

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



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Volume 87

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The Danger of Going Back

John Newton was born in 1725. His father was the captain of a ship trading with countries around the Mediterranean Sea. His mother died when John was not quite seven. She was a godly woman and, while she was alive, she did her best to teach him, even beginning to instruct him in Latin. More importantly, she had him learn by heart parts of the Bible, sometimes whole chapters, and she prayed earnestly for him. When John was just 11, his father took him on his first sea voyage.

John became religious when he was a teenager. He enjoyed reading and found a book called *Christian Oratory*, written by a minister called Benjamin Bennet. John did not understand much of the book, and its teachings may not have been altogether faithful to Scripture, but it influenced him to become religious. He began to pray and to read the Bible, and he assumed that he was truly religious. But he soon got tired of these things and gave them up. He did not just go back to what he was before; he became far worse. He cursed and swore and blasphemed God. He behaved very badly when his father and his step-mother were not around.

John had to know, not only that he needed to be religious, but also that he could not make himself good by his own efforts; he needed a new heart; he needed to believe in Jesus Christ. A little religion will do us no real good. And if our religion is only outward, we will not be acceptable to God, no matter how religious we *seem* to be. Without a new heart – a new nature – we will never love God; we will never truly worship Him. We need that complete change of nature that the Holy Spirit brings about. When John became religious, that change did not last. He needed a permanent change, and so do we. And when the Holy Spirit brings about a new birth in any soul, it is a permanent change of nature; it will never be reversed.

We need to be careful that the books we read will not do us harm. Many religious books are dangerous, because they are not *firmly* based on what Scripture teaches. Books may be very dangerous if they are not consistent with Scripture – if in some places they go against Scripture.

One day, John was riding along on a horse. For some reason, the horse

threw him off and John landed near a hedge that had recently been cut and said to have been dangerous. If he had landed on the hedge, it might have been very unpleasant for him. As he considered what had happened, John thought about the dreadful consequences of appearing before God in his present condition of soul. He knew he was not fit for heaven. These thoughts had a good effect on him; he gave up his more serious sins – but only for a while. He went back to his sins, and he became even worse than before.

One Sabbath, John and a friend agreed to visit a warship. But John arrived late and found that the boat which was to take them out to the warship had left. John was angry that he missed his visit to the ship, but how relieved he must have been that he was not aboard when the boat carrying his friend capsized. Some of those on the boat were drowned, including his friend.

At his friend's funeral, John was very upset, no doubt thinking how near he had come to entering a lost eternity. Again his behaviour changed for a short time. In fact, he became religious three or four times before he was 16, and each time he went back to his sins.

Looking back on this period in his life, John confessed, "All this time, my heart was insincere. I often saw the necessity of religion as a means of escaping hell, but I loved sin and was unwilling to forsake it. I was so strangely blind and stupid that sometimes, when I have been determined [to do] things which I knew were sinful, I could not go on quietly until I had first [gone through] my ordinary task of prayer, in which I have grudged every moment of the time." When the prayer was over, his conscience was quietened and he could get on with his sin, with scarcely a thought that he was doing wrong before God.

Notice John's reference to his heart, the centre of his being. Unless his heart was changed, he could have no real religion, no religion that would influence the whole of his life. The only reason why he became religious from time to time was that he wanted to avoid the consequences of sinning – having to endure the sufferings of a lost eternity. His religion amounted to trying to earn God's favour, as if his imperfect obedience could blot out the guilt of all his past sins. And he had no sense of the value of a Sabbath as a day to be set apart to worship God and to learn more about Him. John very much needed to use his Sabbaths in that way, rather than spending them doing what could be done on some other day or else what should not have been done on any day of the week because it was in itself sinful. He very much needed to spend his Sabbaths, as well as other days, seeking the Lord.

John's last reformation of life went further than any of the others, and it lasted for two years. He tells us: "I spent the greatest part of every day in reading the Scriptures and in meditation and prayer. I fasted often." He left

off eating meat for three months. He adds, "I would hardly answer a question for fear of speaking an idle word" (see Matthew 12:36). He was sad because of his sins in the past, and he kept away from people as much as possible to avoid being tempted to sin. Some of this, of course, like not answering questions, was going beyond what God requires of us.

John was again trying to work out a righteousness of his own, trying to earn his salvation by what he did himself. And he needed to see how weak he really was. When he was in Holland, he went into a shop where he bought an unbelieving book called, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinion and Times*. Through reading it, John gradually lost all his religion. We need to be clear that no degree of religion will do us any good unless Jesus Christ and faith in Him are at its centre. And we cannot keep God's commandments properly unless He will give us a new heart.

But we must notice another important lesson from the ups and downs of John's religion. Once someone has taken a step forward in religion, it is very dangerous to go back. Every step backward that a person takes is provoking God to leave him or her altogether. God, in His great kindness, did not leave John permanently to his own ungodly ways – to the ways of sin and Satan. How thankful John must have been afterwards when God, by the Holy Spirit, did work in his heart to give him a new nature, making him willing and able to trust in Christ Jesus as the Saviour of sinners and to begin walking in the paths of new obedience – sincere obedience to God's commands.

Many people, sadly, have become religious and then gone back. They went away from God and they never returned. The most solemn instance of all was Judas Iscariot. Perhaps it was his greed for money; perhaps it was something else. But he betrayed Jesus and he did not seek any way back. He lost all hope and hanged himself.

You may have started to read the Bible more than you did. Ask God to keep you from neglecting it again. Such backward steps are dangerous. You may never take any interest in the Bible again. If you reject the Bible, you cannot expect to find your way to heaven. Similarly, you may have started to attend church more regularly. Do not turn back. Listening to the preaching of the Word of God is the special means that God has provided so that sinners may be saved. You may even have started to pray with some seriousness. Do not again become careless about prayer.

You have needs, real needs which only God can supply. You need forgiveness; you need a new heart; you need the Holy Spirit to work in your soul. So ask God earnestly for these gifts. Come to Him, for the sake of Christ, who has done everything that is necessary so that sinners like you may be saved. Trust in Him now. Tomorrow maybe too late.

James and Betty

A man was doing missionary work in what seems to have been one of the poorer parts of a city. He was visiting the houses on a street there and met a couple called James and Betty. James had been a soldier; Betty was now completely blind. As they spoke together, the missionary mentioned the name of a minister.

“O,” Betty exclaimed, “he made tears run down my cheeks when I heard him preach.”

“Well,” the missionary told her, “you can easily go and hear him again, for he is at present labouring for some months in this city.”

But Betty told him that she had no one to lead her there, as she could no longer see to go there on her own.

“How is this?” asked the missionary, looking at James.

But James did not want to answer the question – no doubt he did not want to go to church himself – so he got up suddenly and walked out.

Then Betty told the missionary about the difficulties in her life. She had a wicked son, who was seldom out of prison, which must have left her feeling very sad. She could not have a kinder husband than James, she said, but he had a great hatred for God's truth. He would not read the Bible to her, although she was not able to read it herself. He would not even read a tract, although many times someone had handed one in to their house. James had just thrown them in the fire without reading them.

The missionary made another visit to their house soon afterwards. James was sitting at his fireside. The missionary asked him: “Well, James, how are you today?”

All James said was, “Not very well”, and then he left the room and went outside.

The missionary often came back to visit James and Betty. James always went outside, until one day he stayed sitting in his chair as the missionary read a tract to Betty. The missionary took the opportunity to show a friendly interest in him. He asked James about the countries he had been in while he was in the army, and the battles he had taken part in. Then the missionary moved on to ask, “Do you like reading, James?”

“I cannot see now to read”, James answered.

So the missionary offered to get him a pair of spectacles. But James told him that they would be “of no use whatever”. For some reason, James thought that no glasses could be found that would suit his eyes.

But the missionary could not be put off. He was sure he could get suitable glasses, and he would bring some books for James to read. Then James told

him that he remembered an old comrade who had spoken a lot about *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Since the missionary was going to bring some books, James asked if he could bring this famous book by John Bunyan.

The missionary did find suitable glasses for James and brought him the book he asked for. Soon James found that he was enjoying reading. He went further: he got new clothes and began to go to church, taking Betty with him, leading her along by her arm.

He bought a family Bible, which one assumes he used for family worship, as well as for reading on his own and for reading to Betty. He also bought other good books from a colporteur, who went round the doors selling Bibles and other Christian books. He kept some of them on a shelf, having read them twice; he was so pleased with them and was so anxious to learn the teachings they contained.

He always came to church now, and it seemed obvious that he had benefited from what he heard and was now a new creature in Christ Jesus. Betty was very thankful because of the great change that her husband had experienced and for being able to get to church herself.

But one Sabbath, James had to come alone to church. Betty had died. Yet James felt that he could enter into these words of Scripture: "I am not alone, for the Father is with me". No doubt, on the human level, he *was* lonely, but he could believe that God was fulfilling His promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Scriptural Teaching on the Family (4)

Matthew Vogan

This Youth Conference paper has been answering the question, Does the family have a future? The answer is continued here from the previous article, last month, which spoke about God establishing families from the beginning of the world, and about God building the individual family.

With these general principles in mind, let us go on to consider in more detail how we are to build families according to God's blueprint. We need to widen our horizon beyond specific issues of family life to the general principles that lie behind it. The family is the sphere in which we are first taught what it means to love our neighbour as ourselves. This charity must begin at home. Loving our neighbour as ourselves is the sum of the second part of the Ten Commandments.

But we cannot do this without fulfilling the first part of the Ten Commandments, which is summarised as loving God with all our heart, soul, strength

and mind. This is the foundation. A God-centred family is what Joshua meant when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). As Hugh Binning observes, originally we were created to have love constantly flowing out to God and our neighbour, but sinful self wants it all to be one way and only gives out to receive in return.

Of course, the whole of the moral law is to be seen in the context of redemption. We cannot fulfill it ourselves without the free grace of Christ. The law drives us to Christ so that we may be forgiven for breaking God's law and be delivered from its condemnation. We are then pointed back to the law as a rule of life and a way to express love to God and live unto holiness. The best guide to the Ten Commandments is in *The Westminster Larger Catechism* and we will follow some of the relevant themes there in what follows.

Loving God first. The First Commandment says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me". It requires us to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, as the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us. We might summarise this as loving God with all of our all. It strikes at the root of sin in the heart. It resists the self-idolatry of expressive individualism (the idea that we find our basic meaning only when we express our own feelings and desires). This commandment forbids "self-love, self-seeking and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from Him in whole or in part". The Lord sees clearly at all times; it is before His face that we give to any other the honour, glory and love we owe to Him. If we place God first we will also be preserved from idolising others as well as ourselves.

Perhaps we think it is unlikely that we would make idols of our spouse or children, but if we neglect the time and devotion that we owe to God and give it to them, this is the result. Who is the most important person in a marriage? In the view of the world it will probably be yourself and then your spouse. According to Scripture – it is God. Even in Eden, marriage had an outward as well as an inward focus. It was about God bringing two people together. It was for His glory.

Couples must only engage in marriage in dependence on God. *The Westminster Directory for Public Worship* says that God has "brought them together by His providence". They need Him to "sanctify them by His Spirit, giving them a new frame of heart fit for their new estate [state]; enriching them with all graces whereby they may perform the duties, enjoy the comforts, undergo the cares, and resist the temptations which accompany that condition, as becometh Christians".

In coming to be married, the *Directory* says they should "entreat the Lord

(whose presence and favour is the happiness of every condition, and sweetens every relation) to be their portion, and to own and accept them in Christ”.

The First Commandment also links with the Tenth. One key way in which self-idolatry is driven in our culture is through consumerism, which acts as a false religion. Brands do not sell products but rather self-image. Secular observers have often recognised the way that excessive and obsessive consumption or consumerism has become the new national religion. “Consumerism has shouldered aside other ways of understanding the world – real political visions, organised religion, a pulsating sense of national identity,” writes the journalist Andrew Marr in *A History of Modern Britain*. Consumerism seems to guarantee happiness and fulfilment – without Christ. Scripture tells us that greed and covetousness are idolatry.

Consumerism cannot be satisfied; it will demand all of our service and devotion; it will not share anything with God (Matthew 6:24). It makes us discontented while promising a contentment that will never be attained. This is the reverse of what the Bible teaches (Hebrews 13:5). Consumerism reverses the biblical perspective by focusing our attention on the temporary rather than the eternal, the present rather than the future, the earthly rather than the heavenly (2 Corinthians 4:18). Of course owning or buying things is not wrong in itself, but the impact this has on us and the time and energy we devote to it certainly may be wrong. All the advertising and media we are exposed to constantly tells us indirectly that Christ was wrong about the value of life not consisting in what we consume (Luke 12:15). Families can easily be carried along by this and driven by the consumerism of this world.

Our love for God will be expressed together in worship. There must be daily family worship that directs the family to God and not to ourselves. The head of the household must ensure spiritual provision for the soul as well as meeting the physical needs of the family. Sadly, family worship is largely neglected among those who profess to be Evangelical. According to a survey by the Evangelical Alliance in 2012, only 40% of Evangelicals report daily prayer with their family. Much worse, a mere 12-15% confirm that they read the Bible together on a daily basis.

J W Alexander noted that family worship “languishes and goes into decay in times when error and worldliness make inroads upon the Church”. He observed that a return to family worship was “one of the prominent symptoms of recovery, wherever the gospel resumes its power”. It brings a blessing not only on families themselves but also upon the wider community. Thus the well-being and future prospects of society and the Church depend upon the liveliness of family religion.

It is no surprise that the devil seeks to attack the keystone of family religion,

which is family worship. This was a key emphasis of the Reformation period. As John Calvin put it: "Every family of the pious ought to be a Church". There should be family religion involving instruction in the ways of God. Abraham is commended for this. "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement" (Genesis 18:19). The father should give attention to catechising and instructing their family to know the key principles of Christian truth. One minister with a large congregation can only do so much in terms of time and teaching. Fathers are also responsible for their children's spiritual welfare.

Christ the Advocate

Rev K M Watkins

The patient was not well. He was not well at all. During a spell in the local hospital, many tests were done and sent away to a larger hospital. Back at home, and feeling very weak and ill, the patient eagerly awaited news about a course of treatment that would hold out some hope of recovery. When the news came, it was bitterly disappointing. The larger hospital was not proposing to do anything for him, but telling him to wait for two months for another scan. The patient was afraid that his condition would be a lot worse by then, if he was spared.

But a doctor at the local hospital was on his side. This doctor was pleading with the larger hospital to do something more for his patient, and to do it soon, before he became more sick. The patient was pinning his hopes on this doctor's efforts on his behalf.

The patient's minister explained that this was a picture. As sinners, we have a terrible disease. In the end, we will die of it. It is the disease of sin, which puts us in trouble with the true and living God. We ought not to sin. But we do sin. And that means that we are guilty before God.

The patient could not make the larger hospital listen to his cries for help. And the sinner can fear that his case is similar – that God will not hear his prayers for mercy and help. After all, the Bible says, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). The sinner can be afraid that his sin is so provoking to God that his cries for help will be rejected. Knowing something of the plague of sin at work in his soul, he trembles at the words of the psalmist: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

But the patient had someone to speak for him – the doctor at the local hospital. He hoped that the staff at the large hospital would start to listen to this doctor, even though they would not listen to the patient. The doctor would be his “advocate”, to speak on his behalf and present his urgent need for help.

The sinner should think about this. When he is afraid that God will not listen to his prayers because of his sin, there is One who can speak to God on his behalf. And that One is Christ. “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). Christ can present the needy case of the sinner to His Father in heaven. This is called His “intercession”. Christ makes known His will that the sinner should be saved, and forgiven, and sanctified, and kept.

Christ’s intercession will never fail, however much those He intercedes for have sinned. “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). The Father always hears Him and grants Him all that He desires. He said Himself: “Thou hearest Me always” (John 11:42). And the psalmist said, “Thou hast given Him His heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of His lips” (Psalm 21:2). The sinner may feel that his poor prayers do not succeed, but he may be sure that Christ’s prayers will never fail. The sinner who trusts in Christ does indeed “have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”.

It would greatly encourage the patient to know that the doctor had a good record, for then he could hope that no faults would be found in the doctor’s requests. This should encourage the sinner too when he thinks of the Advocate in heaven. Christ is righteous. He has no sin. No fault can be found with Him or with His prayers. His requests always agree with the Father’s will. The Father will never turn Him away. If Christ is interceding for us, then our case is safe.

As Advocate, Christ will obtain whatever the sinner needs. He knows what the sinner really needs, and ensures that all those needs will be met. When Paul promised the Philippians, “My God shall supply all your need”, he added that this would be “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). The exalted Christ, at God’s right hand, the Advocate with the Father, makes sure that all the riches of gospel benefits are bestowed upon the sinner who believes in Him. Indeed, even faith is a gift from the Lord, given to the sinner through the intercession of Christ.

Christ is always a successful Advocate because He is also the perfect sacrifice for sin. Christ has taken out of the way all the sin that would bar the sinner from the blessing he needs. That is why John continues his letter in the way he does. After stating, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with

the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”, he immediately adds, “And He is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:2). Do fears rise up in the sinner’s mind, because of the guilt of his sin? Does he have doubts about the success of Christ’s intercession? Away with such doubts and fears! By offering Himself as the sacrifice for the sins of everyone who will trust in Him, Christ has suffered the wrath due to those sins. As the “propitiation” for sin, Christ removes God’s wrath from sinners by bearing that wrath Himself.

These are the two parts of Christ’s work as the great High Priest. “Christ executeth the office of a priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us” (*Shorter Catechism*, Answer 25). First was His sacrifice, which He finished on earth. Second is His intercession, which He continues in heaven. The sinner needs both of these. He must have Christ as the sacrifice for his sins. And he must have Him as his Advocate to intercede for him. In that way he will be saved “to the uttermost”! Christ in all His fulness is offered to us all in the gospel. The benefits of both His sacrifice and His intercession – all will be ours the moment we believe in Him for salvation.

Felix Neff: Pastor of the High Alps

5. Following Christ in Doing Good

Neff was born in Switzerland in 1798. He spent a few years preaching in Grenoble, Mens and La Baume, towns in south-east France. Then he was invited to become pastor of two churches in the High Alps district of France.

Neff went to a district where people had followed biblical Christianity in the past. But generations of people in that area had suffered persecution from Roman Catholics. Both before and after the Reformation, soldiers were sent into the area, with priests leading them on, to murder as many of the people as they could. But persecution had come to an end before Neff’s time in the district. When Neff began his work in the High Alps in October 1823, there were nearly 700 Protestants living among the mountains.

Neff was sorry for the people; he knew they were very poor and their knowledge of the Bible and its teachings was limited, but he recognised the possibility that, with God’s blessing on his efforts, much good might be done among them.

He wasted no time in beginning work in his new congregation. He went from village to village, speaking to the people and trying to learn the local dialect. The people were glad to have a minister of their own for the first time in many years and they gave him a warm welcome. At that time of year,

Neff found the weather very cold. He told his mother about La Chalp, the village where he was to live. The weather was more pleasant there in winter than in other parts of the district; it was in the bottom of the valley and so was more sheltered from the piercing winds. And as it faced south, the village was more open than others to the sun's warming rays.

After being inducted to his new congregation, probably at the end of November, Neff preached first in the village of Dormillouse. Snow had already fallen at the end of September; yet snow could not prevent him moving around his congregation. Neff visited all the scattered villages of the district. As he called on the people in their homes and talked with them, he wanted to find out about them, especially about the condition of their souls. In each village he gathered the young people together and talked to them about the religion of the Bible. And he encouraged the older people to meet together for prayer meetings.

When he left Dormillouse to visit the other villages, Neff had to climb over one of the highest mountains in France. He took two guides with him and they walked along below glaciers, during the three-hour walk to the top of the mountain. They tramped through snow which was sometimes so soft and deep that they sank in it up to their knees. Since the snowfall in September, only two people had passed that way, but Neff and his guides were able to follow in their footsteps. But they could also see the footprints of wolves and deer. Then they had a two-hour walk down to the first village in the valley on the other side of the mountain. Neff's guides left him there and he continued on his way.

One Sabbath in January, he preached twice at a place called Violin. After the second service, at least some of the people went along with Neff to a cottage, where he read to them a passage of Scripture and made comments on it – no doubt explaining it and applying it to what he believed were the needs of their souls. It was 10 pm when the people left and many of them had to walk long distances to get home. They lit torches to show them the way over the snow.

The next morning, Neff climbed back towards Dormillouse. It was in a district where, hundreds of years before, people tried to follow the teachings of the Bible, in spite of the persecuting efforts of Roman Catholics determined to make them submit to Rome. Dormillouse was well protected; it could only be approached from below by a steep, slippery path, and round about there were protecting glaciers. A very few men could easily hold back the attacks of a large army.

For 600 years, Dormillouse had provided a place of refuge to the people of nearby villages who had to flee from their homes because of persecution.

If they did not flee, they would either have been killed or else forced to turn away from the teachings of the Bible. Many of these people died for their faith, and Neff would have seen the deep caves where the people gathered to read the Scriptures and to worship God.

But when he visited Dormillouse years after the persecution stopped, Neff found no one who was converted and seeking to obey God's law. Yet almost everyone had a strong respect for the Bible. He expressed the wish that the Lord would soon cause His mercy to shine again on these dark places, where He had been worshipped sincerely in the past. Yet Neff was finding people who were now showing a serious concern about spiritual things. Several of them were blessing God for sending Neff among them and they hoped that the Lord would revive spiritual religion in the district.

Some months before Neff arrived, a preacher called Henri Laget had visited the district. Although the people did not understand his preaching, they were glad to see his earnestness. When he left them, they were sad to hear him say that they would never see him again. They said, "When he had gone, it seemed as if a gust of wind had suddenly put out the torch which lit up our darkness among these cliffs".

Neff was disappointed that none of the visiting preachers had held Bible classes among the young people in recent years. So he went round all the homes in the valley and noted the names of the young people between 15 and 30, about 200 in all. He held a Bible class for them on Sabbath afternoons, and sometimes he taught a Bible class on weekday evenings.

The people built a house for Neff at La Chalp, but he was so anxious to do good to the people in every part of his congregation that, usually, he only spent two or three days at home each month; he had so far to travel to get to all the villages and some of them were very difficult to get to. Neff's district stretched 72 miles from east to west and 53 miles from north to south. All the time he lived among the Alps, he never took a day off until he became seriously ill – though his walking from place to place, with a pack on his back and a stick in his hand, was a change from his more ministerial activities, such as preaching and teaching.

The valley of Freissinière attracted more of Neff's attention than any other part of his congregation. He saw that it was more needy than other districts. Indeed it seems there was enough work in this one valley for two ministers. Yet so many were the demands on his time that he was only able to spend one week a month in Freissinière. Besides, many aspects of life were more primitive there than in other places – including education, farming and housing. For instance, the teachers knew very little themselves and many of the cottages had neither windows or chimneys. Neff did what he could to

remedy some of these difficulties – for instance, by recruiting better-educated teachers – and he prayed for God’s blessing on such efforts, as no doubt he prayed for God’s help and care in everything that he did.

A more serious problem was the ungodliness of the people of the valley. Gambling, swearing, quarrelling were among the sins mentioned, and the harsh and brutal way that the men treated the women. The main answer to ungodliness was to preach the gospel, which no doubt was Neff’s main aim. Rather than trying to get the people to give up their individual sins, one by one, he would have looked to the Lord to change their whole nature, so that they would no longer wish to commit any of these sins.

But to erect a church building would make it more comfortable for those who were listening to the gospel, especially in winter. He supervised the building of a new church in Violin, but progress was slow as the local people did not know much about building work, and Neff was only occasionally in that village to supervise the work.

It was always his aim to walk closely in the footsteps of Christ, His Divine Master. He wanted to do as much good as possible while he went about this mountainous district where travel was so difficult.

For Younger Readers

A Drink of Milk

Howard Kelly was a poor boy who had to pay fees if he was to attend school. So he went from door to door selling things to make some money. He was hungry and had almost no money left.

He decided to ask for some food at the next house he came to. But when a nice young woman came to the door, he just asked her for a drink of water. He was not brave enough to ask for more. The woman kindly brought him a large glass of milk. Howard offered to pay her for the milk, but the young women would not take any money.

Many years passed, and the woman became very ill. None of the local doctors knew what was wrong. They could not do anything for her. So they sent her to a hospital in a big city. Howard Kelly was now one of the doctors there. He was asked to see the woman. He went to her room knowing where she came from. When he saw her, he knew at once that she was the woman who gave him the glass of milk.

Dr Kelly wanted to do his best to cure the woman. And he did, after a long time, with God’s help. She became very well again.

But the woman now had another problem. Would she be able to pay the

bill for her treatment? Hospital treatment was not free, and she did not have much money. The bill was sent to her room. The woman could not bear to look at it. At last she did look. She saw the words: "Paid in full with one glass of milk". It was signed by Dr Howard Kelly. He had not forgotten her kindness to him when he was so poor.

And she thanked God. We too should thank God for all the good things He gives us.

The Tower of London

Rev Alexander McPherson

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Many things are counted valuable today simply because they are old. Not only paintings and furniture by the artists and craftsmen of several centuries ago, but a multitude of articles which in their time were common and cheap, but now command good prices because few of them survived. Even the survivors of the little tinsplate cars and train sets that amused children two generations ago, figure in the auctions of such up-market dealers as Christie's and Sotheby's!

There is no doubt that old things are more attractive to people today than ever they were, and ancient buildings, for example, attract sightseers from all parts. If such a building has an interesting history, so much the better; and if the guides often found at such places can tell the story in an exciting way, their audiences will drink it in. They will feel that they have, in a way, been carried back to earlier ages, and thus escaped for a little while from today's world of plastic, shoddy disposables, and petrol and diesel engines.

Among London's many old buildings, none is more popular with tourists than the Tower. Here is history in full measure and, all the year round, people from every part of the world, as well as Britain, pay their dues and cross the empty moat to inspect this 18-acre fortress – and palace and prison and armoury. Since it was begun as a fortress by William the Conqueror (of 1066 fame), the Tower of London has been all these things.

From outside, one has the impression that beyond the yellow walls and towers of the great building there lies a rather cramped interior, but in fact it is spacious and tidily laid out with walks and lawns. This might lead one to suppose that in its palace days (or centuries) the Tower must have been a pleasant place to live in. But on the northward part of the green, a notice informs one of grim events which took place there and reminds one that, for a long time, this was the most notorious prison in all the land. On that grass

a scaffold used to be erected when people of royal or noble blood were to be executed.

The Yeoman Warders take turns to guide parties around the Tower, and their description of persons and events is nothing if not graphic. Amidst their references to kings and queens, princes and noblemen, statesmen and soldiers, traitors and executioners, the Christian ear may catch names of special interest. Latimer, Ridley, the Marquis of Argyle, Archbishop Laud and Judge Jeffreys, all were imprisoned here, some for the faith they professed, while others were punished in the providence of the God whose people they persecuted.

It is a sign of the multi-faith religion of our time that the guides at the Tower, when they do make an occasional reference to martyrs, are careful to speak of them as of “all faiths”. But for the most part, it is on the doings of Henry VIII and other spectacular, even gruesome, events that they dwell. This is what the tourists enjoy, and this is what they get.

In some future day, we hope, a more balanced summary of the history of the Tower will be given by those who show people around. If the Lord will revive true religion and build up His Church to a point of influence we may expect that people will wish to hear about the men and women who nobly contended for divine truth in times when it was dangerous to do so. To their faith, patience, courage and vision were due, to a good extent, the spread of God’s Word and the gospel, and the overthrow of Popery in this country. No doubt, when that time comes, there will also be available those who will gladly tell visitors to the Tower the facts that exalt God’s truth and show the working of His power in His saints.

To older readers we recommend the two volumes of Merle d’Aubigné’s *The Reformation in England* as books that describe well an important part of the history embodied in the stones and relics of the Tower of London.

For Junior Readers

“To a Saviour Fly”

I am sure many of you have heard of the godly minister, Robert Murray IM’Cheyne. He was born in 1813 in Edinburgh, the youngest child in his family. He became a minister in 1835 but only lived for seven years after that. He died when he was only 29, still a young man. He was well known for his holiness, giving much time to reading the Bible and to prayer.

How was he converted? It was the death of his eldest brother, David, that marked the beginning of spiritual life in Robert’s soul. David was already

converted and often prayed for Robert, who was only a teenager when his big brother died. This sad event made a deep impression on him. Every year he marked the day, often commenting on it in his diary.

The year before his own death, Robert M'Cheyne referred to his brother's death, in a letter to a friend: "This day 11 years ago, I lost my loved and loving brother, and began to seek a Brother who cannot die". His brother, whom he loved, was taken from him, but he found the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24), One who would never be taken away.

In one of his poems he referred to his sorrow at David's death:

"The harp is now mute – its last breathings are spoken –
 And the cord, though 'twas threefold, is now, alas, broken!
 Yet why should we murmur, short-sighted and vain,
 Since death to that loved one was undying gain?
 Ah fools, shall we grieve that he left this poor scene,
 To dwell in the realms that are ever serene?
 Though he sparkled, the gem in our circle of love,
 He is even more prized in the circles above."

Throughout his ministry, M'Cheyne had a real desire for the salvation of young people. He wrote a tract called: "Reasons why children should fly [or, flee] to Christ without delay". In it he listed four main reasons:

1. Because life is very short
2. Because life is very uncertain
3. Because most that are saved fly to Christ when young, and
4. Because it is happier to be in Christ than out of Christ.

Another time he solemnly warned the young people in a sermon: "Remember, the present is your only time to be saved . . . There is no believing, no repenting, no conversion in the grave – no minister will speak to you there. This is the time of conversion! . . . O that you would use this little time! Every moment of it is worth a world."

He also wrote a well-known poem which has the title, "Children Called to Christ". It starts:

"Like mist on the mountain, like ships on the sea,
 So swiftly the years of our pilgrimage flee;
 In the grave of our fathers how soon we shall lie!
 Dear children, today to a Saviour fly."

Will you not pray now, that the Lord would have mercy on you and save you while you are young?

"Like flowers you may fade: are you ready to die?"
 O seek Him in youth – to a Saviour fly!"

J van Kralingen

Looking Around Us

How to React to War

War is a dreadful evil. A country is certainly justified in defending itself from attack, but it brings terrible destruction – destruction of property and, more seriously, destruction of life, besides the injuries that so many experience.

But the comments here arise from a remark I have heard more than one person make on the radio. They were expressing surprise, after the outbreak of fighting in Ukraine, that war should take place in the twenty-first century.

We have many advantages today compared with previous generations. We have more effective medicines, better technology, more efficient means of transport and so on. But along with these advantages come weapons that are more deadly and destructive than ever before.

Yet the main point is: human nature has not changed. In many countries, education is much more available than even 100 years ago. Yet it is likely to be more godless now; so it is not likely to make people less violent or nations less warlike. In his Epistle, James asks, “From whence come wars and fightings among you?” Then he asks, “Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (James 4:1). *Lusts* are wrong desires – desires for things we have no right to, or desires for what is sinful.

What James says explains why fights break out between individuals, and why one person shoots or stabs another. Some wrong desire that should have been resisted has instead taken control of at least one of those involved. Too often it results in severe injury or even death. No amount of education will rid society of violence unless the Bible is at its centre. Only if the Bible becomes influential in society will there be a big reduction in violence.

Much the same is true for nations. We should be thankful that there has been no world war since 1945. Yet wars have broken out in various parts of the world again and again. Powerful leaders may want to appear greater than they already are, for they suffer from the sinful desires that pride produces. They may covet the land of another nation, and covetousness is a sinful desire. They may want to avenge a shameful defeat in the past, although God has said that vengeance belongs to Him.

There will be wars as long as nations reject the authority of God. Sometimes they will be more common; and sometimes less so, as God restrains the human tendency to violence. The Bible speaks about a time when nations will not “learn war any more”, a time when “they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks” (Isaiah 2:4). This refers to the weapons of long ago, but we can substitute modern weapons such as guns and missiles and torpedoes, and think of the materials used being diverted

to peaceful modern uses. It will happen, as the previous verse states, when the Word of the Lord goes out from Jerusalem, which in Old Testament times was the centre of God's worship – when, in places all over the world, great numbers will feel the power of God's Word and believe.

So we should pray, not only that war in Ukraine would end quickly, but also that God's truth would go out everywhere with power. We should pray that the Holy Spirit would work in many hearts, giving them a new nature, so that they would not want to be violent. We should also pray that, as a result, nations would refuse to engage in war unless it is absolutely forced on them. The Lord Jesus Christ is "the Prince of peace", who is able to bring about peace between sinners and God, and also between nations.

God and a Sparrow

This poem comes from the *Cheering Words* magazine for 1981. The poet's name is not given. The words, "holy ground", are used to describe a place where the presence of God should have been recognised. The poet was thinking of the words of Christ to His disciples: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (Matthew 10:29).

I stood one day on holy ground,
A place in which God should be found.
No great cathedral marked the place;
No reverent step nor breathless hush
Was known in all that haste and rush;
Men passed unheeding on their way
None asked me why I paused that day
On holy ground of which I tell.
It was just there a sparrow fell.

The final flutter of those wings
Formed by the Hand that made all things,
A little life that there expired
Unseen by men and undesired
Was seen by Him who gave the sea
Its bounds, fixed by His firm decree;
And He who gave each star its place
In realms of vast, unmeasured space –
Eternal God, the Lord of all –
He saw that little sparrow fall.

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