

# The Young People's Magazine

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## Fully up to Date

A letter to a daily newspaper a few days ago referred to James Drummond, “a famous Congregational minister”, who once “told his students to have the Bible and the newspapers open on their desk when preparing a sermon. If the sermon wasn't relevant to the times, then it was a waste of time.” Presumably he believed that no one would notice how up to date the Bible is unless their ministers had some help from the newspapers.

There are no doubt occasions when preachers should refer in their sermons to what is happening in the world around them. But why should they do this? So that they can bring the teachings of the Bible to bear on the events of the time. And they can do this because the Bible is fully up to date; its teachings are always relevant.

We expect daily newspapers to bring us the facts about events in the world; yet in an age like this we need not expect them to point us to the principles on which we should base a proper understanding of what is happening. But the Bible gives us the principles we need; in God's Word you can find the fundamental principles for understanding the whole of life.

A brief news item in the same day's paper tells about a man appearing at Edinburgh Sheriff Court in connection with a robbery when £10 000 was stolen from a security van outside a bank. And another brief item reports on thieves who, outside a supermarket in the early hours of the morning, pushed a woman out of her car and drove it off before being involved in a collision a few miles away.

These two incidents formed only the tiniest fraction of the offences which involved police at that particular time – a very small part of the pattern of today's high crime levels, far higher than a hundred years ago. Leading articles in newspapers may condemn the levels of crime; they may express shock and horror as they discuss them; they may call for new laws and tougher sentences on those who are found guilty. But it is to the Bible we must go to get a proper explanation of what is happening.

These incidents are crimes, because they do harm to other people and break the laws of the country. But the Bible goes deeper; it describes all

wrongdoing as sin. Which means that what is done is not only wrong, but it is done against God – whoever else may also be involved.

Without the Bible we would not know properly about God. But because we have the Bible, we know that God is holy, that He has given us commands by which we ought to regulate our lives, and that He will deal justly with everyone. So He will yet punish all who break His commandments – in other words, all who commit sin, not just those who commit crimes. The fact is that we are all guilty. Yet will today's newspaper – up to date though it is – ever remind you of that?

But where has sin come from? Why do people fail to keep all of God's commandments? Indeed, why do they fail to keep any of the commandments properly? Though your daily newspaper will not give you the answer to such questions, you will most certainly get an answer in your Bible. There sin is traced back almost to the very beginning of the world's history, to what happened in the Garden of Eden when Satan came to tempt Eve and, through her, Adam. Eve and Adam both fell into sin; from then on they had corrupt hearts and it was natural for them to go on sinning against God. And because Adam represented every human being from each succeeding generation, we have all been born with sinful hearts. That is why there is sin in the world.

Yet God has been good; He has always – sometimes more and sometimes less – restrained sin. But why is there more crime today than a hundred years ago? One reason, on the basis of the Bible, is that God is not restraining sin as much as He did then. We may not be able to understand the reasons why He is restraining sin less than He once did, but we can be sure that He has wise reasons for acting in this way.

Probably believers in Rome in 57 AD had plenty information about the sins of people around them in what was then the most important city in the world. But when a letter came to them about that time from the Apostle Paul – what we know as the Epistle to the Romans – they must have *understood* the evil of sin much better than ever before. There were, of course, no newspapers in Paul's time, but even if there were, we could scarcely imagine him writing his Epistle with a pile of them in front of him on his desk.

It is not that Paul went into detail about sins in Rome, but he was inspired by God to give clear teaching about sin in general. Yes, he speaks about idolatry and goes on to give a large list of other sins but, before long he is giving several quotations from that part of the Bible which had already been written – the Old Testament. "There is none righteous, no, not one:" he quotes, "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." That is how widespread sin is: no one

is immune from it; no one wants to return to God; no one – absolutely no one – is doing what is right. And sin affects our whole nature; everything we do is defiled by sin. What is more: sin has consequences. So we will perish for ever in hell unless we are forgiven for all our sins.

It is important to receive teaching about sin, but it is even more vital to discover if there is a remedy. It is, again, to the Bible we must go to learn about that. A newspaper might carry a story about someone who perhaps used to be a drug addict, but has turned over a new leaf and now has a very different lifestyle. Which is indeed excellent news. Would that there was much more of it! But what our daily newspapers will not tell us is that we must go further; we need to be born again; we need new hearts. This is something too hard for us to bring about ourselves, but it is not too hard for God. He has done all that is necessary for sinners to be saved from sin and from the consequences of sin. The Bible teaches us what we need to know about that salvation: how God sent His Son into the world to suffer and die in the place of sinners. This is what must be at the centre of every minister's preaching, and he will get no help from newspapers here. But in the Bible he will find a solid foundation for preaching the gospel, "for 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).

Such a sermon will always be relevant to the times; it need never be a waste of time. One suspects that ministers like James Drummond began to look for help from newspapers in preparing their sermons, because they felt it difficult to convince their congregations, and perhaps themselves, that the Bible is fully up to date. This loss of confidence in the Bible has had very serious results. Each succeeding generation has had less and less of a sense of the authority of God while the crime figures have drifted up and up. It is only a sense of the authority of God, as revealed in the Bible and proclaimed with confidence from the pulpit, that will effectively restrain sin.

If a minister never saw a newspaper, it would be no disaster; though it is not a good idea for him to be out of touch with what is happening in the world around him. Yet he could still tell his congregation what really matters: that they have all sinned, that they need to be born again and that God has provided the remedy for their sin in Christ Jesus. The minister can do so from the Bible alone. And he can be perfectly sure that what he finds in the Bible is perfectly reliable and that it is fully up to date. It deals with the needs of people in every generation – including those of the twenty-first century. Everything we need to know in matters of religion is to be found there. Let us make good use of our Bibles, and of preaching which pays much more attention to the Bible than to newspapers – or to television programmes.

## The Book of Ruth

### 83. The Housebuilder

*Rev Keith M Watkins*

Ruth 4:11a. "And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel."

The people and elders of Bethlehem not only witnessed the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. They also prayed for it: for the bride, for the bridegroom, and for their future children. Their first prayer was for Ruth, the bride: "The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and Leah, which two did build the house of Israel". By asking the Lord to make Ruth like Rachel and Leah, they wanted her to build the family of Boaz like Jacob's two wives built the house of Israel. They wanted Ruth to be a housebuilder – the mother of a family.

From Rachel and Leah, together with their two handmaids, not only Jacob's house, but also the whole nation of Israel, had been built. Jacob's sons had founded the 12 tribes of Israel, who were now a multitude like the grains of sand on the seashore. Now let Ruth the Moabitess also be used to multiply the people of Israel. Let her be like the wives of Jacob and build a large family for Boaz. Let her become a mother in Israel, a housebuilder with many children.

Bearing children was of great importance to the Israelites. They wanted every new wife to become a mother. They understood that having children is one of the main purposes of marriage. Marriage, in which the husband and wife become one, is from the Lord, and through it He seeks children, especially godly ones that would know and serve Him (see Malachi 2:15). Every child born to God-fearing people like Boaz and Ruth will grow up in the Lord's Church, under the sound of the truth. Realising this, it is no wonder that they prayed for Ruth the bride to become Ruth the mother.

Although despised by many, motherhood remains a main purpose of marriage today, as Paul shows us: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house" (1 Timothy 5:14). Young people entering marriage should remember this. Brides should seek to become mothers, to build families. We should still pray for brides, especially those within the Church, that the Lord would make them mothers like Rachel, Leah and Ruth, whose children would enlarge the Church and thus fill the house of God. Let all brides seek to become housebuilders!

This leads us to think of Ruth as a picture of the Church. As Ruth was the bride of Boaz, so the Church is the bride of Christ. And just as the people prayed that Ruth would build the house of Boaz, like Rachel and Leah built

the house of Israel, so we should pray that the Lord's bride would build His spiritual house – His Church.

Of course, Jesus said that He will build His Church Himself (see Matthew 16:18), but He loves to use His people in the process. When sinners are born again, they become living stones in His spiritual house (see 1 Peter 2:5). Only Christ Himself, by the work of His Holy Spirit, can do that. That is how He builds His kingdom. But ordinarily He uses the witness of His Church in this construction work.

The Saviour uses His bride in the great work of building His Church in different ways. He does it by calling men to preach the everlasting gospel. Through the work of the ministry, in which His truth is proclaimed with authority and sinners are called to faith and repentance, the Lord Jesus saves those who believe. Sinners are united to Christ through faith, and "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Usually, they hear through a preacher, for "how shall they hear without a preacher?" (verse 14). The Lord uses the preaching of His servants to bring people to Himself. That is why Paul spoke of himself as a "masterbuilder", of all ministers as "labourers together with God", and of the Church as "God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9,10). So we should pray for the ministers of the Word, that the Lord would use their labours to build His house.

Preaching is not the only way that the Lord uses His bride to build His house. He can use all His people, however private and humble their callings may be. He says to every member of His Church: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Christians are "the light of the world" (verse 14). In the midst of this world's spiritual darkness, the light of the grace that is in them must not be hidden away, and it cannot be. It must shine! And it will shine, by the "good works" of their godly, gracious and holy lives. And when it shines, what will happen? By God's grace the eyes of some people will be opened and they too will start to glorify God. Through the daily witness of God's people, sinners will come to know Him as their own Father.

All God's people have the duty of "holding forth the word of life" (Philippians 2:16). Some do this by preaching, but all must do it by their daily witness, as they live "without murmurings and disputings" (verse 14), "blameless and harmless" (verse 15). Their lives are so different to sinners all around them, and through that light others are sometimes drawn to their Saviour and also become part of the Saviour's house. So we should pray for all believers, from the very moment they are united to Christ in the union of the gospel, that He would use them to build His house, the Church.

Another way the Lord uses His bride to build His house is by giving them children, whom they are to raise for Him. Christian parents are to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). By biblical parenting, by spiritual training, by unceasing prayer, by rightly using baptism, Christian parents are building the Lord’s house. When the Lord adds His power and grace to their endeavours, and their children are saved and become members of the spiritual house of God, Christian mothers become like Rachel and Leah, who built the Church of God in the Old Testament. We should pray for brides that the Lord would give them wisdom and grace to train up their children in the way that they should go, and that they would become the Lord’s children too.

So Christ uses His Church to build His spiritual house. This is why the Bible sometimes speaks of the Church as the mother of believers: “the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26). The believer describes the Church as “her that conceived me” (Song of Solomon 3:4), because it was through the Church’s witness that the new birth came.

So, as they prayed for Ruth, the new wife of Boaz, that she would build her husband’s family, we should pray for the bride of Christ, that she would build her Husband’s family, the Church. Sinners should begin such prayers as soon as they are united to the Saviour. From that moment they become the wife of Christ, let them seek also to become mothers soon. May the Saviour use them to build His Church. May they become spiritual housebuilders!

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## Rowland Taylor

### 3. Built on the Immovable Rock

Taylor was a godly minister in Hadleigh in England in Reformation times. After Queen Mary had come to the throne – following godly King Edward VI – Roman Catholicism was restored. When Taylor objected to a priest saying mass in his church, he was summoned to London and condemned to death. He ate one last meal with his wife and children, when he gave them good advice.

The next day the Sheriff of London came to the prison at 2 am and brought Taylor out. His wife had suspected that this would happen and she was waiting outside with two of their children, 13-year-old Elizabeth – whom they had adopted when, at the age of only three, she was left an orphan – and Mary, their own daughter. When Elizabeth saw the Sheriff and his band, she shouted: “Mother, mother, here is my father led away!” His wife shouted in the darkness: “Rowland, Rowland where art thou?” He answered her: “Dear wife, I am here”.

When he stopped, the Sheriff’s men would have hustled him on, but the

Sheriff himself told them to wait for a little to let him speak to his wife. They knelt down and said the Lord's Prayer. Afterwards Taylor stood up and kissed his wife, shook her hand and said, "Farewell, my dear wife, be of good comfort, for I am quiet in my conscience. God shall stir up a father for my children." He next kissed Mary and said to her: "God bless thee and make thee His servant". He then turned to kiss Elizabeth and wished her God's blessing also. He encouraged them together: "I pray you all to stand strong and steadfast to Christ and His Word, and beware of idolatry". Then his wife expressed the wish: "God be with thee, dear Rowland," and told him that she expected to see him in Hadleigh, which was where he was to face death.

He was led out to the Woolpack Inn and put in a room, where four yeomen of the guard and the Sheriff's men watched over him. At once Taylor went down on his knees; indeed he spent his whole time there in prayer. When his wife tried to follow him, the Sheriff refused to let her speak any more to her husband. But he told her that she could go to his own house, where she could have everything she needed, and directed two of his men to bring her there safely. However, she wanted to go to her mother's, and the officers were commanded to go with her there instead; it was still very early on that winter's morning.

At 11 am they set off from the inn on horseback to hand Taylor over to the Sheriff of Essex, who was now ready to take charge of him. He in turn would pass the prisoner over to the Sheriff of Suffolk, the county in which Hadleigh was. As he rode along with the Sheriff of Essex and his men, Taylor called on them to repent, to change their wicked way of living. And he pointed out to them how he had no fear, but was joyful at heart and glad to die.

As they ate their evening meal at Chelmsford, the Sheriff tried very earnestly to bring his prisoner back to the Roman religion. "We are right sorry for you," he told Taylor, "God has given you great learning and wisdom". Taylor, he pointed out, had been in great favour with the Council before Edward VI died, and even with the King. He was loved by everyone for both his virtues and his learning, the Sheriff went on, with more than a hint of flattery. "And", he told Taylor, "it would be a great pity you should cast yourself away willingly, and so come to such a painful and shameful death. You would do much better to change your opinions and return to the catholic universal Church of Rome, acknowledge the Pope's holiness to be the supreme head of the Church and reconcile yourself to him." But Taylor was firm; he knew what was right and he was mindful of his duty before God. He would not give up the teachings of the Bible and return to the Church of Rome, which never was properly universal (which is what the word *catholic* really means).

After the Sheriff of Suffolk had taken charge of the prisoner, they reached Lavenham. During the two days they spent there, several important men came to him in a further attempt to persuade him to turn back to Rome. If he would do so, they promised him that he would be pardoned and even made a bishop. But no, Taylor was not interested in such promotion and he remained firm in his beliefs. As Foxe the historian put it, thinking of Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount: Taylor "had not built his house upon the sand in peril of falling at every puff of wind, but upon Christ, the sure and immovable rock".

At last they reached Hadleigh. As they rode over the bridge, they saw a poor man waiting with five small children. "O dear father and good shepherd, Dr Taylor," the man shouted, "God help thee as thou hast many a time helped me and my poor children." Both sides of the streets in Hadleigh were lined with people from the town and from the surrounding countryside. They complained to each other: "There goes our good shepherd from us that so faithfully has taught us, so fatherly has cared for us". "What shall we poor scattered lambs do?" they asked. "What shall become of this most wicked world?" And they cried: "Good Lord, strengthen him and comfort him". When he reached the almshouses, where the poorest people lived, he threw to them most of his remaining money. At the last of these almshouses, he asked, "Is the blind man and blind woman that lived here alive?" "Yes," he was told, "they are there inside." He then put the very last of his money inside a glove and flung it through an open window into the blind couple's dwelling.

When they reached the place where the prisoner was to be put to death, a large crowd was waiting. He wanted to speak to them, but the Sheriff would not allow him. He reminded Taylor about a promise he had made to the Council. "Well," Taylor answered, "a promise must be kept." There is no record of this promise but it was common for the Council to threaten to cut out the tongues of prisoners unless they would promise to keep silent when they were being put to death. The authorities were no doubt afraid that the words of the martyrs, witnessing against the errors of Romanism, would be particularly effective in these circumstances. They were also afraid there would be some disturbance among the spectators, but in fact that never happened anywhere.

Taylor gave away his boots and as much of his clothes as he could decently take off. Then he told the people: "I have taught you nothing but God's holy Word and those lessons that I have taken out of God's blessed book, the Holy Bible. And I am come here this day to seal it with my blood." A yeomen of the guard ordered him to be quiet. So he knelt down and prayed. Soon, standing now inside a barrel, he was tied to the stake. With his



hands folded together and his eyes looking up to heaven, he went on praying. The men brought bundles of sticks and lit the fire. A man threw one of these faggots at him; it hit his head and the blood ran down his face. The martyr told him meekly: "O friend, I have harm enough. What need was there for that?"

As Taylor – whom J C Ryle calls "one of the best and bravest of the English martyrs" – was repeating Psalm 51, someone struck him on his lips, telling him to speak in Latin – which, of course, the ordinary people would not be able to understand. Finally Taylor called on God: "Merciful Father of heaven, for Jesus Christ my Saviour's sake, receive my soul into Thy hands". And we need have no doubt that a merciful God heard the prayer of this godly man and brought his soul safely to heaven.

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## The Angel of the Covenant

### 1. The First Appearances

*Rev Angus Smith*

This is the first section of a paper given to the Youth Conference in 2000.

*Christ in the Old Testament* is a fascinating subject, but the subject is far too vast for a paper of this nature. I have chosen to speak on the *theophanies*, the appearances of God – or, to be more exact, the appearances of Christ – in the Old Testament, as the Angel of the Covenant. The Angel of the Covenant at times appeared as man, and at other times as the Shekinah – the pillar of fire and cloud – in which the Angel dwelt.

Who, or what, do we mean by the Angel of the Covenant? He is the Messenger of the Lord, or of the Covenant. The Lord used created angels (or messengers) to do His will in ministering to the Church on earth; but this is the uncreated Angel, the Second Person of the Trinity. He came to make God's covenant of grace with Abram and with His people. Much later on in history, as Messiah, He would say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father". In these days also He would declare Himself to be the One sent to the world by the Father. In John's Gospel alone we read of Him about 30 times as the one who was sent. In the New Testament He did not merely come with a message; He Himself was also the message – of salvation.

At times He appeared in the form of a man, as indeed did other angels. On God's part, this was condescension to sinful men whom He was to save, for it would be easier for weak sinful men to be dealt with by the Lord when He was veiled in humanity. In passing, we notice that, in the *symbols* of Scripture, created angels are seen at times with wings with which they move to do God's

will; yet in real-life appearances that is never so, but they appear as men. They are holy spirits who are flames of fire in their zeal and love for God – ministering spirits to such as shall be heirs of salvation.

The humanity adopted by the Angel of the Lord and the other angels was one which was used as the Lord sovereignly wills, for His own covenant purposes, and could then be laid aside. It was distinct from the humanity which Christ took when He was born into the world and was a portion of the humanity which already existed and came from Adam. When Christ took a true human nature to Himself, it consisted of body and soul, and it is His human nature for ever. In the form of humanity which the Angel took in Old Testament times He, and created angels, could eat and drink in the same way as He did in His body as the Messiah, before and after the resurrection, although neither the resurrection body nor the angelic human form needed food or drink. It was just to make it easier for sinful men to treat with the Lord, and even with angels.

The first time we seem to see Angel of the Lord is immediately after man fell, when He was heard in the Garden of Eden calling, “Where art thou?” to Adam, and in a sense to all lost sinners, especially to the elect. The Angel of Jehovah is a personal name. We use the term *theophany* (appearance of God) when there are appearances in which it can be seen that He is God. Sometimes He is identified as God (Genesis 16:7,13), or recognised as God (Genesis 16:9-11). He is described in terms which are only suitable for God (Exodus 3:5,14). He calls Himself God (Genesis 31:11,13). He receives and accepts worship (Joshua 5:14). These theophanies anticipate the New Testament doctrine of Christ's becoming man (John 1:14), and typify God's dwelling among the redeemed (Exodus 25:8, Revelation 21:3). But, by confusing this Angel with created angels, the Roman Catholic Church has set afoot the worship of angels.

To understand the phenomenon of the theophanies we must look first of all at the history of Abraham, or Abram, as he was then named. God called Him out of Ur of the Chaldees at a time when there were few pockets of the true faith. God would make a new beginning with Abram, for all gospel blessings which we know today were, in a sense, to flow to the world at large through him. These blessings include the coming of Messiah in the flesh, the writing of Scripture, and also all the other spiritual blessings which were to spread throughout the world. God spoke many times to Abraham and others, but the Angel of the Lord did not usually appear then. He would seem to have appeared at special times. He spoke as if He was the Creator and Director of all things and was the covenant God of Israel. He decided the destiny of nations and individuals, and claimed divine honour and glory.

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The first definite mention of a theophany is in Genesis 12, and to understand what happened there helps us follow the pattern of later appearances. At the beginning of the chapter we read how God commanded Abram to leave his father's house, country and people, and to go to a land that He would show him. Stephen (in Acts 7) explains that the God of glory – that is, the Angel – appeared to Abram when he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees. God promised to bless him and to make him into a great nation. He also said that He would bless all who blessed Abram and curse all who cursed him, and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Abram then left Ur, and we are afterwards told that the Lord for the first time revealed Himself to him in Canaan itself, at Sichem in the plain of Moreh, telling him that He would give this land to him. Abram's response to the manifestation of God, and to the covenant promises he was given, was to build an altar to worship the Lord – or to call upon His name. This was a witness in a heathen land that Abram worshipped the true and living God, and relied totally on Him. This pattern of the Angel revealing Himself, the repetition of the covenant promises, and the building of altars would continue – especially in the promised land, where the Church of God would be planted as God's vineyard.

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## How Did it all Begin?

### 2. Evolution

So what exactly is the theory of evolution? It tries to explain how life first began; and it tries to explain how this first form of life changed over long periods of time, producing new life forms, which then changed into other life forms.

When we consider evolution, it is important to remember that it is not a scientific fact but a belief; so it is a religious approach to how life began. Those who believe in evolution like to present it as scientific fact, but the evidence to support this approach just does not exist. There are some things in the Bible which we accept on faith because we do not have hard evidence for it; as the Bible itself says, “through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:3).

Creationists and evolutionists have the same evidence but interpret it in different ways and so come up with different conclusions. This is because they are starting from different belief viewpoints. Evolutionists will argue against this but, as we go on to look at their “evidence” in future months, God

willing, we will come to see that “faith” is required to make the link between this evidence and their final conclusions. We will also consider evidence which clearly supports a belief in the Bible’s account of creation.

Evolutionists outline a general progression for the evolution of living organisms. It starts, they claim, with a single-cell organism which evolved into one with lots of cells. Then some of these organisms evolved into different plant forms and others into fish, some of which evolved into land amphibians, which in turn evolved into reptiles, and so on. Various timelines are produced showing the different branches of evolution for the different categories of living organisms and ending with the appearance of mankind, supposedly evolving, at last, from apes.

Scientists have carried out many experiments trying to prove that non-living material can come alive. A well-known experiment, sometimes called the Urey-Miller Experiment, was carried out in 1953 at the University of Chicago. Its aim was to demonstrate that amino acids, which join together to make up proteins, could have come into existence by chance billions of years ago on the lifeless earth. Miller managed to synthesise three out of 20 amino acids, and the evolutionary world was delighted. Here was the proof they had been looking for! But there were serious flaws in the experiment and in the conclusions drawn from it. Even scientists who believe in evolution accept that the experiment does not prove very much – just that some amino acids can be synthesised under rigorously-controlled laboratory conditions which are not even the same as those on early earth.

Proteins are known to be the “building blocks of life”; as already mentioned, they are made up of different combinations of amino acids. Another scientist, Sydney Fox from Florida State University, tried to advance on Miller’s experiment by showing that proteins could bring the evolutionary world one step closer to synthesising life. Fox managed to join a number of amino acids together under specific artificial conditions. These linked amino acids were supposed to be similar to protein molecules, but were not actually protein molecules, Fox named them “proteinoids”. So the “building blocks” of life have not yet been synthesised. Even if they had been, it would have needed faith and imagination then to conclude that, just because proteins had been made, life would follow.

Until the late 1800s many people believed in spontaneous generation – the idea that life could arise spontaneously from non-living matter. For instance, people thought that rats could form from flour in bags on a bakery floor, that one could get mice by mixing sweaty clothes with husks of wheat! Such beliefs seem ridiculous to us today but they are no more ridiculous than the “spontaneous generation” beliefs of many evolutionists. They insist that,

with the right mixture of chemicals and the right amount of energy in the right sort of conditions, life started on this planet.

Charles Darwin is possibly the name most associated with the idea of evolution. But what made Darwin put forward this theory of organisms evolving without a “Designer”? He had a daughter called Annie who died as a young girl. He could not come to terms with this and began to question God and His goodness. He asked himself: If God is good, how could He have allowed my daughter to die? As a result, he could not accept that God exists and decided that Annie was the unfortunate victim of the laws of nature. And so Darwin tried to expel God out of his world; he did so by denying the truth of God’s existence. He then had to find other explanations for how life began, and so put forward the theory of evolution. Many evolutionist sources like to play down the fact that Darwin turned his back on Christianity.

So evolution is the belief that the universe and all living organisms within it arose from chance. Holding tightly onto this belief, scientists who believe in evolution look for evidence and try to interpret it in such a way as to justify their belief.

*S M Campbell*

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*For Junior Readers*

## “I Had Grasped a Shadow”

As the new school year is well underway, I’m sure most of you will now be very busy with your studies. That is right and proper. The Bible tells us plainly: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might”, and that applies to your school work as well as to other things. It is right to do your best, and if you work hard you will be rewarded by some success.

But it is important to look at these things of this life in a right way. Although they are important in their own place, they must not crowd out spiritual things.

Have you heard of Henry Martyn? He left Britain as a missionary to India and Iran in 1805. He had been a brilliant maths student at Cambridge University. He worked very hard before his final degree exams in January 1801. Although his year group was unusually brilliant, Henry Martyn won the first prize. He was awarded the highest possible honour, becoming “Senior Wrangler” in mathematics. Although he had every reason to be delighted with his success, he had to confess: “I obtained my highest wishes, but was surprised to find that I had grasped a shadow”.

What does that show you? It shows that what we achieve in this world does

not satisfy. It is always tinged with a sense of dissatisfaction because they are only earthly blessings. As the Saviour said to the woman of Samaria: "Whosoever drinketh of this water [from the wells of this life] shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst". It is only the water that springs up to everlasting life that can truly satisfy.

What should you learn from this? Surely that you should put first things first. Yes, you should be diligent at your school work, "but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you". Make spiritual things your first priority and the Lord will also help you with your studies.

"Strive", we are told in Scripture. Strive for what? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate" (Luke 13:24). If you look in the margin of your Bible, it tells you that the word used here means *strive as in agony*, using every effort of mind and body. Salvation is something really worth labouring for. Why? Because, as we are told in Matthew 7:13,14, "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat . . . strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Should you not prefer to be on the way that leads to life, even though it is narrow and few join you. Surely this is better than to be on the way to destruction? And what is there to encourage you to strive? The promise that encouraged Christian, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, when he reached the wicket-gate: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you". That promise is for you too: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). *J van Kralingen*

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*For Younger Readers*

## The Pearl

Jesus told many parables. These were stories about lots of things. He told about a man who went out sowing seed. He told about wheat and weeds growing together in a field.

And he told about men catching fish. The men kept the good fish and they threw away the fish which no one could eat.

But why did Jesus tell these stories? All these parables were stories with an important meaning. We should try to learn the meaning of these parables.

One of Jesus' parables was about a man who went about buying and selling pearls. He was always looking for lovely pearls. When

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he found a nice pearl, he would buy it. Then later he would sell it to someone else for more money than he paid for it. That was how he earned enough money to buy other things – food and clothes and everything else he needed for himself and for his family.

One day he found a wonderful pearl. He would have to pay a lot of money to buy it. But he did not have enough.

So what do you think he did? He went and sold everything he had, so that he could buy this pearl. He sold all his other pearls so that he could buy this one. This pearl was so wonderful that nothing else mattered. He would not allow anything to stand in the way of buying this pearl.

What do you think Jesus meant when He was speaking about this pearl that cost so much money?

Nothing can be more important than to follow Jesus – to obey Him, to believe in Him, and to worship Him. If anything else gets in the way, we should be willing to get rid of it.

Are you sometimes annoyed when you are playing and your father or your mother tells you: “It is time for worship”. You do not want to stop playing. But what is more important? Is it to play or to worship God with the rest of your family?

Remember the man who sold everything so that he could buy the pearl. So what should you do? You should say to yourself: “It is good to worship God. I must go at once.”

Or someone wants you to do something sinful. Perhaps you really want to do what is wrong. But you should remember the man who sold everything to buy the pearl. You know it is always right to do what God tells you.

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## Encouragement

I was staying in a house in the countryside and decided to go for a walk. The landscape was not very pretty: it was winter, which is the dry season in Brazil. It had not rained for many months. The trees were covered in red dust and the unpaved road was covered with a two-inch layer of very fine red dust, so I had to measure my steps very carefully so as not to fill my shoes with it! I thought of the Lord Jesus walking great distances on dusty roads and of the privilege of those who washed His feet while He was on earth.

Everything was dry and everywhere looked very desolate, as if the

landscape had been painted in both dark brown and red colours. It was a Saturday evening; I was sad as I thought about the spiritual state of my beloved country and of my family and I felt discouraged. I thought of the Sabbath day which was approaching and I felt grieved at the thought of seeing so many trampling over such a special day. It is so foolish – in an attempt to enjoy oneself – to refuse to obey the Lord's commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. Then I thought of a holy God watching it all from His holy place and one day calling men to settle their account with Him. How unspeakably solemn!

I was now quite a long way from the house and I saw, from a great distance, a very large mango tree. Mango trees can grow to a gigantic size, almost as big as a house! It seemed that there was someone sitting under it, although I was too far away to see him properly. As I got nearer, I was able to make out that there was indeed someone sitting there, in the shade of the mango tree. It was a young man, wearing camouflaged army fatigues – which explained why I was not able to tell from a distance whether there was anyone there or not.

As I got nearer I could see that he was reading something. And as I walked past him I was able to see the small book he was reading. It was the Bible! He was reading very attentively. When he saw me he greeted me. I did not begin a conversation with him because I thought that it was much more profitable for him to carry on reading what God had to say to him in His Word. I just returned his greeting and told him that I too loved the Word. He smiled warmly and I carried on with my walk.

My mood of gloom quickly passed as I reflected on what I had just seen: a young man, reading the Word of God, preparing his heart for the Sabbath, in a country dominated by the superstitions brought in by Roman Catholicism, spiritism and other false religions. I thought of Acts 18:10: "I have much people in this city", and I prayed that it will yet be so in that large town. When we feel downcast about the Lord's cause in this world, we should remember His promises, such as: "Many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths" (Micah 4:2). What wonderful times these will be, when many shall be willing to learn God's commandments and walk in them!

I quickened my steps back to the house and followed the young man's example. I picked up my Bible and, as I read it, I felt encouraged by the many promises of better days to come. May we feel moved to pray that the Lord will hasten the days when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

*C Johnson*



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## Looking Around Us

### Posters for Churches

“Church. Part of modern life.” This is the message in one of a series of black and white posters produced for the Church of England in a new advertising campaign. Yes, of course, the Church must be part of modern life. But, at the same time, it must remain faithful to Scripture – and to God, who is the true Head of the Church.

In these posters, we are told, the Church aims to bring the attention of the public to “the often-overlooked practical role that the Church plays in their communities and daily lives, as well as its active contribution to the care of society in general”. So one poster reads: “More dances are held in church halls than in dance halls”. And another: “The Church. Provider of judo lessons, antique sales, playgroups, ballet lessons, school discos, flower-arranging classes, theatre clubs, and, oh yes, church”.

It all paints a very sad picture of how the Church of England sees itself – as part, not only of modern life, but of the world (the *world* here describing those who are still in rebellion against God). And when the Church sees itself as part of the world, it is in a dangerous position. The Bible speaks plainly enough: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

But why will the Church not listen to the Bible and to God speaking in the Bible? Because it does not understand what God means when He says, “My son, give Me thine *heart*” (Proverbs 23:26). It should be clear that dancing and drama are activities which no one should feel at home with, after their heart has been drawn to God. Activities like flower-arranging, obviously, are not sinful, but why does the Church need to become involved in teaching them? Perhaps, we may be told, it is to attract outsiders to the churches. But are such churches likely to go on to teach their visitors about sin and salvation? This is the real activity God has directed His Church to undertake, and it is clearly far more important than anything else she might get involved in.

May churches not display posters? Of course they may. But appropriate posters are those which have verses from Scripture, such as: “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found”, or, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”. These verses carry God’s authority with them. They speak to sinners’ deepest needs, and we may expect God to bless them.

May the Church as a whole remember its real duty to the people: to be God’s messenger to convey His mind to every generation. If the Church would do so, taking the Bible seriously, it would indeed contribute something very valuable to modern life.

## How I May Cleanse My Way

This poem is based on the words of Psalm 119:9: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word".

With humble heart and tongue,  
my God, to Thee I pray,  
O make me learn, while I am young,  
how I may cleanse my way.

Now in my early days,  
teach me Thy will to know;  
O God, Thy sanctifying grace  
early on me bestow.

Make an unguarded youth  
the object of Thy care;  
Help me to choose the way of truth  
and flee from every snare.

My heart, to folly prone,  
renew by power divine;  
Unite it to Thyself alone  
and make it wholly Thine.

O let Thy Word of grace  
my warmest thoughts employ!  
Be this through all my following days,  
my pleasure and my joy.

To what Thou, Lord, impart  
be my whole soul inclined;  
O let it dwell within my heart  
and sanctify my mind.

May Thy young servant learn  
by this to cleanse his way;  
And may I here the path discern  
that leads to endless day.

*John Fawcett*