness, pride and his rejection of Christ became sin to him, and he came by the grace of God to rely on Christ Jesus alone for salvation, forsaking his sinful past for ever. Eventually M’Cheyne became a minister.

While still in college, he was diligent in carrying the gospel to lost sinners and he acted in the same way during his whole ministry. Many were blessed under his preaching. His main place of labour was St Peter’s church in Dundee. He visited Israel and other places to see how the gospel could be spread among the Jews. He had a great love for Christ and was earnest in prayer for lost souls. He was well-known for his personal holiness and his support for the Lord’s Day. But he died at the early age of 28, in the year 1843, when he went to be for ever with the Lord.

Rev D W B Somerset led us on a tour of *Church History in Southern Perthshire*. Strathallan School itself used to be called Freeland House when it was the seat of Lord Ruthven of Freeland. The first Lord Ruthven was a Covenanter and was heavily fined in 1662 for supporting the Covenanting

cause. At the parish church of Forgandenny, which dates back to the seventeenth century, we saw the gravestone of Andrew Brodie, a Covenanter who was shot at a nearby conventicle in October 1678. William Row, the son of John Row, one of the Reformers, was minister of Forgandenny for many years. He was persecuted for his staunch Presbyterianism. In the church we sang Psalm 124: "Now Israel may say . . .".

We then visited the parish church of Dron, which is now derelict. The minister of Dron in Covenanting times was Alexander Pitcairn, and it was a great centre of Covenanting activity. We saw the grave of the field-preacher John Welwood, who died in Perth and was buried in Dron at dead of night. When the magistrates of Perth heard that a field-preacher had died, they sent a messenger to arrest his corpse! The final site we visited was the parish church of Aberdalgie, where Thomas Halyburton's father George was minister. It was at a relative's house in Perth that John Welwood died.

Rev Roderick MacLeod gave a paper entitled *Grace to Live in Killing Times – The Covenanters of south-west Scotland in the 1680s*. The first part of the paper described the Church; because it was set up on earth by Christ, it is a divine institution with its own laws, and Christ Jesus is its appointed Head. Godly Presbyterians in the 1680s in Scotland opposed popes, bishops and kings who falsely claimed headship of the Church of Christ. This brought upon them the fierce persecutions of King James II, in support of Episcopacy and Romanism. The Church in Scotland endured what has become known as "the killing times". The King's soldiers had licence to kill, without trial, those who were faithful to Presbyterian principles. Large numbers of killings are noted in the many records still in existence. One of the wonders of the age was the great grace granted to these people. Reared on the Word of God, they would rather die than be unfaithful to Christ and His Word. We today need that same grace and strength.

Rev Donald Macdonald's was the final paper: *The Sabbath Day – Why should we keep it?* God instituted the Sabbath at creation for the good of man. From the beginning of time the godly have valued the Sabbath. The first full day Adam experienced was a Sabbath, which is a gift for man to the end of time. In the time of Moses, the Sabbath was again revealed at Mount Sinai in one of the Ten Commandments, and it is always to be observed, like all the others. When Christ Jesus, the author of the Sabbath, was in the world, He did not abolish the Sabbath; rather He corrected abuses. After His resurrection, the Saviour indicated in a number of ways that the first day of the week is now to be the Christian Sabbath. We are therefore to keep the Sabbath because it is the law of creation, because God sanctified it, and because He commanded the keeping of it and made it a day of rest.

Looking Around Us

Who Answers Prayer?

Someone somewhere seems to think that Jude the Apostle reads *The Daily Telegraph*. A tiny advert appeared in the paper saying, “Thanks to St Jude for prayers answered”. It reflects the Roman Catholic idea that specially-godly people, who have gone to heaven, can present our petitions more effectively than we can ourselves.

But no! Christ is the one Mediator between us and God. It is only for His sake our prayers can be heard. Let us go to God continually, for Christ’s sake, for the supply of all our needs – especially for the salvation of our souls.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2005-06

UK Prizes and Awards

Senior Section

Prizes: *Bonar Bridge:* Rebecca Campbell. *Bracadale:* Neil Campbell. *Dingwall:* Kathryn Mackenzie. *Dunoon:* Esther Maley. *Farr:* Ruth MacQueen. *Glasgow:* Kenneth C Gillies. *Inverness:* Lois H Fiddes. *London:* Josie van Kralingen. *Stornoway:* Anne R Dickie.

Awards with Merit: *Glasgow:* Neil Freeke. *Inverness:* Mark Campbell. *Kyle:* Paul S Whear. *London:* Rebecca Munns. *North Uist:* John A Macdonald.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Bonar Bridge:* Sandy Campbell. *Dingwall:* Beverly Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Hugh Gillies. *Inverness:* James Fraser. *London:* Alexander and Constance Turnbull. *North Uist:* Christina Macdonald. *Scaynes Hill:* Abigail Main. *Stratherrick:* John Fraser.

Awards with Merit: *Crowborough:* Heidi Woodhams. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Donald MacLeod. *Inverness:* Catherine Schouten. *London:* Elizabeth Munns. *North Tolsta:* Mark Mackenzie. *Longcot:* Lucy Cooper, Emily Sayers. *Scaynes Hill:* Martha Main. *Stornoway:* Alasdair G Gillies.

Awards: *Dingwall:* Susannah Mackenzie. *Inverness:* Natalie Macaskill. *Kyle:* Daniel Whear. *London:* David Rowland, Jeremy and Justin van Kralingen. *North Uist:* John Cameron. *Stornoway:* Karina Ferguson. *Swavesey:* Helen and Rebecca Parish. *Swordale:* Murdo S Macleod.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Dingwall:* Alistair Mackenzie. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan. *Glasgow:* Donna Chisolm, Kate Gillies, Neil Gillies. *Inverness:* Anna Fraser. *Kings Lynn:* Joanna Wiltshire. *London:* Rupert J Turnbull. *South Harris:* Catherine MacLeod. *Stornoway:* Sarah K Gillies. *Uig:* Murdo G Mackay.

Awards with merit: *Barnoldswick:* Robert Ross. *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Crowborough:* Kelvin Woodhams. *Edinburgh:* Isla MacDonald. *Glasgow:* Catherine Freeke, Rachel MacLeod. *Haywards Heath:* Hannah Woodhams. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Thomas D Maton. *London:* William Munns. *Portree:* Rachel Mackinnon. *Scaynes Hill:* Philip Main.

Awards: *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin. *Dunoon:* Rachel Maley. *Edinburgh:* Jonathan MacDonald. *Farr:* Alasdair MacQueen. *Glasgow:* Peter MacPherson. *London:* Edward Munns. *North Tolsta:* Sean MacLeod. *North Uist:* John A Macdonald. *Peasmarsh:* Alasdair Bailey. *Stornoway:* Lauren MacDonald, Andrew MacQuarrie. *Swavesey:* Sarah Parish. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Dingwall:* Ruth MacLeod, Andrew MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan. *Gairloch:* Mairi Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Ewen Beaton, Ian Gillies. *North Uist:* Iain Boyd, Fraser MacDonald. *Longcot:* Ruth Cooper. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser.

A group of Youth Conference members outside Aberdalgie church

Awards with Merit: *Barnoldswick:* David Martin. *Dingwall:* Alasdair MacLean. *Edinburgh:* Daniel MacDonald. *Glasgow:* Ruairidh MacLeod, Callum MacPherson. *Haywards Heath:* Edwin Woodhams. *Inverness:* Peter Schouten. *London:* Jeremy and Lucy Turnbull. *Luton:* Stephen Kingham. *Trowbridge:* Joanna Broome. *Vatten:* Sabrina Annand.

Awards: *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie. *London:* Andrew Hickman, Amy van Kralingen. *North Harris:* Tormod Mackinnon. *North Tolsta:* Lucy Anne MacLeod. *North Uist:* Margaret Cameron. *Stornoway:* Leah Beaton.

Lower Primary Section

Aberdeen: Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* James and Rebecca Ross. *Croydon:* Marcus and Susanna Hickman. *Dingwall:* Jane Mackenzie, Laura and Sheena MacLean, Graham MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle Macdonald, Emma and Jonathan Norris. *Fort William:* Gerrit Smith. *Gairloch:* Andrew and Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Grant Beaton, Rebecca and Sarah Macleod, Kenneth Macpherson, Rachel Smith. *Haywards Heath:* Kate Woodhams. *Inverness:* Jonathan Fiddes, John and Rebekah Maton. *Kyle:* Nathan and Sarah Whear. *London:* Claudia, Edward, Miles and Oliver Martin, Andrew and Samuel Munns, Angus Pontin, Annabelle, Henry, Jemima and Joseph Turnbull. *Longcot:* Samuel Cooper. *Ness:* Johan MacInnes. *North Tolsta:* Mairi Campbell, Murran Harrison, Isla Macdonald, Innes Mackenzie, Scott Macleod. *North Uist:* Eilidh Cameron. *Perth:* Calum Patterson. *Staffin:* Neil Angus Matheson, Carey Ross. *Stornoway:* Cirsty Gillies, Aimee and Cara Macleod, Eilidh Macleod, Ryan MacSween, Alasdair and Uilleam Murray. *Swavesey:* Priscilla and Robert Parish. *Vatten:* Jayne-Anne and John Fleming.