

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



September 2009

Vol 74 • No 9

Contents

Directions for a King (2)	163
Romanism: Another Religion?:	
6. What Does It Direct Us to Do?	166
Comfort in View of Death?	168
For Junior Readers – Lessons from the Life of John G Paton:	
36. The First Aniwán Communion	170
For Younger Readers:	
“I Want One of These Cakes”	172
Calvin’s <i>Institutes</i> : a Recommendation	173
Youth Conference 2009	176
Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2008-09:	
UK Prizes and Awards	179
Looking Around Us	179

Cover Picture: *A scene in Geneva, where Calvin was minister.* See page 173.

The Young People’s Magazine

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

Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod BSc, F P Manse, Ferry Road, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA; tel: 01859 520271; e-mail: leverburgh@lineone.net. 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 £19.50 (£1.50 per copy); Y P Magazine £11 (70p per copy); both magazines £28.50. 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

Vol 74

September 2009

No 9

Directions for a King (2)

Last month we looked at some of the directions, in Deuteronomy 17, which God gave to the kings of Israel. The first point was a general one, which applied to the king's whole life, especially to the way he carried out his responsibilities: he was "to fear the Lord his God". So he must keep away from everything that would displease God; he must show a loving respect for God, which would result in him keeping God's commandments. The whole point of us looking at these directions for kings of long ago is that, in various ways, they have relevance for ourselves. We today – all of us – have a duty to fear God: we must respect God and His commandments so much that we will really want to keep them.

We then noticed that there were a number of specific directions which can be summed up by saying that the king was not to focus on the things of this world. The first of these directions was: he was forbidden to "multiply to himself silver and gold". To gather together as much silver and gold as possible was not to be the most important thing in the king's life. So we today should realise that the most important thing in life is not to have as much money and possessions as we possibly can; we are to "seek . . . first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

Let us now notice another of these specific directions. When the king came to the throne he was to write out a copy of the law of God for himself. Was that the whole of the five books of Moses, Genesis to Deuteronomy, or just those parts of them which revealed to him God's commandments? In any case, he was to have his own copy of the law. Remember that these were times long before printing was invented; so the king could not send a servant to a shop to buy him a copy of the Scriptures. Yes, he could have commanded a scribe to write out his copy of the law. But God told him that he must himself write out his own copy. In that way he would become much more familiar with what the law was saying and he would find it much easier to apply it to his own situation as he carried out his duties.

What can we learn from this, about 3500 years later? We should learn how important God's law is for us – and indeed the whole Bible. With modern

printing techniques it is so easy to print Bibles cheaply that possibly everyone reading this article has their own copy of the Scriptures. But do you read it carefully – as if, through it, God was speaking to you personally? Jesus said, “*Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me*” (John 5:39). While the Bible gives us the law of God – showing us how we should live – even more important is what it tells us about Jesus. God is bringing us testimony about Jesus – for example: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). But we are to search the whole Bible to find out what God is telling us, particularly about Jesus, whom God appointed to be the Saviour of sinners like us.

If the king had spent hours and hours painstakingly writing out his copy of the law, this copy would obviously be precious. He would not want to see all his hard work treated lightly and damaged or lost. We too ought to value the Bible. After all, it has a very important message for us. Sometime in the seventeenth century, a sailor was shipwrecked and lost everything he owned, except a few clothes – perhaps those he was wearing. When he reached dry land safely, there was something he wanted to buy with his first half crown. It was a Bible. That was how precious it was to him.

It makes one think he had found something tremendously valuable in its pages – Jesus Christ as his own Saviour. And he desperately wanted, it would seem, to read about Him again and again. Possibly he thought like this: If God wished to tell people all He has revealed in the Bible, then I want to read about these things for myself and absorb them; I want to get good for my soul through reading about them. What an example for us today!

Charles Hodge was a well-known professor of theology 150 years ago in America. He once referred to false statements that philosophers have made, trying to express their idea of God. Then he went on: “A Christian child says, ‘God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth’. Men and angels veil their faces in the presence of that answer [from the Shorter Catechism]. It is the highest, greatest and most fruitful truth ever embodied in human language.” But he was conscious that the answer is firmly based on what God has *revealed* about Himself. So he added: “Without the Bible, we are without God and without hope. The present is a burden and the future a dread.” And he might have added further: If people who have a Bible do not make use of it and study it, they are without God and without hope. They have no one to whom they can go in their troubles who is unlimited in his power to help them. They can only fear if they look into the future, particularly if they look into the lost eternity which is before all who will not seek the Lord.

We will now look at just one more of these instructions for the king of Israel. He was forbidden to “multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away” from God. Perhaps no one who reads this would be tempted to have more than one wife, but it was a real danger long ago. And the foundation God laid for marriage was: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). God intended marriage to be between one man and one woman, and that is how it should always be.

You may not be tempted to have more than one wife, or more than one husband, but a young man may choose his wife unwisely and a young woman may choose her husband unwisely. They may, for instance, marry someone who does not have a true Christian background and who will turn their heart away from seeking God to focus on the world, or even to a false religion. This is dangerous.

It is what happened to Solomon. We are told that “King Solomon loved many strange women . . . of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love” (1 Kings 11:1,2). The strange women were foreign women – theirs was idolatrous worship – and they did, for a time, turn away his heart from the Lord and from the true religion. He even provided for their false, idolatrous worship. Surely, if he had respected God’s mind about marriage, he would have felt less need to describe his experience of life so strongly as “vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

If we really are followers of the true religion – seeking to live in the fear of God and following the directions He has given in the Bible – we will surely want our husband/wife to have the same attitude to God and His laws. In any case, to enter into such a close relationship, and one which is for life, demands that we pray about it with special earnestness.

We should also seek to resist the influence of those around us who do not submit to God and His laws. Even if your workmates or fellow students spend their evenings in pubs, for instance, that is no reason why you should join their ungodly company. Even if other young women do not dress modestly, that is no reason why you should follow their example. God has told us how we should live, and we must give account to Him at last.

Life is not easy, especially in an age like this when the Bible is despised and God is forgotten. How can you get safely through life and reach heaven at last? Follow the directions God has given. But do not lean on your own strength. Look to Christ for salvation and ask that, for His sake, the Holy Spirit would make you more and more obedient to God’s laws.

Romanism: Another Religion?

6. What Does It Direct Us to Do?

Rev D W B Somerset

Previous articles have discussed what Romanism teaches about God, about man, about death and about morality. This is the final article in this series.

The last question that we will ask is: "What does a religion require us, or direct us, to do? And, in particular, what sort of worship does it require?" In other words: "What does it mean in practice to be a follower of this religion?" With Islam, the practice and worship consist mostly, if not entirely, of outward rituals which have to be followed. Sin is not the problem in Islam, and Islam does not pretend to have any solution. The whole direction of the religion is outward rather than spiritual: washings, reciting ritual prayers, almsgiving, observing Ramadan, going on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Some Muslims may go more deeply into what might be called "doctrine" and "spiritual experience", but this is not something that is required of them. Provided they are careful to observe the outward demands of their religion, it is probable (though not certain) that they will go to Paradise, according to Islam.

With Romanism, we come much closer, in appearance, to true religion. Romanism acknowledges the problem of sin, and Rome claims to have a solution. And the solution has the right name: it is Christ and His death. And all the right words relating to sin are used: repentance, faith, justification, the new birth, sanctification, salvation, and so on. The subtlety is that all these words turn out to have been given a new meaning, and the effect of this new meaning is to turn the whole religion outward and away from spiritual things.

What Romanism requires of her followers, in essence, is this: (1) that they join the Church, by baptism; (2) that they confess their sins to a priest; (3) that they receive absolution – forgiveness from a priest; (4) that they partake of the mass; (5) that they perform some good works. These are the things that are essential, for those that have the opportunity to do them. And as long as they do these things, all should be well.

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, they are "born again" by baptism, which puts them into a "state of grace". But it is up to them to maintain this "state of grace". Venial sins (those which are not very serious) do not destroy it, but mortal ones do; so mortal sins must to be confessed to the priest. When they are confessed, the priest will grant "absolution", and the Roman Catholic must then go to mass. This will restore him to a state of grace. Baptism has given him a certain standing, or "justification" before God, and he must try to add to this by "good works". At the end of his life, if he is still

in a state of grace, he will almost certainly go to purgatory to have his remaining sin purged away. After that, he goes to heaven to receive the reward of his and Christ's works.

So this is the bare minimum, and it amounts to practically nothing. In particular, there is no need for a Roman Catholic to have anything to do with Christ. He can get everything in his religion through the priest and the Church. Strictly speaking, there seems to be no need for prayer, unless the priest imposes this on him as a "penance" for his sins. Nor is there any need for him to lead a good or a religious life provided he avoids mortal sins or confesses them afterwards, goes to Mass, and does some good works. But these good works could be acts of "charity"; in other words they might consist of donating money to certain causes, such as the Church of Rome. Also there is no need for a Roman Catholic to have or to read the Bible. And there does not seem to be any great necessity to worship God: this, too, is something extra – a good work.

It goes without saying that what we have been describing, which is the practical religion of many Roman Catholics, is totally different from what the Bible tells us about the Christian life. The true Christian life is one of communion with Christ: "For me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21); "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20); "Your life is hid with Christ, in God" (Colossians 3:3); "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). True Christianity is inward and spiritual, first and foremost, though it does not ignore or neglect outward things. And the spiritual worship of God is essential: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24); "While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being" (Psalm 146:2).

The central act of communion with God in Romanism is not coming to God in one's heart by faith, trusting in Christ crucified. It is, instead, the physical act of partaking of the mass. The Romanist doctrine is that the bread and wine of the mass are transformed miraculously into the physical body and blood of Christ; so one gets the benefit of the death of Christ by eating what used to be bread and what is now the body of Christ (only the priest is allowed to drink the wine). Thus the mass replaces Christ, and physical eating replaces faith. Spiritual things have been turned into physical ones, though they keep their spiritual names. This is the essence of the deceitful doctrine of Romanism.

To sum up this series of articles, Islam is a false religion but it is

comparatively crude. For those brought up under Christianity, it has little appeal – it is too obviously false. Romanism is crude too, but it is much more subtly disguised. It takes biblical Christianity and it adapts it to man in his state of sin. It allows people to have a religion and to use all the biblical terminology, but to continue living very much as they did before (although there is provision too in Romanism for a form of spirituality and mysticism if people prefer that). The great danger of Romanism is that it is a religious way of putting people's consciences to sleep. It is suited to countries and periods of history which are enlightened with a measure of true Christianity. In these circumstances, Romanism presents an alternative. People can be religious and have the name of a Christian, perhaps as required by social pressure, but at the same time they can be worldly, or at least have nothing to do with Christ. They have all the Christian language, but a different religion.

The great sin of Romanism is, firstly, that it is untrue; and, secondly, that it abuses the holy things of Christ in a deceitful and shameless way. It is an exceedingly evil system.

Comfort in View of Death?

Archibald Alexander was a notable minister in America. One day he was asked to visit a young man who was seriously ill, who probably would not live for long. Alexander had met the man several times before but does not seem to have known him well. He knew the man lived a moral life and thought he might have been a church member. But when the minister asked him about his hope for eternity, he confessed that he was not a believer; in fact he even doubted that the gospel had come from God.

"I never felt more at a loss", Alexander later admitted. If the man had not been so weak, Alexander might have attempted to convince him that the Bible is true. But the man was very weak, and for him just to believe that the gospel has come from God – vitally important though that is – would not have been saving faith. In any case he might have died before Alexander would have said enough to convince him.

This man knew that his unbelief gave him no comfort in the face of death and said he wished to believe in Christ. "It occurred to me", Alexander wrote, "that the Word of God contained light and energy in itself and . . . the beams of truth might shine in upon his soul and thus generate a saving faith by the efficient aid of the Spirit." So he asked the women looking after the young man to read him some parts of the Bible, when he was strong enough to listen.

The next day Alexander came back to see the ill man. He now told the minister that his doubts had been scattered and that he was trusting in Christ. And although he was never able to speak after this, it did seem that he died a true believer.

Let us turn to another man, Robert Ray, minister of a church in New Jersey, of whom Alexander wrote: "I never saw anyone approach death so deliberately and composedly". He too was ill, probably with tuberculosis, and had spent the winter in a place called St Augustine in the hope that his health would improve.

The next Spring he returned to his church. His health was worse than ever; he knew that death could not be far away. But as long as he was able to speak, he went to church and preached, though he had to be carried into the pulpit. He would preach until his difficulty in breathing forced him to stop; then somebody would carry him home. This went on for many weeks; Ray felt that, as he must die in any case, he might as well die preaching. He had a strong desire to be the means of saving the people of his congregation; he hoped that the loving warnings of someone so obviously close to death would have the effect of awakening some of them.

Ray was not suffering severe pain and, until the day of his death, he appeared, as Alexander expresses it, "as calm and cheerful as a man long absent from home would be when the time came to return to his friends". He spoke about death as if there was nothing difficult about it. "Indeed," said Alexander, "it had no terrors for him". When he was very near to death, some of his neighbours came to see him; he told them: "You have come to see your pastor die". And, in Alexander's words, "he gently fell asleep".

Let us note some lessons from what we have seen about these two men.

1. *The importance of preparing for death.* Both men realised that we need to believe in Christ if we are to be saved and go to heaven when we die.

2. *The danger of not preparing for death until life draws near to its close.* Alexander was hopeful about the young man but, wisely, he did not speak too confidently about him. Ray had sought the Lord years before and he was clearly ready to die; the young man had left the matter dangerously late.

3. *The young man had almost no time left to glorify God in this world* after he looked to Christ. It was wonderful that he did believe, but he had no opportunity to demonstrate his love to Christ by serving Him in the world. What a privilege to serve Christ! Pray for grace to be of some use to Him in His kingdom on earth. You may not become a minister, but there are many other ways in which you can be a light in the world.

4. *The power of the bare Word of God to change hard hearts.* Yes, God is most often pleased to bless the *preaching* of the gospel to bring sinners to

turn to Him in faith and repentance. But God may use His Word in other ways. So you should take great care to read God's Word regularly and ask Him to bless it to you. Remember that God is speaking to you personally in every verse of the Bible. Listen to Him; bear in mind that His words come to you with real authority and that He is speaking to you for your good, even with words of severe warning. Realise that whatever He is saying is absolutely true; believe it all and look to Christ for salvation.

5. *The source of true comfort at death.* The *Heidelberg Catechism*, from Reformation times, asks, "What is your only comfort in life and death?" It answers, "That I belong . . . not to myself but to my faithful Saviour".

For Junior Readers – Lessons from the Life of John G Paton

36. The First Aniwan Communion

On Sabbath, 24 October, 1869, the first communion was held on the island of Aniwa. It was a solemn and happy occasion, one that Paton had been hoping to see since his arrival on the island three years before.

Twelve Aniwan people were allowed to sit at the Lord's table. They showed evidence in their lives that they had been savingly changed and that they had been enabled to give their hearts to Jesus Christ and His service. They had also been working hard in the communicant classes to learn the doctrines of the Christian faith.

On this memorable Sabbath the service lasted three hours. Paton began with a short sermon carefully explaining the Ten Commandments and the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Then Paton baptised the 12 Aniwan people along with the children of two of them. After another short address, Paton administered the Lord's Supper. Sitting at the Lord's table were the 12 people who had just been baptised, six teachers from Aneityum, another missionary called Mrs McNair who was visiting the Patons, and Mr and Mrs Paton themselves.

The islanders, nearly 200 of them, looked on with a sense of awe, realising that they were watching something very special and solemn. Many of them afterwards asked about the different parts of the service and what they meant. Paton felt he had never experienced such joy as when he put the bread and the wine into the dark hands of the Aniwans, who only a short time before were heathen cannibals.

Mrs Paton wrote to a friend about the first communion: "It was a beautiful sight to see them all standing up neatly clothed, in midst of their benighted brethren, to declare themselves on the Lord's side, and more than one could

witness without deep emotion. Never did I feel happier in any society on earth than when partaking of our Saviour's body and blood with these dark sisters and brothers, now united with me in Jesus. It was a day long to be remembered."

The oldest communicant was a man called Vasi who was 90 years old. Although he was so old, he came to school every day and was one of Paton's best students. There was also old chief Namakei and his daughter Litsi, who was one of the first girls to go and live with the Patons at the mission house. She was devoted to Paton, as she was so grateful to him for bringing her the good news about Jesus. Namakei also had a sister who was converted and sat at the Lord's table at this first communion. She did so even although she met with discouragement from her family. Her husband and son continually laughed and jeered at her for involving herself with the Christian religion.

What a mixture of people: old and young, black and white, male and female, but they were all united in Christ Jesus. They were all saved sinners remembering His death.

Most of you will have seen a communion service. Those people who are church members go down to the front of the church and eat and drink the bread and wine as it is passed round by the church elders. It is a very solemn thing to see.

But what are these people saying when they go to the Lord's Table? Are they saying that they are better than other people? No! Are they saying that they are not sinners? No! Are they saying they are perfect people? No! Are they saying that they are good Christians who serve Christ well? No!

When they go to the front of the church and sit down and take the bread and wine, they are acknowledging Christ as the Saviour of sinners. They are saying that they are sinners, but they look to Christ to save them from their sins and take them to heaven when they die. In England there used to be a man called "Jack the Huckster" who used to sing constantly, "I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all, but Jesus Christ is my all and in all". That is what the people who go to the Lord's Table are saying in their hearts.

Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross to save sinners. As He did so, He was enduring God's wrath against sin. He did this so that those people who believe in Him will not need to endure God's punishment against sin. What a wonderful Saviour, suffering in the place of His people because He loved them!

The bread at the Lord's Table represents His body which was broken, and the wine reminds us of His blood which was shed. When people go to the Lord's Table they do so because they are commanded to remember Christ's death. They want to remember all that Christ has done for them. They

hope that, in doing so, their faith will be strengthened and that they will be encouraged in all the duties they have to do. They feel a greater bond to Christ by remembering His death – and not only to Christ, but to all the other people who are remembering His death as well.

It is a time of gladness but also of sadness. The sadness is because the Lord's people are thinking about what their sins caused the Saviour to suffer. They are saddened when they think of their sin, and they feel that they do not serve Christ as well as they should. But they confess their sins and shortcomings to Christ and ask Him to help them serve Him better in the future. They know that they cannot improve by their own power and they are happy that they have Christ to help them in this.

I hope and pray that you will come to have Christ as *your* Saviour. If you do not yet have Christ you should seek Him urgently. You have seen communion services, but who knows if you, or I, will live to see another one? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). *S M Campbell*

For Younger Readers

"I Want One of These Cakes"

A woman brought a plate of cakes into a room and placed them on the table. Two children, a boy and a girl, were playing in front of the fire.

The little boy jumped up as soon as his mother went out of the room. He said, "I want one of these cakes". And he went towards the table.

"No, no," his sister said to him as she pulled him back. "You must not touch", she told him.

But the little boy very much wanted to have a cake. So he told his sister: "Mother won't know; she did not count them". He tried to shake off his sister and stretched out his hand.

Then his sister told him: "If Mother didn't count them, perhaps God did".

The boy knew that what his sister said was true. He pulled back his hand and left the cakes alone.

Yes, God did know how many cakes there were. And He knows everything. Always remember that He sees everything you do.

Calvin's *Institutes*: a Recommendation

Rev David Campbell

This article is a further part of a paper given at the 2009 Youth Conference.

The final edition of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was published 450 years ago, in 1559. While it has a formidable-sounding name, I want to introduce you very briefly to it so that you will be encouraged to take it up and read it. I hope I can convince some of you to make this anniversary year one in which you start to read John Calvin's great work of theology.

First edition of 1536. Calvin's initial purpose was to educate his hearers in the doctrines he preached and set out clearly the principles of the Protestant religion. When persecution against Protestants in France increased in 1534 and 1535, Calvin seems to have worked with greater urgency. Some of his friends were among the martyrs and it is thought that their deaths prompted him to publish. So the 1536 edition was as much a defensive manifesto of the persecuted Church in France as the simple teaching manual which it set out to be. It was plain, forceful and very practical. Few statements Calvin made in 1536 were changed in his last edition although it was much bigger.

The 1536 edition had these six chapters: 1. The Law of God, 2. Faith, 3. Prayer, 4. The Sacraments, 5. False Sacraments, 6. Christian Liberty and Church and State Power. Chapter 1 gave three uses of the law: to restrain evil, to convict us of our need of Christ and a rule of life for believers. Chapter 2 distinguished true saving faith from mere assent to the truth. It discussed the Trinity and the doctrines of the Apostle's Creed. Chapter 3 rejected all Rome's teaching on prayer and exalted Christ as the only Mediator. It also expounded the Lord's Prayer. The other chapters were more controversial and exposed Rome's errors with great vehemence.

The Preface. The *Institutes* launched John Calvin's reputation almost immediately. This was perhaps as much on account of the bold preface as the direct style of the work itself. The Preface exhorted Francis I, king of France, to stop persecuting the Protestants. It very powerfully answered the Romanists' objections to the true faith. Calvin demanded justice for his friends and proved the genuine New Testament character of the Protestant faith and worship. He also exposed the weakness of Rome's teaching on the supremacy of the Pope, defending the Protestants against false charges.

Effects of The *Institutes*. The hunger for Scripture doctrine and proper interpretation of the Bible was now being met by the Protestant leaders and the *Institutes* became famous throughout Europe. First in Geneva and later in Strasbourg, Calvin used it as a manual for teaching believers the truth as

they had never heard it before. He wanted his congregation to use it along with his Bible commentaries and his sermons, but later editions became a textbook for divinity students. It was intensely practical and useful for Christians at all levels. Under God's blessing, Calvin's *Institutes* transformed the Church, the society and the politics of Europe.

Expansions in later editions. Later editions of the *Institutes* were a response to the demand. They also arose from Calvin's view of the growing need for an educated ministry. The 1539 edition was more than twice the size of the 1536 edition; the final version in 1559, the last of six revisions, was more than five times as large as the original and had the structure Calvin desired most. It was divided into four major books. Book One, on the Knowledge of God the Creator; Book Two, on the Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ; Book Three, on the Way in which we receive the Grace of Christ; and Book Four, on the External Means or Aids by which God invites us into the Society of the Church and holds us therein. Each book is longer than the one before it. Maybe we can best remember this structure by thinking of the first three books teaching the doctrine of the Trinity – about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – and then the fourth about the Church.

General Features. Robert L Reymond, a modern theologian, in his biography of John Calvin, summarises well the *Institutes* by giving five general features.

1. *It is, above everything else, biblical.* In one English translation there are 40 pages of Scripture references, 2474 of them from the Old Testament and 4330 from the New Testament. It is founded solidly on the Bible.

2. *It gives us the doctrine of the Reformation.* According to one theologian (B B Warfield) it has as its unifying theme "the vision of God and His majesty as revealed in Jesus Christ". It preserved, like few similar works, the balance of Scripture between faith and practice.

3. *It is positive and assertive.* Many modern critics have been put off for this reason. While no man is always right, it is very important for teachers to be decisive in stating the truth. The *Institutes*, while full of Calvin's evident humility in dealing with holy mysteries, gives no room to error.

4. Professor Reymond says *it is rhetorical*. He means that it is crafted in such a way as to persuade men. Calvin brings readers back to the original source – the Bible, but he also quotes over 40 Church fathers, chiefly Augustine, attempting to persuade. His *style* is also persuasive. He uses passion, repetition, humour, sarcasm and other devices to make his points.

5. *The Institutes are supremely the work of a pastor.* This was his great interest: the salvation of sinners and the establishment of believers. Some sections are intensely pastoral and practical and others exhibit his pastoral experience in dealing with difficult cases.

Purpose. The opening words of Book One are perhaps the most famous: “Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves”. This summarises, what Calvin’s *Institutes* is all about – to explain to us “what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man”.

Layout. Perhaps a word about the layout of the *Institutes* may be in order. It may surprise us that the doctrine of election is not discussed at the beginning. In fact it comes well into Book Three. While this doctrine is closely associated with Calvin and Calvinism, we should be interested to read how Calvin deals with it. He views it as the source of humility and a very comforting doctrine to believers. It is essential to his understanding of the gospel.

It is also interesting to note where Calvin expounds the Ten Commandments – not in the practical sections on the life of the Church or the work of the Holy Spirit, but between the discussion of God as Creator and God as Redeemer in Christ. This also is for very practical reasons. We cannot know our need of Christ until we discover we are sinners, and “by the law is the knowledge of sin”. Similarly his long discussion of prayer comes after dealing with justification and before dealing with election.

There are long chapters on idolatry, penance, indulgences, purgatory and the false sacraments which many readers might feel heavy going, interrupting the general thread. The reasons for them being where they are would have been very obvious in the sixteenth century, when the Protestant Church had seriously to confront these errors. They can easily be left for a second reading by those who wish to read through Calvin’s *Institutes* today. Perhaps you could begin by reading the chapters on providence and on the Christian life. They are very profitable. Then move on to those on justification and the Lord’s Supper. These establish the theology of Calvin very well, and if you are only going to read a few chapters, read them and those surrounding them. But best of all, read the whole work right through, little by little.

The study of theology should have an interest for those brought up in the Church of Christ. Calvin’s Geneva was famed for its excellent educational standards, and for producing ministers and missionaries. It was also famed for the ability of its young people to defend their faith as ably as the scholars in theological colleges elsewhere. This was the fruit of the catechisms, the commentaries and the sermons, and doubtless of the *Institutes* too. Calvin’s *Institutes* are not as daunting as the name sounds. You will find subjects of great personal importance, which will help you understand sermons and your own Bible reading – and the principles of the Church and worship. You cannot go far wrong with John Calvin as your guide and I hope that what I have tried to convey about the *Institutes* will encourage you to read them.

Youth Conference 2009

Rev D A Ross

This year's Conference took place in April at the Scottish Youth Hostel in Inverness. Sixty-seven young people were present, mostly from the Free Presbyterian Church. Some travelled from Holland and some from as far away as New Zealand. It was encouraging to meet old acquaintances who have attended for several years. Others can no longer attend and we miss them – not least for their varied contributions to the Conference. Some long to be old enough to come to the Conference; when they do come they are a welcome addition and they do not seem disappointed on their first visit. We are sad that some of our young folk never attend or come only a few times.

We have nothing but praise for the manner in which our young people generally conduct themselves. Also we are much indebted to the Housemothers, who do wonderful work caring in so many ways for Conference members. The young people showed their appreciation by presenting the three housemothers, Mrs Norma MacLeod, Miss Eona MacQueen and Miss Janet Campbell with some exotic plants. We also appreciate how well the Hostel staff cared for all our needs.

The papers are, of course, central to the conference, as are the discussions which follow. Many of the questions indicated a good grasp of the subjects as well as enquiring minds and, we hope, an anxious concern to know what the Bible actually teaches; we felt that it was a profitable time. We hope and pray that, as the young people look back on these occasions, they will have pleasant memories of spiritual profit, and also of forming new friendships and strengthening old ones.

The first paper by Rev David Campbell was *Knowing your Bible – The Relevance of Scripture for Today*. He used four main questions to highlight the relevance of the Bible. The first was: "What is the Bible?" Its divine authority and inspiration distinguishes it from the books of all other religions. It is holy and is to be held in the highest reverence. In it God is speaking to us. It is sufficient to guide sinners through life and to eternal happiness.

"Why is the Bible given to us?" Among the parts of Scripture expounded was 2 Timothy 2:16,17. The Bible is to make us wise unto salvation; it "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and to make us perfect in holiness. "What is the relation between believers and God's law?" Mr Campbell referred to some wrong views of the law and then said that it takes to do with our thoughts and actions; it shows us our sinfulness and need of the Saviour. In no sense does it save us, but Christians are obliged to abide by it as a rule of their conduct.

The last question was: “How are we to apply God’s law to our lives today?” Obviously we must keep the Ten Commandments. But the whole Bible is relevant, laying down principles for proper, God-glorifying conduct.

Rev Donald Macdonald spoke on *Baptism – a Biblical View*. Christian baptism, he said, was instituted by Christ after His resurrection. It is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace and admits the person baptized into the visible Church. It is to be given only to those who profess faith and obedience to Christ and not to the ignorant or to heathens. The children of those who profess the true religion are also to be baptized, since they too have a right to be admitted into the visible Church. There is an obvious connection between Circumcision and Baptism. In Old Testament times believers and their children had to be circumcised; this was a covenant sign that God would be their God and that they would be His people. Baptism has now replaced circumcision and is to be practised among all nations. The outward element in baptism is water, and sprinkling of the person is scriptural. It tells of the need for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as well as the necessity of being washed in the blood of Christ. Those who are serious about these matters will earnestly seek to be under this ordinance.

John Calvin and Calvinism – An Introduction to “The Christian Institutes” was presented by Rev David Campbell. He first gave a short history of this remarkable man and then went on to speak about *The Christian Institutes*, in which Calvin summarised the doctrine of the Word of God clearly and faithfully. While Calvin drew from older writers such as Augustine, his work excelled theirs, and to this day we benefit from his many writings. Mr Campbell hoped that the young people would spend time reading this valuable work. Like his fellow Reformers, Calvin was sorely persecuted by the Church of Rome, but the Lord enabled him to be faithful to the end.

Rev Neil Ross organised the historical tour of Easter Ross. He reminded us that the light of the Reformation more and more dispelled the darkness of the Church of Rome and of other superstitions. He spoke too of the extreme persecutions which those who feared the Lord had to endure. But Christ by His Word and Holy Spirit brought many of the people through a true saving change and they became steadfast followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Black Isle and around Evanton were the main areas of interest. We were told, for example, about a religious awakening in Rosemarkie under the faithful preaching of John Wood and about brave Thomas Hogg of Kiltearn, who was persecuted for refusing to submit to bishops. We heard about Hector MacPhail’s fruitful ministry and the well-known stories of how he dealt with individuals who went on to close in with Christ – the Highland Kitchenmaid was just one example. We also visited the Ferintosh Burn, where thousands

of people met in the open-air, anxious to hear the gospel. No church could hold those thousands who attended communion seasons there. Mr Ross finished by directing us to plead with God for such days of gospel prosperity to return to the Highlands and far beyond.

We always attend a Free Presbyterian prayer meeting if there is one within reach of the conference. On this occasion, Rev Donald MacLean, the former minister of the Glasgow congregation, gave the address. It was a pleasure to hear Mr MacLean once again. He preached from Acts 17:11, about the Bereans who heard the Word preached and “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”. He exhorted our young friends, by God’s grace to do so too. In this present evil world they were to be different from worldly people; they were to be on the side of Christ and His Word.

Prayer meetings are a special opportunity for spiritual profit, as people gather to plead with God in prayer and hear His Word preached. The Word cautions us: “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is”. It was at one such prayer meeting some years ago, that a young conference member, careless about eternal realities, first became concerned about sin and salvation; it was an immediate answer to the petitions of that meeting and an encouragement for all our young people to attend the prayer meeting regularly. Who can tell what eternal blessing may be obtained?

Rev Hugh Cartwright gave the last paper, *Martha and Mary – Expressing Devotion to Christ*. Bible characters, he said, are patterns to be followed and warnings against sinful practices. Mary and Martha were in Christ’s everlasting love and their home was a welcome dwelling for Him. The first scene he pointed to was Mary sitting at Christ’s feet and Martha busy with His temporal needs. Martha becomes harassed and finds fault with the Saviour and Mary. But He directs her to be more careful about spiritual matters than the temporal, showing the need to have our spiritual priorities right.

The next scene was the sickness of Lazarus, which showed Mary and Martha’s complete confidence that the Saviour could help them. But their faith had to be strengthened. We too, when faced with trying circumstances, can have unbelieving fears and need to rely totally on Christ, not only for our soul’s salvation, but in all kinds of trying circumstances.

The third scene was when Mary anoints Jesus with very precious ointment. Here Martha is content to serve the supper. The scene centres on the action of Mary, publicly honouring her Saviour, not to be seen of men, but to show her deep devotion for Him. While Mary had many critics, the Saviour fully approved and commended her. Let us be concerned to seek His approval: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:11).

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2008-09

UK Prizes and Awards

Senior Section

Prizes: *Bonar Bridge*: Elizabeth Campbell. *Dingwall*: Alastair Mackenzie. *Glasgow*: Neil Gillies. *London*: Elizabeth Munns. *King's Lynn*: Joanna Wiltshire. *North Uist*: Christina Macdonald. *Sidcup*: Constance Turnbull

Awards with Merit: *Bonar Bridge*: Sandy Campbell. *Edinburgh*: Eilidh Logan, Jonathan MacDonald. *Glasgow*: Laura Chisholm, Catherine Freeke. *Portree*: Rachel M Mackinnon. *Longcot*: Lucy Cooper.

Awards: *Barnoldswick*: Philip J Martin. *Inverness*: Catherine Schouten. *Vatten*: Rebecca Fleming.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Barnoldswick*: Robert Ross. *Edinburgh*: Catriona Logan. *Gairloch*: Mairi Wyatt. *Glasgow*: Kate Gillies, Ruairidh MacLeod, Peter Macpherson. *Inverness*: Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton. *North Uist*: Fraser MacDonald. *Stratherrick*: Ewen Fraser. *Trowbridge*: Joanna Broome.

Awards with Merit: *Dingwall*: Andrew MacLeod, Ruth M MacLeod. *Edinburgh*: Isla MacDonald. *Gairloch*: Rachel Mackenzie. *Glasgow*: Donna Chisolm, Rachel MacLeod. *Haywards Heath*: Hannah Woodhams. *Kings Lynn*: Matthew Wiltshire. *London*: Amy van Kralingen. *Longcot*: Ruth Cooper. *North Uist*: John A MacDonald. *Sidcup*: Lucy Turnbull. *Stornoway*: Sarah Gillies.

Awards: *Luton*: Stephen Kingham. *North Tolsta*: Sean MacLeod. *Stornoway*: Lauren MacDonald. *Swavesey*: Sarah Parish. *Swindon*: Alison Tugwell. *Vatten*: Sabrina Annand, Cameron Rose.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Edinburgh*: Daniel MacDonald. *Gairloch*: Catherine Wyatt. *Inverness*: John Maton. *Longcot*: Samuel Cooper. *North Uist*: Iain Boyd. *Sidcup*: Jeremy Turnbull. *Staffin*: Carey Ross. *Tonbridge*: Heidi Playfoot. *Vatten*: Jayne-Anne Fleming.

Awards with Merit: *Dingwall*: Graham MacLeod. *Gairloch*: Donald Mackenzie. *Glasgow*: Callum Macpherson. *Haywards Heath*: Edwin Woodhams. *Sidcup*: Jemima Turnbull. *Staffin*: Neil A Matheson. *Stornoway*: Cirsty Gillies. *Swavesey*: Matthew Parish. *Trowbridge*: Nathan Broome.

Awards: *Barnoldswick*: Rebecca Ross, David J Martin. *Chippenham*: Jessica Salkeld. *Faringdon*: Philippa Sayers. *Glasgow*: Rebekah MacLeod. *Kyle*: Nathan Whear. *London*: Andrew Munns. *Swavesey*: Robert Parish.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Barnoldswick*: James Ross. *Dingwall*: Jane Mackenzie. *Edinburgh*: Annabelle MacDonald, Emma Norris. *Gairloch*: Andrew Mackenzie. *Glasgow*: Kenneth Macpherson. *Inverness*: Rebekah Maton. *Ness*: Johan MacInnes. *North Tolsta*: Mairi Campbell.

Awards with Merit: *Aberdeen*: Sarah Somerset. *Chippenham*: Rosie Salkeld. *Glasgow*: Sarah Macleod. *London*: Sam Munns. *Ness*: Joanna MacLean. *North Uist*: Eilidh Cameron. *Sidcup*: Joseph Turnbull. *Stornoway*: Eilidh Macleod, Ryan MacSween.

Awards: *Broadstairs*: Oliver Martin. *Haywards Heath*: Joseph Woodhams. *King's Lynn*: Susie Wiltshire. *Ness*: Joshua Acton, Kathryn Ferguson. *North Tolsta*: Scott Macleod. *Point*: Isla MacDonald.

Looking Around Us

Wages or a Gift?

“The Wages of Sin”, screamed the headline over a comment in *The Times* newspaper. The sin involved a long-term fraud by Bernard Madoff, an American who stole perhaps around \$50 billion from investors. He has been



Members of this year's Youth Conference

sentenced to 150 years in prison; he is already 71 years old; so he has no prospect of ever being released. Through this sentence, *The Times* believes, Madoff is receiving the appropriate wages for his sin.

Madoff's fraud had thousands of victims; he wronged them all. But when we use the word *sin*, we are thinking particularly about the wrong done against God. We may think of the long prison sentence as a result of God, in His providence, awarding Madoff the wages of his sins in this life. But that is by no means all the wages that God pays out to sinners; there are more serious wages to be paid out endlessly in hell – not just to those who have committed serious crimes with many victims – but to all who will not turn to God in faith and repentance. The Bible puts it like this: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

But the verse does not stop there; it goes on: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord". Jesus Christ is willing to give eternal life as a gift to sinners, even the chief of sinners (see 1 Timothy 1:15). But we cannot have it as wages; we cannot earn it; we can do nothing that can possibly deserve it.

But how is that gift possible? Because Jesus Christ took the sinner's place, which meant taking his wages. It means that Jesus Christ, the Son of God in human nature, died the death that sinners deserve. It means that everyone who believes in Him will never have to receive the wages of their sins. Instead they will receive, as a gift, real blessing from God in this life and perfect blessing for ever afterwards in heaven.

Price 70p