

# The Young People's Magazine

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**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland  
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

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*“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1*



***August 2008***

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# Contents

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Will You Go Away? .....	143
For Junior Readers – Lessons from the Life of John G Paton:	
23. Fire and Tornadoes .....	146
A New Heart:	
4. Made Sincere and Believing .....	148
“Chosen not for Good in Me”:	
1. A Powerful Blow to His Worldliness .....	150
Youth Conference 2008 .....	153
Samson:	
2. Beginning to Deliver Israel .....	155
For Younger Readers:	
Your Body and Your Soul .....	157
Looking Around Us .....	159
How to Respond to the Bible .....	160

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**Cover Picture:** *St John’s Tower, Ayr.* See page 154.

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## Will You Go Away?

Jesus had been speaking to the people in the synagogue in Capernaum, a village by the Lake of Galilee. But many of them did not like what He was saying and went away. They are described as “disciples” – they had followed Him; they had listened to Him; they seemed to want to learn from Him – but they changed their minds and went away. They asked, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” (John 6:60). They were referring to what Jesus had said about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. They did not understand what He meant. Yet, no doubt, something else was more significant than their lack of understanding; they did not *like* what He said.

But what did Jesus mean by speaking about eating His flesh and drinking His blood? Remember, He was the eternal Son of God. He had become flesh – in other words, He had taken a human nature; so He was now both God and man. He had come into this world to die for sinners, to pour out His blood instead of them. So Jesus meant that the people must believe on Him as the One who took human nature and died for sinners.

There may have been other parts of Jesus' teaching that these “disciples” did not like. For instance, they probably did not want to be told: “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6:44). No one likes to be told that their own efforts cannot please God, and that they have no power of their own through which they can come to Christ.

Today also there are lots of reasons why people go away from Christ and true religion. Like the people in Capernaum, they may not like to hear that they are spiritually powerless. Or they may not like to hear about the doctrine of election – that God has chosen who will be saved and who will not. Or they may not like to hear about the doctrine of original sin. Why, they ask, should they be condemned because of the first sin of Adam, which took place so long ago? In fact, the list of the Bible's teachings which people rebel against is endless. They may focus on the preacher, or on the church which he represents, and assert that the preacher and the church are fearfully old-fashioned. They may claim that no sensible person in this modern age can reasonably be expected to believe such teaching. But all the teachings

mentioned here have been revealed by God and therefore we can be sure they are true. We have no right to argue against them.

People may raise many objections against what they hear from the pulpit – against what they should believe and how they should behave. But, if the preacher keeps to the Bible, these people are arguing against God, who gave the Bible. Christ's words to His disciples still apply: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me" (Luke 10:16). It is still true that those who reject a preacher, when he proclaims the teachings of the Bible, are actually rejecting Christ, and in doing so they are rejecting God.

These people in Capernaum clearly had a problem. But they chose entirely the wrong way of resolving it. There was no need to go away from Jesus when they had difficulties with what He was saying. They should have gone to Him to ask what He meant. That was what Nicodemus did; he said to Jesus: "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God" (John 3:2). And when he had difficulty with Jesus' teaching about the new birth, Jesus taught him and, what is more, He gave the Holy Spirit to enlighten his heart. In this way Nicodemus grasped the truth that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". Thus Nicodemus believed in Jesus; he ate Jesus' flesh and drank His blood.

So if you have difficulties about the teaching of the Bible or about what you hear in church or what you have been brought up to believe, what should you do? You should follow the example of Nicodemus and go to Jesus with your questions. But, you may ask, how can I go to Jesus now when He is no longer on earth? You are to pray that He would teach you. You do not need to go up to heaven (see Romans 10:8); the Word of God is near you, and you can read it. So, whenever you take up your Bible, and whenever you listen to a sermon, pray that Jesus would teach you. Pray that He would apply the truth to your soul by the Holy Spirit, so that your difficulties would be removed and that you would believe the teachings of Scripture and look to Jesus for salvation.

When the people in Capernaum went away from Jesus, they blamed His preaching. But that was not the problem; the problem was in themselves. They had unbelieving hearts (see John 6:64). We should not be surprised if people today go away from the truth and from Christ. They do so because they too have unbelieving hearts; by nature no one wants to be entirely dependent on God for salvation. Today most of the influences around you – fellow students, teachers, workmates and the media, for instance – will point you away from the teachings of the Bible. Do not rely on your own

strength to resist them. And never forget the power of Satan behind them all; he wants to destroy every good idea in your mind. How much you need Jesus Christ – applying the Scriptures to you by the Holy Spirit – to convince you of their truth and draw you to Himself! He is able to do so.

One evening George Whitefield, once a well-known English minister, was preaching about the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins. Two men had come along just to disturb the service, which shows how far they were away from Christ and His truth. After some time the minister repeated, with special emphasis, these words from the parable: “And the door was shut”. One of the men whispered to the other: “O that is not too bad; if the one door is shut, another door will open”. No one else heard him, certainly not the preacher. But he, to their great surprise, exclaimed, “It is possible that someone is here this evening who will say, ‘If one door will be closed, another door will open’. Well now, listen. Let me tell him that this is perfectly true. And I will earnestly warn him about it, for when the one door is closed, which is the door of grace, the other door shall be opened, which is the door of eternal damnation.”

After the sermon both men went to speak to the minister. It was very clear to him that the arrow which pierced their hearts was fired by the Holy Spirit. One hopes that they did not again go away from Jesus and His teachings, but that they went on to believe in Him, to eat His flesh and to drink His blood, as the Saviour who died for sinners.

Even in Capernaum, there were some who did not go away from Jesus. Jesus turned to them and asked, “Will ye also go away?” He was saying to them: You do not want to go away, do you? And no, they did not want to go away. Peter spoke up for the sincere disciples: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

They had recognised Jesus as the One whom all the truly godly had been waiting for in Old Testament times. Peter, John, James and all the other sincere disciples valued Jesus’ teachings – such words as these which pointed out the way to eternal life: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son . . .” (John 3:16). Because they had trusted in Him, they did not want to go away from Him.

Do *you* want to go away? The only safe place in the whole world is where Jesus Christ is. If you go away from Him and His teachings, you may not stop until you reach the door that opens into eternal damnation. And do not rest satisfied with a formal religion – with doing many things, at least in an outward way, which you ought to do, but not believing in Christ. Instead, look to Him as the Saviour who died for sinners, and do so now.

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

## 23. Fire and Tornadoes

Paton and his teachers from Aneityum had been fleeing the warriors of Miaki for the past few days. Following their failed attempt to reach the Mathieson's home by boat, Paton had persuaded a friendly chief to guide them overland to the Mathiesons'. Now this chief, out of fear for his own safety, was leaving them to make the final part of the journey by themselves.

**T**hey did not have too far to go but they still had dangers to face. Shortly before reaching the Mathiesons' house, a man gave each of Paton's group a coconut. They were so thankful to get this because they had eaten nothing that day and hardly anything for the few days before. They were so weak when they reached Mathiesons that they could barely stand.

On hearing Paton's party approach, Mr Mathieson came running out to meet them. How happy he was when he saw them! He thought they had all been murdered. Mr and Mrs Mathieson were themselves quite weak and, just after burying their only child, they were very sad.

Before Paton had left his house he had given some letters to Nowar, who was to give them to the captains of any passing ships. The letters asked the captains to call at the Mathiesons' mission station as their lives were in danger. Nowar was faithful in giving the letters to the captains of the three ships which came into the harbour, but no ship came to their rescue. Instead the captains and their seamen traded with the islanders for some of Paton's belongings and then sailed past the Mathiesons' station on their way to Aneityum. It was not just the Tannese people who were unkind to Paton and despised the work of the Lord.

As they waited with the Mathiesons for help to come, they did their best to carry on taking the good news of the gospel to the people around them. But it was not easy. Threats and challenges were coming to them all the time, and they felt very disheartened when they heard news of terrible murders and of the various battles which were still taking place right across the island.

On 3 February 1862, just over two weeks after Paton and his teachers had fled from their harbour homes in fear of their lives, the Mathiesons had a visit from a group of Miaki's men. They were looking for Paton. They forced Mrs Mathieson to show them round the house. That morning Paton had been wanting to do some writing and had locked himself into a large walk-in cupboard, partly to get some peace and partly for safety. Miaki's warriors did not find Paton and concluded that he had gone inland. In their disgust at not finding their enemy, they fired a gun into the teacher's house and then marched off.

Paton was tired that night from the stress of always having to be on the alert and he went to bed early and fell into a deep sleep. A few hours later he was wakened up by his faithful dog Clutha tugging at his clothes. He could hear noises outside and he quietly crept over to the Mathiesons, who also had fallen asleep. They prayed in hushed voices to the Lord for protection and waited. Very soon the glare of a light fell into the room. Men were passing with flaming torches. They set the church on fire and then the reed fence which led from the church to the dwelling houses in the compound. In a few minutes the house would be in flames and the armed savages would be waiting for their prey as they fled out of the burning house.

Paton grabbed his revolver in one hand and a small axe in the other and asked Mr Mathieson to let him out. Mr Mathieson did not want to open the door and tried to persuade him not to go out. He said, "Stop here, and let us die together! You will never return!" Paton answered, "Be quick! Leave that to God. In a few minutes our house will be in flames, and then nothing can save us."

Reluctantly, Mr Mathieson let him out, quickly locking the door again. He and his wife stood praying as they watched Paton from the window. He ran to the burning reed fence and with the axe cut it from top to bottom and threw the broken bits of fence into the advancing flames, creating a large gap which acted as a fire break.

But he was now surrounded by seven or eight savages all with their clubs in the air ready to strike. "Kill him! Kill him!" was their cry and with that one savage tried to grab Paton. Paton leapt out of his grasp, drew out his revolver and aimed it at the man.

He sternly said, "Dare to strike me, and my Jehovah God will punish you! He protects us, and will punish you for burning His church, for hatred to His worship and people, and for all your bad conduct. We love you all; and for doing you good only, you want to kill us. But our God is here now to protect us and to punish you."

The savages yelled in rage and urged each other to strike Paton, but God restrained them. They stood there, wanting to strike Paton but, for some reason, none of them could bring themselves actually to do so. Suddenly there came a mighty rushing and roaring sound. A tornado was approaching fast. The wind suddenly whipped up the flames and blew them away from the house. With it came a torrential downpour of rain which not only put out the flames, but made it impossible to set anything else alight.

The mighty roaring of the wind, the heavy black cloud and the torrential rain amazed the savages. "That is Jehovah's rain! Truly their Jehovah God is fighting for them and helping them. Let us away!" They fled in a panic

leaving Paton standing alone, holding his empty revolver and his little axe in the pouring rain, praising God for His goodness once again.

Mr Mathieson let him into the house again, exclaiming: "If ever, in time of need, God sent help and protection to His servants in answer to prayer, He has done so tonight. Blessed be His holy name!"

It was another wonderful deliverance from the Lord for Paton. He prayed to God for protection but he also did what he could to protect himself. This principle applies to everything we do. We should ask God for help, protection and guidance in our lives but we also have to be sensible and use whatever God has given us so that we can achieve our goals.

For instance, if you are studying for an exam, you should ask God to help you answer the questions correctly. But you will not then sit back and play around, thinking, "O well, I have asked God to help me, so I don't need to do any work". No, you will try to learn as much as you can for the exam, but you will also pray that God would help you to remember the information you need. In the Bible there is a verse which says: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). This is certainly how Paton lived and it is how you and I should live.

*S M Campbell*

## A New Heart

### 4. Made Sincere and Believing

*George Burder*

This is the final part of a sermon, slightly edited, on words from Ezekiel 36:26: "A new heart also will I give you". It was meant for children. We have already seen that (1) we are born with a hard heart, but God can make it soft; (2) we are born with a proud heart, but God can make it humble; (3) we are born with a worldly heart, but God can make it heavenly; (4) we are born with a wicked heart, but God can make it pure. Burder was a minister in England around 200 years ago.

**5.** By nature the heart is deceitful. Indeed the Scripture says it is "deceitful above all things". It calls good evil, and evil good. It cheats people with false pretences and empty excuses; so they think the way of the wicked is right, although it leads to destruction. There is scarcely any sinner, however great, who does not flatter himself that all will be well at last, though God tells him the opposite. So "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26). But when the Lord gives someone a new heart, He makes it sincere. A real Christian is like Nathanael, of whom Jesus said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile" (John 1:47) – that is, Nathanael would not allow himself any hypocrisy when dealing with God or man.



6. The heart is naturally an unbelieving heart. It is sad that man should be more ready to believe the devil – who is the father of lies – rather than the God of truth. It was by listening to the devil that Eve, our first mother, sinned. And ever since there has been in mankind “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). It is plain that people do not believe God. If they believed what He says about sin, they would not dare to go on sinning. If they believed what He says about Christ, surely they would come to Him for life and salvation. And the reason they do not come to Him is that they “love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil” (John 3:19).

But the new heart is a believing heart. The Christian takes God at His word. He believes what God says when He threatens. He believes God’s promises in Christ. He believes God’s commandments and He obeys. Without this faith, “it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6), for he that does not believe God has made Him a liar. But faith glorifies God. “He that believeth on the Son [of God] hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

**Application:** I have told you what sort of hearts we have by nature, and how the Lord can change them by His grace. I hope you will think over what I have said, and ask yourselves what kind of heart *you* have. Is your heart not hard and proud and worldly and wicked and deceitful and unbelieving? I think you must admit it is so by nature. And does this not show you that you must be born again, that you must have a new heart? If your hearts are not changed, you will grow more wicked as you grow older. And if you die in your sins, you will be lost for ever.

But I hope for better things. Do you not know that Jesus Christ came “to seek and to save that which was lost?” (Luke 19:10). And do you not remember reading that people brought their little children to Him and asked Him to bless them? He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me” (Mark 10:14). Would you not be very glad if He was here now and you could go and kneel down to Him and say, “Blessed Jesus, bless me, even me also?” Well, though He is in heaven, you may do this now. He is the same today as He was then. He loves little children as well as ever.

And I plead with each of you to go into some private place when you go home; kneel down there and say, “Blessed Jesus, I have a wicked heart that makes me do wicked things, and I am afraid of Thine anger. But I have heard in the gospel that Thou hast died for sinners, to save them from hell and sin and the world. O save me, lest I perish! Take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh – a heart to know, trust and love Thee, that I may serve Thee in this world and be for ever happy in the world to come.”

Let none of you say, "I am not old enough, or not big enough, to be religious. It is time enough yet". But you are not too young to die. Younger children than you are in the grave. Besides, you cannot be too young to serve the Lord. Can you be safe too soon? Can you be happy too soon? Can you glorify God too much? Surely not. Well then, pray for a new heart. It is the best gift that God can give you, or you can receive. And may God Almighty, for Christ's sake, bestow it upon every one of you. Amen.

## “Chosen not for Good in Me”

### 1. A Powerful Blow to His Worldliness

*Alex MacLean*

This is the first part of a paper given at the 2006 Youth Conference on "the life and ministry of Robert Murray M'Cheyne".

“**O** to have such a sight of sin as he had, and to prize the blood of sprinkling as he did.” These were the words of Jessie Thain, a close friend of Robert Murray M'Cheyne, after she read his *Memoir* by Andrew Bonar. A year later she read his *Memoir* for the third time and prayed: “O Lord, grant that this record of Thy faithful servant's journey through this vale of tears may be greatly and universally blessed of Thee, especially to those who are engaged in the glorious work of the ministry”. She hoped “that by it they may be led to cultivate greater holiness of walk and conversation and to long more for the glory of Jesus in the salvation of souls”.

Jessie Thain was aged about 22 when she expressed these desires. She looked to Robert Murray M'Cheyne as her father and friend in Christ and greatly missed his fellowship and ministry after he died at the age of 29. She herself passed away to be with the Lord a few years later, aged about 27.

As we consider M'Cheyne's life and ministry, we must not glory in him as a man, but we should see that the grace of God made him what he was. And we should seek, by that same grace, to live our lives to God's glory. Although the Lord used him in building up His Church in this world, M'Cheyne was very conscious that he was “chosen not for good” in himself. But the Lord gave him grace to be a faithful labourer for Him – whose he was and whom he served.

Robert's father, Adam M'Cheyne, was employed by the Court of Session, the highest court in the country, and he was based in Edinburgh. His mother was Mrs Lockhart Murray M'Cheyne, the daughter of David Dickson, who owned the most prominent estate in Ruthwell in the Scottish Borders. So Robert was born into a comfortable upper middle class family.

Adam and Lockhart M'Cheyne had five children, the eldest being a son named David who was to have a profound influence on young Robert. Elizabeth was the second child in the family; she was to look after the manse in Dundee when Robert became the minister of St Peter's church there. William was to qualify as a doctor and practise in India. Isabella died in infancy, aged four months. Robert was the youngest child; he was born on 21 May 1813. While four of the children grew up, none of them married. But although this family had no descendants, the M'Cheyne name still lives on in the hearts of the Lord's people.

The family were brought up with good discipline and high moral standards. Adam M'Cheyne was always ready to use physical punishment, yet he could never remember having resorted to it with Robert. Family worship was kept regularly but there was no living, spiritual religion in the home in the M'Cheyne children's early years.

When he was very young, it became clear that Robert was a clever boy. While recovering from an illness when he was only 4, he learned the whole of the Greek alphabet. As the years went on, his talent for music, singing, poetry, reading, art and drawing became obvious and he took part in gymnastics, athletics and horse riding. Robert received many awards during his school days for his class subjects. As he developed mentally and physically, his character shone with good qualities and his friendly nature and natural gifts made him a popular companion.

Outwardly Robert lived a religious life, but his fondness for dancing, playing cards, and other sinful pleasures clearly showed that “he was a stranger to grace and to God”. Although he seemed to be serious when taking part in family and public worship, he was seeking pleasure in the things of the world. And the piety which some thought they saw in him was just a veneer; it did not come from a new heart. At that time he did not know his own proud, sinful heart. By his own efforts he tried to control his youthful desires for sin, while building up a righteousness for himself. He had a peace in his soul and conscience but it was a false peace, and his religious life lacked a true knowledge of God, a sense of sin and of his own lost condition. He was asleep in spiritual death.

In later years, while dealing with souls in his congregation, he was able to draw on his experience during this stage of his own life. He used it to show his people the emptiness of a life without God and without grace – whatever their attainments in religion and however favourable the opinion others formed of their spiritual state.

Robert sought the attention of girls while in his teens and had no difficulty in attracting them because of his pleasant character and abundant gifts. He

sometimes expressed his feelings about them in poetry. Along with his friends, he enjoyed visits to the Scottish Highlands and to his mother's former home at Ruthwell. There he appreciated the beauties of nature as he walked in the countryside.

After finishing high school, he entered Edinburgh University in November 1827 at the age of just 14. He received a privileged education there from some of the best teachers of that time, in Greek, Logic, Moral Philosophy, Maths and other subjects, and he developed his love for Latin. Robert's successful student days were brought to a climax with the award of a prize in all the subjects he studied.

While attending University, Robert had some religious stirrings and, according to Thomas Chalmers, probably the best-known minister in Scotland at the time, "he was a fine specimen of the natural man". But, as Robert afterwards confessed, he was full of pride and love of the world.

During 1831 important changes took place in the M'Cheyne family. Having completed his medical studies, William left home in April for India, where he qualified as a surgeon. The close-knit family felt deeply the departure of a son and brother for this distant land. But three months later another breach occurred in the family circle which would affect them for eternity. David, the oldest in the family, was a young man with high moral qualities who surpassed his brothers at high school and university. He followed in his fathers' footsteps by becoming a lawyer; he was qualified to conduct cases before the Court of Session. David was further distinguished by his spirituality and his gracious way of life. With the grace of God in his soul, he had a great concern for the spiritual condition of the other members of his family, and for none more than young Robert. David viewed with alarm Robert's love of worldliness as he came to the end of his university days and often spoke to him about the needs of his soul. But at that time Robert thought he was wiser and knew better than his eldest brother and went on his course of sin.

About the time when William left for India, David was suffering from a form of depression and then contracted a fever. To help his recovery, he went to the Lake District but, while climbing the mountains there, he caught a chill. He then returned home but was not strong enough to resist this further affliction; yet his spiritual joy was very obvious. On July 8 he passed away, assured of his salvation, to be with Christ his Saviour.

The death of his loving brother had a profound effect on young Robert, now aged 18, and dealt a powerful blow to his worldliness. His father remarked: "The holy example and happy death of his brother David seems, by the blessing of God, to have given a new impulse to his mind, in the right direction".

# Youth Conference 2008

*Rev D A Ross*

**B**ible-centred topics brought together a number of young people, in early April, to the Church's Youth Conference, which was held this year in the Agricultural College at Auchincruive, near Ayr. Psalm 103:17 is a precious promise related to children: "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children". No doubt, our labour to bring the Word of God anew to the attention of our young friends is part of the outworking of this promise in the providence of the Lord. We trust that these papers will prove to have been profitable for time and eternity for all who were in attendance. The following is a short account of the Conference.

On the afternoon of the first day, Rev D W B Somerset gave a paper on *The Church of Rome*. While she uses Bible language, her teaching and practice are vastly different from what the Bible teaches. The speaker gave several examples. First, Rome has a wrong view of God, and so portrays the Virgin Mary as possessing boundless saving power, which is to exalt her to a level equal with God. Sinners are encouraged to think in terms of their own merit and even their perfection, thus eliminating the need for the redeeming work of Christ. Rome's doctrine of sin is very shallow, resulting in a low standard of morality, while purgatory, another of Rome's errors, is where the vast majority of Romanists are said to be purged from their remaining sins, while everyone else is cast into hell. In conclusion it was said, "The great sin of Romanism is, first, that it is untrue; and, second, that it abuses the holy things of Christ in a deceitful and shameless way. It is an exceedingly evil system."

That evening, Rev John MacLeod spoke on *Effectual Calling*. He reminded us of the outward call of the gospel, which is addressed to all sinners, calling them to repentance and faith in Christ. Sadly, man's response to the outward call of the gospel is to refuse Christ. So this call must be accompanied with divine power. The Holy Spirit does this, convincing the sinner of the evil of sin, and the necessity of Christ to atone for sin, and He persuades and enables the sinner to receive and rest on Christ alone for salvation. Those under the gospel may in a measure be convinced of sin, but they never come to faith in Christ for salvation, apart from the work of the Spirit in effectual calling. Faith is the gift of God and the Holy Spirit has all power to bring the sinner to exercise faith in Christ. The outward call of the gospel is a sincere and genuine call from God to all who hear it; thus to reject Christ carries with it

the fearful punishment of eternal damnation. It is in our best interests to cry to God for mercy, and it is our duty.

The following morning, Rev K D Macleod gave *An Overview of the Bible*. We were taken through the main themes in the Word of God, and were left in no doubt of its oneness and completeness, although it was written over many years by many different authors. We should not wonder at this since the Bible, from beginning to end, was written under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The principal theme running through the Word of God is salvation from sin and, while parts of the Word of God are difficult to understand, the great subject of salvation is abundantly clear, even for those who are not educated. The glorious Saviour is central in the Word; in the Old and New Testaments His line of descent is distinctly preserved; and the many types and prophecies of Him leave us in no doubt that, when He finally appeared in New Testament times, He was indeed the Messiah. Dreadful indeed is the judgement which falls on the ungodly who resist the record of God's salvation, and blessed are those who are obedient to the gospel.

In the afternoon, Rev R MacLeod conducted a historical tour, visiting sites associated with *Some Ayrshire Covenanters* – who stood firm on the side of Christ in spite of intense persecution. We visited St John's Tower, in Ayr, all that remains of the church where the godly John Welsh once fearlessly proclaimed the gospel of Christ. We moved on to the Auld Kirk, also in Ayr, where we saw the burial place of seven pious men who, because of persecution, took part in the disastrous Pentland rising and were executed as a result. Alexander Peden, an untiring minister of the gospel, was chased from place to place by his cruel persecutors, but died a natural death. Yet his relentless persecutors were not content and, out of contempt, dug up his remains to bury him in the burial place of executed criminals at Cumnock, which we visited. We saw Ayrsmoss at a distance, where the godly Richard Cameron was killed in battle as he fought against the tyranny of Charles II. The last to die during these killing times was a 16-year-old youth, George Woods, whose burial place is in Sorn. There Mr MacLeod asked a solemn question: Would we stand firm in the sort of killing times the Covenanters suffered and endured?

In the evening, Mr Hugh Mackenzie spoke on the Free Presbyterian *Mission in Zimbabwe*. We were given a clear picture of its origins and of some of the early gospel workers there, while the main part of the presentation took to do with present-day activities and future developments. While the school, as well as the hospital, an orphanage and a religious bookshop, provide educational, medical, and religious benefits, the great objective is to bring sinners to a saving interest in Christ. There is also a team of translators,

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whose most important work is on the Bible. A new Ndebele translation of the New Testament is now complete and has been published by the Trinitarian Bible Society. We were left in no doubt that, in spite of many difficulties, the good work of our Mission continues in Zimbabwe, and the young people were encouraged to think in terms of giving such assistance there as may be possible for them in providence.

The final paper was given by Rev J B Jardine, on *Samson*, on the last morning of the Conference. He was one of judges in Israel raised up by God and given supernatural strength to deliver Israel from their Philistine oppressors. Single-handedly he was able to resist them and on one occasion he slew one thousand of them. But through his love for Delilah, a Philistine woman, Samson told her the secret of his strength. For a reward, she lulled him to sleep, cut his hair and called the Philistines, who easily captured him and put out his eyes. Some time later there was a large gathering of Philistines in the temple of Dagon, who called for Samson, to mock him. By this time, Samson's hair had grown; he took hold of the two pillars of the temple and received strength from God to pull down the temple upon God's enemies. In this last battle, he killed more of the enemies of the Lord than he did during all other battles although he himself died. Important lessons were noted, not least our choice in marriage. In spite of Samson's weaknesses, he is listed in Hebrews 11 among the cloud of witnesses. Samson's supernatural power is no doubt a type of the power of Christ to deliver His people.

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# Samson

## 2. Beginning to Deliver Israel

*Rev J B Jardine*

The first part of this Youth Conference paper dealt mostly with Samson's character. As a Nazarite, Samson stood under a special promise to God to keep from sin and to act according to the law of God. For this paper, it would be helpful to read Judges 13-16.

*Samson's appearance.* Samson's ability to deliver Israel was confirmed by God when he received the gift of strength through the Spirit of God. We must realise that this does not mean that he was necessarily a muscular man. His strength was not due to physical qualities but to spiritual blessing. In Hebrews 11, Samson is mentioned among those who, out of weakness, were made strong. It is clear that Samson was no natural giant, as is popularly believed, but, as someone has said, "a man who at times was seized with a supernatural impulse of the Spirit to perform, against the oppressors of

his country, feats of heroic might which no merely human arm could have accomplished”.

*The story of Samson's Life.* Samson was a child of promise, like Isaac, Samuel and John the Baptist. Various circumstances surrounding his birth suggested that he would have a remarkable life. Alfred Edersheim says, “The child . . . was not only to be God-devoted but God-given”. A heavenly messenger announced the nature of his birth and his life. This pointed to the extraordinary providences he would experience. His childless mother was told that she would have a son who must be brought up as a Nazarite. The only exception to the rules for a Nazarite was the one against defiling himself by touching a dead body. No razor was to touch his head and he was not to eat any of the fruit of the vine. His mother was told to conform her own life to the substance of the Nazarite law. She must, like Samson, abstain from wine, strong drink and impure food. All this was because he was to “begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (Judges 13:5).

Five key events in his life are recorded in the Bible: (1.) His marriage to a Philistine woman of Timnath against his parents objections. “Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well” (Judges 14:3). Samson married because he sought an opportunity to attack the Philistines. Yet we must also admit that he appears to have had a genuine affection for her. Acting under the secret control of providence he intended to use his marriage to help him deliver his country from oppression.

How can we tell this? His parents objected, but the Bible says that they did not know “that it was of the Lord that he sought an occasion against the Philistines” (Judges 14:4). According to Edersheim, we see this “man's individuality, his personal choice, as the motive power of which the Lord makes use for higher purposes”.

God used this occasion to punish the Philistines through Samson. At the wedding feast he gave out a riddle: “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness” (Judges 14:14). If they would guess the answer, he promised to give them 30 changes of clothes. But the Philistines found out the answer to the riddle only by threatening his new bride. She pleaded with Samson to tell her the answer and, when he did so, she at once told the Philistines. Samson, in revenge, went down to Ashkelon and slew 30 men and took their clothes to pay his debt. Samson went home without his wife and, to save face, her father gave her to Samson's friend.

Samson did not know that his wife had been given to his friend and went



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down to Timnath to see her. He took with him a kid as a gift, in token of his desire for reconciliation. Although he was the offended party, he was willing to do everything in his power to be reconciled. This is a high mark of grace and a spirit that we should seek to have. When he discovered that his wife had been given to someone else, he went out and caught 300 foxes. He tied firebrands between every two tails and burned down the grain fields, olive yards and vineyards of the Philistines. In revenge they burnt his wife and her father to death. Samson then attacked the Philistines (Judges 15:1-8). We should note that, in providence, Samson's wife suffered the same death that she sought to avoid by betraying her husband.

There are lessons here for us all. We must be careful who we marry. We will only have ourselves to blame if we marry with our eyes closed and waken up with a Philistine in our arms. We should consider carefully whatever advice our parents give us about our relationships. And we must bear in mind the danger that we put ourselves in if we begin to socialise with those whose roots are firmly fixed in the world.

(2.) Samson then went to Etam, a defensive rock area in Judah not far from Zorah, his home. The Philistines invaded the territory of Judah and encamped at Lehi near Etam. They demanded that Samson be handed over to them. The men of Judah were willing to surrender Samson and, after tying him up with cords, they handed him over to the Philistines, who shouted for joy as he approached their camp. At that point, the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson and he broke loose from his bonds. After finding the jawbone of an ass, he fought the Philistines, killing over 1000 of them. When Samson was later overcome with thirst, the Lord provided water out of the same jawbone.

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*For Younger Readers*

## **Your Body and Your Soul**

**D**avid Brainerd was a young minister long ago. He went to preach to people who did not know about God. There were so many things they did not know. Brainerd had to think hard how he could explain to them what the Bible teaches.

Brainerd went to these people because he wanted them to be happy. He wanted them to be happy, not only in this life, but also after they would die. So he wanted them to love God, to obey Him and to believe in Jesus.

How did Brainerd begin to teach these people? He told them that there are two parts in everybody – body and soul.

Everyone is happy sometimes. So Brainerd asked the people to think of somebody who is sick and has a lot of pain in his body. But he can still be happy – perhaps when he sees a friend whom he has not met for a long time. He still feels unwell and sore, but he is so happy to see his friend.

But somebody can be free from pain and feel perfectly well, yet he is sad or afraid. He has no pain; he is not at all sick; but because something bad has happened, he feels sad.

There may be something wrong with your body, but the other part of you feels happy. Or all may be well with your body, but the other part of you does not feel happy. The other part of you is what is called your *soul*.

Do you know about someone who has died? Do you know what happened when they died? Their soul was taken away and their body was left behind.

But where did their soul go? If they were good people who loved Jesus, like David Brainerd did, their soul went to heaven. There they will always be happy. They will be with God for ever; so they can never again do anything wrong, and all will be well with them for ever. But if they did not love Jesus, their soul cannot be happy.

So it is very important for us to love Jesus and to do what is right. That is why David Brainerd went to teach the people who did not know about God, or about Jesus and the Bible. He wanted them to hear about Jesus, who came into the world to die for sinners. He wanted them to believe on Jesus.

And did anyone believe on Jesus through Brainerd's preaching? Yes, many people did. So, when they died, their souls went to heaven, and they are happy there now, and always will be.

David Brainerd himself was often sick. God did not heal his body, but God did heal his soul. So we know what happened to David Brainerd's soul when he died; it went to heaven and he is now perfectly happy there. He is free from sin; he loves God perfectly.

That is what you need. Ask God to heal your soul, so that you will love God and believe in Jesus and go to heaven.

# Looking Around Us

## Whom Should We Worship?

It was a religious education lesson on a Tuesday afternoon at a high school near Stoke-on-Trent, in England. The pupils, in year seven (11 to 12-year-olds), were being taught about Islam. It seems the teacher showed the class a short film and then said, “We are now going out to pray to Allah”. She brought some prayer mats out of a cupboard and told the children to go down on their knees. They were also told to wear Islamic headgear during the lesson. Two boys refused to kneel down to pray and were given detention.

Some of the parents were outraged at what happened. One of them complained: “Making them pray to Allah, who isn’t who they worship, is wrong, and what got me is that they were told they were being disrespectful”. We are not told who the teacher claimed they were being disrespectful to (was it Allah?) but we should be clear that prayer can only be made to the true God, who has revealed Himself in the Bible. Prayer is one kind of worship, and Jesus Himself quoted the words: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10). So, in particular, we must not pray to any other god; indeed no other god has any real existence; so only the true God can hear prayer.

Probably the most effective way of teaching about something is for the students to do it. No doubt this teacher thought that the best way for her pupils to learn about Islamic prayer was for them actually to pray to Allah. But she was wrong, because she was telling them to engage in false worship. And to worship any god apart from the true God is a serious sin. No teacher should be telling her pupils to sin, or punishing them when they refuse.

At one time, the main reason for many schools being set up was to give children the opportunity to learn how to read the Bible – so that they would be able to profit from the revelation that God has given in His Word. Yes, British schools still teach religion today, but the attitude usually is: all religions are more or less the same; it does not matter which one you follow; Islam, for instance, is just as good as Christianity – or just as irrelevant.

But Christianity is most certainly not irrelevant. Whatever else we may learn in life – about useful subjects such as science, for example, or maths or technology or history – nothing can possibly be as important as this: there is one God, and only one; we are to receive the revelation He has given us in the Bible; we are to trust in Him and in Jesus Christ whom He has sent to be the Saviour of sinners; we are to follow Him faithfully in the light of His commandments. If we do so, we will be safe in this life, we will be safe at death, and we will be safe throughout eternity.



Members of this year's Youth Conference

## How to Respond to the Bible

Words written by R M M'Cheyne in a Hebrew Bible he sent to a friend. We too may express our desires like this in seeking God's blessing as we read the Bible.

Anoint mine eyes,  
O holy Dove,  
That I may prize  
this book of love.

Unstop mine ear,  
made deaf by sin,  
That I may hear  
Thy voice within.

Break my hard heart,  
Jesus, my Lord,  
In the inmost part  
hide Thy sweet Word.

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