

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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Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod BSE, P Manse, Ferry Road, Levenburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA; tel: 01859 520271; e-mail: leverburgh@lineone.net. All unsigned articles are by the Editor.

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No 1

“Take with You Words”

Do you pray? Perhaps you say that you cannot pray, that you do not know how to. But you certainly need to pray to God. He has made you, and you therefore have a duty to worship Him – and that includes praying to Him. You are a sinner; you have done many things that you should not have done. And there are many things which you should have done, but you have not. You need to turn away from your sins; you need to return to God. That is what He is telling you: “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity” (Hosea 14:1).

God wants you to return to Him with a prayer in your heart. Perhaps again you say, I just cannot pray. But He goes on: “*Take with you words*, and turn to the Lord”. Do you now say, My problem is that I do not know what words to take with me when I pray to God. But there is a straight-forward answer to that question. God knew your need long before you ever thought about it. The next words in Hosea 14 give you an example of a petition which you can use. You are told to “say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously”. Yes, here are words for you to use in returning to God. You are to ask Him to take away all your sin and to receive you in His great mercy.

Yet there is another very important question which should rise up in our minds at this point: How can sinful humans beings, like us, ask anything from God and hope that He will give them what they ask? The answer is that Jesus Christ came into the world to act as a Mediator between God and sinners. In other words, He came to stand between God and them. We have no right to any blessing from God, but Jesus Christ stood in the place of sinners, took their punishment, and suffered and died instead of them. So it is for Jesus' sake that we can hope for any blessing when we pray; there can be no other reason.

Are we praying for forgiveness? Then we must ask God to pardon us for Jesus' sake. Are we praying for some other blessing – of any kind whatever? We must ask God to give it to us for Jesus' sake. At the *end* of every prayer we add the words: “for Jesus' sake”. But right through our prayers we should

remember that Jesus Christ is the one Mediator between us and God; it is only for His sake that we can have what we ask for.

Whatever circumstances we may be in and whatever may be troubling us, we should go with it all to God in prayer. Robert Roberts was one of Wales' best ministers. One day a huge crowd gathered to hear him preach in the open air in the north-west of the country; probably no church building could have held them all. It was becoming very windy and wet and it would have been impossible for the congregation to have stayed where they were. Roberts lifted up his arms to heaven and cried out: "O my God, grant a respite for a little while, to speak and hear of Thy Son". In less than five minutes the storm quietened down and the skies cleared. Everyone knew that God had heard His servant, for Jesus' sake.

And many a time, before and since, people have taken words with them and prayed to God and He has answered their prayers. Yet we should realise that not everything we ask for will be good for us. Obviously God saw that it would be good for the people to hear Robert Roberts speak about Christ as the great and glorious Saviour that He indeed is.

We should be content if God says, No, when we pray for something, even when we have really set our heart on it. Let us always remember that God knows everything far better than we do. Perhaps when we look back on the matter after several years have passed, we will see clearly that God did indeed know better and that it was in kindness that He refused to give what we asked for. Yet it is good for us to tell God about everything we think we need. And it is good when, whatever we ask for, we can say from our heart, "If it is Thy will". We are wise to ask God to overrule our desires and to give what really is best for us.

But obviously some things are more important than others. Most important of all are the needs of our souls. We are sinners; we are *guilty*, and we need to have our guilt taken away. Who can do that but God himself? So we need to go to Him in prayer; we need to take with us words, and say to Him, "Take away all iniquity". We must look to Christ, as the One who took the guilt of sinners upon Himself, and ask God to forgive us for His sake.

We have gone *away from God*; "we have turned everyone to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). We need Him to bring us back, to make us willing to return to Him. So let us take with us words and say to Him: "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously". But may we expect a kind answer if we come to Him through Christ? Of course we may; the Saviour has promised: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). He will never forget His promises.

God calls on us to be holy. But are we holy? Do we always do what is

right? Do we always think in ways that honour God? Perhaps what we should really ask is: Do we *ever* think in ways that honour God? Obviously we are *unholy* – though some people, those who have believed in Christ, are beginning to be holy; they have started to think in ways that honour God. But how can we begin to be holy? Let us take with us words and turn to the Lord and ask Him to make us holy, to create in us a new heart. That is what David did when he felt so very unholy; he prayed: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

We are prone to *go astray* from God’s commandments. Even God’s children – because they have only the beginnings of holiness – are liable to go astray. How can we be safe? Only if God will take care of us. So we must ask Him to protect us and to keep us from wandering away from Him, in our attitudes and in what we say and do. We should take with us words and pray: “Keep me” (Psalm 17:8). And we should ask God particularly to keep us from Satan’s temptations. We may use the words of the Lord’s Prayer: “Lead us not into temptation” (Matthew 6:13).

It is always good to pray. If we are about to do something or to go somewhere, we should always pray. Even if what we are doing is very ordinary, we should always be ready to pray. And if the thought comes into our mind that we should pray, we should always do so. At such a time, it may not be possible to go down on our knees to pray, but we can always send up a few words of prayer to God.

In the winter of 1873 a boiler exploded in a mill with serious consequences; several people were killed and many more were injured. The wife of one of the men working in the mill was getting on with her work at home, which obviously was not very far away. At the time of the explosion she suddenly felt an unusually strong desire to pray. At once she went down on her knees and, almost immediately, a large piece of the boiler came crashing into the room where was. If she had not kneeled down to pray, it would have hit her head. But by going to pray, her life was spared. Someone commented, “Surely He may be called the best Shield who can protect the lives of His people in such strange ways as this”.

We will meet many dangers, and we should ask God to protect us from them all, even from those we do not yet know about – and perhaps never will. But the most serious dangers are spiritual. How necessary it is for us to take with us words and ask the Lord to give us all the various spiritual blessings we have been thinking about. We must remember that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) – even eternal death, in hell for ever. So remember the words: “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously” – and use them often.

Martha and Mary

3. More About Our Spiritual Priorities

Rev H M Cartwright

The second article began to consider “our first encounter with Mary and Martha”, in Luke 10:38-42, when Mary sat at Jesus’ feet to listen to His words. It “impresses on us the importance of having our spiritual priorities right”. Mary “realised that she needed Christ and His Word infinitely more than He needed her and her service”. Martha thought “no one was doing anything for Him but herself, and she felt rather aggrieved that the Lord was not recognising the trouble to which she was going”.

Martha and Mary obviously were of different natural dispositions. Grace does not produce people who are clones of one another, but it sanctifies one’s natural character. If Martha was more at home in the kitchen and Mary in the study, both tendencies needed to be sanctified and balanced. According to our Lord, Mary had the balance right. While Martha was busy about many things, Mary had the one thing needful – which was to take the opportunity they then had of sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Love to Christ can be misdirected and weakened by being run into many channels of activity, which have something to do with Him, rather than being taken up with Himself. We can become engaged in a rather Christless round even of Christian activities. It is important to take the opportunities we have to become better acquainted with Christ and His Word, not as an excuse for failing in our practical Christian duties but in order to have right motives and to be properly balanced in performing these Christian duties. Christian activity needs to be fed by communion with Christ and to be regulated by His Word. This is what will purify the motives and strengthen the soul for acceptable service. This is the essence and inspiration of discipleship.

It is so easy to be taken up with the external – with what we can see – and a mere round of activity. It is not always possible to draw aside from what is calling out to be done in order to seek communion with Christ in His Word. But if that is where the heart is, opportunities will be given and they will be used. This is the frame of mind that will continue in heaven when all the bustle of earth is over. And while we are on earth, it is this frame of mind which, as the commentator R C H Lenski puts it, works calmness and quiet assurance from above and, when the proper time comes, directs zeal along the right course. At the feet of Jesus one learns from His Word and Spirit what He would have one do, as He would have it done.

Robert Candlish, in his *Scripture Characters*, says that Mary and Martha “were persons of very different tempers and dispositions; and this difference is uniformly and strikingly brought out in their treatment of the Lord Jesus.

Both looked up to Him with reverence; both regarded Him with full confidence and tender affection; and both were equally earnest and eager in testifying their esteem and love; but each in doing so followed the bent of her own peculiar turn of mind. . . .

“Martha was distinguished by a busy, if not bustling, activity in the despatch of affairs . . . always awake to the common calls and the common cares of the ordinary domestic routine of life. Mary . . . was evidently characterised by more depth of thought, more devotedness . . . of feeling. She was more easily engrossed in any . . . spiritual subject; more alive at any time to one single profound impression, and apt to be abstracted from other concerns. . . . If Jesus had come ‘to be ministered unto’, He would have been best pleased with Martha’s attention to all His wants. But as He came ‘not to be ministered unto, but to minister,’ He found greater delight in her sister Mary, who, with the meekness of a disciple and the earnestness of a spiritually-awakened soul, listened to the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth”.

Candlish concludes: “On their comparative excellences and defects . . . we pronounce no judgement, further than what may be gathered incidentally from the narrative as the judgement of the Lord Himself. But we may be allowed to say, in conclusion, of Mary’s fervency of spirit as compared with Martha’s diligence in business: This you ought to cherish, but not to leave the other undone. . . . There is a danger, in days especially when much is to be done, of substituting a certain bustling activity and liberality and zeal in the work of the Lord for deep and devoted piety in waiting upon His word. What Jesus chiefly desires is to see you rather sitting at His feet than cumbered about much serving – rather that you should ask and receive much grace from Him than that you should make a merit of rendering much service to Him.

“But beware of supposing that there is any inconsistency . . . between these two habits of mind. The tempers of the two sisters may be united and blended. . . . Be as fervent in spirit as Mary was, as diligent in business as Martha was. Choose the privilege of waiting upon the word of the Lord – yet neglect not the work of the Lord. Seize every opportunity, answer every call, of usefulness – while, at the same time, you cultivate the holy taste for meditative retirement, divine fellowship, and heavenly rest – even as He did who ‘went about doing good’, and of whom also it is written that He ‘spent the whole night in prayer to God’.”

Christ is the great need of our souls. When we have Christ, the one thing needful is to be taken up with Him and to be seeking that the Holy Spirit would take of the things that are Christ’s and show them to us. Those who are inclined to activity need to remember the need for spiritual communion

with Christ to give them proper motivation, and those who are inclined to contemplation need to be reminded: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). Yet it has to be said, in keeping with the incident we are noticing, that while “hearers only” are those who are not really taking in and considering what they hear, God-glorifying living will follow where there is true hearing and consideration.

I shall be much shorter in looking at the other encounters we have with Mary and Martha because the one we have just looked at is in many ways the most fundamental.

The Two £10 Notes

Rowland Hill was a godly minister who lived about 200 years ago – a kind man but rather unusual in some of his ways. There was a good woman in his London church who was married to an ungodly man. While she was in church, listening to her minister preaching, her husband would spend his time drinking beer. But they fell into debt; probably it was partly the result of him spending too much money on strong drink. Anyway, they could not pay the rent on their house. So someone came and took away their furniture; it would be sold to help pay off the money they owed their landlord. The good woman did not know what to do, so she decided to go and speak to her minister. She went to his house and explained her problem.

“How much would you require to save your furniture?” asked the minister sympathetically.

“£18 would be quite sufficient”, she answered, and her heart was pounding as she waited for his answer. Hill was a rich man, but £18 was worth far more then than it is now.

“I’ll let you have a loan of £20 and you can repay me at your convenience.” But he did not want to give the money to the woman – presumably because he hoped he might do some good to the man’s soul, as well as help the couple out of a difficult situation.

The woman hurried back home and told her husband what had happened. And at once he hurried away to Hill’s house. The minister received his visitor in a very kindly way. He asked the man to confirm what his wife had just said, adding: “And £20 will be sufficient to restore your furniture to you?”

“It will, sir.”

Hill pointed to the table and said, “Well, then, there are two £10 notes for you, which you can repay when you are able. Take them.”

The man went over to the table, picked up the notes and began to fold

them. As he did so he thanked the minister and told him that he hoped he would soon be able to pay the money back. Suddenly Hill told him: “Stop a little! Just lay the notes down again until I ask a blessing on them.”

The man did as he was told. Hill stretched out his arms and prayed like this: “O Lord, who art the Author of all mercy and the Giver of every good and perfect gift, do Thou be graciously pleased to bless the sum of money which is given to him who is now before Thee, that it may lead to his present and eternal welfare. For Jesus Christ’s sake.” Then he told the man: “Now you may take the money”.

The man picked up the two £10 notes a second time. As he began again to fold them Hill stopped him and said that he had forgotten something. The man was very confused, and even more so when Hill added: “My friend, you have not yourself asked for a blessing on the money. You had better do it now.” Probably this was what the minister most wanted to do when he asked the woman to send her husband to his house to collect the money – to get him to begin to pray.

The man could only stutter: “I cannot pray. I never prayed in all my life.”

“You have the more need to begin now”, replied Hill coolly but firmly.

“I cannot; I do not know what to say.”

“Try, try and thank God and ask His blessing – however short your prayer may be.”

“I cannot; I cannot say a single sentence.”

“Then you can’t have the money. I will not lend £20 to a prayerless man.”

The man hesitated for a moment but he could see that he had no alternative. He closed his eyes and said with great earnestness: “O Lord, what shall I say to Thee and to Mr Hill on this occasion?”

He was about to start another sentence when Hill interrupted him. “That will do for the beginning”, the minister told him. “It is an excellent first prayer, for it is from the heart. Take the money, and may God’s blessing be given along with it!” As he spoke, Hill took up the £10 notes and gave them to the man.

The whole way that Rowland Hill took in speaking to the man was indeed odd, but it was with a view to his good. And God did bless the money. The man and his wife became prosperous and, no doubt, paid back the £20 as soon as they possibly could. But God did more for the man; He gave him a greater blessing. The whole incident made a deep impression on his mind and in the end he was converted.

There are some lessons we should learn:

1. What a concern Hill had for the souls of other people! He was afraid that the man would die in his sins and go to a lost eternity. Almost certainly,

when the man went away, Hill would have gone down on his knees to pray for him again.

2. We must pray to God. We should always acknowledge Him as the one who rules over everything; He has control over all that happens to us.

3. We must ask God to bless all the money we receive – whether as a gift or as a loan or as wages. We can use our money wisely or foolishly; we should ask God to help us use it wisely. We can use our money to God's glory or sinfully; we should ask Him to keep us from using it sinfully and help us to use it for His glory.

4. It was a great blessing for the couple to receive a large sum of money to pay off their debt. It was a far greater blessing for the man to get a new heart and to have his sin forgiven. It was also a far greater blessing for his wife to see her husband converted, and begin to live to the glory of God. Then they could both, so to speak, walk hand-in-hand together on the way towards heaven.

Baptism

4. May Infants Be Baptized?

Rev Donald Macdonald

This is the last article in the series. The previous article asked the question: Who Should be Baptized?

Those who belong to Baptist churches argue that infants have no right to the sacrament of Baptism. They will tell you that an infant cannot believe, that an infant cannot exercise faith, it ought not to be baptized. If this argument is followed to its logical conclusion, you might say, Neither can an infant clothe or feed itself; it is dependent on its parents to provide for it in these ways. Are we to deny an infant food or clothing because it cannot do these things for itself? The idea does not make sense. The fact is: because infants are capable of being saved, they have a right to this ordinance.

When we enquire into the matter, it is clear that infant Baptism was practised from the earliest times; we believe it was practised by the Apostolic Church. It is unbelievable that at Pentecost, for example, there were no children among all those who were baptized. We read later in Acts of households being baptized. Also the early Christian Fathers baptized infants and it was certainly the practice of the Reformers.

John Calvin, one of the greatest minds of Reformation times, states in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that the command of God to circumcise infants was either proper and exempt from frivolous objection, or else it

deserved to be condemned. But, he goes on, if there was nothing improper or absurd in circumcision, no one can show anything absurd in observing infant baptism. Calvin argues further: "When we consider the design of the institution of the Lord's Supper, the conclusion is easy respecting the persons who ought to be admitted to participation of it. We observe the same rule also in the case of infant Baptism. For when we consider the end of its institution we evidently perceive that it belongs to infants as well as to adults. Therefore they cannot be deprived of it without a manifest evasion of the wisdom of the Divine author."

This whole argument goes back to God's covenant with Abraham and to the history of the Jews and of the visible Church of Old Testament times. In Genesis 17 we are introduced to the covenant of circumcision, where God tells Abraham: "As for me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee."

And further: "God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee: Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

The covenant of circumcision introduced the infant into the visible Church in Israel. In the Old Testament Church, the outward sign was in their flesh; it showed that they belonged to God's people. In the New Testament Church, after Christ's resurrection, the outward rite was changed to Christian Baptism; we believe that this is both scriptural and logical. In Romans 4: 16,17, Paul refers to the fact that God promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were".

Abraham is the father of many nations, the father of the faithful – of all them that believe – as it was in him that all the families of the earth were to be blessed. So it is surely reasonable to argue that God's promise began to be fulfilled after the resurrection, when He commissioned His Apostles to disciple all nations and baptize them in the name of the Trinity.

Thus Baptism replaced circumcision, and the Saviour's command includes the baptism of infants. This is what takes place in all parts of the earth, in all generations, to the end of time, wherever the Church is established – “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14).

Conclusion: It is very important to have clear and correct views about Baptism, as people in the visible Church, even in Reformed circles, have widely-differing opinions on the subject. We must be clear in our minds about the distinction between the visible Church and the invisible, and with God's dealings with His Church in the Old Testament and New, beginning with Abraham and the covenant of circumcision. We should also know the practice of the Reformed Church in her best times. Then we should see that what we have said about the meaning, the mode and the subjects of Baptism is based on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. It is reasonable to conclude that the views on the sacraments of the Church in the Highlands of Scotland in her best times, and her practice, come as near to the scriptural pattern as any other.

Decent and Distinct

Like perhaps many a teenage girl, I confess I argued stubbornly with my Mum on the always-thorny issue of what to wear. In the specific context of our Free Presbyterian family, we argued about skirts versus trousers.

The Bible has very clear general guidelines for how girls – and boys – should dress. First and foremost, boys and girls and men and women have to respect the Seventh Commandment, and “preserve their own and their neighbour's chastity” (as the *Shorter Catechism* puts it), which in practical terms includes what the *Larger Catechism* calls “modesty in apparel”.

In addition, both the Old and New Testament outline the important principle that men and women should be distinct in how they look (see, for instance, Deuteronomy 22:5 and 1 Corinthians 11:14-15). As well as being distinct in the length of their hair, and the use of head coverings in worship, this principle also includes a distinction in the clothes that they wear.

Of course, the biblical principle itself goes no further than stating that men and women should be distinguishable from each other by their clothing. The way in which people put the principle into practice has varied from time to time and from culture to culture (the Bible does not say that men have to wear trousers specifically, only that the genders should be dressed distinctively).

In providence, in our culture in the West, the gender distinction has traditionally been made by men wearing trousers and women wearing skirts. But the question that arises time and again in our families is whether that practice should still be observed.

There are so many reasons why girls in particular face difficulties in following this practice. Perhaps it is not fashionable – all the other girls in your class wear trousers and you look obviously different from them in a skirt, and people keep asking annoying questions about why you do it. Or it does not seem practical – skirts, perhaps, are too cold in the winter, too entangling for cycling, too awkward for most sporting activities, and so on.

In informal discussion among older girls and women in the church, there is a lot of sympathy for the problems which younger girls face when they have to wear skirts rather than trousers. After all, most of us have been there and done that. So are there any good reasons for persisting in dressing so differently, not just from men, but from plenty other women too? I believe there are.

The main one would be that it really is part of our providence that, in our culture, skirts are traditionally seen as women's clothing. It is not that all women have always only worn skirts, but rather that skirts are generally regarded as women's clothing and not men's.

Of course, as children of the Reformation, we know that it is not good to follow tradition blindly, and this is where it is important to remember that wearing skirts is only a cultural practice which preserves the biblical principle. But if we take the biblical principle seriously, and are determined to make the gender distinction as clear as possible through what we wear, then we have few other options left to us in our culture for putting the principle into practice, other than by continuing to resort to skirts for women and trousers for men.

The other main point is the reasoning behind our questioning the skirts / trousers tradition. Harsh as it may sound, if the biggest source of difficulty with wearing skirts comes either from a disrespectful challenge to our parents' authority, or from a preference for getting as close as possible to worldly fashions, then it should be clear enough that our reasons for disliking skirts are very misguided.

Also, in our own church context, we need to bear in mind that many people view the widespread abandonment of the skirts / trousers distinction with a lot of regret and disappointment. If people determinedly persist in abandoning the skirts / trousers distinction without any regard for the conscientious feelings of other people in the church community, this too would indicate that they did not come to the issue with a proper attitude.

Rebelliousness, worldliness, and carelessness about what other believers think, can never lead to good reasons for changing traditional practices. So arguments for change should be regarded with deep caution, unless they come hand in hand with a clear attitude of respect, a concern for decency rather than to be conformed to the world, and tenderness to the conscience of other believers.

The Bible never suggests that people will have an easy time when they try to conform their lifestyle and behaviour as closely and consistently as they can to the principles it sets out. In order to equip ourselves to deal with the possible difficulties in our own culture, therefore, we need to be as clear as possible about why we do or do not do certain things. In this way, everyone can make up their own minds to abide by any particular practice with the personal conviction that it is the right thing to do.

We should all also try to be as helpful to each other as we can. Girls should not put their mothers in awkward situations by quarelling with them about this particular cultural practice. Girls and women should support each other as far as they can, knowing and sharing the difficulties that this practice often involves. And boys and men should also be as supportive as they can, and respect the courage (since that is what it often boils down to) that their sisters, wives, mothers and friends have to show as they try, for principle's sake, to maintain this practice. "Modesty in apparel", and distinctness in dress, are the twin biblical principles which men and women and boys and girls need always to keep to.

CED

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

40. The Last Chapter

There are many more stories about men and women, boys and girls from Aniwa who came to know and love Christ as their Saviour. God had blessed the work and preaching of Paton, and the island of Aniwa was claimed for Christ.

In 1883 Paton attended the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Australia. He brought to the attention of the ministers and elders

at this meeting the need for a new and larger ship to replace the *Dayspring*, preferably a steam-powered one. The mission work in the New Hebrides had expanded and the needs of the mission workers were not being met – their lives were threatened and some had even been lost.

The General Assembly agreed that there was a serious need and they gave Paton the job of going back to Britain to try and raise enough money to pay for this rather expensive project. About £6000 pounds was needed; which would be the equivalent of having to raise about two and a half million pounds today. A lot of money! And you have to remember that people in these days were not so well-off as most of us are today.

Paton took up the job with enthusiasm and prayer; he knew he could not do this alone. He would need God to work in the hearts of the people he would be speaking to, so that they would give what they could spare to this cause.

He arrived in Britain and made his base in Glasgow, where his brother lived. He had invitations from different churches to come and speak about this project and he started work straight away. The money started to trickle in. But £6000 was a lot of money and seemed a long way off.

Some larger donations did come in from people who were well-off but most of the gifts came from poorer people such as servants in the big houses or farm-hands and labourers. Some of the notes accompanying the smaller donations that Paton received were similar to these: “From a servant-girl who loves the Lord Jesus”; “From a servant-girl that prays for the conversion of the heathen”; “From a working-man who loves his Bible”; “From a working-man who prays for God’s blessing on you, and work like yours, every day in family worship”.

At one conference he was speaking at in Dundee, he noticed three Indian girls, sitting near the platform, who listened eagerly to all he had to say. At the end of the meeting, the youngest of them, about 12 years old, rose and greeted Paton with a bow. She then took four silver bangles from her arm and presented them to Paton saying: “I want to take shares in your mission ship by these bangles, for I have no money, and may the Lord ever bless you!”

Paton was moved by her generosity and zeal for the work of the Lord but he didn’t feel he could take the bangles. But the girl insisted, and Paton eventually accepted them when the lady who had been sitting beside the girl said: “Please, do take them, or the dear girl will break her heart. She has offered them up to Jesus for your mission ship.” Paton obliged, and the young girl returned home happy.

Paton later learned that she and her two sisters were Indian orphans who had been adopted by two missionary ladies. They were all going to return to India and the girls were going to help the ladies in their work there. Her

offering of jewellery was among many Paton received. He then sold them to a Christian goldsmith who gave a fair price for them.

Nearly two years had passed, and Paton returned to Australia with not only the target sum but half as much again! He had managed to raise £9000. Three new missionaries went with him, which was a great encouragement to the other missionaries.

Paton returned to Aniwa for a visit after having been away for four years. What a welcome he got! He felt like a returning king. He was thrilled, the first Sabbath he was back, to hear the men gathering early for prayer and praise, to ask a blessing on the preaching. He thought he had slept in and had missed the first church service! It was encouraging for him to see the Aniwans taking a responsibility for their church and to discover that it was still prospering. He also lived to see a Christian church flourishing on Tanna; among the members were some of the very men who had tried to kill him.

Paton's work was now mainly travelling around speaking about the mission work in the New Hebrides. At last he made his home in Melbourne, in Australia, where he lived for a few years before he passed away at 83 years of age on 28 January 1907. His wife Margaret had died two years earlier.

"God gave His best, His Son, to me; and I give back my best, my all, to Him" – this was the motto of Paton's life. Most of us would struggle to achieve and endure even a small fraction of what Paton did as he served God. But perhaps we can be like the Indian girl who gave what she could to help God's cause. Whatever talents we have in either gifts or belongings, we should want to use them to honour and serve God.

His parting words at the end of his book remind us that, whatever path our life takes, it will eventually come to an end in this world. He was thinking specially of other believers when he wrote, "In your life and in mine, there is at least one last chapter, one final scene, awaiting us; God our Father knows where and how! By His grace, I will live out that chapter, I will pass through that scene, in the faith and in the hope of Jesus, who has sustained me from childhood till now. As you close this book, go before your Saviour, and pledge yourself upon your knees by His help and sympathy to do the same. And let me meet you, and let us commune with each other again, in the presence and glory of the Redeemer. Fare-thee-well!"

You and I will only know true happiness if we follow Paton's advice and know what it means to say:

"Into Thy hands I do commit
My spirit; for Thou art he,
O Thou Jehovah, God of truth,
that hast redeemed me"

(Psalm 31:5).

*For Younger Readers***Moses and the Burning Bush**

It was the strangest thing Moses had ever seen. He was looking after some sheep which belonged to his wife's father. Moses was looking out for some grass for them to eat. But they were in a place where very little grass grew.

Then he noticed a bush on fire. Perhaps that was not unusual, but this bush was very unusual. It was not being burnt up. The fire kept on burning, but the bush was still there. None of it was burnt away.

It sounds impossible, does it not? But it really happened. And we know that it really happened because the Bible tells us about it.

Moses wondered what was happening. He said to himself: "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt".

Then he found out why the bush was not being burnt up. God was in the bush. And God had a message for Moses. God was going to tell him what he had to do.

And God was watching Moses. When Moses turned aside, God called to him out of the bush. God said, "Moses, Moses".

Moses answered: "Here am I". He was willing to listen to what God had to say to him.

But Moses must not come too close to the burning bush. Because God was there, it was holy ground around the bush. So Moses was told to take off his shoes. He must show respect for God. We should always show respect for God.

Moses was one of the Children of Israel. His people were all slaves in a country called Egypt. Moses was to be their leader and he was to bring them out of Egypt. God was now telling him that he was to go back to Egypt and lead his people out to a new land where they would be free.

Did Moses do what God told him to do? Yes, he did. He knew it was a difficult work that God called him to do, but God promised to be with Moses. So Moses obeyed and went on to lead Israel out of Egypt. Then they were free; they were no longer slaves.

Does God ever speak to you? You may never hear God speaking out of a burning bush. You may never see a bush burning like the

one Moses saw. But God speaks to you every time you hear your mother or your father reading from the Bible. And He speaks to you every time you hear a minister preaching in church.

He has something to say to you. And you should be listening.

What Is Evangelical Religion?

2. Human Sinfulness

J C Ryle

This is another edited extract from a chapter of the book, *Knots Untied*. Last month's article was about Scripture.

The second main feature of Evangelical religion is the important place it gives to the doctrine of human sinfulness and corruption. It teaches that, as a result of Adam's fall, everyone is as far from original righteousness as is possible. By their own natures they are inclined to evil. They are not only in a miserable, pitiable and bankrupt condition; they are in a state of guilt; they are condemned before God; and the danger they are exposed to cannot be far away. They are not only at enmity with their Maker and have no right to heaven, but they have no will to serve their Maker; they have no love to their Maker; and they are not suitable for heaven.

We believe that a terrible spiritual disease like this requires a powerful spiritual medicine to cure it. We dread giving the slightest encouragement to any religious system of dealing with man's soul which even seems to promote the idea that his deadly wound can be easily healed. We dread helping along man's favourite notion that a little church-going or other religious activity – a little patching, mending, whitewashing, gilding, polishing, varnishing and painting the outside – is all that his situation requires. Hence we protest with all our heart against formal religion – relying on the sacraments, and every kind of merely-outward Christianity.

We maintain that all such religion is founded on too low a view of man's spiritual need. It needs far more than this to save or satisfy or sanctify a soul. It needs nothing less than the blood of God the Son applied to the conscience, and the grace of God the Holy Ghost renewing the heart completely. Man is diseased at the very core of his being, and he needs a cure that will reach the core of his being. I believe that ignorance of the extent of the Fall, and of the whole doctrine of original sin, is one great reason why many people can neither understand, appreciate, or receive Evangelical religion. Evangelical religion has the Bible as its foundation; so it is based on a clear view of original sin.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2009-10

Names for Exercise 1

Senior Section: *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin, Robert Ross. *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan, Isla and Jonathon Macdonald. *Glasgow:* Catherine Freeke, Kate Gillies, Rachel MacLeod. *Inverness:* Anna Fraser, Thomas D Maton. *King's Lynn:* Joanna Wiltshire. *Longcot:* Lucy Cooper. *North Uist:* John A Macdonald. *Stornoway:* Sarah K Gillies. *Swindon:* Alison Tugwell. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

Intermediate Section: *Barnoldswick:* David Martin. *Dingwall:* Andrew Macleod, Ruth M MacLeod, Finlay Murray. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan, Daniel MacDonald. *Faringdon:* Pip Sayers. *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie, Mairi Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Ruairidh Macleod, Callum and Peter Macpherson. *Inverness:* Peter Schouten. *King's Lynn:* Matthew Wiltshire. *London:* Amy van Kralingen. *Longcot:* Ruth Cooper. *Luton:* Stephen Kingham. *North Uist:* Fraser Macdonald, Margaret Cameron. *Sidcup:* Jeremy and Lucy Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Iain Boyd. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Trowbridge:* Joanna Broome. *Vatten:* Sabrina Annand, Cameron Rose.

Junior Section: *Aberdeen:* Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* Rebecca Ross. *Chippenham:* Jessica Salkeld. *Dingwall:* Graham J MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle Macdonald, Emma G Norris. *Gairloch:* Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Rebecca Macleod, Kenneth J Macpherson. *Inverness:* John and Rebekah Maton. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *London:* Andrew and Sam Munns. *Longcot:* Samuel Cooper. *North Tolsta:* Scott Macleod. *Sidcup:* Jemima Turnbull. *Staffin:* Neil Matheson, Carey Ross. *Stornoway:* Cirsty E Gillies, Aimee Macleod. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot. *Trowbridge:* Nathan Broome. *Vatten:* Jayne-Anne Fleming.

Upper Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Rachel Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* James Ross. *Dingwall:* Alasdair and Uilleam Murray. *Edinburgh:* Jonathan Norris. *Gairloch:* Andrew Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Sarah Macleod, Katie Macpherson. *Inverness:* Jonathan Janczak, Daniel Maton. *King's Lynn:* Susie Wiltshire. *Kyle:* Jane Macleod. *London:* Jane Mackenzie, Henry Munns. *Ness:* Joanna and Jonathan Maclean. *North Tolsta:* Mairi Campbell, Catriona and Christie Nicolson. *North Uist:* Eilidh Cameron. *Point:* Isla MacDonald. *Sidcup:* Henry and Joseph Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Ryan MacSween. *Trowbridge:* Abigail and Daniel Broome, James Playfoot.

Lower Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Samuel McIntosh. *Barnoldswick:* Claudia van Essen. *Dingwall:* Hannah Mackenzie, Deborah Yong Maclean, Laura MacLeod, Donald Murray, Matthew and Esther Ross. *Edinburgh:* Bradley and Fraser Morrison, Jessica and Louise Norris. *Gairloch:* Roderick Wyatt. *Garrabost:* Duncan Macdonald. *Glasgow:* Jonathan Macleod, Iain Macpherson, Rebecca Smith. *Guildford:* Susanna Risbridger. *Inverness:* Jessica Maton. *King's Lynn:* Thomas Wiltshire. *Kyle:* Mark Whear. *London:* James and Rachel Campbell, Mark, Sarah and Paul Mackenzie, David and John Munns. *North Tolsta:* Anna and Ross Campbell, Ruth Morrison. *Sidcup:* Annabelle, Sebastian, Julius and Max Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Lucienne and Jamie Doig, Cara and Matthew Macleod, Kate and Mollie MacSween.

2010 Youth Conference

This year's Youth Conference will be held, God willing, in Glasgow, from Tuesday, April 6, to Thursday, April 8. Further details should appear in next month's magazine.

Looking Around Us

“The Parliament of the World’s Religions”

In December, people from 80 countries representing more than 220 “faith traditions” came together in Melbourne for seven days of discussions; even pagans and atheists took part. They gathered for what was called “The Parliament of the World’s Religions”, which involved as many as 600 different meetings. Those who organised the “Parliament” hoped that these meetings, and also conversations between individuals, would lead to new partnerships between religious groups.

But one important question seems to be missing from all this: Is a religion true or false? The Bible says, “There be gods many, and lords many” (1 Corinthians 8:5) – and, just as there are many gods, so there are many religions. And Paul goes on, writing as someone inspired by God Himself: “There is but *one* God, the Father, of whom are all things . . . and *one* Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things”. We should notice an important fact, which distinguishes the true God from all other gods – He is the Creator of all things. “All things” come from Him; He made them. Not only did the true God make all things; He has told us about His work in the Bible.

This is the God who is to be worshipped; we must worship no other. This is the God to whom we are to pray; we must pray to no other. But those who take part in “The Parliament of the World’s Religions” can scarcely confine themselves to the worship of one god, even if they profess to be Christians of one kind or another. But there can be no proper religious partnership between what is true and what is false.

Associated with the Parliament is a “Skywheel” sacred-art project which plans to send a satellite into space with thousands of copies of prayers wound inside a prayer wheel. And these prayers, it is claimed, will “radiate blessings to the universe above and our world below”. This seems weird. How can a prayer radiate blessings to anyone? A prayer must be addressed to the God who really exists. After all, a prayer is a request for an answer, and an answer can only come from a real, living Being. But there is only one such Being, the living and true God, who has revealed Himself in the Bible. He can answer prayer, and only He.

We must not hesitate to go to the true God for blessings. And He has wonderful blessings to give. So wonderful are they that His own Son had come into the world to die to make them possible. Let us then pray to God to give us, for Jesus’ sake, the great blessings of salvation.

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