

The Young People's Magazine

Vol 72

September 2007

No 9

In New Surroundings

All children are born completely helpless. In ordinary circumstances they have parents who feed them, who provide clothes and shelter for them, and who protect them from harm and danger as far as they possibly can. As children grow up, they need less attention; they become more able to look after themselves. Increasingly, they will have to make decisions and face dangers on their own. But they must still respect their parents.

Parents have a duty to prepare their children for the future. They must show their little ones a good example. They must keep God's commands, have family worship, and pray and read the Bible themselves. They should do all these things sincerely before God, as if they really matter to them. Their worship, for instance, should not be just an outward shell; if there is nothing spiritual in it, it will not please God. And the children will eventually realise that their parents have no heart interest in what they are doing. It should be no surprise if, in these circumstances, the children grow up into teenagers and young adults who are completely careless about God and the things of God. It may be no surprise, yet these teenagers and young adults have lost a precious opportunity to set out on the way to heaven.

You should be very thankful for your parents if, by their love to God and their willingness to follow in His ways, they have shown you a good example. Your duty is to follow that example and to live your life in the light of what they have taught you from the Bible. Their example and their teaching form the best protection you can have as you go out into the world.

School can be a dangerous place. The wicked example of other children, by swearing and telling lies and refusing to obey their teachers, for instance, may have a bad effect on those who come from good homes. Yet one cannot be sure that children from good homes – who, after all, also have sinful hearts – will behave perfectly in school! And when they behave badly, their sin is more serious, because they have been taught that there is a God and that He sees all that they do.

What is the purpose of going to school, and to university for those who are older? It is, obviously, to learn. Not only to learn the facts of history or

science but also to *do* things. At one end of the scale, little children learn how to read and write and, at the other end of the scale, some university students will learn how to treat various diseases, for example, and others how to make sure that new bridges are safe. But there is something else that university courses especially are designed to teach – to think clearly. And all these things make education valuable.

Yet education, like everything else in life, needs a proper foundation. And most modern education lacks a foundation in the Word of God. Most schools and universities today ignore the Scripture command: “Train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6). It is assumed that there is no God and that the world just happened to come into existence through some evolutionary process. But in school and university *you* should not forget the teachings of the Bible and the principles which your parents taught you.

This is a time of year when some of you will begin work or move on to another stage in your studies. In new surroundings you will see fresh faces, and you may make new friends. Other people can have a great influence on you – it may be for good, but more often for evil. The danger is greater in an age like this when so few people are prepared to accept the authority of the Bible. So, wherever you are and whatever company you may be in, always remember God's commandments and the good example that I hope you were shown at home. This is specially important in choosing a partner for life – and I sincerely hope, in the light of the Seventh Commandment, that the only partner you will take will be a husband or wife. And make sure that it is not someone who will lead you away from the paths of God.

Sadly, sinners do not need a bad example to begin doing wrong. “Out of the heart”, as Jesus warned, “proceed evil thoughts” and all other kinds of sins (Matthew 15:19). Everyone is capable of committing any sin – and, apart from God's restraint, will do so – because of how corrupt their hearts are. Bad company – especially, godless company – can have a serious effect on young people in particular, leading them astray from the standards of the Bible, sometimes into sins that they would never have imagined committing.

The words of Solomon are as relevant as ever: “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Proverbs 19:27). Every idea must be resisted which might move us away from the words of Scripture, which give us true knowledge; we must not listen to such ideas. You may have been brought up to avoid worldly entertainment, including discos, pop music and films. At school or at work you may come under pressure from your friends to wander away from the paths of knowledge, but remember the standards expected of you when you were at home. You may feel the time has come for you to become more independent, but do not ignore

the possibility that your parents have more experience of life than you yet have, and that they have more understanding of God and His will for us human beings. If this is so, you should take serious note that they are more willing than you to submit to God's law, and that they realise it is good for us – and you should follow their example.

After a service some women came up to a minister named David Simpson. "Do you", one of them asked, "remember dancing with us?" and referred to the time and place where they had been together. "Yes," he replied, "I remember it very well, and am much ashamed of those days of my vanity." And he added: "You and I are many years older now, and so much nearer death and eternity". He was now looking at life in the light of God's Word; he felt the sinfulness of activities such as dancing. And he hoped that the women would begin to take a more serious attitude to life and realise that they needed to prepare for death and eternity.

But this more serious attitude is not only for older people. God has given us our time in this world so that we would live to His glory and prepare for eternity. Even young people should want to be ready for death; not everyone who dies is old. Life is uncertain, and the end of it is particularly so.

Hester was a teenager who attended Simpson's preaching. When he argued against dancing she felt "powerful convictions" in her mind but she tried to resist them. As time went on, the minister's sermons were making more of an impact on her; she was seriously feeling her need of salvation. A sermon on the words: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26) made a great impression on her. After another sermon, on the new birth, she wrote, "I saw and felt, as I had never done before, that I must experience that divine change or perish". Soon she came to the conclusion that she must "forsake all my sinful pleasures and trifling companions". And she was brought to look to Christ for salvation as she listened to Simpson reading, from 1 John 2: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins".

Hester found salvation because she did not give up attending public worship. Do not be afraid to let your workmates or fellow students know that you go to church. And do not let them influence you to give it up. Again, remember your parents' example. To turn your back on the preaching of the gospel is one of the most effective means of remaining unconverted all your days and of reaching a lost eternity. Christ said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). In other words, seek Christ and the salvation He has provided, and God will supply everything else you need – in every situation.

Missionary to India

16. Clear Evidence of Progress

Last month's article told the story of some young people who were baptized in 1843 and 1844 through Alexander Duff's work in Calcutta. Duff was now a minister of the Free Church of Scotland.

These few baptisms caused great concern among the Hindus. Huge meetings were called and at one of them, held on a Sabbath, 2000 people gathered. Many went so far as to express concern that their religion "was threatened with destruction". They were all agreed that something had to be done to counter the work Duff and his associates were doing in school and college. So what was to be done to protect the Hindu religion? The best suggestion put forward, it seems, was to open another college – to teach, in English, the science and the writings of Europe. To Duff it seemed a strange way to protect Hinduism.

Another meeting decided to force parents to withdraw their children from the Free Church's college. But, as Duff commented, "how often does the Word of God assure us that, sooner or later, the wicked shall be taken in their own craftiness and fall into the pit which they have dug for others!" An agreement was indeed drawn up, but local custom dictated that the name of one of the Indian gods must be placed at the top of the document. Here lay a serious difficulty. Whatever name was chosen, some sect or other would find it objectionable. So, as the document went around for approval from one Hindu leader to another, the name at the top was changed again and again. Another public meeting was called and a compromise was reached. But the storm subsided, for two years. Then, after some further baptisms, the storm of opposition blew up again. Perhaps the spirit of this opposition could be summed up in what one Hindu told a group of boys who attended the meeting: "Do whatever you like, but do *not* be a Christian".

Reports began to circulate that Duff was in danger, that violent men were ready to attack him with clubs. He was seen as the great cause of young men turning from Hinduism to Christianity and being baptized. Someone concerned for Duff's safety told him in a letter: "Do not, at least, go out at night or return by the same road". But what was Duff's attitude? He was going to ignore all the threats. Even if they were real, he wrote in a letter to a Calcutta newspaper, "I should not be in the least degree moved by them. My trust is in God". To Duff, that trust – or, at any rate, the God in whom he trusted – was a far better guarantee of security than to be protected by the "bristling array of artillery" in Calcutta's Fort William. He had come to India to do what he could to spread "sound knowledge of every kind, and

especially the knowledge of that great salvation which is freely offered in the gospel to all the kindreds and tribes of the fallen family of man”.

Duff continued his letter with a summary of his teachings, almost entirely in the words of Scripture: “‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.’ ‘So God created man in His own image.’ ‘And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.’ ‘God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.’ ‘By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.’ But ‘the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works’. He is ‘of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity’. ‘The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.’

“‘At the same time, the Lord has proclaimed His name, saying, ‘The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty’. As for the race of man, ‘there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.’

“‘But ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life’. ‘God is love.’ ‘Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.’ ‘If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ ‘If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ ‘Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ ‘Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.’ ‘Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.’”

It was the desire of Duff’s heart to see every Indian truly born again by the “Word of the living God”, working through “His almighty Spirit”. Thus he hoped “to see India itself at length arise from the dust and, through the influence of her regenerated children, become a place and a glory in the whole earth”. This was why this Scottish missionary, and his colleagues, were working their hearts out, thousands of miles from home. This was why they would go on in spite of threats of violence, real or imaginary.

When the young converts were put out of their homes, they of course

needed somewhere to live. It was Duff and his wife who gave them a place to stay. Morning worship was kept every day at 8 o'clock exactly. Lal Behari Day, later a minister and one of those who found refuge in the Duffs' home, was specially impressed with Duff's prayers. They were, he remembered, "fresh and new every morning and evening, naturally arising out of the verses read and carefully meditated over". And he looked back warmly on "the earnestness, the fervour, the deep sincerity, the childlike simplicity of those prayers". So, Day felt, they "seemed to breathe the atmosphere of heaven" and to stand in the presence of God. And after family worship in the evenings the young people were often asked to stay on; they might talk for up to an hour with Duff, when, as Day put it, he "impressed on our youthful minds the highest truths and the holiest principles".

This was in 1843, but two years later 13 converts were staying with the Duffs – and four of them were married. Duff and his wife had been, he wrote, "driven to our wits' end in making even temporary provision for them". But God made more permanent provision. Very soon after they heard about the Duff's problem, a group of 12 businessmen and officials collected £1000 between them so that he could build a home for these Christian students in the grounds of his own house.

It was a happy day for Duff when two of his most mature converts, Kailas and Mahendra, were themselves ordained as missionaries. And on 1 October 1848 Lal Behari Day became minister of the Free Church in Calcutta. Here was clear evidence of progress.

Solomon – the Wise and Wealthy King

1. Building God's Temple

Rev W A Weale

This is the first part of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference.

Of all the kings in the Bible, perhaps none is as well known as Solomon – because of his great wisdom. If the average person was asked, "Who was King Solomon?" the reply might be, A king in the Bible noted for his wisdom. But what does the Bible say about King Solomon? It tells us a great deal and that is what we wish to look at here.

Established as King. Remarkably little is known about Solomon before he became king. He was one of David's sons, and his mother was Bathsheba. But he was not the eldest of his sons and this had a bearing on events. David's eldest son was Amnon, who was murdered by Absalom, the next eldest. This fact no doubt explains Absalom's later rebellion and death. He

clearly expected to become king eventually but he was not prepared to wait.

The third eldest was Adonijah and he assumed that, with Amnon and Absalom now dead, he should be king. However, God's ways are not ours, and in His choosing Solomon we have one of several examples in the Bible of a younger son been preferred before an elder. Although we are not clearly told that Adonijah and the others knew of God's purpose, this was almost certainly the case, which makes their behaviour indefensible. We are told that, when David was old, Adonijah made a bid to take over the kingdom and was supported by Joab and Abiathar the priest. Bathsheba saw the wrong, as well as the danger, in this. She persuaded the aged David to proclaim Solomon king. The result of this was that Solomon was set on the throne of Israel and all opposition was put down. It appears that the reason why David instructed that Joab be put to death was not so much that he had supported Adonijah but that he had murdered Abner and Amasa. Abiathar the priest was deposed and, although Adonijah was spared for a time, he also was put to death when he was seen to be still plotting behind the scenes.

With all opposition out of the way, the kingdom was firmly established in Solomon's hands. It was shortly after this that Solomon received a remarkable token of God's favour. Conscious of his need of God's blessing, he said, "I am but a little child and know not how to go out or come in" (1 Kings 3:7). "He sacrificed a thousand burnt offerings at Gibeon", where the tabernacle now stood. While there, God appeared in a dream by night inviting him to make any request he wished. I wonder, if we were in his position, what we would ask for. Solomon humbly asked for wisdom so that he would rule well over Israel. God was pleased with his choice and promised not only to give him great wisdom, but also riches and honour – so that there would be none like him on the earth. Solomon was overjoyed at the prospect of all this and so, at the tender age of 20 years, the future appeared very bright for a happy and successful reign.

His Building Projects. David, Solomon's father, was a man who feared God from his youth. After Saul's death, and especially when he became king over the whole kingdom of Israel, he spent much of his time subduing the nations round about: the Philistines, Moabites, Edomites and Syrians among others. The result of this was that Solomon came to power when his nation was in total control of those around it; so he could look forward to a peaceful reign – a fact predicted in his very name Solomon (or *peaceful*).

All this meant that Solomon was able to attend to matters within his kingdom, especially the building of the temple in his capital city Jerusalem. David earlier had a desire to do this but God had forbidden him because he had been involved in wars. But he did gather material for Solomon, so that

he would be able to proceed with this task once he was settled as king. David passed on to Solomon the plans which God had revealed to him and which had to be carefully followed when working on the temple. But building did not begin until the fourth year of Solomon's reign, no doubt because much material still needed to be gathered. Cedar from Lebanon, regarded as excellent wood for such a building, was shipped to a suitable port in Israel; this involved 10 000 workers per month. Hiram, king of Tyre, was contracted to supply this wood and ship it. He also supplied stonecutters to prepare the great quantity of stone needed.

The site of the temple was Mount Moriah, probably where Araunah's threshing floor had been. This was the spot where the plague had stopped in David's time. Very likely it also was the very place where Abraham earlier went to offer up Isaac. It faced David's city, which was on the north side of Jerusalem (Ps 48:2).

Building this temple took seven years and, when we read of its splendour, we are not surprised. It was built on the plan of the former tabernacle but was twice the size. Leon Woods, in his *Survey of Israel's History*, describes it in this way: "It was 90 feet long and 30 feet wide, containing the same two divisions: the holy place and the holy of holies, occupying two-thirds and one-third of the total respectively. It was built of stone but panelled with cedar overlaid with gold. The holy of holies housed the ark of the covenant with its mercy seat and two cherubim. . . . In the holy place were the altar of incense or 'golden altar', 10 golden lampstands standing five on each side, and ten tables of shewbread (1 Kings 7:48,49). One difference from the tabernacle was that before the holy place was a porch 30 feet wide and 10 feet deep, and on the porch two bronze pillars called Jachin and Boaz." (The former name suggests: "God will establish thy throne for ever", and the latter: "In the strength of Jehovah shall the King rejoice".)

"Along the sides and rear of this structure were chambers three stories high, providing storage areas (1 Kings 6:5-10). Around the whole building lay a court similar to that which surrounded the tabernacle. Found in it were the great brazen altar, 30 feet square and 15 feet high, a large laver or "molten sea", 15 feet across the brim (1 Kings 7:23-26), and 10 small lavers located five on each side of the building. This court, as well as the temple proper, was restricted to the priests, but around it was the 'great court' intended for the people."

When the temple was finished, there followed its "dedication". First of all Solomon brought the ark of the covenant to the holy of holies from the tent David had placed it in. The other items were newly made but not the ark, which was a sign of the very presence of God. Significantly, when this was

put in place, God’s glory filled the temple even as it had the tabernacle. Next, Solomon preached a message to those gathered (1 Kings 8:12-21 and 2 Chronicles 6:1-11), after which was the prayer of dedication. When this was finished, the fire of God fell on the burnt offerings placed on the brazen altar and during the next seven days many other sacrifices – 22 000 oxen and 120 000 sheep – were offered. After this, God appeared to Solomon a second time promising him further blessing if he would be obedient in the future.

While the temple was the greatest building project Solomon undertook, others followed. There was his own palace, which took 13 years to build, six years longer than the temple. There was the house of the forest of Lebanon, which was used, partly at least, to store arms. There were the hall of pillars and the hall of judgement, where Solomon sat for judgement on a six-step throne of ivory overlaid with gold. Finally there was the special house he built for the one who appeared to be his favourite wife: the daughter of Pharaoh.

“As the Lord Commanded”

4. Prayer

Rev D W B Somerset

In the previous two articles we considered the use of musical instruments under the Old Testament and their significance for New Testament worship. We showed that their purpose in the Old Testament was to signify various parts of the work of Christ and the gospel, and to illustrate the nature of true spiritual worship. It follows that there is no authority for using musical instruments in New Testament worship.

It is clear from the Bible that prayer is one of the most important parts of the worship of God. Sometimes the word *prayer* is used as a general description of worship: “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people” (Isaiah 56:7); “On the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made” (Acts 16:13).

True prayer brings out the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. In its very nature, prayer involves each of the three Persons of the Godhead in a distinct way. This is something we should always seek to be aware of when we are praying. We must “draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father”; we must feel our absolute need of the blood and intercession of Christ to make our prayer acceptable in the sight of God; and we must realise our entire dependence on the Holy Spirit to enable us to pray aright. “For through [Christ] we . . . have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Ephesians 2:18).

One of the issues regarding prayer in public worship is the question of

liturgies and read prayers. Is it lawful to use these? There is no doubt that it is lawful to do so in cases of necessity. In 1564 the Church of Scotland under John Knox adopted the Book of Common Order. This contained prayers which could be read when there was no one to conduct a service without them. Such was the case in many parishes in Scotland at that time. In the same way, people who are embarrassed to conduct family worship have sometimes made a start by using read prayers. It is better to use these than to have no worship at all. But Christians should be seeking to move beyond the need of such things. They are promised the intercession of the Holy Spirit in prayer with "groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26), and this is the basis for extempore prayer (that is, a prayer that is not being read). "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

In the past it was usual for people to pray out loud even when they were praying in secret. There is the story, for instance, of the famous minister Robert Bruce, when people were waiting for him to preach in the church in Larbert. A bellman was sent to fetch him from his room, but the man returned alone and said that he did not know when Mr Bruce would be coming. He had knocked on the door, but Mr Bruce had not answered. There appeared to be someone in the room with him, to whom Mr Bruce had said many times, with the greatest seriousness, "that he would not – he could not – go unless He came with him; and that he would not go alone". "And", said the bellman, "I never heard the other one answer him a word."

He had not realised that what he was hearing in the room was Robert Bruce wrestling in prayer. If people were more accustomed to praying aloud when they were alone, they would soon get over any embarrassment they might feel when called to pray in the presence of others. "Let Me hear thy voice," says Christ to His people (Song of Solomon 2:14). He likes to hear the sound of their voices in prayer, just as we like to hear the voices of people whom we love.

There is a useful book called *Thoughts on Public Prayer*, by the American Presbyterian minister, Samuel Miller. One of the chapters is on "Frequent Faults of Public Prayer" and another is on "Characteristics of a Good Public Prayer". Some of the 18 frequent faults which he mentions are worth repeating here. One common fault, for instance, is the overuse of favourite words and set forms of expression, especially the overuse of God's names. Some have the habit of adding the word, *Lord*, to the end of every petition. Another common fault is a lack of order, in jumping around from one topic to another and then back again.

Another fault is being too lengthy in prayer. It was said of Robert Bruce's

prayers that every sentence “was like a strong bolt shot up to heaven”. “God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:2). Another fault is “preaching” in prayer, when there are long doctrinal statements but few petitions. We must remember that we are chiefly addressing God in prayer rather than seeking to instruct our fellow men. Another fault is not being appropriate to the occasion. We are praying for a reason, and our petitions should relate to that reason.

Another issue regarding prayer in public worship is whether it is necessary to stand. Clearly this cannot be required for the elderly, for instance, or for those who are unwell, or become tired – perhaps because they are holding small children. God “will have mercy and not sacrifice” in such cases (Matthew 12:7). But otherwise, the biblical pattern is to stand for prayer.

In *The Pattern on the Mount*, Walter Scott, who was later a Free Presbyterian minister, counts up, in the Old Testament, 45 cases of people standing at prayer, 22 cases of lying face down on the ground (obviously an unsuitable posture for public worship), four cases of kneeling, and only one case of sitting. The case of sitting is Moses when he became tired after standing for a long time (Exodus 17:12). For sitting, there are also the examples of David (2 Samuel 7:18), and of Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), but neither of these was engaged in public prayer. Furthermore, David seems to have been sitting more for the purpose of spiritual reflection than of supplication, judging by his words in verses 18-29, while Elijah was tired and dejected. Christ takes it for granted that His disciples will pray in a standing posture: “when ye stand praying” (Mark 11:25).

As far as biblical warrant is concerned, we are free to stand or to sit when we sing. The reason why people have traditionally remained seated for singing in Scotland is because it may be tiring to stand for both the singing and the prayers. Some congregations have attempted this, but inevitably they have ended up standing for the singing and sitting for the prayer. Often the reason why congregations start to stand for the singing is because the more worldly, musical side of the singing is taking over from the spiritual side. Soon they begin sitting for the prayer, and very often this change is accompanied by the introduction of musical instruments. Sad to say, this has been a familiar pattern.

One final issue is whether it is right for women to pray at prayer meetings. Often there have been women’s prayer meetings in times of revival, but historically it has not been the practice for women to pray at general prayer meetings. The biblical basis for this is 1 Corinthians 14:34: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak”. The term *speak* is general. It includes all utterances except singing.

It does not refer simply to addressing the assembly in a teaching capacity, but it includes even the asking of questions: "If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (verse 35). Representing the assembly in public prayer to God goes far beyond the asking of questions. For this reason women should not engage in public prayer in mixed assemblies.

For Younger Readers

God Made Him Safe

He was an Indian. He was a good man. Someone asked him how he knew that he had a new heart. But he gave no answer.

This man now loved God; in the past he did not love God. What changed him? It must have been some power.

Someone asked him, "Did you see the power?"

"No", he answered.

"Did you hear it?"

"No."

"Did you feel it?"

"Yes."

And could he not say something about these feelings?

He was quiet for a little while. Then he knelt down on the sand and made a little ring of wood chips and dry leaves. Inside the ring he put a little worm. Then he set fire to the wood chips and leaves.

After a short while, the little worm began to feel the heat. It moved one way and another to try and get away from it. At last it seemed to feel that it could not get away from the heat. It just lay in the centre of the ring and curled up.

Then the Indian lifted up the worm in his fingers. He placed it away from the heat, outside the ring, where it was safe.

Now he explained: "I was like the worm. The pains of hell took hold on me, but God delivered me."

He learned that sin will be punished in hell. Like the worm, he could not get away from his sins and from the punishment for his sins, no matter what he did.

But God took him away from the danger he was in. It was God who made him safe, for Jesus' sake. God's power saved him.

Nothing as Important as Your Soul

J C Ryle

Another piece, slightly edited, from this noted nineteenth-century English minister. It follows the article in July.

Your soul is eternal. It will live for ever. The world and all that it contains shall pass away. Firm, solid, beautiful, well-ordered as it is, the world shall come to an end. “The earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). The works of statesmen, writers, painters, architects are all shortlived; your soul will outlive them all. The angel’s voice shall proclaim one day that “time shall be no longer” (Revelation 10:6). But that shall never be said of your souls.

Try, I plead with you, to realise the fact that your soul is the one thing worth living for. It is the part of you which ought always to be considered first. No place, no employment, is good for you which injures your soul. No friend, no companion, deserves your confidence who makes light of your soul’s concerns. The man who hurts your person, your property, your character, does you only temporary harm. He is the real enemy who tries to damage your soul.

Think for a moment why you were sent into the world. Not merely to eat and drink, and to indulge the desires of the flesh. Not merely to dress up your body and follow its lusts wherever they may lead you. Not merely to work and sleep and laugh and talk and enjoy yourselves, and think of nothing but time. No, you were meant for something higher and better than this. You were placed here to train for eternity. Your body was only intended to be a house for your immortal spirit. It is flying in the face of God’s purposes to do as many do – make the soul a servant to the body, and not the body a servant to the soul. The *Larger Catechism* begins with this admirable question and answer: “What is the chief and highest end of man?” “To glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him for ever.”

God is no respecter of persons. He regards no one’s coat or purse or rank or position. He does not see with man’s eyes. The poorest saint that ever died in a workhouse [a place where very poor people could live, in very severe conditions] is nobler in His sight than the richest sinner that ever died in a palace. God does not look at riches, titles, learning, beauty or anything of the kind. God looks at one thing only, and that is the immortal soul. He measures all men by one standard, one measure, one test, one criterion, and that is *the state of their souls*.

Do not forget this. Morning, noon and night, keep the interests of your soul in view. Rise up each day desiring that it may prosper; lie down each

evening asking yourself whether it has really got on. Have you heard of Zeuxis, a great painter of long ago? When he was asked why he laboured so intensely and took such extreme pains with every picture, his simple answer was, "I paint for eternity". Do not be ashamed to be like him. Set your immortal soul before your mind's eye and, when people ask you why you live as you do, answer them in his spirit, "I live for my soul". Believe me, the day is fast coming when the soul will be the one thing people will think of, and the only question of importance will be this: "Is my soul lost or saved?"

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

12. Avoiding War on Tanna

For quite some time, Paton and his missionary teachers had managed to keep the peace between the different tribes on Tanna. But Paton did not have much to do with some of the inland tribes, and they murdered eight chiefs who were on their way home from visiting the harbour people. At the same time, one of the inland chiefs, who had been preventing his people from fighting, was murdered by the people in his village, along with his brother, four wives and two children. The new chief was happy to let the people go to war.

So now the whole island was unsettled, and war was declared. The young men of Tanna were as excited about this new state of affairs as if they were going to some big sporting event!

Paton wanted to avoid a war; he knew many lives would be lost in it. So the next day he and Abraham and another missionary teacher set off inland. They were going to visit the inland chiefs to see if they could persuade them not to go to war. As they went deeper inland, Paton's two teachers sank into a solemn silence, showing how scared they were. Paton tried to chat to them to keep up their spirits but they begged him to walk on in silence. So they went on without talking to each other, but no doubt they were all praying.

They passed many deserted villages; the women and children had gone away into the safety of the forests, not knowing when they might be attacked; and the men were obviously gathering somewhere planning their attack on the harbour people. At last Paton and the teachers came to the place where the inland men were gathered at a big feast. When the inland men saw the three missionaries approaching, they all rushed for their weapons and stood as if they were going to attack. The teachers stayed close to Paton, and together they walked straight through the warriors. Paton shouted in Tannese: "My love to all you men of Tanna! Do not be afraid; I am your friend; I love

everyone, and I have come to tell you about Jehovah God and good conduct such as pleases Him!"

An old chief then came and took Paton by the hand and said, "Sit down beside me here and talk with me; soon the people will not be afraid". But the people were unsettled. Some had gone running into the forest and others were dancing round Paton and the two teachers, hitting the ground and beating a canoe with their clubs as they shouted, "Missi is come! Missi is come!" The inland people seemed to be getting more and more excited and came pushing around the visitors, painted in their gruesome war paints, with their hair full of fantastic feathers. But Paton calmly went on speaking to them as best he could, answering their questions. After an hour or so they seemed to have agreed to give up the idea of war.

Paton was then allowed to conduct worship with the people and was given a present of coconuts, sugar-cane and two fowls. In return Paton gave the most important chief a red shirt and shared out fish hooks and red cloth to the others. The leading men then came and shook hands with Paton and the teachers; they promised that they would do no harm to anyone connected with the mission.

When the harbour people heard where Paton and the teachers had gone, they thought they would never see them again. They were sure that the inland people would kill Paton and the teachers and feast on their bodies. You can imagine their surprise when the three men returned. Not only were they unharmed, they were carrying presents and bringing word that the war was cancelled. Such a thing had never happened on Tanna before!

So there was peace for that time All hands could get to work, planting yams, mending fences and attending to all the jobs that needed doing. But how long would this peace last?

Paton and his teachers put themselves in a very dangerous position in order to secure this peace. They were brave and asked the Lord to help them carry out their plan to avoid unnecessary killing. The Lord did help them; He blessed what they did, so that there was a good result.

Sometimes in your day-to-day life you will have to do things which are not easy. They might not be as dangerous as facing raging warriors with clubs and axes! But it might mean that you have to speak out about something you think is wrong. It might involve you standing apart from your friends and telling them you do not agree with them and cannot act as they do.

It is not easy to do these things, and it needs courage. But we must be careful not to become angry with people or to rub them up the wrong way. There is a verse in the Bible which says: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). This is what you and

I have to try to do. It is often difficult to get the right balance between standing up for what is right and being polite and respectful to the people we differ from. We need to ask God to give us the wisdom and courage to do this in the best possible way.

S M Campbell

Looking Around Us

The Dangers of Cannabis

The British government is at present reviewing the classification of cannabis. Since 2004 it has been a class C drug, but it may be brought back into class B, which would mean the Government treating it more seriously and the police having to take a stricter approach to it. The review is a reaction to reports that more powerful strains such as “skunk” are now widely available.

UK experts are discovering that cannabis users are 40% more likely than non-users to suffer a mental illness such as schizophrenia. An article in *The Lancet*, a medical journal, states that up to 800 cases of schizophrenia in the UK each year could be linked to cannabis smoking among 15- to 34-year-olds. Researchers have found that those who use cannabis oftenest are twice as likely as non-users to develop symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions.

It is estimated that two million people in the UK are regularly using cannabis. So it is not surprising that some in prominent positions have smoked cannabis. It was perhaps inevitable that a journalist would pick out Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, who is responsible for drugs policy and much else, to ask if she had ever used cannabis. She confessed she had done so when she was young, as did several other Cabinet ministers, including Chancellor Alistair Darling and Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly. In 2000, eight leading members of the opposition made a similar confession.

Mrs Smith added that she had “done wrong” and that she had broken the law. It is good she was honest about what she did, and particularly that she used the word *wrong*. One might be concerned to have men and women in government who did what was wrong, and illegal, 20 or 30 years ago. Yet, rather than single out these individuals, it is more appropriate, particularly when the guilty parties seem to have turned their backs on such sins, to note with dismay how widespread cannabis use has become.

While cannabis is not the *most* dangerous of drugs, no one should meddle with it. It is dangerous; one cannabis joint may do up to five times as much damage as a tobacco cigarette, because of the amount of cancer-causing chemicals it contains. If it is wise – and it most certainly is – not to start smoking tobacco, then it is even more necessary to avoid completely the whole drugs scene, which is damaging to body, mind and soul.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises

UK Prizes and Awards 2006-07

Senior Section

Prizes: *Dingwall:* Kathryn Mackenzie. *Dunoon:* Esther Maley. *Glasgow:* Kenneth Gillies. *Inverness:* James Fraser. *London:* Jeremy van Kralingen. *Sidcup:* Alexander Turnbull.
Awards with Merit: *Bonar Bridge:* Sandy Campbell. *London:* Elizabeth Munns. *Scaynes Hill:* Abigail Main. *Swavesey:* Rebecca Parish.
Awards: *Dingwall:* Beverly Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Donald MacLeod. *Inverness:* Mark Campbell. *London:* David Rowland, Justin van Kralingen. *North Uist:* John Cameron. *Scaynes Hill:* Martha Main.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Dingwall:* Alastair Mackenzie. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan. *Glasgow:* Neil Gillies. *Kings Lynn:* Joanna Wiltshire. *North Uist:* Christina Macdonald. *Sidcup:* Constance and Rupert J Turnbull. *Stratherrick:* John Fraser.
Awards with Merit: *Crowborough:* Heidi Woodhams. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Catherine Freeke. *Inverness:* Natalie Macaskill, Catherine Schouten. *Longcot:* Lucy Cooper, Emily Sayers. *North Tolsta:* Mark Mackenzie. *Portree:* Rachel M Mackinnon. *Stornoway:* Alasdair Gillies. *Swavesey:* Helen Parish.
Awards: *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin. *Dunoon:* Rachel Maley. *Edinburgh:* Jonathan MacDonald. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell. *Kyle:* Daniel Whear. *London:* William Munns. *North Tolsta:* Sean MacLeod. *Scaynes Hill:* Philip Main. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Barnoldswick:* Robert Ross. *Crowborough:* Kelvin Woodhams. *Dingwall:* Andrew MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan. *Gairloch:* Mairi Wyatt, Rachel Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Kate Gillies, Rachel and Ruairidh MacLeod, Peter Macpherson. *Inverness:* Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton. *Kings Lynn:* Matthew Wiltshire. *North Uist:* Fraser MacDonald.
Awards with Merit: *Dingwall:* Ruth M MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Isla MacDonald. *Glasgow:* Donna Chisolm. *Haywards Heath:* Hannah Woodhams. *London:* Amy van Kralingen. *Longcot:* Ruth Cooper. *Luton:* Stephen Kingham. *North Harris:* Tormod Mackinnon. *North Uist:* John A MacDonald. *Sidcup:* Lucy Turnbull. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Trowbridge:* Joanna Broome.
Awards: *Inverness:* Peter Schouten. *London:* Edward Munns. *North Tolsta:* Lucy A MacLeod, Sheena Mackenzie. *North Uist:* Margaret Cameron. *Peasmarsh:* Alasdair Bailey. *Stornoway:* Sarah Gillies, Lauren MacDonald. *Swavesey:* Sarah Parish. *Swindon:* Alison Tugwell. *Uig:* Murdo G Mackay. *Vatten:* Sabrina Annand.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Dingwall:* Graham MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Daniel MacDonald. *Gairloch:* Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Callum Macpherson. *Haywoods Heath:* Edwin Woodhams, Kate Woodhams. *Inverness:* John Maton. *Staffin:* Carey Ross. *Vatten:* Jayne-Anne Fleming.
Awards with Merit: *Barnoldswick:* Rebecca Ross. *Dornoch:* Lewis Mackenzie. *Dunoon:* Elspeth Maley. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *North Uist:* Iain Boyd. *Longcot:* Samuel Cooper. *Sidcup:* Jemima and Jeremy Turnbull. *Staffin:* Neil Matheson. *Stornoway:* Cirsty Gillies. *Trowbridge:* Nathan Broome.
Awards: *Barnoldswick:* David Martin. *Croydon:* Andrew Hickman. *London:* Andrew Munns. *Longcot:* Philippa Sayers. *Swavesey:* Robert Parish.

Youth Conference members in Edinburgh in April this year

Lower Primary Section

Awards: *Aberdeen:* Rachel and Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* James Ross. *Croydon:* Marcus and Susanna Hickman. *Dingwall:* Jane Mackenzie, Alasdair, Donald and Uilliam Murray, Matthew Ross. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle Macdonald, Emma, Jessica and Jonathan Norris. *Gairloch:* Andrew Mackenzie, Roddie Wyatt. *Garrabost:* Isla Macdonald. *Glasgow:* Sarah Macleod, Katie and Kenneth Macpherson, Rachel Smith. *Haywards Heath:* Joseph Woodhams. *Inverness:* Jonathan Fiddes, Jonathan Janczak, Daniel and Rebekah Maton. *Kings Lynn:* Susie Wiltshire. *Kyle:* Sarah Whear. *London:* Henry and Samuel Munns. *Ness:* Kathryn Ferguson. *North Tolsta:* Mairi Campbell, Scott Macleod. *North Uist:* Eilidh Cameron. *Sidcup:* Annabelle, Henry, Joseph and Sebastian Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Aimee and Cara Macleod, Eilidh and Kirsten Macleod, Ryan MacSween. *Swavesey:* Priscilla Parish.

Seashore Thoughts

In every object here I see
Something, O Lord, that leads to Thee.
Firm as the rocks Thy promise stands,
Thy mercies countless as the sun,
Thy love a sea immensely wide,
Thy grace an ever-flowing tide.

In every object here I see
Something, my heart, that points at thee.
Hard as the rocks that bound the strand,
Unfruitful as the barren sand,
Deep and deceitful as the ocean,
And, like the tides, in constant motion.

John Newton