

Insight Into



March / April 2021



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Insight Into

General Information

Insight Into is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, **Insight Into** seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

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MEDITATION

“What Think ye of Christ?”

“And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God”

(John 1:34).

Rev. H. Hofman

The question, *“What think ye of Christ?”* (Matthew 22:42), is particularly pressing when we approach the end of the Passion weeks again. Soon seven Passion sermons will have been read or preached once more. The Passion message is a very special preaching of Christ. Therein He is set forth as the Lamb of God, the guilt-assuming Surety of His people, and the Way, the Truth, and the Life by which lost sinners are reconciled with God. Dear friend, has this message reached you? Has it touched you deeply? Has it been received with the deep reverence and humility of a God-given faith? John has given a very detailed description of the ministry, but also of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus. He witnessed the baptism of Jesus, His many miracles, His personal teachings (Chapters 14-16), His High Priestly prayer, and His arrest, trials, crucifixion, and burial. The central message of his book is clear: Jesus Christ as the Son of God. John has selected certain events from the life of Jesus in which His deity is most strikingly evident. As such, his book is more *topical* than *chronological*. Everything in this message speaks of and points to the Son of God, who is the Word which became flesh and dwelt among us. *“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not”* (John 1:11). Nevertheless, He is and remains the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. The question at the end of the Passion season is pressing: *“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”* (Isaiah 53:1). The Son of God has again been proclaimed from heaven to be the One in whom the Father is well pleased. John speaks of Him in His prophetic, priestly, and kingly office. None of these offices can be missed in the work of meriting and applying salvation. The state and nature of the Mediator in His humiliation has again been expounded. He is the Bread of Life which has come down from heaven. Truly, at the end of the Passion season, we ought to reflect upon what many centuries before the prophet Isaiah already said: *“What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?”* (5:4a). I earnestly ask you to give an answer upon the question placed before you.

Washed up on the Beach

(Taken from *The Young People's Magazine*)

Rev. K. M. Watkins

We did not know what it was when we first saw it, washed up high on the beach after a stormy few days. Even when we came right up to it, we still did not recognize it, although we later discovered that it was not very unusual. It was a colony of goose barnacles, all attached by their long “necks” to a large piece of timber. The colony numbered many hundreds, but now that they had been out of the water for a time, they were all dead.

In a shipwreck, it might be a good idea to catch hold of some floating debris from the broken ship. When Paul’s boat sank off the coast of Melita, that is what those who could not swim did: “*Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship ... they escaped all safe to land*” (Acts 27:44). But for goose barnacles, their habit of sticking to driftwood floating in the sea is a dangerous policy. Once attached, they cannot remove themselves, so they just go where the driftwood goes, floating on the surface of the ocean, feeding on the plankton which they catch by waving their “legs” in the sea. This seems to work well enough for a time, but if a storm drives their adopted home onto a beach, they will be stranded and will die in the dry air.

It was sad to see so many dead creatures. But it illustrates something much more distressing. The stranded barnacles are a solemn picture of people who perish in their sins, without faith in Christ.

1. Goose barnacles *attach themselves to something* that passes by in the ocean currents. It might be to a piece of timber or to a piece of worthless plastic. This is what sinners do. They attach themselves to something in life that catches their attention.

Many people attach themselves to entertainments, such as sport, drama, films, music, and so on. They cannot stop themselves from latching on to such things. The celebrities and stars make a fortune out of their besotted

fans, but these deluded followers cannot let go. For other people, it is social media and its addictive need to know and be known. Instead of living in the real world, they live out their lives in the make-believe of distorted pictures and unbalanced accounts of life given by themselves and others. Some attach themselves to the most unwise friendships and relationships. Even though these connections rarely work for good, but almost always for harm, they cannot disentangle themselves. Then there are people whose covetous hearts drive them to seek money, prestige, and power. It does not matter how much of these they acquire, they always need more, even to their last breath.

2. Goose barnacles are actually *quite attractive*--not their long, rubbery necks, nor their actual bodies, but their pearl-white shells with yellow edges. Sinners too, although wedded to their sins in a spiritually ugly way, and altogether corrupt within, can nevertheless appear outwardly beautiful in the eyes of others.

Many sinners seek to lead quiet, peaceable, respectable, and dependable lives as caring family members and helpful neighbours. But that is only the outward shell. Underneath, their hearts are "*deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*" (Jeremiah 17:9), just like every other fallen sinner. And what of the unsightly neck? Careful and troubled about many things, and full of earthly cares, these sinners spend all their days in pursuit of some ideal life in this world, neglecting the true beauties of the spiritual world, in the loveliness of Christ and His grace.

Others seek to clothe themselves with religion, by which we mean false religion, any religion that is not the true religion of saving faith in Christ as revealed in Scripture. However well they may achieve the standards set by their religion, and however attractive their temples and rituals may appear to many, they can form no true protection for their souls. The ugly rubbery neck of pride shows what all the followers of false religion are attached to: their own self-righteousness. However zealously attached they are to their religious dogmas and duties, they are clinging to worthless pieces of flotsam. This is true of Roman Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Mormons, so-called Jehovah Witnesses, and all the rest.

3. When things are going well, the goose barnacles *seem to have everything*. Their chosen home carries them through the ocean, transporting them to the food they need in order to live. So it is with sinners. For a while, in their own eyes their chosen course of life seems to provide them with everything they need. Putting out the "legs" of their sinful desires, they feed on their interests and activities to their hearts' content. They are like the prodigal son in the far country, before his money, friends, and food came to an end.

It takes the grace of God, by the working of the Holy Spirit in the soul, to open a sinner's eyes, and show him that his godless sinful life cannot satisfy his soul's needs. "*Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*" (Isaiah 55:2). Across the whole ocean of worldliness, in its pleasures, profits, or promotions, there is nothing that can meet the needs of a never-dying soul. The prodigal's money, friends, and food all ended before "*he came to himself*" (Luke 15:17). Then his eyes were opened and he realized that he needed to repent and return to his father's house, casting himself on his mercy. So the sinner needs to be brought to see the emptiness of living only for this present world.

4. The goose barnacles are *not in control of the direction they are going in*. They are carried here and there, up and down, backwards and forwards, according to the winds, tides, and currents. Sinners are like this, too. Like barnacles in the sea, they wander aimlessly, driven to and fro by any current that carries them along. Without faith in Christ, they are "*like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed*" (James 1:6).

Sinners often think that they are in control of their lives. Indeed, that might be part of why they resist Christ, for they do not want to give up their perceived freedom to live in any way they please. This, they promise themselves, is their liberty. What they do not realize is that they are controlled by the sinfulness of their own hearts and the influences of the devil. The Jews rejected this when the Lord Jesus told them, "*Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*" (John 8:34). They said, "*We ... were never in bondage*" (verse 33). But like all sinners, they were slaves to their sins, driven up and down by their sinful desires.

5. In the end, the lives of the goose barnacles *ended in disaster*. The piece of lumber they had attached themselves to, solid enough in itself, was no help to them when storm and tide washed them up on the beach, leaving them to perish. So it is with sinners. However strong and sturdy their attachments may appear, and however well they may seem to serve them for a time, lives without Christ will eventually end in disaster. The broad way of sin, even though teeming millions travel along it, always ends in destruction if people persist in it.

For the eternal safety of our never-dying souls, we need something much firmer than a piece of wood or plastic to latch onto. We need a fixed and solid foundation that will never let us down. We need a solid rock that can be depended on in all weathers, whatever temptations and attacks are made upon it. We have such a foundation set before us in the gospel. God has said: "*Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried*

stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isaiah 28:16). This is a sure and steadfast foundation stone that has been tried and tested. Whoever believes on this rock shall never be forced into a hasty panic to find a better foundation, for it will never fail. “*And that Rock was Christ*” (1 Corinthians 10:4).



We must flee all our false hopes, for they are vain and useless when the storm of death comes. If we go on trusting in them, we will be washed up on the beach of a lost eternity, cast away in our unbelief. We must look to the power of the Holy Spirit to make us willing to let go of them. We must turn to Christ, as He is offered to us in the gospel as the one and only sure hope. “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The Founders of the American Republic stated explicitly that the promotion of the Christian religion in America, particularly via church attendance, is **essential** for the preservation of the country and the civil institutions of the government. For example, John Hancock, whose signature is so conspicuous and prominent on the *Declaration of Independence*, in his inaugural address as governor of Massachusetts, expressed to his fellow citizens:

“A due observation of the Lord’s Day is not only important to internal religion, but greatly conducive to the order and benefit of civil society. It speaks to the senses of mankind, and, by a solemn cessation from their common affairs, reminds them of a Deity and their accountability to the great Lord of all. Whatever may be necessary to the support of such an institution, in consistence with a reasonable personal liberty, deserves the attention of civil government” (Brown, Abram (1898), *John Hancock: His Book*, page 269).

Earthly Prospects Deceitful

John Newton

(1725-1807)

Oft in vain the voice of truth,
Solemnly and loudly warns;
Thoughtless, inexperienced youth,
Though it hears, the warning scorns:
Youth in fancy's glass surveys
Life prolonged to distant years,
While the vast, imagined space
Filled with sweets and joys appears.

Awful disappointment soon
Overclouds the prospect gay;
Some, their sun goes down at noon,
Torn by death's strong hand away:
Where are then their pleasing schemes?
Where the joys they hoped to find?
Gone for ever, like their dreams,
Leaving not a trace behind.

Others, who are spared awhile,
Live to weep o'er fancy's cheat;
Find distress, and pain, and toil,
Bitter things instead of sweet:
Sin has spread a curse around,
Poisoned all things here below;
On this base polluted ground,
Peace and joy can never grow.

Grace alone can cure our ills,
Sweeten life, with all its cares;
Regulate our stubborn wills,
Save us from surrounding snares:
Though you oft have heard in vain,
Former years in folly spent;
Grace invites you yet again,
Once more calls you to repent.

Called again, at length, beware,
Hear the Saviour's voice and live;
Lest He in His wrath should swear,
He no more will warning give:
Pray that you may hear and feel,
Ere the day of grace be past;
Lest your hearts grow hard as steel,
Or this year should prove your last.

“Envy, it tortures the affections, it vexes the mind, it inflames the blood, it corrupts the heart, it wastes the spirits; and so it becomes man's tormentor and man's executioner at once.”

~ Rev. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

“Holiness is not a merit by which we can attain communion with God, but a gift of Christ, which enables us to cling to Him, and to follow Him.”

~ John Calvin (1509-1564)

“In regards to this great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to men. All that the good Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book.”

~ Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)



“No Continuing City”

“For here have we no continuing city” (Hebrews 13:14).



Read: Hebrews 13:12-17

It applies to each one of us that we have no continuing city here. The king and the beggar, the rich and the poor, the wise and the foolish, the pious and those who do not serve God, it is true of all of us that we have no continuing city here, but one day must die. “*What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?*” (Psalm 89:48).

Even if they would promise us that we would live until the last day, then we would still have no continuing city, for also this earth with all its works shall perish. Could we only consider this truth in a right way, and often be praying with Moses: “*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*” (Psalm 90:12). Let us do whatsoever our hands find to do, “*for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, wither thou goest*” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Our time here is not long anymore. One day we will all go to our eternal home. If we love our soul, let us hasten for our life’s sake. Let us seek Christ and deliverance from the grave of sin.

Now there is still an inviting Jesus standing before us; the gate of the city of refuge is still open. Tomorrow it can be too late. Then the door can be forever locked.

Make haste for your life’s sake!

~ Taken from *Watch and Pray* by Exh. Wulfert Floor

“Few tremble at the Word of God. Few, in reading it, hear the voice of Jehovah, which is full of majesty.”

~ Rev. Robert Murray M’Cheyne (1813-1843)

Through the Alphabet with the Bible

Here are five verses from the Bible using the word search:

“I the LORD search the heart” (Jeremiah 17:10).

Precept: *“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me”* (John 5:39).

Promise: *“And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart”* (Jeremiah 29:13).

Prayer: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts”* (Psalm 139:23).

Encouragement: *“For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out”* (Ezekiel 34:11).

~ Submitted

“Believers are not hired servants, supporting themselves by their own work, but children maintained at their Father’s expense.”

Rev. Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

“There is nothing that can stand the touchstone of God’s justice. Christ is my all, and I am nothing.”

~ Rev. John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Lessons from the Fig Tree

“Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away”

(Matthew 21:19b).



Rev. E. Hakvoort

Looking for early ripened figs

The history in which the Lord Jesus cursed the fig tree is a well-known one. Yet, it might initially puzzle us somewhat, especially when we compare Scripture with Scripture and when we consider what we read about this same fig tree in Mark 11. We see that when Jesus came out of Bethany, He was hungry. It shows the Mediator in His human nature. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if He could find some fruits on it that He might eat of them.

However, when He came to the fig tree, He found nothing on it but leaves. Mark writes: *“For the time of figs was not yet”* (Mark 11:13). Yet, Jesus then said to the fig tree: *“Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.”* We might say, but Jesus knew that it was not the time of the figs. Why did He then curse this fig tree? Certainly the Lord knew that He would not find any fruit on the fig tree, for all things are known unto Him!

But there is more to say, since there is no unrighteousness in Christ! He has never done any sin, neither has He spoken this curse in anger. On the contrary! Although it was not yet the time of the full harvest, even in the springtime, there could be found on each fig tree some early ripened figs. Most of them would fall off and everybody could take and eat them. However, Jesus did not even find those early figs on the fig tree and that was a disappointment. That is the reason Jesus curses the fig tree and it withered immediately.

Lessons from the fig tree

Do we see the lessons in the fig tree? It shows us the image of a barren life, without spiritual fruits. It is the picture of a person on whose tree of life is not even found the smallest fruits of grace. And when we see this

in the light of Jesus being in the last week of His life, and on His way to Jerusalem to suffer and to die for all His children, then these touching words have even more depth.

Oh, how many callings have there come unto the people. How many prophets did the Lord already send them? But the fruit was that they have killed and stoned them. How many times did the Lord Jesus Himself speak unto the people? His desire was to gather them together as a hen gathereth her chickens. But the conclusion was so painful; they did not want that. They did not want Him to be King in their life. That is the reason they would soon crucify Him.

Certainly they would bring Him in Jerusalem with a loud cry: *“Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord”* (Mark 11:9). But their cry was superficial. They wanted a King, but not one to deliver them from their sins. No, they only wanted Him as King to deliver them from the consequences of sin, from the Romans and the persecutions. So, there were leaves of outward religion enough on their tree of life, but there were no true fruits of conversion and repentance.

Judgment upon the lack of fruit

The touching lesson in this fig tree is first, that where the Lord may expect fruit but doesn't find it, He will come with His judgment. And that judgment is the heavier after that if we have heard God's Word and experienced His callings. Young and old, how many callings did the Lord send us already in our life? In nature, for example, by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, and in Scripture, by all the sermons we have heard already. What have these callings done in our life? Have they given a fruit of repentance? Or do we just, like the Jews, rebel in our enmity against the Lord and His serious callings? That then this fig tree may warn us and urge us to seek the Lord while He may be found. That we then may ask Him to sanctify all the callings in our life and to bring us with all the callings in the right place before Him as a beggar at the throne of grace, seeing that there is no fruit of grace found in us, but that this can only come from Him.

No fruit in self

The second lesson of this fig tree is that there is no fruit in self. For these words are often used to express that there will never be a saving fruit in the life of God's children. There is a time in their life when the Lord gives His love in their heart and teaches them that they have sinned against all God's commandments, although they have a strong desire to keep all those commandments. They think so often that they can grow some spiritual

fruits of grace on the tree of their life.

Fruit from Christ

But then the Lord teaches them that there is no fruit found on us, in order to lead us to Christ who obtained all the fruits of salvation for His people. The words of Hosea 14:8 are also often added: *“From Me is thy fruit found.”* What a blessed message that is for one who has learned that he cannot bring any spiritual fruit forth anymore that is pleasing to the Lord. But when we may hear that the fruits of grace are only found in Christ, this comforts our mourning heart.

Let then the Lord take away all our fruits to give the fruits of Christ’s finished work, that we may know Him! Don’t you think so, my dear friends? There is no happier people than those who may learn this lesson. That they may look away from self and look unto Christ, who obtained a full salvation for such wicked sinners as they are. They see nothing in self, but everything in Him. And one day He will deliver them forever. Then their eternal fruit is found of Him.

“God will never come to His right unless we are totally reduced to nothing, so that it may be clearly seen that all that is laudable in us comes from elsewhere.”

~ *John Calvin* (1509-1564)

“Humility is the sweet spice that grows from poverty of Spirit.”

~ *Rev. Thomas Watson* (1620-1686)

“Certainly, if we are to believe what our eyes see, then the kingdom of Christ seems to be on the verge of ruin. But the promise that Christ will never be dragged from His throne but that rather, He will lay low all His enemies, banishes from us all fear.”

~ *John Calvin* (1509-1564)

The *Life* of CHRIST

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg

*H*is Father's honour was His delight and His life. Christ had come to do His Father's will and even said openly that He came not for Himself but for Him who sent Him. The Son kept not one part of His life for Himself; He took nothing from the time that His Father gave Him to be the second Adam. He surrendered His soul and body, and He sacrificed Himself to the Father for His Bride. Now I admit that the Son also looked to the future. He had been promised that He would receive His own as a bride, and that joy also drove Him to give up everything. Christ had the shame of it and wanted to die the accursed death on the cross to be rewarded with heavenly joy. Yet Christ was also concerned with the salvation of sinners, also with the joy presented to Him, for the honour of His Father. It was all sacrifice, everything for the Other, unselfish love for the Father and His own. What grace! Because He suffered so much and paid so much, nothing can go wrong in the ultimate outcome, and if He is our Surety, then everything is good.

With that life, Christ was not only our great Example when it comes to why we live, but also a Substitute for His own. He knew or committed no sin, yet was made a sin (offering), and that to make sinners the righteousness of God in Him. His life was perfectly meaningful and only He could say when looking back on His life that it was "finished." Are we already covered in His meaningful life? Did He become ours through faith? I mean that belief which is the opposite of doing and performing. The one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the wicked, is covered with His obedience.

"For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me" (Psalm 69:9).

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).



The Message of the Rainbow

Mr. Matthew Vogan

Have you seen lots of rainbows over the past several months? Many houses are displaying in their windows rainbows painted by children. Perhaps you cannot help noticing them as you go for walks. It has been happening all over the world. It was first started in Italy and Spain, and it has been called “The Rainbow Trail.”

Why are they doing this? They are using the rainbow as a symbol of hope during times of difficulty and trouble. Sometimes people use the rainbow in a very wrong way to make it a symbol of a lifestyle that God condemns. That makes those who love God doubly sad, because of the sin being promoted and because the rainbow is misused, being removed from its original meaning.

Who made the rainbow that we see in the sky? God, of course. Can you remember what the Bible says the rainbow means? It speaks of God’s promise never again to destroy the world by a flood. There is much more to the rainbow than a general symbol of hope in stormy times. God made it for a purpose and gave it a particular meaning. But the Bible speaks about the meaning of the rainbow in other places as well as in Genesis.

God says to Noah: *“I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth”* (Genesis 9:13-16).

God makes the rainbow special. He says it is *“My bow.”* God’s glory is shown in its beautiful bright colours that attract our attention. He is still working in all the things that He has made. They all point to the one who created them. It is also a special token or sign of His covenant. It helps remind us of His promise, as a covenant is something that contains promises.

It reminds us that God is faithful and keeps His promises. Perhaps someone made a promise to you, but then they forgot about it or things changed and they could not keep it. This does not happen with God. After thousands of

years, God is still keeping the promise He made to Noah. It is not because people are less sinful that God has not destroyed the earth by another flood, but only because of His promise.

Why does God call it a bow? It is like a bow without any arrows. It has no bowstring. That is a bow that cannot be fired at anyone. But have you thought about where it is pointing? It is pointing not down towards the earth but up towards heaven. It speaks of mercy and peace. It speaks not just of the mercy of the world being preserved but of grace in Christ. In Isaiah 54:8-10, the covenant made with Noah is connected to the Covenant of Grace made in Christ. In Revelation, the rainbow is also a sign of grace. Christ sits on the throne with a rainbow round about it (Revelation 4:3). This shows that the throne of Christ is surrounded with mercy.

In Revelation 10:1, Christ is presented in a vision described as a mighty angel. He is crowned with the rainbow. He is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) and His crown is the rainbow, representing peace (Genesis 9:13-14). The rainbow has a variety of colours and is all glorious. The “*manifold grace of God*” (1 Peter 4:10) has a variety and a glory; manifold was originally translated as meaning many-coloured. The rainbow begins with red and in the Bible this colour often reminds us that it was necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to shed His blood and die, so that the sins of His people would be forgiven. The last colours in the rainbow are purple or indigo and then violet. In the Bible, purple is often associated with royalty. So we can think about Christ’s kingdom of grace that will never come to an end. The heavenly throne is surrounded by a rainbow to show that it is a throne of grace to those who have obtained mercy (Revelation 4:2-3).

All the colours blend together in a spectrum. Can you tell exactly where one colour ends and another begins? It would be very difficult. In the same way there are many glorious and unsearchable mysteries in the grace of Christ.

We cannot see a rainbow without the sun shining. The light of God’s Spirit and truth must reveal His mercy through His Word.

It is “*the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain*” (Ezekiel 1:28). The darker the cloud, the more vividly the colours of the rainbow stand out. So it is with God’s mercy and His just wrath against sin. When we think of God’s judgment against sin on the cross, we see mercy and truth met together against the dark backdrop of sin being punished in the Saviour’s sufferings. The cloud of infinite judgment had to be poured out on Christ’s head.

The rainbow reminds us of God’s faithfulness and mercy, and it reveals much to us of His grace in Christ. It speaks to us about the gospel if we have a spiritual understanding of it. You have this mercy of God in Christ and an eternal hope revealed to you. It is a sure and certain hope that is a perfect provision. It deals with the nature and consequences of sin, a disease infinitely worse than the coronavirus.



The Wrong Way

J. van Kralingen

A minister called Rev. Alexander Macleod was once travelling by train to a town called Newburgh, in Fife, Scotland. The train reached a place called Ladybank Junction where railway lines crossed and the train was divided into two parts. He heard the guard shout, “Change here for Dundee,” but he did not catch the second part of what he said, “Change for Newburgh and Perth.”

He asked another gentleman in the carriage, “Are we right for Newburgh?”
“Yes,” the man replied, “all right, sir; I’m going your way, too.”

The train moved on and the next station on the way to Newburgh should have been Collessie. But when the train stopped, the sign said Springfield. Realizing something must be wrong, the minister pointed the sign out to his fellow passenger.

“Don’t worry,” the man said; “Springfield and Collessie are two names for the same place.” After Collessie he should have arrived at Newburgh, the small town where he wanted to go. Instead, he saw a big spread-out town with towers and church spires rising up above the houses.

The man beside him now seemed alarmed and said very loudly: “We’re wrong, sir; we’re in the wrong train; we should have changed carriages at Ladybank! This is Cupar, on the way to Dundee!” They had to get down hurriedly from the train and wait for the next train back to Newburgh, which was not due for another three hours.

As Rev. Macleod sat in the station waiting room, he began to think of mistakes on journeys, of wrong directions, of the hardships and losses caused by taking wrong roads, and of the great need to be sure of being on the right road. It reminded him of the verse in Proverbs which says, “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Proverbs 14:12). He thought of the great journey of life, and

also of the roads on that journey that may seem to be right, but are actually wrong.

What about you at the beginning of a new year? It lies ahead of you like a road, a journey which you have not taken before. There may be signposts suggesting you go one way, and other signs suggesting you go a different way. The wrong roads must be avoided at all costs.

Do you not need a guide book to help you find your way and make correct decisions? What about the Bible? What did David say? *“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”* (Psalm 119:105). God’s Word helped him to avoid the wrong roads and to choose the right roads on his journey.

So you can pray: *“Thy ways, Lord, show; teach me Thy paths; / Lead me in truth, teach me; / For of my safety thou art God; / all day I wait on Thee”* (based on Psalm 25:4-5). There is also a promise for you to carry with you: *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

“As grace is first from God, so it is continually from Him, as much as light is all day long from the sun, as well at the first dawn or at the setting.” ~ Rev. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“It is a pity that our tears, on account of our troubles, so blind our eyes that we should not see our mercies.”

~ Rev. John Flavel (1630-1691)

“God is not greater if you reverence Him, but you are greater if you serve Him.”

~ Augustine (354-430)