

The Young People's Magazine

Vol 72

June 2007

No 6

Scotland Deserves Better?

Scotland has voted. The results have been declared and now, hopefully, all the political parties' placards hanging from lampposts all over the country will come down. Among them were placards, from one small party, which declared: "Scotland deserves better". Obviously, very few voters believed that this party would rule better than the others; none of their candidates were returned to the Scottish Parliament.

It is worth considering what Scotland really deserves. This is a country with a great heritage. The Scottish Reformation of 1560 set the nation on a truly scriptural course, when John Knox was the country's most prominent minister, preaching the pure doctrine of the Bible. There have been many setbacks since then, but if you lived in Scotland about 1850 you probably would have little difficulty, in most parts of the country, in finding a church where the pure gospel was preached. You would probably find that your minister was what a minister ought to be: a man who sought to live a holy life, who believed that the Bible is God's Word, who recognised the authority of its teachings over him and over you, who set Jesus Christ before you as the eternal Son of God who died for sinners, who called on you to come to Christ and receive from Him a free salvation.

How things have changed! In large parts of Scotland it is now very difficult to find a minister who takes the Bible seriously and submits to all its teachings. How many of them believe that all their hearers are sinners who need such a salvation as only Christ can provide? Very few. And therefore the Scottish people as a whole are, in the Scripture phrase, "as sheep not having a shepherd". God is rejected; the Bible is ignored; its standards are forgotten; and we live with the consequences.

There was a time when every boy and girl learned the Ten Commandments by heart in school. Now it is as if they no longer exist. Certainly everyone wants the commands not to steal or to bear false witness to apply to everyone else. Almost everyone accepts that they are bound by the command which forbids killing – although they may not give that protection to unborn babies in the early stages of development.

It is a long time now since the Fourth Commandment was thrown away,

because people would not allow God to have a claim on any part of their time. Then the Seventh was thrown away – the command forbidding adultery. And because parents do not recognise God's authority behind the Fifth Commandment, which demands honour for father and mother and for all in authority, they have no basis for demanding obedience from their children. So children are far too often out of control at home and on the streets and in school. Why did pupils in Hawick High School think they could get away with assaulting their new head teacher and capturing the incident on a mobile phone? Because of the extent to which discipline has broken down in society generally. This has happened because Scotland has lost its respect for the Ten Commandments generally and for the Fifth Commandment in particular.

So what does Scotland deserve? Perhaps we should ask first: Deserve *from whom*? Probably the slogan on the lampposts was saying that Scotland deserves better from her politicians; so better men and women should be elected – our politicians should have more ability, be more honest, have better policies, and apply themselves more energetically to their work? The trouble with most political slogans is that they often do not really mean anything. But one thing is sure about today's politicians: they do not seek God's blessing on what they do; they do not ask Him to help them to make wise decisions. And that is serious.

What would most people in Scotland today see as a successful government? Probably one which would so manage the country that everyone's income would rise very quickly, crime would disappear and everything would run smoothly. Most people are looking for an easy and prosperous life, and lots of free time to use – or, more accurately, misuse – on more and better entertainment. They do not consider that before long they must meet God, and that there is an eternity beyond this world for which we must prepare. God just does not enter into their thinking. And that is what makes Scotland's position so dangerous. "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man [or a country] soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

But what does Scotland deserve *from God*? That He would leave the country to itself. This is what we are already seeing to a great extent, when so many are allowed to drift through life without thinking about their souls and their desperate need for salvation.

But what if God was to leave Scotland to an even greater extent? Then there would be no more conversions; as godly people were taken home to heaven there might be no one to take their place. This would mean that Scotland would have no salt. You may ask, What does that mean? Do you remember what Jesus told His followers: "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13)? He meant that, by their godly lives and their prayers, they

were preserving the world from further decay – like salt may be used to preserve meat or fish. A country without the example of godly people is in a dangerous position. And a country without anybody to pray for it is in a very dangerous position.

When God leaves a country, He takes away what we call *restraining grace*. When God gives restraining grace He, in His kindness, keeps people from sinning as seriously as they would otherwise do. That is a great blessing, even though it is only for this life. And when He takes away restraining grace, it leaves a country in a serious state. The people are left to follow their own ideas. Crime is likely to increase drastically; people will be less thoughtful of each other; what is now called anti-social behaviour may get completely out of control. Scotland would then become a much less pleasant place to live in. It is not a pretty picture. But that is what Scotland deserves.

Members of government in all parts of the world will at last have to appear before God to give an account of how they ruled their nation. So must all politicians appear, and all voters who elected them. As sinners, we deserve nothing good from God. If God was to give us what we deserve, He would cast us away to a lost eternity.

That was why Isaiah cried “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger” (1:4). But he spoke in the hope that his people would turn back to the God whom they despised. He went on: “Why should ye be stricken any more?” Why, he asked them, should they have to endure all the difficulties and punishments which were ahead of them when God would deal with because of their sins? Instead, they should put away their sins and turn back to God. They were to hear Him calling to them: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”. And this is God’s message to us today wherever we live in His world – in Scotland in particular.

We should pray that the Lord would give us a godly government. But in our present situation, if there was such a government, the men and women who formed it would almost certainly be voted out at the next election – for passing scriptural laws. What we should pray for, of course, is that our nation, wherever we live, would be profoundly influenced by the Bible. Then people would be much more content with what they have, rather than always seeking more and more of this world’s goods. The Shorter Catechism speaks of “a competent portion of the good things of this life”. That is what we should be content with. But, even more, we should seek God’s grace in our hearts, so that we would have what Jesus described as “treasure in heaven”.

David – Son of Jesse

2. A Humble Shepherd and a Valiant Soldier

Rev John MacLeod

The first article looked at David as the man after God's own heart.

D*avid as a humble shepherd.* It would appear that Jesse, David's father, was a wealthy man according to the standard of these times. Boaz, his grandfather, is described as a mighty man of wealth, and it is likely that some of his wealth would have passed down to his descendants and that the family of Jesse was therefore among the more prominent families in the land. Ruth, David's great grandmother, was of course originally a poverty-stricken Moabitess who provided sustenance for herself and Naomi by gleaning after the reapers in the fields of Boaz. He took notice of her and, not judging by the outward appearance, recognised her as rich in grace, one who had come to trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel.

In any case, Jesse owned flocks, and it was while he was keeping the sheep that David was summoned to attend the feast where Samuel was to anoint him as the future king of Israel. It might not have been so evident at the time of the anointing that this was an event of great importance in the history, not only of Israel, but of the Church of Christ and the world of mankind. Years were to pass before the crown would be placed on David's head. Apart from the brief periods when he was called upon to attend Saul's court to play his harp in order to soothe the troubled mind of the king, he was occupied as before – as a shepherd dutifully tending his father's sheep. There was, however, this difference: after the anointing we are told that “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward”.

W M Taylor is worth quoting here: “It was a crisis in his history. He entered, from that moment, upon a higher stage of life than that on which heretofore he had stood. The lighthearted boy became a thoughtful youth, forecasting the duties and responsibilities of his future career; but, far from considering the tending of his sheep a work too lowly for one on whom the consecrating oil had been shed, he went back to it, seeing in it a new significance as preparing him for the nobler labours that lay before him. He sought to fit himself for the loftier sphere by continuing faithfully to discharge the duties of the humbler; and while he was far from putting away from him the exaltation which was in store for him, he was content to wait until it was God's time for him to rise to it. The revelation of the future neither soured his heart at the present, nor turned him away from the work he was required to do. The day that was passing over him only acquired new

importance in his eyes because of the revelation of the future which had been given him; and he was not the less watchful as a shepherd, but rather the more, because he knew that there was a throne before him.”

David was to learn the lesson, and so must we, that, “before honour is humility”. And if we are followers of David in the heavenly race – and that is what all of us ought to wish for – then we also have received a measure of the same Spirit, and in due time we also shall receive a crown. If so, we are meantime faithfully to attend to the duties belonging to our position here in time.

David as a valiant soldier. When he was recommended to Saul as one who was “a cunning player on an harp” he was also spoken of as “a mighty valiant man, and a man of war”. How he gained that reputation while still a shepherd is not easy to understand. But it is likely that, when he was not actually tending his flocks, he would have been perfecting the skills a soldier would need. Someone who could single-handedly kill a lion and a bear must have been agile, indeed a man of extraordinary physical strength – not to speak of being fearless and courageous beyond many.

That his reputation was well-founded was to be demonstrated when he arrived at the place where the Israelites and the Philistines faced one another in battle array. He did not come to enlist or take up arms, but as the bearer of provisions sent by Jesse to his other sons who were serving in Saul’s army. It may be noted here that David’s response to Eliab’s taunt revealed whose he was and whom he served – in that, when he was reviled, he reviled not again. But there was a cause, and the account of David slaying Goliath in full view of both armies is so well known that we need not dwell on its details at present. It remains on record as an unparalleled example of courage, patriotism and devotion to duty.

Above all, it is an example of someone exercising faith and trust in the living God in the face of approaching difficulties and troubles. Listen to him as he goes out against the towering and well-armed Philistine. “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s, and He will give you into our hands.”

Such confidence was not misplaced, nor is this the only instance we have

on record of David relying upon the help of his God in the face of his enemies. It is clear that it was not his own glory he had in view but that of his God. And what does *He* say? "Them that honour Me, I will honour". If we follow that rule and if we are good soldiers of Jesus Christ, then, however formidable and mighty our spiritual enemies may be, we shall conquer, because greater is He that is with us than all they that be against us.

“As the Lord Commanded”

1. In Spirit and in Truth

Rev D W B Somerset

This is the first article in a series on how we are to worship God. It is based on a paper given at this year's Youth Conference.

One of the first principles of religion is that we ought to worship God: "Give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2). God is very great and very glorious. He is "infinite, eternal and unchangeable", as the *Shorter Catechism* says. And He is "incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute . . . most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering . . . and withal most just and terrible in His judgements, hating sin", as the *Westminster Confession* says. It is only right that we should acknowledge these truths by honouring and praising Him.

But the question at once arises: How are we to worship God? Has He left us free to invent our own ways of doing so? Has He appointed certain elements of worship, allowing us to arrange the rest to suit our taste? Or has He commanded us exactly how we are to worship Him? And if so, what instructions has He given? In these articles we will try to answer these questions. We will mainly be dealing with *public worship*, and we will, of course, try to give the New Testament answers. If we were living in Old Testament times, the form of worship that God required would be very different and far more complicated.

(1.) The Nature of Worship. Before we come to the *form* of worship, we must first consider briefly the *nature* of worship. The form of worship is about the various outward aspects of worship such as psalm-singing, or standing to pray, whereas the nature of worship is about what takes place in our hearts. In this, we are guided by the words of Christ: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

By *truth* here is meant: having a right view of God in our worship. In worshipping God we must be always conscious that He is holy and that we

are sinners. We must believe that He has given His Eternal Son in our nature, Jesus Christ, to die for sinners. And we must come to God trusting in the righteousness and intercession of Christ, and depending on the Holy Spirit to enable us to worship and to pray. If worship is not “in truth” in this sense, it will be vain. It will not be acceptable in the sight of God.

By *spirit* is meant: having our hearts and our desires engaged in worship. It is not enough to go through a routine in worship: singing, reading and reciting words without thought or interest. Sometimes people may utter well-spoken public prayers but in their hearts they are scarcely speaking to God at all. Their thoughts may be taken up more with what they are to say next than with the glory of God. While they are speaking, there may be little desire in their hearts for the things for which they seem to be praying. Such worship will evidently be of little value in the eyes of God. He looks for the spirit of worship, for faith and love and longing in the heart. “Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me, saith the Lord?” (Jeremiah 31:21).

It is necessary to maintain a balance in this matter. The outward form of worship is important, but what happens in our hearts is far more important. Sometimes we meet with godly people who are astray, we believe, on some aspects of worship, yet they seem to have profited greatly from the Word of God. Perhaps they have a closer walk with Christ than others who have a better form of worship. At other times we meet with people who seem unduly taken up with disputes about forms of worship, such as whether or not to sing only psalms in church, and we fear from their behaviour that they are neglecting “the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith” (Matthew 23:23).

But the form of worship is of great importance because it involves God’s commandments. It is certain that those practices which He has commanded will promote holiness; while to omit them, or to do what He has not commanded, will be harmful to the soul. But we must remember that, as the body without the soul is dead, so too is the form of worship without the spirit and the truth of worship.

(2.) The Form of Worship. We come now to consider the outward form that the worship of God is to take, and the fundamental principle in this subject is called the *Regulative Principle*. This principle states that we are to worship God in the way that He has appointed, and no other. In chapter 21, “Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day”, the *Westminster Confession* expresses the Regulative Principle as follows: “The light of nature showeth that there is a God who hath Lordship and sovereignty over all; is good, and doeth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with

all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”

Many verses can be quoted to establish the Regulative Principle. For instance, in Exodus 39-40, which describes the making of the garments of the High Priest and the setting up of the Tabernacle, the expression “as the Lord commanded Moses” is used no fewer than 17 times. The intention, clearly, is to emphasise over and over again the fact that everything was done exactly as God had commanded, without anything being either omitted or added.

Deuteronomy 12 consists of the “statutes and judgements” of God relating to worship, and it concludes as follows: “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (verse 32). Again we see that the Israelites were emphatically forbidden to add anything to, or omit anything from, the worship of God.

In Matthew 15:9 Christ says of the Jews: “In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”. He is quoting from Isaiah 29:13, “Their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men”. The meaning is that anything introduced by men into the worship of God is vain as far as God is concerned. He has no pleasure in it. In Matthew 28:20, Christ sends out His apostles to make disciples of all nations, “teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you”. Again, the implication is that His disciples are not to “observe” things (such as Easter and Christmas) which He has not commanded.

In Colossians 2, Paul speaks of various additions being made to Christian practice, such as the “worshipping of angels” (verse 18). He dismisses these as things which “have a show (or appearance) of wisdom in will-worship and humility” (verse 23) but which in reality have no value. (*Will-worship* is worship which people make up for themselves.) Many human additions to worship have a “show of wisdom” but they are not pleasing to God.

Other verses might be quoted, but these are sufficient to show that the Regulative Principle is indeed scriptural. There was a continual tendency in the Old Testament Church to mix true and false worship together. Church history since then shows the same tendency; the danger continues in the New Testament Church. This is why we need to know the reason for worshipping God as we do. If we do not know the reason, we are simply relying on tradition, and this leaves us wide open to whatever innovations Satan may be promoting at a particular time.

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

9. Threats of War and Death

Paton stayed on the island of Tanna with another missionary, Mr Copeland. The two of them worked together; they went on learning the language and trying to speak to the heathen people. They saw many things that shocked them.

One of the many things that Paton found upsetting was the way the women were treated. The men used them like slaves. The women and girls had to work hard all day long: tending the crops in the fields, cooking food, making fences, collecting firewood. The men and boys sat around, practising throwing spears and hitting out with clubs and tomahawks (which are like sharp axes).

If a husband and wife were walking along, she would be carrying a big load and he would just be carrying his club or spear. If she did the slightest thing that upset him, he would beat her. Even if the lady died after one of these beatings – and many did – nobody took any notice. And if a man died, his wives were immediately killed to accompany him into the next world.

If there was any trouble, women were often selected as sacrifices to make peace with the gods. For instance, Nouka the high chief was unwell and, to help make him better, three women from his village were sacrificed. So if you were a girl or a lady, Tanna was not a very nice or safe place to live in.

Nor was it safe for Paton and Copeland. The rains were not coming, and the local people were starting to complain that the white men living on their island were causing this problem. A big meeting was called, and chiefs and warriors gathered from all over the island. The next day, Nouka, the local high chief, came to tell Paton that the other chiefs had said that the Harbour people living around Paton and Copeland must kill the missionaries or else force them to leave the island. If not, the other chiefs would gather all the rest of the island people. Then they would come and kill the Harbour people and the white men. War had been declared.

Nouka advised Paton: “Pray to your Jehovah God for rain, and do not go far beyond your door for a time. We are all in the greatest danger and, if war breaks out, we fear we cannot protect you.”

The next Sabbath, just as they were gathering to worship, rain began to fall, and it continued to fall. The people believed it had been sent in answer to the white men’s prayers, and no doubt it was. The local people allowed them to stay on Tanna.

But another problem arose. Too much rain fell and it was followed by hurricanes. Many people fell sick and their fruit trees and crops were spoilt.

And so the people again started to make plans to get rid of the white men who, they thought, were causing them all sorts of problems. Life was difficult living with people who were easily affected by superstitious beliefs.

More trouble and threats came when a visiting chief from the nearby island of Aneityum came to Tanna. When he returned home, he became ill and died. The people on Tanna blamed Paton and his God for this. They planned to burn down Paton's house and to murder him and his friends. To try to bring peace, the brother of the chief that died sailed over to Tanna. He came to tell the people that it was not Paton's fault that his brother had died. But this brother fell sick as well. For the local people, this strengthened the idea that Paton, his friends and his God were the cause of all the sickness, death and other problems on the island.

Lots of meetings were held to discuss what to do with the white men. Great feasts were also given. Sadly the food for the feasts was supplied by sacrificing several women.

At this time of unrest, one group of three ladies came running to the mission house asking Paton to protect them because their husbands were going to kill them. But what could Paton do? The local teachers who were helping the missionaries warned them against doing anything to protect these ladies. If they did so, the teachers said, they would all be murdered at once because the men were so blood-thirsty. Another time eight girls came to the mission house asking for help because the men in their village were fighting and killing the women. At night time the girls went off and Paton did not know what eventually happened to them.

All the chiefs and warriors on the island were called to another large meeting. It was agreed that a band of men would be selected to kill the mission party. All those who were friendly with the missionaries were also to be killed, so that no one would be left to tell what had happened to them and bring punishment on the island.

Great excitement and chaos arose in the meeting as they formed their plans. Suddenly one great chief stood up, smashed his club to the ground and roared: "The man that kills Missi [the local name for Paton] must first kill me. The men that kill the mission teachers must first kill me and my people, for we shall stand by them and defend them till death." The next moment another chief stood up and shouted the same thing.

The meeting went to pieces. Nobody knew what to do. Nobody wanted to start a war with these chiefs. Paton had treated the wounds of a brother of the first chief after another war, and the brother had recovered. This may have made the chief feel more friendly towards Paton. But Paton felt that the Lord had clearly influenced the hearts and minds of these chiefs. Paton and his

friends had spent the day of the meeting in prayer, asking God to help them. Here was the answer. Their hearts overflowed with thankfulness to God.

Paton and his friends must have felt powerless in the face of so many dangers. But they did not sit back and do nothing. They did the best thing they could have done in such a situation. They prayed to God for His help. He heard their prayers and answered them, as God heard David's prayers: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:6). How thankful we should be that we too can pray to God for help in any difficulties we may have.

We also have to be thankful that we do not live in a culture that places little value on life. Yet, sadly, our society is changing and moving away from Christian values. Abortion – killing unborn babies – and euthanasia – killing old or sick people – are both becoming more common. We should pray to God to work in the hearts and minds of people everywhere. We should pray for the rulers of our nation, asking that they would make laws that do not go against God's laws.

S M Campbell

The Evil of Sin

J C Ryle

Another piece, slightly edited, from this noted nineteenth-century English minister. This is the first of his general counsels to young people: "Try to get a clear view of the evil of sin". It follows the article in March.

If you only knew what sin is and what sin has done, you would not think it strange that I exhort you as I do. You do not see it in its true colours. Your eyes are naturally blind to its guilt and danger; so you cannot understand what makes me so anxious about you. Do not let the devil succeed in persuading you that sin is a small matter.

Think for a moment *what the Bible says about sin*, how it dwells naturally in the heart of every man and woman alive (Ecclesiastes 7:20, Romans 3:23), how it defiles our thoughts, words and actions, and does so continually (Genesis 6:5, Matthew 15:19), how it makes us all guilty and abominable in the sight of a holy God (Isaiah 64:6, Habakkuk 1:13), how it leaves us utterly without hope of salvation if we look to ourselves (Psalm 143:2, Romans 3:20), how its fruit in this world is shame, and its wages in the world to come are death (Romans 6:21,23). Think calmly of all this. I tell you today, It is no more sad to be dying of a serious disease and not know it than it is to be a living man and not know these things.

Think *what an awful change sin has worked* on all our natures. Man is no

longer what he was when God formed him out of the dust of the ground. He came out of God's hand upright and sinless (Ecclesiastes 7:29). In the day of his creation he was, like everything else, "very good" (Genesis 1:31). And what is man now? A fallen creature, a ruin, a being that shows the marks of corruption all over. His heart is like Nebuchadnezzar's, degraded and earthly, looking down and not up. His feelings are like a household in disorder, calling no man master – all extravagance and confusion. His understanding is like a lamp flickering in the socket, powerless to guide him, not knowing good from evil. His will is like a rudderless ship, tossed to and fro by every desire, and constant only in choosing any way rather than God's. Alas, what a wreck is man, compared to what he might have been! Well may we understand blindness, deafness, disease, sleep and death being used to describe man's condition, when the Spirit has to give us a picture of man as he is. And man as he is, remember, was made so by sin.

Think too *what it has cost to make atonement for sin*, and to provide a forgiveness for sinners. God's own Son must come into the world and take upon Him our nature, in order to pay the price of our redemption and deliver us from the curse of a broken law. He who was in the beginning with the Father, and by whom all things were made, must suffer for sin, the just for the unjust. He must die the death of a malefactor before the way to heaven can be laid open to any soul. See the Lord Jesus Christ despised and rejected of men, scourged, mocked and insulted; behold Him bleeding on the cross of Calvary; hear Him crying in agony: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Mark how the sun was darkened and the rocks rent at the sight, and then consider what must be the evil and the guilt of sin.

Think also *what sin has done* already on the earth. Think how it cast Adam and Eve out of Eden, brought the flood upon the old world, caused fire to come down on Sodom and Gomorrah, drowned Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, destroyed the seven wicked nations of Canaan, and scattered the twelve tribes of Israel over the face of the globe. Sin alone did all this.

Think again of all the *misery and sorrow that sin has caused*, and is causing at this very day. Pain, disease and death; strifes, quarrels and divisions; envy, jealousy and malice; deceit, fraud, and cheating; violence, oppression, and robbery; selfishness, unkindness and ingratitude – all these are the fruits of sin. Sin is the parent of them all. It is sin that has so marred and spoiled the face of God's creation.

Young people, consider these things, and you will not wonder that we preach as we do. Surely, if you would only think about them, you would break with sin for ever. Will you play with poison? Will you make sport with hell? Will you take fire in your hand? Will you harbour your deadliest

enemy in your bosom? Will you go on living as if it mattered nothing whether your own sins were forgiven or not – whether sin had dominion over you, or you over sin? O awake to a sense of sin’s sinfulness and danger! Remember the words of Solomon: “Fools” – none but fools – “make a mock at sin” (Proverbs 14:9).

Hear then the request that I make of you this day: pray that God would teach you the real evil of sin. If you wish your soul to be saved, arise and pray.

For Younger Readers

The Old Shoes

One day a student was taking a walk with one of his teachers. As they went along, they saw a coat and a pair of old shoes lying on the path. They could see a man working in a field. He was almost finished work. They knew that the shoes and the coat must belong to the man.

The student said to his teacher: “Let us play a trick on the man. We will hide his shoes, and hide ourselves behind those bushes.” The student wanted to laugh at the man. When he would come back to the path, his shoes would be missing and he would be upset.

It was not a nice thing to do. And that is what his teacher told him. But the teacher had a better idea. He knew that the man working in the field was poor but that the student had a lot of money. “Put a dollar in each shoe,” the teacher told him, “and then we will hide ourselves behind the bushes.” Then they could expect to see a happy man, not a man who was upset. That would be much better.

The student took out two coins and put a dollar in each shoe. Then he and his teacher went behind the bushes. They waited to see what would happen.

Soon the man finished his work. He walked across the field and onto the path where he left his coat and shoes. As he put on his coat, he slipped one foot into a shoe. Of course, he felt something hard.

He bent down to see what it was. He picked up the dollar and looked at it again and again. He was so surprised. He looked this way and that way to see who put it there, but he could see no one. Remember, he was a poor man, with very little money. It was a long time ago, and a dollar could buy a lot of useful things then.

He put the money in his pocket and put his foot into the other shoe. Perhaps he was even more surprised to find the second dollar.

What did he do? He did just what he should have done. He went down on his knees, looked up to heaven and gave thanks to God. He told God about his sick wife and his hungry children. The money he found in his shoes would be so useful.

The teacher asked his student: "Now are you not much better pleased than if you had played your trick?"

Of course he was. He answered: "You have taught me a lesson I hope never to forget. I now feel the truth of the words which I never understood before: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'."

These were Jesus' words. Remember them. It is better to give things to others than to get them.

Missionary to India

13. "A Poor Ignorant Boy"

Till 1834 Alexander Duff taught, with success, from the Bible in his Calcutta school. Unwell, he had to return to Scotland, where he used his time promoting interest in the work in India. In 1840 he restarted his mission work with his usual energy.

Back in 1838, when Duff was still in Scotland, he heard about a mass movement of Hindus and Muslims to Christianity in a district 50 miles north of Calcutta. A little later, many more turned to Christianity. During a time of severe flooding over a wide area, the people lost their crops; missionaries from England and Germany sailed over the flooded plains to distribute rice and help the people in other ways. Their kindness made such an impression on the people that large numbers professed Christianity; 900 were baptized at just one service. But, when the missionaries moved on and left their followers without proper spiritual support, it soon became clear that many of them had no saving interest in Christ.

After his return to India, Duff was anxious to establish a mission in the district and spent school holidays there to examine what ought to be done. He took special interest in existing mission stations. When he was about to leave one of them, he gave a feast to 500 of the local Christians; piles of curry and rice, with fruit, were spread out on soft green plantain leaves for everyone to help themselves.

On the opposite bank of the river, in the town of Culna, home to 50 000 people, Duff secured a piece of land on which to begin a mission in the

district. But where could he find reliable missionaries? He was able to turn to a few of those who had been educated in his school.

Yet not all the pupils who were baptized held out against temptation. Dwarkanath Bhowe was baptized when he was 17. Three times he was carried away by his family and kept in chains, until he was set free by order of the Supreme Court. Throughout this time of persecution he kept faithful to his new beliefs. A brilliant student, he was one of only four Indians selected by the Government to sail for London, where he was to complete his course in medicine. But after his return to India as a fully-qualified doctor, he fell victim to over-indulgence in alcohol.

A fellow-student of Dwarkanath intended to be baptized at the same time. He became seriously ill with a fever and sent for his friends. He confessed to them that he believed in Christ and died shortly afterwards. His death was no doubt a disappointment to Duff, but he would have found comfort in the fact that God keeps under His control everything that happens.

Mahendra Lal Basak had entered Duff's school in 1831, at the age of nine. But because of the Christian teaching there, he was transferred to a government school. Yet what he had heard from Duff was enough to make him begin to think seriously. His Hindu friends tried to tempt him to commit such awful sins that, as they hoped, would make the missionaries turn their backs on him. But Mahendra resisted the temptations. At the end of his time in school he won a gold medal and he proved to be outstanding at maths. He was baptized in 1839 and began a six-year course of study, under Duff, with a view to becoming a minister.

That same year Kailas Chunder Mookerjee also began to study for the ministry. Some time before then, while a pupil in Duff's school, his conscience was pricked as he made his way with his family to an idolatrous service. He fled to Duff for protection. After being deceived by promises of safety, he left the mission and was kept in close confinement for three months. He then escaped and was baptized.

These two men were appointed catechists. Part of their training had involved going round country districts with the missionaries. After one such trip Duff described himself as very satisfied with the humility and earnestness "of my young friend Mahendra". Standing on the steps in front of a Hindu temple in Culna, Duff and Mahendra got into a long discussion with some of the leading men, which ranged over a wide variety of subjects. Soon a huge crowd gathered. They wanted to hear what Duff had to say, but he suggested that Mahendra should ask some questions. "What!" they exclaimed. "Shall we listen to the words of a poor ignorant boy?"

Duff described how the situation developed: "With the greatest calmness

and self-possession Mahendra replied, 'Well, friends, if I am a poor ignorant boy, is that not a stronger reason why you who are so learned should take pity on me and give me the knowledge which you believe would remove my ignorance? I began to ask the questions, not with a view to abuse you or your faith, or to display my own learning, which is very little; but simply to know what your creed really is and thus let me compare it with my own.' This soft answer had the desired effect."

After answering some of his questions, the crowd began to put some of their own to Mahendra. One of these questions was about his new faith. In reply he told them how he came to turn his back on Hinduism and embrace Christianity. He caught everyone's attention and absolute silence reigned among what at first had been a rowdy and noisy crowd. He told them: "Countrymen and friends, I am a Hindu. I was born and brought up a Hindu. Indeed, I belonged to the Boistobs, one of the strictest sects, as you know, among the Hindus. My father was and is a Boistob; my mother was and is a Boistob; they were both very careful in training me up in the knowledge of their own creed." Indeed, they had sent him to be taught by one of the great teachers of the Boistob sect.

Duff could easily see, what he well knew already, how much more effectively an Indian could speak to his own people than a European. "O that we had hundreds of Mahendras," he exclaimed, "hundreds showing similar qualifications of head and heart. Then might we begin to lift up our drooping heads in the full assurance that the day of India's salvation is near at hand. At the end of Mahendra's long address we distributed all the tracts in our possession. We had reached the temple about 5 pm; it was now 8 o'clock; and the full moon, shining from the deep blue vault of an almost starless, though cloudless, sky lighted us back to our small boat on the river. On our way we overheard many remarks about what had been said. Among others, the following: 'Truly he looked a poor ignorant boy, but his words showed him to be a great teacher'."

Mahendra and Kailas, the two newly-appointed catechists were the men whom Duff sent to begin the new mission based in Culna. But within a few years, in 1845, they both died, only weeks apart – no doubt having done useful work in the service of their Master in heaven.

During the early 1840s Duff was continuing to do whatever he could to spread the gospel in India. But he knew that satisfactory progress could only be made through the Lord blessing His own Word. From India the Scottish missionary called on the British churches to "pray that the time may come, and that right speedily, when the outpourings of God's Spirit shall descend on this dry and parched land".

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2006-07

Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Auckland:* David Thomas. *Bonar Bridge:* Sandy Campbell. *Chesley:* Martha Bouman, Randy Winkels. *Dingwall:* Beverly and Kathryn Mackenzie. *Dunedin:* Richie Worth. *Dunoon:* Esther Maley. *Gisborne:* Herman and Trudy Haringa. *Glasgow:* Kenneth C Gillies, Donald MacLeod. *Grafton:* Shelley van Dorp. *Holland:* Anne and Peter Bakker, Daniel van Draanen. *Inverness:* Mark Campbell, James Fraser. *London:* Elizabeth Munns, David Rowland, Jeremy and Justin van Kralingen. *North Uist:* John Cameron. *Queensland:* Miriam Brigden. *Scaynes Hill:* Abigail and Martha Main. *Sengera:* Lydia Momanyi, Bernard Mosoti, Kevin Nyabuto. *Sidcup:* Alexander Turnbull. *Singapore:* Linus Lau Jun Ling. *Swavesey:* Rebecca Parish. *Sydney:* Alison and Laura Marshall. *Ullapool:* Susannah Mackenzie. **Intermediate Section:** *Auckland:* Sam McCrae. *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin. *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Bulawayo:* Prudence Chibonda, Khulekani Dube, Shylet Dube, Sittanekizile Dube, Bukoruhle Khumalo, Sarah Mabhunu, Memory Moyo, Sothile Moyo, Talent Moyo, Pinky Ncu be, Sibanda Thandazani. *Chesley:* Jenny Bouman, Rachel Winkels, Audrey Zekveld. *Crowborough:* Heidi Woodhams. *Dingwall:* Alistair Mackenzie. *Dunedin:* Gresham Worth. *Dunoon:* Rachel Maley. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan, Jonathan MacDonald. *Farr:* Alasdair MacQueen. *France:* Julia Davenel. *Gisborne:* Louise van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Catherine Freeke, Neil Gillies. *Grafton:* Matthew White. *Holland:* Adrienne Berman. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Natalie Macaskill, Catherine Schouten. *King's Lynn:* Joanna Wiltshire. *Kyle:* Daniel Whear. *London:* William Munns. *Longcot:* Lucy Cooper. *North Tolsta:* Mark Mackenzie, Sean MacLeod. *North Harris:* Donald MacLeod. *North Uist:* Christina Macdonald, Laura Macinnes. *Portree:* Rachel M Mackinnon. *Scaynes Hill:* Philip Main. *Sengera:* Jennifer Mosiria, Edinah Ombega, Salome Ontiri. *Sidcup:* Constance and Rupert J Turnbull. *Stratherrick:* John Fraser. *Swavesey:* Helen Parish. *Sydney:* Andrew Marshall. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

Junior Section: *Auckland:* Laura McCrae, Amy Thomas. *Barnoldswick:* Robert Ross. *Chesley:* Jacob Zekveld. *Crowborough:* Kelvin Woodhams. *Dingwall:* Andrew MacLeod, Ruth M MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan, Isla Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie, Mairi Wyatt. *Gisborne:* Finlay Cramp, Anne-Marie Geuze, Heidi Haringa, Alexander van Dorp, Kirsten van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Donna Chisholm, Kate Gillies, Rachel and Ruairidh Macleod, Peter Macpherson. *Grafton:* Bethany McAlpine, Chelsie and Jackie Cameron, Chloe van Dorp, Abraham Wallis, Cameron White. *Haywards Heath:* Hannah Woodhams. *Holland:* Jelle Bakker. *Inverness:* Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton, Peter Schouten. *King's Lynn:* Matthew Wiltshire. *London:* Edward Munns, Amy van Kralingen. *Longcot:* Ruth Cooper. *Luton:* Stephen Kingham. *North Harris:* Tormod Mackinnon. *North Tolsta:* Sheena Mackenzie, Lucy A MacLeod. *North Uist:* Margaret Cameron, Fraser MacDonald, John A Macdonald. *Peasmarsh:* Alasdair Bailey. *Queensland:* Mary Brigden. *Sengera:* Diviner Ayubu, Kwamboka Nyasaka, Eglar Omone. *Sidcup:* Lucy Turnbull. *Singapore:* Julius Lau Jun Xi. *Stornoway:* Sarah Gillies, Lauren Macdonald. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Swavesey:* Sarah Parish. *Swindon:* Alison Tugwell. *Sydney:* James Marshall. *Trowbridge:* Joanna Broome. *Uig:* Murdo G Mackay. *Vatten:* Sabrina Annand.

Upper Primary Section: *Auckland:* Bianca Jago, Lachlan McCrae. *Barnoldswick:* David Martin, Rebecca Ross. *Connecticut:* Rachel Mack. *Croydon:* Andrew Hickman. *Dingwall:* Graham MacLeod. *Dunoon:* Elspeth Maley. *Edinburgh:* Daniel Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. *Gisborne:* Muriel Cramp, William Haringa, Emma van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Callum Macpherson. *Grafton:* Alexandra van Dorp. *Haywards Heath:* Edwin and Kate Woodhams. *Holland:* Gerben Bakker, Nathalie MacDonald. *Inverness:* John Maton. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *London:* Andrew Munns. *North Tolsta:* Innes Mackenzie. *North Uist:* Iain Boyd, Angus Macinnes. *Oxon:* Samuel Cooper, Philippa Sayers. *Queensland:* Rachel Brigden. *Sengera:* Isaac Matoke, Dennis Michieka, Finlay Mogari, Ericson Momanyi, Mary Mosoti, Abram Nyasaka, Andrew Obiri, Nyaera and Wycliff Ondieki, Dickson and Nyaruri Ontiri, Stephen Onyancha, Jane Ouko, Nehemiah Torori. *Sidcup:* Jemima and Jeremy Turnbull. *Staffin:* Neil Matheson, Carey Ross. *Stornoway:* Cirsty Gillies. *Swavesey:* Robert

Parish. **Sydney:** Keith Marshall. **Trowbridge:** Nathan Broome. **Ullapool:** Lewis Mackenzie. **Vatten:** Jayne-Anne Fleming.

Lower Primary Section: **Aberdeen:** Rachel and Sarah Somerset. **Auckland:** Claudia and James Campbell, Nathanael de Bruin, Rita de Bruin, Jarrod and Monique Jago. **Barnoldswick:** James Ross. **Chesley:** Samuel Zekveld. **Connecticut:** Rebecca and Sarah Mack. **Croydon:** Marcus and Susanna Hickman. **Dingwall:** Jane Mackenzie, Matthew Ross. **Edinburgh:** Annabelle Macdonald, Emma, Jessica and Jonathan Norris. **Gairloch:** Andrew Mackenzie, Roderick Wyatt. **Garrabost:** Isla Macdonald. **Gisborne:** Hannah Geuze, Anna and Annika van Dorp. **Glasgow:** Sarah Macleod, Katie and Kenneth Macpherson, Rachel Smith. **Grafton:** Christine and Joshua Kidd. **Haywards Heath:** Joseph Woodhams. **Holland:** Samantha and Thaddeus MacDonald. **Inverness:** Jonathan Fiddes, Jonathan Janczak, Daniel and Rebekah Maton. **King's Lynn:** Susie Wiltshire. **Kyle:** Sarah Whear. **London:** Henry and Samuel Munns, Elizabeth Strata. **Ness:** Kathryn Ferguson. **North Tolsta:** Mairi Campbell, Scott Macleod. **North Uist:** Eilidh Cameron. **Sengera:** Josinah and Rianah Aboki, Maera Batasi, Faith Bogita, Dolvin Boko, Janet David, Sheila Kerongo, Christine Kwamboka, Duke Machuma, Duke Magara, Christine Matoke, Kevin and Purity Matongo, Jessy Mayra, Isabella Michieka, Nelson Mogusu, Edwin Mokoro, Justine Mokua, Truus Moraa, Alice Morang'a, Duncan and Peter Moses, Purity Moseti, Christine Mosoti, Edinah, Linet, and Sisiria Nyabuto, Judy and Kaudensia Nyagwoka, Naomi Nyakundi, Vane Nyakwara, Jackson Nyambane, Phyllis Nyandwaro, Joseph Nyang'au, Moraa Nyasaka, Nyangaresi Obwocha, Faith Okeng'o, Denis Okero, Clifflin Okioga, Vincent Ombura, Kerubo Omwoyo, Evans, Frider, Makenzie, Patrick, Vincent and Wilkister Ondieki, Brian and MacDonald Onduso, Andrew, Dennis, Dolphin, Edwin, Gesare and Lillian Orina, Isabella and Ziporah Ontiri, Haron and Vincent Pius, Brian Ratemo, Evans Torori. **Sidcup:** Annabelle, Henry, Joseph and Sebastian Turnbull. **Stornoway:** Aimee and Cara Macleod, Eilidh and Kirsten Macleod, Ryan MacSween. **Swavesey:** Priscilla Parish. **Sydney:** Calum, Duncan and Hugh Marshall. **Wisconsin:** Calvin and Josiah Smith.

Looking Around Us

Common Ancestors?

“Scientists have finally proved”, a newspaper report tells us, “the generations-old theory that all humans can claim a single set of common ancestors.” Scientists had never been able to satisfy themselves that Australia’s Aborigines came from the same stock as the rest of mankind. Now two scientists from Cambridge University have “found common DNA between peoples of Australasia and Melanesia and nearby New Guinea”. So, they conclude, these peoples are all part of the one human family.

In fact, there ought never to have been any doubt that all human beings have the same ancestors. The Bible even tells us their names: Adam and Eve. And this is a matter of fundamental importance. You cannot throw away the Bible’s teaching about mankind’s beginnings without interfering with its teaching about the salvation God has provided. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). All of the Bible’s teachings hang together; we dare not reject any of them.