

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



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Contents

The Voice from the City of God	103
“My Life Is in the Lord’s Hand”	106
Romanism: Another Religion?:	
3. What Does It Teach About Man?	109
For Junior Readers – Lessons from the Life of John G Paton:	
33. The First Aniwán Church	111
From Genesis to Revelation:	
6. The New Testament	114
For Younger Readers:	
“Follow Me”	116
A Final Farewell:	
1. What You Need First	116
Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2008-09:	
Names for Exercise 2	119
Looking Around Us	120

Cover Picture: *A street scene in Chester.* See page 108.

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No 6

The Voice from the City of God

God has a city. If you lived in Old Testament times, you might think of it as Jerusalem. You might sing, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Psalm 87:3). And glorious things could indeed be spoken of a place where God's temple was, where the sacrifices were offered, and where everyone knew that God was present in a very special way. So you could think of Jerusalem as the centre of the Church of God.

Now there is no temple in Jerusalem; there is no longer any need for one, for Jesus Christ has offered Himself up to God. He took upon Himself the sins of a vast number of people and suffered all that was necessary so that they would not need to suffer themselves. His was the one perfect sacrifice; so no more sacrifices need to be offered. But you can still think of the city of God as a picture of His Church. And although no further sacrifices need to be offered, we do need to hear about the one effective sacrifice, which Christ offered. It is the duty of the Church of God (the city of God) to make known the gospel message – the truth about what Christ did in offering Himself up as a sacrifice to God.

Think of ministers as trumpeters on the walls of God's city. Outside these walls are multitudes of people, all of them unconverted. Some of them come close enough to the walls of the city to hear the sound of the trumpets; most of them would never dream of coming anywhere near them. But that is to miss what could do them a great deal of good, for time *and* for eternity.

What do I mean? God has sent ministers with a message to those who are outside the city, to those who are still unconverted. But very few of them have any interest in listening to that message, even although it is absolutely critical to where they will spend eternity. Unless sinners will hear the gospel message and believe on the Saviour who is proclaimed in that message, they cannot escape a lost eternity – they cannot get to heaven.

It is conscience that makes some people stay near the city. Conscience does not shout so loudly that they obey the gospel message and enter the city, but it stops them from going away altogether. It is good that they do not go away but no one can expect to get to heaven unless they enter the city.

What ministers are doing when they blow their trumpet is calling sinners to come to Christ (that is, to believe in Him) and so enter the city of God.

But there is another note that they blow on their trumpets, and that is a note of warning. That, of course, is the sort of note sounded in the last paragraph – a warning about the danger of staying away from Christ, even although you may keep coming to church and listen to the gospel message. No one can be safe unless they do actually believe in the Saviour whom God has appointed. Yet the main note of warning is the fact of sin – that it is a very serious evil, that it is offensive to God, and that it deserves eternal punishment. It is the perfectly-holy God who created mankind; so He has authority over us and has every right to expect us to obey Him. Not to obey is seriously wrong; to sin against God “is an evil thing and bitter” (Jeremiah 2:19). And “the wicked shall be turned into hell” (Psalm 9:17).

Many people outside the city do not like to hear such things. They accept that there is some difference between right and wrong, but they want to leave God out of the matter. They do not want to think that they must appear before Him at last to account for how they spent their time in this world. Did they spend their lives in sin, to God's dishonour, or did they live to God's glory? Did they go on defying God's authority, or did they turn to Him in repentance? Did they turn away in unbelief from the sound of the trumpet or did they listen to it and come to Christ? The answers to such questions will point the way to either hell or heaven. Yes, these matters are absolutely critical to our eternal well-being.

Sin is indeed a reality in the life of every human being. And ministers must speak about sin and its consequences if they are to be faithful to those who hear them. It may be much more pleasant for a sinner to listen to the kind of trumpet which never sounds what seems to be a jarring note about sin. But it is not safe. If no clear note of warning about sin is sounded, then the gospel note does not really mean anything. The gospel brings a message of deliverance from the evil and the guilt of sin. What a wonderful sound it should be to a sinner to hear that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)! For someone who knows that he deserves to perish for ever in hell, what a wonderful sound to hear the announcement of a way of salvation should be! It is a way provided by God Himself, so that the sinner will not perish but go to heaven.

Think of Lydia listening to Paul – a most skilful trumpeter. We do not know what exactly he said to the women who had gathered for prayer by the riverside. Yet we can safely assume that he spoke in some way about sin and salvation, but we do know that the Lord opened Lydia's heart so that she

attended to what Paul was saying. She believed on Christ and entered the city. Eternal life was now hers and she went to heaven when she died.

Shortly afterwards there was an earthquake which terrified the Philippian jailer. It is most unlikely he had ever been near the city of God, but among his prisoners that night were Paul and Silas. He came to them with that vital question: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). How did they respond? They blew the gospel trumpet from the walls of the city; they told him: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". He did believe on Jesus; he too entered the city and was safe.

But why do so many stay outside the city? The answer is that they have sinful hearts and they think they will be much happier if they stay outside. Satan does all in his power to encourage them to stay where they are; he was a liar from the beginning and you can be sure *all* his temptations are deceits.

The fact is that every sinner who enters the city gets a new nature. Part of God's saving work is to send the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of sinners. Then they no longer delight in sin but begin to love holiness. They no longer find His commandments restrictive but begin to see that they are "holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). When sinners are outside the city, Satan and their friends do all in their power to convince them that the city is very unattractive, and their own unbelieving hearts are easily influenced by such myths. But let a sinner get inside the city and he soon realises that it really is attractive; he would never think of leaving it. And he never will.

We must notice another of Satan's lies: You don't need to hurry; there is lots of time to get into the city. He has had thousands of years of experience in trying to keep sinners out of the city and he has developed tremendous skill in doing so. He knows that it would not be good tactics to tempt some to go too far from the city. Their consciences might shout too loudly. They might get a fright, like the jailer in Philippi, and be more ready to listen to the gospel trumpet. He is content to leave them coming to church, perhaps even listening to the sermons they hear and reading a little of the Bible and saying their prayers. But he knows that he will succeed with them if only he keeps them from feeling a sense of urgency, if only he can keep them from taking seriously what God says: "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). You have no time to spare.

Yes, God has spoken wonderful things about His city. We are to believe Him. After all, it is *God* who has spoken. So if you are still outside the city, ask God to give you a new heart, so that you will want to enter the city – and above all, so that you will begin to trust the king of the city, Jesus Christ. Then you will be able to sing, with your whole heart, what is as true today as ever: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Psalm 87:3).

“My Life Is in the Lord’s Hand”

Daniel M’Master was a godly man. He lived in Scotland at a time when it was very dangerous to be a follower of Christ. It was the time of the Covenanters, when good people were persecuted just because they wanted to worship God in the way that He has appointed.

Daniel lived in a very lonely place called Blairfoot, in the south of Scotland. Other godly people often came to his house to read the Bible and pray together and also to speak about the things which mattered most to their souls. Some of them were men who had to leave their homes, as they were afraid that soldiers would come to arrest them because of what they believed. Indeed Daniel himself sometimes had to wander about the loneliest areas round his home and sleep at night in a cave or in some corner in the open air. But as Daniel’s house was itself in a lonely spot, these wanderers sometimes felt that it was reasonably safe to gather there.

In January 1685 Daniel was in bed with a fever. Although this was about the worst time of persecution, good men who were hiding in the area of Blairfoot used to come to visit the sick man. They would pray together and talk. And Daniel, ill though he was, would feel encouraged.

One day a number of godly people had gathered at Blairfoot. They could never be sure when a company of soldiers might come riding through the district looking for Covenanters like themselves; so they took their normal precaution of stationing one of them as a lookout to warn the others of any signs of danger. It was a wise precaution; at that time 50 soldiers were roaming the countryside. And when an informer named Muncie heard about the gathering at Blairfoot, he hurried away to tell the soldiers, expecting to be well paid for the information. The lookout saw the soldiers approaching and rushed into the house to warn the people. But they could not abandon Daniel; they knew that his illness would not protect him from arrest, or even death if the soldiers wanted to kill him. So his friends wrapped him up in his bedclothes and carried him as quickly as they could to a nearby cave.

But Muncie was not the only informer around. Indeed it turned out that one of the men who had gathered at Blairfoot was only pretending that he wanted to worship God with the Covenanters. This man set out to tell the soldiers that the people they were looking for were now in the cave. But soon afterwards another man left the cave. He called at a smithy not far away, where a blacksmith worked – putting new shoes on horses’ hooves, for instance. There he was told the truth about the man who left the cave before him – he was actually a wolf in sheep’s clothing. This second informer was sure now to be on his way to find the soldiers and direct them to the cave.

The Covenanter rushed back to the cave to warn his friends. They decided to separate into two groups; one was to carry Daniel in the direction of a place called Durisdeer. The other hoped to draw the soldiers away from Daniel’s party; they went towards some boggy ground, where soldiers on horses would find it very difficult to follow them. But the soldiers also split up into two groups, to follow both parties of Covenanters.

One of the Covenanters who fled to the boggy ground tried to hide in a narrow trench beside a stream. A soldier noticed him but showed unusual sympathy; after he had allowed the others in his troop to get ahead of him, he went over to where the Covenanter was lying. “Friend,” the soldier told him, “I know you are one of the party whom we are pursuing; but I do not want to reveal you. Creep farther into the hole, and do not stir till the danger is past.”

The party carrying Daniel were, of course, making very slow progress and the soldiers were easily catching up on them. It was clearly impossible for Daniel to escape, but perhaps the others could get away. This was perfectly obvious to Daniel himself and he insisted that they leave him and run for their lives. His friends brought him to a cave whose mouth was hidden and they left him there; then they fled. Nothing more is known about what happened to any of the other Covenanters; so it is assumed that they all got away safely. But the soldiers’ dogs caught Daniel’s scent and he was dragged from his hiding place without mercy. The soldiers carried him to Durisdeer, where they spent the night.

Someone has applied to Daniel the words of 1 Peter 4:12, saying: “He did not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which was to try him, as though some strange thing had happened unto him”. He had heard about many other Covenanters, some of whom he knew, who had been killed for holding to the same beliefs as himself. So he now fully expected to be put to death just like them. In any case, the soldiers told him that night to prepare for death, because he was to be killed the next day. He clearly had a strong trust in God’s faithfulness, for he answered them perfectly calmly: “If my life must go for His cause, I am willing. God will prepare me.” It should not surprise us to learn that, during the night which followed, Daniel enjoyed close communion with God. So he believed that God was supporting him in his time of trouble and he felt very happy. Indeed some of the soldiers desired to die like him and some felt convicted in their hearts before God.

The next day the soldiers began to carry Daniel away. But after some time they stopped; it seems that they found it too much effort to carry him any farther and they decided to kill him there and then. First they asked him many questions, but Daniel refused to answer them. They also accused him

of many things which they claimed he had done wrong, but he was able to deny everything. Then they told him that he must die if he would not accept that the King had authority, not only over the ordinary affairs of the country, but also over the Church. But Daniel told the officer in charge of the troops: "That is what I cannot do, but I submit very cheerfully to the Lord's disposal as to my life".

The officer then asked: "Do you not know that your life is in my hand?"

"No, sir, I know that my life is in the Lord's hand and, if He sees good, He can make you the instrument to take it away."

Daniel was allowed to kneel and pray briefly. Then he spoke very seriously and solemnly to the officer in charge of the troops, trying to impress on him the wickedness of the work in which he was involved – it was doing such serious damage to the Church of God. Yet the officer went ahead with the evil deed he had in mind. But before he gave the instruction to four soldiers to raise their muskets and shoot, Daniel sent up one last petition to heaven which everyone could hear. "Lord," he prayed, "Thou broughtest Daniel [in the Bible] through many trials and has brought me, Thy servant, hither to witness for Thee and Thy cause. Into Thy hands I commit my spirit and hope to praise Thee through all eternity." Soon the shots were fired and Daniel's soul escaped to heaven. There, we can be sure, he is praising God – and will do so to all eternity.

Just two years later, a young man was ordained minister of a church in Chester. He was Matthew Henry, later to become well known for six large volumes explaining the Bible. He may never have heard of Daniel M'Master, but Henry's answer to the question, What is it to be truly religious? describes M'Master perfectly. To be truly religious, says Henry, is "to cast all our cares upon God and to commit all our ways and works to Him, with an assurance that He will care for us". It is to refer ourselves and all our concerns "to God, and to His will and wisdom," with complete submission to what He decides. This is how Daniel reacted to the situation he found himself in. He submitted readily to God's will, because he knew that God is perfectly wise and perfectly good, and so he could trust God in everything.

"To be truly godly", Henry says again, "is to have our wills melted into the will of God in everything". It is to be fully reconciled to all the ways that, in His providence, God orders things – both for ourselves and for others. "It is to be satisfied that all is well that God does." "Fears are hereby silenced, and hopes kept up." And so, like Daniel, anyone who is truly godly can be happy. He need not worry; his mind is "filled with pleasing prospects" – in Daniel's case, no doubt, filled especially with pleasing prospects of heaven, in spite of the horrible death that he was to endure.

Romanism: Another Religion?

3. What Does It Teach About Man?

Rev D W B Somerset

In the previous article, which appeared in April, we considered what Romanism teaches about God. We saw from the Roman Catholic doctrine of God and of Mary that there are good reasons for regarding Romanism as a different religion from biblical Christianity. The next question that we may ask about Romanism, as about any religion, is: What does it teach about man?

The question of what a religion teaches about man opens up a vast field, but one fundamental aspect to consider is: How is man's nature related to God's? Is there any resemblance between them? Is there perhaps even the possibility of communion between man and God? Or is God so different from us, or so far above us, that there can be no common ground or meeting-place? Is it as impossible for God to commune with man as it is for man to be friendly with molecules? This is essentially the question of whether man is made in the image of God – whether there is any likeness between man and God at all. Going even further, could God become man? Is it possible that the Word might be made flesh and dwell among us (John 3:14)?

To this question, Islam would emphatically answer, “No! Allah is transcendent; man and God are utterly different; we can have no real knowledge of him or friendship with him; we were not made in his image.” Christians, on the other hand, reply that man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), but that the moral image was lost through sin, and only the ruins remain. The obstacle to communion is not the gulf between us by creation, but the gulf that has come about by sin. At first sight, Rome would seem to give exactly the same answer to this question, but, as so often, we find that a fundamental difference emerges when we look more closely.

The Church of Rome acknowledges that man was made in the image of God, but when she explains what she means, it turns out to be something subtly different. This is clearly brought out if we consider the doctrine of *original sin*. The doctrine of original sin teaches that we are guilty on account of Adam's sin, and also that our natures are utterly corrupted as a result: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9); “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5); “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psalm 58:3); “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way . . . their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they

have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips" (Romans 3:10-13).

The result of corruption is that we have "concupiscence", or wrong desire, in our hearts. This is the evil that is continually welling up: "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders . . . all these evil things come from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). This is the "inordinate affection [that is, desire], evil concupiscence, and covetousness" that is to be put to death (Colossians 3:5). The things that we are desiring may be lawful, but the sin lies in the discontent with which we desire them. The desire is "inordinate" (immoderate, excessive, intemperate, disorderly) and it is in opposition to God: "the carnal mind . . . is not subject to the law of God" (Romans 8:7).

This is what the Tenth Commandment speaks of: "Thou shalt not covet". What is forbidden in this Commandment is not just the conscious desire after sinful things, but the very beginnings of that desire in the heart. The conscious desire is already condemned in the other Commandments. Coveting one's neighbour's wife is adultery, already forbidden in the Seventh Commandment. Coveting one's neighbour's house is stealing, already forbidden in the Eight Commandment. But the Tenth Commandment goes deeper; it looks at the very first motion or impulse in the soul: "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (James 1:15). In Romans 7 Paul speaks about his conversion. It was because of the Tenth Commandment: "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (verse 7). The Holy Spirit used the Tenth Commandment to expose the fountain of sin in his heart. And this sense of sin continued all his Christian life, and it is a part of every Christian life. Every Christian has to confess that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit" (Gal 5:17), and to say with Paul, "When I would do good, evil is present with me" (Rom 7:21).

Now what does the Church of Rome do with this doctrine? Her first trick, or rather Satan's first trick, is to say that the guilt of Adam's sin is taken away in baptism. In this way a substantial part of our guilt is neatly disposed of, and the way is prepared for the Romish doctrine of salvation by works. If we are not held guilty on account of Adam's sin, then there is only the problem of our own sins, and if this problem can be minimized then we might be able to earn heaven by our own works. This is the idea that Satan is aiming at.

So, having got rid of the guilt of Adam's sin, the next thing is to get rid of the idea that we have inherited a corrupt nature from him. This is done as follows. According to Rome, when Adam was created, he had the same "concupiscence" in his soul that we now find in ours. But God put a supernatural restraint upon it, so that it did not trouble him. Yet, when he sinned,

the supernatural restraint was removed, and the natural “concupiscence” started to well up. So concupiscence, according to Rome, is part of our created nature. It is not in itself sinful; it is not something we have to repent of, or be ashamed of. It is just an infirmity, like feeling tired or sick. In this way, a further, very substantial part of our sin is subtly disposed of by the Church of Rome.

So, according to Rome, sin consists simply in thoughts and acts of sin, while the fountain of sin in the heart is denied. The whole of our background sin, our sinful nature, has been got rid off! The effect of this is to change the practical nature of religion drastically. The Roman Catholic is taught to think infinitely better of himself than he ought. He does not have to acknowledge and mourn over the continual sinfulness that is in his heart. He is taught to ignore it. Provided he can abstain from sinful actions and grossly sinful thoughts for a while, he thinks that he has not sinned. He has no continual need of the blood of Christ. He starts to think in terms of perfection and merit. He does not realise that he sins all the time. This makes a great practical difference. God will not despise “a broken and a contrite heart” (Ps 51:17) but, according to his religion, the Roman Catholic does not need to repent of most of his sins.

To tie this in with the image of God: if Adam was created with a natural concupiscence, then he was not really created in the image of God in knowledge, righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10). So while Rome professes to believe that Adam was created in the image of God, she does not really do so. It is surprising that a change in what appears comparatively to be a less important doctrine should so completely alter the religious life. This is why we have to look at the reality of what a religion teaches and not just the words.

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

33. The First Aniwan Church

It was quite some time before Paton brought up the subject of a church building on Aniwa. He liked to train the people to do things for themselves rather than just provide things for them, and this included church and school buildings. Paton and his teachers used to go from village to village, teaching and speaking to the people wherever they could: by the roadside, under the shade of a tree, in the public ground of the village. The old mission house was used for all sorts of meetings including church services.

But the time came when Paton felt it was possible to build a church; there were now enough people interested in the cause of Christ. He called a meeting and carefully explained his plans for how he thought they should build a church. Paton explained some important things to them. No one would be paid for the work they did on the church. It would be for the use of all the islanders. The church was to be used for the worship of God, and for nothing else. He told them that God would be pleased with any materials they could bring to help build the church. He also told them that they must not begin until they had divided the work among them and made sure they would have enough materials to complete it. He said he would give help and advice in directing the work and would also provide rope and nails which he had brought with him to Aniwa.

Meeting after meeting was held throughout the island with long speeches from the different chiefs and various other men; accompanied with lots of tomahawk-waving and club-banging to emphasise important points. Everyone agreed to forget past quarrels and a new friendliness developed between the islanders as they planned how they would build the church. There was only one chief and his village who refused to join in building the church.

Once the different chiefs and villages had agreed on the plans, they all set to work. They looked for trees and cut them down; they built walls; they sank holes for the supporting trees. The work went on well and peacefully, with no serious hold-ups. One young man who was working on the roof fell to the ground and was badly stunned. But as soon as he became conscious again, he jumped up and shook himself saying, "I was working for Jehovah! He has saved me from being hurt." Then he climbed back onto the roof and cheerfully went on with his work. Soon the church was completed and the islanders were delighted with their church, as was Paton.

But shortly after it was finished a great hurricane passed over the island and the church collapsed to the ground, in spite of all the precautions they had taken to make it as strong as possible. The people were devastated; but then one of the main chiefs rallied the people together and said: "Let us not weep like boys over their broken bows and arrows! Let us be strong and build a yet stronger church for Jehovah."

First they agreed to spend ten days repairing their own homes and salvaging what food they could from their damaged crops. Then they came together to start work on the church. They sang and prayed to God, asking Him for His blessing on the work, and then started clearing the rubble of the ruined church. They kept what they could to use again and threw away the damaged, useless materials.

In the meantime Paton went to visit the one chief who was still determined

not to get involved. Paton spoke to him and personally invited him to join in the work. He explained to the chief that it was God's house for all the people of Aniwa and, if he and his people did not help, the other islanders might say they had no right to use it. The chief listened to Paton and at last agreed to come and help.

The work went well with every village doing their bit, but there was one problem. They needed one large tree for one of the main supports for the roof. Men had been scouring the forest looking for a large-enough tree but not one could be found – all the good ones had already been used.

One morning they were all woken up at dawn by men shouting and singing. Paton looked out to find out what was going on and could see a procession of men. They were being led by the chief who had most recently joined the work; he was singing and dancing at the front. The men coming behind him were carrying a large, black tree to the church. The chief had taken the roof-tree from his own house and was gifting it to the church. It was black because of the soot from the fires burning inside his house over the years. The rest of the people did not want this dirty, old tree in their new church especially when it stood next to the clean, fresh wood which had newly been cut. But Paton thanked the chief and accepted his gift, encouraging him to come to the church to worship under his own roof-tree. The church could now be completed.

What an example the people of Aniwa are to us today! Many of them had believed the gospel message and had come to love Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They showed their new faith by their actions. They listened to their minister and followed his advice. And they were prepared to work and to make personal sacrifices for God by giving of their belongings and time to build the church.

We have to ask ourselves two things: first, have we come to know Christ as our Saviour? And, second, do we show our faith in Him and love for Him by giving of our belongings and time to His cause? You might ask, What can I give to help God's cause? You might not have money to give to the church, or to poor people that you know. But I am sure you have opportunities to give of your time to others – maybe by doing something for older people who live near you or even by helping your parents around the house.

God doesn't need anything from us, of course – He can do everything He desires, without getting anything from us. But God is pleased to see us giving to His cause something of what He has given us. The Apostle Paul wrote to the new Christians in the Church at Corinth: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

S M Campbell

From Genesis to Revelation

6. The New Testament

This series is intended to provide an overview of the Bible. In the last section we took a quick look over those parts of the Old Testament which date from the time of David onwards. This is the final article in the series.

You may wonder when I am going to come to the New Testament. But the Old Testament is around two and a half times as long; it lays the foundation for what is revealed in the New Testament; and it is perhaps less familiar to you. Obviously the great subject of the New Testament is Christ, the Son of God, who became man – and His work in this world, why He carried out that work, and what He is doing now as the ascended Saviour in heaven. But the great subject of the *Old* Testament also is Christ; the important point is that He is so much more clearly made known in the New. Yet by taking both Testaments together, we have a much more complete picture than in either on its own.

The Gospels are not strictly a biography of Jesus; we are told almost nothing, for instance, about the time between His birth and when He began His public ministry. Everything is focused on His purpose in coming into the world: to save sinners. He came to suffer and to die, because the wages of sin is death. His was the only sacrifice that could really take away sin. Which was why John the Baptist, His forerunner, pointed Him out and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). All the lambs and other sacrifices offered in Old Testament times were pointing forward to Him. In this verse we see that such types were fulfilled in Christ, but there are many verses in the Gospels which tell us that various prophecies about Him also were fulfilled.

Not only was Christ's death important; so also was His life and the perfect obedience He offered to the law of God. God demands that we keep His law perfectly. So if a sinner is to get to heaven, not only must he have a substitute to take his place and die for him, he must also have a substitute to keep God's law on his behalf. Christ has done all this; He is a complete Saviour. The whole Bible makes plain that we are to look to Him for salvation.

Another great feature of the Gospels is Christ's teaching, both directly and through parables. He had come as a Prophet, to reveal the mind of God to sinners. Yet, at that time, most of His clearest teaching was reserved for the disciples, who were to proclaim His teaching much more widely after His death. We might have expected that, when Christ was in the world, everyone would have believed on Him. But while some people did so, most rejected Him. This shows us how strong is the power of unbelief in the human soul;

our nature is fallen and we are unwilling to come to Christ. It needs divine power, the power of the Holy Spirit, to make sinners willing to believe in the Saviour. As John's Gospel teaches us (7:37), the Holy Spirit was not then given – not until after Jesus rose from the dead.

Now we must be clear that throughout the whole of history, since God first revealed Himself in the Garden of Eden, the Holy Spirit was at work in the heart of every sinner who believed. But not much was yet revealed about Him, and His work was restricted to a small part of the world. It was after the resurrection of Christ that the Holy Spirit was given to the whole world.

When the tongues of fire came down on the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, it was a sign of the Holy Spirit being given to the Church. Soon afterwards it was made clear to Peter, and through him to the rest of Christ's followers, that the good news of salvation were to be taken to the whole world; they were no longer to be confined to just one people, the Jews. After Peter was commanded in a vision to eat unclean animals – something that had been forbidden under the laws of Moses – it was understood that some of these laws were no longer binding. In particular, God's people no longer needed to obey the ceremonial law, which took to do with ceremonies such as sacrifices. It was also understood that Gentiles like Cornelius were to be full members of the Church of God.

The Acts of the Apostles focuses especially on Peter at first, and later on Paul, and tells us how they and others began in Jerusalem, before going much further afield, to preach the gospel – the good news about Jesus Christ. Their preaching was applied by the Holy Spirit to many who listened to it; large numbers of sinners were converted. Thus the Church of God was established, not only in Jerusalem, but in various cities and country districts in large parts of the Roman Empire and perhaps beyond.

As part of the process of establishing the Church, Paul and other Apostles began to write letters to individuals, to particular congregations, and to groups of believers scattered over wider districts. But these letters, or Epistles, were inspired by the Holy Spirit just as much as the Gospels – and the prophecies, the historical books, the Psalms and other writings of the Old Testament. So the Epistles belong to the whole Church in every generation. We in particular are to learn from them. Now that Christ has come and finished the work which was given Him to do, the Epistles are almost the final block of teaching that it pleased God to give to the world. There is only one other book in the Bible, Revelation, which is mostly taken up with prophecies of what was then future, prophecies which stretch on to the end of the world. And this last Book in the Bible closes with a view of heaven.

The whole aim of the Bible is to teach sinners what they need to know if

they are to escape a lost eternity, live out their time in this world to the glory of God, and be prepared to spend eternity with Him in heaven. May we all benefit by the Bible in this way!

Jesus told the Jews of His time: “*Search* the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). He was thinking of the Old Testament, for the New was not then written. Let us remember His words, for they apply to the New Testament also. The whole Bible testifies of Christ, and so we may find eternal life in it. It is our duty, not only to *read* the Scriptures, but also to study them. They are a wonderful treasure, which we should do our utmost to understand, depending on the Holy Spirit as we study them.

For Younger Readers

“Follow Me”

One of Jesus' disciples was called Matthew. His job was to collect money for the government.

Other disciples like Peter and Andrew, James and John went out in their boats to catch fish. Perhaps when they were taking their fish away to sell, they had to pay some money to Matthew.

But one day Jesus passed by while Matthew was at work. He said to Matthew: “Follow Me”.

What did Matthew do? He obeyed. He left everything at once and followed Jesus. He would go wherever Jesus went.

Does Jesus say to you: “Follow Me“?

Yes, He does. He wants you to do what He tells you. And He wants you to trust in Him to take away all your sins.

A Final Farewell

1. What You Need First

J H Thornwell

Thornwell was an American minister who spent some years as the head of South Carolina College. In 1844 he addressed the group of students who had reached the end of their course in the College; his subject was Christ's atonement. This is the first of two articles which, in edited form, contain the last part of his address.

I have brought this subject before you because of how important it is in relation to the glory of God, and also to the well-being of the human race.

The cross of Christ is the centre of the Christian system. From it we may learn about the character of our Judge, the evil of sin, our present condition and the prospects which await us beyond the grave. The scheme of redemption is a bright and glorious page in the history of God's works – a new book sealed with seven seals, containing the most important lessons. It speaks of Jehovah in loftier strains than the seraph's heart had ever reached or the seraph's tongue had ever uttered, until the Lion of the tribe of Judah prevailed to unloose the seals, to reveal the mysteries, and invited the nations to behold their God.

His glory is displayed in redemption with such a lustre that all other revelations of His name are as the feeble light of the stars in comparison with it. Creation proclaimed His power, providence His goodness, conscience His justice, and hell His vengeance. These were like so many stars, differing from each other in glory, in which we might see all that could be known of God. But when Jesus came, the Sun of Righteousness arose, darkness was scattered, and the light of God's glory – reflected from the face of His Son – darted its rays through heaven, earth and hell. The cross became the centre of universal attraction; it displayed God's perfections in a unique combination; it was the source at once of rapture to angels, of terror to the lost and of hope to mankind.

The death of Christ is without doubt the most sublime event in the history of time or the records of eternity. And in what a light it presents the evil of sin! What a commentary upon its guilt and depravity is given by the groans, agony and anguish of the Son of God! The cross proclaims it, in living letters, to be the abominable thing which God hates. God spared not His own dear Son – holy, harmless and undefiled as He was – when He occupied the position of the guilty under the law. So we may be as fully assured, as if it were written in letters of fire upon the sky, that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die”. Learn to estimate the guilt of sin in the blood of the Lamb, and not in the deceitful reasonings of a corrupt heart. There, stripped of her flatteries, unmasked in her treachery, exposed in her temptations, she stands revealed in the hideous deformity of her nature – hateful to God and deadly to man. Her steps lead down to death, and her feet take hold on hell.

You are soon to enter on the active duties of life. The responsibilities of manhood are gathering around you, and you will soon go forth, no longer subject to the authority of tutors and guardians, but of your own masters.

Let me impress on you that the first, the indispensable, element of success in your future career must be sought in the favour of God. There is a Being who presides over the destinies of men and does “according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth”. His favour is

life; His loving-kindness is better than life. No one can withstand His indignation; no one can abide the fierceness of His anger; He compasses us about behind and before and understands all our ways; we are absolutely dependent upon Him for all that we have or are. Since all this is so, it is surely the utmost folly to look for prosperity in His dominions without His favour.

Can you expect enduring happiness when the curse of the Almighty hangs over you, when the awful leprosy of sin is wasting your soul, and the edict has gone forth dooming you to banishment from God? What prospect is before you when, at every step, you are surrounded by a power which you cannot resist, which is provoked to vengeance by your carelessness and contempt? No doubt, your bosoms are bounding with hope; the future seems full of promise; and you are eager to enter the next stage of life. But be assured that the first care which should demand your attention is the salvation of the soul. What you first need, most pressingly need, is to have your conscience purged from dead works by the blood of Him who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God.

It is no time to settle the less-important concerns of this life when your souls are in danger every hour – when the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against you, a burning hell is beneath you and a terrible eternity before you. Be exhorted to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. See to the needs of your immortal souls, and the needs of this life will not be neglected. The great subject of concern with me is the salvation of your souls. I am sure that if you begin your career with God's favour, His blessing will follow you at every step. And though His way may often be in the whirlwind of adversity or the deep waters of affliction, He will eventually make all things work together for your good. I shall feel that you are committed to the guidance of a Friend who will never leave you nor forsake you, who knows your interests and is able to provide for them.

But my feelings will be very different for those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of His Son. For such there is no safety. At home or away, awake or asleep, in sickness or health, in poverty or riches, the curse of God follows you. There is no escape from His hands. And, earnestly as I could wish that all may be well with you, I must constantly feel that nothing is well – that nothing can be well – until you are sprinkled with the blood of atonement. I am afraid to trust you in the world, for the prince of darkness has fearful power in it, and may use it to make your heart still harder in sin. I shall dread to hear of your death, lest your dying hours should fill your friends with gloom and be too sad a pointer to the awful destiny which follows. And, above all, my feelings are insupportable when I remember that I must meet you at the judgement seat of God and be a swift witness against you.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2008-09

Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Auckland:* Jonathan van Kralingen. *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin. *Bonar Bridge:* Sandy and Elizabeth Campbell. *Bulawayo:* Prudence Chibonda, Khulekani, Shylet and Sithandazile Dube, Sukoluhle Khumalo, Sarah Mabhumu, Wendy Maphala, Sothile and Talent Moyo, Pinky Ncube. *Chesley:* Jenny and Martha Bouman, Rachel Winkels, Audrey Zekveld. *Dingwall:* Alistair Mackenzie. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan, Jonathan MacDonald. *France:* Julia Davenel. *Gisborne:* Herman and Trudy Haringa, Louise van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Catherine Freeke, Neil Gillies. *Grafton:* Matthew White. *Holland:* Peter Bakker. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Catherine Schouten. *King's Lynn:* Joanna Wiltshire. *London:* Elizabeth Munns. *Longcot:* Lucy Cooper. *North Uist:* Christina Macdonald. *Portree:* Rachel M Mackinnon. *Queensland:* Miriam Brigden. *Sidcup:* Constance and Rupert J Turnbull. *Sydney:* Andrew Marshall. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

Intermediate Section: *Auckland:* Amy Thomas. *Barnoldswick:* Robert Ross. *Bulawayo:* Natash Makweza, Maria Maphosa, Nonhlanhla Nkomo. *Chesley:* Jacob Zekveld. *Dingwall:* Andrew and Ruth M Macleod. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan, Isla Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie, Mairi Wyatt. *Gisborne:* Finlay Cramp, Anne-Marie Geuze, Heidi Haringa, Kirsten van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Donna Chisholm, Kate Gillies, Rachel and Ruairidh Macleod, Peter Macpherson. *Grafton:* Chloe van Dorp, Cameron White. *Haywards Heath:* Hannah Woodhams. *Holland:* Jelle Bakker. *Inverness:* Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton, Peter Schouten. *London:* Amy van Kralingen. *Longcot:* Ruth Cooper. *Luton:* Stephen Kingham. *North Tolsta:* Lucy A MacLeod, Sean Macleod. *North Uist:* Margaret Cameron, Fraser MacDonald, John A Macdonald. *Peasmarsh:* Alasdair Bailey. *Queensland:* Mary Brigden. *Sengera:* Finlay Mogari, Eric Onwong'a Mosoti, Vane Omweno, Ondari Ongang'o, Dick Ontiri, Mary Onwong'a, Drusillah Oreng. *Sidcup:* Lucy Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Sarah Gillies, Lauren Macdonald. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Swavesey:* Sarah Parish. *Swindon:* Alison Tugwell. *Sydney:* James Marshall, Alexander van Dorp. *Trowbridge:* Joanna Broome. *Vatten:* Sabrina Annand, Robert Ross. **Junior Section:** *Barnoldswick:* David J Martin, Rebecca Ross. *Bulawayo:* Kelly Dube, Ashley Ereck, Blessing Mlozi, Sasizani and Sibonokuhle Moyo, Ntando, Sandile and Sizo Ncube, Tariro Zivaishe. *Chippenham:* Jessica Salkeld. *Connecticut:* Rachel Mack. *Dingwall:* Graham MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Daniel Macdonald. *Farringdon:* Philippa Sayers. *Gairloch:* Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. *Gisborne:* Muriel Cramp, William Haringa, Emma van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Callum Macpherson. *Grafton:* Chelsie and Jackie Cameron, Abraham Wallis, Alexandra van Dorp. *Holland:* Gerben Bakker, Nathalie MacDonald. *Inverness:* John Maton. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *London:* Andrew Munns. *Longcot:* Samuel Cooper. *North Uist:* Iain Boyd. *Queensland:* Rachel Brigden. *Sengera:* Brian and Josinah Aboki, Bonface Ang'asa, Kembero Kembwaro, Macdonald Mataru, Deric Mokaya, Justine Mokua, Deric Mokaya, Winner Momonyi, Christine Mosoti, Christine and Donald Nyabuto, Bernard Nyakwara, Mary Nyamwembe, Adams Nyang'au, Joseph Obiye, Christine Ogoro, Josephat Ogoti, Priscah Onduso, Wycliffe Oreng, Dolvine and Nyabonyi Orina, Rusiah Rabiki, Gideon Ratemo, Nehemiah Torori. *Sidcup:* Jemima and Jeremy Turnbull. *Staffin:* Neil A Matheson, Carey Ross. *Stornoway:* Cirsty Gillies. *Swavesey:* Matthew and Robert Parish. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot. *Sydney:* Keith Marshall. *Trowbridge:* Nathan Broome. *Vatten:* Jayne A Fleming.

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Levin Nyakundi, Rebecca Nyamao, Philes Nyandwaro, Donald Oganda, Catherine and Moraa Okeng'o, Moffath Omwancha, Brian Omweno, Mary Onderi, Isabella Ontiri, Calvin and Nancy Orina, Brian Osoro, Eduine Ratemo, Evans Torori. **Sidcup:** Henry and Joseph Turnbull. **Stornoway:** Eilidh Macleod, Ryan MacSween. **Sydney:** Duncan Marshall, Anna van Dorp.

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Looking Around Us

When Honesty Pays

Santiago Gori is a taxi driver in La Plata, a city in Argentina. After he had dropped off an elderly couple just a short distance from where he had picked them up, he found they had left behind a bag with £21 600 in it. What did he do with the money? He did the honest thing: he searched for his passengers and, when he found them a few days later, he returned the bag and the money.

Argentines are used to corruption at all levels of society and they found this an extraordinary story; they are so used to finding people acting dishonestly. Two young workers at an advertising agency set up a website to thank Mr Gori. Thousands of people have logged on to the site and hundreds of them have made donations totalling, a few weeks ago, £10 000. An Argentine abroad even promised, when he would return to his own country, to bring back a second-hand GPS receiver for Mr Gori's taxi.

Perhaps this story may encourage other people to be honest. The important thing to remember is that God always sees us, whatever we do. He knows if we deal fairly with other people, or if we take what does not belong to us.

Price 70p