

# The Young People's Magazine

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**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland  
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

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*“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 River Seine in Paris. See page 212.

### **The Young People’s Magazine**

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# The Young People's Magazine

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Number 11

## In Bondage to the Bible?

One minister told another: “Your trouble is: you are in bondage to the Bible”. Clearly the man who said this did not believe in the full authority of Scripture. With all his human limitations, he was presumably prepared to judge God’s revelation to mankind and choose which parts of it he would accept. He was not prepared to submit to God speaking to him in the Bible, for throughout this holy book *God* is speaking to all who come in contact with it. He is telling us all we need to know about spiritual things; He is telling us how we should live and how we can get to heaven.

But this minister, it would seem, was not prepared to accept that God is using the Bible to bring us a reliable message. Yet it is altogether reliable in everything it says. From beginning to end, the Bible speaks the truth. When we think of what the Bible says, we should realise that it is God speaking. And He is speaking to us all, whether young or old, male or female, rich or poor. It does not matter who we are – God is telling us what we need to know in religion. And it is our duty to listen – and to obey.

How did the other minister react to the charge that he was in bondage to the Bible? He took it as a compliment; he was pleased to be recognised as someone who *submitted* to the Bible – which would be a better way of describing his attitude. This should be our attitude too: we should want to submit to the Bible, recognising that God is speaking to us in it. But apart from God working in our souls, we will never really submit to Him and to what He says to us through the Bible. We need God to change our hearts, working in us by the Holy Spirit, for the sake of Christ and what He did in this world for the salvation of sinners.

To accuse somebody of being “in bondage to the Bible” is rather typical of much modern religion. People are ready to pass judgement on the Bible, rather than to accept that the Bible passes judgement on them – or, rather, that God uses the Bible to pass judgement on them.

Most people do not like the idea of a Creator who demands total obedience from them. Instead they are willing to accept the idea of evolution, although it is absurd to think of everything in the universe coming into existence by

a series of chance events, with no conscious being in control of it all, even if it all took a very long period of time – that everything just happened! Yet these things did not just happen, and that should be obvious to us if we think for a little about how wonderfully designed every living creature is, especially a human being, or even one individual cell – which is remarkably complex. A Creator *was* needed.

God created all things. That is the testimony of Scripture. In other words, it is God's testimony – for what Scripture says, God says. And it is our duty to submit to that testimony, whatever other people may think of us. Indeed it is our duty to submit to all that the Bible teaches about God. It teaches, among other things, that God knows everything, including everything about ourselves; that He is perfectly holy, perfectly just and perfectly wise; that He is eternal and is all-powerful; that He is loving (this includes His mercy, His kindness to those who are needy – not least because of sin); and that He is totally faithful to the truth, in everything He reveals. And this is made clear in very many ways; we are to receive it all as true and live our lives in this world in the light of what He tells us about Himself.

Unconverted people do not want to believe in a God like this, One who demands perfect obedience and who is absolutely just in His dealings with angels and human beings. But He may not deal with us in the way that we want. Indeed He will *not* deal with us as we would want Him to if we do not submit to His commands and to the merciful revelation of the Saviour, the Son of God who came into the world to save sinners. If we continue disobedient, what He will do is, solemnly, punish us for ever and ever.

But if we submit to the Bible, accepting that we are sinners and believing in Christ Jesus as the Saviour of sinners – trusting in Him as the One who is graciously calling sinners to Himself – then all will be well. Whatever difficulties we may experience in this life, the Good Shepherd will bring us safely through them all and we will not experience the punishment of sin in a lost eternity. Instead He will bring us into the eternal blessedness of heaven when we leave this world.

Most people today do not want to be reminded that they are sinners. They would then have to face up to their duty to turn away from sin – an unwelcome thought because they are in love with so many sins. Yet God tells us in the Bible: "Put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil" (Isaiah 1:16). He is telling us to stop sinning.

But perhaps you say, Surely the Bible makes clear that no one can stop sinning in this life. That is so. Yet it is your duty to stop sinning. This should send you to earnest prayer, asking God to work in you by the Holy Spirit, for Jesus' sake, giving you a new heart and subduing your sin. And you should

pray also that the Spirit would continue His work in your soul so that, when you die, you would be made perfectly holy and never sin again.

It is dangerous to choose our beliefs, about God or anything else, on the basis of what we like. What should matter to us is what is true and what is right. That is why we should be willing to submit to God and what He has revealed in the Bible. Then, and only then, will we be safe, for all He says is true and right.

The fact is that, if we do not submit to God and to the Bible, we are in bondage to sin and to unbelief. Because of that bondage, we are not free to believe in Christ; we are not free to keep God's commandments with our whole heart; we are not free to reject all worldly and godless ways of thinking. Yes, we may accept the truth of many of the Bible's teachings, but we do not really submit to their influence. Yet Jesus said, "If the Son . . . shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). The Lord Jesus is the only One who can set sinners free from the bondage of sin and unbelief. We must trust in Him.

Saul of Tarsus was in bondage to sin and unbelief; he afterwards described how he had acted: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to . . . Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9), among them persecuting Christ's followers. He was in bondage to a false way of thinking, denying that Jesus was the Messiah, the One prophesied in the Old Testament as coming from God. Saul needed to be set free, and it was only Jesus Himself who could do so. When Jesus met him on the way to Damascus, it was a wonderful deliverance for the man who was to spend the rest of his life preaching the good news about Jesus as the Saviour of sinners. Then he was submitting to the truth about God as revealed in the Scriptures.

Think now of Martin Luther. He knew that he was a sinner and that he needed to be saved from his sins. But he was in bondage to false, Roman Catholic ideas; he assumed that he needed to bring to God the righteousness that He required. He struggled on for some years without ever coming close to success. This went on until Jesus Christ set him free, showing Luther that "the righteousness of God" – a phrase in Romans that troubled him – really means the righteousness that God provides. By faith in Jesus he received that righteousness and was delivered from the bondage in which he had been held. He submitted to the way of salvation that God had revealed, and he was then free to serve God for the rest of his life.

Let *us* seek to be set free from bondage to sin, to the world and to false ideas about religion. Let us ask God to make us willing and able to submit to Him and to His commandments and to be content with all the ways of His providence. Then we will have God's blessing in this life and in eternity.

## The Lawyer and the Bushman

A lawyer was making his way home in the outskirts of a city in the Australian state of Victoria after his day's work. As he walked along he overtook a bushman (that is what Australians call someone who lives in the bush, or any area of wild land). The bushman had been walking for some days, having eaten very little food. So he was very hungry and tired.

It needed very little conversation between the two men to make the lawyer realise that the bushman came from the same country as himself – in fact, from the same area of Scotland, the north-east. So the lawyer invited the bushman to spend the night in his home. Hungry and tired as he was, the bushman was very willing to accept the invitation. "I will do that with all my heart," he replied, "if you will take me as I stand."

The two men made their way together to the lawyer's house and, after a bath and a meal, the bushman sat down at the fireside with his host. Soon they were talking about things that had happened when they were young, back in Scotland. They were happy to find out that they both belonged to the same parish and had gone to the same church, where they had listened to the same minister, but presumably at different times.

Then the bushman confessed, "I wish that I had taken the good advice he gave me on the day that I left my home to emigrate to Australia. I would have been a different man today if I had."

The lawyer asked what that advice was. "I am interested to know," he added, "because he gave me also a word of counsel when I was leaving home, which has cast its light along my path since."

The bushman answered, "He told me to put my trust in Christ, and I would be saved to live a happy life. I promised that I would, but I forgot all about it very soon."

"He gave me the very same counsel," the lawyer replied, "and I have proved the value of it, for I was brought to the Saviour at that time, and I have known the Lord as my Redeemer and Keeper ever since." He then took his visitor's hand and said, "It is not yet too late for you to do the same".

The next morning the two men parted. Two years later a man came to the building where the lawyer worked and asked to see him. The man was shown into the lawyer's office. He said, "I am the man whom you entertained two years ago, and gave the good word of hope that it was not yet too late to trust my soul and my life to the Lord". He could now say that God had given him grace to trust in Him, and he added, "He has saved me".

These words gave the lawyer a joyful heart. And the man went on to tell how God had dealt with him. He said that God had led him to see that the

only way of life worth living here and the only way to have a good hope for eternity is for sinners to turn to Christ in repentance, looking to Him for His saving grace and keeping power. And the lawyer praised God for giving him suitable words to speak to the visitor who spent a night in his home two years earlier.

Let us learn a few brief lessons:

1. How easy it is for young people to forget the good advice people give them! Ask God to help you remember good advice – what is in line with the teachings of the Bible – especially about your soul. Ask Him to give you grace to act on good advice, and to do so at once.

2. It is important to seek the Lord while you hear the gospel preached to you, and not leave off seeking till you are old – especially because you may never see old age.

3. Notice how the bushman stressed that it was *God* who had dealt with him; he said, “He has saved me”. It is God who must save us; it is He who must make us willing and able to trust our soul and life to Him; it is He who must give us repentance (see Acts 4:12) and faith. We must feel altogether dependent on Him for everything. God the Holy Spirit must work within us if we are to have a new heart.

4. A time may come when it is too late for us to seek salvation – when we are passing into eternity, when our soul is separating from our body. So let us take heed to the call of Scripture: “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6,7).

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## The Sons of God: Adoption in Romans 8

### 1. The Making of the Sons of God

*Rev David Campbell*

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

**T**his short study is intended, not only to inform you about the Scripture teaching on the subject of adoption, but to encourage each of you to take up your Bibles for yourselves. When you read your Bibles, you should look up marginal references and think about the doctrines being taught in the verses you read. You should read and study the Scripture proofs connected with that doctrine in your catechisms and in the *Confession of Faith*. You should also take up some sound Bible commentary on the passages or verses

you are looking at and read these carefully. If this brief look at adoption in Romans, chapter 8, helps to encourage you to begin or to continue to do this, it will be time well spent.

Romans, chapter 8, ought to be familiar to you all. It is one of those chapters that has been very precious to many of the Lord's people down through the ages. It is a source of much comfort, encouragement and instruction. Robert Bruce, the godly minister of Edinburgh who died in 1631, asked for this portion of Scripture to be opened for him on his deathbed. Here is a short quote from his biography:

"Cast me up the eighth of Romans, cried he, and he repeated much of the latter portion of this scripture, till he came to the last two verses, 'I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Set my finger on these words, said the blind dying man: God be with you, my children. I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus this night. I die believing in these words."

We will look at some verses in the chapter and I hope that, in considering them, you will be able to see something of the reason for the assured hope that Robert Bruce had as he passed out of this world into the eternal world. The chapter is of great use in directing us in the serious and important duty of examining ourselves concerning our state before God and our relation to Christ. It is also a most complete encouragement to those seeking a full assurance of salvation, who may be troubled by doubts and fears. If our study prompts those who have never really examined themselves to begin now to do so, and if those who are truly the children of God may be helped in having that fact confirmed to them, we will surely be the better for studying this portion together.

I want to consider three things with you: (1.) The making of the sons of God. (2.) The marks of the sons of God. (3.) The manifestation of the sons of God.

**1. The making of the sons of God.** *The Shorter Catechism* tells us: "Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God".

Like justification, this is one of the benefits of the redemption purchased by Christ. It is because of Christ, and in union with Christ, that anyone enjoys the grace of adoption. This is clearly taught about the sons of God in Romans 8. In verse 9 we read, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His". And then in verse 29 we read, "For whom He did fore-know, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that



He might be the firstborn among many brethren". Both these verses point to the fact that adoption is an act of God's free grace. In His free grace from all eternity He purposed to have many sons brought to glory and to have His own Son as their elder brother. His free grace brings them and Christ together in time. It is God who makes people His children, not themselves or anyone else.

There are two questions we want to consider here: in order to answer the question, *How is a person made a son of God?* we must first ask, *Who are made sons of God?*

(1.) Who are made sons of God? Our question is, What is their former state and their relation to God before they are adopted? As we read in Romans 8, they are "none of His" until they have the Spirit of Christ. They are neither sons of God nor are they accepted by God nor do they have "the image of His Son". What are they then?

Those who are made sons of God are all God's creatures – He made them. The Bible calls all human beings "the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29) and it is from God that they have their life and being. In this very limited sense they are sons or children of God by creation, but in every other sense, they are rebellious, alienated, fallen, lost and ruined sinners, "having no hope and *without God* in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). In John chapter 8 we have a discussion between Christ and the Jews about God being their Father. They said, "We have one Father, even God". And He replied, "If God were your Father, ye would love Me"; and then, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:42-44).

Here, and in various other places, the Bible makes clear that those in need of redemption are the children of the devil. They are also "children of wrath", "children of the wicked one", "children of disobedience" and the seed of the serpent. Those who are made the children of God were in the devil's family.

An American theologian, J L Girardeau, explains the situation this way: "There are two senses in which man by his fall ceased to be a son of God.

"In the first place, he lost his spiritual life, and therefore ceased to be *spiritually* a son of God, and became, in this spiritual sense, a child of disobedience, a child of the devil. . . . Man was never produced or created by disobedience or by the devil, he was produced and created by God. [In other words, he does not cease to be God's creature, nor does he become the devil's creature or property.] . . . Man voluntarily broke with God, and . . . destroyed the tie which bound him to his maker.

"In the second place, man, by sin, ceased to be *legally* a son of God. His disobedience disinherited him. His rights were contingent [that is, dependent]

upon continued holiness. That gone, they went with it. God disowned and excommunicated him. Thenceforward he became a child of wrath.”

So those who are made the sons of God are those who, by the Fall, are children of the devil and, both *spiritually* and *legally*, are not sons of God, although they are and remain God's creatures. They are also rebels against God's moral government and so are justly condemned by God as their Ruler and Judge. In this relation they require to be pardoned and justified. In their relation as disowned and disinherited they require to be reborn, restored and adopted.

In application, should this not be the great concern of our souls in this world? The Bible describes us as children of the devil in our fallen and ruined condition. What a terrible identity to have and what a terrible state to be in as the creatures of God, made to glorify and to enjoy Him! Let us not be deceived by those who try to flatter human nature with glowing descriptions of its natural greatness. However great our ability to think, and however restrained from the degree of sin which we are capable of, we are by nature in a terrible and perilous condition. Ought we not therefore to seek the redemption that is in Christ Jesus?

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## Christ or the World?

*Robert M M'Cheyne*

M'Cheyne was a godly minister in Dundee who died when he was only 29. This is a letter to a boy G (we only know the initial of his first name) in September 1842. G had been awakened to concern for his soul. The letter has been edited.

I was glad indeed to see, by the letter you sent me, that though your mind is dark and troubled, you have not gone back to the world. It is a false, deceiving world! It smiles only to betray. I would be glad to lead you to taste the peace that passes understanding that is only to be found in Jesus.

You are quite wrong in thinking that I do not understand your misery. I know it well. It is true that Jesus does give me peace. He washes me from all sin in His own blood. I often feel Him standing by my side and looking down upon me, saying, “Thou art Mine”. Yet still I have known more misery than you. I have sinned more deeply than you. I have sinned against more light and more love, and yet I have found mercy; why may not you? Remember what James Covey said: “Tell poor sailors that none of them need to despair, since poor blaspheming Covey found mercy”.

I was interrupted while writing this by a very little girl coming to ask, “What must I do to be saved?” Poor thing, she has been weeping till I thought

her heart would break. She lives several miles away, but a companion was awakened and told her, and ever since she has been seeking Christ with all her heart. I was telling her that sweet verse: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). It will answer you also, dear friend.

Christ Jesus is God's dear Son. He made all things: sun, moon and stars, men and angels. He was from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, and yet He came into the world. He did not say, I will keep My throne and My happiness and leave sinners to die and perish in their sins. No, "He came into the world". He became a babe, and was laid in a manger, for there was no room in the inn. The inn was like your heart; it was filled with other lodgers and had no room for Jesus. He became "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". He bore "our sins in His own body on the tree". While we were sinners, "Christ died for us". Why did He do all this? It was to save sinners. Not to save good people, not to save angels, but sinners.

Perhaps you will say, But I am too bad a sinner. Yet Paul says, "of whom I am chief". Paul was the chief of sinners, and yet He was saved by Christ. So Christ is willing and able to save you, even if you are the chief sinner on the face of the earth. If Christ came into this world and died to save such as you, will it not be a fearful thing if you die without being saved by Him? Surely you have lived long enough without Christ. You have despised Jesus long enough. What has the world done for you, that you love it so much? Did the world die for you? Will the world blot out your sins or change your heart? Will the world carry you to heaven?

No, no! You may go back to the world if you please, but it can only destroy your poor soul. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Timothy 5:6). Read these words in your Bible and mark them; and if you go back, that mark will be a witness against you before the great white throne, when the books are opened. Have you not lived long enough in pleasure? Come and try the pleasures of Christ, forgiveness and a new heart. I have not been at a dance or any worldly amusement for many years, and yet I believe I have had more pleasure in a single day than you have had all your life.

In what? you will say. In feeling that God loves me, that Christ has washed me, and in feeling that I shall be in heaven when the wicked are cast into hell. "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand" (Psalm 84:10).

I do not know what is to be the result of your anxieties. I do not know whether you will be drawn to Christ, or driven back into the whirlpool of a perishing world, but I know that all will soon be settled for eternity.

I was in a very wicked family today where a child had died. I opened my Bible, and explained this verse to them over the coffin of their little one: "It

is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement" (Hebrews 9:27). Solemn words! We have to die only once, and the day is fixed. If you die wrong the first time, you cannot come back to die better a second time. If you die without Christ, you cannot come back to be converted and die a believer. You have to die but once. O pray that you may find Christ before death finds you!

"After this the judgement." Not: after this purgatory. No further opportunity to be saved: "after this the judgement". As death leaves you, so judgement finds you. If you die unsaved, you will be unsaved in the judgement. May I never see you at the left hand! If I do, you will remember how I warned you and prayed for you and besought you to come to the Lord Jesus.

Come to Jesus. He will in no wise cast you out.

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## The Reformation in Europe

### 3. John Calvin in France and Geneva

In last month's section of this Youth Conference paper, we followed Martin Luther's life somewhat further. He was put out of the Church and translated the Bible into very readable German. We also considered more briefly the work of Ulrich Zwingli, the Reformer of Zurich in Switzerland.

We cannot consider all the Reformers, but we must now go on to speak about another man of God, who became a leader in what has become part of Switzerland: John Calvin, who was born in 1509, the year when both Luther and Zwingli became priests. Calvin is most associated with Geneva, which was then an independent city state. But Calvin belonged to France. We do not know much about his coming to faith in Christ; all he tells us is the he had been "firmly addicted to the papal superstitions", and could not free himself from "such a deep mire", but "God by a sudden (or unexpected) conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame". And some of his friends were realising that Luther's teaching on justification was no dangerous heresy; it was firmly based on Scripture.

Indeed, at the time when Calvin's student days were over, a Reformation movement had already begun in France. Those involved realised the importance of the Bible and learned that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, but their leaders hoped to reform Roman Catholicism from inside and did not separate from its false worship, not even from the mass. And one of their leaders became a Roman Catholic bishop.

Then the new rector of the University of Paris, Nicholas Cop, gave an address in November 1533 in which he called for the reform of the Church

in France. Clearly this was not to the liking of the authorities. To escape arrest, Cop had to flee and sought refuge in Switzerland. It is thought that Calvin had helped him with his speech; so he too was in danger. It seems that he escaped with no time to spare, being lowered from his window on a rope made from bed sheets. The next day, the authorities searched Calvin's room and took away his papers. By that stage those "who were looking for a purer doctrine", Calvin wrote, "began to come to learn from me, although I was a novice and a beginner". Clearly, though he was only a beginner, he was learning quickly.

In October 1534, there took place in Paris what became known as "the affair of the placards". They contained a strong attack on the Roman doctrine of the mass, under the headline: "The horrible, gross and insufferable abuses of the papal mass, invented directly contrary to the Holy Supper of Jesus Christ". The placards referred to the doctrine of transubstantiation: the blasphemous idea that, as the priest repeats certain words, the bread and the wine are changed into the body and blood of the Saviour. The placards called the mass "the doctrine of devils against all truth and openly contrary to all Scripture". Most unwisely, one placard was attached to the door of the King's bedroom. Several of those involved with the placards were soon arrested and six were burnt to death.

Calvin realised that he must flee the country. He made his way to Basel, in Switzerland, and there, aged just 26, he wrote the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (the word *institutes* means basic instruction). It was originally printed as a small book which could be carried in one's coat pocket, but the final rewrite would have needed a very large pocket indeed. (My copy of an English translation runs to over 1200 pages.) It has been one of the most important books in the whole of Protestant history.

Some business that Calvin had to attend to brought him briefly back to Paris. From there he meant to travel to Strasbourg, but the direct route was dangerous: he would have to pass the area where the armies of the Kings of France and Spain were facing each other, ready for battle. So Calvin had to travel by way of Geneva, where he expected to spend a night and then move on. William Farel, himself a Frenchman, was a minister in this now-Protestant city state. The people there had sent away their bishop and had given up the mass. Its motto had been, "After darkness I hope for light", but when Geneva officially became Protestant, their motto became simply: "After darkness light" – they had found what they had claimed to seek.

Farel, a forceful character, heard that Calvin was in the city and called on him. Calvin described Farel as a minister who was "working with incredible zeal to promote the gospel". And Farel begged him to stay in Geneva and

help him reform the city further. But Calvin had other ideas; he wished to move on to Strasbourg and continue his studies there in the company of other Reformers. But Farel told him that God would curse Calvin's leisure if he would not help the work of the gospel in Geneva at such a time of need. Calvin felt that this was "as if God had from heaven laid His hand upon me to arrest me". Calvin stayed on in Geneva and, though he had very little, if any, leisure, God blessed his hard work to continue the success of the gospel. And his writings have had tremendous influence over the centuries since then, and even today.

Only a few months later, Calvin and the other two ministers in Geneva were invited to speak in favour of the Reformation in the nearby city of Lausanne. It was Calvin who shone in the discussion, by his knowledge of Scripture doctrine and also as a speaker. Back in Geneva, the ministers sought to further the Reformation cause; they produced a Confession of Faith and regulations for how the church in Geneva should be ordered. These regulations took to do with who should, or should not, come to the Lord's Supper and, among other matters, the singing of Psalms and marriage.

The result was division within the city; some people were displeased that anyone would try to keep them back from the Lord's table. Then the Council in Geneva ordered the preachers to use wafers rather than bread in the Lord's Supper. This shows how far the Reformation had still to go in Geneva (the use of wafers is a Roman Catholic practice; the idea is that because, as they claim, the bread and wine have been changed into the body and blood of Christ, it would be terrible to let any crumbs of bread fall on the floor and somebody stand on them). When the ministers refused to use wafers, the Council banned them from preaching. And when they refused to stop teaching the people from the Word of God, they were expelled from Geneva.

So, after less than two years there, Calvin was again, in 1538, an exile. Again he hoped to take up a quiet life of study, in Strasbourg. But Martin Bucer, the leading Reformer there, insisted that Calvin must become the minister of the congregation of French refugees in the city. His time there was perhaps the happiest period in his life – in part because he found a wife, Idelette. Two years later a son was born. They called him Jacques but, sadly, he died, after just a fortnight. Calvin told a friend about what happened and added that the Lord "is Himself our Father and knows best what is good for His children". After less than nine years of marriage and much illness, Idelette too passed away. Calvin wrote, "I struggle as best I can to overcome my grief. . . . I have lost the best companion of my life."

Back in Geneva, a different set of men were elected to office and just three years after being expelled, Calvin was invited back. Farel, now a minister in

Neuchâtel, urged him to return. Calvin's reply was not encouraging: he would prefer "100 deaths to his cross" – of becoming again minister in Geneva. But in 1541 Calvin did return. Working alongside the other ministers there, Calvin's preaching and pastoral oversight were wonderfully used to bring about a great change in religion and morals in the city state by the time of his death in 1564.

He has left a great heritage of scriptural writing to succeeding generations, especially when we take into account the poor state of his health during the last 10 years of his life. John Knox spent some years of his exile from Scotland in Geneva and called it "that most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the Apostles".

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*For Junior Readers*

## One Door

**Y**ou all know who Noah was, do you not? What was he famous for? For building the ark! Where do we read about him? In God's Word, the Bible. What sort of man was he? He was a godly man: "Noah was a just man and perfect (or upright) in his generations, and Noah walked with God".

We are also told in the New Testament that he was "a preacher of righteousness", warning the people around him of the flood which God was going to send on the earth. The people of the world were so wicked that God was going to destroy them – wipe them all out. But, in His mercy, He also provided a way of escape.

God recorded in the Bible the account of Noah and the ark which God told him to build. You can read the details of the ark in Genesis 6. It was to be enormous, big enough to hold all the different kinds of birds and land animals which were to be preserved to breed after the flood was over. It was to be three stories high and was to have a window or opening of a cubit high for light and fresh air.

And what else was it to have? It was to have a door – only one door! By this door all the animals were to enter the ark, and the eight people whose lives were to be saved. We are told that, once Adam and his family were all safely inside, "the Lord shut him in" (Genesis 7:16).

Do you see how the ark is like a picture of the way of salvation? We are all wicked sinners and we deserve to be destroyed. But God in His kindness and mercy has provided a way to escape His wrath and judgement.

If salvation is like the ark, how do we enter it? There is only one door, and if you look up John 10:9 you will find the answer to this question. Jesus

was speaking in that verse, and what did He say? He said, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved".

Just as Noah's family went through the one door into the ark to be saved from the flood, so must we go through the one door, Jesus Christ. He came into this wicked world and suffered and died to save lost sinners. And just as God said to Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark", Jesus invites us: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

The Bible tells you of your danger, it also tells you in the gospel of the one way of escape, the one door to eternal life. And Christ Jesus promised, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you".

*J van Kralingen*

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*For Younger Readers*

## The Nails in the Post

A father was very worried about his son. Why? His son was often doing what was wrong. He was telling lies; he was using bad words. Worst of all, he was not sorry for what he did.

What could the father do? I am sure he punished his son for doing what was bad. I hope the father prayed to God, asking Him to change the way the boy was behaving.

I hope the father knew that, if his son was to behave in a better way, God must change his whole nature. So I hope the father asked God again and again to change his son's nature, to give him a new heart.

But how could the father teach his son to behave better? He had an idea. Perhaps this was because God was beginning to answer his prayers. The father decided to hammer a nail into a post every time his son did something wrong. Soon there were a lot of nails in the post; it was almost covered with them. And the boy felt rather unhappy when he saw the post covered with so many nails.

But every time the boy felt sorry and made a real effort to do what is right, the father pulled out one of the nails. Probably there were some days when a nail had to be put back in again.

At last a day came when the father pulled out the last of the nails. The father thought his son would be very pleased. He was not. He said, "O Dad, all the nails have gone, but the marks are left".



Remember that when we sin – when we do wrong – we may leave marks behind us. We may cause harm to other people. But we may also cause harm to ourselves. Ask God to give you a new heart and to keep you from sinning. How good if God keeps us from doing harm to ourselves and to others!

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## Why Did God Permit Sin?

**B**rownlow North was once a well-known minister. After preaching one Sabbath in Edinburgh, a young man came into the room where he was speaking to people on their own. He told the minister: “I have heard you preach three times, and I neither care for you nor your preaching, unless you can tell me why did God permit sin.”

“I will do that with pleasure,” North replied at once. He went on to give a very simple answer: “Because He chose to”. It was the absolute truth.

The young man seemed to be taken by surprise and stood speechless. North again replied, “Because He chose to”. He added, “If you continue to question and object to God’s dealings and, vainly puffed up by your carnal mind, strive to be wise above what is written, I will tell you something more that God will do: He will some day put you into hell fire. It is vain for you to strive with your Maker; you cannot resist Him. And neither your opinion of His dealings, nor your blasphemous expression of them, will in the least lessen the pain of your everlasting damnation, which, I again tell you, will most certainly be your portion if you go on in your present spirit. There were such questioners as you in Paul’s time, and how did the Apostle answer them? ‘Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God.’”

The young man here interrupted North to ask, “Is there such a text as that in the Bible?”

“Yes, there is,” was the reply, “in the ninth chapter of the Romans; and I recommend you to go home and read that chapter. And after you have read it and seen there how God claims for Himself the right to do whatever He chooses, without permitting the thing formed to say to Him that formed it, ‘Why hast Thou made me thus?’ remember that, besides permitting sin, there is another thing God has chosen to do. God chose to send Jesus. Of His own free and sovereign grace, God gave His only begotten Son to die for sinners – in their place – so that, though they are sinners, and have done things worthy of death, not one of them shall ever be cast into hell for his sins who is brought to Jesus as the only Saviour, to believe in Him and rest in His Word. I have no time to say more to you now; others are waiting to see me.

Go home, attend to what I have told you, and may God the Holy Spirit bless it for Jesus Christ's sake."

The next Friday, North was sitting in a friend's home, when he was told that a young man wanted to speak to him. After being shown upstairs, the young man asked the minister: "Do you remember me?"

"No", the minister answered.

"Do you not remember the young man who asked you to tell him, 'Why did God permit sin'?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, sir, I am that young man; and you said that God permitted sin because He chose to, and you told me to go home and read the ninth chapter of Romans; and also [you told me] that God chose to send Jesus to die for such sinners as I am; and I did what you told me, and afterwards I fell down at God's feet and asked Him to forgive my sins . . . and He did. And now I am happy. . . and though the devil still comes sometimes to tempt me with my old thoughts, and to ask me what reason I have to think God has forgiven me, I have always managed to get him away by telling him that I do not want to judge things by my own reason, but by God's Word, and that the only reason why I know I am forgiven, is that for Christ's sake, God chooses to pardon me."

If the young man had continued in the attitude with which he began to speak to Brownlow North, he would never have been converted. But God, in His kindness, subdued the man's heart and made him willing to follow North's wise advice. Some of the minister's words seem strong; many people would say that they were certain to put the young man off religion altogether. But no, they were not too strong – they expressed the truth, as God has revealed it in the Bible.

There are questions which no one in this world can fully answer. One such question is what the young man asked. If we are troubled by any such question, we must be satisfied with the sort of answer that North gave. If we really needed to know more, God would have revealed more in the Bible.

The fact that He did not say more shows us that we do not need to know more, and we should be satisfied with what has been revealed. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). There are secret things, which God has chosen not to reveal; but there are other things which God has chosen to reveal; it is our responsibility to do all that He has commanded us in His revelation through the Bible. Our attitude should be one of submission to all that God has revealed, and we should plead with Him for grace to do so.

## Looking Around Us

### How Should We Worship Jesus?

A series of amateur attempts to brighten up various paintings and sculptures in Spain have caused a lot of upset among those who know something about art. One example is a set of models dating from the 1400s which are kept in a chapel in a little village in the north of Spain. They have been repainted by a lady in the village who is no artist.

She has given Mary, the mother of Jesus, a bright pink headscarf and some eyeliner. We can be sure of one matter: no one now knows what Mary looked like. Again, one can be sure that, if Mary was alive today, she would not wear eyeliner; she would not want to paint her face in a vain effort to give herself a degree of beauty she did not have naturally.

Another of these wooden statues, originally plain, is supposed to be of Jesus. When it was painted, this statue was given a bright green robe. Again no one knows what Jesus looked like, but there is an even stronger reason why people should not make statues or paintings of Him: He is God, and the Second Commandment forbids us to make any likeness of Him: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:4,5).

Yes, we must worship Jesus, for He is God. But it is very different to think of worshipping what is supposed to be a statue of Jesus – whether of wood or of any other material. It is certainly not Jesus, and it probably does not even look anything like Jesus did; even it does, it would still be wrong.

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## “The Lord Is My Portion”

A poem by John Newton on these words from Lamentations 3:24; it shows his confidence in God alone.

From pole to pole let others roam,  
And search in vain for bliss;  
My soul is satisfied at home,  
The Lord my portion is.

Jesus, who on His glorious throne,  
Rules heaven and earth and sea,  
Is pleased to claim me for His own,  
And give Himself to me.

His Person fixes all my love,  
His blood removes my fear;  
And while He pleads for me above,  
His arm preserves me here.

His word of promise is my food,  
His Spirit is my guide;  
Thus daily is my strength renewed,  
And all my wants supplied.

For Him I count as gain each loss,  
Disgrace, for Him, renown;  
Well may I glory in His cross,  
While He prepares my crown!

Let worldlings then indulge their boast,  
How much they gain or spend;  
Their joys must soon give up the ghost,  
But mine shall know no end.

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## New Zealand Youth Conference 2019

The 2019 Youth Conference in New Zealand will be held, God willing, from 1.30 pm on Wednesday, January 16, till 3 pm on Friday, January 18, at the Hunua Falls Camp, in the Auckland Region. The Lower age limit is 16. The cost is NZ\$120. Payments can be made on arrival at the conference, but please e-mail Rev Jett Smith as soon as possible to tell him that you intend to attend (jettddaniel@gmail.com). The papers and speakers for this Conference are as follows:

### 1. The Life of Joseph

Lessons for Young People ..... *Mr H Optland*

### 2. Prayer meeting at 7:30 pm in the church in Otahuhu

### 3. The Christian's Response to Opposition from an Ungodly Society

..... *Rev G G Hutton*

### 4. The Need for Creeds and Confessions

..... *Rev Caleb Hembd*

### 5. Resisting Temptation

..... *Rev D A Ross*

### 6. The Covenants

What They Teach Us Today ..... *Rev Caleb Hembd*

**Price £1.00**