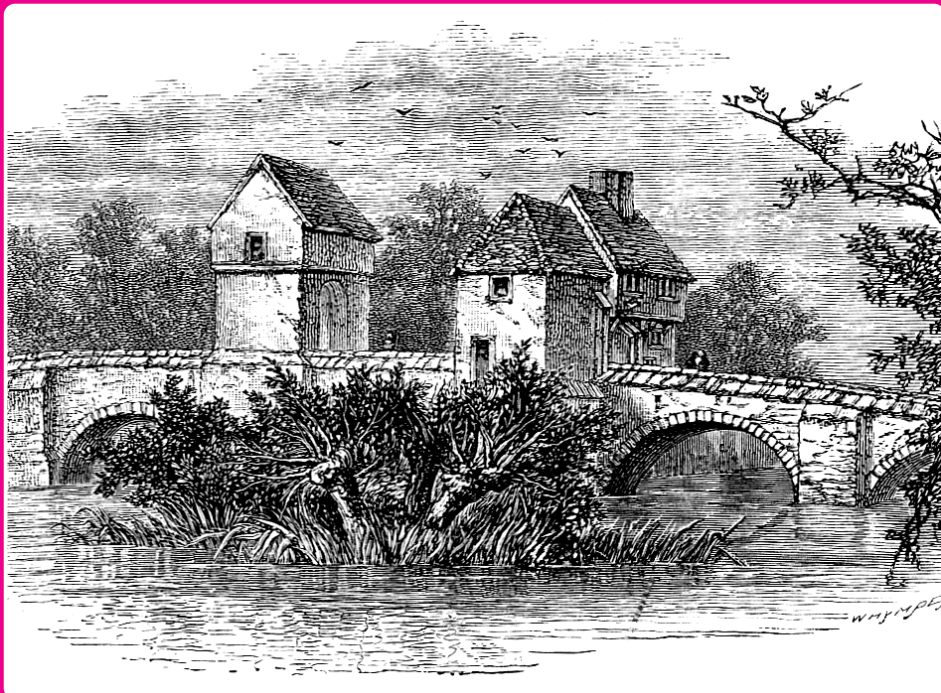


The Young People's Magazine

**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: The jail above the River Great Ouse at Bedford, where John Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*. See page 52.

The Young People's Magazine

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The Bible Is Reliable

Until 1450 the only way to produce books in Europe was to write them out by hand, a very long and painstaking process. In that year Johannes Gutenberg started to print books in Mainz, in present-day Germany; it was a much more efficient method. Many copies could be produced in a small fraction of the time needed for scribes to write out one copy of the book. Gutenberg began printing with individual metal letters arranged to fill up each page, and the pages were basically the same as those of this magazine, though the typeface looked very different.

In 1455 he began to print what is known as the Gutenberg Bible. It is thought that only 16 complete copies of it are left. One of these is in the John Rylands Library in Manchester University, but it is too valuable for people to touch it. But the library wanted an exact copy of this Bible which scholars could use in their studies. So they arranged with a company in Falkirk to produce a new copy, and library staff are said to be delighted with the result.

But a Bible that no one is allowed to read is of very little use to anyone, though one would not wish to damage an old and valuable copy like the Gutenberg Bible. We should be very thankful that Bibles today are plentiful; so it is possible for everyone, at least in developed countries, to have one for themselves. The important thing is to make good use of the Bible: to read it and ask the Holy Spirit to apply its truths to our souls.

Most of us would have another difficulty with the Gutenberg Bible; it is a Latin translation. Very few, I am sure, of those who read this article would be able to understand anything in the Gutenberg Bible. We need a translation into our own language, for the Bible contains God's message to everyone. We should be thankful to have had the Bible translated into English, so that we can read it; and the Authorised Version still remains the most reliable English translation among the many that have flooded the market over the past 50 and more years. If we do not read it, we cannot expect it to do us any good, and we will have to give account on the day of judgement for our sinful neglect of it.

In the past, it was the policy of the Roman Catholic Church to keep the

Bible from ordinary people. No doubt the Church leaders were afraid that people would find out that there were the huge differences between Church teaching and Scripture teaching.

More than 150 years ago in Belgium, a Roman Catholic priest was rebuking a woman and her brother for reading what he called a “bad book”. In fact, he was pointing to the Bible.

The woman answered, “Mr Priest, a little while ago my brother was an idler, a gambler, a drunkard, and made such a noise in the house that no one could stay in it. Since he began to read the Bible, he is hardworking, he no longer goes to the pub, he no longer touches cards, he brings home money to his poor old mother, and our life at home is quiet and pleasant.” Then she added a very good question: “How is it, Mr Priest, that a bad book produces such good fruits?”

Nowadays it is no longer practical for the Roman Catholic authorities to forbid their people to possess and read the Bible; too many would refuse to pay any attention. One problem with Roman Catholic editions of the Bible is that they contain the books known as the Apocrypha, books that were never part of the inspired Scriptures. These books are the source of some Roman Catholic errors such as prayers for the dead, and they contain errors in history and geography.

On the other hand, the Bible, consisting of the 39 Old Testament books and the 27 New Testament books, is completely reliable. In it God is speaking to us. It tells us everything we need to know in matters of religion. No one is to add to it and no one is to take anything away from it.

Let us consider some of the matters God speaks to us about in the Bible, remembering that everything He says to us is perfectly true.

1. The Bible tells us about *God*. He is eternal: He had no beginning and His existence will never come to an end. He is infinite in every way; He is altogether without limits. And He cannot change. He is perfectly wise, powerful, holy, just, good and true. It is our duty to worship Him and to obey Him. We could not know anything about Him unless He had revealed Himself, which He does in the Bible.

2. The Bible tells us *how everything began*. No one else was there to see what happened – only God. So no one could know anything about it unless God had revealed it in Scripture. He tells us that He created all things “by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3); that is, by His powerful word. He spoke and it happened; by His power He made human beings and all the other creatures, the sun and all the countless numbers of other stars – though God can count them all (see Psalm 147:4).

3. The Bible tells us about *our sinful condition*. Though God created every-

thing perfect, human beings included, yet sin came into the world. Satan tempted Eve and Adam to sin, and they fell from their perfect condition. And all their descendants, Jesus apart, are infected by the fearful disease of sin. That is why Paul says, “All have sinned” (Romans 3:23). And he goes on to say that all “come short of the glory of God”; they keep missing the mark of perfect obedience to God. In other words, everyone keeps on sinning – though some people may sin more seriously than others. Sin affects everything that we think, say and do. Because God is holy, He hates sin and He must punish because of sin. These solemn facts are reliable testimony from God, and we should take it extremely seriously.

4. The Bible tells us about *deliverance from sin*. It tells us that God “the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14). He was born into the world; He suffered and died in the place of sinners, taking their punishment upon Himself, so “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15). Salvation is by faith in Christ, trusting in Him as the One who is now “exalted a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). These quotations from the Bible are part of the record that God has given about His Son. We dare not treat that record lightly; to neglect the message, or to reject it, is to remain under condemnation – condemned to a lost eternity.

5. The Bible tells us about what happens *after death*. Death is not the end of our existence, which will never come to an end. Beyond this world, there is heaven and hell. Those who believe in Jesus Christ, and whose sins therefore are forgiven, will go to heaven. And, solemnly, those who do not believe in Jesus Christ will go to hell. Another matter that God reveals in the Bible is that everyone will be judged, with Christ on the judgement seat, so “that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). Thus all will know, on the basis of sound evidence, that God is just in sending to hell those who continued in their sins, and in bringing to heaven those who turned from their sins to follow Christ.

These are some of the main themes that God is telling us in the Bible. We, whose minds are twisted by sin, have no right to wish that some of these things were not true. God in His kindness has revealed them, in the Bible, for our good. The whole Bible, as we noted already, is completely reliable; we can depend on it absolutely. Let us then make good use of it; let us receive it as perfect truth and study it, for God is truth. Where we will exist, beyond this life, depends on receiving the truths of the Bible. And it depends especially on this question: Do we believe on God’s only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners?

Joshua – Successor to Moses

1. From Slavery to Assisting Moses

Rev Neil M Ross

This is the first part of a paper given at the 2015 Youth Conference.

Joshua appears abruptly in the Bible as if he was already well known. Without any introduction, he is presented in Exodus 17 as the man appointed by Moses to be the commander of the Israelite army. Who was this man in whom Moses placed so much confidence?

Joshua's life may be divided into three periods. Most commentators think that, for about the first 40 years of his life, he was a slave in Egypt. He spent the next 40 years travelling with his fellow Israelites throughout the Sinai wilderness to Canaan, the land promised to them by God. Finally, he spent his remaining 30 or so years in Canaan as the leader of the people, governing them according to the will of God.

First, we shall glance at his life in Egypt. Although Joshua, a descendant of Jacob, was probably born into slavery in Egypt, he was actually of high birth. His tribe, Ephraim, was a leading tribe; his family was the principal family in that tribe; and his grandfather, Elishama, is described as "prince" of the tribe (Numbers 2:18, 7:48). Thus Joshua, as well as his father Nun, were princes.

Joshua, like other Israelites, obviously suffered under the oppressive Egyptians, who "made their lives bitter with hard bondage". How joyful he must have been when he and his people were freed from their cruel enslavement, and made their exodus from Egypt to begin their journey to the land of which God said, "I will give it you for an heritage" (Exodus 6:8). How heartily he would have sung that wonderful song which they sang when they got safely through the Red Sea: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him (Exodus 15:1,2).

More blessed still are sinners, when they are liberated from the bondage of sin and Satan and begin to make their way to the heavenly Canaan – all by faith in Jesus Christ, who says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," and, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32,36). May we all have this best freedom.

Joshua, at the time of the Exodus, was called Oshea (which means

salvation), but his name was changed to “Jehoshua” (Numbers 13:16; together with its shortened version, Joshua, it means *Jehovah is salvation*). “This name”, as an eminent minister of long ago said, “is the key to his life and work.” The basic truth, that Jehovah is salvation, was embedded in Joshua’s heart as he thought of the salvation of himself and the people, whether saved from their enemies or from their sins.

The fact that “salvation is of the Lord”, is one that we also must truly understand and appreciate, if it is to be well with us here and hereafter. It was a truth which David delighted in. “Salvation”, he said, “belongeth unto the Lord” (Psalm 3:8). Jonah was certain of it when he acknowledged in his prayer from the belly of the whale: “Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9). Unless we are taught by the Spirit of God, we will be disposed to think that, somehow or other, we can save ourselves. How necessary it is to be completely dependent on Jehovah Jesus alone, not leaning on human attempts for the salvation of our souls.

Joshua’s name in Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8, is given in its Greek form, *Jesus*. It is not surprising that Joshua is a striking type of Jesus Christ, the Saviour. The most obvious similarity between Joshua and Jesus, apart from their names, is that Jesus, like Joshua, leads His believing people to the heavenly Canaan to have eternal possession of that blessed rest of which Paul says in Hebrews 4:9: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God”.

The Israelites were not long out of Egypt when they were faced by enemies. They were camped at Rephidim, in the Sinai desert, when, without any provocation, the surrounding Amalekites attacked them. It was Joshua whom Moses commanded to form an army and repel the attackers. “So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek” (Exodus 17:10). The result, by God’s help, was a resounding victory for the Israelites. Joshua proved to be a courageous soldier and able commander.

Moses further recognised Joshua’s ability as a leader and organiser when he made Joshua his personal assistant and trusted confidant. It is in this sense that Joshua was, as the Bible says, the “minister” and “servant” of Moses. (Exodus 24:13, 33:11). But it was God who directed Moses to choose Joshua as his attendant and assistant, as is implied by the fact that God commanded Moses to rehearse to Joshua specifically the historical record of the defeat of the Amalekites – no doubt to encourage him and prepare him for a greater leadership role.

When Moses ascended Mount Sinai it was Joshua who went with him. Moses went to the top of the mountain to receive the law from God, while Joshua remained at a lower level and faithfully waited for Moses to

return. As he met Moses coming down from the top, he heard shouting from the Israelites below and said to Moses that it was the noise of battle. It was, in fact, the noise of the horrible revelling of the people as they worshipped the golden calf in defiance of God, the only One they ought to have worshipped. No doubt the holy anger and decisive action of Moses, at the sight of his people's abhorrent idolatry, made a deep impression on Joshua's mind (Exodus 32:17-20).

Joshua's patient waiting below the summit of Sinai on the one hand and the impatience of the people at the foot of the mountain on the other, are instructive. Joshua waited patiently for 40 days for Moses to return, which teaches us an important lesson: when it is our duty to wait in some situation, whether waiting for an answer to prayer or persevering with a task, we are to do so with patience.

On the other hand, we see that the Israelites would not wait any longer for Moses. In their impatience they disparagingly dismissed him and made the golden calf and worshipped it. Our impatience may lead us into many temptations: not least, to go our own way instead of waiting for the Lord to say, in one form or another, "This is the way; walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21).

The Danger of Rebellion Against God

Soon after being inducted to a church, a minister was asked to visit a 60-year-old man who seemed to be dying. He was seriously ill with pleurisy – inflammation in his lungs – and was suffering severe pain. Besides all this, the man was very upset.

The minister tried to speak with him, but the man was unwilling to say much at all. He must have known the danger he was in of soon going to a lost eternity, but clearly he had no hope of being saved through the One who came into the world to save sinners. The minister read to him from the Bible, spoke seriously about death probably not being far away and prayed. Then he promised to come back the next day and went away.

A neighbour told the minister that, at one time, the man had professed to be converted; he had become a member of the church; he was anxious to be at every service on Sabbaths and on weekdays; and he was noted for faithfully warning unconverted people about the dangers they faced. After a year or so, the man stopped coming to church, made friends of ungodly people, broke the Sabbath, got drunk, swore and mocked holy things. This had gone on for 20 years, and now he was, so it appeared, on the verge of death.

On his second visit, the man seemed very pleased to see the minister.

Although his breath was short, he told the minister: “Pray for me! O pray for me! I am a miserable sinner who have crucified the Son of God afresh [he was referring to Hebrews 6:6] and am fit only for hell.” He confessed to the minister in detail his long course of sin. Sometimes his conscience used to disturb him, he acknowledged, but instead of confessing his sins to God and seeking mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ, he would plunge again into sin. It was probably the sin of drunkenness – drinking too much in the hope of quietening, for the time being, the reproaches of his conscience. He did not go back to church, he said, in case he would become obviously upset.

Then after telling the minister all this, he shrieked, “Is there any hope for such a vile sinner? Can such a guilty apostate find mercy?” (An apostate is somebody who has given up completely the religion which he once professed. It is a very dangerous condition to be in.)

The minister quoted to the man encouraging verses from the Bible, where God says, “Return unto Me, and I will return unto you”; “I will heal your backslidings”; “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”. But it was in vain. The man threw his arms around in the air and tossed himself wildly in his bed. He was in despair, repeating the words: “Lost, lost, for ever lost!”

The minister called again the next day and found the man less ill and more calm. Yet he still felt he was too great a sinner to be pardoned on his deathbed, but this was to treat lightly the mercy of God for guilty sinners. He said that he had been praying all night that God would spare his life for a little longer so that he might confess his sins to the church and the world, and lead a better, godly life. He was sure that, if he was given a few more years to live, he would use them in the service of Christ. The emphasis, as far as one can see from this distance, was on what *he* would do, not what God in Christ could do for him, working in him by the Holy Spirit. Yet the minister, try as he might, could not focus the man’s attention on the present – on his need of repentance and pardon at that point in time.

Yet he did get over his illness. The minister watched the man’s recovery with great concern, but he found it more and more difficult to get the man to speak about religious things. Only once did he come to church, and the minister could see that he was showing no interest whatever in what was said. The man went back to his old habits; he even made fun of the terror he had felt when he was ill.

Three months later he died suddenly. The minister commented, “Never before or since have I felt so profoundly the force of the passage, “He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”.

It is a tragic, solemn story, but there are several lessons which we should learn from it:

1. There is a great danger in turning back to the world after becoming religious. And supposing someone finds that they were not truly converted, the answer is to seek the Lord earnestly at once, not to give up whatever degree of religious observance they had.

2. There is no need to despair, no matter how seriously sinful one's past may have been. It is sinners that Christ calls to Himself, not those who have made themselves righteous.

3. If conscience warns us on the basis of Scripture – especially if it speaks forcefully – we ought to listen to it and ask the Lord, for Christ's sake, to change our heart and our behaviour.

4. There is a great danger in trusting in our own resolutions to do better. They are bound to fail; our hearts need changing and it is God who must change us. Our first duty is to trust in Christ as the Saviour of sinners.

5. Delay is another great danger. We are called to seek the Lord now, "while He is to be found" – not at some other time we may think best. By that time we may be dead, and it will be too late. Or, in our unbelief and rebellion we may, by hardening our hearts in resisting the call to seek the Lord now, refuse Christ and salvation through Him once too often.

For Junior Readers

The Converted Taxi Driver

Not so many years ago there was a taxi driver in Glasgow who originally came from the Isle of Skye. He had a long name! It was Robert Murray M'Cheyne MacSween. Can you think why he had been given this name? His mother was a godly lady and she chose this name because the Lord had blessed the reading of Robert Murray M'Cheyne's sermons to her soul.

Robert had the blessing of being brought up in a Christian home and was taken to church when he was young. But when he left Skye and his family behind, he was influenced by the world and its temptations. He turned his back on what he had learned at home. He then became a seaman and had some very dangerous journeys across the oceans. In fact, he had some very narrow escapes from death – but the Lord preserved his life.

He later married and settled down, working in Glasgow as a taxi driver. Sometimes he would drive past the Free Presbyterian church in his taxi, taking passengers wherever they wanted to go, and he might see the congregation going into the church or coming out of it. But he had no wish to join them.

One day he had a Christian man in his taxi. This man commented on Robert's Highland accent and said he hoped that he attended church. When Robert admitted that he did not, the man urged him most seriously that he should go.

At first Robert paid no attention to the advice he had been given. But one Sabbath Day he decided to go to a church near where he lived. He felt very uncomfortable in these surroundings as he had not been in church for many years, and he nearly walked out.

The text that day was from the Book of Jeremiah: "Is not My word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Robert was very impressed with the text and the sermon, as the Holy Spirit applied it to his soul. He was brought under deep conviction of sin. His sorrow at having sinned so seriously against God was so great that his eyes would be streaming with tears even as he was driving, and he could hardly see the road in front of him – yet the Lord kept him safe.

He began to read the Bible thoroughly. As he sat in taxi ranks waiting for passengers, he now spent his time reading the Word of God. As he was driving along, he would be thinking over the truths he had read. He also began to pray for mercy, for the sake of the Saviour who had died for sinners and had risen again. His prayer was answered at last and he was brought to trust in Christ. He now wept tears at the thought of such a great sinner obtaining mercy and his tears were mixed with the joy of salvation.

He now wished that others would also come to taste of this salvation which he was enjoying. He started to carry a bundle of gospel tracts in his taxi. As he dropped passengers off, he would offer them a tract, give them a word of advice and invite them to church. He was so full of the wonder of salvation that he had little desire to speak of anything else.

He then became a member in the Glasgow congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church and sat at the Lord's table for the first time. He much enjoyed the preaching of the gospel and continued to use his spare time, as he waited for passengers, in reading the Bible and other good books.

Sadly he developed heart disease and he had to go into hospital. Though he was only 48 years old, he passed away during heart surgery to be with Christ, the Saviour whom he loved.

What about you? Will you not seek the Lord while you are young? Here is a prayer for you to use:

"Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide
in those Thy paths divine,
So that my footsteps may not slide
out of those ways of Thine" (Psalm 17:5). *J van Kralingen*

Knowing Where You Are Going

4. *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Matthew Vogan

In this series, we focus on the five books that were most popular and prized in Scottish Christian homes in the past. They continue to be cherished today and, we trust, will prove their value as they are read today. As you would expect, the Bible was on every cottage shelf in the past. In most cases too, there was *The Westminster Confession*. The Catechisms, Sum of Saving Knowledge and other vital documents were usually bound together with this. We will take it for granted that we all know that we ought to be reading these and making as much use of them as possible.

Continuing to list these books that you must read, we arrive at *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. It was widely read in English, and also translated into Gaelic in 1812. In fact, it has been translated into 200 languages around the world. It has been a reliable spiritual guide to many.

This book reminds us that we need to know where we are going. What is our final destination? Our life ought to be a journey “from this world to that which is to come”. We must see our sinful condition and our need of Christ. We also need to abandon our comfortable attachment to this sinful world, the “City of Destruction”, if we will ever get to heaven, “the Celestial City”.

Helplessness. *The Pilgrim's Progress* opens with the question of knowing where to go. We see a man helpless without any such knowledge, and are gripped by the stark vision of a ragged, burdened man in a “certain place”. All our attention is focused, not on the place, but on the man and his pitiful cry, “What must I do?” It is a vivid description of the desperate emptiness of anyone in a state of nature. John Rogers, a Puritan, likewise felt this emptiness deeply. In reflecting on his own experience, he said, “For what I was before, I know not what, a mere – I know not what”.

The ragged man has only enough knowledge to ask the most basic, helpless question in a bare statement of ignorance. This shows us man in his lostness: he has no answers in himself; they must come from outside himself. God must speak. With a little more knowledge from the Scriptures he is able to increase his question to, “What shall I do to be saved?” Evangelist must present to him plain exhortations on where to go and how to get there. He sees the great gulf between mere existence and eternal life. Recognising his danger of eternal death, the man will run from Destruction crying, “Life! Life! Eternal life!”

It was a firm principle with the Puritans that knowledge, or “a right understanding” (as Richard Baxter put it), was vital to any sound conversion. This

did not mean that conversion was simply absorbing new information. Quite the opposite. The Puritans spoke of it as a supernatural act of God's redeeming grace alone. The understanding must be informed by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. We must be persuaded of our sinfulness and the suitability of Christ as a Saviour. To use the words of *The Shorter Catechism*, this is effectual calling: "God's Spirit . . . convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills". The renewed will responds: embracing, by faith, Christ freely offered in the gospel.

Dependence. As Bunyan's pilgrim progresses, he continues to be dependent on knowledge. Failing to discern ignorance in Mr Worldly-Wiseman, he acts on false knowledge. Coming close to Mount Sinai he is "afraid to venture further". So "he stood still, and [knew] not what to do". Again he is helpless and dependent on knowledge from Evangelist.

The Christian remains dependent on the Spirit after conversion. They "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). The Holy Spirit's instruction in knowledge by means of the Word continues to be fundamental to living the Christian life. The believer must still know how to make progress, how to continue to journey to the destination that he has begun earnestly to pursue. Christian, the Pilgrim, is instructed in Interpreter's house and helped with some necessary knowledge. He is able to say when leaving: "Here have I seen . . . things to make me stable in what I have begun to take in hand".

Later Christian cannot go forward after losing his roll, which points to his knowledge of his election. Bunyan repeats twice that Christian "knew not what to do". Christian cannot keep going forward in this situation but must retrace his steps. Thus the knowledge that Christian requires is not only in his mind, but vitally united to experience and faith. Knowledge may sustain faith, but faith (through grace) sustains Christian.

Christian faces many troubles, toils and snares, but he is led safely on. The shepherds that Christian meets at one point both encourage and unsettle him. Their puzzling replies to his questions are based on the principle of "no fears, no grace". It is a difficult journey, but not impossible. When Christian asks, "How far is it thither?", the shepherds wisely respond, "Too far for any but those that shall get thither indeed". Christian's enquiry, "Is the way safe, or dangerous?" meets the truth "Safe for whom it is to be safe". These answers are intended to stir up resolute faith and committed progress.

Experience. Through the character of Talkative, Bunyan makes the vital point that despite an emphasis on knowledge, those who "say and do not" are in fact outside the truth, no matter how orthodox their speech. Talkative

is tight-lipped on experience, but “The Kingdom of God is not in word but in power”. A Christian must be of the truth, and so know the truth and its power (John 8:32). Bunyan had been instructed by his pastor John Gifford to seek the truth in its power and not to take “any truth upon trust, as from this or that or another man or men, but to cry mightily to God, that He would convince us of the reality thereof, and set us down therein by His own Spirit in the holy Word”.

The pilgrims tell their experiences of the Word to encourage each other in their journey. The spiritual wisdom that Puritan ministers offered stressed the vital importance of experience. As John Rogers put it, “Now to a poor soul all such things, as are in the soul, are made known by experiences; experience we say, proves principles”.

When Bunyan was in prison for preaching the gospel, he wrote a letter to his congregation to strengthen them. In it he encouraged them to call back to mind the times when the truth confronted them in their past experience. “Have you never a hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the close, the milk-house, the stable, the barn, and the like, where God did visit your soul? Remember also the Word, the Word, I say, upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope.”

Ignorance. When the Lord Jesus Christ said to Pilate, “Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice” (John 18:37), His “judge” immediately proved the point by responding with blind, wilful ignorance, “What is truth?” Again and again those false pilgrims that Christian meets betray, out of their own mouths, the fact that they are not of the truth. Atheist, for instance, betrays his blindness when he says, “There is no place as you dream of, in all this world”. Ignorance too lacks knowledge of all that will save him; his lack of true knowledge leads him to an all-too-modern and familiar position that we call *relativism*: the idea that everyone has their own truth. He says, “That is your faith, but not mine; yet mine I doubt not is as good as yours”.

Formalist and Hypocrisy have the same relativism; all the ignorant reject God’s truth and so condemn themselves. The ignorance of the ignorant in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is not an innocent lack of knowledge, rather it is a wilful rejection of the truth. They ought to know where they are to go and how they are to get there, but they have refused that knowledge.

Over against the vision of those crossing to the Celestial City we see one wretched soul entering into damnation. It is significant that this is Ignorance himself. The point that Bunyan seeks to make is stated powerfully in one of the books that made a strong impression on him as an early Christian. In *The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven*, Arthur Dent writes, “Our Lord foreseeing the great danger of ignorance (how thereby thousands are carried headlong

into hell) doth admonish all men to search the Scriptures, which do testify of Him. . . . O therefore that men would earnestly seek after the knowledge of God in time.”

Sometimes people make the mistake of trying to enjoy *The Pilgrim's Progress* as just another story. They ignore its themes and concern for truth and knowledge. This would be great ignorance. It occurred to Bunyan that some readers might attempt this. He cautions us in his Conclusion not to play with the “outside” of his dream. We are to “put by the curtains and look within” the “veil”. We must make sure not to be blind to the truth as the ignorant travellers but seek the reality and power of the truth. As the author himself says, “O then come hither, and lay my book, thy head and heart together”.

Heaven and Hell

5. Heaven

Rev J B Jardine

The previous section of this Youth Conference paper, in last month's *Magazine*, gave some answers to the question: “Why Will There Be a Day of Judgement?”

5. What we know about *heaven* is very imperfect. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

(1) Heaven is described in the Word of God as an actual place, a place that is somewhere beyond this world. Jesus said, “In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

(2) Heaven is a place of great light, an eternal day where the sun never sets. It is where the Lord, the Light of heaven, dwells. It is a place without death, sorrow, pain, tears or curse. It is a place of happiness, without gloom or sadness and full of the singing of the righteous.

(3) Heaven is a place where our present knowledge will be increased beyond what we can understand in this life. Believers will awake with His likeness and will know everything perfectly. All the problems, perplexities and mysteries of this world will be solved.

(4) Heaven is a kingdom as real as any earthly kingdom, with perfect love flowing between the King and His subjects. It is spoken of as a city: Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

(5) Heaven is a home. When a soul enters its eternal home, it rests from its labours, cares, anxieties, temptations and enemies. It rests in peace, joy,

happiness, protection and the endless blessings of God. It is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, one that never fades away.

The blessedness of the righteous in heaven is made known also in how they will be dressed. *They will be dressed in a white garment.*

(1.) This garment speaks of their freedom. In ancient times, freed slaves wore a white garment.

(2.) This garment is a token of their purity. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:8). When John asked, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes?" he was told: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:13,14). They are robes of perfect purity and spotless holiness.

(3.) This garment is a sign of their "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), as it was a sign of priesthood among the Jews. They will become perfect priests when they are offering the sacrifice of praise to God the Father and to the Lamb.

(4.) This garment is a sign of their triumph. Christ says, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels" (Revelation 3:5). The righteous are received into heaven to enjoy peace as conquerors.

After the righteous are acquitted, they are to be admitted into the presence of the Lord. In His presence they will continue to exist for ever in a state of conscious and exalted happiness, glory and honour. This blessedness is repeatedly called, "eternal life", "everlasting life", an "eternal weight of glory", "eternal salvation", an "everlasting kingdom", and an "eternal inheritance". They are blessed because:

(1) they are perfectly free from sin;

(2) they are in direct communion with Christ, as joint heirs with Him – and through Him with God the Father. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12).;

(3) they have perfect freedom from evil of every kind. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

They enjoy every form of blessedness, altogether beyond what we can understand. "It is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them

that love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). They are brought into the “full enjoying of God” (*Shorter Catechism*, answer 38). Thomas Goodwin, one of the best-known Puritans, comments, “To sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was” the way of speaking “in the Old Testament, but to sit down with Us – with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost – this is Christ’s language; this is New Testament language”.

Man’s chief end is fulfilled in the eternal blessedness of the righteous. The Scriptures consistently teach that man’s only true happiness is in God, and that his full happiness in God cannot be reached in this life, but they teach that believers are assured of that happiness in the life to come.

When Lazarus the beggar died, the angels were there to receive his soul. This was not an extraordinary favour for him, but every true believer can expect the same favour. All who enter heaven will be of one mind and experience; they are chosen by the Father, washed in the same blood of atonement and renewed by the same Spirit.

Though no one can adequately describe the glories of heaven, yet, as someone has said, “all that is best and most precious here is most plentiful there”. Someone else has said, “It is not in heaven that we are to find God, but in God that we are to find heaven.”

For Younger Readers

The Weaver's Favourite Texts

Somewhere in Scotland, there was once a weaver; he made pieces of cloth. **S**He was poor, so obviously he did not make much money from the cloth. But he seems to have been rich in his soul. All are rich who have found Jesus Christ. They are trusting in Him, and He will supply all their needs. This man loved to tell people his three favourite texts in the Bible.

The first was from 1 John 1:7: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and He died in the place of sinners. The poor weaver was trusting in Jesus as the One who died, the One who poured out His blood. So the weaver believed that all his sins would be washed away. He said, “That’s my sin *away*”.

The second text was from Luke 12:6,7: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? . . . ye are of more value than many sparrows.” God knows about little birds like sparrows. So God takes care of people who trust in Him. The weaver trusted in God and believed everything that God promised. So he said, “That’s my care *away*”. There was no need for him to worry, as God was caring for him.

The last text was from 1 Thessalonians 4:17: "We . . . shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air". The weaver said, "That's myself *away*". He believed that the Lord Jesus would take care of him at the end of the world. He would always be safe.

For Your Bookshelf?

John Knox, by Simonetta Carr, published by Reformation Heritage Books, in their series of Christian Biographies for Younger Readers, hardback, 64 pages, £11.99 from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

John Knox was probably the most important figure in the whole history of the Church of Christ in Scotland. He was probably born in 1514 and died in 1572. Knox was living in the castle at St Andrews, in Scotland, and teaching three boys when the people in the castle chose him as their minister. He burst into tears and went away to his room. But in the end he felt it his duty before God to become a minister. The castle in St Andrews is by the sea, and one day, when the people there looked out, they saw several French warships sailing towards them. Soon the French took over the castle and Knox became one of their prisoners. He was to spend a year and a half on one of their galleys, pulling hard on his oar day after day.

At last Knox was released and he spent seven years as a preacher in England. Then good King Edward VI, still just a boy, died, and Queen Mary took his place. Lots of good people were burned to death, just because they did not believe Roman Catholic teaching. Knox escaped to Europe, but in 1559 he came back to Scotland. And the next year Scotland officially turned from being a Roman Catholic country to become Protestant. Knox spent the last 13 years of his life in Scotland preaching the gospel and standing up for the teachings of the Bible.

There is much here to interest young readers. Even more important is the fact that even young people should know something about those who stood up for the Bible and its teachings long ago. In the book's 64 large pages, there are lots of attractive pictures as well as a number of paintings. The painting on the front cover shows what is supposed to be Knox fleeing from England to France in a small boat, but nobody would try to cross the open sea in such a small boat.

The book states it is for ages 7 to 12, but I wonder how many seven-year olds understand the word *mandatory*. Yet Simonetta Carr has made a big effort to explain things simply. And if you find the book too difficult at first, put it aside for some time and then try again.

Looking Around Us

Can Anyone Escape Justice?

Greville Janner was for many years a member of the British House of Commons; afterwards he was appointed to the House of Lords. In later life he was accused of serious crimes, but by the time police investigated them seriously, Janner was old and had lost his memory; it was impossible to put him on trial. Then he died. Some people were very disappointed that he was not brought to court. They were sorry for those who, it was claimed, had suffered from what Janner had done. These people, they felt, were denied justice; he would never be punished for the crimes he was accused of.

But we can be sure of this: everyone will be dealt with in perfect justice on the other side of death. And let us remember that, however wicked may be the crimes that individuals commit against other people in this world, what is even more significant is that each of these crimes is a sin against God. That was why, when David was confessing his wrongdoing, he said to God: “Against Thee, *Thee only*, have I sinned” (Psalm 51:4).

At the end of the world, everyone will be judged, and Christ will be the Judge. In this world, it is often very difficult to know whether someone accused of a crime is guilty or not; not enough evidence is available. On the Day of Judgement, all possible evidence will be available to the Judge; so it will be perfectly obvious whether people are guilty or not, whether they deserve to go to hell or not. No sinner can escape God’s justice.

Yet many of those who come before the Judge will be found not guilty; they will be treated as if they had kept all God’s commandments perfectly. But were they not sinners too? Yes, indeed they were. So why will they not be punished? It is because they found a Substitute who took their punishment and suffered instead. That Substitute was the Lord Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself to become man and to suffer unto death. “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).

Is God just when he finds sinners “not guilty”. Yes, because these are sinners *who believe in Jesus*. That is why they do not perish in hell for ever; that is why they will have “everlasting life”.

You may not have been involved in serious crimes. Yet, if you do not believe in Jesus, you will still be found guilty on the Day of Judgement because of your many sins – all of them against God. So you must look by faith to Jesus Christ for forgiveness, and turn in repentance from all your sins. In this world, Jesus called sinners to repent and believe the gospel. And from heaven He still calls to us to repent and believe.

UK Youth Conference 2016

Arrangements

Venue: Netherurd House, Blyth Bridge, West Linton, Peebleshire, EH46 7AQ.

Dates: Tuesday, April 5, to Thursday, April 7.

Chairman: Rev Donald Macdonald.

Lower Age Limit: 16 years old.

Applications: to Rev Donald Macdonald, F P Manse, Bayhead, North Uist, HS6 5DS (please let Mr Macdonald know by March 14, if possible). See the February issue for an application form. The fee will be £40 for those in full-time employment and £20 for others. Cheques are to be made payable to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Programme

Tuesday, April 5

- 2.30 pm **Singing the Praise of God**
 The Case for Psalms only in Public Worship
 by Dr R J Dickie
- 7.00 pm **The Bible's Teaching About God**
 God Infinite and Eternal
 by Rev J R Tallach

Wednesday, April 6

- 9.30 am **Principles of the Christian Church**
 An Important but Neglected Subject
 by Rev Douglas Somerset
- 2.30 pm **Historical Tour**
 of Covenanting Sites
 conducted by Rev David Campbell
- 7.00 pm **Thomas Boston**
 His Life and Ministry
 Mr Frank Daubney

Thursday, April 7

- 9.30 am **Job**
 Fearing God and Eschewing Evil
 by Rev David Campbell

Price £1.00