

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



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Cover Picture: *Traigh Mhor*, North Tolsta (see page 164).

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No 9

Life Is Precious

Few people now remember the Battle of Fromelles, fought in north-east France during World War I. But hundreds of British and Australian troops were slaughtered there in just a few hours on 19 July 1916. Indeed it was the worst 24 hours in Australia's military history, with 5533 of her soldiers killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Two years ago the remains of 250 men were discovered in a mass grave nearby and a new cemetery was created to provide what was considered to be a more appropriate burial for them.

Among the relatives who gathered recently for the official opening of the new cemetery was Londoner Alastair Matheson, whose great-uncle Christy fell at Fromelles. This historic event, Mr Matheson feels, "underlines how precious life is". As a boy he had heard about his great uncle, and he is obviously sad that it was never possible for them to meet. He is probably thinking of opportunities he has missed of enjoying his relative's company, and all because of the fearful scourge of war.

We too should think of life as something precious. But what makes it precious? Yes, there are opportunities of making friends and enjoying each other's company. Yet one needs wisdom in choosing friends. Everyone should ask: Will this person whose company I am beginning to enjoy do me good or harm? Will this person tempt me to commit sin more readily than I otherwise would? Will he or she lead me away from the Bible and its teachings? Will he or she help me to forget God and to live as if He had never given me the Ten Commandments?

Human friendship is a wonderful gift if it has a good influence on us: influencing us against sin and helping us to think about God and His commands. It is a great blessing if it leads us to consider life seriously, and our relationship to God. But friends who lead us in the opposite direction are dangerous. We very much need God to lead us safely through every area of our lives, not least in our choice of friends – and especially in choosing a husband or a wife. So we should pray earnestly that He would do this for us.

If this life is a precious opportunity to experience human friendship, it is, much more importantly, an opportunity for finding the greatest of all friends,

Jesus Christ, and to begin to enjoy fellowship with Him. If we find Him, He will never cast us off. But if we do not find Christ, it would be far better for us never to have lived – so awful is the end of a Christless life, when the unbelieving soul passes into a lost eternity.

On the website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission there is a section entitled, “Remembering Fromelles”. One of the pictures shows part of a battered New Testament which, one assumes, was recovered from the burial site. At its top left-hand corner one can see most of Romans 5:1. Significantly, its words have been underlined. This suggests that the owner of this New Testament valued these words and that he may have been resting his soul on Christ and what He did for sinners, so that (in the words of the verse) “being justified by faith, [he had] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”. If that was so, though this soldier’s precious life was lost for this world when he became the target for a German bullet, yet his precious soul went straight to heaven.

John MacKenzie was another young man who fought in France during World War I. He belonged to North Tolsta, on the Isle of Lewis; he had sought salvation about 10 years before the war began and found rest for his soul in Christ. But looking back on the more than 20 years before then, he could see clearly that he had been, sinfully, wasting precious opportunities for seeking Christ and living to the glory of God.

After joining the army, he was stationed for some time in Cromarty. As an officer, his role there was to train other soldiers. One day he told the men, “A grenade is your best friend in the trenches”. Then he corrected himself: “Christ is your best friend in the trenches”.

For quite some time, there was always a number of godly, praying men in the army camp at Cromarty. John MacKenzie joined them at their meetings for prayer and expounding the Scriptures. Before joining the army he had been accepted as a student for the ministry and now he often preached to the soldiers. It is said that “he did this, not in a cold and formal and unsympathetic manner, but as one who, knowing the terrors of the Lord against sin and sinners, persuaded men and beseeched them, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God. He had experienced the awful wrath of God against sin in his own soul and, consequently, warned men to flee from the wrath to come.” Here was a man who had realised the preciousness of life, seeing it as a God-given opportunity for obtaining mercy. He would have been very conscious of the danger ahead of these young soldiers: before long they would probably be on their way to a battlefield, possibly in France, to face enemy bullets and a serious risk of death.

Someone wrote from Cromarty to a friend: “I feel very sad after the godly

men left us in the last draft, but I am sure in my mind that, if it be the Lord's will concerning them that they should fall on the field of battle, they will have a blessed eternity with the Saviour whom they loved and served". Some of the godly soldiers who had been in Cromarty did fall in battle; their precious lives were cut short; but God has said, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15).

John MacKenzie reached France at the end of March 1918 and was sent to the trenches. Living and fighting in a trench was never pleasant, but heavy rain made conditions even more unpleasant. John marvelled how patiently his fellow soldiers, though ungodly men, endured whatever they had to face. He commented: "How much more should men, having the grace of God in their hearts, benefit by such an ordeal?" They should be made so much more patient and more dependent on God than they would otherwise have been.

On 9 June 1918 a shell, from the German trenches opposite, burst near John MacKenzie. He was severely wounded. His comrades began to carry him to where he would get medical help, but he lost so much blood that he died before they reached the dressing station.

Clearly *his* death was precious to God. His lifetime too was precious, as he had lived to the glory of God and sought to influence others for good. Yet his death was a loss to this world. If God had spared him, he could have been a useful minister for many years; his preaching might have been blessed to many souls. But we can never tell what the future might have been; the important point is that he made use of his opportunities. Long before death swept him into eternity, he sought the Lord and found Him; and John served Him until the moment he died. So we know that he is experiencing a precious eternity in the presence of God.

You have a precious life which, at the longest, cannot continue for very long in this world. But you will exist for ever, either in heaven or in hell. You should ask yourself if you are ready to die. If not, your precious life is in danger of being wasted.

Take seriously the fact that you have offended God by your sin. Receive the testimony of the Bible that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). So you must believe in Him, as you are commanded, and everlasting life will certainly be yours. And in this life you may in some degree be useful. You can be a good example to others; you can show that it is possible to live a godly life in an evil world. You can pray for those around you, and even for people throughout the world; and when you speak to other people it may be helpful to them spiritually. Remember that no life is really precious unless it is lived to the glory of God.

Only One Way of Salvation

5. Some Consequences

J C Ryle

This is a series taken from Ryle's book, *Knots Untied*, and is based on the verse: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). It has been edited. In the last three articles Ryle has been answering the question: Why is the teaching of this verse true?

3. *Some consequences which flow naturally from Peter's teaching.* To me this seems to be one of the most important parts of the subject. The truth I have been trying to set before my readers has so much to say about the condition of most of mankind that I must say something about it. If Christ is the only way of salvation, what are we to feel about many people in the world? This is the point I am now going to take up.

I believe that many people would go with me as far as I have gone and no further. They think it unkind to say anything that appears to condemn others. For my part I cannot understand such charity. It seems to me the kind of charity which would see a neighbour drinking slow poison but never interfere to stop him, or which would allow passengers to embark in a leaky vessel and not try to prevent them, or which would see a blind man walking near a precipice and think it wrong to cry out and tell him he was in danger.

The greatest charity is to tell the greatest quantity of truth. It is no charity to hide the real consequences of such a saying of Peter as we are now considering or to shut our eyes against them. And I solemnly call on every one who really believes there is no salvation in any but Christ – none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved. I solemnly call on that person to give me his attention while I set before him some of the tremendous consequences involved in the doctrine we are considering.

(a) *All religion is utterly useless without Christ.* Today many people who claim to be Christians have a religion of this kind. That there is a God, that there is something called providence, that God is merciful, that there will be a state after death – this is about the sum and substance of their creed. As for the distinguishing teachings of Christianity, they do not seem to recognise them at all.

Now I denounce such a system. Its foundation is human ideas; its hopes are an utter delusion. The god of such people is an idol they have invented themselves – not the glorious God of the Scriptures. Even on their own showing, it is a miserably-imperfect being, without holiness, without justice. It has nothing except a vague mercy for everyone. Such a religion may

possibly do as a toy to live with; it is far too unreal to die with. It utterly fails to meet the needs of a sinner's conscience; it offers no remedy; it provides no rest for the soles of our feet. It cannot comfort, for it cannot save. Let us beware of it if we love life. Let us beware of a religion without Christ.

(b) *Any religion in which Christ does not have the first place is folly.* I do not need to remind you that many believe a system of that kind. Some false teachers tell us that Christ was just a man. They claim that His blood had no more effect than that of anyone else, and that His death on the cross was not a real atonement and propitiation of man's sins. They say that, after all, doing is the way to heaven and not believing.

I solemnly declare that I believe such a system ruins souls. It strikes at the root of the whole plan of salvation which God has revealed in the Bible; it sets aside the greater part of the Scriptures. It overthrows the priesthood of the Lord Jesus and strips Him of His office. It converts the whole system of the law of Moses about sacrifices and ceremonies into a meaningless form. It seems to say that the sacrifice of Cain was just as good as the sacrifice of Abel. It turns man adrift on a sea of uncertainty, by plucking from under him the finished work of a divine Mediator. Let us beware of it if we love life. Indeed let us beware of the least attempt to undervalue Christ's person, offices or work. The only name whereby we can be saved is a name above every name, and the slightest contempt poured upon it is an insult to the King of kings. God the Father has laid the salvation of souls on Christ, and no other. If Christ was not very God of very God, He never could accomplish it, and there could be no salvation at all.

(c) *To add something to Christ, thinking it is necessary to salvation, is a great error.* It is easy to profess belief in the Trinity and reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ and yet make some addition to Christ as the ground of hope. This overthrows the doctrine of the text as completely as denying it altogether.

The Church of Rome does this on a large scale. She adds to Christianity, over and above what the gospel requires, things that she has invented herself. She speaks as if Christ's finished work is not a sufficient foundation for a sinner's soul – as if it is not enough to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". She sends people to priests and confessors, to penances and absolution, to masses and extreme unction, to fasting and scourging of the body, to the Virgin Mary and the saints – as if these things could add to the safety that is in Christ Jesus. And in doing this she sins against the doctrine of God's Word with a high hand. Let us beware of any Rome-like hankering after additions to the simple way of the gospel, from whatever quarter it may come.

But I fear the Church of Rome does not stand alone in this matter. I fear

there are thousands of professing Protestants who are often erring in the same direction – although, of course, in a very different degree. They get into a way of adding other things to the name of Christ, perhaps without realising what they are doing, or they attach an importance to them which these things ought never to receive.

The Scottish Reformation of 1560

4. More Problems in the Church

Rev D W B Somerset

The last two articles in this series pointed out some of the problems with priests and bishops in Scotland before the Reformation. These dealt with four of seven points made by David Hay Fleming, who wrote about the history of the Scottish Church. The other three are covered here.

5 and 6. Two further corruptions in the pre-Reformation Church in Scotland were *credulity* and *imposture*. By *credulity*, we mean the readiness to believe ridiculous stories and absurd miracles. For instance, John Major (1467-1550), who was one of the best-educated and least-superstitious Scotsmen of his age, believed that the eighth-century “saint” Baldred had three corpses. The story was that three parishes had, after his death, disputed the honour of possessing his grave; in the morning, after praying about the dispute, they found that in place of his corpse there were now three identical corpses, all wrapped in winding sheets so that each parish could have one. John Major used this example of Baldred’s three corpses in a serious attempt to illustrate how the body of Christ could be in several different places at the same time, through transubstantiation (the false idea that, in the mass, the priest can change the bread and wine into the body and soul of Christ).

By *imposture*, we mean the inventing of false marvels and false miracles for the purpose of deceiving people and getting their money from them. This was made all the easier by the general credulity. An example of the sort of false miracle that was current before the Reformation relates to a well at Kilwinning in Ayrshire which sometimes flowed with blood instead of water. The mystery of the miraculous blood was solved in 1826 when a pipe was discovered which led from a nearby monastery downhill to the well. Whenever the miracle was required, sheep’s blood could be poured down the pipe and out it would flow at the bottom. There were many similar examples.

Credulity and imposture combined together in the veneration of relics. Scotland was not as rich in relics as some countries were. In a village-church near Genoa, for instance, there could be found, it was said, “the tail of the

ass on which Christ rode into Jerusalem, the rope with which Judas hanged himself, and the pieces of silver with which he betrayed our Lord, the saddle of one of the three kings, and the marble table on which Abraham had been about to sacrifice Isaac". But Scotland did have the arm of St Andrew and two pieces of the holy cross in St Andrews, and an arm-bone of St Giles and another piece of the holy cross in Edinburgh. Another piece of the holy cross, along with Aaron's rod, had been removed to England by Edward I after the invasion of 1291.

The examples that we have given show the danger of credulity. Why did the people of Kilwinning not go and examine the well while the blood was flowing to find where it was coming from? They did not do this because they believed that such miracles were possible, and were to be expected. The result was that they gave their money to the rogues who lived in the monastery. And in the end, we fear, they lost their souls in hell because they believed the teaching of these same rogues. Similarly, even such a clever man as John Major was deceived by the fable of St Baldred's three corpses, and this made him more ready to believe the fable of transubstantiation and teach it to others.

7. The final corruption to be mentioned was *rapacity*, or greed for money. Before the Reformation, many people, perhaps most, who held positions in the Church were there in order to make money out of it. One great source of income for the Church was purgatory – “purgatory pick-purse”, as the Protestant martyr Hugh Latimer called it. People would give money to the Church to pay for masses to be said, which were supposed to deliver their relatives from the torments of purgatory. “As soon as a coin in the coffer rings / the soul from purgatory springs”.

Another source of income for the Church was the “corpse present”, which was often ruthlessly enforced. When there was a death, the priest was entitled to a cow and the outermost cloth (that is, a coat), and others too had rights. These “death duties” could be ruinous. In his famous poem, *The Satire of the Three Estates*, which was written at the time of the Reformation, David Lyndsay describes a beggar who until recently had been well able to support his aged parents, wife, and family. But disaster had struck. He had had “a good grey mare” and three cows, but his troubles began when his father died. His landlord claimed the grey mare and the vicar took the best cow. His mother died a day or two later and the vicar came and took the second cow. The poor man's wife was so distressed by these various calamities that she mourned constantly and in a short while died of sorrow. The vicar returned and took the last cow and the man's coat. There was nothing that the bereaved man could now do but go with his children and start begging for food.

These were some of the most glaring faults of the pre-Reformation Church, and they show how utterly corrupt it was. There had been several attempts at reformation from within, but they were far too superficial and too feeble to accomplish anything. The truth was that the Roman Church was beyond being reformed, and this is what men like Luther, Zwingli and Knox eventually realised. The great need was to separate from Rome. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

“From Death unto Life”

John Adger was a 15-year-old boy from Charleston in South Carolina. He was studying in a college in Schenectady in New York State. One day he came to the dining hall for dinner after most of the other students had finished. He noticed that the few who were left were worked up about something. He asked what it was and was told: "That fellow McDowell is going about talking to everybody on the subject of religion".

John felt terrified that McDowell would speak to him about religion, but he did not want anyone to notice his fear. So he said, rather boastfully: "If he dares to speak to me, I will tell him that I think on that subject for myself".

John McDowell was 10 years older than Adger, but they were both in the same class. McDowell was poor, his clothes were old and shabby, and he walked with a limp. Because he could not afford his fees, he rang the bell before classes and before morning worship, and thus paid his way through college. Unthinking boys like Adger looked down on him, but McDowell had something they did not have; he had grace in his heart and he lived a godly life.

In fact McDowell did not speak to Adger about religion, but the Holy Spirit used the incident in the dining hall to bring Adger to begin thinking seriously about his soul. Two or three months earlier, as Adger sat in the gallery of a church in Schenectady, he heard the minister emphasising that everyone must be converted and become a Christian. This made Adger think about the matter for a moment; yet he quickly put it out of his mind – with the thought that he was too young to be concerned about it. But he was not too young. Nor are you.

But that day in the dining hall, Adger could not so easily throw off these serious thoughts about his soul. The fact that he was a sinner took a firm hold of his mind. "I scarcely thought of anything else", he wrote later. Yet he managed to keep up with his studies reasonably well. He spent his free time reading the Bible and talking about spiritual things with a few others in

his class who also were concerned about their souls – or else he would go out into the fields behind the college to pray to God.

One day Adger visited David Little, another student, whose room was just across the corridor from his, and found him brushing his shoes. "Where are you going?" Adger asked.

"I am going over to McDowell's room to attend a prayer meeting", was the reply.

Adger had never heard of this prayer meeting but at once he decided to go along with Little. Prominent among the students who gathered there for prayer were some men in their mid-twenties who, though they were poor and not very successful in their studies, were "consistent followers of Christ". And, perhaps because of *all* these facts, most of the other students did not show them much respect.

One afternoon Adger was sitting in a corner of McDowell's long room, listening to what other men were saying. Then one of them quoted the words: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). At once hope sprang up in Adger's heart that he must "have passed from death unto life" because it was quite clear to him that he did love these men who were the despised brethren of Christ. "This made me feel very happy", he recalled. "I believed that I was justified by faith, and therefore I had peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord."

But this feeling of peace did not last long. "A great darkness come over my soul", Adger wrote. "I gave up all hope that my sins had been forgiven, and again I began to feel, as I had done before, that I was on the brink of everlasting ruin." He was now afraid to lay his head on his pillow at night for fear that, if he fell asleep, he would waken up in hell.

Where could he go for help? He had no doubt already gone many times to God in prayer and had been reading his Bible. But there is a place also for speaking to those who know something about the way of salvation and who may have experienced its difficulties. The obvious man for Adger to approach was, of course, McDowell. One evening, in great concern about his soul, he made his way to McDowell's room. McDowell talked with him and prayed with him, but Adger got no help.

After some time McDowell left to attend a prayer meeting in the town. While he was away, Adger sat beside a lamp reading the Bible and he tried also to pray. But when McDowell came back, Adger still felt as dark as ever. Again McDowell tried for a long time to help his younger friend, but in vain. At last the time came when McDowell knew that he must go to bed; he had to waken in good time in the morning to ring the bell. Eventually Adger too fell asleep, exhausted.

Adger gives us no more detail about his early spiritual experiences except to say that “these alternations of darkness and light, of doubts and hopes, continued . . . for some time”. But a few months later he felt able to make a profession of faith in the Presbyterian church in Schenectady.

We have already seen how Adger was tempted, as have many others, to put off seeking salvation because he was too young. This is Satan's work, and it is dangerous to listen to him; indeed it has often proved fatal. He can keep stringing people along, until they are very old, with the thought that they will have plenty of time to seek the Lord in the future. But for now, he tells them in his own deceitful way, they should enjoy the world and its sinful pleasures. God has a very different message: “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Obviously it is to God we should listen.

But let us learn a few more lessons. (1.) As Adger himself points out, it is usual for young believers to experience both darkness and light, and doubts and hopes. At the same time, we must remember that the experience of one young Christian may be very different from that of another. All of them believe in Christ, but for some of them the experience of coming to Christ may be much more difficult than for others, and much less clear.

(2.) Adger was very likely right when he first deduced that he was a believer, because he loved those who were already followers of Christ. But God must have had good reasons for leaving him afterwards to struggle as he did, before giving him a clearer sense that he had passed from death unto life. Just as our bodies need exercise, so do our souls. God saw that Adger needed spiritual exercise. He got that exercise and no doubt it was useful to him afterwards, when he had to try to help others with their spiritual difficulties after he became a minister.

(3.) Adger had to learn that he was completely dependent on the Holy Spirit for salvation. It is all too easy to assume that we can do something which will at least help to earn us salvation. But we can do nothing that is good enough to please God; everything we do is polluted by sin. While we must seek the Lord, pray, read the Bible and listen to preaching – and do so earnestly – none of this can begin to earn us salvation. It is all of grace – not of works. It is not earned by anything we can do.

(4.) What must sinners do who are concerned for their souls? They must believe. But their focus should not be so much on their need of faith as on their need of Christ. And they should be in no doubt that Christ is willing to save sinners. He calls: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). And He gives the assurance: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

David Brainerd's Questions

2. The Benefits Believers Receive at the Resurrection

David Brainerd was a pioneering missionary among groups of American Indians in the 1720s. In teaching the people the doctrines of the Bible, he sometimes asked them questions based around one of the answers in the *Shorter Catechism*; they are slightly edited. Here he is using the Answer to Question 38: "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection? A. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgement, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity." Brainerd tells us that his questions were answered without hesitation.

Q. You see I have already shown you what good things Christ gives His good people while they live, and when they come to die. Now, will He raise their bodies, and the bodies of others, to life again at the last day?

A. Yes, they shall all be raised.

Q. Shall they then have the same bodies as they now have?

A. Yes.

Q. Will their bodies then be weak; will they feel cold, hunger, thirst and weariness, as they now do?

A. No, none of these things.

Q. Will their bodies ever die any more after they are raised to life?

A. No.

Q. Will their souls and bodies be joined together again?

A. Yes.

Q. Will God's people be more happy then than they were while their bodies were asleep?

A. Yes.

Q. Will Christ then own them to be His people before all the people of the world?

A. Yes.

Q. But God's people find so much sin in themselves that they are often ashamed of themselves. Will Christ not be ashamed to own such people for His friends at that day?

A. No, He will never be ashamed of them.

Q. Will Christ then show all the world that He has put away these people's sins and that He looks on them as if they had never sinned at all?

A. Yes.

Q. Why will He look on them as if they had never sinned? Is it for the sake of any good things they have done themselves, or for the sake of His righteousness accounted to them as if it was theirs?

- A. For the sake of His righteousness counted to them, not for their own goodness.
- Q. Will God's children then be as happy as they can desire to be?
- A. Yes.
- Q. The children of God, while in this world, can only now and then draw near to Him, and they are ready to think they can never have enough of God in Christ. But will they have enough there, as much as they can desire?
- A. O yes, enough, enough.
- Q. Will the children of God love Him then as much as they desire; will they find nothing to hinder their love from going out to Him?
- A. Nothing at all; they shall love Him as much as they desire.
- Q. Will they never be weary of God and Christ and the pleasures of heaven, as we may become weary of our friends and enjoyments here, after we have been pleased with them for a while?
- A. No, never.
- Q. Could God's people be happy if they knew God loved them, and yet felt at the same time that they could not love and honour Him?
- A. No, no.
- Q. Will this then make God's people perfectly happy – to love God above all, to honour Him continually, and to feel His love to them?
- A. Yes.
- Q. And will this happiness last for ever?
- A. Yes, for ever, for ever!

For Junior Readers

“Open Happiness”

SO said the huge billboard sign. Yes, I am sure everyone wants happiness and would like a simple way to obtain it. But what was the advert on the billboard promoting, with the promise of happiness? It was promoting Coca Cola – encouraging you to open a bottle of Coke and achieve instant happiness! True or false? I am sure you all know the answer to that: false, of course!

Solomon, the wisest of men, tried all sorts of ways of obtaining happiness. He recounts his experiences in the Book of Ecclesiastes: “I made me great works; I builded me houses . . . I had great possessions . . . I gathered me also silver and gold . . . and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not mine heart from any joy”.

Did any of these things bring him happiness? What does he conclude?

“And behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” No, none of them brought him happiness.

So where should you look for happiness? Surely in the Bible. It is “the only rule to direct you”, and it can tell you *how* to find happiness. Perhaps you could even look up a few texts to help you answer the question.

“Happy is that people whose God is the Lord”, David tells us in Psalm 144:15. To know God as your own God will bring you happiness – much more happiness than anything earthly could ever give you.

But it is not just to know *about* God. Solomon tells us in Proverbs 16:20: “Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he”. To trust, or depend on, anyone in this world, however much you love them, will not bring the deep, lasting happiness that trusting in God will bring, in time and in eternity.

Moses also points (in Deuteronomy 33:29) to what brings happiness: “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people *saved by the Lord?*” This alone will make you truly happy: to be saved by the Lord.

Perhaps you have read the poem for young people which starts:

“O happy is the man who hears
Instruction’s warning voice;
And he who heavenly wisdom makes
His early, only choice.

For she has treasures greater far
Than east or west unfold;
And her rewards more precious are
Than all their stores of gold.”

Will you not pray for this heavenly wisdom? Then you will be really happy in time and in eternity.

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

How to Find Treasure

A man was going through a village selling Bibles. As he came near the door of a cottage, he heard loud voices. The father and mother in the house were arguing. They were very angry. And they were using bad words.

The children were very frightened. They crept away into the corners of the room.

The man said to the father: “How unhappy you must all be to

live in this way! I wonder you don't try to make yourselves more comfortable."

The man answered, "It's very hard for us poor people to be comfortable, when we cannot get enough bread to eat".

The man selling Bibles then asked for a drink of water. The father brought him a drink in a broken mug. As he was drinking, the man looked around the room. He noticed something in a corner that interested him. It was a big Bible.

He thanked the father for the water. Then he told him: "My friend, I have a secret to tell you".

What was the secret? The man told the father that there was treasure in the cottage. He also said, "If you only find it and make a right use of it, it will make you rich and happy". The man then said goodbye and went away.

The father and mother were poor. So they were very interested in something that could make them rich. And the man said that the treasure was already in the house. Was he just making fun of them?

No, they decided, he was not. Both of them thought a lot about the treasure, but they did not speak about it. When the father was alone, he used to search all through the cottage, looking carefully in every corner. And when the mother was alone, she would search through every corner of the cottage. But neither of them found what they were looking for.

One day, when her husband was away, she searched and searched until she was tired. She sat down, still wondering where the treasure was. Then she saw the Bible and said to herself: "I wonder if that can be it?"

She got up at once. She wiped away the dust from its cover. She opened it. It was the first time for many years that anyone opened the Bible.

The Bible was a gift from her mother, who was now dead. The first words the woman saw in the Bible were those her mother wrote. They were inside the front cover. They come from Psalm 119: "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver".

She said to herself: “This must be the treasure the stranger meant”. And she sat down to read the Bible. It told her about her sins. It told her too about Jesus, who could take these sins away. She sought Him and she believed on Him.

One day, some time afterwards, her husband came home. She told him: “I found the treasure of which the stranger spoke”.

“Where is it?” he asked.

“In this blessed book”, she said. “Let me read to you about it.” She read to him from the Bible. He too believed in Jesus. God changed them. They no longer quarrelled. They no longer used bad words. They tried to keep all God’s commandments.

The man who sold Bibles came back the next year. He found a great change in the house. Now everything was different. He could hardly believe that it was the same place. The father and the mother gave him a warm welcome. They told him: “We have found the treasure of which you told us, and it has made us rich and happy”.

No, I do not suppose that they had a lot of money. But they would no longer waste it. So it would be easier for them to buy more food and other things. They would no longer go hungry. And now they had God to guide them all the way through life. They had God’s book, the Bible, to teach them how to live.

Looking Around Us

The Would-Be Robber

It must have been the strangest-ever attempt to rob a shop. In late July a man entered a mobile-phone shop in Florida carrying an imitation gun. He needed \$300 quickly, he said, to avoid eviction from his home and he took the reckless step of attempting to rob the shop.

The young manager remained calm. She spoke to him for nearly five minutes and gave him some good advice. Clearly the man was desperate; his circumstances had overwhelmed him. She told him he should go to church; he should find a pastor and talk to him. And she suggested that the pastor would pray for him.

The man then apologised and left the shop. He even claimed to be a Christian himself. No doubt this reflects the mistaken ideas that many people

have of what it means to be a true Christian. It is to the Bible we must go for right information on such subjects. A real Christian is someone who knows he is a sinner and who trusts in Jesus Christ. He trusts in Jesus because he knows he cannot save himself and has come to see that Jesus died to save sinners like him, bearing their guilt. And he is turning away from sin, seeking to live a godly life.

But the would-be robber was hoping that the sin of theft would deliver him from his very real difficulty. This was obviously wrong, and his own conscience seemed to be giving him this message.

So what should he have done? He had already tried to borrow the money he needed from various friends, but he had not been successful. God tells us: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15). However desperate we may be, however difficult our circumstances, we may always pray to God for help. No situation is too hard for Him to deal with. God may not help us in the way that we expect, but we should always remember that He is wiser than we are – infinitely so. And there is something else we should remember: to seek first the salvation of our souls (see Matthew 6:33).

The Evil of Suicide

Passengers crossing from the Isle of Harris to the Isle of Skye last month were shocked to see a man pull off his jacket and jump from the ferry into the sea. A small boat was launched from the ferry but it was too late; the man had died.

Suicide is a very serious matter. It is particularly sad when young people are involved. No doubt it is in such an age as this, when God and His revelation are forgotten, that people so lightly throw away their precious lives. A sense of hopelessness takes hold of many of them, but we should recognise the evil work of the devil in tempting sinners to commit suicide. And today he is fearfully successful in that evil work. Sometimes there seems to be a pattern of suicides in a community. For instance, within a fortnight in July, five young men in Dundee took their own lives.

One matter that such people seem to forget is the terrible impact on those who are left behind; they are left to grieve for the rest of their lives. But how solemn for an individual to pass into eternity, as a result of his own sinful act, to meet his Maker!

We should always recognise, however low we may feel, that there is a great and good God who is ruling over everything. We should feel free to come to Him in all our needs, and especially the needs of our souls. Always remember that Jesus Christ is calling to each of us: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2009-10

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Members of this year's Youth Conference

The Fountain of Siloam

These verses were written by Robert Murray M'Cheyne at the foot of Mount Carmel, during a visit to Palestine in 1839. He was thinking of Isaiah 8:6.

Beneath Moriah's rocky side
a gentle fountain springs;
Silent and soft its waters glide,
like the peace the Spirit brings.

The thirsty Arab stoops to drink
of the cool and quiet wave;
And the thirsty spirit stops to think
of Him who came to save.

Siloam is the fountain's name,
it means "One sent from God";
And thus the Holy Saviour's fame
it gently spreads abroad.

O grant that I, like this sweet well,
may Jesus' image bear,
And spend my life, my all, to tell
how full His mercies are.

Price 70p