

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



November 2016

Vol 81 • No 11

Contents

The Best and the Most in This Life	203
Principles of the Christian Church:	
5. The Church as the Bride of Christ	206
The Master and His Dog	208
For Younger Readers:	
The Good Book	211
For Junior Readers:	
“The Lord Will Take Me up”	211
Job – Fearing God and Eschewing Evil:	
1. Introduction	212
The Old Minister’s Talk	215
Knowing Where You Are Made Wise:	
1. <i>The Self-Interpreting Bible</i>	216
Looking Around Us	219
The Sands of Time (3)	220

Cover Picture: The Free Presbyterian church in Chesley, Ontario.

The Young People’s Magazine

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

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

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

Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; e-mail: wc.fpchurch@btconnect.com; tel: 0141 332 9283. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates, including postage, are: F P Magazine £26.00 (£2.00 per copy); Y P Magazine £15.00 (£1.00 per copy); both magazines £39.00. All queries should be directed to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

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

The Young People's Magazine

Volume 81

November 2016

Number 11

The Best and the Most in This Life

John Newton was once a godless seaman, but God met him and changed his heart and life. Later he became a minister, first in the little town of Olney in Buckinghamshire, and later in London, where his church still stands, very near the Bank of England.

Newton is still well known for the letters he wrote. Those who are interested can read a few hundred of them which were preserved and printed; they are still in print today. They are full of godly wisdom.

I want to focus on a letter he wrote to an unconverted friend. Newton felt that there was something in most of his letters which his friend did not like, and Newton told him so quite bluntly. But he wanted to show his friend how best to live his life. And he claimed to have one advantage over his friend in thinking about what was best: "I have experienced the good and evil on both sides, [he had been both godly and ungodly] and you only on one".

If his friend was to send him a list of his pleasures, they would include the theatre, playing cards, the pub, along with dances and concerts. "I could answer that most of these I have tried and tried again", Newton pointed out. He knew for himself how limited was the pleasure they could give him; so he could now heartily reject them all. Even if, for a moment, he did not think about religion, he would rather be a worm crawling on the ground than to be a *man* whiling away his life in a boring series of such trifling activities.

Newton asked his friend to consider how he was wasting his abilities if his only purpose in life was to spend his time in such pleasures, while getting up early and staying up late to earn money, just so that he would have more to spend – on what was useless and sinful. Newton went on: "I am sure, while I lived in these things I found them unsatisfying and empty to the last degree, and the only advantage . . . was that they often relieved me from the trouble and burden of thinking. . . . I am willing to hope you do not stoop still lower in pursuit of satisfaction. Thus far we stand on even ground. You know all that a life of pleasure can give, and I know it likewise."

On the other hand, if Newton was to try to explain the source of his best pleasures, he felt his friend would think as little of them as he did of his

friend's pleasures. The pleasures Newton gave as examples were: an assurance that his sins were pardoned, "a habit of communion with the God who made heaven and earth", calm reliance on God's providence, "the cheering prospect of a better life in a better world, with the pleasing foretaste of heaven in my own soul".

To these he added "the pleasure I often find in reading the Scriptures", in prayer, "and in that sort of preaching and conversation which you despise". He went on, "Here lies the difference, my dear friend; you condemn what you have never tried. You know no more of these things than a blind man does of colours", and he defied his friend always to convince himself that Newton was wrong. In other words, could he always claim to be engaged in what was really as satisfying as what Newton spent his time doing?

Then Newton asked, "What do I lose upon my plan that should make me so worthy of your pity? . . . Do you think I do not eat my food with as much pleasure as you can do, though perhaps with less cost and variety? Is your sleep sounder than mine?" Newton pointed out that he too had friends, and then he went on: "Let me add one thing more: I know you have thoughts of marriage; do you think . . . your principles are" likely "to make you more happy in it than I am? You are well acquainted with our family life." Did he expect to experience more of the peace and heartfelt joy in his marriage than Newton had done? "I wish you may equal us," Newton added kindly, hoping his friend too would enjoy happiness as a married man.

Then he pointed out that he did not need to give up his religion "to enjoy the best and the most that this life can afford". "But I need not tell you that the present life is not made up of pleasurable incidents only. Pain, sickness, losses, disappointments, injuries . . . will, more or less, at one time or other," come our way. "Can you bear these trials better than I?"

Newton knew that his friend would not pretend that he could. Was his friend not often very annoyed when things did not work out as he wanted? Newton stressed, "You cannot view these trials as appointed by a wise and heavenly Father" for your good – for his friend was not a child of God. "You cannot taste the sweetness of His promises, nor feel the secret support of His strength" in your time of trouble; "you cannot so cast your burden and care upon Him" as to feel relief by doing so. Nor could he see that God was using His power to deliver him, in contrast with what Newton experienced.

He assured his friend, who had no experience of these things, "that they are realities, and that I have found them to be so". When Newton's concerns about worldly things were most difficult and discouraging, he had once and again experienced "that peace which the world can neither give nor take away". He was referring to the peace that God gives to His children.

Then he wrote, “You do pretty well among your friends; but how do you like being alone? Would you not give something for that happy secret which could enable you to pass a rainy day pleasantly” without the help of work or company or entertainments? Then Newton exclaimed, “What a poor scheme of pleasure is yours that will not support” a time for reflecting on the serious issues of life!

Obviously the man to whom Newton was writing had heard that a few friends were gathering at Newton’s manse to worship God together, and he found it strange. Newton confirmed that they met every fortnight and asked, Does it seem better to live completely without God? If it had been a gathering to play cards together, Newton added, it would not displease his friend. “How can you . . . avoid being shocked at your own unhappy prejudice? But I remember how it was once with myself.”

So he was not surprised any more and added, “May He who has opened my eyes open yours! Only He can do it. I do not expect to convince you by anything I can say, as of myself; but if He is pleased to make use of me as His instrument, then you will be convinced. How should I then rejoice!” He would be happy to be useful to anyone, but especially to a friend.

Newton went on: “May God show you your true self and your true taste; then you will attentively listen” to what he did not want to hear about: God’s “goodness in providing redemption and pardon for the chief of sinners, through Him who died upon the cross for sins not His own.”

No doubt, there are readers who would be much the better of applying Newton’s thoughts to themselves. Do you think of religious activities as what you could never imagine yourself being happy in? Then why do some people, such as Newton and perhaps some close relations – maybe your mother and father or brother or sister – or someone who used to be a very close friend, now enjoy going to church and reading their Bible, for instance? Very possibly, in the past, they thought just as you do now, and as Newton once did.

But God changed their hearts, and they now are among His friends. God is able to do the same for you; He is able to change your heart and give you new ways of thinking and new desires – desires after the things of God, the things which are for your spiritual good, in time and throughout eternity.

Seek Him, and seek Him earnestly. This world will not last; perhaps your ability to enjoy many of the sinful pleasures of this world, that you so much long for, will soon come to an end. What will you do then?

Especially with death ahead of you, should you not seek the Lord now, before it is too late – before your opportunities come to an end? Look to Christ; trust in Him, for He died for sinners just like you.

Principles of the Christian Church

5. The Church as the Bride of Christ

Rev D W B Somerset

Last month's section of this Youth Conference paper looked at the third of four pictures of the Church given in the Bible: it is like a temple. This is the final article in the series and gives the last of these pictures.

The fourth illustration of the Church used in Scripture is that of the Church as the Bride of Christ. When the Apostle Paul speaks about marriage and the union between a husband and a wife, he says: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh", and he concludes: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (Ephesians 5:31-32).

From one point of view, marriage was created by God to give us an understandable illustration of the union between Christ and His people. We have referred already to the vision in Revelation: the Church is seen, before the marriage supper of the Lamb, coming down from God out of heaven, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2). We read of her as a bride in almost the last words of the Bible: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come" (Revelation 22:17), desiring the Second Coming of Christ (and perhaps referring also to the coming of sinners to Christ).

This view of the Church emphasises the great love that Christ has to His people, like the love of a bridegroom for the bride. Marriage is one of the chief events of human life, and Christ's marriage to His bride is the great purpose of His taking human nature. "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isaiah 62:5).

This view of the Church also emphasises the duty of the bride to please her husband. That is her great purpose: "He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him" (Psalm 45:11). Paul says concerning wives: "She that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (1 Corinthians 7:34). So the purpose of the Bride of Christ is not to please herself but to obey and to please Him.

This applies, in particular, to the Church's worship of God, and it helps us to understand the so-called "regulative principle of worship": that we are to worship God only in the way He has appointed, the way that we know is pleasing to Him. We are to worship Him by prayer, singing, reading the Word, preaching, and the two sacraments, but not in any way that is not found in His Word.

Musical instruments are found in the Old Testament but they are "typical" – that is, they give a picture of worshipping God with all our powers: "heart

and soul and strength and mind” – and we do not find them used in the New Testament worship. The same can be said of things like burning incense. There is even less biblical warrant for lighting candles in churches, for festivals such as Christmas and Easter, and for more recent introductions such as acting and dancing in public worship. How can anyone know that these things please the Bridegroom? Clearly they do not.

One point that is worth making is that the Bride does not have to receive direct instructions from the Bridegroom in order to know His mind: a nod is often enough. Jonathan Edwards notes this regarding the change of the Sabbath to the first day of the week. We see from a few references in the New Testament that the Church in the time of the Apostles was keeping the first day of the week as the Sabbath, and that is enough for us. To insist on an explicit command may sound very faithful, but in fact it is an act of unbelief. It is like the Jews “seeking a sign” from Christ when they already had abundant evidence (Matthew 16:1); or like the Apostle Thomas saying that he would not believe in Christ’s resurrection unless he could put his hands into Christ’s side (John 20:25).

Conclusion. We have mentioned briefly the following six Church principles: the unity of the Church; the government of the Church by Presbyterian courts; the spiritual independence of the Church; the spirituality of the Church; the Establishment principle, or the duty of nations to support the Church; and the regulative principle of worship.

These are all important biblical principles and therefore Christians have a duty to support them. They may not be as important as the fundamental doctrines of Christianity about Christ and the way of salvation, but they are not unimportant; and they tend to have a long-term importance for the well-being of the Church. A bad diet is not as immediately dangerous as a stab-wound, but it may prove as harmful in the end, leading to disease and even to death (think of the sailors dying of scurvy in the eighteenth century). The casting off of the regulative principle of worship and the Establishment principle in the nineteenth century, together with a decline in the spirituality of the Church, has led to the fearful consequences in Scotland that we are seeing today.

The practical application is that we should seek to attend a Church which not only preaches the gospel but also upholds these principles and conforms to them; and we may have to suffer somewhat for this. Such a Church may be small; there may be difficulties over supply and maintaining services; there may be people in the congregation that we find awkward, and we may be subject to mockery in some parts of the country. And in times of persecution, things may be very much worse than that. But these Church

principles are biblical principles, and they are for the good of the Church, and for the glory of God. Therefore we have a duty to contend for them, and to seek to uphold them. "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob" (Psalm 132:4-5).

The Master and His Dog

Rev K M Watkins

The dog had not intended to do it. He had not meant to bite his master's hand. They were walking together; it was the dog's favourite time of day. His master was throwing sticks for him to fetch. He was getting more and more excited. Another stick was lying on the ground. They saw it at the same time, the master and his dog. It was nearer the master, so he bent down to pick it up. But the playful dog thought that he could get to it first. The moment the master put his hand upon it, the dog's teeth arrived too. The result was blood – and quite a lot of blood.

It looked a lot worse than it was, though, and no lasting harm was done. However, the dog did not know that. All he knew was he had hurt his master. All he could think of was the harm his teeth had caused. There was still a distance to walk. All the way, the dog's tail was between his legs. He tried to stay as close as he could to his master, but he could not look him in the face, except for repeated nervous side-glances to see what his master might be thinking.

One thing, and one thing only, mattered to the dog. It was not the stick that just a few moments earlier had been so important. It was not the smells on this and that side of the path that usually would have drawn his interest. It was reconciliation with his master. The dog needed reassurance, not once, not twice, but over and over again, that his master meant him no ill-will. He needed to know that the relationship of trust that had built up over the months and years had not been destroyed. Every glance from his master, every comforting word, was eagerly seized upon as a token that things were all right again.

The master felt rebuked by this. He professed to fear the Lord. He thought of how often he had let one thing or another become far too important. Like the stick to the dog, at times even lawful pleasures had taken over his desires, and at other times the cares of this life had too much consumed his thoughts. He knew that this was idolatry, allowing these things to take the place that only the Lord should have in his heart and life.

It came to him with fresh conviction that by these things he had wounded his Saviour. Just as his dog, who in his eagerness to have the stick had not intended to hurt his master, so the master had not intended to wound Christ. But that, he saw, was the effect of greediness for sin and for other things. He felt that he was looking on Him whom he had pierced (see Zechariah 12:10). He felt that the Saviour was looking on him in the way that He looked on Peter after the three denials. The master needed to go out and join Peter in weeping bitterly, with a godly sorrow for sin.

It made the master think of all the unconverted people in the world. They have never wept spiritually for their sins. They have never had a relationship with Christ, and so have never thought about their sins in reference to Christ. Therefore they have never been grieved for their iniquities in the way that only true Christians can be.

Are you one of these unconverted people? Do you know nothing of a trusting relationship with Christ? If so, can you not see the hardening effect that has upon you? If a strange dog, one that never knew the master, had bitten him, that dog would not have been affected in the way that the master's own dog was. The master's dog could not bear to think of what he had done. Another dog would probably not have cared. Do you care about the sins you have committed? Do you care about Christ? Do you care about His suffering on the cross for the sins of His people? Does that make you see your sins in a most heinous light.

If not, it shows that you need to be born again. You need a new heart. You need to find Christ. You need to meet Him in the gospel. You need to trust Him with the salvation of your soul. Then a relationship with Him will begin. When Christ becomes your Lord and Master, you will never be able to think of sin in the same way again. From then on, sin will always be a personal matter, a breach between you and your gospel Master.

The dog taught his master another lesson. It was another rebuke. His dog could not bear to think that a rift had formed between them. His dog had been desperate to have their relationship restored, and could not attend to anything else until that was resolved. Nothing else mattered but for him to be assured that his master still felt the same toward him.

His master compared himself with his dog, and felt ashamed. How often he had grieved his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ! But how slow he had been, on far too many occasions, to seek speedy reconciliation. It had been almost as if he could live easily with it, knowing that all was not well between him and Christ. He had been able, all too often, to postpone the needed reconciliation to a more convenient season. His dog had not been like that with him! How could he be like that with his Saviour?

He recalled what he had heard from others about keeping “short accounts” with the Lord. Yes, sin would enter in. But let it be immediately confessed and forsaken. Let reconciliation with Christ be sought most earnestly and most urgently.

He thought of Benhadad, the king of Syria. Ahab, king of Israel, had inflicted a massive defeat on his army, and now his own life was in danger. His servants offered him hope: “We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings”, they said (1 Kings 20:31). The matter was urgent, and Benhadad did not waste a moment. He sent his servants to Ahab, with “sackcloth on their loins, and . . . ropes upon their heads” (verse 32). They were desperate for reconciliation, and were eager to seize on the smallest hint of mercy. As soon as Ahab spoke of Benhadad as “my brother”, they “did hastily catch it” (verse 33), and used it in a plea for mercy. It paved the way for reconciliation. (In the historical context, Ahab did not do his duty, but the way that Benhadad sought mercy is a good example for us.)

The dog had reacted to his master like Benhadad to Ahab. The dog’s tail between his legs was the equivalent of sackcloth on the loins. His sticking close and repeated side-glances spoke of his eagerness to “catch” every smallest hint that all was well with his master.

The master could never forget that his King Jesus was merciful indeed. But how slow he had been at times to seek, find and enjoy that mercy. After sin – sin that had grieved his gospel Master – his soul had been like the body of the paralysed man in Capernaum. It could not and would not move. The paralysed man’s soul, though, must have been eager for a token of mercy from Christ, for as soon as the Saviour saw him, He did not deal with his bodily affliction but his soul trouble: “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Matthew 9:2).

The master knew what was needed. With a sense of shame, he had to go to his Master in heaven. He had to confess his sin and by faith receive a fresh intimation of pardon and acceptance. He knew that no one who does that will be disappointed. “O taste and see that God is good: who trusts in Him is blessed” (Psalm 34:8, metrical version).

The master thought of Peter’s eagerness for reconciliation with Christ. As soon as he “heard that it was the Lord, he . . . cast himself into the sea” (John 21:7). Nothing could keep him back from his Master. He had to have things put right between Christ and himself. Yes, there was shame. Much shame. Especially when Christ questioned three times over that very matter about which Peter had been so sure – his love to Christ. Even if all men denied Him, Peter was not going to do so. But three times he had denied Him, most grievously. The sense of shame was enormous.

Yet that did not stop Peter seeking reconciliation. On the contrary, it stirred him up to seek it. He could not continue without forgiveness and peace. And he was not disappointed.

For Younger Readers

The Good Book

The man was going about selling Bibles in Bolivia, a country in South America. He stood at the door of a house, speaking to a man who was living there.

“Take it away”, the man told the Bible-seller. “I don’t want it. It is a bad book.” He was angry.

What was he talking about? It was the Bible. Of course, it is not a bad book. It is God’s book. It is a very good book. It is a perfect book. It teaches us how to be saved from what is very bad, from sin.

The two men talked together for some time, and then the man bought the Bible. He knew that his wife would not like the Bible; so he used to get up early and go to a small room at the end of their house. There he would light a candle and sit down to read his Bible.

One morning he heard a noise. It was his wife; she too was up early and was already dressed. “What are you doing up so early?” her husband asked her in surprise.

“I’m coming too”, she told him. So they went together to the little room to read and pray. From then on, they did so every day. God blessed the good book to them. They believed in Jesus and lived godly lives.

For Junior Readers

“The Lord Will Take Me up”

It is a great blessing to have a Christian family and Christian friends, is it not? It is a great blessing when they encourage you to walk in God’s ways and to do what is right. Not all young people have this privilege.

A long time ago there was a young girl whose family were very opposed to her religion. After she was converted she succeeded in buying a Bible for herself as her family did not own one. It was her most precious possession in the whole world. She loved God’s Word and believed His promise that He would be her friend for ever.

Sadly her family persecuted her for her religion. At last she had to flee

from the family home carrying only her greatest treasure in her hand, her Bible. As she tried to escape, one of the family chased her and tried to grab the Bible. Although she tried to hang on to it, he managed to get a hold of the Bible and pulled it from her grasp – apart from one page which was torn out and remained in her hand.

When at last she reached a place of safety, she looked down at the torn-out page in her hand. She was so glad to read the verse which met her eyes: “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up” from Psalm 27. These precious words comforted and calmed her.

Did this happen by chance? Of course not! It was God Himself who so wonderfully preserved that very page for her. On that page were these precious words which reminded her that she could not be separated from His love and care.

Should you not seek to know God as your own God and Saviour, as this girl did? Then, even if friends or relations cast you off, you need not be afraid. The same Lord will care for you whatever lies ahead. What this girl found out by experience is summed up in these words: “This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.” *J van Kralingen*

Job – Fearing God and Eschewing Evil

1. Introduction

Rev David Campbell

The series of which this is the first article was originally a paper given at this year's Youth Conference. Most of this article was written specially for publication in this issue of the *Magazine*.

The Book of Job is one of the more difficult books in the Bible to understand. In some ways Job is unique and that makes his case difficult, there being few, if any, to compare him with. But this also makes him a special example for all generations, just like Abraham is an example of faith, Moses of meekness and Solomon of wisdom. He stands out in the extreme difficulties he passed through as a striking example of patience.

The Book of Job is found in the part of the Bible in which the poetic books are. This is because it is mainly written in poetry. From chapter 3 to 41, the book is poetic, but it has an introduction and conclusion in prose. The poetic sections have been divided in different ways by interpreters, but the central section has a dialogue between Job and his three friends. Job begins and then each friend contributes a speech in turn three times, to which Job replies – except in the third set of speeches, when only two of the friends

speak. There is then a long section in which a fourth person – Elihu – speaks. The final main section of the book is the voice of the Lord to Job, with shorter responses from Job to what God says to him.

There are many very striking and beautiful passages in Job which reveal the depths of his trouble and sorrow and the strength of his faith and hope. Many phrases point directly to the gospel and there are searching questions about man's sin, God's providence and justice and about salvation. Near the beginning of the dialogue (chapter 9), Job asks, "How should man be just with God?" And almost the same question is asked by Bildad near the end of the dialogue (chapter 25). This is a question of the greatest importance for everyone, and it should encourage us to read and search this part of the Scriptures for the answer.

We are prayerfully to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is the author of the whole Bible, in trying to understand this, and every other, part of it. Other striking features of the book include the number of animals, birds, insects and plants mentioned, and also the references to the stars, and the great leviathan and behemoth. There are over 120 words in Hebrew used only in the Book of Job. Yet there is no direct reference to the Children of Israel, or to the Ten Commandments given at Mount Sinai. Some believe that both the Flood (at 22:16) and the destruction of Sodom (18:15) are alluded to and there are several references to the Creation of the world.

People have been disputing for a long time about what the message or argument of the Book of Job is. Clearly the friends spoke many things that were right and true, but they were reprov'd at the end. They had not spoken in a way that justified God's dealings and they had falsely accused Job. Perhaps the conclusion that Job arrives at in the end is the greatest lesson he has learned in all his experiences and perhaps is the main message of the whole book: "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak: I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:2-6).

Many godly men have preached or written commentaries on the Book of Job. John Calvin's sermons on the book were published in 1574 and some of them are available in e-books from the Banner of Truth. Most of the recognised commentators have useful discussions of the purpose and message of the book and some, like James Durham, have lectures on the book. It is useful to consult what good Reformed commentators say in their introductions

to the different books of the Bible in order to get a general view of the message or messages in that book. One Puritan writer summarises the four main lessons taught in the book. These are:

Firstly, to convince us that our own righteousness is not sufficient and that human nature is corrupt and that, if we are to be just before God, we need a righteousness other than our own.

Secondly, to teach the doctrine of providence and to answer objections which men make to it arising from evil and afflictions in the world, and to encourage us to be submissive, patient and uncomplaining under trials.

Thirdly, to display the glory of God in all His attributes – His sovereignty, His justice, His wisdom, His power and His goodness and to exalt Him in our view as the Creator, the Governor and the Judge of all men.

Fourthly, to give us a picture or type of the Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings, in which He was first brought low by affliction and then exalted.

Many interpreters have tried to discover exactly who Job was, and where the land of Uz was and also in what period of the Old Testament Job lived. There are perhaps many theories about these questions which could be given some weight. Various scriptures refer to persons called Uz or Huz who may or may not be associated with Job. Of the three possibilities, the one adopted by several commentators, including John Gill, is that the Uz in the Book of Job refers to Huz, the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother. Thus the land of Uz, in the east, is that part of the world in which this man lived, his descendants calling the place after him.

Job therefore, according to this theory, would be related to the descendants of Abraham. If this theory is correct, it may also be the case that various other people mentioned in the Book of Job are similarly connected to the family of Abraham. Perhaps Bildad the Shu'ite is descended from Shuah, the son of Abraham's wife Keturah. Perhaps Eliphaz the Temanite is descended from Teman the son of Esau. These are just possibilities.

These questions are not of great importance, but in searching the Scriptures we may find an answer to them. Such answers may perhaps help us to understand some of the features of this book. Some suggest that Moses may have either met or heard about Job when he spent 40 years in the land of Midian. Being learned in all the wisdom of Egypt and being an Hebrew, it has been suggested that Moses may have written the Book of Job at, or perhaps after, this time in his life. This might explain why there is no reference at all to the Children of Israel or to their deliverance from Egypt. More likely, either Job himself wrote the Book of Job, or Elihu may have written it. What matters is that the book was eventually bound up with the other Scriptures given to the Jewish Church, to whom were committed the oracles of God.

In this paper we will look at four views of Job: First the *Perfect* man; Second, the *Prosperous* man; Third, the *Persecuted* man; and Fourth, the *Patient* man.

I hope that this may further encourage you to read and search this part of the Bible. In doing so, I hope that you will not only learn about the patience of Job, but that you will be given grace to follow the example of Job in those things for which he is so highly honoured as a tried and tested believer in Christ.

The Old Minister's Talk

Archibald Alexander was a godly minister who died in 1851. He spent most of his life helping to prepare students for the ministry. Just a few months before he died, he preached on a communion Sabbath, a beautiful summer day, in a place called South Trenton. The pastor of the congregation had once been among Alexander's students.

In the afternoon, Alexander went to speak to the Sabbath school. Conscious that he was getting old, he told the children:

"This is the last time I expect to address you. You will probably never see me again. But you will remember what I tell you long after I am dead and gone. You will remember that an old man addressed you on this occasion. When I was a little boy, only five or six years old, I remember hearing an old man preach the gospel, just as you hear me now. I remember how grey his hair was, and how old he looked, and how he was dressed.

"And I never can forget the text that he preached from. It was these words: 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha'. I did not then know the meaning of these hard words, but the minister went on to explain them, and said that if we did not love the Lord Jesus Christ, we should all be accursed of God and devoted to destruction.

"And this I repeat in your hearing this day, my young friends. If you do not love the Saviour you will be destroyed. You can never enjoy His favour and blessing unless you love Him with all your hearts, and do whatsoever He has commanded you. Remember it is an old man that tells you so – on the authority of the Word of God."

Alexander also told the children that at home they should write down that on that day, 27 July 1851, Dr Alexander, an old man, addressed the Sabbath School and said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha". He ended up by repeating almost what he had said already: "Remember it is an old man that tells you so". I do not think he was

too worried that the children would remember that *he* had spoken to them. What he was really anxious about was that they would remember what he had said, from God's Word. And the fact that he had lived long, and so had gained some experience of life, gave some extra authority to what he said.

You must remember how serious a matter it is to love the Lord Jesus Christ and how dangerous it is to go through this world without loving Him.

Knowing Where You Are Made Wise

1. *The Self-Interpreting Bible*

Matthew Vogan

In this series of books that you must read, we focus on the five that were most popular in Scottish Christian homes in the past. They continue to be treasured and, we trust, will prove their value as they are read today. The previous article in this series, in July, looked at William Guthrie's book, *The Christian's Great Interest*.

We have been considering the books most treasured by past generations in Scotland. The best book to read is, of course, the Bible. The next best books are those that help us to understand and apply the Bible's teaching. The Bible alone is the source of true wisdom; other spiritual books are only helpful in so far as they help us to understand this true wisdom. There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. We can remember facts, but wisdom is knowing the right course of action. It is how to apply what we know in the best way.

If there was one book in Scotland that people in the past most used in order to understand Scripture, it was an edition of the Bible called *The Self-Interpreting Bible*. Produced by John Brown of Haddington, it contained many notes that helped ordinary people to understand the meaning of Scripture. It was intended for devotional benefit. (An article in the April *Young People's Magazine* introduced some aspects of *The Self-Interpreting Bible* and this article will focus on some others.)

John Brown's goal was to assist in accurate, practical, simple understanding of the Bible. He said, "An accurate attention . . . will, through the blessing of God, greatly assist in searching the Scriptures with success".

It took its place in humble cottages alongside the other books we have noticed in this series. It was said that there was hardly a house that did not have a copy of *The Self-Interpreting Bible*. Robert MacKenzie, who wrote a book about Brown, notices how well it complemented books we have listed in this series: "Brown's *Bible* was treasured in the homes of the people with all the reverence and care enjoyed by Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and

Boston's *Fourfold State*. It supplied what was lacking in these great soul classics, providing a clear path to the fount from which they derived their vitality and strength. The three were considered the necessary literary and religious equipment of the household. They furnished pabulum [staple food for the mind] for serious reading; and they produced strong men."

Understanding the Bible as a whole. The Self-interpreting Bible begins with ten arguments for the inspiration of the Bible. These are as clear and concise and scripturally-grounded as could perhaps be hoped for. They also expound the main evidences of the divine origin of Scripture asserted by the *Westminster Confession*.

Since Scripture is uniquely divine in character it must be interpreted in a uniquely careful way. Brown gives 14 rules for interpretation. It is a spiritual book and must be interpreted in a spiritual way, with a renewed mind, prayerful dependence on the Spirit, and humility of mind. It must also be interpreted carefully and reverently, taking account of its fullness.

Understanding the Bible in its context. Brown covers other areas vital for interpreting the Bible. He lists some of the events of Scripture in order of time, as well as the laws and types of the Old Testament. He sketches what is necessary of geography as well as of the history of nations from the start to the end of time. Other practical information includes the measurements, weights and calendar found in Scripture. There is a dictionary, particularly giving the meaning of biblical names and a harmony of the four Gospels.

Understanding each book of the Bible. Each book is introduced briefly, identifying the time in which it was written and including an outline of its contents. This helps to relate each chapter to the whole overall meaning and context of the book.

Understanding each chapter of the Bible. Each chapter is also introduced with an outline of its contents. Each metrical psalm also is introduced by comments in order to provide explanation and application. At the bottom of the page, explanatory notes indicate matters of doctrine or general points that need to be made clear. These are helpful in more obscure places, where the language is figurative or prophetic. Brown is also keen to give practical teaching.

Each chapter has a section at the foot of the page called "Reflections". These closely apply the meaning of the chapter to one's heart and life. This section follows through the verses of the chapter showing the connection between them. These reflections generally take up only a long paragraph and are clear and concise but full. As Brown indicates, these are intended to awaken the conscience, to direct and enliven our obedience, as well as warm the heart. "Thus we may listen to, and converse with God, and lay our

consciences open to the inspired arrows of our all-conquering Redeemer.”

Understanding each verse of the Bible. The margin of *The Self-Interpreting Bible* contains hundreds of thousands of cross-references. Each part of a verse is thus referenced to other Scripture verses which relate to it or shed light on it. It is this aspect that makes it *self-interpreting*. Brown wore out five copies of the Bible in identifying verses and checking his work. And he highlights the benefit of this aspect of his work: “Properly attending to these, the reader must discern of whom, or of what, the Holy Ghost there speaks and understand the passage accordingly. He may easily fix in his mind a general, but distinct, view of the whole system of inspiration [he means *the Bible*]; and thus be capable, with the utmost readiness, to find out or compare whatever passages of Scripture he may desire.”

Brown encourages us to make use of these. He tells us that collecting the parallel texts in this work has afforded him much more pleasant insight into the Bible than all the many commentaries he ever looked at.

Conclusion. The failure to reprint *The Self-Interpreting Bible* is one of the lamentable omissions of the past century. This means that a copy can only be obtained from second-hand booksellers, yet copies are still quite common. This is a book to be studied and digested as a life-time companion.

Modern study Bibles have many disadvantages. Sometimes people can give undue authority to the notes because they are printed alongside the text of the Bible. Yet far too often the notes can contain error or be misleading. Even when they are more sound, they can sometimes reduce study of the Bible by seeming to provide easy answers and a superficial approach.

Brown does not do this. His notes are sound, rich and full. He provides many helps to study the Bible, not to gloss over it. His reflections encourage prayerful application. We must not, of course, depend on any helps in themselves but engage with the Bible for ourselves. Nothing should come between us and the Scriptures by preventing us from searching them and meditating on them. Yet helps can be of great benefit; they can stir us up and prompt further consideration.

Brown's great goal was that we should come before the God of the Word by means of the Word. In this way “we find His words, and eat them, to the joy and health of our soul; we hide them in our heart, that we may not sin against Him; we become mighty in the Scriptures, and expert in handling this sword of the Spirit, in opposition to every enemy of our soul . . . we are made wise unto salvation; are reprov'd, corrected, and instructed in righteousness, and perfectly furnished for every good work”. Brown's simple prayer for his *Self-Interpreting Bible* was: “May the Lord Himself prosper it for these ends!”

Looking Around Us

John Knox's Bible?

Experts have been paying attention recently to a large Old Testament, printed in Hebrew and in Latin. It contains the signature, “Jo. Knoks”, which is dated 1561 and is written on the reverse of the title page (the spelling looks unusual, but the owner signed his name at a time when spelling was much less fixed than it is now). These experts now believe that this Bible may have belonged to John Knox, the leader of the Reformation in Scotland, though he spent several years out of the country, notably in England and Geneva. The Bible was printed in Switzerland in 1546.

The volume was left to Glasgow University in 1864 by a William Euing, as part of his collection of about 3000 Bibles. He worked in insurance in Glasgow and must have had a very successful business for him to afford to buy all these Bibles for his collection and many other books besides. The find was revealed in an article posted on the University's website.

Professor Jane Dawson, of Edinburgh University, has recently produced a new biography of Knox. She explains, “During his career and in common with most sixteenth-century figures, Knox used a variety of different signatures and writing styles. In such a Latin/Hebrew Old Testament he would have probably used the Latin abbreviation *Jo* of his Christian name, *Joannes*. The spelling of Knox with a second ‘k’ would also be unusual for him, though this was a variant used by his contemporaries.” Professor Dawson adds, “Although there is no match [between this and] Knox's known signatures, there is equally nothing to prevent this being Knox's book.”

Many people will find it interesting to hear of an Old Testament being found that possibly once belonged to a faithful servant of Jesus Christ who was so useful in influencing Scotland away from the false teachings of the Roman Church towards the truths of the Scriptures. But what is really important is that we would receive these truths for ourselves. For instance, when Knox wrote to the ordinary people of Scotland, he stressed that there is only one way of attaining benefits from Christ, and that is through faith, working by love. This is the faith that we too need.

The Need for Hope in Life

Dr Mark Spencer is a GP working in Fleetwood, Lancashire. He oversees a year-long project which aims to improve people's health. He says, “When I suggest to patients that stopping smoking, knocking the vodka on the head and eating more healthily would help them, a fairly common response is: ‘Why should I? What's the point? My life is rubbish. Getting through today

is hard enough; so why bother about tomorrow? Just give me some pills and I'll be out of your way.'”

“What if we could make a pill that created years of added healthy life?” the doctor asks. “It would be a Nobel Prize winner for medicine! However, people don't need a wellness pill. They need hope. They need to be able to look forward to tomorrow. They need to choose to be healthier today so that they can enjoy tomorrow with their children and their grandchildren.”

His ideas are sensible. They include encouraging people to take exercise, do some gardening and cook their own food. But what is more relevant is to believe in God as ruling over all things, in control of all that happens. While people must face up to the solemn fact that they are sinners open to God's anger, the gospel provides a wonderful message of hope: that Jesus Christ, God's Son, came into this world to suffer and die for sinners including those without hope. All who believe in Christ will be forgiven all their sins; God's wrath will be turned away from them; and they will have God's fatherly care for the rest of this life and eternal blessedness in heaven at last.

The Sands of Time (3)

This poem, by Anne Ross Cousin, turns into poetry some of what Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661), the godly minister of Anwoth, wrote. Here are two more verses.

The little birds of Anwoth,
I used to count then blest.
Now beside happier altars
I go to build my nest;
O'er these there broods no silence,
No graves around them stand,
For glory, deathless dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.
Fair Anwoth by the Solway,
To me thou still art dear!
Ev'n from the verge of heaven
I drop for thee a tear.
O if one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God's right hand,
My heaven will be two heavens
In Immanuel's land.

Price £1.00