

The Young People's Magazine

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

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1



November 2020

Vol 85 • No 11

Contents

“God Everything and Man Nothing”	203
The Carcase on the Beach	206
Chosen to Be King	208
When to Pray	211
Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland:	
5. The Church Today	212
The Tabernacle and Temple:	
8. The Day of Atonement	213
For Junior Readers:	
“Keep the Gate Shut”	215
For Younger Readers:	
Connie’s Chickens	216
Thomas and His Favourite Chapter	216
Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2019-20:	
Overseas Prizes and Awards	219
Looking Around Us	219

Cover Picture: Inverness Free Presbyterian church.

The Young People’s Magazine

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

Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod BSc, 11 Auldcastle Road, Inverness, IV2 3PZ. Tel: 01463 712872; e-mail: kdmacleod@gmail.com. All unsigned articles are by the Editor.

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

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

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

The Young People's Magazine

Volume 85

November 2020

Number 11

“God Everything and Man Nothing”

The boy was just 7 when he was kidnapped in some part of Africa, shipped across the Atlantic with probably hundreds of others, and sold as a slave in America. He was always known, at least when he was older, as Uncle Jack. There was very little religion in the district of Virginia where his master brought him. Religious services took place very rarely and scarcely anyone kept the Sabbath.

One day he heard a white man say that the world would probably be destroyed in a few days. The man, of course, had no authority to speak like this, but Jack was afraid and he asked someone what he ought to do to prepare for the end of the world. He was told he should pray. But he confessed, “This I knew nothing about. I could not pray.” At last he remembered some parts of the Lord’s Prayer, and he tried to repeat them for a long time. But doing so brought no help.

Yet the Lord was working in his heart, perhaps through him remembering some of the things ministers had said in their preaching, on their occasional visits to where he lived. Jack was brought to a deep and thorough conviction of his guilt, helplessness and misery in God’s sight. He tried hard to find out the truth about Jesus, but he could not find anybody who could help him, except the minister who came his way now and then.

Jack confessed: “I had a very wicked heart, and everything I did to make it better seemed to make it worse”. Then a minister, John Smith, visited his district. Jack recalled, “He turned my heart inside out. The preacher talked so directly *to* me, and *about* me, that I thought the whole sermon was meant for me. I wondered much who could have told him what a sinner I was.” Of course, no one had told him, but the Bible – from which Smith was preaching – tells what is true about everyone.

“But after a while,” Jack went on, “there came along a young man they called Mr Hill; and about the same time another, with a sweet voice, they called Mr Alexander. [This was Archibald Alexander, later a well-known minister, who wrote the excellent book *Thoughts on Religious Experience* – recommended to older readers.] These were powerful preachers too and

told me all about my troubles, and brought me to see that there was nothing for a poor, helpless sinner to do but to go to the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in Him alone for salvation." God gave him grace to trust in Christ.

"Since that time," he noted, "I have had many ups and downs, but hitherto the Lord has helped me and I hope He will help me to the end." Jack was now very interested to hear the Bible being read. As this went on, he said, he found "that it knew all that was in my heart" and he wondered how "a book should know so much".

It is no surprise that Jack now wanted to learn to read for himself, and he asked his master's children to help him. They did so and he was soon able to read the Bible easily. He then spent all his spare time with it. After some time, his church set him apart as a preacher. It may seem strange that a church would appoint a man as a minister who had never been to any school, and no doubt it was strange, but he did absorb a great deal of Bible teaching. At this point, he was still a slave, but kind people paid to set him free.

Jack, who does not seem to have had a surname, very much liked the kind of preaching "which makes God everything and man nothing". What did he mean? That ideas like these should have an important place in preaching: we cannot say anything too great about God; we cannot praise Him too much; we cannot be too dependent on Him; all we need, especially for our souls, must come from Him. At the same time, we should realise how small we are, in comparison with God; how desperate our position is as sinners who deserve God's curse for ever.

He knew how dangerous it is to make light of sin, of every sin. He would not encourage anyone to say that anything wrong was just a little sin. Yes, it might be less serious than other sins, but it was committed against God, who is an infinite Being, a perfectly-holy God. So every sin is serious, even if it is done in one's heart and no one else on earth sees it.

Jack knew that human beings are totally depraved. That does not mean that everyone is as bad as they could possibly be; it does mean that every individual is corrupted by sin in every part of his being; none of it is free from sin. We cannot say, for instance, that someone is basically good and just needs to be a little more careful about doing what is right. Sin has affected the very core of our being, and it is only God that can put us right.

Jack wanted to hear such preaching, preaching that told the real truth about man: that he is a sinner, that he cannot put himself right, that he cannot get rid of the guilt of his sins by anything he can do. He cannot begin to save his soul. He must be completely dependent on God.

It is not that man needs a little help from God so that he can be saved from sin and its consequences, and then he can do the rest himself. It is not even

that he can do a little himself, and then God will do all the rest. The truth is that man can do *nothing* to earn his salvation and God must do *everything*. We must look to Him for the whole of our salvation.

Yes, we are told to believe in Christ; we are told to repent – to turn from our sins. But we are not able to believe or to repent. Yet God gives the grace that sinners so much need. Then, and only then, do they believe in Christ and repent. What sinners cannot do, God does, working in their souls through the Holy Spirit. The fact is: man can do nothing towards earning his salvation; God does everything.

Yet that does not mean that man is idle in salvation. He does look to Christ; he does turn from his sin; he does begin to love God. Yet all this is because God makes him able to do so. People may object that they cannot understand how these things can be consistent with each other. The point is that God has revealed them to us. Everything that He tells us is true; the Bible is absolutely reliable from beginning to end.

There was a time when Paul thought he could do many things to earn his salvation, but he was wrong; he was not making God everything. But God began to work in Paul’s heart and, from then on, he saw that God was everything. He then confessed, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). Paul thought so little of his own power that he acknowledged he could not even think properly. Sufficient power to think properly – in a way that would be to God’s glory – must come from God.

This was the way of thinking that Jack found attractive; it was what God had taught him, and it was the way he himself would have preached. He wanted people to think high thoughts of God and low thoughts of themselves. And that is the way we too should always think.

One day a wealthy man met Jack; the man was rather proud of how good he was – as he wrongly thought. He told Jack: “I think, old man, I am as good as I need be. I can’t help thinking so, because God blesses me as much as he does you Christians, and I don’t know what more I need than He gives me; and yet I never disturb myself about preaching or praying.”

The man was making himself everything and God nothing. So the preacher answered by telling the man that he was acting like the pigs did. “I have often seen them rooting among the leaves in the woods and finding just as many acorns as they needed. And yet I never saw one of them look up to the tree from which the acorns fell.” There was one vital blessing the man did not have: his soul was not saved. May we all learn to be totally dependent on God, especially for our souls! All our good things must come from Him. So we must pray, and we do need the preaching of God’s Word.

The Carcase on the Beach

Rev K M Watkins

Usually there was very little to spoil the beach's beauty, with its almost-white sand and turquoise sea. Occasionally the tide would bring in some seaweed, but most of it would not last long. But that day was different. The weather had been stormy, and washed up on the beach was the carcase of a dead cow. It had only recently died, and must have fallen into the sea from the steep rocks along the coast, for no cattle had access to the beach at that time of year.

This can illustrate the experience of sinners. Things seem to go well with them, and they think that they have good hearts and are leading good lives. Yes, like a little seaweed appearing every now and then, they have to admit that they are not perfect, but their failings do not trouble them or spoil the good thoughts they have of themselves. Their slight convictions soon go away. The Bible describes them: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Proverbs 30:12).

But then things may take a turn for the worse, and they go through a period of stormy weather in their outward lives. Perhaps their health fails, or valued friendships are spoiled, or family relationships break down, or death takes away their closest companions, or they suffer poverty, or there is trouble or failure in their studies or work. Or perhaps things continue going well, but with bitter disappointment they find that the things of this world, even at their best, cannot make them truly happy. Now they begin to feel that everything they lived for and valued has been worthless, as if their hopes and dreams have washed up on the shore of their lives like a dead carcase.

Sometimes, these providences are intended by God to prepare the way for His mercies. The Holy Spirit then raises up an inward storm in their souls. Lashing their consciences like a fierce wind, the law of God shows them their sins as they never saw them before. Like the cow, they fall to their deaths. Paul said he felt himself to be spiritually "alive" until the law of God came with convicting power, and then he "died" – that is, he realised that he was spiritually dead (see Romans 7:9-11).

By nature, all sinners are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Coming to see their spiritual deadness is not pleasant, just like seeing the dead cow was not pleasant. All have inherited from Adam's fall a corrupt, sinful nature. Physically they are alive, but not spiritually. They have no spiritual life towards God. As for fearing God, knowing God, trusting God, loving God, serving God, glorifying God, enjoying God, they are as dead as

the cow on the beach. Like graves painted white, sinners' outward lives may appear good in men's eyes, but on the inside their souls are "full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27).

After a few days the cow's carcase began to smell. It was horrible. When the Holy Spirit is convicting sinners, they not only acknowledge the Bible teaching about sin, but they also feel the vileness of their own spiritual death. They feel how rotten and offensive they are, like the cow's rotting carcase. They can join David when he said (Psalm 38:6,7, metrical version):

"My wounds do stink, and are corrupt, my folly makes it so.
I troubled am, and much bow'd down; all day I mourning go.
For a disease that loathsome is so fills my loins with pain,
That in my weak and weary flesh no soundness doth remain."

After a day or two, someone did their best to cover the dead cow with sand. Sinners often try to do this when they get a sight and sense of their sinful corruption. They try to cover it up; they try to hide it; they try to bury it. Some do it by making excuses. Others try to produce good works. Others become busy in religious activities: saying prayers, going to church, hearing sermons, reading Scripture, meeting with God's people. But however hard they try, the spiritual death of sin is still there, just as the cow's carcase was still there. The mound of sand gave away its location, and the smell still lingered in the air. Sinners find this too. The rotting corruption of spiritual death is still there, whatever they do to try to hide it.

The wind and tide soon shifted the sand, to uncover the cow's dead body again. Now it looked even worse than before. Likewise the Spirit of God shows sinners that they cannot bring an end to sin, whatever they try to do. For all their promises and amendments, the unconverted heart is as bad as ever, if not worse: "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).

No one could raise the cow to life again, and sinners cannot raise themselves to spiritual life. They need a power outside of themselves to rescue them from the corruption of their nature. Then they hear words like these: "Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves" (Ezekiel 37:12). They see that God raised other sinners to life: "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us [made us alive] together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4,5). The Spirit of God puts spiritual life in their souls, and they come forth, putting their trust in the same Saviour who raised Lazarus from the dead, though he had been in the grave four days and was stinking.

To begin with, new believers may think that sin is completely gone. But it is not long before they realise that sin is still with them. Paul calls this “the old man” and the body of death. When he found sin still working in his soul, he cried out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24).

Over the following days, it depended on the tides and winds how much of the cow could be seen: sometimes more, sometimes less. It is so for the children of God too. Sometimes they see more of the corruption that remains within them, sometimes less. It depends on the tides and winds brought by temptations and trials. But in the end, when death comes to remove them to glory, they will be made perfect in holiness and their sinfulness will be completely removed for ever, never to rise again. This was Paul's hope too. He had asked, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And he had answered himself: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:25).

Chosen to Be King

Rev Alexander McPherson

This is a chapter from the attractive new book about David by Mr McPherson: *From Shepherd Boy to King of Israel*. The chapters in this book were originally articles in this *Magazine*, explaining the various incidents in David's life and drawing useful lessons for young people. It is available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom (paperback, 248 pages, £9.50).

While David was growing up in Bethlehem, Israel was having its first experience of being ruled by a king. For four hundred years, since the time of Joshua, the nation had been ruled by judges. Whereas many of these had been poor magistrates and leaders, Samuel the prophet, the last of them, had governed wisely and well. In old age, however, the people were concerned about who should succeed their revered judge because both his sons were bad characters. So the elders decided that what the nation needed was a king such as all the other nations had, and they said so to Samuel.

But the Lord saw in their decision a rejection of Himself, who had in fact been Israel's true King, ruling through the judges. God, therefore, told Samuel to warn the people what having a king would mean in terms of conscription for military service and taxation. The warning was not heeded, so the Lord instructed Samuel to anoint Saul privately to be king (see 1 Samuel 10: 1-13). Afterwards Saul was chosen by lot and accepted by the people as king. His reign began well, but quite soon he began to show self-will and disobedience

to God. He also began to disregard the fact that God was the supreme King of His people, and that any human king they were allowed to have must be subject to their heavenly King. It was after the affair of the Amalekites, related in chapter 15 of 1 Samuel, that God finally rejected Saul – Samuel’s message to him from God was: “Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king” (1 Samuel 15:23). But he was not to be actually deposed until God’s time for removing him would come. In the meantime, a successor was to be designated, and this important event is described in 1 Samuel 16.

It was with some degree of fear that Samuel the prophet received a command from God to go to Bethlehem and anoint one of Jesse’s sons as the king-designate. And when he arrived there, the elders of the town became afraid too. This is not to be wondered at, for it was widely known that Saul had been notified that the Lord had rejected him as king and purposed to select a successor (1 Samuel 13:14; 15:23). It was also known that Saul was determined to hold on to his position, and would be on the watch for any move to displace him. Also by now the King was known to be ruthless and cruel. Samuel’s special visit was therefore viewed with apprehension.

Samuel, however, did not reveal the purpose of his visit, but simply called Jesse and his sons to a sacrifice, and surveyed the seven stalwart young men. First the eldest, Eliab, a fine figure of a man. Samuel thought, Surely this must be the man I am to anoint! But no, a voice that only the prophet could hear, corrected him: “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Some good people are poor judges of character. Samuel is reminded that it is God who is making the choice; yes, and that God is able to penetrate beyond good appearances to men’s inner selves.

This verse, 1 Samuel 16:7, is worth considering well. If we apply it to ourselves, what does our religion consist of? Good morals and our attachment to the Bible and the gospel? These can exist and a new heart and Spirit-wrought faith be lacking. We do well to apply the sense of the verse when we are considering others also, especially those we think might be useful to Christ’s cause. Something more than a fertile mind, fluency, persuasive arguments or an affable manner should be looked for. Is there solid character, conscientious conduct, humility, wisdom, faithfulness and a loving spirit? As far as we can discern the heart, let us do so.

No, Eliab was not the man, nor was Abinadab, nor Shammah, nor any of the other four! The new king was to be a son of Jesse, yet he is not among the ones presented. But wait, perhaps they are not all present – and so it turned

out. The youngest, a lad still in his teens, is with the sheep, and it has not been thought worthwhile calling him to the sacrifice and feast. Well, he must come now, and in due course he does come, a most handsome lad. The divine voice speaks again: "Arise, anoint him: for this is he" (1 Samuel 16:12). David is the future king, so Samuel anoints him.

Among the Hebrews, as with other eastern peoples, anointing with oil was done for the honouring and pleasure of guests, and as treatment for wounds and sores. But it also had a religious significance as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and His influences. It was used in this way on this occasion, and the symbol was accompanied by the reality it signified: "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Samuel 16:13).

We noticed earlier that it can be inferred from verse 7: "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart," that David was different in spirit from Eliab. David was a regenerate, spiritually-minded lad, so that it was not just on the occasion of his being anointed that the Holy Spirit entered David's heart. What then is the meaning of "came upon David" in the words, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward"? Saul's anointing, described in chapter 10:1, sheds light on this. In Saul's case it was at a certain point on his journey homewards after his anointing that the Spirit of God came upon him. One result was that "he prophesied" (verse 10). But that was not all; Saul was changed in mind, manner and ability from being a peasant to a captain and ruler.

David's case was similar, except that he already had saving grace. At once he felt the solemn consciousness of a strange new destiny before him. His family probably did not realise the purpose of the anointing, but David knew that it was the divine designation to a great work for God. Although still tending sheep, his thoughts ran out to caring for a larger flock. What need he had for humble trust in God, and for giving himself over to preparations of mind and heart! And, although David did not know it, the Lord had a stern course of training prepared for him.

It is also the case that, when grace is given to a sinner to repent and believe and follow Christ, it has the effect of shedding new light upon one's life, and new dignity upon one's soul. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). There are other occasions also when a special effusion of the Spirit rescues the child of God from mere habitual religion and trifling, and impresses him or her anew with his high destiny, heavy responsibilities, and great need of God's help and sanctifying grace.

When to Pray

The captain of a ship sailing between Liverpool and America was an ungodly man. Just as he was about to leave port for a voyage, he took on a man as a member of the crew. This sailor proved to be ready to quarrel with others; he would angrily blaspheme God; and, if he got the chance, he would get drunk. And he knew nothing about his work; at least he pretended not to know.

One day a great storm arose, and the whole crew was brought on deck and then sent to their various duties – all except the new crew member. The captain was afraid he did not have enough men on board to keep his ship afloat; so he went to look for the sailor and found him, much to his surprise, on his knees praying.

The man was repeating the Lord's Prayer, over and over again, very quickly. The captain was annoyed at what he assumed was either hypocrisy or cowardice – probably it was both. He took the seaman by the collar and shook him roughly. He told the man: "Say your prayers in fair weather"; there were other duties to be attended to in a severe storm. And if someone feels he must be religious when he is in danger, he should also be religious in good weather.

This sailor got up at once, saying quietly, "God grant I may ever see fair weather to say them". He was afraid that the ship would sink and he would drown. But after a few hours, the storm went down and the ship safely reached its destination a week later. The sailor was paid off and the captain forgot about what happened.

Over the next four years, the captain twice experienced shipwreck and was badly hurt when a spar fell from one of the masts. But nothing had any effect on him; his life was still as ungodly as ever. At the end of one very dangerous voyage, the captain arrived in New York. On a Sabbath morning, the streets of the city were crowded with people going to various churches, but the captain was making his way to an inn where he often went to drink.

As he walked slowly on, he met a close friend, in whose company he had often wasted his time at the inn. After they had greeted each other, the captain grabbed his friend's arm and asked him to come with him to the inn.

But the friend – who was now, one assumes, a changed man – wanted the captain to come to church with him to thank God for His mercies on the sea. The captain did not like to refuse and they went to church together. They found that there were no seats left; even the aisles were almost full. They pushed through the crowd and managed to find standing room right in front of the pulpit.

The preacher held the people's attention, even the captain's, as he proclaimed the Word of God. The captain found the preacher's face and voice rather familiar, but he could not think where he had seen the man before. After some time, the preacher noticed the two friends standing together. He stopped suddenly, for he recognised the captain. He was silent for more than a minute and then shouted out: "Say your prayers in fair weather".

No one could understand what the preacher meant, except the captain. Then, when the preacher was again in control of his feelings, he described what had happened on his voyage to New York. The words which the captain had spoken to him during the storm had followed him day and night after coming ashore. Later he believed that he had been converted and that the Lord had called him to the ministry.

The captain too was converted and, instead of going to the inn to drink the Sabbath away, he went to the preacher's home and lived there for six weeks. Afterwards he went back to sea and lived a godly life.

Prayer is not only for times of danger. Each day we need to pray again and again to the God who can watch over us and can do us good in all kinds of situations. Only He can deliver us from hell, which is the greatest danger that anyone can ever face. How greatly we need to experience God's salvation, for we are sinners on our way to eternity.

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

5. The Church Today

Rev J D Smith

Last month's section of this paper, from the Youth Conference in Australia, spoke about the setting up of the Free Presbyterian Church and why that was justified.

2. The Present. Today the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland maintains a presence in eight different countries around the world: the UK, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. From time to time one of our ministers has been visiting Israel; he has been involved in translating the New Testament into Hebrew.

There are 47 congregations where Free Presbyterian services are held. There are 24 ministers in the Church. Though this fact is something we should be immensely thankful for, yet we should bear in mind that this number is about half the number of congregations, and four of these are not ministers of particular congregations, for various reasons, including retirement.

How we need to be praying that the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers into His harvest – to preach the gospel, because it is God's special

ordinance to convert sinners to Christ. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

To many, the Church is very small. But however large or small we are in the eyes of others, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland continues to the present moment. Some had predicted that it would die out within a few years of its formation. But after almost 130 years, that prediction has long since proven false. God has preserved the Church’s witness in this generation.

At the present we have reason to give thanks to the Lord for His many benefits. To use the words of the late Rev D B Macleod, in his comments on the centenary of the Free Presbyterian Church: “The doctrines of God’s Word are still proclaimed in our midst – law and gospel, and this is no mean blessing in the light of the great apostasies which have taken place in the visible Church today. We still have the worship of God in its purity in our midst, unadulterated with instrumental music and uninspired hymns, as are found in so many Churches. We have the ordinances of God’s house: the preaching of the gospel, the singing of His praises, prayer and the sacraments of the New Testament preserved to us. We have the discipline and government of the Church of God still left with us, though largely neglected by most branches of the visible Church in this and other lands. Taking into account all these things, we cannot but marvel at the Lord’s goodness to us. ‘To any nation never He / such favour did afford; / for they His judgements have not known. / O do ye praise the Lord’ (Psalm 147:20).”

The Tabernacle and Temple

8. The Day of Atonement

Rev J B Jardine

Last month’s article in the series spoke about sacrifices offered at the tabernacle and temple. This is the last part of this Youth Conference paper.

6. The Day of Atonement. This was the busiest day of the year for the high priest. He offered sacrifices and carried out rituals to put away the outward guilt for the sins of the past year for himself, for all the priests and for the whole nation of the Jews. After the preliminary sacrifices, the high priest put aside his official garments and washed his whole body before putting on a plain white linen garment. This garment signified the humiliation and purity which were appropriate to the duties of this holy day.

He took a bullock for a sin offering to be offered for himself and the whole priestly family; he also took incense, which he put on burning coals

from the altar. The incense was a symbol of prayer, for he was a sinner and was entering the presence of the holy Jehovah.

He then returned to the altar and took the blood of the bullock and went in through the veil into the most holy place. He sprinkled the blood seven times on the mercy seat and seven times before the mercy seat.

Now that atonement had been made for himself, the high priest could then make atonement for the people. Two goats were taken, one for the Lord and one for a scapegoat. The goat for the Lord was slain for a sin offering and its blood sprinkled in the most holy place. The high priest placed his hands on the head of the scapegoat and confessed sin on behalf of the people. It was then sent into the wilderness, bearing away the sins of the people. The high priest then put on his usual garments.

The heart of Old Testament religion was the covenant relationship between God and His people, Israel. The priest acted on behalf of the people as a whole. The daily sacrifice and the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement were offered on behalf of all the people. They believed that God blessed them as a people when they were obedient to Him and that they suffered when they disobeyed.

During the second temple period – after the Jews returned from captivity – there was a growing awareness of the importance of having a personal relationship with God. The ceremonies at the temple on the Day of Atonement pointed to the need for intense self-examination, prayer and confession; each one must repent personally. An individual could draw closer to God or withdraw from God on his own. A true relationship with God required more than the public performance of the rites which identified any of them as a Jew. It required an inward turning to God and a devotion that others could not see but was acceptable to God. This was fulfilled in the atoning work of Christ.

7. The Temple Today. In AD 691, the Dome on the mount, where the temple had been, was completed. It has dominated Jerusalem ever since then and remains a source of religious and political controversy. Today's Jews still dream of rebuilding the temple. A common prayer that Jews offer up when speaking of the temple is, "May it be speedily rebuilt in our days". This is a wrong view shared by many professed Christians, particularly those known as Dispensationalists.

The temple and its rituals have fulfilled their purpose. "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. . . . Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:50-51,54).

For Junior Readers

“Keep the Gate Shut”

Many years ago there was a farmer in England who was very concerned about his crops. There was one field in particular which he knew would be badly damaged by people walking through it, and even more so by horses’ hooves if they should get loose in that field. He decided to send Willie, one of the farm boys, to stand guard over the gate to that field and make sure that nobody opened it or tried to enter the field.

Before long, a group of huntsmen on horseback came up and demanded that the gate be opened so that they could get through. Willie refused and told the men what the farmer’s orders were. One by one, several of the hunters came to plead with him but his answer to them all was the same: “The farmer’s orders are to keep the gate shut!”

At last an important-looking man rode up and said in a commanding voice, “My boy, do you not know who I am? I am the Duke of Wellington and I am not used to being disobeyed; I command you to open the gate so that my friends and I may pass through!” Willie lifted his cap respectfully but answered firmly, “I am sure the Duke of Wellington would not wish me to disobey my master’s orders!”

The old soldier was very pleased with this answer! He said, “I honour the man or boy who can neither be bribed nor frightened into doing wrong”. Then he handed Willie a shining gold sovereign (a lot of money in those days), turned his horse round and galloped away!

Each one of you is like a gatekeeper. And what does the Lord, your Master, command? He says, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation”.

Be sure to keep the gate of your eyes shut: beware of reading or watching anything that is sinful and may harm your soul. Resolve, like David in Psalm 101, “I will endure no wicked thing before mine eyes to be; / I hate their work that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me”.

Keep the gate of your mouth closed. Do not say any bad language, any crude comments, any untruths, any unkind words. You can use the prayer in Psalm 141, “Set, Lord, a watch before my mouth, keep of my lips the door”.

Then what about ear gate? Keep your ears shut against any temptations to follow your worldly friends into situations which are sinful and dangerous for your soul. What did Solomon say? “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us . . . walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path!” That is very good advice, advice you should always remember. (You can look up the whole section in Proverbs, chapter 1).

Finally, the Lord has given you this command: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23); a prayer, “Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings” (Psalm 17:8); and an encouragement when you realise you cannot keep yourself, “The Lord is thy keeper” (Psalm 121:5). *J van Kralingen*

For Younger Readers

Connie's Chickens

Connie was a young girl who lived in the country. She had an old hen that lived in a barn near her house. The hen sat on seven eggs and seven chickens hatched out. They too belonged to Connie.

When Connie was going to bed one evening, she noticed that the barn was on fire. Her little sister began to cry. Connie too was about to cry. She was afraid her hen and its chickens would be burnt in the fire. So she went down on her knees and prayed to God that her little chickens would not be burnt.

The next morning, Connie went to look for them. She found her hen outside scratching around for things to eat and all her chickens were with her. They were all safe. God answered Connie's prayer. No one knew how they escaped from the barn. But God knew.

You can ask God for everything you need. But, more than anything else, you must ask Him to take away all your sins and make you one of His children.

Thomas and His Favourite Chapter

Thomas used to work in a quarry near his home. But his working days were now over. For several years he had suffered from a disease in his lungs that people in his area called “the stone complaint”. It was caused by breathing in the dust created by breaking the stones. It was very common among men who had worked in a quarry for some years. They developed a cough, became weaker and weaker, and many of them died when only middle-aged.

Thomas was slowly becoming weaker. He was strongly built and had been a powerful man. But as the disease advanced, he became very weak; his face was thin and his dark eyes were deeply sunk. He was so weak that

he sometimes found it difficult to sit up. More often than not, a visitor used to find him leaning forward on a table, his face resting on his hands and his elbows supported by a pillow sitting on the table.

He was a man of few words but, as this visitor got to know him better, he realised that Thomas thought a lot. Sometimes he would ask Thomas if he would like him to read some particular chapter from the Bible. And Thomas was sure to ask for John 14. After this had happened two or three times, the visitor asked about it: "Thomas, you seem very fond of this chapter. It is a very beautiful chapter, but is there any particular reason why you always ask for it. Besides, I have seen more than once that your Bible was open at it when I came in."

Yes, Thomas told him, there was a reason, and he promised to explain. He almost knew the chapter off by heart, he added. And then he began, in a hollow voice, to repeat the words of Jesus in the chapter: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me . . .". And he went on to recall several more verses.

"And why is it that you love this chapter so much?"

Thomas explained that one of the other workmen told him he had heard an old minister say that "a man might get to heaven" by John 14. "Well, thinks I, if that's so, I will not rest till I know that chapter. I did not see any meaning in it then, no more than a babe, and I didn't know one letter from another. Never mind, thinks I; I'll do it for all that. And I did do it. First I had to learn my letters; that gave me a [great] deal of trouble. But I stuck to it till I mastered them. However, the long and the short of it is that I never stopped till I could read that chapter."

After he had learned to read the chapter, Thomas started to memorise it. "And to this day", he went on, "though I've read many and many a chapter besides, and love them all, yet to my mind there's never a chapter like that. 'Let not your heart be troubled', He said to them [the disciples]. There now – what can be like that?"

The visitor found it quite moving to hear Thomas speak. The visitor had never heard him say so much before. But, though his voice was husky and his breath short, he seemed to warm to what he was saying. He spoke as if his whole heart was in it.

"But," said his visitor, "you said you did not understand the meaning of the chapter though you learned it. You understand it better now, don't you?"

"Yes, a [great] deal better. I was all dark then, and bad enough too. And long after I took to learning that chapter, I was as bad as any of them – drinking and swearing, and all the rest of it. God knows that. God forgive me!"

Thomas stopped; he did not say more for several minutes. Then he went on:

“It was not till I was ill that I began to see the meaning. I used to say it over and over before, but it was only like words. There was not a worse one in the quarry than me. That there wasn’t, not one – not a greater drinker among them all. But I used to have fears, and it was my fears that made me learn that chapter. If a man may get to heaven by that chapter, thought I, I’ll try to get there. That is why I learnt it, but I was as blind and ignorant as a beast.

“But since I’ve been ill, everything seems different. I seem to see a meaning in it now. It’s what Jesus Christ said to them, when He was going to leave them – to comfort them. And it seems to comfort me. I love Him now, because I know that He died for my poor soul. And I love all He did and all He said. I never read that chapter but I seem to see more there than I did before. There’s nothing makes me so sorry for my sins as reading that chapter. To think He should love us so, and I should go on drinking and swearing as I used!”

The visitor described further: “Then he told me, and often he told me the same at other times, that sometimes he would sit for hours alone, while his wife was out at work, thinking over his past, and that the tear would roll down his cheeks at the thought that he had ‘gone against Christ so’. ‘And where should I be without Him?’ he would say.

“The end came at last. Again and again was the favourite chapter read. Again and again did we talk about it and pray over it. It was loved more and more. More and more light came, more grace, more faith, more love. As the body declined, the soul grew and prospered. He was a happy man, though sorely troubled at times by thoughts of his past life. Happy because he did believe, though with trembling faith, that his sins were forgiven through the blood of Jesus. . . . And so he died. His Saviour came and fetched him, and took him to that place which He had gone before to prepare; and there the poor quarryman, poor no longer, will dwell for ever in the mansions of his Father’s house.”

It was good that Thomas began to read John 14 and to learn it by heart. But it was probably in a superstitious way that, at first, he thought it would bring him to heaven; or else he was trusting in what he was doing so that God would accept him. But, in reality, he could only get to heaven if he trusted in Christ as the One who died for sinners like himself. Yet it seems that, in the light of what he read in the Bible, he did trust in Christ – through the Holy Spirit applying the truths of Scripture to his soul. The old minister’s words had come true, but only because Thomas believed in the Lord Jesus.

We should also learn that it is good to read the Bible and to memorise it. Even if, at the time, you do not get good from doing so, God may yet bless to your soul what you have learned. Ask Him to do so and keep on asking.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2019-20

Overseas Prizes and Awards

Senior Section

Prizes: *Fountain Inn:* Phineas Kerr. *Grafton:* Hugh Marshall.

Awards: *Auckland:* Rachel Campbell. *Grafton:* Andrew White, Ronnie Zuill

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Chesley:* Kara Zekveld. *Connecticut:* Nathanael Mack. *Grafton:* William Marshall.

Awards: *Auckland:* Amelia Smith. *Chesley:* Isabel Bouman. *Fountain Inn:* Ehud Kerr. *Grafton:* Mahala Zuill.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* John Campbell. *Grafton:* Levi Kidd.

Awards: *Auckland:* Peter Campbell, Aaron Smith. *Grafton:* Eve Zuill.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Owen Smith. *Fountain Inn:* Isabel Kerr. *Gisborne:* Brooklyn and Shona Hembd. *Münster:* Clara Rösner.

Awards: *Chesley:* Hannah Bouman. *Grafton:* Shyla Hawkins, Elijah Zuill.

Lower Primary Section

Awards: *Auckland:* Joseph and Marion Campbell, Keith Smith. *Chesley:* Angela Tuinier. *Fountain Inn:* Tala-Linn and Zerubbabel Kerr. *Gisborne:* Ashley and Preston Hembd. *Grafton:* Harrison Kidd. *Münster:* Conrad Rösner. *Sydney:* Abigail, Ethan and Lachlan MacDonald, David and Sarah Steel.

Looking Around Us

Roman Catholic Miracles?

An Italian teenager who, sadly, died of leukaemia at the age of 15 in 2006, has been “beatified”. Carlo Acutis was recognised for, among other things, helping to run websites for Roman Catholic organisations. He is now just one step away from being declared a “saint” by the Roman Catholic Church.

To be beatified, people have to be credited with performing a miracle; two are needed for someone to be made a “saint”. It is claimed that Carlo saved another boy’s life. According to a BBC report, Rome claims that he “interceded from heaven in 2013 to cure a Brazilian boy who was suffering” from a rare disease of the pancreas. The Vatican has ruled that this was actually a miracle. Presumably part of the claim is that the Brazilian boy prayed to Carlo and was heard.

But that is totally impossible. We ought to pray to God, for the sake of Christ – not to, or for the sake of, some human being, who was a sinner like everyone else. In any case, even if the human being is in heaven – the Apostle Paul, for example – he cannot hear our prayers; so he cannot intercede for us, and he has no power now to work miracles on earth.

The fundamental problem with the Roman Catholic system is the vast extent to which it ignores the Bible and relies on human inventions for its

teachings. The Bible, and only the Bible, is the basis for the religion of true Protestants. The Bible points to Christ alone as the One through whom our prayers can be presented before God. Let us bring all our needs before God in this way, including every illness we may suffer from and, especially, all our spiritual sickness. And let us remember that Christ “is able . . . to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Life on Venus

Venus is the second-nearest planet to the sun but the hottest of all the planets. Its orbit is next to the earth’s, on the inside. It has been in the news recently because scientists have discovered the gas phosphine in the atmosphere of Venus, 50 km up from the surface of the planet. Molecules of phosphine are made up of one phosphorus atom and three hydrogen atoms. On earth, phosphine is associated with life, with microbes living in the bowels of animals like penguins, or in places like swamps, where there is little oxygen.

The difficulty facing astronomers is: Where has the gas come from? Their problem is that they look at all such questions from an evolutionary perspective, and continue to do so even when their evolutionary answers have to be changed again and again in the light of fresh discoveries.

At the moment, they have no answers to the origin of phosphine on Venus. A professor from Cardiff University and some colleagues have published a paper in the journal *Nature Astronomy* explaining their observations of phosphine at Venus, as well as the investigations they have made in their efforts to show that this molecule could have been made on this very hot planet by some natural process. But they cannot think of any such process that does not involve a living creature.

But the word *creature* illustrates their difficulty; it should point them and us to a Creator. And there *is* a Creator, as the Bible reminds us, not only in the opening chapters of Genesis, but again and again – for example, “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Ex 20:11). God made Venus and everything in it, and if the phosphine has not been in the atmosphere of Venus since the creation, He designed the process by which it has been formed. If the researchers would accept God’s creative power, they could apply their undoubted abilities to providing answers to much more relevant questions, which would very possibly be helpful to large numbers of people.

Price £1.00