

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



July 2019

Vol 84 • No 7

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Cover Picture: River Ness and Inverness Castle. Se page 139.

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

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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.

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Volume 84

July 2019

Number 7

A City That Will Continue for Ever

Everyone knows that they must die, but how few seriously face up to the reality of death. The Bible often speaks about this, not because we would not otherwise know about it, but to impress the fact on our minds – to make us think seriously about it. One such reminder is expressed in these words: “Here have we no continuing city” (Hebrews 13:14).

We should think about Abraham, after God called him to leave the heathen city of Ur, never to return but to live in Canaan. He never built a permanent home there; instead, like his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, he lived in a tent. He never settled in a particular place; any day he was free to take down his tent; place it on an ass, perhaps; and travel in any direction, as far as he wished; and then put the tent up again sometime before darkness fell. He, like Isaac and Jacob, lived as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13). They were showing that “here have we no continuing city”.

What should be our response to the fact that, in this world, we have “no continuing city”, no permanent home? Let us notice five points.

1. *We are not to set our hearts on the things of the world.* Samuel Rutherford, the godly minister of Anwoth, in south-west Scotland (and later a professor in St Andrews University), said something like this: “We must not make our nest in the forest of this world, because God has sold the forest to death”. He was thinking of a bird making her nest in a tree, perhaps beside his manse in Anwoth. But suppose the forest in which the bird built its nest had been sold to someone who would cut trees down to build a house on the site. Then the bird would lose all its effort and might even lose all the chicks which hatched from the eggs in the nest.

So we are not to settle down in this world, for sin has brought death with it, and death affects everyone; we cannot escape from it. Paul tells us that, while we may *use* the things of this world, we are not to *abuse* them (1 Corinthians 7:31). We are not to abuse them by setting our hearts on them, making idols of them and assuming that we can never lose them. So Jesus warned, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal”. We must

not set our hearts on what is counted valuable in this world: these things may wear away; they may be stolen; or death may take us away from them.

“But”, the Saviour went on, “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matthew 6:19,20). He is telling us to value the spiritual blessings which come to us from heaven: grace in the soul, for instance, a place in God's family and in His kingdom. These we will never lose; they will never be stolen from us. These are indeed valuable; if we have them, they will follow us to heaven.

2. *There is a permanent city.* It is not in this world, but in heaven. Nothing is permanent in this world; heaven and all its blessings will continue for ever. It is a city “whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). It is not a human idea; it has a real existence, and God created it. It has, as we read in the other part of this verse, “foundations”, which points to the fact that it will last for ever; it cannot be washed away.

Abraham “looked for” this city, not for one of the cities of this world, which eventually will be destroyed or decay into ruins. It was “by faith” Abraham did so, receiving as truth all that God had revealed to him. That was why he lived in a tent: he knew that the only permanent dwelling place lay beyond this world. Heaven is a place of complete purity and holiness, where everyone will enjoy perfect blessedness. But only those whose sins are forgiven and who have experienced a change of heart and life can enter there. No one else can enjoy the happiness of heaven.

3. *We are to seek this city.* Surely, in the light of what has been said in the previous paragraph, it is obvious that we should seek a place in heaven, the city that continues for ever. And if we are to reach heaven, we must seek to be prepared for it while we are spared in this world. The Saviour tells us that it is the narrow way that leads to eternal life, in contrast with the broad way that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13,14). On the broad way, people have a huge choice as to the way that they live and as to what they believe. But if we are to tread the narrow way, we must submit to a godly lifestyle and believe what God has revealed in Scripture. Remember it is this narrow way that leads to heaven, and so it is the way we must seek to walk in.

We must ask God to draw us by His grace, to make us able and willing to turn from sin and trust in Christ Jesus as the Saviour whom God has appointed for sinners like us. Christ tells us to “enter in” to this way; He lays this responsibility on us; indeed He directs us to “*strive* to enter in” (Luke 13:24); we are to be in real earnest. If we are to seek the Lord, where can we hope to find Him? The answer is: in the Bible. We are to seek Him as we read it, but we are also to seek Him as we listen to preaching from the Bible. This

is where the Lord Jesus reveals Himself; this is where we can expect to find Him and be brought on our way to heaven.

4. *We are seek this city urgently.* There is no time to waste. When Felix trembled at Paul's solemn warnings, he spoke about "a convenient season" when he would listen again to the Apostle. But it seems Felix never found a time when he felt it convenient to listen to these warnings again. How sad that he did not grasp this remarkable opportunity! But *we* are told: "Seek ye the Lord *while* He may be found, call ye upon Him *while* He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). The Lord may be found now, at this point in time; He is near to us now. But if we delay, we may find that it is too late, for "here have we no continuing city". We may be carried away from this world very suddenly, without any warning – even if we are young.

5. *Believers are to live as those who are going to this city.* David Brown, an able Scottish minister, warned "the disciples of Christ [to] beware of obliterating the distinction between the 'broad' and the 'narrow' way". He was concerned about them living in a worldly way – professing to be true Christians and yet living like those who are still on the way to eternal destruction. There is a danger that such people are not on the narrow way at all, that they have never been converted. This is one reason why people should examine themselves; Paul counsels, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). And we must examine ourselves on the basis of what we find in the Bible – for example in the first verses of Matthew 5.

Those who are heading towards the "continuing city" are going along the narrow way. Others might complain about the restrictions of that way; they cannot live as they please; they are restricted by the commandments of God.

Let us note the following as examples: (1) they must worship only the living and true God and they must turn away from all other gods, including the things that the people of this godless generation give their hearts to; (2) they must show reverence to God in all the ways that He has revealed Himself: in particular, they must be careful about how they use the names of God and of Christ; (3) they must remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy; they must not consider it as their own day, when they might do whatever they please; they must seek to restrict themselves, as far as possible, to holy things in what they do and say and think; (4) they must not commit adultery, even in their thoughts, and they must try to keep away from everything that would tempt them to commit adultery.

How restrictive! most people would say. But God's children, who are on their way to heaven, have been given a new heart. So, however imperfect they may still be, their tastes are different from others'. But remember that

the narrow way leads to eternal blessedness in heaven. Remember too that the Lord is calling you *now* to seek Him, and to do so urgently and earnestly. Do not put it off, for you have no continuing city here.

Will You Meet Me in Heaven?

This article is meant to illustrate the previous one.

Little James and his parents lived in London. His father did not believe that God exists, yet he allowed his wife to send their children to a Sabbath school. Not long afterwards, James became ill, and it soon became clear that he would not recover. One evening, when his father came home from a meeting of atheists, his wife told him: "James is dying".

The father climbed the stairs and went to his son's bedside. James told him: "Father, I am very happy; I am going to heaven. Will you meet me there?" At once James died and his soul went to heaven. He had realised that he had no continuing city in this world. He sought another, a city that will last for ever. And God brought him there.

James' words impressed themselves on his father's mind. Many times he tried to get rid of the impression, but he did not succeed. He was to describe himself as one who blasphemed God, who drank too much, and "the vilest wretch out of hell".

One Sabbath he drove some people in a horse-drawn carriage a few miles out of London. After he dropped his passengers, he went to a church. One of the Bible readings was 2 Samuel 12, which tells about David's thoughts after his child died. When James' father heard David's words, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," he thought to himself: "It is impossible". As an atheist, he did not believe in heaven, so he could not accept that David could ever see his child again. Still James' question followed him and left him upset – upset and unbelieving.

He knew nobody who could help him with spiritual matters. But one day a missionary called at his home and he told the missionary what was troubling him. The missionary taught him from the Bible and prayed with him. After, it seems, several visits from the missionary, James' father gave up his atheism; the Holy Spirit blessed to him what the missionary said, gave him a new heart and brought him into a new way of life. He and his wife began to come to church regularly.

As a result of his change of heart, the father too was now seeking a city that will continue for ever. David's hope no longer seemed impossible; the former atheist, like David, now expected to meet his child in heaven.

Samuel the Prophet

2. His Youth During Dark Days in Israel

Rev Neil M Ross

The first part of this paper, which was given at this year's Youth Conference, appeared last month. It dealt with Samuel's birth and childhood and his serving God in the tabernacle.

Samuel's birth and upbringing took place during an ungodly time in Israel's history. Indeed, within a couple of generations after Joshua died (he died about 300 years before Samuel was born), Israel descended into idolatry. "They provoked the Lord to anger," the Bible says, because "they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroath" (Judges 2:12,13).

But Israel was still a theocracy – that is, it was ruled directly by God through those who governed in His name: such people as Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson, who were called "judges" and were appointed by God to deliver Israel from their enemies and govern them. In Samuel's youth, Eli was the Judge of Israel as well as the High Priest. Sadly, during the times of the Judges, as Scripture says, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes". The people put their own laws in place of God's laws.

Our own nation is in the same sinful situation. Especially we are rejecting His Word and making laws contrary to it. So we are saying to God, as others said long ago, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job 21:14).

Another sad circumstance of Samuel's young days was that God's word was not preached to the people. This is shown by the biblical statement: "The word of the Lord was precious [or rare, or scarce] in those days; there was no open vision [that is, no revealing of the mind and will of God to the people by a prophet of God]" (1 Samuel 3:1).

In our own country there are large swathes of society which do not have the preaching of the gospel. This is very serious because, as Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

In the days of Eli, his own sons, Hophni and Phineas, although priests, were "sons of Belial", who "knew not the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:12). They were notorious for their wickedness – especially because they unlawfully took for their own use the best of the people's sacrifices, that were intended for God. So the people despised the worship of God. Today, shocking sins committed by leaders of the professing Church provoke God's indignation, undermine true Christianity, and cause the enemies of God to blaspheme Him.

Eli did not restrain his sons as he ought to have done, which resulted in

God solemnly rebuking him through an unnamed messenger. Eli was charged with honouring his sons more than God and so God told him: "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30). May you learn and ever remember that whether you are engaged in work, study, worship or leisure activities, God is saying to you, "Them that honour Me I will honour".

There was one person in Eli's day who was specially honoured by God – young Samuel. One night, as he was sleeping at the tabernacle, he heard someone calling, "Samuel!" This happened three times, and each time he thought it was Eli who called him, but Eli assured him that he had not called. Samuel did not realise it was God who was calling him in order to give him a prophetic message. As Eli instructed him, Samuel said in response to the fourth call, "Speak; for Thy servant heareth".

This teaches us that we ourselves should listen to God speaking to us in His Word. We should have the same resolve as the Psalmist, when he said, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (Psalm 85:8). For example, at the beginning of each day we should turn to our Bibles before connecting with friends on social media.

It was a solemn message that Samuel got from God – a prophetic message of judgement against Eli and his priestly family. Samuel, we are told, "lay on his bed until the morning" – probably wide awake – but he was afraid to deliver the awful message to Eli in the morning. Under pressure from Eli, "Samuel told him every whit," we read, "and hid nothing from him" (1 Samuel 3:18).

From that time forward, Samuel received other prophetic messages from God which were all fulfilled; so the people spoke of him as a true prophet of God. It is now obvious that, although it was Samuel's parents who dedicated him to the Lord, Samuel was now fully accepting his own responsibility to devote himself willingly and lovingly to the service of God – which he did to the day of his death.

Those of you who have been baptized, under your parent's vows, now have a duty to accept your own responsibility to live to the glory of God, by His grace, especially by following Christ in the narrow way of Christian living. May you be brought to say of Him as Paul said, "Whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23).

But to return to Eli, we see that Samuel's prophecy about him was fulfilled. It happened in this way: Israel went to war against the Philistines and was defeated. Thousands of Israelites, including the sons of Eli, were killed and the ark of God was captured. When Eli, now 98 years old and blind, heard the terrible news, he fell backwards, broke his neck and died.

Such was the sad end of Eli and of his sons. God’s word to Samuel was indeed fulfilled in a most solemn manner.

This fulfilment of God’s word at that time, forcibly reminds us of the warning in the Book of Ecclesiastes to young people who go their own way, forgetting God and enjoying sinful pleasures: “Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement” (Ecclesiastes 11:9). God’s word shall be fulfilled.

Samuel would have known what had happened to the ark following its capture by the Philistines, and that eventually, after seven months, it was transferred to Kirjathjearim. There it remained for many years.

The Israelites continued under the oppressive rule of the Philistines. But, in spite of their troubles and problems, they persisted in forgetting God and worshipping idols. They were not at all concerned that the ark of God was left in Kirjathjearim and His worship neglected.

Another lesson: the troubles and distress a sinner experiences will not of themselves bring him to repentance, as Proverbs 27:22 teaches us: “Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him”. May the Lord bless to us our own troubles so that, in combination with the Word of God, they would have a saving and sanctifying effect on us.

John Calvin – His Life and Work

1. Unexpectedly Made Teachable

Mr F R Daubney

This is the first section of a paper that was given at this year’s Youth Conference. A number of biographies of Calvin were used in preparing the paper, including those by Thomas M’Crie, T H L Parker and Emmanuel Stickelberger, besides Merle d’Aubigné’s writings on the Reformation.

John Calvin was born in Noyon, in Picardy, northern France, on 10 July 1509, the second son of his parents. His father was from a humble background but, by natural gifts for business and hard work, he improved his circumstances and in the end held several semi-legal positions in the church and state. These occupations did not lead to riches, but they did bring him into contact with the first families of the area, who respected him for his intelligence and diligence.

In later years, the Reformer was accused of changing his surname from Chauvin to Calvin in order to conceal the lowness of his birth. But the change was simply from French into Latin, the language in which he composed the

greater part of his works. Calvin never hid his lowly beginnings and, long after he was known throughout Europe, he continued to refer to himself as "a plebeian", or a common person.

Gerard Chauvin was strict with his children and did not believe in over-indulgence. Such treatment could not fail to exert an influence on the mind of the young Calvin. Who can tell whether it contributed to the touch of severity in his own character? He certainly looked back on his upbringing with gratitude. "I had", he said, "a somewhat severe father, and I rejoice at it as the source of any virtues which I may possess."

Under his parents' training John gave early symptoms of religious feeling but, other than this, very little is known of his early life. His home city was distinguished for its adherence to Rome; the people were proud of being Roman Catholic, and in later years they were taught that the only black mark against their town was being the birthplace of the heretic John Calvin.

Calvin enjoyed every advantage that could train and sharpen his extraordinary intellect. He was brought up and educated with the sons of a noble family. His father first intended him to enter the Church, probably because it promised distinction and wealth, and from the age of 12 he was supported by the revenues of some church appointments that had no duties attached to them. At 14 he was sent to Paris, where he attended two colleges, studying philosophy and languages. His father, proud of his John's abilities, and expecting a brilliant career for him, decided he should give up theology and study law.

Calvin began his legal studies at the University of Orleans before attending the University of Bourges. At Orleans he did so well that he was sometimes, though still a student, called upon to lecture. As a result, he obtained his doctor's degree without payment of the usual fees. At Bourges he learned Greek, a language frowned upon by the Romanists, who were probably wary of anyone having the ability to read original texts. His study habits, which he retained throughout his life, were framed at this time. He ate sparingly and seldom. He began the day at 5 am by reviewing what he had done on the previous evening and continued studying until midnight. He became a very accomplished Latin scholar, had a good knowledge of Greek and was sufficiently acquainted with Hebrew to enable him to expound the Old Testament Scriptures from it.

During the period when John Calvin was pursuing his studies at University, the Reformation doctrines were making rapid progress in France amongst those who, in every rank of life, were offended and disgusted with the formalities and corruptions of Romanism. The Reformation began in Germany in 1517 and was speedily introduced into France and Switzerland. Protestant

books were circulated, Protestant congregations formed, Protestant pastors preached, and Protestant martyrs died in the towns and villages of France. These simple, Bible-believing Christians were at that time called Lutherans and the young Calvin, by this time studying in Paris, no doubt observed their morals and religious practices with interest. No one would have imagined that years later Protestants in France would be known, not as Lutherans, but as Calvinists!

It was in the summer of 1531, that Calvin, now aged 22, settled in Paris. Here he met old university friends and formed new friendships. Yet his natural tendency was to be alone, and he valued the privacy of life in Paris which allowed him more time for study. At this time, he had not adopted the principles of the Reformation and his work was mainly literary. His first book, a commentary on a volume by the Roman philosopher Seneca, appeared in 1532.

The religious changes taking place across Europe were the talk of all society. Calvin initially resisted the criticisms of Mother Church and defended her with great tenacity against what he regarded as the deadly teachings of Luther. But a desire for truth drove him to search the Scriptures and he immersed himself more and more in the Gospels and Epistles. He also made a study of the writings of the Church Fathers. Using his natural intelligence and applying his training in law and philosophy to interpret religious questions, he discovered that the teachings of the Roman Church differed from what he was learning in the Scriptures.

From now on, this lonesome young man became a warrior for the truth, unafraid of the threats of death which at this time were made towards supporters of the Reformation. In matters of faith he became unyielding. His convictions, grounded in Scripture, were immovable and he asserted them with great zeal. It is important to remember that those who knew Calvin said he had a charming disposition, was always ready to help, and had a natural kindness of heart. In our day, the idea that his character was harsh and cold is based almost entirely upon what his enemies falsely said about him.

There is no agreement as to when exactly Calvin was converted and adopted Reformation principles, but it was probably when he was around 20 years of age. He said, “Like a flash of light, I realised in what an abyss of errors, in what chaos I was”. The almost-violent manner of his conversion, in being brought out of a horrible pit and miry clay brought about deep submission to the majesty of God and obedience to His irresistible power.

In his commentary on the Psalms he says: “God drew me from obscure and lowly beginnings and conferred on me that most honourable office of herald and minister of the gospel. . . . What happened first was that, by an

unexpected conversion, He tamed to teachableness a mind too stubborn for its years – for I was so strongly devoted to the superstitions of the Papacy, and nothing less could draw me from such depths of mire. And so this mere taste of true godliness that I received set me on fire with such a desire to progress that I pursued the rest of my studies more coolly, although I did not give them up altogether. Before a year had slipped by, anybody who longed for a purer doctrine kept on coming to learn from me, still a beginner, a raw recruit.”

Pictures of Jesus

Rev K M Watkins

A little boy arrived home from school with a colourful booklet. Nothing unusual in that, you might think. But this book was not a normal children's book. It was full of drawings that were trying to show what Jesus looked like. Almost every page had such a picture: Jesus riding into Jerusalem; Jesus washing the disciples' feet; Jesus at the Lord's Supper; Jesus on the cross; Jesus in Gethsemane; Jesus before Pilate; Jesus carrying the cross; Jesus on the cross; Jesus risen from the dead.

Sadly, a local minister had given these booklets to all the children at the school. It is shocking to see Roman Catholic errors in the pictures. The Lord's Supper shows Jesus lifting the bread above His head. Jesus never did that! It is what the priests do in the Romish mass, because they claim that the bread actually and physically becomes the very body of Christ, and so they lift it up as an act of worship called “elevating the host”. Also the risen Jesus is shown with a gold-coloured band above His head. This is the so-called “halo” which was imported into church art from pagan religion, and much loved by Rome. But neither Jesus nor anyone else ever had a real halo.

Thankfully, the boy's parents belonged to the Free Presbyterian Church and did know better. They knew that it was very sinful to make pictures of Jesus. I think the boy knew something was wrong too, for he had never seen such things at home or at church. Do you know that pictures of Jesus are sinful? Pictures of Jesus are sinful because they are against God's law, for “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4).

Which of God's laws is broken by pictures of Jesus? It is the Second Commandment, which begins with these words: “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” (Exodus 20:4,5). Not all pictures are wrong. You might like drawing, or painting, or making

photographs or models of lots of things, even of people. There is nothing wrong with that, in and of itself.

But it is wrong when a picture is connected with worship – to “bow down” and “serve” God. We are guilty of idolatry, not only when we worship a false god, but also when we use an image to worship the true God. When the children of Israel worshipped the golden calf, they were not trying to worship a different god. That would have been a sin against the First Commandment, which requires us to “have no other gods”. Rather, they were trying to worship the true God using a graven image that they had invented. That was a sin against the Second Commandment. Pictures, images and statues of God are idolatry.

Pictures of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are sinful idolatry. So are pictures of Jesus! He is God the Son. We are to worship Him, even as we worship the Father. We are to bow down to Him and serve Him, just as we are to bow down to the Father and serve the Father. We are to worship Jesus because Jesus is God. So having pictures of Jesus is idolatry, because He is One whom we worship, and we are never to make pictures of what we worship. God – including Jesus – must not be served by pictures or statues.

Those who use pictures of Jesus might say that they are not trying to show Him as He is God, but only as He is man. The Son of God has indeed become a true man, by taking a human nature into union with His divine Person. That means He has a true human soul and also a real human body. But that does not make it right to draw Him in His human nature. The humanity of Jesus was never separate from His divine Person. Jesus is always to be worshipped. A picture of Jesus is a picture of the One we worship. And that is forbidden by the law of God! The One who is represented in the booklet in foolish cartoon-like drawings is the One we are meant to bow down to and serve.

Being God as well as man, Jesus is unique. He is the only God-Man. He alone is “God and man in two distinct natures and one Person for ever”. Christ is divine and we have little idea of the effect this had on the appearance of His body. Painters and artists and sculptors have boldly attempted to show it – but they will never achieve it. For “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). It is a great mystery just to think about it. Surely it is beyond any man’s ability to picture it with any accuracy. If only they knew it, those who have tried to do so have been meddling in things too high for them, things that they did not understand. Had they understood a little, they would not have dared to do so.

Think of what the Bible says about Jesus. In relation to the Father, Jesus

is “the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (Hebrews 1:3). How can an artist show that degree of brightness? How can a painting depict that “image”, when “no man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18)? The Bible tells us that in Jesus “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). But how do you make a picture of the Godhead? God is a spirit. Trying to make a picture or a statue of that is so wrong. That is what Paul told the pagan idolaters in Athens: “We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device” (Acts 17:29).

The Bible tells us very little about Christ’s physical appearance. It does not tell us how tall He was. It does not tell us what His face looked like. None of the pictures of Jesus are based on reality – they are all guesses, produced by men’s imaginations. Romanism has led too many into a standardised picture of Jesus, with wavy brown hair, white skin and blue eyes. None of those features are likely for a Jew, as Jesus was.

The sufferings of Jesus were so great that “His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:14). We may have seen pictures of people who have gone through terrible suffering. That does not mean that we know how to draw Jesus when He was in an agony and sweating as it were great drops of blood in Gethsemane. We cannot know what He looked like when He cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Heaven itself drew a veil over that scene, for “from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour” (Matthew 27:45).

We can never draw a face that would show the spiritual sufferings of Christ’s soul – sufferings which no other man on earth went through. This world has never seen anything equal to it. He was afflicted “more than any man . . . more than the sons of men”. The pains of hell took hold on Him, as He endured the wrath and curse of God for His people’s sins. How could any man paint that? Those who did see Christ crucified were stunned by what they saw, and never left on record what He looked like. “All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned” (Luke 23:48).

Christ says of His people that “they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him” (Zechariah 12:10). Clearly He is not speaking of looking with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the soul. It is not a picture of Jesus on the cross that will make a soul mourn on account of his sin, but it is seeing with the understanding how Christ died for sinners, and looking by faith to Him, in the Word, for salvation.

Pictures of Jesus will not help sinners to believe in Christ, but will get in

the way of them doing so. Pictures of Jesus do not help the spread of the gospel but hinder it. Pictures of Jesus do not show the truth but distort it. They turn the spiritual message of the gospel into something that is worldly. Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailor: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). To bring him to faith, they did not show him pictures of Jesus, but "they spake unto him the Word of the Lord" (verse 32).

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17), not by seeing pictures of Christ. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21), not by the idolatrous blasphemy of pictures of Jesus. Do you feel your need of being saved? Then seek Christ by going to the words of God contained in the Bible and preached in faithful pulpits. Do not go to men's picture books, which the Bible condemns.

Brownlow North

Rev Donald Beaton

This article is reprinted, with editing, from *The Young People's Magazine* for February 1937. Mr Beaton was then the Editor of this Magazine.

Brownlow North was at one time very well known in Scotland. His mother Rachel was a godly woman, who never gave up praying for her godless son even when he followed the evil tendencies of his nature. There were times when his conscience rebuked him, but then he plunged deeper into excesses of pleasure, drunkenness and Sabbath-breaking. He was trying to drown, if he could, the prickings of his conscience.

He was the son of a minister, the grandson of a bishop and the great-grandson of a prime minister. He had the best education available, at Eton and Oxford. He had made up his mind to enter the ministry of the Church of England. According to his own testimony, "I had at this time a horrible sense of the guilt of my sins and of the wrath of God justly due to them, and had really purposed to depart from them and turn to God". But he added, "I never apprehended Christ; I never accepted Him as my sin-bearer and my righteousness".

After he had finished his studies he was promised a post at Olney. But someone wrote to the Bishop of Lincoln about the sins of his early years. This led the Bishop to ask him at a private interview: "Mr North, if I were in your position and you in mine, would you ordain me?"

North honestly replied, "My Lord, I would not!"

After this he threw himself into his old life of sin. He sometimes went shooting, for sport, on Scottish moors. In 1850 he was near Dallas, in Morayshire, and we are told of this period of his life: the effects of "his influence and example upon his friends and associates", and upon the whole area, was very corrupting. "To a large extent he cast off even that form of godliness which many worldly and ungodly persons retain" because they do not want to offend the religious people in the community.

But God had other purposes for Brownlow North and arrested him suddenly. He confessed afterwards that he had virtually said to God: "I must have my sins. I know the consequences, but I accept them; I accept damnation as my portion."

The story of his conversion is best told in his own words. "It pleased God, in the month of November 1854, one night when I was sitting playing at cards, to make me concerned about my soul. The instrument used was a sensation of sudden illness, which led me to think I was going to die. I said to my son: 'I am a dead man; take me upstairs'.

"As soon as this was done, I threw myself down on the bed. My first thought then was, Now what will my 44 years of following the devices of my own heart profit me? In a few minutes I shall be in hell, and what good will all these things do me for which I have sold my soul? At that moment I felt constrained to pray, but it was merely the prayer of the coward, a cry for mercy. I was not sorry for what I had done, but I was afraid of the punishment of my sin.

"And yet still there was something trying to prevent me putting myself on my knees to call for mercy – and that was the presence of the maidservant in the room, lighting my fire. Though I did not believe at that time that I had ten minutes to live, and knew that there was no possible hope for me but in the mercy of God, and that if I did not seek that mercy I could not expect to have it, yet such was the nature of my heart and of my spirit within me, that it was a balance with me – a thing to turn this way or that, I could not tell how – whether I should wait till that woman left the room, or whether I should fall on my knees and cry for mercy in her presence.

"By the grace of God I did put myself on my knees before that girl, and I believe it was the turning point with me. I believe that if I had at that time resisted the Holy Ghost – of course, I cannot say, for who shall limit the Holy Ghost? – but my belief is that it would be once too often. By God's grace I was not prevented. I did pray and, though I am not what I should be, yet I am this day what I am, which at least is not what I was."

His conversion caused a sensation among his close companions, who prophesied that it would be temporary, a fit of excitement that would soon

pass away. But it was not so. In 1859 the Free Church formally recognised North as an evangelist. From this time onwards, until his death in 1875, he went about preaching the glad tidings of salvation.

For Younger Readers

A Good Prayer

Do you pray? I hope you do. But what does it mean to pray? It means to ask God for what we need or what we want.

What do we need most of all? We need to have God as our friend. And what stands in the way of God being our friend? It is this: we are sinners and God is holy. He hates sin.

There was a man long ago who was concerned about his sin. He went up to the temple at Jerusalem, where people came to worship God. He knew that God was not his friend.

So he prayed. He said, "God be merciful to me a sinner". You will find the whole story in Luke 18. The prayer is at verse 13. God answered the man's prayer. He took away the man's sin and made him His friend.

You too should pray to God in the same words as the man used: "God be merciful to me a sinner", and you should add, "for Jesus' sake". Ask Him to take away your sin and to make you His friend.

For Junior Readers

Robert Bruce's Last Breakfast

Have you heard of Robert Bruce? Not Robert the Bruce; he was the King of the Scots from 1306 until 1329. This Robert Bruce was a godly minister and church leader in Scotland in the years after the Reformation. He lived from 1554 to 1631. His father was a Baron, one of the Scottish nobility, and he was born in Airth Castle, not far from Stirling.

His father was determined that Robert should study law and have an important position in the country. He sent Robert to St Andrews University and then to France and Belgium for further study. But during these years, the Lord was working in Robert's heart and brought him to a saving knowledge of Himself.

Not only that, he also felt called to the ministry of the gospel. His parents were very much opposed to this plan and put many difficulties in his way. They insisted that he give up his right to the barony and the large income which went with it if he was to go on to study divinity.

But Robert turned his back on the earthly honours and riches. Like Moses of old, he "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God" and "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures" of this world. He therefore continued to prepare for the Christian ministry.

He first of all became minister of St Giles' church in Edinburgh, where he shone as a great light in the city and the nearby parts of the country. He was also in favour with the King for some years. But these were difficult times in the country, and Bruce was later banished to France and then to Inverness, where his preaching was greatly blessed. During the last six years of his life he was allowed to return to the south and he preached regularly in the Larbert church.

One Sabbath afternoon he had not appeared in the church when the service was due to start. The beadle was sent to the room where he usually stayed between the services.

The man listened at the door of the room and then returned to the church. "I think he shall not come out at all," he reported, "for I hear him always saying to another that he will not, or cannot, go unless that other go with him, and I do not hear the other answer him a word at all."

But Robert Bruce was praying to the Lord for His presence to go with him and help him in his preaching. He was like Moses, who prayed, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence". This was the secret of his powerful preaching.

In spite of all the trials he had endured, he lived until he was 77 years old. On the morning of his last day in the world, he ate his breakfast with his family. Then he told his daughter, Martha, that his Master was calling him (to heaven).

He asked for the Bible but was not able to read any longer. He then asked them to find Romans 8:38 and to place his finger on these words: "For 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."

"Now", he said, "God be with you my children; I have breakfasted with you and shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night." Immediately after that he passed away to glory and was buried at the foot of the pulpit in the Larbert church where he had often preached.

J van Kralingen

Intermediate Section of Scripture & Catechism Exercises

We regret the following names were omitted in error from the list of those who completed Exercise 2: **Barnoldswick:** Claudia Van Essen. **Brighton:** Katherine Hills. **Edinburgh:** Fraser Morrison. **Glasgow:** Grant Maclellan, Rebecca Smith. **Llanelli:** Jonathan Cran.

Looking Around Us

The Main Things in Church

More than 30 tartans from Scottish clans were to be blessed at a ceremony in the Old High Church in Inverness on a Sabbath in June. But you might ask, Why should one want to bless a tartan?

According to a local newspaper website, “the ceremony involves clan members . . . presenting a piece of their tartan that can be blessed before the congregation” by the ministers who led the service. The ceremony, we are told, is a tradition in the US, Canada and Australia but the service in Inverness was only the second time it has been held in Scotland. The first one in Scotland was a much smaller event in Tobermory, on the Isle of Mull, in 2017.

It is not at all clear what good this blessing was expected to do for the piece of cloth or for its owner. Would the cloth last longer, or would the owner be happier when wearing it? That is unlikely; indeed one cannot imagine that anyone would profit by it.

In fact, it is one more example of churches losing sight of what they should be doing. When people come to sit in church pews, the minister should be seeking their spiritual good.

We do have examples in the Bible of *people* being blessed. Isaac blessed his sons Jacob and Esau. He said what God revealed to him. We also read about the mothers who brought their little children to Jesus, so that He would bless them. And parents today should wish their children to be blessed. So they should ask God to bless them; they should pray for their children. They should ask that God would keep their little ones from harm of every kind, that He would have mercy on their souls – forgiving their sins, keeping them from evil and temptation, making them new creatures in Christ Jesus, and bringing them to heaven at last.

These are the matters that ministers should focus on: the spiritual needs of people young and old. They should tell the people principally about sin and salvation – that all mankind fell in Adam and thus are sinners on their way to a lost eternity; that God sent His Son to be the Saviour of lost sinners; that Christ died in the place of sinners and rose again; and that everyone who believes in Christ will be saved and go to heaven.

Now there are many other subjects that ministers should preach about, but

all preaching must centre around these great matters of sin and salvation. But one fears that, when ministers give their time to blessing tartans – or any other *things* that people might want them to bless – they have lost sight of the main issues of life.

Asking the Way to Zion

This poem, by John Newton, is based on Jeremiah 50:5: “They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten”. Newton is thinking here of Zion as the heavenly Jerusalem, where God has His throne – that is, heaven itself.

Zion, the city of our God,
How glorious is the place!
The Saviour there has His abode,
And sinners see His face!
Firm against every adverse shock,
Its mighty bulwarks prove;
'Tis built upon the living Rock,
And walled around with love.
There all the fruits of glory grow,
And joys that never die;
And streams of grace and knowledge flow,
The soul to satisfy.
Come, set your faces Zion-ward,
The sacred road inquire;
And let a union to the Lord
Be henceforth your desire.
The gospel shines to give you light;
No longer, then, delay;
The Spirit waits to guide you right,
And Jesus is the way.
O Lord, regard Thy people's prayer,
Thy promise now fulfill;
And young and old by grace prepare
To dwell on Zion's hill.

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