

# 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*



***January 2008***

***Vol 74 • No 1***

---

# Contents

---

Who Can Protect Us? .....	3
For Junior Readers – Lessons from the Life of John G Paton:	
28. Aniwa and the Speaking Bit of Wood .....	6
From Genesis to Revelation:	
1. Beginnings .....	8
Separation from the World:	
2. The World Is a Source of Great Danger to the Soul .....	11
For Younger Readers:	
Such a Long Time to Learn .....	13
“Chosen not for Good in Me”:	
6. The Beauty of Holiness .....	14
The Red Pen and the Bible .....	17
Looking Around Us .....	18
Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2008-09:	
UK Names for Exercise 1 .....	19
The Barren Fig Tree .....	19

---

**Cover Picture:** *Robert Murray M'Cheyne*. See page 14.

## The Young People's Magazine

**Published by** the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Scottish charity number SC003545.

**Editor:** Rev Kenneth D Macleod BSc, F P Manse, Ferry Road, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA; tel: 01859 520271; e-mail: leverburgh@lineone.net. All unsigned articles are by the editor.

**Material for the magazine** should reach the editor by the beginning of the previous month.

**Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address** should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; e-mail: wc.fpchurch@btconnect.com; tel: 0141 332 9283. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates, including postage, are: F P Magazine £19.50 (£1.50 per copy); Y P Magazine £11 (70p per copy); both magazines £28.50. All queries should be directed to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

**Free Presbyterian Magazine:** The Church's main magazine is *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Send to the General Treasurer at the above address for a free sample copy. See above for subscription rates.

# The Young People's Magazine

Vol 74

January 2009

No 1

## Who Can Protect Us?

**B**ritain is now almost a godless society, and some other countries are even worse. In some countries, such as the United States, there is much more evidence of people acknowledging God, but even there a great deal of religion is very shallow. Yes, in almost every country in the world, there are Christian churches – but we should be clear that many of these churches do not pay much attention to the Bible. Yet even where there are lots of churches, young people are unlikely to meet many whose principles are truly influenced by the Bible – as they come into contact with others in school, for instance, or in university or at work.

Most people you meet today live as if there was no God. Suppose they could receive a message from someone with the authority to say that there is no God, there would not be the slightest change in their lifestyle. They would just go on as they do now, ignoring the principles God has given us to show us how to live – the principles summed up in the Ten Commandments. People may still speak about right and wrong, but they ignore the fact that *God* has given us these sure principles to guide us in deciding what is right and what is wrong. As David (described as “the servant of the Lord”) looked around him, he said, “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart that there is no fear of God before his eyes” (Psalm 36:1); when he saw a wicked man sinning, David could see clearly that here was someone who had no respect for God or His laws. And when today you see people around you doing what is seriously wrong, it indicates that they have no respect for God or for His Commandments.

These people may not reject all the Commandments. But certainly they would never think of keeping the Fourth, and remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Probably they would have no respect for the Seventh Commandment: “Thou shalt not commit adultery”. Why, they would ask themselves, should we restrain ourselves in our relationships with the opposite sex?

Nor need we expect them to be careful about how they treat the Third Commandment: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;

for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain". They will feel free to speak about Him in any way they like; after all, they have no respect for Him or any of the names by which He has revealed Himself.

These people may indeed have a moral code, but it is not based on what God has revealed. It will be a pick-and-mix version of the various ideas they have come in contact with. They will almost certainly believe in something like the Eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal". After all, they do not want anyone to steal their possessions, although they may not be quite so careful about what belongs to their employer.

The whole outlook of such people on moral issues is: Does it *feel* right? They make themselves judges of what is right, rather than accepting what God says. The Bible speaks of God's judgements, because He has passed judgement on what is right and wrong, and we should accept what He says as absolutely true. And He has total authority to direct us in these things.

I hope this is what you have learned at home – God's absolute right to direct us as to how we should live. But when you go out into the world – to school or university or work, or any other place your duty calls you to – you are likely to meet many who want to live according to their own moral code, and very few who want to follow the moral code which God has given us.

How should you react? There are two main options: (1) decide to follow the world and, probably, go deeper and deeper into sin; or else (2) seek to follow God and to obey the moral code He has given us. It may well seem easier to act like everyone else, but that is to follow the broad way – and, remember, it leads to everlasting destruction. It may seem impossible to be different from everyone else; it may feel like swimming against a very strong tide. But how important it is to do what is right! And we can be absolutely sure that what God tells us to do is right. Indeed the Bible tells us that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12). Yes, God's law is not only holy, it is good for us.

It is our duty to keep God's commandments. There is no doubt about that. But you may find it is very difficult to keep them, especially when you are with people who do not respect them. One obvious but important conclusion you should draw from such a difficulty is that you need help; indeed you need a great deal of help. By your own power, you will never be able to keep God's commandments well enough to please God. So where will you get the help you need? Only from God Himself, working in your soul by the Holy Spirit. If you are to resist the temptations of an ungodly world, you need a new heart, and it is only the Holy Spirit who can give you a new heart. So you need to pray that, for Jesus' sake, the Holy Spirit would create a new heart within you. And you have every encouragement to pray for that.

Do you imagine it is too much to expect the Holy Spirit to come and work within you? You should not think like that. As the Apostle Paul wrote, God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20). God can do not only what we ask, or what we imagine is possible, but He is able to give us things that are altogether beyond what we can think or ask. It is He, of course, who knows what is best for us, and what He gives may be better than what we ask for. But, whatever else we ask, we should pray for the most important things, the best things. And these are spiritual things, blessings for our souls, the blessings of salvation.

One of these blessings is God’s protection – in particular, to keep us from the temptations we meet when we mix with workmates or fellow students, for instance. They may do many things they should not do; they may say many things they should not say; they may read many things they should not read. We are very apt to be influenced by their example, but we need God to keep us; we need the Holy Spirit to give us new hearts. And we need the Holy Spirit to keep our hearts, even after we have been born again.

If you have a new heart, Christ has come to dwell in your heart. If He has taken possession of his heart, you are safe. Let me illustrate the matter by referring to a young man called John. Perhaps at this time he was still working for a bookseller. One day a young man showed John a picture of a lonely cottage on a moor and said, “How can anyone live there?” The young man answered his own question: “John, we can live anywhere if we have Christ in us and Christ with us.” So we can go anywhere in safety if we have Christ in us and Christ with us – and if it is our duty to go there, and that would normally include your place of work or study. On the other hand, you should not expect God’s protection if you go to some place where you know you will probably meet temptation, when you do not need to be there. Then it would be presumption for you to go, and that is dangerous. You should not expect to come away unharmed from a pop concert or a dance, for instance; you gave in to temptation before you went there. These are not places for someone to go who hopes to get to heaven at last.

Think of Paul in prison, expecting very soon to be put to death. In spite of all the temptations he might face – to deny his Master, for instance – he knew that all would be well. He could say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” – the day of judgement (2 Timothy 1:12). By grace from heaven, Paul had by faith committed his soul into God’s keeping, and so it would be safe whatever happened. If Paul needed to be kept, so do we. Let us earnestly ask God to give us a living faith in the Saviour and to keep us safe from all kinds of temptation – for Jesus’ sake.

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

## **Aniwa and the Speaking Bit of Wood**

For about four years, the focus of Paton's missionary work was speaking to other Christians about it. He continued to travel round Australia and New Zealand to raise money and to interest people in the missionary work in the South Sea Islands. This work even took him back to his native Scotland.

He enjoyed being back in Scotland and was glad once again to see his parents, who were now quite old. He also met someone who became his second wife. Her name was Margaret Whitecross, a Christian lady who had a strong interest in missionary work. The Lord blessed her and Paton with a long, happy marriage and 10 children: although three of them died when they were very young.

Mr and Mrs Paton set sail from Scotland to Sydney in January 1865, but it was a year and a half later before they set sail again for their new mission island called Aniwa. Paton had wanted to return to Tanna but the advice from all the other missionaries was that it was still too dangerous. So Paton agreed to settle on Aniwa, hoping that one day God would make it possible for him to return to Tanna. But God never did guide Paton back, although other missionaries settled on Tanna some years later and saw many of the islanders converted to Christ.

Aniwa was a much smaller island than Tanna and was surrounded by a coral reef. Indeed the only rock found on the island was coral. It did not have any high mountains or hills and, as a result, suffered from low rainfall, leading to a shortage of water at some times of year. But the moist atmosphere and heavy dews gave enough moisture for many plants to grow in the fertile soil.

The islanders built a temporary shelter for Paton, Margaret and their young child and welcomed them to their new home. Paton quickly started looking for a high piece of land where he could build a permanent home. He wanted to avoid the mistake he made on Tanna, building his house on sheltered land, which gave rise to sickness, fever and eventually death for Mary Ann, Paton's first wife.

They were allowed to buy a raised piece of land on Aniwa, but they learned later that it was a sacred piece of land and that some of the people were hoping the gods would kill them for building their house there. It was a place where the remains of cannibal feasts were buried. When Paton was clearing and levelling the site he gathered two large baskets of human bones. He asked the chief: "How did these bones come to be here?" and the chief replied, with a shrug of his shoulders: "Ah, we are not Tanna men! We don't eat bones!"

Neither Paton, nor Margaret his wife, nor their child came to any harm

from living on this site. Paton thought that this might have helped the people on Aniwa realise that their Jehovah God was indeed a powerful God.

Paton had now to start learning a new language and he did this much as he learned Tannese. He picked up the questions in the Aniwa language, “What is this?” and “What is your name?” And from there he built up many other words, which he wrote down and memorised.

Paton tells the story of “the miracle of the speaking bit of wood”. One day he was working on his new house and he needed some more nails and tools. To save time he decided to send a message to Margaret his wife, who had the things stored at their shelter. Paton wrote down the list of things on a smooth piece of wood and asked the old chief, who was watching nearby, to take the piece of wood to Margaret, telling him that she would send back what he wanted.

The old chief looked at Paton in curious amazement. “But what do you want?” he asked Paton. “The wood will tell her”, Paton answered. The chief looked a bit angry, thinking that Paton was trying to make a fool of him. He asked, “Whoever heard of wood speaking?”

Paton pleaded with the chief to believe him and just take the wood to his wife. Grudgingly the chief went off and gave the piece of wood to Margaret. She looked at it and then at once started searching around and gathering all the things her husband needed, for the chief to take back to him. The chief not only brought back what Paton needed but also the piece of wood. He eagerly asked Paton to explain to him how this amazing thing had happened.

Paton read the words off the piece of wood. He then went on to explain to the chief that, just as he had spoken to his wife through the words on the piece of wood, so God spoke to them by the words in His Book, the Bible. Paton told the chief that, when he would learn to read, he could hear God speaking to him from His book. The old chief then wanted to learn and to help in the work of getting God’s words written down in his own language. He became a keen helper of Paton in this work.

We are very well off in having God’s words easily available to us in the Bible. But because we are so used to having the Bible – and indeed many of us probably have several Bibles in our homes – we may not appreciate what a wonder this is. So we may not value the Bible as we ought to, or read it as carefully as we should. We must keep in mind that “this is actually God speaking to me.”

Bible societies work hard trying to get translations of the Scriptures into new languages and distributing the Bibles to people who might not be able to afford to pay for one. The Trinitarian Bible Society gets lots of letters from people who have received these Bibles; these people are so thrilled to

be able to read God's Word. We need to ask God to help us read His Word carefully and ask Him to help us understand it. The psalmist David had a good appreciation of God's Word when he said:

“O how love I thy law! It is  
my study all the day:  
It makes me wiser than my foes;  
for it doth with me stay” (Metrical Psalm 119:97-98).  
*S M Campbell*

# From Genesis to Revelation

## 1. Beginnings

This overview of the Bible was originally a paper at the 2008 Youth Conference.

Suppose you are at a service in church and the time has come for the sermon; the minister gives out his text, which is just one verse from the Bible. It is as if he takes his microscope and focuses it on the truths that appear in the one verse which he has chosen, out of the more than 31 000 which make up the whole of Scripture. This is not what we are going to do just now. Instead we will try to look at the whole of Scripture at once.

But what is the Bible? It is a collection of 66 books written over a period of around 1500 years. There are books written by Moses and Solomon and Isaiah and Peter and Paul and many others, including some whose names we do not know. These were the human authors, but Paul reminds us that “all scripture is given by inspiration of *God*, and is profitable” (2 Timothy 3:16). In other words, the whole Bible was breathed out by God, which means that the Holy Spirit so guided its human authors, such as Moses and Peter, that they wrote exactly what God wanted them to write. So, because God is the final Author of the Bible, there can be no mistakes in it; we can depend absolutely on everything it says. No wonder Paul describes the whole of it as “profitable”!

Yet not all of the Bible is easily understood. Does this mean that some people will not be able to find their way to heaven? No, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* put the matter like this: “Those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded [put forward], and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them” (1:7). In other words, what we most need to learn from the Bible – especially the way of salvation through Jesus Christ – is made sufficiently clear in some part, or parts, of Scripture. This



means that everyone, even those who are not educated, will be able to get a right grasp of it. So everyone can find out from the Bible how they may be saved from sin and from a lost eternity. But we must also remember our need of the Holy Spirit if we are to have a spiritual understanding of the teachings of the Bible. What need then to pray that the Holy Spirit would so work in our hearts that we would begin to understand the Bible properly and believe in Jesus Christ!

Instead of looking in detail at one verse or chapter, or even a complete book, we are going to try to take what we may call a bird's eye view of the Bible. We will try to look at it as a whole and answer such questions as these: What are the themes of the Bible? What are the threads which run through its ideas and teachings? What is the significance of the various books that make it up?

The first theme we find in the Bible is creation: how God created the whole universe, and everything in it, in six days, and all was "very good". It is worth noticing how, later in Scripture, God's work in creation is often brought forward to show His power and authority. For instance, in Isaiah 40, the questions are asked, "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, *the Creator* of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" And what is to be learned from the Creator's power? "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength". From this we are to conclude that, no matter how weak we are in ourselves, we will receive all the strength that we need if we trust in the One who is the Creator of all things.

God ended His work of creation by bringing into existence Adam and Eve, the first human beings. They were perfectly holy and perfectly happy. Yet neither their holiness or their happiness was guaranteed to last. Adam in particular, as the head of the whole human race, was warned about the consequences of sinning against God. He was given a specific test: would he, or would he not, refrain from eating the fruit of just one tree? As a test of his obedience it did not seem particularly demanding, for he was free to eat every other kind of fruit. But the devil came into the garden, tempted Eve to break God's command and, through her, caused Adam also to disobey. It was the first sin, and because Adam represented all his descendants, they all sinned with him.

How much of the Bible is taken up with sin and the consequences of sin! We cannot possibly understand the rest of the Bible properly unless we take this fundamental fact seriously. And sin does indeed have consequences. First of all, there is death; Adam had been warned that if he ate of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would "surely die".

Clearly he did not die that day, in the sense of passing away from this world. But it shows us that there is at least one other sense of death which is even more significant. As soon as Adam sinned, he became *spiritually* dead, and so did Eve. Previously they had been spiritually alive and so they were able to love God and to keep His commands heartily. Now it was completely different; they did not love God; they did not want to obey Him; they did not welcome His presence; instead they tried to run away from Him. And throughout the Bible we see repeated evidence of spiritual death.

There is also the matter of *eternal* death – endless suffering in hell. There are many references throughout the Bible to this solemn fact of a lost eternity. And we should note that it is Christ Himself who, more than anyone else, warned about hell as the place to which those will be sent who go on in their sins.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they had no reason to believe that either of them could escape eternal death. But almost immediately God made known to them that “the seed of the woman” would come to bruise the devil’s head, while the devil would bruise His heel. This is the first reference to Jesus Christ coming into the world to suffer and die: His “heel” was to be *bruised*. At the same time, Christ would inflict total defeat on the devil; his *head* – the most vital part of the body – was to be bruised.

Further instruction no doubt came in connection with the animals which were killed so that Adam and Eve could use their skins as clothes, to cover their nakedness. These animals had to die because Adam and Eve had sinned; they were substitutes for our first parents. This must be understood as the first teaching about sacrifice, and the first picture of Christ as the substitute for sinners, dying instead of them – so that, in the words of John 3:16, “whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”. Sacrifice is a theme which runs right through the Bible, and we will return to it.

Thus far we have only covered the first three chapters of Genesis. We cannot afford time to look at any other individual part of Scripture so closely – though it can hardly be said that we have given even these chapters a thorough examination. These three chapters, with their themes of creation, sin and salvation are totally fundamental; we cannot hope to understand the rest of the Bible unless we are familiar with them.

### **2009 Youth Conference**

This year's Youth Conference will be held in Inverness, God willing, from Tuesday, April 7, to Thursday, April 9. Further details should appear in next month's magazine.

# Separation from the World

## 2. The World Is a Source of Great Danger to the Soul

*J C Ryle*

This is another section, slightly edited, of a chapter from the book, *Practical Religion*. Last month's article introduced the matter as a subject of vast importance.

By the *world*, remember, I do not mean the physical world, on the face of which we are living and moving. If someone pretends that anything which God has created, in the heavens above or on the earth beneath, is in itself harmful to anyone's soul, he says what is unreasonable and absurd. On the contrary, the sun, moon and stars; the mountains, valleys and plains; the seas, lakes and rivers; the animals and plants – all are “very good” in themselves (Genesis 1:31). All are full of lessons about God's wisdom and power; all proclaim daily: The hand that made us is divine. The idea that matter is in itself sinful and corrupt is foolish; it is false.

When I speak of the *world* here, I mean those people who think only, or chiefly, of the things of this world and neglect the world to come – people who are always thinking more of earth than of heaven, more of time than of eternity, more of the body than of the soul, more of pleasing man than of pleasing God. It is of them and their ways, habits, customs, opinions, practices, tastes, aims, spirit and tone that I am speaking when I refer to the *world*. This is the world from which Paul tells us to come out and be separate.

Now the well-known *Church Catechism* teaches us at its very beginning that the world, in this sense, is an enemy to the soul. It tells us that there are three things which a baptized Christian is bound to give up and three enemies which he ought to fight and resist. These three are the flesh, the devil and the *world*. All three are terrible foes, and all three must be overcome if we would be saved.

But whatever people think about the Catechism, we shall do well to turn to the testimony of Holy Scripture. If the texts I am about to quote do not prove that the world is a source of danger to the soul, there is no meaning in words.

(a) Let us hear what Paul says:

“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

“We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12).

“Christ gave Himself for us, that He might deliver us from this present evil world” (Galatians 1:4).

“In time past ye walked according to the course of this world” (Ephesians 2:2).

“Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10).

(b) Let us hear what James says:

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

“Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

(c) Let us hear what John says:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

“The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not” (1 John 3:1).

“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (1 John 4:5).

“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4).

“We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

(d) Let us hear, lastly, what the Lord Jesus Christ says:

“The cares of this world choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22).

“Ye are of this world: I am not of this world” (John 8:23).

“The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him” (John 14:17).

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:19).

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16).

I make no comment on these 21 texts. They speak for themselves. If anyone can read them carefully and fail to see that the *world* is an enemy to the Christian's soul, and that there is an utter opposition between the friendship of the world and the friendship of Christ, he is past the reach of argument

and it is waste of time to reason with him. To my eyes they contain a lesson as clear as the sun at noon.

I turn from Scripture to matters of fact and experience. I appeal to any old Christian who keeps his eyes open and knows what is going on in the Churches. I ask him: Is there anything that damages the cause of religion more than the world? It is not open sin or open unbelief which robs Christ of His professing servants so much as the love of the world, the fear of the world, the cares of the world, the business of the world, the money of the world, the pleasures of the world, and the desire to keep in with the world. This is the great rock on which thousands of young people are continually making shipwreck. They do not object to any doctrine of the Christian faith. They do not deliberately choose evil and openly rebel against God. They hope somehow to get to heaven at last. They think it proper to have some religion. But they cannot give up their idol; they must have the world. And so after running well and bidding fair for heaven while boys and girls, they turn aside when they become men and women, and they go down the broad way which leads to destruction. They begin with Abraham and Moses and end with Demas and Lot's wife.

The last day alone will prove how many souls the *world* has slain. Hundreds will be found to have missed heaven who were trained in religious families and knew the gospel from their very childhood. They left the harbour of home with bright prospects and launched forth on the ocean of life with a father's blessing and a mother's prayers. But they then got out of the right course through the temptations of the world, and ended their voyage in shallows and in misery. It is a sorrowful story to tell, but sadly it is only too common.

I cannot wonder that Paul says, "Come out . . . and be . . . separate".

---

*For Younger Readers*

## Such a Long Time to Learn

He was a ship's captain. Perhaps he had sailed a long way across the seas and was now in some town far away from home.

The captain was a good man. He loved God and believed in Jesus. He was walking along a street one evening. He heard people singing in a building. It was a hall used for services for sailors.

An old sailor was taking the service that evening. He said, "I have been 42 years learning three things". It seemed such a long

time to learn just three things! The captain listened carefully; he was very interested to find out what these three things could be.

He did not have to wait long. The old sailor soon told his hearers what the three things were.

The first thing was that he could not save himself from his sins. The second was that God did not expect him to save himself. And the third was that Christ has done everything we need, so that we may be saved.

I am sure you could learn all these things by heart very quickly. You would not need to spend 42 years before you could repeat them all, would you?

But that is not what the old sailor meant. He might have found it very easy to repeat these words: "I cannot save myself". But it took him 42 years to find out how very difficult it indeed was to save himself from sin. It is so difficult that he just could not do it. Neither can we. Only Jesus Christ can save us.

These three things are a lesson which we can only learn properly when Jesus teaches us. He is the most wonderful teacher. Ask Him to teach you everything you need to know about salvation – including the three things the old sailor took so long to learn.

---

## **“Chosen not for Good in Me”**

### **6. The Beauty of Holiness**

*Alex MacLean*

This is the final part of a paper given at the 2006 Youth Conference on “the life and ministry of Robert Murray M’Cheyne”. Last month’s article described M’Cheyne’s visit, along with Andrew Bonar and two other ministers, to Palestine. On his way home he heard that the Lord was blessing His Word in Dundee, where M’Cheyne was minister of St Peter’s church.

**B**efore departing for Palestine, M’Cheyne arranged that William C Burns, a young minister, would take his place in St Peter’s. M’Cheyne wrote to him: “I hope you may be a thousand times more blessed among them than ever I was”. Now he could rejoice that his wish had been fulfilled and he longed to see the evidence with his own eyes. It was this young minister whom the Lord had chosen for a time of spiritual awakening in St Peter’s, but there was no jealousy in M’Cheyne’s heart. While he was absent from

his flock, M'Cheyne was bringing them before the Lord in prayer each day, and what he had been pleading for had now become the happy experience of many of his people.

Before this time of awakening, M'Cheyne had prayed and laboured earnestly for such a blessing in his congregation. And now that the Lord had graciously visited them, M'Cheyne's workload increased as many anxious souls were seeking the Saviour. Besides, those who had come to the Saviour needed to be instructed and established in the truth.

While thanking William C Burns and, above all, thanking God for His wonderful work, he said, “My dear brother, I shall never be able to thank you for all your labours among the precious souls committed to me; and what is worse, I can never thank God fully for His kindness and grace, which every day appear to me more remarkable. He has answered prayer to me in all that has happened, in a way which I have never told anyone.”

Many ministers visited St Peter's to see for themselves God's work in this ongoing awakening and to assist in preaching the gospel; there was also a great need to feed the flock of Christ. Among those who came to Dundee was John Macdonald from Ferintosh, whose own ministry had been greatly used by the Lord as he travelled and preached extensively throughout the land. Before this time of special awakening, M'Cheyne's preaching had been blessed to the salvation of many sinners and his labours were blessed in later years also.

M'Cheyne is well known for the many poems he composed; perhaps the best known of them is “Jehovah Tsidkenu” (The Lord our Righteousness), which he wrote while, aged 21, he was recovering from a serious illness. He believed that he would not live long. His frequent illnesses, along with his experiences while visiting the sick and dying, probably heightened his awareness of the shortness of time and the weakness of the human body. And so he sought to spend and be spent in seeking the salvation of sinners.

M'Cheyne took an active part in the defence of the Sabbath Day. He wrote a pamphlet entitled, *I Love the Lord's Day*, in which he said, “The Sabbath is a remaining flower of Paradise, it is a ‘day of blessing’. It delights the Lord on this day in particular to consecrate His Word” – pointing out that most sinners are converted on the Lord's Day. He was very careful in observing the Sabbath and used it as a day for spiritual activities. His sermons were prepared on weekdays, as he did not think it was proper to prepare them on the Sabbath, but only to go over what he had previously prepared.

Because of his concern for the souls of sinners generally, M'Cheyne willingly preached wherever he was invited, and at times went on evangelistic tours. His last such tour was in February 1843, when he preached 27 times

in 24 different places over a three-week period in Peterhead and the Aberdeen area. Never before had he experienced the feeling that the Lord was so close to him as on his journey back to Dundee.

He preached to his own congregation for the last time was on March 12. He told them that the believer "shall see the face of God without a cloud . . . to all eternity. Here, O believer, you have many clouds to darken your view, but there, there will be none; and then there is being with Christ, which is another part of the eternal inheritance."

He preached his last sermon in Broughty Ferry that evening on the verse: "Arise, shine . . ." (Isaiah 60:1), and it was blessed to a woman in the congregation. The next evening he took ill and, although he did not sleep that night, he rose the next day to officiate at a wedding. On his way home he met a young girl; as he spoke to her of the Good Shepherd who gave Himself for His sheep, about six other children gathered round and listened intently. Like his Master he had a deep concern for little children.

M'Cheyne called on his doctor on his way home and returned to his manse seriously ill with typhus fever. A few days later, on Saturday, 25 March 1843, his ministry in this world came to an end and Robert Murray M'Cheyne passed into the eternal world at the age of 29. His desire was now fulfilled: "Often, often, I would like to depart and be with Christ – it is far better". How aptly his life is summed up in this verse from his poem, "I Am Debtor":

Chosen not for good in me,  
Wakened up from wrath to flee,  
Hidden in the Saviour's side,  
By the Spirit sanctified,  
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,  
By my love, how much I owe.

We will close this short review of M'Cheyne's life by referring briefly to one of the most striking ways in which it glorified his Lord and Master – the holiness he showed by his devotion to God, serving Him by a life of obedience. He often prayed "Lord, make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be made". His life of holiness was not an insincere display of outward religion; his desires after holiness of heart and life came from a new heart indwelt by the Spirit of holiness. Many testified that it was the genuinely-holy way he conducted himself, whether in the pulpit or in the company of others, that moved them; they saw in him the beauty of holiness as they never saw it before. When M'Cheyne wakened each morning, he wanted to seek the Lord before he saw any other human being; so he spent much time in prayer at the beginning of each day, getting up about 6 am.



---

We ought to profit by remembering these examples of M'Cheyne's wise statements:

“Do not think any sin trivial. Remember it will have everlasting consequences.”

“Union to Jesus and holiness, from His Spirit flowing into us, is our chief and only happiness.”

“There is no joy like that of holiness.”

“I trust you feel real desire after complete holiness. This is the truest mark of being born again.”

---

## The Red Pen and the Bible

I went one day into a large army institution in the United States to speak to some old soldiers. When I came into the building, one of the chief officers told me that they used to have an old captain of Marines there. It was just after one of two great battles, and this old captain was a bit of a hero. When he came, at the close of his life, to this retirement home, he came as someone who did not believe the Bible and would never attend the chapel services.

One day he was taken seriously ill, and this chief officer went into his room and said, “Captain, why don't you read the Bible?”

“Because I don't believe in the Bible”, answered the old man.

A few days later the officer came again and said, “Captain, here is a Bible; if you find any place that you think you can believe, mark it with red. And if you read the Bible through and cannot find any such place, when I come next time you can tell me so.”

The old captain said, “Where shall I begin?”

“Begin with the Gospel of John”, said the officer.

So the old man started through the Gospel of John. He read the first chapter and never made a mark. He read the second chapter, and not a mark. He read to the fifteenth verse of the third chapter, and never reached for his pen. But when he came to the sixteenth verse, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”, the old man took up his pen, dipped it in the ink, and marked the sixteenth verse in red.

By the time we came to this part of the story, we had reached the door of a room. The officer who was telling it to me opened the door, and stepped in. It was the room the old captain had occupied, and it was now empty.

The old captain had gone to his eternal home, and the officer said, “I wish you could have seen his Bible; but we have sent it to his daughter in

Philadelphia. There was scarcely a page in the whole Bible that was not marked with red. He had come to believe it all.”

What had brought about the change? Not a minister, because he would not listen to ministers! Not the officer, because he would not let him talk to him about Jesus! It was the Spirit of God. There has never been a man or woman converted in this world in whom the Spirit of God did not do His work, convicting them of sin, convincing them of Jesus, lifting up the Saviour before them, and then enabling them to believe on Him.

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38,39).

Adapted slightly from *Cheering Words*

---

## Looking Around Us

### Religion and Society

What is wrong with society today? Many answers may be given – some right and some wrong, some sensible and some stupid. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has researched what people in Britain think about the question.

As might be expected, some people's views contradicted what others have said. Take religion, for instance. Some people believed it was a cause of much evil in society. Others saw the decline of religion as the problem.

Who was right? In fact, both may be partly right. But we must distinguish between *true* religion and *false*. There can be no doubt that false religion – what has no foundation in the Bible, and even what is not *properly* based on the Bible – has done a great deal of harm. It has caused a great deal of damage to individuals, and to society in general.

People today think they can stand back and lump every kind of false religion together with true Christianity. But they are wrong. What God has revealed in the Bible is truth; if we follow it, we will do what is right. But if we turn away from the Bible, we will do what is wrong – what is offensive to God and is likely to be damaging to other people.

We are to take God's Word, the Bible, as a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path (see Psalm 119:105). It tells us to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbour as ourselves – and our neighbour is anybody else we come in contact with. This is true religion, but it must come from a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit. And every community where true religion flourishes ought to be a community where the evils that so much afflict society today have disappeared.

---

# Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2008-09

## UK Names for Exercise 1

**Senior Section:** *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin. *Bonar Bridge:* Sandy and Elizabeth Campbell. *Dingwall:* Alistair Mackenzie. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan, Jonathan MacDonald *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Catherine Freeke, Neil Gillies. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Catherine Schouten. *King's Lynn:* Joanna Wiltshire. *Longcot:* Lucy Cooper. *North Uist:* Christina Macdonald. *Portree:* Rachel M Mackinnon. *Sidcup:* Constance and Rupert J Turnbull. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

**Intermediate Section:** *Barnoldswick:* Robert Ross. *Dingwall:* Andrew and Ruth M Macleod. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan, Isla Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie, Mairi Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Donna Chisholm, Kate Gillies, Rachel and Ruairidh Macleod, Peter Macpherson. *Haywards Heath:* Hannah Woodhams. *Inverness:* Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton, Peter Schouten. *London:* Rachele Strata, Amy van Kralingen. *Longcot:* Ruth Cooper. *Luton:* Stephen Kingham. *North Tolsta:* Shona Harrison, Sheena Mackenzie, Lucy A MacLeod, Sean Macleod. *North Uist:* Margaret Cameron, Fraser MacDonald, John A Macdonald. *Peasmarsh:* Alasdair Bailey. *Sidcup:* Lucy Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Sarah Gillies, Lauren Macdonald. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Swavesey:* Sarah Parish. *Swindon:* Alison Tugwell. *Trowbridge:* Joanna Broome. *Vatten:* Sabrina Annand, Robert Rose.

**Junior Section:** *Barnoldswick:* David J Martin, Rebecca Ross. *Broadstairs:* Edward Martin. *Chippenham:* Jessica Salkeld. *Dingwall:* Graham MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Daniel Macdonald. *Farrington:* Philippa Sayers. *Gairloch:* Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Rebekah Macleod, Callum Macpherson. *Inverness:* John Maton. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *London:* Andrew Munns, Ben Strata. *Longcot:* Samuel Cooper. *North Tolsta:* Murron Harrison, Innes G Mackenzie. *North Uist:* Iain Boyd. *Sidcup:* Jemima and Jeremy Turnbull. *Staffin:* Neil A Matheson, Carey Ross. *Stornoway:* Cirsty Gillies. *Swavesey:* Matthew and Robert Parish. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot. *Trowbridge:* Nathan Broome. *Vatten:* Jayne A Fleming.

**Upper Primary Section:** *Aberdeen:* Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* James Ross. *Chippenham:* Rosie Salkeld. *Dingwall:* Jane Mackenzie. *Edinburgh:* Emma Norris, Annabelle Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Andrew Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Kenneth Macpherson, Sarah Macleod. *Inverness:* Rebekah Maton. *King's Lynn:* Susie Wiltshire. *London:* Elizabeth Strata. *Ness:* Joshua Acton, Kathryn Ferguson, Johan MacInnes. *North Tolsta:* Mairi Campbell, Scott Macleod. *North Uist:* Eilidh Cameron. *Point:* Isla MacDonald. *Sidcup:* Joseph Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Eilidh Macleod, Ryan MacSween.

**Lower Primary Section:** *Aberdeen:* Samuel McIntosh, Rachel Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* Christopher, Lily-Ann and Robert Metcalfé, James Ross. *Broadstairs:* Claudia and Miles Martin. *Dingwall:* Hannah Mackenzie, Mark and Sarah Mackenzie, Laura MacLeod, Alasdair and Donald Murray, Matthew and Esther Ross. *Edinburgh:* Bradley Morrison, Jessica, Jonathan and Louise Norris. *Gairloch:* Roderick Wyatt. *Garrabost:* Duncan Macdonald. *Glasgow:* Jonathan Macleod, Iain and Katie Macpherson, Rachel Smith. *Guildford:* Susanna Risbridger. *Inverness:* Jonathan Janczak, Daniel and Jessica Maton. *Kyle:* Sarah Whear. *London:* Claudia and James Campbell, Henry Munns. *Ness:* Jonathan MacLean. *North Tolsta:* Anna Campbell, Catriona and Christie Nicolson. *Jersey:* Alexander Ross. *Sidcup:* Annabelle, Henry, Julius, Max and Sebastian Turnbull. *South Harris:* Cameron MacLeod. *Stornoway:* Lucienne Doig, Kirsten Macleod, Kate and Mollie MacSween. *Swavesey:* Priscilla Parish. *Trowbridge:* Abigail and Daniel Broome.

---

## The Barren Fig Tree

Within a vineyard's sunny bound  
An ample fig-tree shelter found,  
Enjoying sun and showers.

The boughs were graceful to the view,  
With spreading leaves of deep-green hue,  
And gaily blushing flowers.

When round the vintage season came,  
This blooming fig was still the same,  
As promising and fair;  
But though the leaves were broad and green  
No precious fruit was to be seen,  
Because no fruit was there.

“For three long years”, the master cried,  
“Fruit on this tree to find I’ve tried,  
But all in vain my toil;  
Ungrateful tree! The axe’s blow  
Shall lay thy leafy branches low.  
Why cumpers it the soil?”

“Ah, let it stand just one year more,”  
The dresser said, “till all my store  
Of rural skill I’ve shown.  
About the massy roots I’ll dig;  
And if it bear, we’ve gained the fig,  
If not, then cut it down.”

How many years hast thou, my heart,  
Acted the barren fig-tree’s part,  
Leafy, and fresh, and fair,  
Enjoying heavenly dews of grace,  
And sunny smiles from God’s own face?  
But where the fruit? Ah, where?

How often must the Lord have prayed  
That still my day might be delayed,  
Till all due means were tried!  
Afflictions, mercies, health and pain,  
How long shall these be all in vain  
To teach this heart of pride?

Learn, O my soul, what God demands  
Is not a faith like barren sands,  
But fruit of heavenly hue.  
By this we prove that Christ we know,  
If in His holy steps we go:  
Faith works by love, if true.

*R M M'Cheyne*

**Price 70p**