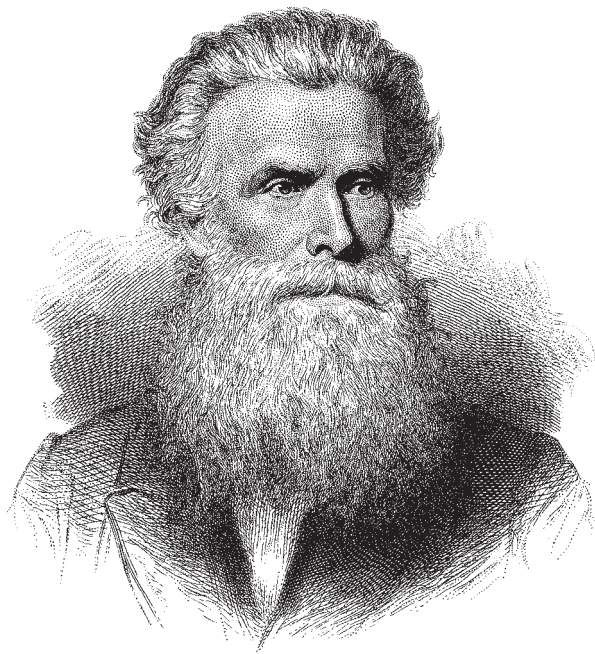


The Young People's Magazine

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

“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



May 2008

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The Bible and Alcohol

More and more youngsters in Britain today are drinking too much. People are speaking of a “crisis” when, on average, 22 under-18s are admitted to hospital in England every day as a result of drinking to excess. Hospitals in the south-west of England have reported an increase of 80% in such admissions in just six years, between 2001 and 2007.

Not only are such young people doing harm to themselves, some of them are doing very serious harm to others. For instance, a group of three teenagers in Cheshire were convicted in February of murdering a man when they were drunk; he had confronted them when they were carrying out acts of vandalism outside his home. There is also a serious problem in Scotland, where the number of young people admitting to drinking alcohol when they are 13 is about 51%, a figure which rises to almost 84% by the time they reach 15.

What is wrong? Presumably much underage drinking is the result of the bad example shown by parents. Yet, even when parents act responsibly, peer pressure is a powerful influence; young people need considerable will power to resist others of their own age who tempt them to do what is wrong. It is very easy to buy alcohol nowadays. A Liverpool professor has pointed out that “a young person’s £10-a-week pocket money will allow them to get drunk three times”. And a senior policeman has asked, “Why is it we have got ourselves into a position where lager is being sold cheaper than water?”

These are serious matters, but more serious still is the fact that most young people today have no solid foundation on which to build their thinking about how they should live. No one has taught them about God and no one has pointed them to the teaching they could get from the Bible.

And what does the Bible say? It gives many warnings against drunkenness – for example, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). Someone under the influence of drink is liable to do many things that are not wise; it is as if the alcoholic drink is mocking him – tempting him to do what may cause others to make fun of him. But those under the influence of drink not only do what is

foolish; they do what is sinful. Perhaps the drunken teenagers would never think of assaulting anyone when they were sober. How many other sins also have been committed under the influence of drink! How much bad language and how many immoral actions have been the result of young people drinking too much!

Perhaps some people will agree wholeheartedly with all this, but go on to ask, What is wrong with drinking, so long as I do not get drunk? The first point to be made is that alcohol may begin to affect your behaviour long before you can really be described as drunk. How much alcohol is it safe to drink? No doubt that varies from person to person. But there is a quantity of alcohol that will begin to affect an individual's thinking; there is a point at which that individual will feel less accountable for his actions; and it ought to be clear that it is irresponsible to drink to that extent. To do something that is going to make you more likely to commit sin is itself a sin.

If you were standing near a slippery slope, beyond which is a dangerous cliff face, how near to the cliff would it be safe to go? If you have any sense, you will keep well away from the edge. And if you have any sense, you will keep well away from getting drunk. Indeed many people feel it sensible never to touch a substance which can do so much harm, a substance which is the cause of so much sin. It is because there are very serious dangers in drinking alcohol that the Scottish Government is considering raising to 21 the age at which it is legal to buy it.

You might point out, rightly, that wine was commonly drunk in Bible times. But it seems that generally it was well diluted with water. And often it was not safe to drink water on its own. But today, in most parts of the world, there is a good supply of drinkable water and there is an ample supply of other drinks which do not contain alcohol.

The pub has become almost central to the culture of Britain and many other countries. But it is no place for a Christian or anyone else who has serious thoughts about God and His law. It is a place where many people go to get drunk. But even apart from that, it is a place for worldly conversation and entertainment. It is a place that can only do harm to people's souls.

Does this sound all very negative? Perhaps it does, but then Ephesians 5:18 must sound very negative also. There we read: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess". But the passage goes on: "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord". There are better things in life than over-indulging in alcohol; one of these is to sing Psalms and to give glory to God in doing so. But maybe what you need is a heart that would enjoy singing Psalms. If so, ask God give you a new heart.

A New Heart

1. We Need to Be Changed

George Burder

This is the first 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. Burder was a minister in England around 200 years ago.

I hope you will remember what I am going to say to you. This sermon was made on purpose for children – made so plain that I hope you will understand it all. I suppose you know that you have souls, which must live when you die and must go to heaven or hell for ever. Now, do you not think it is right to think of your souls, so that they may not go to hell?

I know that you love to play, and it is right that you should play sometimes. But you should remember something else besides play. You know there is a God that lives in heaven, and it is He who gives you food and drink and clothes; it is He who keeps you from being sick and from dying; and He does this so that you may have time to think of Him and pray to Him. I want you to know that it is a terrible thing for God to be angry with you. It is much worse than for your father and mother to be angry with you. Perhaps they may smack you when they are angry; but God Almighty can cast you into hell, to be burned in the fire for ever and ever.

Perhaps you will say, I hope He will not do so to me. I hope so too, and I tell you this so that you may know how to avoid that misery, and that you may learn the way to heaven. Now Jesus Christ is the way to heaven. He came down from heaven to save people like us from going to hell. He did this by suffering and dying for their sins, so that *they* might not suffer for them. It is just as if one of you is going to be punished for doing wrong, and someone else takes your place. In love to you, and to keep you from being hurt, he takes your punishment. And so you escape the punishment.

In order to be saved, the first thing you must know is this: you are sinners. You have left undone what you ought to have done, and you have done the things you ought not to have done. When your parents have been angry with you for doing wrong, perhaps you have thought about it afterwards and have been very sorry for it. When you feel sorry for it, you want them to forgive you, and you go to them and ask their pardon. You also promise not to do wrong again.

Now, there is something in religion like this. We have all done what we should not do, and God may justly be angry with us. But "there is

forgiveness” with Him so that He may be feared (see Psalm 130:4). Jesus Christ, the dear Son of God, bore His anger for sinners like us. The gospel is good news, and God sends men with the gospel to tell us that, if we come to Him by Jesus Christ, He will forgive us. He will be kind to us and help us to do better in the future.

Now, our text is God’s kind promise to His children: “A new heart also will I give you”. The word *heart* does not refer to any part of your body; it means the mind, the spirit, the character. God says that He will make it new and right and good, so that you will love and serve and enjoy Him, both here and in the next world. It is the same thing as being *born again*.

You may remember reading that a learned man called Nicodemus came to Jesus Christ by night, to be taught by Him. The Saviour said to him: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). By this He meant a change of heart, which takes place through the power and grace of the Spirit of God.

Now, unless the heart was bad, there would be no need to change it. But the heart of every person and of every child is very bad, until grace changes it. We are all born in sin, and we love sin until we are born again. Then we love Christ and everything that is good. But you will notice that being baptized is not the same as being born again. Water cannot cleanse or change the heart; it is an “outward visible sign of grace”, but not grace itself.

The Holy War

4. Joy in Mansoul

Rev Roderick MacLeod

This series gives a summary of John Bunyan’s book, *The Holy War*. He pictures the human soul as the town of Mansoul. We have seen its fall into the hands of Diabolus (the devil) and its recapture by Emmanuel (Jesus Christ). King Shaddai is God, and the Diabolonians are the devil’s followers.

In chapter 9 we read of the joy of Mansoul when Emmanuel pardoned it. “O tidings,” they cried, “glad tidings. Good tidings of good and of great joy to poor Mansoul”. “Yea, they that judged themselves, as they went to be judged of their Judge, were by His mouth acquitted.” This was not because “they were innocent, but of the prince’s mercy, and were sent home with pipe and tabor”. When they sang of mercy, they had to mingle joy with their repentance. There was great delight in Mansoul when the pardon of all sin

was announced. The friendship of the Prince was wonderfully desirable to them. They earnestly asked him to stay with them. They considered it an honour to be under the rule and the teaching of the great Prince Emmanuel. They saw that it was absolutely necessary for him to protect them.

Prince Emmanuel met these longings with gracious promises. To show how much he loved their company, he prepared a feast: food and drink and song – songs fetched, not from the streets of Mansoul nor the fields around its wall, but from the court of Shaddai. Divine mysteries were propounded, heavenly light was made to play on them and their truth was unfolded. “Now the . . . elders of the town of Mansoul thought that they never should have enough of the Prince Emmanuel; his person, his actions, his words and his behaviour were so pleasing . . . so desirable to them.”

In this chapter we are taught the great power of God’s mercy to break the hardest heart of the most determined sinner. It is the love of God, revealed in Christ, that breaks the heart. This is a conquest where the one who is conquered cannot discern which is greater: the sweetness of being overcome or the power that overcame them. Thus we are able to understand these words: “Thy people shall be willing, in the day of Thy power” (Psalm 110:3).

In this conquest we see the vastness of God’s generosity to His enemies. It is the freeness of His unmerited favour to the worthless. It is the greatness of His boundless mercy to those in terrible misery. It is these blessings seen in the face of Jesus Christ. It is these blessings viewed by faith (more or less clearly) in that ocean of love which the life and death of Jesus Christ speaks of. This is what makes it impossible for the sinner to refuse Emmanuel His rightful place in his heart any longer.

In the tenth chapter the Diabolonians within the city were condemned to die. The chief of these were: Atheism, Lusting, Incredulity, Forget-good, Hard-heart, False Peace, No-truth, Pitiless and Haughty. In the midst of the solemnities of that time, these enemies put up a great struggle, and Incredulity escaped. Mansoul cried out for the help of her Prince.

In this section we see the believer’s constant warfare with sin. The weakening of corruptions within proves to the believer himself, and to Emmanuel his King, that his heart is sincere before God. It also proves that, though sin cleaves to him, he does not cleave to sin. One of our preachers at a recent communion season quoted a godly Puritan who gave good advice: Do to sin what sin did to Christ. Put nails in the *hands* of sin so that it cannot work against grace; in the *feet* of sin, so that it cannot walk with us; in the *heart* of sin, so that it cannot long live in us – and so prove to ourselves that we are among those who crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.

In the eleventh chapter we are introduced to a most glorious person: One

equal to Emmanuel and Shaddai, who was given to the people of Mansoul for their help. They were informed of the eternal glory of this person, who is called My Lord Secretary. He was so useful to them that they could not do without him; he acted in a kind way on their behalf and brought them gifts which could make them wonderfully rich. A ministry of good tidings was set up under his guidance. And, under his eye, weekly feasts were prepared where Mansoul and Emmanuel met together.

This is nothing other than the preaching of the Word of God, under the guidance and the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit. There Christ feeds on the graces of His people, and they feed upon Him, meeting and feasting together.

Provision was also made to relieve Mr Conscience when he was sick. It was drawn from the blood of Emmanuel's grape, a fountain that is always open and running freely. It was most refreshing to his particular disease. A wonderful document was drawn up, a new charter which spoke of the pardon of sin and of everlasting consolation.

This teaches us that the gospel is a new charter for man. The old covenant having been broken, a new one is put in its place. The old being weak through Adam its Head, the new is strong in Emmanuel its Head.

New garments were given to the people of Mansoul to show the whole universe that they are now Emmanuel's. He gave them directions about these beautiful garments: (1.) They must wear them daily: "lest you should at some times appear to others as if you were none of mine". (2.) They must always keep them white, for "if they be soiled, it is a dishonour to me". (3.) They must gird them up so that they do not touch the ground and get dirty. (4.) They must take heed that they do not lose them, "lest you walk naked and they see your shame". (5.) But if they should defile them, they must then "speed to do that which is written in my law, that yet you may stand, and not fall before me and before my throne". Appearing in these garments they always had delightful access to the great and affectionate Prince Emmanuel. He welcomed frequent visits from them.

In this part, Bunyan teaches that the believer has a garment of profession to wear, which is seen both by God and man. It is white and clean, to show that the believer's duty to God His Saviour is to be holy as He is holy, and to shine as a light before men. God sees what men do not see. Other men do not see sins of the heart, but God sees them; so they must wash their garments in the fountain to which Mr Conscience was sent, the blood of the grape – the fruit of Christ's suffering.

Instructions were given to Mansoul about the conflict before them. These instructions had to do with: (1) the presence of the followers of Diabolus

within the town, (2) how they were to deal with them, (3) their names, (4) the danger they posed, and (5) their deceitfulness.

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

20. Ian, the Almost-Christian Chief

War! War! War! Nothing else could be spoken about across the island of Tanna. Groups of armed warriors watched other groups, fear on their faces. Nobody knew when or where the war would start. Meetings were being held between various tribal chiefs and once again Paton found himself in the middle of it all.

One group of warriors, led by the harbour chiefs Miaki and Nouka were absolutely definite that Paton had to go. He must either leave the island or be killed. Another group, led by a great inland chief called Ian, wanted Paton to stay.

Meeting after meeting was held as the chiefs and warriors argued and threatened. Uncertainty was in the air. One side did not know when the other would suddenly strike.

When yet another meeting was to be held, Ian came to Paton. “Follow me, follow me quickly,” he said. Paton went with him although he did not know where he was going. Eventually they arrived at the village where Ian’s family lived. There in the square were Ian’s warriors armed with guns and axes; they were standing over a terrified group made up of Miaki, Nouka and their warriors.

Ian marched into the middle of the square and, proudly looking round, shouted: “Missi, these are my men and your friends! We are met to defend you and the worship!” Then pointing over to Miaki and Nouka he cried: “These are your enemies and ours! The enemies of the worship, the disturbers of the peace on Tanna! Missi, say the word and the muskets of my men will sweep all opposition away, and the worship will spread and we will all be strong for it on Tanna. We will not shoot unless you agree; but if you refuse they will kill you and persecute us and our children, and banish Jehovah’s worship from our land.”

What was Paton to do? He did not want to be the cause of anyone’s death. He stood in the middle of them and cried: “I love all of you alike. I am here to teach you how to turn away from all wickedness, to worship and serve Jehovah, and to live in peace. How can I approve of any person being killed for me or for the worship? My God would be angry at me and punish me if I did!”

Ian was angry: "Then Missi, you will be murdered and the worship destroyed". Paton explained again how he could not agree to anyone being killed and he turned to leave. At last, after further talk, both sides unwillingly agreed to peace and they went back to their homes.

For some time after this, the peace lasted but then there were fights and squabbles over land and Miaki and Nouka were not happy. They called a gathering and declared that they were going to kill Ian by witchcraft (nahak). The people were scared.

Shortly after this Ian did become ill, seriously ill. To Paton it looked as if he had been poisoned, but all the people thought it was the nahak that had made him sick. Paton did all he could to help him, but he was in a lot of pain and was not getting better.

One night a group of men from Ian's village came to get Paton. Paton agreed to go but only once daylight came. When he arrived at the village many people had gathered and he started to feel uncomfortable – he could sense that there was tension. He went in to Ian's house and talked and prayed with him, as he appeared to be dying. When he had finished praying, Paton suddenly realised that he was all alone with Ian in the hut and that there was an unnatural silence outside. It was as if everyone had suddenly disappeared.

Paton was alarmed! This meant that some terrible deed was going to be done. "Come near me, and sit by my bedside to talk with me, Missi," Ian said. Paton did so and, as he was speaking to him, Ian lay as if in a dream. Suddenly from the thatch close to his bed, Ian pulled a large knife like one a butcher might use. He brushed the edge of it against his hand and then jabbed the tip of it towards Paton's heart. He held it there, shaking. He was so disturbed.

Paton didn't know whether to move or speak, but he prayed in his heart for the Lord to spare him; or, if it was his time to die, to take him to glory to be with Himself. The seconds passed. Paton sat where he was, not moving or speaking. His sight came and went. Then all of a sudden Ian whipped the knife round back into the thatch: "Go! Go quickly!" he cried.

In a flash Paton was on the road. Not one person could be seen in the village. Paton then realised that it had been agreed that Ian would kill him. Nobody wanted to witness the killing. So, when the warships would come to find out what had happened, everyone could say they did not see anything. Then no one could be punished.

Paton ran the four miles back to his house and arrived faint and shocked. He praised God for having delivered him once again. Poor Ian died soon afterwards, and two of his wives were killed to accompany him to what the people called the "other world".

Ian, the great inland chief, seemed to be so promising. He respected Paton and defended him and wanted Jehovah's worship on his island. And yet, as far as we know, he died a heathen. He did not come to know Christ as his Saviour.

You must be careful that you do not end up like Ian. You might be respectful towards God and His worship, and that is good. But it is not enough. Christ, and Christ alone, is our only hope of being saved. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6).

S M Campbell

Missionary to India

24. "Without Wearying and Without Fainting"

In 1856 Alexander Duff returned to Calcutta for the third and last time. Soon after he arrived, the Indian Mutiny broke out, but the Duffs were kept safe in Calcutta.

When Duff began his work in Calcutta he focused on educating boys. Because of the attitudes in Indian society, there were difficulties in organising a school for girls. But by 1857 Duff could see that those who had studied at his college, and now had families, were ready to send their daughters to a girl's school; it was time to venture out in this new direction. The next year he reported to Scotland: "Beginning with a mere handful, the number gradually increased in spite of much open and serious opposition". An Indian offered his home for a public examination of the girls – a means of attracting attention to what was being achieved in the school – and others gave money for prizes and scholarships, for instance. Duff "felt more than rewarded for all the trials and troubles of the past", and he "thanked God and took courage".

Among those whom Duff met on his first night in Calcutta in 1830 was the Swiss missionary A F Lacroix. They remained close friends until Lacroix died in 1859. For 38 years he had, longer than anyone else, preached to Indians in their own language. But, said Duff, the success which followed "his faithful, acceptable and untiring labours in the way of the conversion of souls to God, for which he intensely longed and prayed, was very small, but . . . he never once lost heart"; he went on "to the very end" with constant "cheerfulness and elasticity of spirit".

Duff's words in a sermon he preached at that time described himself almost as much as his friend, when he referred to Lacroix's "assured confidence that not one of the 'exceeding great and precious promises' would fail; and that, sooner or later, India, yea, and the whole world, would be the

Lord's. He constantly delighted in saying that the Christian's business was to labour, and labour on – to plant and water, and water and plant, without wearying and without fainting – leaving all results to God. From love to Christ and in obedience to His command, he intensely felt it was his duty to work, and work on, in faith, whether privileged to witness any success or not. The work of sowing was his; the blessing of 'increase' was God's." So apart from two years he spent back in Europe, Lacroix laboured on for those 38 years "as cheerfully and energetically as if he was reaping a glorious harvest. 'It will come, it will come, after I am dead and gone,' was his prevailing thought, 'for the good Lord has said it; and it is not for me to scan His ways or to know the times and the seasons which He has appointed.'"

A few years later Duff's Scottish colleague in Calcutta, David Ewart, died after becoming ill with the disease of cholera. Then Duff heard of the death of Gopeenath Nundi, whose faithfulness under trial had been so impressive. "Little did I dream", Duff looked back with sadness, "when we knelt together in my study to commend each other to the Father of spirits, it was the last time we should meet till we hail each other before the throne on high, as redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. But so it has proved. I mourn over him as I would over an only son." And, after all, Gopeenath was a spiritual son, one of Duff's converts. Gopeenath too, Duff believed, had a number of spiritual children. "When", Duff asked, "shall we have scores and hundreds" with the same spirit as Gopeenath? And he called for prayer that greater numbers of Indians would be raised up to take his place.

Soon afterwards another of the early Scottish missionaries, William Mackay, had to return to Edinburgh as a result of ill health. This added to Duff's responsibilities but, now that he was in his mid-50s, he no longer had the strength to carry them out fully. Besides, he was himself unwell during every rainy season and only recovered during the brief time of cooler weather. Yet he laboured on in the hope that there would yet be a great harvest. He prayed "without ceasing that the Spirit may be poured out in Scotland, England, India and all lands. . . . How long, Lord, how long? When wilt Thou rend Thy heavens and come down? When will the stream descend?" He knew that, in the face of Hinduism, which was already 3000 years old, the missionaries' weapon had to be "more than ever the Word of God and the arm that wields it, prayer". Duff was deeply grateful for those souls which had already been converted in India, but he longed for more – "thousands, yes, tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands, and millions".

Duff himself went on with his work. An Indian, who had become a government official, told how he and one of his superiors had visited Duff's college with its 1000 students. He noted how the students listened quietly

and respectfully as Duff stood praying under a veranda onto which all the classrooms opened. He noted too that, among other petitions, Duff prayed “for the overthrow of idolatrous superstition and the spread of the knowledge of the true God in India”. This was why this missionary had come to India, in the hope of being an instrument in God’s hand to weaken idolatrous superstition and to spread the knowledge of the true God. The official was impressed with Duff’s “admirable way of speaking to the lads” and how well those in the highest classes were coping with the philosophy textbook they were studying.

Duff understood the value of a good general education, but Philosophy and other such subjects were, for him, also a means to an end. He wanted to expose the foolishness of Hindu superstition, as well as expose the students to the truths of Christianity, in the hope that some would come to a saving knowledge of the truth. During the 32 years since he had first arrived in India he laboured on without wearying and without fainting. And he saw his hopes fulfilled in some measure – a number of these students found Christ for their souls and some of them became messengers of the gospel themselves. But Duff’s days in India were now drawing to a close.

For Younger Readers

What Is Sin?

Do you know what it means to sin? Of course, you know what it means to do wrong. You remember lots of times when your father and mother were not happy because of something you did, or because of something you did not do.

Perhaps your father told you to do something and you did not do it. Let us say he told you to come to the table for your dinner. But you were enjoying yourself playing with a toy, and you did not come at once. You knew you should have come right away. You did not obey your father. You did wrong.

Or perhaps your mother told you not to do something. But you went on and did it anyway. Let us say she told you not to put your finger into the sweet mixture she was making. But you knew it would taste nice and you put your finger in anyway and licked it. You did not obey your mother. You did wrong.

You did wrong when you went against what your father or your

mother said. But what made it so wrong was that God tells you to obey your father and your mother. So you not only did wrong against your father or mother, you sinned against God. To do wrong against God is to sin.

But God has made it possible to have your sins taken away. How was that? He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to take sin away. That is why Jesus Christ had to suffer and die. That is how serious sin is – the Son of God had to die because of sin. So ask God to take away all your sin for Jesus' sake.

“How Long is Eternity?”

This story, slightly edited, is reprinted from an earlier issue of this Magazine.

“**H**ow long is eternity?” asked a little boy who was six years old. His father sat silent.

“Father,” said the child again, “How long is eternity? Won't you tell me?” Still there was no reply.

The fact was that, until then, the father had never thought about eternity. He had lived as though there would be no hereafter. The present world was all he had ever thought about, but now his own child's question awakened other thoughts and feelings. The child may have forgotten about his question; not so his father. Wherever he went, and whatever he was doing, the thought was always present in his mind: “How long is eternity?”

At last he went to a neighbour and asked him what he thought about it? “Eternity,” he said, “we can have no idea of the length of the eternity. I once heard a minister say that, if a drop was taken from the ocean once in a thousand years, there would come a time after millions of millions of ages when the ocean would be emptied by that single drop once in a thousand years. Again it has been said that, if a little bird was to take a single grain from a large mountain once in a thousand years, there would come a time when that sand would be completely removed and that mountain levelled. And yet, after the millions and millions of years thus spent, eternity would only then be beginning.”

“How long is eternity?” still rang in the man's ears. And, the more he thought of it, the more alarmed he became. With these thoughts about the length of eternity, there came thoughts about the number and the weight of his sins. Sleep forsook him; a horrible dread came over him. He found no rest.

In this state he went to an old minister and told him his distress. The old

man listened to his story and then pointed to the sinner's Friend. He spoke of Jesus and His great salvation, of His blood that blots out all sins, and of His robe that covers the nakedness of the sinner. The man saw and he believed. And the question, "How long is eternity?" no longer give him pain, for he knew that he would pass that eternity in the presence of God and the Lamb.

Cry to God

A letter, slightly edited, written by Jonathan Ranken Anderson, a Glasgow minister, on 5 August 1846 to a young woman who was concerned about her soul.

It is only too obvious that there is a great gulf fixed between the soul of a sinner and the knowledge of God, and that this gulf cannot be crossed by created power. But what then? Is there no hope? To say there is none would be to contradict the plainest declarations of divine truth and to deny that a revelation from God exists. To yield to despair is devilish; to cherish hope in the foundation laid in Zion is at least to look in the direction of Christianity.

I do not care how dark and painful your thoughts about your state are, so far as either your heart or hand is concerned. You may have as low and despairing thoughts about self as you please. But, on the other hand, you cannot think too highly and too confidently of Him whom you have offended, whom you hate, and yet whom you do not know. For your salvation is to flow from the very Being you have rebelled against. He has kindness enough to pity you, for He is love. He has wisdom enough to instruct you, for He is light. He has power enough to save you, for He is all-powerful. In the deepest darkness look for Him, even as a traveller in the darkest night would look for the rising sun.

When farthest off, cry to Him – for out of the lowest depths He hears the cry of the needy. Let the glory of His being be that on which your soul casts anchor. Though all else should prove like the shifting sands, leaving you to drift at the mercy of every wave, keep fast by the truth that God lives – a truth more stable than the universe. And the day may come when you shall sing, Blessed be the God of my salvation.

I try to pray for you, but, alas, I make a poor hand at this work. This is only – and I am quite conscious of it – because of how unspiritual I am. We should tremble to think of having access to such an instrument as prayer, and yet neglecting to wield it for our own and others' salvation. O if we had a more vivid grasp of the wrath to come, if we looked more intensely into the misery of a lost soul, if we had a firmer conviction of the great beauty of

salvation, surely we would be constrained to pray without ceasing. And we would be especially constrained to pray when we felt most averse to it and when we least feel our need of it.

Looking Around Us

Women Bishops?

The dispute about women ministers rumbles on in the Church of England and its associated Churches. In the Church in Wales recently there were proposals to allow women ministers to become bishops. But these proposals were defeated by just three votes out of 140 at a meeting in Lampeter, in south-west Wales. This happened although they were backed by Dr Barry Morgan, the Archbishop of Wales, who is the head of the Church in Wales.

Afterwards he spoke of his “great disappointment” and claimed: “I feel we won the argument, but we narrowly lost the vote”. And he went on: “It is essential that the Church makes best use of everybody’s talents; so this outcome was very upsetting”.

Of course the Church should make the best use of everybody’s talents, but only within the principles God has laid out in the Bible. The Bible must be the basic reference book for everything that is done in the Church. And no one can really win any argument if they go against the Bible’s teachings. In the end, God is the judge of everything, including the debate about women bishops. And no one whose arguments are not biblical should be upset if they do not get their own way.

So what has the Bible to say about women bishops? Perhaps the first thing one should say is that it says nothing about bishops, in the sense of super-ministers – ministers who organise the activity of ordinary ministers. If the Bible is silent about them, they should have no place in the Church. The Authorised Version uses the word *bishop*, but there it means exactly the same as the word *elder* (see how Titus 1:7 speaks of an *elder* when he is clearly one of the *bishops* referred to earlier, in verse 5). And a minister is just an elder who is responsible for teaching in the Church as well as for ruling.

What is more, women are forbidden to teach in the Church of God (see 1 Timothy 2:12). But they are to use their talents in many other ways. They can teach children in Sabbath schools, for instance, and older people too in a private way. They will almost certainly have many opportunities of showing kindness to others. But whatever opportunities men or women may have, whatever talents they may have, all God’s children may, and must, pray.

Women bishops? There should be no women ministers in any Church;

nor should there be bishops, whether male or female. Yet we should pray earnestly that God would send men out to preach the gospel – godly men whom He would fit with the necessary gifts to be “able ministers of the new testament” (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2007-08

Exercise 3

All answers from overseas should be sent to *Mrs N M Ross, F P Manse, 10 Achany Road, Dingwall, Ross-shire, IV15 9JB, Scotland*. The correctors should have your answers before the end of June. These exercises are based on Joshua 14 to 1 Samuel 25, and Acts 20 to 2 Corinthians 4.

Senior Section (15 years old and over)

UK answers to *Miss C MacQueen, 32 Fraser Crescent, Portree, Isle of Skye, IV51 9DR*.

Old Testament

1. Read the book of Ruth.
 - (a) Write the two well known verses expressing Ruth’s determination to go with Naomi. It would be good to learn them by heart. (2)
 - (b) Explain why Naomi thought she would be better called Mara. (2)
 - (c) Why did Boaz wish to be kind to Ruth? (2)
 - (d) Quote a few words which describe how Ruth had faith in the God of Israel. (2)
 - (e) How did Ruth provide for herself and her mother-in-law? (2)
 - (f) How was Naomi occupied after Ruth’s marriage to Boaz? (2)
 - (g) How is Ruth’s son Obed related to David? (1)
2. Read 1 Samuel chapter 1.
 - (a) What did Hannah vow to do if the Lord would answer her prayer? (2)
 - (b) How was Eli mistaken when he looked on Hannah? (1)
 - (c) How did Hannah explain her behaviour? (2)
 - (d) What was Eli’s reaction and what effect did this have upon Hannah? (2)
 - (e) What does the name Samuel mean? (2)

New Testament

1. Read Romans chapter 8.
 - (a) In your own words say how the carnal mind is described. (2)
 - (b) Quote the short verse which says who “the sons of God” are. (2)
 - (c) How are the Lord’s people encouraged by the Apostle, whatever they may have to suffer? (2)
 - (d) Put the following in correct order: justification, glorification, predestination, calling. (2)
 - (e) List the adversities which cannot separate believers from the love of Christ. (4)
 - (f) List what cannot separate believers from the love of God. (4)
2. Read Romans chapter 10.
 - (a) How is the law kept for believers? (2)
 - (b) How near has the gospel come to us? (2)
 - (c) Say why it is so important to be always at the public means of grace. (2)
 - (d) What benefits should follow from having a preacher whom God has sent? (2)
 - (e) Write down the verse quoted from Isaiah’s prophecy which is a response to the rejection of the gospel. (1)

Memory Exercise

- Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to question 89 in the Shorter Catechism: How is the Word made effectual to salvation? (3)

Intermediate Section (13 and 14 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs E Couper, 17 Duncan Street, Thurso, Caithness, KW14 7HU.*

Old Testament

1. Read Judges, chapters 6 and 7.
 - (a) Which tribe was invading Israel? (1)
 - (b) Why did Gideon feel he could not save Israel? (2)
 - (c) How did the Lord encourage him? (3)
 - (d) Why did the Lord want him to have fewer soldiers? (2)
 - (e) Tell in your own words how Gideon's army was made smaller. (3)
2. Read 1 Samuel chapters 1 and 2.
 - (a) Why was Hannah sad? (2)
 - (b) In what ways did Elkanah try to comfort her? (3)
 - (c) What did Hannah plead for and what did she promise? (4)
 - (d) Why was Samuel called by that name? (2)
 - (e) Write down statements which tell us of Samuel's progress. (3)

New Testament

1. Read Acts chapter 20.
 - (a) What had Paul testified to the Jews and Greeks? (2)
 - (b) Which verse shows that he was not afraid of the future? (2)
 - (c) Why was he "pure from the blood of all men"? (2)
2. Read Acts chapter 24.
 - (a) What particular person accused Paul? (2)
 - (b) What four charges were brought against Paul? (4)
 - (c) To whom did Paul explain the Christian faith? (2)
 - (d) What effect did it have on him? (3)
3. Read Acts chapter 26.
 - (a) Why was Paul now "happy"? (2)
 - (b) What did Festus think was wrong with Paul? (2)
 - (c) How did King Agrippa receive Paul's message? (2)
 - (d) What verdict did Festus and Agrippa pass on "this man"? (2)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to question 48 in the Shorter Catechism: What are we taught by these words "before me" in the first commandment? (3)

Junior Section (11 and 12 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs C M Sutherland, Inchure, Saval Road, Lairg, Sutherland, IV27 4ED.*

Old Testament

1. Read Judges chapter 7.
 - (a) What nation did Gideon deliver the children of Israel from? (1)
 - (b) How many soldiers did he have when he went to fight? (1)
 - (c) Why did God want him to have so few? (1)
 - (d) What three things did each soldier carry when he went to fight? (3)
 - (e) Say what the soldiers did with each of the three things. (3)
 - (f) What were the two princes of Midian called and what happened to them? (3)
2. From your reading of 1 Samuel, say who spoke the following words and to whom they were spoken:
 - (a) Why eatest thou not? And why is thy heart grieved? (chapter 1)
 - (b) Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him. (chapter 1)
 - (c) For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him. (chapter 1)
 - (d) Why do ye such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. (chapter 2)
 - (e) What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me. (chapter 3)

(10)

New Testament

1. Read Romans chapter 12. How are we commanded to behave
 - (a) towards that which is evil
 - (b) towards that which is good
 - (c) in business
 - (d) in tribulation
 - (e) towards them which persecute us
 - (f) towards those that weep
 - (g) towards those that rejoice? (7)
2. In Romans chapter 10 verses 13-15 there is a chain of truths in which each is linked to the next. Read these verses carefully and then write down the words missing from the following passage. The same number indicates the same word; so there are six different words to be filled in. If preachers are not (1) by God, they cannot (2) . If preachers do not (2) , the people will not (3) . If people do not (3) , how shall they (4) ? And if they do not (4) , how shall they (5) on the name of the Lord? If they do not (5) on the name of the Lord, they will not be (6) . (6)

Memory Exercise

- Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to question 89 in the Shorter Catechism:
How is the Word made effectual to salvation? (3)

Upper Primary Section (9 and 10 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs Sheena Campbell, 2 Silverknowes Midway, Edinburgh, EH4 5PP.*

Old Testament

1. Read Judges 4:4-9.
 - (a) What is the name of the person who was judging Israel at this time? (1)
 - (b) Who did she send for? (1)
 - (c) Who was going to be delivered into his hand? (1)
 Read verses 14-24.
 - (d) Where did Sisera flee to? (1)
 - (e) What did he ask to drink and what was he actually given? (2)
 - (f) What two things were used to kill Sisera? (2)
2. Read 1 Samuel 18:1-11.
 - (a) Why did Jonathan make a covenant (agreement) with David? (1)
 - (b) What job did Saul give David? (1)
 - (c) How many did the singing women say Saul killed? How many did they say David killed? (2)
 - (d) How did Saul react when he heard this? (1)
 - (e) What happened the next day as David was playing the harp? (2)

New Testament

1. Read Romans 12:10-21. There are several verses which talk about being loving and kind to other people. Find and write out the verse which mentions:
 - (a) "Be kindly affectioned one to another" (1)
 - (b) "given to hospitality" (1)
 - (c) "live peaceably with all men" (1)
 - (d) "avenge not yourselves". (1)
2. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-28. Paul is describing how the Lord's Supper should be kept.
 - (a) What did the Lord Jesus do before He broke bread? (1)
 - (b) What does the bread represent? (1)
 - (c) What does the cup represent? (1)
 - (d) What does eating the bread and drinking the cup show? (verse 26) (1)

- (e) What are the people to do before eating the bread and drinking the cup? (1)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write down the answer to question 12 in the Shorter Catechism:
What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created? (2)

Lower Primary Section (8 years old and under)

UK answers to *Mrs R J Dickie, 11 Churchill Drive, Stornoway, Lewis, HSI 2NP.*

Old Testament

1. Elkanah had two wives. What was the name of the one who had no children? (1 Samuel 1:2)
2. What did she ask the Lord to give her? (1 Samuel 1:11)
3. What was the name of the priest who saw her praying and thought she had drunk too much wine? (1 Samuel 1:13)
4. What did the priest say when she explained that she was praying to God? (1 Samuel 1:17)
5. What did she call her son? (1 Samuel 1:20)
6. Was he old when Hannah brought him to Eli in Shiloh? (1 Samuel 1:24)
7. What did Hannah make and take to him every year? (1 Samuel 2:19)
8. Who called Samuel one night when he was lying down to sleep? (1 Samuel 3:4)
9. Who did Samuel think was calling him? (1 Samuel 3:5)
10. What did Eli teach him to say if God called him again? (Fill in the missing words): S____, LORD for thy servant h____. (1 Samuel 3:9)

New Testament

Complete these verses from Paul's Epistle to the Romans:

1. As it is written, There is n____ righteous, no, not o____. (Romans 3:10)
2. For a____ have sinned and come short of the g____ of God. (Romans 3:23)
3. For the w____ of sin is death; but the g____ of God is eternal l____ through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)
4. For whosoever shall c____ upon the name of the L____ shall be saved. (Romans 10:13)
5. So then faith cometh by h____, and hearing by the w____ of God. (Romans 10:17)

Youth Conference in Australia

The proposed Youth Conference in Sydney has been postponed till January 2008, DV. More information will be available later.

Price 70p