

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



April 2009

Vol 74 • No 4

Contents

Chewing Your Spiritual Food	63
Romanism: Another Religion?:	
2. What Does It Teach About God?	65
From Genesis to Revelation:	
4. From Joshua to Solomon	67
Separation from the World:	
5. What True Separation Really Is	69
“Do not Mention Another Time”	72
For Junior Readers – Lessons from the Life of John G Paton:	
31. The Sermon on the Well	76
For Younger Readers:	
A Very Good Prayer	78
Looking Around Us	79
Manna	80

The Young People’s Magazine

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

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

Material for the magazine should reach the editor by the beginning of the previous month.

Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; e-mail: wc.fpchurch@btconnect.com; tel: 0141 332 9283. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates, including postage, are: F P Magazine £19.50 (£1.50 per copy); Y P Magazine £11 (70p per copy); both magazines £28.50. All queries should be directed to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

Free Presbyterian Magazine: The Church’s main magazine is *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Send to the General Treasurer at the above address for a free sample copy. See above for subscription rates.

The Young People's Magazine

Vol 74

April 2009

No 4

Chewing Your Spiritual Food

As a youngster, were you ever told to chew your food properly? The idea was that, if you did not chew it properly, you would not be able to digest it and you would get no good from it.

But what about spiritual food? You go to church – I certainly hope you do – and spiritual food is set before you when you hear the truths of the Bible as some part of it is read. And some more spiritual food is set before you as you listen to a sermon. Have you ever thought that such spiritual food needs to be chewed?

But what, you may ask, do I mean by “chewing” the truths of the Bible? Well, let us say that the minister is preaching to you from some text that speaks about God. He points out that God is the Creator, and that He made you in particular; he reminds you of God’s authority and of His right to direct you to obey all His commandments. I assume that you listen to what the minister says; otherwise it is like leaving all your food on your plate without even tasting it. If you do not listen to what you hear from God’s Word, it will most certainly do you no good. But, having listened, you are to think over what you have heard; that is what I mean by “chewing” it.

In thinking over what you hear in church, you are to think of it as personal to yourself. You are to consider how it applies to *you*. You are to say to yourself, then and afterwards, God has created *me*; so He has authority over *me*; and He has a right to tell *me* to obey His commandments. And you should ask yourself: Am *I* submitting to God’s authority? Am *I* keeping all His commandments – or any of His commandments?

From speaking about God and His authority and His commandments, the minister may go on to speak about sin. He may tell you that God demands that we keep all His commandments *perfectly*. And we sin when we come short of doing so in any degree. The minister will probably go on to say something about the consequences of sin, that those who commit sins deserve to be punished for ever.

Again you ought to chew over these serious truths. It should be clear to you at once that you do not keep God’s commandments perfectly. You

should remind yourself that you sin by doing what God commands you *not to do* – if you dishonour your parents, for instance, by doing what they want you not to do, or if you tell a lie to someone. Again, you are to remind yourself that you sin when you do not do what God tells you *to do* – if you do not love God with all your heart, or if you do not love your neighbour as yourself. Then, as you think over these things, you are to realise that every sin you commit is serious and that they all deserve eternal punishment.

And if, as you chew them over in your mind, you take these things at all seriously, you will want to know how you can be delivered from eternal punishment – and indeed delivered from sin altogether. You will be glad to hear your minister speak of Jesus Christ as the one who came into the world to save sinners. You will be glad to hear of how He took the guilt of sinners upon Himself and died in their place. But you may feel that, as a needy sinner, Christ is impossibly far away from you. You may even wonder if it will ever be possible for you, in any sense, to get near to Him.

Then think of the well-known verse which begins: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Think of the love of God to unworthy sinners like yourself – that He gave His own Son to die instead of them. Turn this over in your mind, again and again. And do not stop there; go on to the rest of the verse: “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”. It tells you how there can be a connection between you and Christ Jesus, the Saviour – by *believing* or, to use another word, by *faith*. Faith does not just mean believing that what the Bible says about Jesus is true; it means to *believe on* Him, to *trust* in Him as the Saviour whom God has appointed – who has done everything that is necessary for the salvation of every sinner who does believe on Him.

So when the minister goes on to give the call of the gospel, using perhaps the words of Paul and Silas, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31), you are to take these words as spoken to yourself. And you are to chew over them.

As you listen to the preacher and think over what he says, you should pray. When you leave the church, you should keep turning over in your mind what you have heard and you should again pray. And when you reach home, you should continue to chew over what you have heard, and pray again. You now probably have an opportunity to go away on your own to ask God to bless to your soul what you heard in church. As you pray, turn over in your mind what you heard – whether about God or sin or salvation, or anything else relevant to the needs of your soul – and ask God to help you understand. Especially you should ask Him for grace to believe in Christ; ask Him to open the eyes of your soul so that you would see Jesus and trust in Him.

Romanism: Another Religion?

2. What Does It Teach About God?

Rev D W B Somerset

The first article, last month, introduced some basic questions about religions. This article answers the first of them.

Buddhism says that there is no God, Hinduism says that there are many gods, Islam says that there is a god called Allah, and Romanism and biblical Christianity give the true Christian answer that there is one God, who exists in Three Persons: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Obviously religions which differ about the number of gods must be different religions. But even if religions teach that there is only one God, it does not necessarily follow that the religions are the same, or even very similar. Clearly the nature or the attributes of the “God” are all-important. If the nature of the “God” is vastly different, then the religion is different.

The “Allah” of Islam, for instance, is very different from the Lord God of Israel. Apart from the doctrine of the Trinity – which Islam lacks, and which is fundamental to Christianity and to the work of redemption – the nature of Allah (or his supposed nature) is entirely different from the nature of the God of Israel, as revealed in the Bible. For Islam, the essential thing about Allah is his power and will: he has absolute power and sovereign will. He is not a moral God or a holy God. His nature does not determine his actions; his actions are arbitrary – he does whatever he wills, without either consistency or holiness. There is a very interesting book on this subject by Samuel Zwemer, called *The Muslim Doctrine of God*. It was published in 1905 and is still in print and well worth reading. It brings out how utterly different the Muslim idea of *God* is from the Christian idea.

The reason for mentioning this is to alert us to the need to delve a bit deeper. We must not be taken in by the superficial sound of words. The same words may be used, but do they have the same meaning? How does a Roman Catholic understand the doctrine of God? At first sight, the God of Romanism seems to be the same as the true God. A Romanist would have no difficulty with the *Shorter Catechism* answer on the nature of God (“God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable . . .”) or on the Trinity (“There are three Persons in the Godhead . . .”). But when one starts to look more closely at Romanist teaching, one becomes less certain that the God that the Romanist professes to worship is the same as the God of Scripture.

The most obvious difference lies in the teaching about the Virgin Mary.

In Romanism she is, to all intents and purposes, a goddess. She can hear prayers; so she is effectively infinite. She can even cope with a million people praying to her at the same time. No ordinary human being can cope with two people speaking at once, but Mary is unlimited in her capacity. Mary is omnipresent (present everywhere): no ordinary person can be in two places at the same time, but Mary can be simultaneously present with multitudes of people on opposite sides of the world. Mary is omniscient (knows everything): she knows “all the sufferings and hopes of all men, women and peoples” (a prayer of Pope John Paul II in 2000). She knows the human heart, which is God’s special privilege: “the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts” (1 Chronicles 28:9).

Mary is also omnipotent (all-powerful): “the Refuge of sinners, the Hope of the hopeless, the Consoler of the afflicted, the Comforter of the dying” (a prayer of “The Children of Mary”). She can “receive [people] to heaven” (a prayer of Pope Leo XIII). There is nothing that she cannot do, or at least nothing that anyone might want to ask for. She can help in every situation. She is all-sufficient. And this power has been delivered to her: she acts in her own name. Many of the prayers to her found on the internet are not asking her to intercede with God for help, but are asking her to intervene directly, on her own authority and in her own strength. She is virtually a goddess: “the bride of the Holy Spirit” (a prayer of John Paul II) and “the Queen of Heaven” – by marriage she has obtained a place in the Godhead. And such views of Mary are not optional in Romanism, but obligatory. A Romanist is required to believe these things concerning Mary.

Does this mean that Romanists have a different God? The answer depends on one’s spiritual viewpoint. From a worldly viewpoint, this sort of thing might be regarded as broadly Christian. But from a biblical viewpoint, it is not. In these prayers Mary is treated as a goddess, and she eclipses the glory of the true God. He is in the background and the glory goes to her. She has become the central figure. Christ and the Father are tagged on at the end of the prayer, if at all. There is nothing in any of these scores of prayers to Mary on the internet that a true Christian could use, or tolerate for a moment. If *religion* means one’s relationship with God, then these prayers belong to a different religion. They are the prayers, not of someone who has a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, but of someone who has a relationship with a goddess called Mary, and who regards her as sufficient for the needs of his soul. The worshipper of Mary has no reason to go to God because he can find all that he needs in Mary.

The Scriptures make it plain that the true God will not tolerate a rival of this sort. He is a jealous God: “My glory will I not give to another” (Isaiah

42:8). He has got glory to Himself in the death and resurrection of His Son, but *all* the glory is to go to Him: “Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory”. He insists that His people give Him their hearts, and that they find rest and satisfaction for their souls in Him alone. He said to Abraham: “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Genesis 15:1). Such a goddess, therefore, as the Virgin Mary of Romanism cannot exist. She is fictitious, like the Allah of Islam. Islam presents us with a non-existent “God” and Romanism presents us with an imaginary female goddess. This is our first reason for arguing that Romanism is a different religion.

From Genesis to Revelation

4. From Joshua to Solomon

This series is intended to provide an overview of the Bible. In the last section we looked at how Moses led Israel out of Egypt and saw the importance of the sacrifices and other types. A *type* is like a picture designed by God to give teaching about what would later be made clearer – for instance, an animal sacrifice was a type of Christ’s offering Himself up instead of sinners.

The Book of Joshua deals with the Children of Israel being brought into the land which God had promised to Abraham for his descendants. But what are we to learn from the Book of Judges, with so many sad chapters telling of sin, and sometimes particularly serious sin? What we may see most prominently is a people very much left to themselves, when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6) and ignored God and His commands. This Book teaches us how much we need to ask God to restrain us from sin.

So often, in the time of the Judges, the people wandered away from God into ways of sin. Then He, in judgement, would send some tribe, such as the Philistines or the Midianites, against them. When that tribe conquered them and oppressed them, they would cry to God in at least outward repentance, and He would deliver them. Later, Israel would go away into sin and idolatry again. And the cycle went on and on for hundreds of years.

The Book of Ruth describes a series of incidents in the time of the Judges. It shows how it was possible, even in the Old Testament times, for someone who was not an Israelite to be saved and to be received into the Church of God.

The final judge was Samuel (though this brings us into another book – the first of the Books of Samuel). He was a godly man, but his sons, who latterly took over some of his duties, were not. So the people asked for a king to be

appointed over them. By doing so, God told them, they were rejecting Him. For although they had judges ruling their country for much of the time since the death of Joshua, these judges held their office under God. It should have been clear that God had always been their real King – whether they acknowledged Him or not.

Yet God gave them a king, and that king was Saul. He was to be an example of a bad king – one who would oppress them – to make it clear that a king could not be a blessing to his people unless he consciously ruled on behalf of God. Though Saul seemed to start out well, he soon showed that he did not really respect God and that he was not fit for his office. God had given him to the people in judgement. But another king was appointed instead. This was David, although he had to endure a long period of persecution before Saul eventually died and he could actually begin to reign over God's people.

David was a godly man and he ruled over his country in the fear of God – in other words, in running the country he wanted to act in the light of God's law. As king over God's people, as we have already noticed, David was a type of Christ. For instance, we can see in him a picture of Christ's care for His people.

One notable legacy from David is the large number of Psalms which he wrote. These Psalms were written in praise of God and, because they were inspired by God, they are particularly suitable to use in worshipping Him. Indeed in public worship we should only sing the Psalms, because God has not given us authority to use anything else.

We are reminded again and again in Scripture that there is no perfection in this life – apart, of course, from the Lord Jesus Christ. David himself, godly man though he indeed was, fell into very serious sin. By his adultery with Bathsheba he gave “great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme” (2 Samuel 12:14). The repeated difficulties he experienced – including rebellions by his sons Absalom and Adonijah – are to be seen as God's chastisement of David as a son who had blatantly disobeyed his Father in heaven. They were also public signs of God's displeasure against sin – especially the sin of someone who was in such a public position.

David was succeeded as King by Solomon. He was a good man and started off very well. Think of how he reacted when God, in a dream, offered to give him whatever he wanted. Solomon asked for wisdom; he was afraid of making foolish decisions in ruling his country. Yet he went astray; he married heathen women, and he helped them to practise their idolatry. Solomon did not apply his God-given wisdom to his personal life as he should have done; indeed he had 700 wives altogether. It is particularly dangerous for people to misuse the gifts God has given them.

Yet Solomon was brought back to a godly outlook. We have a record of his thinking in the Book of Ecclesiastes. There he tells us how he sought for satisfaction in all sorts of worldly ways, but he always discovered that they led to emptiness. "Vanity of vanities," he says again and again, "all is vanity." But he finishes his Book with this God-honouring thought: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Solomon also collected the wise sayings that make up the Book of Proverbs, and he wrote the Song of Solomon, which is a picture of the love between Christ and His people.

God did not ignore Solomon's sin. The King was warned that in the time of his son, the kingdom of Israel would be divided. That is what happened soon after his son Rehoboam came to the throne, following Solomon's death. Basically, the tribe of Judah (along with Simeon) remained faithful to the line of David, while the 10 northern tribes rebelled and Jeroboam became their king. Jeroboam claimed to be afraid that, if his subjects continued to go up to the temple in Jerusalem to worship God, they would be attracted back to the rule of Rehoboam. He made two golden calves for his people to worship, in spite of the Second Commandment. He claimed that the people could worship the true God through these calves, but he was completely wrong.

Separation from the World

5. What True Separation Really Is

J C Ryle

This is another section, slightly edited, of a chapter from the book, *Practical Religion*. It has been slightly edited. Last month's article was the second explaining what is *not* meant by separation from the world.

I take up this branch of my subject with a very deep sense of its difficulty. It is very clear that there is a line of conduct which all true Christians ought to pursue with respect to "the world, and the things of the world". The texts already quoted make that plain. The key to the solution of that matter lies in the word *separation*. But it is not easy to show what separation consists in. On some points it is not hard to lay down particular rules; on others it is impossible to do more than state general principles and leave everyone to apply them according to his position in life. This is what I shall now attempt to do.

(a) First and foremost, if someone desires to come out from the world and

be separate, he must steadily and habitually refuse to be guided by the world's standard of right and wrong. The rule of most of mankind is to go with the stream, to do as others do, to follow the fashion, to keep in with the common opinion, and to set your watch by the town clock. The true Christian will never be content with such a rule. He will simply ask, What does Scripture say? What is written in the Word of God? He will maintain firmly that nothing can be right which God says is wrong, and that the customs and opinions of his neighbours can never make that to be a trifle which God calls serious, or that to be no sin which God calls sin. He will never think lightly of such sins as drinking, swearing, gambling, lying, cheating, swindling, or breaking the Seventh Commandment, just because they are common and many say, "Where is the mighty harm?"

That miserable argument, "Everybody thinks so; everybody says so; everybody does it; everybody will be there", goes for nothing with him. His only question is: Is it condemned or approved by the Bible? Even if he stands alone in his village or town or congregation, he will not go against the Bible. If he has to come out from the crowd and take a position by himself, he will not flinch from doing so rather than disobey the Bible. This is genuine scriptural separation.

(b) He that desires to come out from the world and be separate must be very careful how he spends his leisure time. This is a point which at first sight appears of little importance. But the longer I live, the more I am persuaded that it deserves most serious attention. An honourable occupation and lawful business are a great safeguard to the soul, and the time that is spent on them is comparatively the time of our least danger. The devil finds it hard to get a hearing from a busy man. But when the day's work is over, and the time of leisure arrives, then comes the hour of temptation.

I do not hesitate to warn every man who wants to live a Christian life to be very careful how he spends his evenings. Evening is the time when we are naturally disposed to unbend after the labours of the day, and evening is the time when the Christian is too often tempted to lay aside his armour, and so brings trouble on his soul. "Then cometh the devil" and, with the devil, the world. Evening is the time when the poor man is tempted to go to the public house and fall into sin. Evening is the time when the tradesman too often goes to the inn parlour and sits for hours hearing and seeing things which do him no good. Evening is the time which people choose for dancing, card playing and the like and consequently never get to bed till late at night. If we love our souls and would not become worldly, let us mind how we spend our evenings. Tell me how a man spends his evenings, and I can generally tell what his character is.

The true Christian will do well to make it a settled rule never to waste his evenings. Whatever others may do, let him resolve always to make time for quiet, calm thought, for Bible-reading and prayer. The rule will prove a hard one to keep. It may bring on him the charge of being unsocial and over-strict. Let him not mind this. Anything of this kind is better than habitual late hours in company, hurried prayers, slovenly Bible reading and a bad conscience. Even if he stands alone in his village or town, let him not depart from his rule. He will find himself in a minority and be thought a peculiar man. But this is genuine scriptural separation.

(c) He that desires to come out from the world and be separate must steadily decide not to be swallowed up in the business of the world. A true Christian will strive to do his duty in whatever position he finds himself, and to do it well. Whether statesman or merchant or banker or lawyer or doctor or tradesman or farmer, he will try to do his work so that no one can find any reason for fault in him. But he will not allow it to get between him and Christ. If he finds his business beginning to eat up his Sabbaths, his Bible-reading, his private prayer, and to bring clouds between him and heaven, he will say, "Stand back! There is a limit. Hitherto you may go, but no further. I cannot sell my soul for place, fame or gold."

Like Daniel, he will make time for communion with God, whatever the cost may be. Like Henry Havelock, once a well-known soldier, he will deny himself anything rather than not have time for his Bible-reading and his prayers. In all this he will find he stands almost alone. Many will laugh at him and tell him they get on well enough without being so strict and particular. He will not pay any attention to it. He will resolutely hold the world at arm's length, whatever present loss or sacrifice it may seem to involve. He will choose to be less rich and prosperous in this world rather than not to prosper in his soul. To stand alone in this way, to run counter to the ways of others, requires immense self-denial. But this is genuine scriptural separation.

(d) He that desires to come out from the world and be separate must steadily abstain from all amusements and recreations which are inseparably connected with sin. This is a hard subject to handle, and I approach it with pain. But I do not think I should be faithful to Christ and faithful to my office as a minister if I did not speak very plainly about it, in considering such a matter as separation from the world.

Let me then say honestly that I cannot understand how anyone who makes any pretence to real vital religion can allow himself to attend horse races and theatres. Conscience, no doubt, is a strange thing, and every man must judge for himself. One man sees no harm in things which another regards with

abhorrence as evil. I can only give my own opinion for what it is worth, and entreat my readers to consider seriously what I say.

That to look at horses running at full speed is in itself perfectly harmless, no sensible man will pretend to deny. That many plays, such as Shakespeare's, are among the ablest productions of the human intellect, is equally undeniable. But all this is beside the question. The question is whether horse racing and theatres, as they are now conducted in England, are not inseparably bound up with things that are downright wicked. I assert without hesitation that they are so bound up. I assert that the breach of God's commandments so accompanies the race and the play, that you cannot go to the amusement without helping sin.

I entreat all professing Christians to remember this and to take heed what they do. I warn them plainly that they have no right to shut their eyes to facts which every intelligent person knows, for the unthinking pleasure of seeing a horse race, or listening to actors. I warn them that they must not talk of separation from the world if they can lend their sanction to amusements which are connected with gambling, betting, drunkenness and fornication. These are the things which "God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4); "the end of these things is death" (Romans 6:21).

Hard words these, no doubt! But are they not true? It may seem to your relatives and friends very strait-laced, strict and narrow if you tell them you cannot go to the races or the theatre with them. But we must fall back on first principles. Is the world a danger to the soul, or is it not? Are we to come out from the world, or are we not? These are questions which can only be answered in one way.

If we love our souls we must have nothing to do with amusements which are bound up with sin. Nothing short of this can be called genuine scriptural separation from the world.

“Do not Mention Another Time”

Ichabod Spencer was a minister in New York. One day a boy came to his house with a message from a lady; she wanted Spencer to visit a young man who was sick. But the day was very hot; the place was three miles away (and he probably had to walk there); he had lots of other things to do; he did not know either the lady or the young man, who turned out to be her nephew; and so he was reluctant to go. As Spencer tried to decide what to do, the boy said earnestly: "She said you must come".

The minister went. He found the young man reading a book. He looked

pale and weak but not too ill. They talked for some time and Spencer learned that the man had come from Ireland; he had studied law; he was now 26 and had been unwell for the last six months. Whenever Spencer tried to talk about why he had been asked to come, the young man always changed the subject. At last Spencer asked directly if he wanted to see him for some particular reason. The young man hesitated for a moment and then told him the truth: “I have an old aunt who is a very religious woman, and she has been urging me to send for you. . . . She thinks I will not live long, and has talked to me often on the subject of religion. But as she and I could not think in the same way, she insisted that I ought to speak to some minister of the gospel and finally became so insistent that I reluctantly agreed.”

How did he differ from his aunt in religion? Spencer asked him.

The young man thought his aunt was “too rigid” in her ideas.

“Perhaps she has examined the subject of religion more than you have”, Spencer suggested.

“I have no doubt,” the nephew agreed, “that she has spent more time over it. But my mind is not so formed as to take things on trust. I want *knowledge*.”

And they talked about knowledge, for long periods. The young lawyer argued that, while we can have sure knowledge about the things which we can see and hear and touch, we cannot really know anything about the human spirit. But Spencer showed him that he was wrong: he was relying on an assumption which was, in fact, false. Said Spencer, we can use our minds to reason, and the knowledge we can gain through reasoning may be more impressive than any other knowledge.

The young man confessed: “If my aunt was here now she would rejoice over me. I have silenced her many a time by saying to her: ‘If I could *see* God, I would believe in Him’.” Spencer was making some progress.

Again the minister pointed out that the young man was making an assumption: thinking he was justified in doubting every kind of evidence except what he could get through his own senses – by hearing or seeing, for example. And they talked on and on. At last the lawyer sat in silence for a long time. Spencer thought it best to leave him to his thoughts. He picked up one of the lawyer’s books and went over to the window to read it. Half an hour passed before the lawyer broke the silence with another question. After a little more conversation there was another long pause and Spencer began to read again. At last he put the book away and got up to go.

“I must see you again”, the lawyer said and asked the minister to come for an hour or two the next day.

“Not tomorrow”, Spencer had to tell him, but he offered to come the following day.

“Well now,” replied the lawyer, “do not disappoint me. I’m sorry to trouble you and I feel more grateful to you than I can say; but I cannot leave our subject here.” Their discussions had begun to move him away from his unbelief and he was now afraid of his doubts coming back in their full force.

The minister did return two days later and they talked and talked, until he felt that it was time to leave his friend. The lawyer had just asked him to explain a point and he began to answer: “Another time, perhaps . . .”.

“Do not mention another time,” the lawyer interrupted. “I may be a dead man before I see you again. Tell me now! Take away, if you can, the last inch of ground I have left, and show me to be without excuse in the sight of that God in whom you have compelled me to believe and before whom I must soon stand. I am a dying man. I have no time to lose.”

And they continued to talk for some time longer. The lawyer explained what had led him to give up believing in God: the unchristian actions of those who claimed to be Christians. But Spencer pointed him in another direction: “You should have looked where there was some *influence* of Christianity, not where there was none” – he should have thought about, for instance, societies circulating Bibles, sending out missionaries or setting up homes for orphans. And he went on to tell the lawyer that he ought to welcome Christianity to his heart, for his eternal salvation.

“So I do”, he answered, “so I will. I believe in Christianity. I know I need it. I believe Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I trust Him to save me. I rely on the Holy Spirit to help me against the temptations of Satan and the sinfulness of my own heart. You spoke of examples of religion in private life. Let me tell you. The example of my old aunt has been a demonstration to me. Satan cannot shake it.”

Clearly the young man had made progress, but he still did not understand the way of salvation. Although he believed the fact that Christ came to save sinners, he did not believe *on* Him; he did not *trust* the Saviour for salvation.

But at this point Spencer suggested again that he should go away and come another time; he was afraid that he would tire the ill man too much by continuing to talk.

“Another time!” exclaimed the lawyer, “Another time! You astonish me. I am a dying man. I stand on the verge of time now. I feel the gravedigger is at my side. *You* may talk of time. With your health and prospects, it is not unnatural. But if I should be talking of time, death would laugh at me and call me a fool and a liar.” Then he turned and fixed his eyes on Spencer’s face as he stood in front of him. “Tell me”, he demanded, “what to do to be ready to die.”

“You believe in God – the infinite eternal Spirit?” Spencer asked.

“I do.”

“Then pray to him.”

“I have, and I will.”

“You believe you are a sinner?”

“I know I am,” the lawyer confirmed.

“Then repent and trust in Christ for pardon.”

“Will repentance save me?”

“No,” the minister replied. And he went on to explain: “Christ Jesus saves sinners. You must not trust to your repentance and faith to save you. That would be self-righteousness. Trust only in the crucified Son of God.”

The young man did not seem convinced. After a pause he asked again: “What must be done first, *before* I trust in Him?”

“Nothing. Just nothing.”

“How? Is there no preparation to make?”

“No, none at all.”

“But holiness . . . ?”

Spencer finished the sentence: “. . . results from faith in Christ”.

“And the Holy Spirit . . . ?”

“. . . is your only hope. Without His help you will neither repent nor believe. It is His work to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.”

Then the lawyer asked, “Will you pray with me?”

Of course he would. They went on their knees and Spencer prayed. Then he left, and never saw the young man again. The minister did return the next day, but the man’s friends would not let him in. The lawyer, they said, was too exhausted. But someone afterwards told Spencer that, after he had left for the last time, the lawyer sent for his aunt. He told her that he had given up his atheism, that he no longer doubted that the Bible came from God, and that he believed that the work of Christ was all-sufficient for a dying sinner. He went on speaking to her, and sometimes praying, until he fainted. Spencer was later told that the young man had died in peace, praising God for the work of Jesus Christ in dying for sinners.

This man did not find Christ one moment too soon; he was very quickly swept away into eternity. His words, “Do not mention another time”, were absolutely appropriate.

But what a pity that he did not seek Christ earlier! Then he might have served Christ for a period of time in this world. He might have been a public witness to the power of a godly life. He might have shown a good example to others, as his godly aunt did to him.

It is good – it is truly wonderful – for a sinner to get to heaven. But it is

even better for a sinner to seek the Lord early in life, and find Him, so that he may have the opportunity of serving God for some time in this world.

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

31. The Sermon on the Well

The people worked hard to help Paton build a wall around the inside of the well. They dragged and rolled coral blocks from the shore to the top of the well. Then Paton shaped them and fitted them into the inside of the well. It was tough work but necessary to prevent the sides of the well from falling in.

At last the well was finished. And the old chief, who had thought Paton was mad when he had first suggested digging a well, asked Paton to allow him to preach a sermon on the well the following Sabbath. Paton agreed and encouraged the chief to bring as many people as he could to hear him.

The news spread like wildfire over the whole island: Chief Namakei was to be the missionary speaking at the next worship. A great crowd gathered for the occasion.

Chief Namakei arrived dressed in a shirt and a kilt. He was very excited and swung his tomahawk around as he spoke to the people. He reminded the people of Aniwa how they had all thought Paton was quite mad for thinking he could get water from under the earth. They had laughed at him and mocked him but His Jehovah God helped Him and gave this wonderful well to him and to the people of Aniwa.

Referring to Paton as Missi, he then went on to say: "Something here in my heart tells me that the Jehovah God does exist, the Invisible One, whom we never heard of nor saw till the Missi brought Him to our knowledge. The coral has been removed, the land has been cleared away and, lo, the water rises. Invisible till this day, yet all the same it was there, though our eyes were too weak. So I, your Chief, do now firmly believe that when I die, when the bits of coral and the heaps of dust are removed which now blind my old eyes, I shall then see the Invisible Jehovah God with my soul, as Missi tells me, not less surely that I have seen the rain from the earth below.

"From this day, my people, I must worship the God who has opened the well for us, and who fills us with rain from below. The gods of Aniwa cannot hear, cannot help us, like the God of Missi. Henceforth I am a follower of Jehovah God.

"Let every man that thinks with me go now and fetch the idols of Aniwa, the gods which our fathers feared, and cast them down at Missi's feet. Let

us burn and bury and destroy these things of wood and stone, and let us be taught by the Missi how to serve the God who can hear, the Jehovah who gave us the well, for He sent His Son Jesus to die for us and bring us to heaven. This is what the Missi has been telling us every day since he landed on Aniwa. We laughed at him, but now we believe him. The Jehovah God has sent us rain from the earth. Why should He not also send us His Son from heaven? Namakei stands up for Jehovah!”

That very afternoon, Chief Namakei and several of his friends came to the mission house and left their idols there. In the weeks that followed, more and more people brought their idols to the mission compound. They burned the wooden idols, most of the stone ones were buried, and a few were taken out and sunk at sea.

The people now flocked to the services and listened eagerly to what Paton had to tell them about Jesus – about His life and death. They started asking a blessing on their food and even having family worship in their homes. They also started keeping the Lord’s Day as a special no-work day. They could now leave their belongings in their homes; they did not need to take their animals to church with them to stop them being stolen. Before then, Paton had to preach over the noise of squealing pigs, squawking hens and barking dogs! Now though, there was hardly any stealing going on. When it did occasionally happen, it was dealt with in proper courts, rather than by individuals taking revenge on the suspects.

Paton was thrilled to see God working in the hearts and minds of the people of Aniwa. He was delighted by how they accepted the presence of the Invisible God even although they could not totally understand it. It saddened him that multitudes of educated people in America and Europe would not accept the presence of a Creator God because new ideas in science could not explain such things.

Sadly this situation has only got worse. Today in our schools, colleges and universities it is often considered unscientific even to ask if there is a Creator. Those who believe in evolution are working harder and harder to silence any mention of the fact that there is another viewpoint on how the world came to be. They do not even want to discuss the possibility that there might be a God, an all-powerful Creator, who created this wonderful world.

Many of you will probably come across the theory of evolution in school at some stage. Do not be afraid to speak up and say that you believe God created all things. Do not think it stupid to say that you do not believe that all life evolved from some sort of slime. Take the time now to try and learn as much as you can about Creation and you will see that the Bible’s teaching about God creating the universe does not actually contradict many scientific

theories at all. David the psalmist had a proper understanding of God as the Creator when he said: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God" (Psalm 90:2). *S M Campbell*

For Younger Readers

A Very Good Prayer

One day Jesus told a story about two men. They both went up to the temple in Jerusalem. That was the place where people went to worship God.

The two men went up to the temple to pray to God. One of them was a Pharisee. The Pharisees were people who tried to keep all God's laws, but also some others that they made up themselves.

The other man was called a publican. He worked for the government gathering taxes – money – from the people.

The Pharisee did not seem to need anything from God. He told God how good he was. He was not like other men who did bad things. And he was not like the publican beside him. He thought that he was a very good man indeed and that God would be very pleased with him.

But the publican had very little to say, just a few words. He did not think he was good; he called himself a sinner. He knew he needed God to do something for him. He knew that he needed God to do many things for him.

This is what he said: "God be merciful to me a sinner". No one has ever prayed a better prayer. He was asking God to put away all his sins. He knew that he was not good, but he wanted God to make him good.

Do you think God was pleased with the Pharisee's prayer? No, He was not.

And do you think God listened to the publican's prayer? Yes, He did. God took away all this man's sin.

Lots of people since then have used the publican's prayer. They needed the same things as he did; they knew that they were sinners. So they have found it a very good prayer.

It would be a very good prayer for you to use too: "God be merciful to me a sinner".

Looking Around Us

Working on Sabbath

“Rail strike over Sunday work row.” How unusual to see such a headline! People complaining about having to work on Sabbath! In March, 100 conductors on the London Midland rail service were claiming that they were under pressure to work on Sabbaths and were raising strong objections. The RMT trade union accused the company of refusing to honour long-standing agreements that staff could opt out of working on Sabbaths; they said the dispute had dragged on for eight years.

Whatever the actual rights and wrongs in this dispute, it is clear that it is wrong to do work on Sabbaths which is neither necessary or merciful – and to gather in money from railway passengers has nothing to do with either necessity or mercy. It is now becoming more and more difficult for people to find a job which involves no unnecessary work on a Sabbath, but the opportunity to opt out of Sabbath work is a great blessing.

But it is difficult to believe that many of the 100 conductors in dispute with the railway company have a scriptural basis for their objections. They probably just want to be at home on Sabbaths or enjoy themselves in sport or some form of entertainment – which also is Sabbath-breaking.

But God has spoken. He has said, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”. This means that we should use the whole day, as far as possible, in seeking to worship God and to get good for our souls.

Many people today will experience difficulty over Sabbath working. If you experience such difficulty, make sure that you pray about it earnestly. God never turns away those who sincerely seek His help.

What Moral Values?

Gordon Brown, the British Prime Minister, has spoken again and again about the crisis which has hit the banking system all over the world. That is just what one would expect. But in a speech in Bristol, in March, he complained that banks had lost sight of basic moral values.

He was probably right. But what was his standard? Mr Brown referred to ordinary people’s values, such as fairness and hard work. Did he mention the Bible or God’s law? If he did, it did not appear in the report on the BBC’s internet news service, which was used to write this comment. And it is most unlikely that he did mention either the Bible or God’s law, given British politicians’ fear of mentioning Christianity.

There is no doubt that banks in Britain need proper moral values, but those who work in them need more precise guidance than vague statements

like “what ordinary people think”? How can anyone know that exactly? And have these ordinary people listened to God speaking in His Word or not? Would most ordinary people not think it quite acceptable to tell the occasional little lie?

We need a better standard, and we have one in the Bible. There God has revealed a solid moral standard to direct the conduct of business, even in the twenty-first century. And it provides direction for individuals too, not only at work but in every other situation. We are told in the Bible: “Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The moral basis for all our actions must be what God has revealed, as summed up in the Ten Commandments. God also says: “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:6).

Manna

Based on Exodus 16:18. The passage tells about God providing manna for His people after they came out of Egypt.

Manna to Israel well supplied the lack of other bread;
While God is able to provide, His people shall be fed.

(Thus though the corn and wine should fail, and creature streams be dry,
The prayer of faith will still prevail for blessings from on high.)

Of His kind care how sweet a proof! It suited every taste.
Who gathered most had just enough, enough who gathered least.

'Tis thus our gracious Lord provides our comforts and our cares;
His own unerring hand provides and gives us each our shares.

He knows how much the weak can bear and helps them when they cry;
The strongest have no strength to spare, for such He'll strongly try.

Daily they saw the manna come, and cover all the ground;
But what they tried to keep at home, corrupted soon was found.

Vain their attempt to store it up; this was to tempt the Lord.
Israel must live by faith and hope, and not upon a hoard.

John Newton

Price 70p