

# The Young People's Magazine

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## More than a Dream

God speaks to us all. He has given us the Bible, where He tells us about Himself and about our duty to Him. He makes plain that, as our Creator, He has a right to our obedience – that we are under obligation to obey Him perfectly. So we must love Him *wholeheartedly*. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God”, He commands, “with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). And if we do not obey Him from the heart, it should be clear to us that we do not love Him at all.

We are sinners. It is beyond our power to love God with all our heart. Indeed, unless we have been born again, we cannot love God at all. It was possible for Adam and Eve, immediately after they were created, to love God perfectly and to obey Him wholeheartedly. Then they fell, and they lost that power. And no other human being has ever had that power, except believers – and only when they enter heaven. There they will enjoy perfect happiness for ever, and a great part of their happiness will be because they love God perfectly – because they will never be able to sin again. But let us be clear: only those who begin to love God and to serve Him in this world will get to heaven. No one else ever will.

How important then to begin to serve God before death finds us! How important to begin to serve God *now*! Especially when the time of our death is so uncertain. We do not know when our opportunities of finding salvation will come to an end. So it is a dreadfully serious matter to be careless about God's authority. And it is particularly serious to be careless about His call to believe in Christ, and to receive salvation through Him. “This is His commandment,” John says of God the Father, “That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23). Because this is God's command, we have no option in the matter. Indeed to refuse to believe in Christ is the most serious of all possible sins.

Christ said to Matthew: “Follow Me”. Matthew obeyed, without delay. He felt the authority of Christ's words and left his work at once. Matthew might have been tempted to think how secure he was in his work as a tax-collector. Feeling assured of a good income, he might assume that he would never go

hungry. He might also have been tempted to fear that his life would quickly become insecure if he began to follow the despised Jesus of Nazareth, who did not even have anywhere to lay His head at night. But Matthew did not focus on such matters; he did not even ask for time to make up his mind. Because he recognised Christ's authority, he obeyed immediately. He had every right to be perfectly sure that the One who had called him was undertaking to look after him, to provide for every need he might ever feel.

So today, when we read in the Gospels the story of Christ calling Matthew to follow Him, we are to think of the Saviour calling us to follow Him – with the same authority as when, long ago, He spoke to Matthew while he sat at his booth collecting taxes. Matthew was called to be an apostle, a very special calling. No one is called to be an apostle now, but we are all called to follow Christ. And no one has any right to ignore this call. It is a call to go wherever Christ will lead us and sincerely to obey God's commands. It is a call to believe in Christ as the One whom God the Father has appointed as the Saviour of sinners. He died at Calvary as their substitute and is now exalted "a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). What glory is His! How dare we ignore Him, especially when He offers us such a glorious salvation?

George Thomson became minister of St Gennys in Cornwall in 1732. A happy young man, everybody enjoyed his company. But, although he was a minister, responsible for looking after the souls of his people, he was not converted; his preaching was doing no good to his congregation. He did not really understand the teachings of the Bible as he read passages from it to them on Sabbaths; he did not feel its authority. Nor did he feel the authority of the God who inspired it and who was still speaking through it.

After about two years in St Gennys, Thomson was wakened one night by an alarming dream. In it someone told him that, exactly a month from that day, "at six in the afternoon, you must appear before the judgement seat of Christ to give an account of the dreadful abuse of all your talents, and the injuries done to the souls committed to your care". Alarmed though he was, he told himself: "Glad I am it was no more than a dream. I am no old woman to pay attention to dreams. I will sleep again."

And he did go back to sleep, but only to experience the same dream again – but this time with more frightening details. His mind was more disturbed than before, but again he went back to sleep. And again the dream returned, with even more terrifying details. Once more he wakened, but this time he could not get back to sleep. He was absolutely convinced that he would die in a month's time. He was thoroughly shaken out of his carelessness. He called together his friends and some of the more prominent members of his

church and told them about his dream. He asked them to find someone to take his place as minister and to come back on the day which had been appointed, as he believed, for his death.

What did Thomson do? He wisely shut himself away with his Bible in the hope that he would find peace of mind. But instead, everything he read seemed to tell him that he was condemned. He was very conscious that he had brought great dishonour on God in public and he could not believe that the Most High could forgive so great a sinner; he could not see that God could preserve His honour if He did so.

As time went by, Thomson's distress increased. But, a fortnight later, deliverance came as he was reading Romans 3:26: "To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus". He understood for the first time what Christ had done to save sinners; he began to follow Jesus. And he saw, over against what he used to think, that God "could be glorified in his salvation". God is indeed righteous when He saves those who believe in Jesus.

The dreaded day came the next month. Thomson still expected to die. But when six o'clock came, the hour mentioned in his dream, he was still alive. His dream was not a prophecy but, in His providence, God used it to awaken Thomson from his carelessness. When he took up his ministry again, he faithfully preached the teachings of the Bible. And God blessed his work; many sinners were converted.

Although Thomson was not called to the judgement seat on the day he feared, that day will come. We do not know when, but no one should doubt that Christ will one day come to judge the world. And although that day has not yet come, Thomson did have to meet his Maker, on the day of his death. So will we. As death approached, how thankful he must have been that he had already looked to Christ for salvation, that he did not then have to find peace with God. If we are to get to heaven, we too must be prepared for it – uncertain though the time is. It is never too soon to be concerned about our soul; it is never too soon to realise that, in our own strength, we cannot love God with all our heart; it is never too soon to come to Christ for salvation.

Thomson should have sought the Lord before he became a minister – before he took on the responsibility of caring for the souls of other people. Even if had no thought of becoming a minister, he should have sought the Lord long before he did. Indeed none of us has any right to delay seeking Christ; not to follow Him is a serious sin. We ought to seek salvation earnestly at once. Let us do so with special earnestness if, up till now, we have not thought seriously about the tremendously important matter of where we will spend eternity – in heaven or in hell. There is no time to waste.

*For Junior Readers – Lessons from the Life of John G Paton*

## 11. The Great Visit

Once the great warship HMS Cordelia had cast anchor in the bay, Captain Vernon landed on Tanna. He came ashore in his uniform and with a large number of his officers, all of them carrying guns. They made a splendid procession, which filled the local people with awe. Captain Vernon had heard that Paton was having a tough time on Tanna and he knew how to work the situation to help Paton.

Miaki, the chief who was responsible for Paton's blankets going missing, saw the boat approaching with all the finely-dressed officers. He left Paton's side and ran off towards his village. Paton thought he had gone away in terror but Miaki had other, grander ideas!

Captain Vernon was speaking to Paton when Miaki returned and stood importantly by Paton's side. He was now wearing a soldier's old, tattered, red coat, which he had obtained from a trader. He looked a rather strange figure with the short red coat tightly buttoned up over his body, his bare legs appearing underneath and long, matted cords of hair falling over his face.

Captain Vernon was told that this new addition to the welcoming party was Miaki, a great war chief. The Captain muttered under his breath, "The contemptible creature!" But Miaki did not understand what was said and he grinned happily at anyone who happened to look his way.

Miaki was very impressed with the smart, tall Captain Vernon. He wanted to measure him against a spear and mark on it where the top of the Captain's head reached. Then they would send it round the island so that everyone could see how great was this Captain from Queen Victoria. Vernon agreed and the local people were delighted with their reminder of the great Captain.

Captain Vernon was anxious to help Paton in any way he could. The various chiefs were invited to meet the Captain at Paton's house the next day. They were very suspicious and sent their women and children to the opposite side of the island, away from any possible danger.

The captain met 20 chiefs in Paton's house and warned them against being cruel or unkind to Queen Victoria's people. He then took all the chiefs for a tour of his warship. They were obviously scared when the sailors fired a canon into the water and, when one was fired into some trees on the island, they were absolutely terrified. But they recovered a little when they were each given a small gift. They came ashore full of stories about the wonders of what they called the "fire-god of the sea" and of "the Captain of the great white Queen".

There was nothing more the Captain could do for Paton, so he sailed

away. He hoped that his words of warning would encourage the people of Tanna to behave in a kind and respectful way to Paton and his fellow missionaries. He hoped too that they would remember the fierceness of the warship and the shots from its canon.

A short while later, another boat appeared. It was not a warship this time; it was a boat from the London Missionary Society. The people on board urged Paton to come with them for a three-week holiday as they toured the islands, but Paton would not leave Tanna. Not long before then, some of the people had been involved in fighting, and Paton was worried that it would get worse if he left. So he denied himself the pleasure of the break, even although he badly needed a rest.

Plans were being made to move the missionary's house and the church to the top of a hill, away from the swampy areas that caused disease. Paton had started buying land and wood in order to build his new house. But, just at this point, fever struck him again. He became so ill that he thought he was going to die. He managed to crawl part of the way up the hill, and his faithful friend Abraham and his wife Nafatu carried him the rest of the way to the top. There they nursed him back to health. He never did go back to sleep down on the lower ground; each night he slept under the trees until his new bedroom was ready.

It was Abraham and Nafatu who helped him build his house. In fact, without their help, Paton would not have managed it. God provided help for Paton where he did not expect it. Abraham and his wife were from the nearby island of Anietyum. Abraham had at one time been a cannibal; now, through God's mercy, he was a Christian: a new creature in Christ Jesus. This encouraged Paton to think: If this man was converted, then why not the people of Tanna? Abraham proved himself over and over again to be a wonderful helper to Paton. In times of difficulty, Paton was greatly helped through Abraham's prayers.

Paton denied himself pleasure, because he had the eternal good of the people of Tanna on his mind. He longed for the day when they would come to know Jesus as their Saviour and he did not want to do anything that would make this less likely. It was his great aim in life.

What is your aim in life? Do you want to have Christ as your Saviour? Or are you content just to go to church and be outwardly good most of the time? If so, you are just like Miaki in his old soldier's coat. There is a verse which says, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). This means that even the good things we do are worthless if we hope that they will somehow help us to get to heaven.

In order to get to heaven we must have Christ as our Saviour. He died on

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the cross for the sins of His people. So those who believe in Him have His righteousness, covering them. A few chapters earlier, in Isaiah 61, there is a verse which says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels". Do you want the filthy rags of your own works, or the rich covering of Christ's righteousness? I know what you need and what I need. But the question is, Do you *want* it?

*S M Campbell*

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## David – Son of Jesse

### 4. A Righteous King and a Man of God

*Rev John MacLeod*

Last month's article described David as a friend and as a dutiful son. This is the final section of a paper Mr MacLeod gave at the Youth Conference in 2005.

***D****avid as a righteous king.* The rule is clear that governs the conduct of all who are placed in positions where they are to exercise authority over others. We have it from the pen of no less a person than David himself, who declared, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue". That principle was, and remains: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God".

David is to be held in high regard as a righteous sovereign and an able administrator, whatever his failings might have been in personal relationships – and we must remember, for instance, that Joab, the callous murderer and traitor whom he spared, was a close relative and co-conspirator in the death of Uriah, and that Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. The Bible tells us that "David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgement and justice unto all his people"; and we have no higher authority than that.

"His care," Matthew Henry comments, "extended itself to all the parts of his dominion: He 'reigned over all Israel' (2 Samuel 8:15); not only had he a right to reign over all the tribes, but he did so; they were all safe under his protection, and shared in the fruits of his good government. He did justice, we are told, with an unbiassed, unshaken hand: he 'executed judgement . . . unto all his people'. This intimates . . . his easiness of access and readiness to admit all addresses and appeals made to him. . . . He never perverted justice through favour or affection, nor had respect of persons in judgement."

It has been noted that, in Saul's time, we read only of Abner as captain of the host; no others are mentioned. David, however, appointed more officers:

Joab was in command of the forces in the field, and Benaiah was over the Cherethites and Pelethites, who are thought to have been bodyguards attending the king's person. They are supposed to have been ready to do service at home, help in the administration of justice and in preserving the public peace. As David's sons grew up and became fit to be employed, they were made chief rulers; they had places of honour and trust assigned to them – in the household or the camp or the courts of justice, according as their abilities led them. They were chief about the king; they were doubtless employed near him, so that they might be under his eye.

The Lord Jesus has appointed officers in his kingdom, for His honour and the good of the Church; when He ascended on high He bestowed such gifts – “some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, pastors and teachers . . . for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”. He has also allotted our work to us: “For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work”. “David made his sons chief rulers,” Matthew Henry comments, “but all believers, Christ's spiritual seed, are better preferred, for they are made to our God kings and priests.” “The military glory of David's life was not its highest distinction, and we may warrantably enough regard him as the one who put in place an internal civil administration which, for thoroughness and efficiency, surpassed everything up to his day which any country on the face of the earth, with the single exception of Egypt, had enjoyed.”

**David as a man of God.** David's son, Solomon, makes the observation that there is no man living that “sinneth not”, and David was no exception. But he was one who feared God above many. He has the distinction, as already pointed out, of being described as the man after God's own heart. The psalms which he wrote reveal him to have been a man much exercised in spiritual things. And it is proved by the fact that Christians in every age have found in the Psalms what was, and is, suited to the circumstances in which they find themselves. Although the Spirit of the Lord spoke by him and His word was in his tongue, yet David in writing was influenced by what was personal. Although he was one of the holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Ghost to give us the Scriptures, yet in writing he was influenced by his trials and temptations; his failings and backslidings, followed by repentance and self-loathing; and all the Lord's dealings with him in his own soul's experience, in adversity and in prosperity. This was for our learning.

Like Abraham, David was what we may call an Old Testament Christian. He was justified by faith, as Paul points out in Romans 4. If we move on to chapter 7, we find Paul's experience of indwelling sin fully in harmony with what David recorded in Psalm 38 as his spiritual experience.

He was a man of prayer. Who, reading the Psalms, would think otherwise? In the Old Testament we find David, when his soul was in health, consistently confiding in his God. And the manner in which he was delivered out of many dangerous situations is to be attributed to this, as is the way in which he was eventually enabled to subdue all his enemies. "As for me," he declared, "I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice." Time does not permit me to cite further instances of David's prayerfulness. There are very many of them, and it is little wonder that we find David with an overflowing heart expressing himself thus: "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." "Men" – and that includes all of us – "ought always to pray, and not to faint."

He was humble and submissive to the will of God. Having been settled over the kingdom and his enemies subdued, David's desire was to build a temple in Jerusalem, where God had promised to place His name. But this was not permitted; Solomon was to build that house. And David fully submitted to that revelation, although it would appear that his heart was set on doing it. In conveying this information to him, the Lord also spoke of the royal house which he was to found, and also of the kingdom arising out of that royal house, which was to last for ever. So wondrous is this in the eyes of David that he appears to be at a loss for words. And when he does speak, it is by way of appealing to God's own omniscience: "What can David say more unto Thee? For Thou, Lord God, knowest Thy servant."

These features in the character of David were seen on other occasions. On such events as the death of Bathsheba's first child, the death of Jonathan, the deaths of Amnon and Absalom, we find no murmuring on his part, however great the grief and the sorrow of these events. He did not say like Cain: "My punishment is greater than I can bear". He tells us in his own words: "Dumb was I, opening not my mouth, / because this work was Thine". He consistently looked beyond the instrument to the Agent. Thus did David live, and thus did David die – resting upon the foundation revealed in that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure.

In the present company we cannot bring what we have had to say of David to an end in any better way than by quoting his death-bed advice to Solomon. We hope that every young person here will lay it to heart: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever."



*For Younger Readers*

## **Not too Young to Ask for Help**

Some of you will have heard about the little boy in Inverness whose mother collapsed in their home. He was desperately in need of someone to come to help her.

His name is Jake and he is only four years old. His mother suddenly became very ill and fell helpless on the floor. He took his mother's mobile phone, dialled 999 and asked the ambulance service for help. Then he gave them his home address, and stayed on the phone until the ambulance arrived.

How did he know how to do this? Well, his mother taught him to remember his home address and how to dial 999 in an emergency like this. When his mother collapsed, he was a very worried little boy. "I felt sad for my Mum", he said.

He remembered what she told him and got medical help for her. And the help came within just seven minutes.

But all boys and girls need help. Most of all, they need help for their souls.

Let me ask you a few questions. Are you worried about your soul? Are you sad because you have sinned against God? Do you know that you have to be saved from something worse than illness of the body? Do you know that you need to be saved from the deadly disease of sin? And where can you find help?

God tells us to call Himself for help, when we have such concerns. The Bible says, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near". So we are to pray to Him: "God, be merciful to me a sinner. Lord help me. Lord heal me."

I am sure you know that God has sent His dear Son, Jesus Christ, to be a spiritual physician – that is, a doctor for the soul. He came into the world to save sinners. He came to heal them from the awful disease of sin. Jesus says to us in the Bible: "They that are whole [those who are well] have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

If we call to God in prayer, He will hear us and help us. He says to us: "Ask, and ye shall receive". Blind Bartimaeus called to Him:

“Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy upon me!” His prayer was answered right away and Jesus took away his blindness.

Little Jake was very worried. But he did more than worry: he asked for help. And you too must ask for help.

Although Jake is very young, he was not too young to phone for help. And you are not too young to ask the Lord to help you and save you.

Jake did not wait until next day to ask for help. He phoned right away. You must ask God for help without delay. *NMR*

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## **“As the Lord Commanded”**

### **3. Musical Instruments (2)**

*Rev D W B Somerset*

In the previous article we considered the use of musical instruments under the Old Testament, in connection with the temple and the ceremonial law. We showed that their purpose was to point to various aspects of the work of Christ and of the gospel. The way that we benefit today from the use of musical instruments in the Old Testament is not by continuing to play them, but by understanding what they were intended to signify and laying it to heart.

**I**n this article we consider a second, closely-related, way in which musical instruments were used in Old Testament worship. The Psalms often refer to them in connection with praising God. The psalmist himself used his harp to praise God: “Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God my God” (Psalm 43:4); “I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God; upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto Thee” (Psalm 144:9). Similarly, he often exhorts others to praise God in the same way: “Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him with a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise” (Psalm 33:2-3); “Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their king. Let them praise His name in the dance: let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp” (Psalm 149:2-3).

The question arises for us: How are we to follow the psalmist's example and exhortations in this matter? Is he telling us to learn to play the harp and other musical instruments in order to praise God, or is there some different meaning in these verses? It seems clear at once that the second answer must be the correct one. Apart from anything else, there are many people in the

world who are lacking in musical ability and cannot learn to play harps and other instruments; yet these verses are addressed to such people as well as to others. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

We are led, then, to seek some other meaning in those verses in the Psalms which speak of musical instruments, and it is natural to look to other parts of the Word of God. As the Westminster Confession says, “When there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture . . . it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly” (1:9). There are quite a number of references to harps elsewhere in the Bible, but the one that seems to be clearest is Revelation 5:8: “And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints”. The four beasts and the four and twenty elders represent the *redeemed*, for they say in verse 9: “Thou . . . hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”. In verse 8, therefore, we have those whom Christ has redeemed worshipping Him with harps and with vials. We are told that the vials represent the prayers of the saints, and it must follow that the harps represent the *praises* of the saints.

The significance of harps, then, and of the other musical instruments in the Psalms is that they give us a picture of what a worshipping soul is like in the sight of God. We cannot see a soul, but God “looketh on the heart”; and a heart that is praising Him through Christ is as pleasant spiritually to Him as a well-played harp is outwardly to us. This should encourage us to praise God through Christ. It is something acceptable and well-pleasing to Him. “O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise even with my glory. Awake psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early” (Psalms 108:1-2, 57:7-8).

The comparison between the soul and a musical instrument suggests a number of ideas. The first is that in order to worship God we need to be in possession of a *spiritual harp*. In Revelation 15:2 John saw those that had “gotten the victory over the beast”, and they had “the harps of God”. James Durham, a minister in Glasgow from 1647, suggests that to have such a spiritual harp is to have grace in the heart: “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). Without grace, our so-called “prayers” and “praises” can have no music or beauty in the ears of God. They are unpleasant and hateful, like the roaring of bears (Isaiah 59:11) or the howling of those in pain. “They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds” (Hosea 7:14). But if our souls have been washed in the blood of Christ and made alive by His Spirit, then our prayers and praises are “sweet”

to Him (Song of Solomon 2:14). They are “spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

A second idea is that the soul must be well-tuned for worship. David's soul was out of tune for worship when he had fallen into sin with Bathsheba. He “kept silence” at that time and was unable to praise God. “When I kept silence,” he said, “my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long” (Psalm 32:3). If the soul of the believer is proud, or worldly, or intent upon some sin, then God will not accept worship from it. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18). But as soon as David had repented, he was ready to praise God once more. “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness. O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise” (Psalm 51:14-5).

A third idea is that there are many *notes* or *strings* for worship. There is to be the note of joy, for instance, and the note of love. There must be thankfulness, confidence, wonder, hope, longing, reverence and so on. “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises to Thy name, O most High: to shew forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night, upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound” (Psalm 92:1-3). No note is to be missing, nor is any note to be over-played relative to the others. Some believers, for instance, are lacking in the note of godly sorrow (1 Corinthians 5:2); while others err in the opposite direction of being “swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (2 Corinthians 2:7).

In Psalm 150 there is an exhortation to praise God upon all possible musical instruments: “Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord” (verses 4-6). These musical instruments represent, we think, the various *faculties of the soul* – that is, the mind, the will, the emotions, the conscience and the memory. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength (Mark 12:30,33). All our gifts and abilities are to be devoted to His praise. “I will also praise Thee with the psaltery, even Thy truth, O my God: unto Thee will I sing with the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee; and my soul, which Thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Thy righteousness all the day long” (Psalm 71:22-24). When all the people of God are together, praising God with all their being, it will be like the sound of a multitude of musical instruments. “I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and

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I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps” (Revelation 14:2).

In concluding this section, let us note what we have already seen: the musical instruments in the Old Testament give no authority for introducing them into New Testament worship. Our pattern of New Testament worship is derived, not from the temple, nor from the private worship of David, but from the synagogue, in which the Psalms were sung unaccompanied. The musical instruments of the Old Testament had a spiritual significance, and their use today would be a distraction and a snare. It is with the heart, principally, that we are to praise God, “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19).

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## Missionary to India

### 15. An Endless Storm

In 1840, Alexander Duff returned to India after a period of ill-health. Only three years later, the Disruption took place in the Church of Scotland. Duff and the other missionaries knew it was right to join the Free Church. But this meant that they had to start again almost from the beginning.

God continued to bless the work of the Mission. One day in July 1844 Gobindo Chunder Das appeared at Duff’s door. He had been one of Duff’s pupils, but back in 1839 there was a scare because some of the boys in the school had been baptized; the Hindu community was afraid that there would be a mass exodus of Duff’s pupils to Christianity. This did not happen, but some parents took their boys away from the school and Gobindo was one of them. Yet he did not forget what he had learned, although for six years he resisted the truths of the Bible. But now these truths overcame his fears and his pride. He came to Duff under strong conviction of sin, ready to give up everything for Christ. He was persecuted by his family but was in due course baptized. Later on, Gobindo became a useful teacher. His was the first baptism in the Free Church Mission, but it was not the last.

Indeed in 1845 there were several baptisms. Gooroo Das Maitra was one of the first two to be brought thus into the visible Church that year; he was later to become the minister of the Free Church congregation in Calcutta.

The other was Umesh Chundar Sirkar; he came to Duff at the same time as Gooroo. For two years the Bible teaching he was receiving in Duff’s school had disturbed him. What he was learning about Christ had such an influence over him that his Hindu friends encouraged him to study books written by Thomas Paine, an Englishman who rejected the Bible and its teachings. They hoped that these books would persuade Umesh to turn

away from the Scriptures and that he would lose his concern for his soul.

But the result was the opposite of what they wanted: Umesh became convinced that Christianity is true and he wanted to be baptized. But there was a huge difficulty in his way. Although he was only 16, he was already married – to a girl of 10 – and his father was sternly opposed to Christianity. For two years this very young couple searched the Scriptures during the night, the only time when, in a crowded household, they could have peace to do so. After spending much time studying the Bible, they began to read *The Pilgrim's Progress* together. When Umesh's wife, now 12 years old, read John Bunyan's description of Christian's flight from the City of Destruction – a picture of setting out on the way to heaven – she asked her husband: "Is this not exactly our condition? Are we not lingering in City of Destruction? Is it not our duty to act like Christian – to arise, forsake all, and flee for our lives?"

Only on the festival day for some idol could women in her position visit even her female friends, and they had to be carried in a palanquin – a large box carried by four or six bearers. At the first such opportunity, Umesh brought his wife to Duff's house with the help of a recent convert, Jugadwisher. It was a Sabbath afternoon, and a prayer meeting was just coming to an end when they arrived; at its head was a son of Alexander Stewart, who had been minister of Moulin, Duff's native district, when the future missionary was born. Duff afterwards described his reactions: "While meditating in my own closet on the ways of God and wondering whether, and in what way, He might graciously interpose to deliver us from our distresses, suddenly Umesh, his wife and Jugadwisher appeared before me. It looked like a remarkable dream. 'The Lord be praised', said I. What could I say less? His mercy endureth for ever." God has His own ways of encouraging those who are doing His work.

The young couple's families went to enormous lengths to try to bring them back. Never had there been so strong a reaction when someone in Calcutta had turned to Christianity. Crowds of relations and others laid siege to Duff's house; they seemed prepared to use force to get the new converts back. The missionary would allow only three men to enter; these included a brother of Umesh and his father. They were allowed to try to persuade Umesh that he had gone wrong, but he stood firm.

At last, one afternoon, just when the Supreme Court in Calcutta was closing for the day, a lawyer for Umesh's father appeared. He wanted a judge to order Duff to hand Umesh over as, he claimed, the lad was only 14 and was being held against the law. It was the Chief Justice who listened to the application. He was sure that Duff would not act as the lawyer claimed

he had done, and he suspected that statements made on behalf of the family were untrue; so he arranged to have the case investigated at once. And the judge was right; Umesh was 18, not 14. The application was refused. Soon Umesh and his wife were baptised.

Just a week later, there was another disturbance. Baikunta Nath Day had already been a student with Duff for eight years. He too fled to Christian surroundings for shelter – to the house of another missionary, Thomas Smith, whose house was in a Calcutta suburb. But one day, while Smith was out, his house was entered and Baikunta was removed by force. He was taken to the home of a distant relative and put in chains. Macleod Wylie, a lawyer who was a Free Church member in Calcutta, went to court in an attempt to have him set free. A judge granted his application, but it proved impossible to set Baikunta free; no one knew where he was being held.

His family did all in their power to persuade him to give up his faith. They pointed, on the one hand, to his chains, which he had to endure while he refused to give up Christianity. On the other hand, they pointed to all the sinful pleasures he might enjoy if he returned to idolatry. Duff noted that “every attempt was made not only to pervert the mind, but to corrupt the very morals, of the young man”. His parents were not worried if Baikunta committed adultery; all that mattered to them was that he would not continue as a Christian. Indeed they wanted him to sin seriously, so that he would be unfit for baptism; they knew that the missionaries would refuse to baptize their son if he was guilty of some serious sin.

Yet Baikunta was able to resist all the temptations his family set before him. And, as Duff later wrote with a thankful heart: Baikunta “was not overcome so as to deny, or to be ashamed of, the name of Jesus”. At last the missionaries found out where Baikunta had been taken. The court document secured his release, and he was baptized. He eventually became a teacher and a preacher of the truth for which he had suffered persecution.

In spite of all the opposition, others also were baptised. Among them were five Jews, with a Rabbi at their head whose name was Isaac. But all the disturbances affected the numbers coming to the mission for their education. Altogether, 1300 students had been studying in either the school or the college, but in just one week attendance dropped by 300. Yet after two months of disturbances, Duff could write back to Scotland: “Our Institution is still standing . . . amid the endless peltings of a storm which has continued to rage for two months with scarcely a single lull. Thanks be to God for the result. It has been severely shaken; how could it be otherwise? But the real wonder is that it has not been torn up, root and branch.”

Duff was very conscious of the necessity for earnestness; if he and the

other missionaries did not do their work thoroughly, they might as well not do it at all. But these words of Ecclesiastes apply not only to missionary work but to every area of life: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (9:10). They apply to us all, not least to how we care for our souls.

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## Looking Around Us

### "The Signs of Heaven"

Since it opened in September last year, Bangkok's new Suvarnabhumi airport has been plagued with various problems, including cracked tarmac on the runways, unattractive shops and long queues. All this is in spite of 46 years of planning. Sinking swampland has been blamed for some of the difficulties, along with corruption and rushed construction. But the President of the Feng Shui Research Institute of Thailand claims that he has the real answer: work on the airport began in the wrong phase of Jupiter. "The energy can be very disturbed", he declares, "when Jupiter, our largest planet, is playing havoc with magnetic fields."

It all sounds very impressive and scientific. But it is not; it is pure superstition; there is no foundation for any of these ideas. God told the people of Judah perfectly plainly: "Learn not the way of the heathen, and *be not dismayed at the signs of heaven*; for the heathen are dismayed at them" (Jeremiah 10:2). No more are we to be influenced by the signs of heaven – which include the positions of the stars and the phases of Jupiter.

In Western countries like Britain, many people have given up on religion. Yet some have a lot to say about spirituality, but a great deal of it is the superstition of distant centuries recycled for today. Feng shui may never have disappeared from the East, but it is now influencing the West. Even a former president of the United States had his furniture arranged according to the principles of feng shui. But whatever modern ideas about religion or spirituality we come across, we must be guided by the Word of God.

We are to acknowledge God in everything. This is what the Bible teaches us. Solomon put it like this: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6). We are to pray to God about everything – about every task we are engaged in and about all our plans for the future. If we sincerely commit these things to God, He will direct us – in our studies, our work (even someone designing or building an airport), our leisure activities, and especially the concerns of our souls. God is ruling over everything; He controls everything that happens. And we ought to acknowledge this; we ought to ask Him to bless us – for time and for eternity.



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## Youth Conference Report 2007

*Rev D A Ross*

The attendance at this year's Youth Conference was one of the largest ever. About 90 people were present, including the speakers and house mothers. Some years, it is difficult to choose a date which suits everyone, but on this occasion there was no problem. This would have contributed to the larger gathering. It was a pleasure to meet again those who are in the habit of attending, and others for the first time. Some belonged to other churches, but the large majority were Free Presbyterians; some attended from as far away as New Zealand, Canada, the United States and Holland.

We are indebted to the those who prepare papers for the Conference. Not only is there benefit from hearing them, but our young friends also have an opportunity to meet ministers and elders and to ask questions and discuss matters in their papers. Recreation periods also afford opportunities to talk about religious and moral concerns. We know too of friendships moulded among conference members, in connection with religious matters, which continue well beyond yearly conferences. For these and other blessings, we are deeply thankful and we do hope that the Most High will continue to use the conference to strengthen the faith of young believers and awaken others to a genuine interest in eternal truths. We urge our young people to keep on attending and, if possible, to bring friends. And I am sure that, if attendance is with a view to obtaining spiritual blessing, they will not be disappointed.

In all probability the excellent papers we heard will appear in this Magazine. What follows is a brief series of notes on the various topics.

The first paper was from Rev W Weale: ***The Wise and Wealthy King – Lessons from the Life of Solomon***. Sadly, King Solomon fell away from his uprightness despite the fact that he was a man in communion with God, blessed with great wisdom; his too was the extraordinary work of building the temple. His marriage to a heathen princess was the first step in his sad decline. From that time, Solomon became involved in idolatry. For this he was severely punished by God. He afterwards wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes under the direction of the Holy Spirit; it has everything we need to warn us against ungodliness and to exhort us to godly living.

Rev Hugh Cartwright spoke on ***John Knox, His Life and Legacy***. Knox was one of the most remarkable of Scotland's Reformers, and indeed of all her spiritual leaders. He feared no man but he feared his God. By God's blessing, he led the way in establishing true religion in Scotland and towards abolishing the idolatry of the Church of Rome. His contributions were many – not least, he demanded divine authority for all true worship and restored

preaching to its proper place. His influence was greatly blessed, not only in Scotland, but also in other parts of Europe. Even to the present time, we benefit from his godly zeal and the brave stand he took against false worship.

***Reliable Bible Translations – the Need, the Difficulties and the Process*** was the paper given by Mr D P Rowland, who lectures all over the world on this important subject. We were left in no doubt that the Authorized Version is the best version in English. But there is a pressing need to spread the Word of God to all nations, and this calls for the demanding work of translating the Word of God into as many languages as possible. Mr Rowland is General Secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society, which is involved in this work. In translating the Bible, it strives to be faithful to the original text. There are many problems in this work, not least to find, as translators, godly persons who are sympathetic to the scriptural aims of the Society.

Rev David Campbell conducted a ***tour*** of places connected with Church history in Edinburgh. He provided a booklet with a short history of the eight sites visited. Some of these tied in well with Mr Cartwright's paper. We were reminded of the sufferings which the godly in Reformation times were prepared to endure for the Cause of Christ, and we were encouraged to make a study of these people for our own spiritual good. We were also reminded of the origins of our own Church and of what our godly forefathers, as well as the Reformers, did for our sakes. In the Magdalen Chapel, Rev A Sinclair Horne gave a short account of its associations with the Reformation.

Rev R Macleod gave a paper about ***The Holy War – Conquered by Love, Overcome by Grace***. It followed an earlier paper he gave in Portree some years ago. *The Holy War*, one of John Bunyan's well-known allegorical works, deals with the fall of man and his bondage to Satan. But later – after much foolish, wicked resistance – fallen man is overcome by Christ Jesus, who brings him into a saving relationship with Himself and into His service. This paper emphasised the great wonder of the persisting, conquering love of Christ and reminded us of our own great need of this gracious Saviour.

***“As the Lord Commanded” – How We Should Worship God***, by Rev D W B Somerset, highlighted different parts of public worship, based on the Scriptures, as practised in our Church – reading the Word of God, preaching, singing the Psalms unaccompanied by instrumental music, as well as prayer. The Bible is read in public for, in particular, those who fail to read it in their homes. Dr Somerset stressed the need to worship God in spirit and in truth because it is sinful to be taken up with only the outward form. Instrumental music, like the sacrifices in the Old Testament pointed to the coming of the Messiah. Now that He has come, these are no longer part of public worship.