

The Young People's Magazine

Vol 69

July 2004

No 7

Secure?

The message stared down from a hoarding above a busy London street: “If you felt more secure about tomorrow, wouldn't you feel more liberated today?” It was an advertisement from a company, part of a major bank, which specialises in long-term savings and pensions. The idea the company wished to suggest was no doubt this: If you invest your money with us, you will feel secure about the future because you are bound to get a big return on your savings. And you will feel freer to buy whatever you want today, because you will not need to worry about the years ahead.

But we ought not to be too confident about the future. In his Epistle, James warns those “that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain” (4:13). He points them to the uncertainty of life. They may make great plans about what they will do in a year's time, or even today or tomorrow – “whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow”. So he goes on to ask: “For what is your life?” And he gives the answer himself: “It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”. It is just like a wisp of mist or a puff of steam which quickly disappears into the air and is gone for ever.

Of course it is wise to save for the future, if we have money to spare. But no investment company can promise certainty for years to come. Inflation may take away the value of our money; stock markets may crash and investors lose much of what they paid for their shares. Our possessions will eventually get old and wear out, or they may be stolen. So Christ Himself warned: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Matthew 6:19). Today things are no different. We have to face up to the fact that we may lose our possessions to moths, rust, thieves and a multitude of other possibilities. Nothing under heaven is secure to us.

We must not set our hearts on the things that this world gives. Yes, we may use them – and when we do so, we must use them to the glory of God. But we must not live as if the things of this world are all that matter in life. We need food and drink to keep soul and body together; we need clothes and

homes to give us shelter from the weather. We may enjoy the company of friends and relations; and we may appreciate many of the other good things God gives us in His kindness. But we must not put any of these in the place of God, giving them our hearts and treating them as more important than spiritual blessings. We have souls that must exist throughout eternity, and our souls cannot be permanently satisfied with what will not last for ever.

So Christ went on to say, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal". We are to seek those blessings which Christ gives to sinners from heaven – blessings which will never be taken from us by moths, rust, thieves or anything else. The blessings of salvation – including a new heart, forgiveness of sin and a right to a place in heaven – are permanent; they will never be taken away from those who believe in Christ. Those who have these blessings have every right to feel secure. They have no need to worry about the future. Whatever their needs are, Christ assures them: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things". And He will supply all their needs, for this life as well as for the next.

But how can anyone feel secure about the future if they are not ready to die? Death is certain. We must leave this world sooner or later, and we do not know when. So we should feel the real urgency of being prepared for eternity – through Christ Jesus, who died for sinners and rose again. It is He who sets sinners on the way to heaven. It is those who believe on Him who are truly free. As He said Himself: "If the Son . . . shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). All who believe on Jesus are delivered from the slavery of sin. That is true liberty.

When people have plenty money, they may feel free to spend as much as they wish; they do not need to ask themselves if they can afford what they set their hearts on. Because they feel secure in the knowledge that their money will not run out quickly, they are liberated from worry about their spending. Yet, although they may feel secure when they think about their money and their possessions, they ought *not* to feel secure when they think about death and eternity and the judgement seat. And they ought not to feel liberated when they think about the hold that sin and Satan have over them.

But is there a suggestion in the word *liberated*, as used in the advertising slogan, of being free to indulge in sin if we do not have to worry about money? That we may live as we wish? If we think in that way, let us remember that our desire to sin comes from our corrupt natures.

The angels in heaven are perfectly free and they do not want to sin. Those whom Jesus set free from sin in this world, and who are now in heaven, do not want to sin. In fact, they are perfectly holy and will never sin again; they

have been completely liberated from the power of sin. That is perfect freedom; that is how Adam and Eve were created in the beginning. And in His great kindness God has done what is necessary to bring even rebellious sinners back into that condition of perfect freedom.

Even in this life, Christ is setting God's children free from the power of sin. They have been given a new nature. So, more and more, they do not want to sin. And they should make every effort, in dependence on God's grace, to live according to their new-found freedom – to keep away from sin. The more believers realise their security in Christ, the more they will recognise the liberty that is now theirs.

Some of God's children have been imprisoned for their faith. They lost their outward freedom, yet their spiritual freedom was as real as ever. Among them was Marion Harvie, just 20, a Covenanter who had been sentenced to death. On the scaffold in Edinburgh in January 1681 she pointed out the contrast between her slavery to sin in the past and her spiritual liberty in the present: "At 14 or 15 . . . I was a blasphemous and a Sabbath-breaker, and a chapter of the Bible was a burden to me; but since I heard this persecuted gospel, I did not dare to blaspheme, nor break the Sabbath, and the Bible became my delight". Not only did she now feel the sinfulness of blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking and neglecting the Bible but, because she now had a new nature, she hated these sins. Although in other ways she was far from free, she was conscious of something much more important than her loss of freedom and the sentence of death: the freedom from sin that Christ gives to believers and the sure prospect they have of a blessed eternity.

Perhaps some young people are saying, I want to have the best of both worlds; I want to live in sin for as long as I can; then I will repent and at last enjoy the blessedness of heaven. But that is a wicked way of thinking. How dare you expect God to bless you if you are determined to go on in sin? Even if God in His mercy will save you after years of sinning wilfully, you will have done yourself great harm. Listen to Charles Spurgeon, once one of London's best preachers: "Many who have been saved from a life of crime will nevertheless be spiritual cripples for life. To be snatched out of the vortex of vice is cause for great gratitude, but to have been kept out of it is better. It is doubly well if the grace of God comes upon us while we are still untainted by the pollution of the world and have not gone into excess of riot. Before dissolute habits have undermined the constitution, and self-indulgence has degraded the mind, it is above all things well to have the heart renewed. Prevention is better than cure, and grace gives both. Thank God that you are still young, and pray earnestly that you may now receive grace to cleanse your way by taking heed thereto, according to His Word." That is true liberty.

Matthews of Kaitaia

Peter Best

Joseph Matthews was from Deddington in Oxfordshire and a weaver by trade. After undertaking a course of study at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) training College at Islington, he sailed, on 18 March 1831, on the first leg of a journey to New Zealand, working his passage on a convict ship bound for Botany Bay in Australia. He was then just 22 years of age. It took about six months to reach Sydney, where he spent another six months on the staff of the Parramatta Mission under the direction of Samuel Marsden, the senior chaplain to New South Wales. Finally he arrived at Paihia, in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, on 26 March 1832, over a year after leaving Plymouth.

Having an aptitude for teaching, he was first employed at Waimate at the school for the children of missionaries, and it was there he met his wife to be, Mary-Ann Davies, the daughter of a CMS missionary. But he was not content to be just a teacher. He felt called to be a missionary. Hence, against the better judgement of his superiors, he decided to set out, early in November 1832, to establish, if possible, a mission station in the far north of New Zealand. He had difficulty getting help, being warned by friendly Maoris of the ferocity of the Rarawa people of those parts. However, his zeal and impetuosity caused him to throw caution to the wind and, with the assistance of a reluctant Maori guide, he made a long trek through the bush, across rivers and over mountains until he reached a hilly vantage point where he recognised an ideal situation for establishing a mission station. Camp was set up with the Sabbath approaching.

To their dismay, the party soon discovered that a large body of Maori warriors were gathered on the plain before them. A “hui” (assembly) had been organised by Titori, a notorious Bay of Islands warrior, for the purpose of making preparations for a war expedition to the south, to the Bay of Plenty. He had just returned from that district after causing much havoc and bloodshed. He was bent on enticing the supreme Rarawa chief, Nopera Ngakuku Panakareao and his tribe, who lived at this place called Te Ahu, into joining with him.

Matthews and his party were spotted, and the appearance of Europeans, who were known to discourage fighting, was not welcome. Matthews was taken captive and marched down the hill to the gathering of warriors. Panakareao spoke fiercely to him, telling him that he could well be killed and eaten. Indeed, fires were prepared for a cannibal feast – such was the mood of the mob.

Nevertheless, Matthews showed great courage when threatened by this angry crowd. He responded calmly to those thirsting for his blood: "Not on the Ra Tapu (sacred day). Besides I have come a long way to bring you a message; it would be a pity for you not to hear it." Their response was that, if this was so, they would hear him first and cook him afterwards! The matter of a sacred day, or Sabbath, caught the attention of the Rarawa chief. His race had many "tapu" (sacred) places and articles, but the idea of a "tapu" day was quite new to him and he demanded an explanation.

Joseph seized the opportunity and, with the prospect of a martyr's death awaiting him, preached his first sermon to these people from the text "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy". He spoke of Christ's mission on earth, his crucifixion and his rising from the dead on the first day of the week. It was all new to Panakareao, who was also impressed with the reverent manner in which the message was delivered. The feast was postponed; the chief wanted to hear more and, although the crowd clamoured for permission to kill and cook the strangers, Panakareao ordered them to kill a pig instead. He asked Matthews to stay with him until the next Sabbath, so that he would be sure of observing the right day and hear more of the plan of salvation. Departing on the Monday after that second Sabbath, Joseph arrived back at Waimate bringing a cordial invitation to his colleagues for missionaries to come and establish a station at Panakareao's village, later to be called Kaitaia.

Joseph Matthews was to serve 60 years at the Kaitaia mission, and the present town of the same name (population over 5000) which grew up around the mission owes its origins to him. And, as if wishing to remember the circumstances surrounding its origins, Matthews would raise outside his church every Sabbath a Union Jack and a missionary flag, inscribed with the words "Rongopai" (gospel or good news). As for Panakareao, he became a loyal supporter of the Mission. He was baptised along with his wife and 12 other adults and six infants on 28 June 1836.

So rapidly did the gospel take effect that congregations were soon formed in a number of outlying villages. Matthews appointed native teachers or catechists for these congregations. Every Saturday for many years he would give instruction to these teachers. They would then return to their villages to take services on the Sabbath. The Maori converts formed their own missionary society in February 1841 and gave freely of their money to spread the gospel to other lands; it was an example of their appreciation of the blessings of the gospel.

Matthews was able to write, in his Journal on 25 August 1850, about these once-savage warriors: "It is indeed a wonderful thing to find that they have

been so tamed by the gospel that thousands have received the truth in the love of it. In my opinion a thousand Lazaruses raised from the dead would not be a greater miracle than the reception of the gospel by the natives of New Zealand".

The Role of Women in Society

2. A Look at Some Bible Verses

Rev Neil M Ross

This is the second part of a Youth Conference paper; the first part considered some biblical principles. Readers should note that, while all the authors quoted have written usefully about this subject, they may not be reliable on other matters.

We shall now consider several principles governing the role of women in society as we find them in the following passages of Scripture: First, Genesis 1:27 says that, when God created mankind, He created them "male and female". Genesis 2:18-25 records how the woman was created and given to the man as his wife. In 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, we see that "the head of the woman is the man", and how she therefore is to have her head covered in public worship. 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 commands, "Let your women keep silence in the churches". Ephesians 5:22-24 requires wives to submit to their husbands, because the husband is the head of the wife, and Colossians 3:18 repeats this requirement. In 1 Timothy 2:9-15 the main words are: "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man". And, lastly, in 1 Peter 3:1-6 women are instructed how to "adorn" themselves, and we again have the exhortation, "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands".

Let us go back to Genesis 1:27. There we read, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them". Here we have the very important principle that, morally and spiritually, there was a wonderful sameness between the male and the female – both were created in the image of God, in perfect knowledge, righteousness and holiness. As one writer says, "There is no hint here of superiority or inferiority. Men and women enjoy equality of personhood, dignity and worth." Of course, sin has defaced that part of the image of God, but everyone still bears the image of God in a certain way, for James 3:9 says that all "are made after the similitude of God".

However, Genesis 1:27 shows also that there is a basic difference between man and woman: "*Male and female* created He them". They are different physically and biologically. Physically, the man is stronger; while the woman, as Scripture says, is "the weaker vessel", and as such is to be honoured (see

1 Peter 3:7). It is true that this verse speaks of believing husbands and wives who are heirs together of the grace of life; but the verse contains the principle that the woman, as the weaker vessel, is not on that account to be despised by the man, but rather honoured – the main idea in the word *honour* is respect. The man is so constituted as to lead, and God has invested him with the leadership role. The woman, on the other hand, is to be under the leadership of the man, who is to protect her, provide for her, and respect her.

Man himself, however, needed a helper – and the helper given him by God was the woman. John Calvin says that these words of Genesis 1:27: “Male and female created He them”, are of the same force as: “The man himself [that is, by himself or alone] was incomplete”. So Genesis 2:18 says, “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet [or suitable] for him”. Verse 22 adds, “And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Matthew Henry makes this pithy statement about the creation of the woman: “She was not made out of [man’s] head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved”.

We see next that God brought the newly-created woman to the man, and gave her to him as his wife. So marriage was appointed and established by God Himself. Matthew Henry rightly says, “Marriage is honourable, but this surely was the most honourable marriage that ever was, in which God Himself had all along an immediate hand. Marriages (they say) are made in heaven. We are sure this one was, because the man, the woman, the match, were all God’s own work. He, by His power, made them both, and now, by His ordinance, made them one.”

The biblical account of the creation of the man and the woman presents us with the following principle: “the woman is for the man”. This is plainly stated in 1 Corinthians 11:8,9: “The man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.” As John Gill comments, the woman was “to be a companion and associate of his, both in religious worship and in civil life; and for the procreation and education of children”. And Anne Graham puts it like this: “God created the woman for the support and companionship of the man, and her acceptance of the man’s loving leadership”.

So, all in all, these Genesis verses teach us that the woman was created after the man, out of the man and for the man. Therefore the woman is the glory of the man. 1 Corinthians 11:7 says, “A man indeed ought not to cover

his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man". This means, as most commentators agree, that the woman "is a distinguished ornament of the man" – "an expression of his honour and dignity" because made out of him, created to help him, and given to be "a crown of honour and glory to him".

Another implication of the woman being created after the man, out of the man, for the man, and as the glory of the man, is that the man, in some way or another, is over the woman – that he has a certain primacy and leadership role in relation to the woman. This is explicitly stated, as we have already noted, in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man".

Modern feminist so-called theologians argue that the Greek word *kephale* (in 1 Corinthians 11:3), translated as "head" in the Authorised Version, should really be translated *source* or *origin*, and therefore does not have in it the idea of authority and leadership. The fact is, as Sharon James notes in an appendix to *God's Design for Women*, that Professor Wayne Grudem in the USA, after a deep and extensive study of *kephale*, showed convincingly that nowhere is it used in the New Testament or in other Greek literature to mean *source* or *origin* when referring to a person. The correct translation is indeed, "The *head* of the woman is the man".

Another argument of modern feminists against Christian teaching on the headship of man is that this headship did not exist when man was created male and female. Rather it came after the Fall and as the result of the Fall. Therefore, say the feminists, the ideal state for the woman is liberation from dominion by man. But there is clear enough proof that the man was given the responsibility of leadership and authority right from the beginning. It was the man who was created first, it was the man who named his new companion and wife, it was to the man that the command was given not to eat of the fruit of the tree, it was the man who was called to account by God, and it is the man who is presented as the head of the whole human race.

We must also note that the Bible clearly teaches the duty of the woman to submit to the man. It is implied when Scripture says that she was created "for the man" (1 Corinthians 11:9), and that she was created after the man. "Adam was first formed, then Eve," says Paul (1 Timothy 2:13), teaching that Adam was before the woman, not just in the order in which they were created, but also in their relationship with each other. So the previous verse says that the woman is not "to usurp authority over the man". The subjection of the woman to the man is stated explicitly in 1 Peter 3:1: "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands". Similarly, we read in Ephesians 5:22 and Colossians 3:18 that wives are to submit to their own husbands.

For Younger Readers

“God Was with Him”

Do you remember the story of Joseph? He was a good boy. He did what his father told him.

But Joseph’s brothers hated him. One day they decided to kill him. They put him in a pit until they were ready.

But, while Joseph was in the pit, some men came riding along on their camels. They were merchants going to Egypt to buy and sell things. Joseph’s brothers then changed their minds. Instead of killing Joseph, they decided to sell him to the men.

How much did the men pay for Joseph? Just 20 silver coins. And the men went away, taking Joseph with them.

At last they reached Egypt. The merchants sold Joseph to an important man called Potiphar. Joseph settled down to work in Potiphar’s house. He must have been very lonely, away from his kind father and his home.

But Joseph wasn’t really alone. The Bible tells us that God was with him. Wasn’t that wonderful!

Joseph didn’t deserve God’s kindness. But you might ask, Wasn’t Joseph a good lad? Yes, he was, but it was God who made him good. So God would never leave Joseph alone. God would always help him.

God helped Joseph with his work in Potiphar’s house. And Joseph did it all well. Potiphar trusted Joseph. He put Joseph in charge of everything in his house. He knew that Joseph was honest and would look after everything properly.

Everything Joseph did turned out well. This was because God was with Joseph. Yet, after some time, it seemed that God was no longer with Joseph.

Potiphar’s wife accused Joseph of doing something very bad. Potiphar believed her and he put Joseph in prison. But God was still with Joseph.

The man who looked after the prison liked Joseph and trusted him. This man too knew that Joseph was honest and would look after everything properly. And everything Joseph did turned out well. This was because God was still with Joseph.

But it could not have been nice for Joseph to be in prison. And at last God made it possible for him to come out. Perhaps we will look at that next month.

When Joseph came out of prison, God was still with him. And God took care of Joseph every day till he died. Then God brought him to heaven. So God is still with Joseph today.

Ask God to be with you always, for Jesus' sake. Then He will not let anything harm you, whatever happens. And at last he will bring you to heaven, just like He took Joseph to heaven.

Bianchi

4. The Battlefield

Bianchi was an Italian who joined a German army and was afterwards converted. One day he went to his captain to ask permission to go to a prayer meeting in another regiment. Permission was refused and Bianchi ended up in prison. That evening the Major called Bianchi in for an explanation. They soon began to talk about spiritual things. He asked to be allowed to leave the army, but that was not possible. He then mentioned that he expected to get his dismissal soon in any case – that God would bring him to His heavenly home. This article ends the series.

Bianchi said goodbye to Major von Benedeck and headed back to the prison. The officer said to himself: "I wish I could help that man. And I wish I could speak as calmly about my death as he does about his."

The next day was a Sabbath. During the morning, the Captain came to the prison and allowed Bianchi to go free, although he was clearly not happy about having to do so. He even gave Bianchi permission to go to the other regiment. There Bianchi found his friends gathered for a prayer meeting. He was the last to pray and everybody felt that he spoke like someone already in heaven.

Soon afterwards the army went out to battle. Bianchi's regiment came under fierce fire and he was hit by a canon ball. He was killed instantly. The Major was standing not far away and exclaimed: "Bianchi has got his dismissal. The Lord has given it to him."

Later that day, the Major too was hit by a canon ball and badly wounded in his arm. While he was being carried to hospital, he whispered to his servant: "William, go as quickly as you can to the next village and ask the minister to come and see me at once. Tell him that a poor, lost sinner desires comfort from him." The minister came right away, and found the wounded officer waiting for the surgeon to attend to his arm; probably the surgeon was attending to one of the many others who would have needed his attention. "Had you not better postpone our conversation till after you arm is attended to?" the minister asked the Major.

“No, no,” von Benedeck answered, “my soul is of greater importance than my arm.” And he went on to tell the minister about his conversation with Bianchi. “This man”, he added, “was killed this morning before my eyes, and I am sure he blessed the moment when the canon ball struck his head. But it is not so with me. Perhaps I shall die from this wound; and if so, I wish to die the death of that righteous man. Please speak to me words of instruction and comfort, and pray with me. Forget that you are speaking to a high officer in the army. You are speaking to a poor, wretched, trembling evildoer now, who only wants to know whether there is grace for him yet, and whether there is still room for him at the feet of Jesus.”

The minister pointed the Major to Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour. The wounded man must have been in severe pain, but soon his face brightened up and he was asking the minister to praise God for His unspeakable gift of a Redeemer. Then the surgeon appeared, ready to amputate the Major’s arm. It must have been a fearfully painful operation, presumably carried out without an anaesthetic. Yet he recovered and continued in the army. The King did not want to lose an able officer – although he now had only one arm. And Major von Benedeck hoped to be able to do something for the cause of Christ among his troops. He had now put on the whole armour of God. What a blessing came about through Bianchi’s influence! And we can hardly doubt that the change in the Major’s life came as an answer to the soldier’s prayers.

For Junior Readers

Cameras

If you live in or near to a large town, I am sure you will have noticed cameras mounted at traffic lights. They are there to catch motorists who do not stop at red lights.

If a car goes ahead when the light is red, the camera takes a photo of the rear of the car including its number plate. The police can then trace the name and address of the owner of the car and send them a “ticket” with a fine, as their punishment for breaking the law. Once people realise there is a camera at certain traffic lights they are usually very careful to stop in time. They do not want to break the law if they are going to be punished.

What does this remind us of? Red lights are a warning, telling us to stop and not go any farther. What has God given us as red lights in our journey through life? His commandments. He has given them to us for our protection and we risk danger to our souls if we disobey them.

If you knew that a hidden camera would take a photo of you every time

you sinned, would you not be more careful to obey God's commandments? Hagar learned to say, "Thou God seest me". And surely you should remember this wherever you are, or whatever you are saying or doing. Your parents may not see you; your church friends may not know what you are doing; but God sees everything. The Bible tells us clearly: "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts". So even if your outward actions are not sinful, the Lord can see your sinful thoughts. Should that not make you more careful to obey His commands?

If you break God's commandments, as we all do, what punishment will follow? It is not that you will have to pay a fine; it is something much more serious. What does the Bible say? "The wages of sin is death." Death will follow sin. Not just the death that brings our lives to an end, but eternal death. How very solemn! God's law is so far-reaching that the apostle James says: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all". So even if you feel quite sure that you keep at least some of God's commandments, yet, in God's eyes, if you broke only one – if you committed only one sin – you would be as guilty as if you broke them all.

What are you saying to God if you are not stopping at His "red lights", if you are not obeying His commandments? You are really saying the same as Pharaoh said to Moses long ago: "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" How very foolish to speak or behave in this way! What does the future hold for such people? "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Should that not make you stop and think? Should it not make you pray with the Psalmist:

"O let my footsteps in Thy word aright still ordered be:

Let no iniquity obtain dominion over me"

(Psalm 119:133)

J van Kralingen

James Kidd of Aberdeen

1. Ulster, America and Scotland 1761-1794

Rev D W B Somerset

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

James Kidd was born on 6 November 1761 near Loughbrickland, about 30 miles from Belfast in Ulster. He was the youngest of three sons. His father died a few months after he was born, and his mother returned to her place of birth at Broughshane near Ballymena, north of Belfast. Relations of James Kidd are living near both Loughbrickland and Broughshane to this day.

His mother was a godly woman, and she taught him to read from John's

Gospel and the Shorter Catechism. He soon had most of John's Gospel by heart, and in later years he told Donald Sage, another minister: "She made me then read to her a chapter of the New Testament daily, and verse by verse commit it to memory; in all which the grand and prominent object to which she never failed to direct me, from almost every verse I read, was Christ – what He said or did, and what He suffered. Yes, Sir, the last pulse of my old heart will cease to beat when I cease to remember my mother."

When he was eight years old, he went to the Presbyterian communion at Broughshane, and was greatly struck by the solemnity of the occasion and by the sight of the minister preaching. He vowed that he too would become a minister of the gospel. This is the only account that survives of his early religious experience. He himself used to mention this incident later in life, and it seems that he believed it was more than just a childish fancy – that there was a gracious desire put into his heart by the Holy Spirit at that time. Perhaps it was then that he was born again, if not before. It is not uncommon for a child from a godly background to be converted without any very marked outward experience accompanying the event.

Mrs Kidd was too poor to pay for education for her son, but James had such a thirst for learning that he began to borrow books from neighbours and to commit them to memory. Soon afterwards, James Ritchie, the son of a rich man in the district, offered to teach him some Latin, and he learned the basics of the language in this way. He and James Ritchie were like David and Jonathan in their friendship, but James Ritchie soon died, and James Kidd was once again without a teacher. Within a short while, however, a rich farmer stepped into the breach and paid for him to go to the local Academy for six months. He worked very hard, and soon he was ahead of most of the other children. In order to pay for further education, he started a school himself at a place called Elginy, and with the money he saved he was able to study in Belfast for a time. After this a school was opened at Kildownie, about 20 miles from Belfast, and he taught there for four years. James Kidd had to struggle hard to get his education. What would he have said to so many children and young people today who are neglecting opportunities for studying and learning!

In 1783, at the age of 21, he married Jean Boyd, a farmer's daughter from near Ballymena, and in April of the following year he and his wife emigrated to America. The American War of Independence had just finished after eight years, and people like James Kidd were attracted by the opportunities in the new world. He settled in Philadelphia in Pennsylvania, and worked for a while as a private tutor. Next he taught in a school, and eventually he opened his own. In 1787 and again in 1789 he attended the University

of Pennsylvania, studying Latin, Greek, Philosophy and other subjects.

About this time he happened to see the Hebrew alphabet in a book that he was reading, and this trifling event proved to be of great importance for the whole course of his life. He was "smitten with a passion for Oriental languages" and he soon mastered the Hebrew letters. He employed a Portuguese Jew to teach him Hebrew, and within a few months he could read the book of Genesis. Every Friday he attended a synagogue in order to hear Hebrew being read fluently. Soon after this he acquired a Hebrew Bible. Here we have an account of this purchase, more or less in the words of James Stark, the author of Kidd's *Life*.

"The exorbitant charges of his Jewish teacher, and the expenses of a rising family, reduced Mr Kidd's finances to a very low ebb. He was greatly in need of one thing, and he as ardently longed for another – and he had not the money with which to purchase both. What he needed was a suit of clothes; what he coveted was a Hebrew Bible that he had cast his eyes upon in the window of a Dutch bookseller. In obedience, doubtless, to the direction of his wife, yielding at last to her repeated protests, he went away with money he had saved to clothe the outer man. But while going to the tailor's he had to pass the bookseller's and found, alas, as many have done before, though usually in connection with other things than sacred literature, that he was on temptation's path. As he passed, he could not help looking at the coveted book; he stepped in to have a closer inspection; the Dutchman was loud in his praises of the edition and type; the impulse, as he felt the money in his pocket, was too strong to be resisted. He flung the price on the counter, carried off his prize, and had to begin again the painful toil and economy to accumulate as much as would enable him to replace his threadbare garments."

All this time, he was still intent on becoming a preacher of the gospel. He decided to return to Britain in order to study Divinity under the well-known John Brown of Haddington. Brown was the Divinity Professor for a branch of the Secession Church and, like Kidd, he was a self-taught man. Probably this was what attracted Kidd. So, in about 1791, at the age of 30, Kidd came to Scotland, leaving his wife and family behind in America. To his surprise, he found on his arrival that John Brown had been dead since 1787. Undeterred, he began studying at Edinburgh University, and was soon enrolled in the Divinity classes there. To support himself, he gave Hebrew tutorials for the other students under the eye of the Professor, James Robertson. In May 1793, the Professor of Oriental Languages at Marischal College in Aberdeen died, and Kidd's talents were well enough known for him to be advised to apply for the chair. His application was successful, and on 11 January 1794 he was appointed Professor in Aberdeen.

At this point tragedy struck. He could now afford to bring his wife and family across from America to join him in Aberdeen. On the voyage, however, on September 18, a storm arose. Mrs Kidd went up on deck in alarm with their three-year-old daughter Janet in her arms. A huge wave broke over the vessel, knocked her down, and swept the little child overboard. Who can imagine the grief of the Kidd family at this time, and of Mrs Kidd in particular? How unsearchable are the ways of God!

Ambition

5. Some Lessons

W G T Shedd

This is the last part of a sermon by this American preacher; it has been edited. His text is: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not" (Jeremiah 45:6). His reasons for not seeking the great things of the earth were: (1) Great things will not be reached because, as soon as you have them, they lose their value. (2) If you could obtain the great things, they would ruin your soul by pride. (3) So far as you obtain them, it is indirectly, not by any previous purpose you had of doing so. (4) Great sorrow always springs out of a great expectation that is not fulfilled.

1 In the light of this subject, we see the sinfulness of ambition. Some speak of a "holy ambition"; but there is no such thing, any more than a holy pride, or sanctified greed. Ambition, as the origin of the word shows, is not the straightforward search after a good thing, simply because it is good; it is the roundabout attempt to obtain a "great thing" for the sake of some selfish advantage. If the student toils after knowledge, not for its own sake but because it brings fame and worldly gain with it, he is an ambitious student. He does not go straight to the mark to obtain learning because it is good in itself, but for some selfish purpose. If a man seeks religion, not because it is excellent in itself, but so that he may advance his standing in society, he is ambitious. He does not move directly towards the good thing and choose it for its own pure excellence. It is impossible that such a spirit should be good.

On the contrary, it is sinful in the utmost degree, because it is the very essence of selfishness and pride. Such a person uses all the good things and all the great things, of this world and the next, merely to bring about his selfish, ambitious ends. It was by this sin that the angels fell. They were not content with loving God because He is lovely, and with obeying the law because it is holy, just and good. They desired to obtain some personal advantage over and above the joy, peace and blessedness of serving God for His own sake. And Satan, the fallen archangel, plied our first parents with the same motive. He promised them that, if they would eat of the forbidden

tree, they should "be as gods". He awakened in them the feeling of ambition, and by ambition they too fell.

2. We see the complete blessedness of those who are free from all ambitious aims and selfish purposes – those who can say: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. Thou, O God, art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." We cannot find perfect happiness on earth because we cannot find a soul that is perfectly unselfish and without ambition. The best of men will confess that the lingering remains of this sin of Adam – this desire to be as gods, this straining after superiority – are continually stirring within them and interfering with their spiritual peace and joy. And they long for the time when they shall be satisfied with God's likeness, when they shall not be in the least envious of the happiness and the privileges of others, when they shall not be disturbed in the least to see others placed above them – because this will be the state of feeling in heaven.

The spirit of a just man made perfect, who is indeed satisfied because he is satisfied in God, does not envy the exaltation of the angel above him. The angel feels no pang of jealousy on seeing the cherub higher than himself. The cherub does not grudge the seraph his glory and joy. And none of all these has the slightest desire to drag down the archangel from his lofty place in heaven. Each and all of these ranks of happy beings know that God is infinitely greater and more glorious than His universe, and in Him they all delight according to the extent of their powers. And, only as this spirit moves the hearts of Christians here below, does the Church resemble the heavenly state. But, alas, Ephraim envies Judah, and Judah vexes Ephraim, and the kingdom of the meek and lowly Redeemer is torn with inward struggles.

The heart of the individual believer is also torn with inward struggle. How difficult it is to obey the direction of the Apostle James: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low". How difficult not to seek "great things" and, in the simple, godly and conscientious carrying out of daily duties, to seek first of all the kingdom of God and His righteousness, without any pride or ambition.

To this frame of mind we are summoned by the Redeemer, and to this we must attain. Therefore cultivate this meek and lowly temper. We can only rid ourselves of our pride and ambition by prayer and supplication, by constantly remembering that the things which are seen are temporal, by often meditating on the vanity of earth, and of man as mortal, and upon the glory and eternity of all that is in heaven. By such methods as these, and only by such methods, can we obey the command of God by His prophet: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."

Looking Around Us

Religious Observance in Schools

A new report on this subject – religious worship as distinct from religious education – has been issued by the Scottish Executive. A Church of Scotland spokesman claimed that it “offers a strengthening of the position of Christianity”. One wonders.

Certainly, the report might have been worse. We are assured by the Scottish education minister that the Lord’s Prayer will continue to be heard in schools. It would be an absolute scandal if the Executive were to decide otherwise.

How are schools expected to respond to a situation where pupils belong to a variety of religions, and some have no religion at all? According to this report: “It is of central importance that all pupils and staff can participate with integrity in the forms of religious observance devised by their school without compromise to their personal faith stances”. It may be difficult to understand what statements like this are really supposed to mean, but the idea seems to be that everyone can be satisfied if the form of worship offends no one.

But if the authors of the report really understood what religious worship ought to be, they would realise that it is impossible to satisfy everyone. There is one God. He has revealed Himself in the Bible and shown us how He should be worshipped. He cannot give His glory to another. Nor may we.

One prominent head teacher seems anxious to oppose attempts to “dilute religious observance entirely”. That is good. But then he adds: “Any faith is better than none”. He is perhaps putting forward a false choice. We must reject a wrong faith *and* we must reject atheism. There is only one God; this is the God we should worship in school as well as in church. There is only one true religion; that is the religion we should follow in school as well as at home.

People may object that this is to hide from the reality of the situation in Scottish schools today. But no one should hide from the fact that we are all responsible to God for giving Him the worship due to Him. This is true for atheists and worshippers of false religions as well as everyone else. All are under obligation to worship the one true God.

The report speaks of a very general kind of spirituality – the spirituality which would “express and celebrate the shared values of the school community”. This is, of course, not the spirituality of the Bible. True spirituality is the activity of a soul which has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, not some kind of vaguely religious talk or activity.

True worship takes as its starting point: What will please God? This report starts with the idea: What will satisfy those who are involved in the worship?

Of course, if things are right, the two questions will come together. Those who think rightly will be satisfied with the worship that will please God.

Scotland was once very much a Christian, Bible-believing country. Our heritage is precious. It is well worth holding to what is left of it. So it is highly important that pupils and staff in our schools should be worshipping the true God, and Him only. Did not Christ Himself say, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10)?

Sovereign Mercy

Almighty God, before Thy throne
Thy mourning people bend;
'Tis on Thy sovereign grace alone
our humble hopes depend.

Tremendous judgements from Thy hand
Thy dreadful power display;
Yet mercy spares this guilty land,
and still we live to pray.

Great God, and why is Britain spared,
ungrateful as we are?
O make Thy awful warnings heard
while mercy cries, "Forbear".

What numerous crimes increasing rise
through this apostate isle!
What land so favoured of the skies,
and yet what land so vile?

O turn us, turn us, mighty Lord,
by Thy all-powerful grace;
Then shall our hearts obey Thy Word,
and humbly seek Thy face.

Then, should disease or foes invade,
we shall not sink in fear;
Secure of never-failing aid,
if God, our God, is near.

A Steele