

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



December 2009

Vol 74 • No 12

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Cover Picture: Dunvegan Castle, Isle of Skye.

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

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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.

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Vol 74

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No 12

Ready to Die

Paul was almost at the end of his life. He was in prison in Rome. It was not that he had done anything wrong before God; it was probably just because he was a Christian and a preacher of the Christian gospel. He wrote, "The time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6); he knew that some day soon an executioner would come for him and lead him out to die.

But was he *ready* to die? He was indeed. He could honestly go on to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith". Paul had kept up a consistent opposition to Satan and his evil work; he had followed the ways of real godliness to the end; he had believed the true doctrines which God had revealed and he had faithfully preached them. And now he could look forward to his eternal reward in heaven – not, he knew, because he deserved such a reward, but because God is the God of grace. So he added: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me".

Obviously, Paul was no ordinary Christian. His conversion was unique; the risen Christ had come to meet him on the way to Damascus, to make him willing to follow the Good Shepherd. Besides, Paul was an apostle; he was a specially-godly man; and as a missionary, he endured dreadful hardship in bringing the gospel to many widely-scattered areas around the Mediterranean Sea. Yet he was saved on the same basis as everyone else who goes to heaven – he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who died in the place of sinners and who rose again.

We are not focusing on Paul as someone who was different from every other believer. We should remember how conscious he was of sin in his heart and how, day by day, he needed to have that sin put away. We may think of Paul as a man who sought to follow Christ closely, to be completely dependent on Him and to do His will consistently. It was in that God-given spirit of dependence that Paul began his Christian journey; his first question, as he set out for heaven, was to ask his Saviour: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He was no longer the master of his own life; he had submitted to Christ as his King. So he was willing to have the Lord Jesus direct him as to

what he should do and how he should live. This was a very clear indication that Paul was now on the way to heaven and that he was ready to die.

Think of another man, someone Jesus spoke about, whose name we do not know. He was a farmer; he was probably growing crops on a large area of ground. One year he had an exceptional harvest. He did not want to waste any of the grain he had reaped; he decided to pull down his barns and build larger ones. He told himself: "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry". His wonderful harvest would, he was sure, provide him with food for many years into the future. And he would enjoy himself thoroughly. But how wrong he was! For, as Jesus tells us: "God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20). Solemnly, he was going to die, and he was far from being ready.

There is no suggestion that the farmer took the warning seriously, sought the Lord earnestly and urgently, and found mercy. But suppose for a moment that he did so. Then, however thankful he might have been because he was now ready to die, one matter would have given him very serious concern: there was almost no time left to serve God in this world. He must die that day and he would have almost no opportunity to do anything to the glory of God. No doubt many true Christians feel that they can do nothing to glorify God. But they are wrong. They have begun, for instance, to live godly lives – however far short they may come of perfect obedience to God's commandments. Yet God is glorified in the fact that, because they have new hearts, they really want to do what is right. They are learning to ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" They are still very imperfect but, even if they are called into eternity today, they will enter heaven. We can be sure that God will finish the work He has begun in their souls.

David Jones was a noted minister in Wales who died almost 200 years ago. On the day before he died – a friend, another minister called Thomas Harris, – called to see him. As they talked together, Jones picked up his diary and read a verse he had written there two days before; it was Isaiah 45:24: "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". He went on to say, "This I have, dear Harris, and it is sufficient to strengthen me to face the world to come, with ease". He knew that it was a solemn thing to die, but he was ready for it. He needed a righteousness that God could accept and he had such a righteousness because he was trusting in the Lord Jesus. He needed strength to face death, and he was trusting in the Lord Jesus to supply the strength he needed, so that he might face death with ease.

His was not a last-minute preparation. He had served God faithfully for many years. He once came across some men who had gathered for a bout of

cock-fighting. He told them with obvious kindness: “I have some remarkable good news for you if you would be so good as to listen”. He spoke to them about the state of their souls and the love of Christ. As he spoke, the power of God fell on them. Hopefully, at least some of them had a permanent change of heart. And they all made their way home; they no longer wished to take part in their cruel sport. It was clear that Jones loved God and loved his fellow sinners; he was ready to die.

The Bible has a special message for young people: “Remember now thy Creator *in the days of thy youth*” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). It is highly unwise for you to think of seeking God only at some time in the far-away future. Even if your Creator will spare you to become old, there may be a serious difficulty in the way of seeking God then – you may be losing your memory and your mind may no longer be working well. Now, we must not limit God’s power to save old people who are losing their memories, but we must *not presume* on what God will do. He has told us to seek Him while we are young. It is very sinful and highly dangerous to disobey Him. After all, how dishonouring it is to God to think of slipping into heaven at the very last minute, having despised until then every opportunity of beginning to serve Him! Ask God to convert you now. Then you will be fit to serve Him and you will be ready to die – no matter how soon you are called away from this world.

Ready to Die – Another Example

Fanny Palmer was just 18 but she was seriously ill. Her father was a minister in New Orleans and he was confident that she had been a godly girl for several years. It was clear to him that she had a new heart and so he could be sure that she was ready to die. One Sabbath afternoon he asked her: “Do you think you will ever recover?”

“No, Father,” she said, “I do not see how it is possible for me to get well.”

“Do you feel then, Fanny, that you are prepared to die?”

“Yes, Father, I hope I am ready, but I feel so very unworthy.”

“What is it that makes you feel so unworthy?”

“O I have lived so far below my duty.” And she added: “I look back on my whole Christian life and it is worth just nothing. I have often feared that I may be deceived.”

“Those who dread being deceived seldom are”, her father told her. He explained that those who think they are converted but are not – who are deceived about the matter – do not even suspect that they are deceived. The reason is that not to question one’s spiritual state “lies in the nature of the

delusion". "But, Fanny," her father went on, "there is a shortcut out of all this difficulty, for we are saved after all, not by our goodness, but by Christ Jesus, in whom we believe."

"O yes, I know that, and there is my hope."

"Do you feel then, my daughter, that you place your whole trust in the Saviour of sinners?"

"Yes, I feel that my trust is in Christ alone."

"Well then, you are not afraid to die?"

"No, not exactly; but, Father, it is a fearful thing to die."

"So it is, my darling, to those have not repented, but to God's children it is just going home."

"Yes, if we could only have perfect assurance that we are His children."

When this conversation took place there was no sign that death was specially near. But just five days later she fainted and, after she recovered, she said, "O mother, I am dying".

Her mother agreed that she was and added: "Trust your Saviour".

Fanny nodded her head energetically in agreement and then said, "I do; I do". After recovering from a third faint, she turned to her father and said, "It is a frightful thing to die".

He answered, "My daughter, you have twice said that to me. What is there in death that seems to you so fearful?"

"O it is such a solemn thing to meet God. But what I most dread is the pain of dying."

Her father was relieved to find out that this was what was disturbing her. He tried to encourage her by telling her that, having seen many people die, he was convinced that no one feels pain at the moment of death. He then asked her: "Fanny, do you feel that you love Jesus?"

She answered at once: "Yes, I know that I love Him".

"Do you know that you love Him just as you know that you love your mother and me?"

"Just in the same way."

"Well, then, if you love Him and He loves you, can you not leave this matter of your dying in His hands, without being distressed – just, for example, as you have often left things to your mother and me, and have given yourself no further concern, simply because you confided both in our wisdom and love?"

"Yes", was her simple answer. And soon she was gone to her final home in heaven above. What a comfort for her parents to have seen her live as someone who was trusting in Christ, and also to have the testimony of her life confirmed on these last days! What a mercy that she was ready to die!

Martha and Mary

2. Our Spiritual Priorities

Rev H M Cartwright

The first part of this Youth Conference paper introduced the subject. We were told that the incidents where Martha and Mary appear in the Gospels tell us much about Christ and about His dealings with His people. They also tell us about our attitude to Christ – “how devotion to Christ should find expression in our lives”.

Our first encounter with Mary and Martha is in the account which is given only in Luke 10:38-42 and it impresses on us the importance of having our spiritual priorities right. It is the well-known visit of Jesus to the house of Martha, when Martha became exasperated with Mary, and indeed with the Lord. While she was busy in the kitchen preparing food for the Saviour, and probably His twelve disciples and the rest of the family, Mary was sitting listening to the words of Jesus. No doubt Martha did not mean the disrespect for her Lord, in addition to the displeasure with her sister, which her words convey: “Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.” Jesus’ response is well known: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her”.

Martha was embraced in the divine love and human affection of our Lord, and she loved Him as truly as Mary did. It would be wrong to label Mary as a genuine Christian and Martha as a worldly person. It would be wrong to say that Mary had Christ as her Saviour and Martha did not. It was Martha’s love for Christ that made her concerned to make as good provision for Him as she possibly could. Mary may have been helping her prepare the meal till she heard Jesus begin to speak and left her to go to listen to what He had to say. Martha may have felt that, if Mary would come back to help her, they both would be able to get the benefit of Jesus’ teaching. We should think as well of her, and indeed of anyone else, as the facts allow.

Why then did she receive this gentle rebuke from the Saviour? There is another occasion recorded when “they made him a supper, and Martha served” (John 12:2), and no rebuke was given. There is a necessary place for what people might call practical contributions to the service of Christ. Faith works by love. Paul commends the Philippians for sending him help when he needed it (Philippians 4:16) and exhorts the Romans not only to continue instant in prayer but also to distribute to the necessity of the saints and be given to hospitality (Romans 12:12,13). There are some of the Lord’s people whose circumstances or disposition make them much more “practical” in their

Christian service than others. When Dorcas died, all the widows stood by Peter weeping and showing him the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them (Acts 9:39).

You remember this part of the evidence to be given by the Son of man in the day of judgement that people before Him truly belonged to His flock: "For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in. . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren ye have done it unto Me" (Matthew 25:35,40). In writing of things which accompanied salvation in the lives of the Hebrews, Paul said: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:9,10).

The Church owes a great deal to those who occupy themselves as Martha did in attending to its temporal affairs, including those who are "lovers of hospitality" (Titus 1:8). Martha's diligence was not being reprov'd or even undervalued, and the love which prompted it was not being questioned. The problem was that she had lost her sense of priority; she was working hard in order to have something worthy to give to Jesus, and she was putting that before what she needed to receive from Him.

I think that Moody Stuart in his book, *The Three Marys*, is sometimes a little hard on Martha, but there is truth in these words of his: "Martha thought that Christ had need of her and of her services, but Mary knew that it was she that needed Christ. In part, Martha may be regarded as occupied with the concerns of this passing life. . . . But again, she may be taken as doing many things in the service of Jesus Christ, for the purpose of pleasing and honouring Him. The case is a sadly common one: of doing much for Christ, yet caring less for Christ Himself, His teaching, presence and fellowship. . . . She imagined that Christ had need of her services, and that it would please Him best to provide many things to honour Him. But she mistook the character and calling of Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. . . . It is far easier and more natural for every one of us to seek to serve Christ than to be willing to be saved by His service and suffering for us."

Mary is regarded as the more spiritually-minded of the two sisters. We cannot assume that she had no sense of responsibility for practical matters. But she made a choice. She was led by gracious reflection to give the same answer as the Psalmist to the question, "What shall I *render to the Lord* for all His benefits toward me? I *will take* the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalm 116:12,13). She wanted to take the opportunity of Christ's visit to her home to sit as a disciple at His feet and to learn of Him (Matthew

11:29). She could say with Job: “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). She realised that she needed Christ and His Word infinitely more than He needed her and her service.

Having tasted that the Lord is gracious she, like a new-born babe, desired the sincere milk of the Word that she might grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2,3). She realised that taking from Him was more honouring to Him than giving to Him. Her sitting at the feet of Jesus led her to do something for Him which Christ said would be remembered in all ages. She is not an example of a contemplative but inactive life. She is an example of a person who had the right priorities. Having this one thing needful is what gives meaning and purpose and unity to life. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple” (Psalm 27:4). “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Martha knew and felt these things also, but for the meantime she lost sight of them and became overcome by the inward anxiety and outward bustle of doing the best she could for the Saviour’s earthly comfort, to show how much she loved and honoured Him. She came to think that 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.

Baptism

3. Who Should be Baptized?

Rev Donald Macdonald

Last month’s article in this series, originally a Youth Conference paper, asked the question: How Is Baptism to Be Performed?

Scarcely anyone within the Christian Church has ever argued that adults should not be baptized. The argument surrounds the baptism of children or infants. It is clear from the Holy Scriptures that the Apostles baptized adults, when they planted churches among the Gentiles and heathen people were converted to the faith. It is also clearly implied from Scripture that children were baptized: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, *and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:38,39). The households of Lydia and the Philippian jailor can also be referred to.

Which children are to be baptized? The answer is clear from Scripture and the Confession of Faith: only the children of those who are members of the visible Church. In other words, those with at least one parent who makes a credible profession of faith in Christ are to be baptized. Before discussing further the different views on who should be baptized and what their qualifications are, it will be appropriate to comment on the visible Church and its privileges. We will make clear the distinction between the visible and the invisible Church.

Baptism is the outward admission of the person being baptized into the visible Church, with all its privileges. This brings us to a distinction between the visible and the invisible Church. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* tells us that the invisible Church is “the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head”. And the visible Church is “a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation”. The members of the visible Church are brought into a covenant relationship with God. Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace, has founded the Church for this purpose: to administer the provisions of the covenant.

The Free Presbyterian Church's *Manual of Practice* lays down five qualifications for Baptism: “(1) A confession of faith in accordance with the Word of God and the standards of the Church. (2) A life and conversation becoming the gospel as far as can be outwardly seen. (3) A competent knowledge of religious truth, and of the nature and meaning of Christian ordinances. (4) Such as are members of secret societies requiring secret oaths from their members – for example, Freemasons – are not entitled to privileges while they remain connected with such societies. (5) Privileges are not to be given to any who engage in Sabbath work (other than the works of necessity and mercy), or who travel by any form of transport run in systematic disregard of the Lord's Day.”

Are the qualifications for Baptism the same as for the Lord's Supper? Opinion on this point varies. Some hold the view that the qualifications are the same, and it is suggested that only communicants have the right to have their children baptized. One can understand why some lean towards such a position and even adopt it. Others reject this view; if the visible Church is exclusively made up of regenerate persons, non-members and their children will be classed among the unchurched. That is not intended by either Scripture or our Confession of Faith and catechisms.

But this view has its dangers; weak and fallible men cannot really be judges

as to who are regenerate and who are not. Experience has proved that not all who sit at the Lord's Table are regenerate. Are we to conclude that a parent who is weak and trembling and who cannot see his way to come to the Lord's Table is to be denied the sacrament of baptism for his children because he is not a communicant member? Or does the fact that he or she does not make a profession of conversion mean that they are not born again?

In his book, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, John Kennedy takes up this distinction between the visible and invisible Church and the place of the sacraments. He debates with those who held the view that both sacraments are to be "administered on the same footing – the same kind and measure of profession and of qualification being required on the part of applicants for either; that no adult should be admitted to the one without the other".

The Ross-shire fathers believed that though, in general, the two sacraments were equal seals of the covenant of grace they differ in some respects even as sealing ordinances. "Baptism", says Kennedy, "being a door of admission into the visible Church, a larger measure of charity is required in dealing with the applicants for that sacrament than is called for in the administration of the other."

They regarded Baptism as the sacrament of admission in that it specially sealed a believer's introduction into the covenant of grace, and his interest in the initial blessings of regeneration and justification. They regarded the Lord's Supper as a sacrament of nurture, especially sealing the believer's right to all that is required to advance his growth in grace until he becomes a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Many of them defined the distinction thus: Baptism required "an uncontradicted profession", while the Lord's Supper required "an accredited profession".

Further in defence of the argument, Kennedy refers to the Church in the days of the Apostles. Although they were inspired men, they did not pass infallible judgement on those who applied to them for Baptism; they did not judge the state of people's hearts when they claimed to be converted. When the converts on the Day of Pentecost, and the Philippian Jailer, the Ethiopian eunuch and Lydia, along with many others, wished to be baptized at once, the Apostles did not venture to pass judgement on their spiritual state.

He says, "They acted as wise men, but as mere men and charitable, not as inspired men and infallible; and, casting the responsibility on those who made it, they administered baptism on an uncontradicted profession of faith." Whole families of believers were baptized, including children. "Now, if it was the same profession that was required by the Apostles for the baptism of oneself as for the baptism of his child, and if it was and could only be such as the "charity" that "thinketh no evil" alone could accept, was this not exactly

the practice of the Ross-shire fathers in administering that ordinance?"

The Ross-shire fathers were no doubt criticised for taking this particular line in their view of the sacraments, particularly of Baptism. They would have been charged with being too strict on the Lord's Supper, on the one side, while they would be considered lax on Baptism, on the other. But, as Kennedy goes on to say, the practice of men in the North of Scotland went far to prove "that it was according to the mind, and was crowned with the blessing, of the Lord". It had four desirable results:

(1.) The Church was preserved from being too restrictive on the one hand, and from being too slack on the other. The door of the Church was open to all whom pity, charity and prudence would admit, and the inner circle was guarded from too many crowding in who were not fit for it.

(2) It preserved a distinction, so far as can be properly done, between the approved followers of Christ and all others. This distinction, on the level of the Church, is completely blotted out when both sacraments are administered on the same footing.

(3) It kept up a sense of shortcoming in the conscience of those who did not come to the Lord's Supper, but that sense of shortcoming would have been completely extinguished under a different system.

(4) It always reminded ministers of the dangers of not distinguishing in their preaching between those who are converted and those who are not, and brought about some consistency between what was faithfully said in the pulpit and what was done in admitting people to the Lord's Supper.

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

39. Litsi – The Queen of Aniwa

Litsi Sore, meaning Litsi the Great, was the only daughter of Old Chief Namakei. When he became interested in Christianity he took Litsi to the Patons and said, "I want to leave my Litsi with you. I want you to train her for Jesus."

And so Litsi moved in with the Patons. She was an intelligent girl and picked up things quickly. She soon became a great help to Mrs Paton and a firm favourite with all the Paton children. Mrs Paton gave Litsi clothes and she was no longer running around naked like the other island children. When her uncle, her father's brother, saw her dressed so smartly, he sent along his only daughter to be trained like her cousin. The mothers of both girls were dead. The girls reported all they saw and heard at the Patons' and both

fathers became deeply interested in the work and they helped to spread the gospel across the island.

Litsi grew up into a bright, clever Christian girl. She married the tallest and most handsome man on Aniwa. but sadly his good points were mostly outward, and he proved to be a foolish man. He died young and, after his death, Litsi returned to the Mission House to live with the Patons.

Her second marriage was to a young Christian man called Mungaw. It looked likely to be a promising and happy arrangement but ended with sadness and tragedy.

Mungaw was the heir to a chief and had been trained at the Mission. He had given every sign of being a Christian man. He was an able man and a very good speaker. He was a deacon and then an elder in the church; he also became High Chief of one half of Aniwa. Even under difficult circumstances he remained stable and showed a remarkable Christian spirit.

This all changed after Paton took him with him on a visit to Australia. He hoped that, when people saw this converted Christian chief, it would stir interest in the mission work. During this trip Mrs Paton took unwell and Paton had to return unexpectedly to where she was staying. Some men took advantage of Mungaw, who was left by himself for a short while. They took him into a pub and tried to persuade him to drink. When he refused they forced drink and drugs into him until he became unconscious. They then robbed him of the little money he had and threw him out onto the street.

At last Mungaw managed to make his way back to Paton and it took three weeks of nursing to bring him out of the strange shocked stupor he was in. But he was still not himself; so arrangements were made for him to return to Aniwa as quickly as possible in the hope that he would return to his normal self. Sadly he never did.

A form of madness took him over – and he would have crazy bouts of rampaging when he would destroy property, burn houses and threaten people. In between these bouts he would lie in a sleepy state bemoaning all the bad things he had done, saying, “The white men spoil my head! I do not know what I am doing. My head burns hot and I am driven.”

Poor Litsi, she hardly recognised the wonderful Christian husband who had left for the shores of Australia. He made life very difficult for her; her life was in danger many a time. But she bore it all with remarkable Christian spirit.

One time he smashed her head open because she had said to him, “O don’t do that!” – when he had said he was going off out to burn a neighbour’s house down. When Mrs Paton went to see her, she replied to Mrs Paton’s words of encouragement: “O I know it, Missi; my whole words now are

prayer; for I have no one else to speak to. And I would have gone mad if I could not have told my Saviour! I tell Him everything, and know that it is all right even if Mungaw should kill me, for he cannot harm me beyond the grave.”

Shortly after this, Mungaw was shot dead by some men on the island, who were not prepared to tolerate his mad rampages any more. It was a sad funeral of one who had previously shown such fine Christian grace.

After some time Queen Litsi of Aniwa married again. She had a desire to go as a missionary to the people and tribe of Nasi, the man who had murdered Mungaw. He was a Tanna man who had been living on Aniwa for some time. When a white missionary had been appointed for Tanna, Litsi and her new husband were amongst the island teachers who accompanied the missionary. There, on Tanna, where Paton had first started his missionary efforts, Litsi was now working.

Many years had passed when Paton visited Tanna again to be greeted by a joyous Litsi: “O my father! God has blessed me to see you again. Is my mother, your dear wife, well? And your children, my brothers and sisters? My love to them all! O my heart clings to you.”

She then went on to say to Paton: “My days here are hard. I might be happy and wealthy as Queen of Aniwa. But the heathen here are beginning to listen. The Missi sees them coming nearer to Jesus. And O what a reward when we shall hear them sing and pray to our dear Saviour! The hope of that makes me strong for anything.”

Litsi showed not only by her speech but also by her actions of self-denial, that she was a changed person. She clearly showed that she did not live for the things of this world but saw the greatness of eternity and wanted to serve Jesus. Her outward appearance even changed when she adopted Christian principles. The clothes she wore marked her as different from the other children and this helped to encourage others to join the church.

Are we serving Christ – trying to serve Him as best we can, with His help, in the situations in which we find ourselves? And are we prepared to show by our outward appearance that we are on the side of Christ, and trying to follow His standards rather than those of the world? Although there will be many difficulties in the Christian life, those who seek to live as Christians – in dependence on – Christ will be helped to cope with these situations. They will in the end be the happiest people.

Jesus told His disciples: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. . . . For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24,26). *S M Campbell*

For Younger Readers

The Old Deaf Lady

The lady was very deaf. It was a struggle for her to hear anything. But she still went to church, because she loved to hear about the things of God. She was a good woman, who loved God.

She stood beside the pulpit because she wanted to hear as much as possible – even although she could only make out a word or two now and then. She had an ear trumpet to help her hear. One end of it was small and she placed it against her ear. The other end was much bigger and she placed it as near the minister as she could.

If she understood a word that the minister said, she would take away her ear trumpet and put it down beside her. She would then pray to God. She would ask Him to bless to her what she had heard.

I am sure she was not too interested if she heard a word like *and* or *but* or *it* or *when*. But if she heard the word *God*, she might think of how wonderful He is. And she might ask God to help her understand better how great and glorious He is.

Then she would put her ear trumpet back to her ear again, and she would listen until she understood another word. It might be *Jesus*. Again she would put down her ear trumpet. She might think of Jesus as the Son of God, and that He came into the world to save sinners. She might think of Him dying on the cross and rising again on the third day. Then she might think of Him in heaven now, and she might pray that she would go on trusting in Him.

The old lady could hear very little and yet she tried so hard to hear as much as she could. I am sure you can hear very well, but do you try to listen to what you hear in church?

Maybe there is much of what the minister says that you cannot understand. But I think you could listen like the woman did – for words that you can understand. Then you can think about them. And, again like the deaf old lady, you can pray to God and ask Him to bless you.

When you hear about God, think of how great and glorious He is. Then ask God to help you to remember that He hates sin.

When you hear about Jesus, remember that He came into the

world to die; He came to save sinners like you. Ask God to bless you and to make you able to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What Is Evangelical Religion?

1. Holy Scripture

J C Ryle

This is an edited extract from a chapter of the book, *Knots Untied*. It was written with an eye to the situation in the Church of England over 100 years ago, and some of what is said in the rest of the chapter is not so solidly scriptural as this. The word *Evangelical* is used very loosely today; Ryle shows us how it should be used.

To the question, "What is Evangelical religion?", the simplest answer I can give is to point out what appear to be its main features. I consider that there are five of them.

The first of the main features of Evangelical religion is that it gives absolutely the first place to Holy Scripture as the only rule of faith and practice – of what we believe and what we do. It makes Scripture the only test of truth, the only judge of an argument.

Its teaching is that, for salvation, man does not need to believe anything unless it can be read in the written Word of God or can be proved from it. Evangelical religion totally denies that there is any guide for man's soul which can be put on the same level as the Bible. It refuses to listen to such arguments as: the Church says so, the Fathers say so, Catholic tradition says so, Church Councils say so, the universal conscience of mankind says so, the light within me says so – unless it can be shown that what is said is in harmony with Scripture.

The supreme authority of the Bible is one of the cornerstones of our system. Show us anything plainly written in that Book and, however difficult for us to understand, we will receive it, believe it and submit to it. Show us anything in religion which is contrary to that Book and – however plausible, beautiful and apparently desirable – we will not have it at any price. It may come before us endorsed by respected old writers; it may be commended by reason, philosophy, science and the universal conscience of mankind. It means nothing.

Give us rather a few plain texts. If the thing is not in the Bible, or cannot be worked out from the Bible, or is not in clear harmony with the Bible, we will have none of it. Like the forbidden fruit, we dare not touch it lest we die. Our faith can find no resting place except in the Bible or in Bible arguments. Here is rock; all else is sand.

The Young People's Magazine

2009
Volume 74

Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod

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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Looking Around Us

“Forgive Me for What I Have Done”

A man from Surrey was jailed for life recently at the Old Bailey court in London after being convicted of murdering his girlfriend’s mother at her home in south London, in March. Police found fibres from the woman’s clothing on garments the man had been wearing, but they needed more evidence. So they bugged his car.

When police officers listened to the recording, they heard him say: “God, forgive me for what I have done”. It shows that the man had a conscience and some sense that God takes notice of sin – at least when it is serious. It seems encouraging too that he prayed for forgiveness. But it is not at all encouraging to find that he was also recorded pleading: “Please God, help me . . . for me and Lucy [his girlfriend] eliminated from all police inquiries and everything’s all right”. It seems clear that what was important for the murderer was not the evil of his sin or his guilt before God. He was only concerned about the short-term consequences of his sin – he wanted the police to decide that he and his girlfriend were not involved in the murder. Then he would not be brought before a court and sentenced to a long period in prison. There is no sign, at least in what has been reported, that he was sorry for his horrific crime; he just wanted to escape its consequences.

But this is not how we ought to think about God and His reaction to sin. God warned wicked people long ago: “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself” (Psalm 50:21). In the same way, the murderer did not take the *evil* of sin seriously; he thought that God reacted to sin just as he did. He did not want to have to experience the punishment of his sin; he imagined that God would not be too concerned about having even serious crimes punished – in this life or the next.

But he was wrong, very wrong. God does hate sin; He even hates what may seem to us to be little sins. Because He is absolutely holy, God must punish sins of every kind.

Yet God does forgive sins. And so that He could be just when He forgives the sins of those who are guilty – of sins of all degrees of seriousness – He gave, amazingly, His own Son to bear the punishment due to sin. Yes, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

And when sinners believe in Christ and have their sins forgiven, they turn away from sin in repentance. They begin to hate sin. If they are convinced something is a sin, they want to keep away from it. *We* must ask God to forgive all our sin and to give us sincere repentance.

The Depths of Jesus' Love

While I sojourn here below,
Jesus' love shall be my song;
Still His praises will I show
all my blessed life along.

Banished long and caused to roam,
how have I my state bewailed!
Now my Father calls me home;
Jesus has for me prevailed.

Jesus has my ransom paid,
blotted out the guilty score;
He to buy my pardon bled,
died, that I might die no more.

O the depths of Jesus' love;
what has God beheld in me?
How has the Redeemer strove
me to save and make me free!

Hearken sinners, while I tell
what the true believer shares;
What the sons of Zion feel
when in them the Lord appears.

Joys unspeakable abound:
peace and love and righteousness,
When in Jesus we are found,
when the Spirit seals our peace.

Joys in us, as rivers, flow
when Immanuel makes us free;
Peace which you with us may know –
come, you sinners, taste and see.

John Cennick

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