

# The Young People's Magazine

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## What Must We Know?

Isaac Newton was one of the greatest scientists of all time. Most of his life from the 1660s onwards, he worked quietly away in his rooms in Cambridge University, where he became a professor. For a long time he did not want anyone to know the discoveries he was making. Although he is most famous for his understanding of gravity, he probably made a more important contribution to what we know about the world and its place in the solar system than any other scientist. Others since then have taken science much further, but only because they were using the science and mathematics that Newton developed. A recent writer has claimed that he “discovered more of the essential core of human knowledge than anyone before or after”.

But what is the essential core of human knowledge? What do you really *need* to know so that you can live out your life in the best way possible? Now, there is no doubt that today, apart from men like Isaac Newton, we would not have any of the wonders of modern science and technology – from mobile phones to washing machines to spacecraft – much of which makes life easier in many ways. And if many people now are just as busy as those in the past, most of them can achieve much more than they could have done in the days before modern technology was developed. But, long before Isaac Newton was born, people knew something far more important than modern science and mathematics and they were making their way safely to heaven in the light of that knowledge. In the end, what shall it profit a man to grasp the essential core of *scientific* knowledge if he will lose his soul?

What do we really need to know? First, we need to know that God exists, that He is “high above all the earth . . . exalted far above all gods” (Psalm 97:9). And like everything else that we will consider, this is something we learn from the Bible. It is because there is a revelation from God, in the Scriptures, that it is possible for us to learn the essential core of human knowledge. And we can be sure that what the Bible teaches – or, to put it another way, what God has revealed to us in the Bible – is perfectly accurate; it is absolutely reliable. We can never go wrong if we listen to the Bible.

We must also know that this God is our Creator, and because He is our

Creator, He has authority over us. He has given us commandments which we are obliged to obey. But we should not find this oppressive; God's is a good law – that is, it is for our good. If we were to obey God in everything, our lives would be much easier than they are. This of course reminds us that we are sinners, which is something else we very much need to know, and to recognise that it is no trivial matter to be a sinner. Indeed it is tremendously serious, because every sin is committed against an infinitely holy God. And sin must be punished; God would be unjust if He did not punish sin.

But at the very centre of the essential core of human knowledge is the fact that God sent His own Son into the world to rescue a vast number of sinners. The Saviour, the Bible tells us, is both God and man, united in one wonderful Person. We may not be able to *understand* how this can be, but it is the teaching of God's Word, and we are therefore to receive it as the truth. We should not expect to be able to understand easily the ways of the infinite God. After all, who can explain how gravity works? How, for instance, does the sun exert a pull on the earth, millions and millions of miles away? Newton was able to calculate the force of gravity but neither he nor anyone since then has been able to explain how it works. So we should not be surprised if we cannot understand fully how Christ, the Son of God, became man so that He could save sinners.

These sinners were condemned to eternal punishment because of their sins, but Jesus Christ bore their sins on the cross; He died instead of them, as their substitute. He endured the punishment they deserved. And He did something else they could not possibly have done for themselves. He kept the law on their behalf, and He did so perfectly. Indeed He did everything that was necessary for them to be saved, so that they might escape the indescribable torments of a lost eternity and enjoy instead the wonderful blessings of heaven. That is what the Bible teaches, in John 3:16 for instance: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". What is more, they will enjoy God's blessing in this life – He will care for them and help them, until He brings them to heaven.

We must not be content with what we might call outward knowledge. Few of us might know as much about the Bible as Judas Iscariot (though he could only then have known the Old Testament). But what good did his knowledge do him? The other disciples believed in Jesus as a Saviour from God, but Judas did not; he did not submit to His Master; he had no real love to God or to His Son Jesus Christ. So he did not really know Jesus. And at last he was lost; he was not fit to go to heaven – in spite of all his knowledge.

And we must not presume that we are safe just because we have the

essential core of human knowledge – because we know a lot about the Bible, or because we have learned the Shorter Catechism. We cannot be safe unless we actually believe in Jesus Christ as the Saviour whom God sent into the world, who died for sinners and rose again. If we do no more than accept that the facts of Scripture are true, we must not be content; faith in Jesus Christ includes trust. Paul told Timothy about the day of judgement: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12) and, as he did so, he was trusting in Christ to keep his soul safe till then. We must *trust* in Him to deliver us from our sins and to keep us safe always.

There is much more in the Bible than has been mentioned in this article. We should try to learn as much of it as possible, and we should pray that the Holy Spirit would bless it to our souls. We should ask: “Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy truth” (Psalm 86:11). Yet we *must* gain from the Bible that essential core of knowledge which includes the important truths about sin and about salvation through Jesus Christ. And we should pray: “Thy Spirit is good; lead me” (Psalm 143:10). Then ours will be a spiritual knowledge of God and what He has revealed in the Bible, and we will be safe even when the time will come when we have to die.

Yet we should not despise other areas of knowledge, whether science or maths or whatever. Some of you will be beginning new stages of your education at this time of year. Make the most of your opportunities to prepare yourself for the future – particularly in the world of work. You should remember with thankfulness that these opportunities are greater today than at any other time in history. And remember the scriptural principle: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Yet there is another scriptural principle that should guide you in your studies – and in everything else – “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). If you are working under pressure and you are tempted to skip reading the Bible or prayer, remember what should have the highest priority in your life. It is your soul and what will contribute to its welfare. When life draws to a close, everything else we have learned will lose its importance. But if you have grasped what really is the essential core of human knowledge, these teachings of the Bible will then seem more important than ever. Depend on them – and especially on Jesus Christ as revealed in them – and you will be perfectly safe in heaven for ever. So, while there are many things which it may be important for you to know, can anything be more essential than to know the way of salvation?

## Rowland Taylor

### 1. Poisoning Christ's Flock

Rowland Taylor was the godly minister of Hadleigh in Suffolk in Reformation times in England. Well-educated and faithful to his flock, this good man would never miss any opportunity of preaching the gospel to them. John Foxe, who wrote the *Book of Martyrs*, speaks of his humility. "None were so poor" but they might come to him freely, he tells us. On the other hand, "none was so rich but he would tell him plainly his fault". Throughout the reign of Edward VI, he went on diligently with his work, but this godly king died in 1553, when he was just 16. He was succeeded by his older sister Mary, who was a fanatical Roman Catholic.

Taylor was now in danger, but he kept on preaching as he had always done. He warned his people about the changes being made around the country to the form of worship; Roman Catholic idolatry was being brought back. In Hadleigh a priest called John Averth was employed to say mass, although he was openly immoral. Two men, Foster and Clerk, had an altar built for him as quickly as possible, but it was soon pulled down, during the hours of darkness. The altar was at once rebuilt and the next day the church bells were rung to signal that mass was to be said. Taylor was busy studying the Bible when he heard the bells ringing out and thought they were calling him to church. But inside he found the priest in his robes ready for action, surrounded by armed men prepared to repel any attempt to disturb him.

"Who made thee so bold", Taylor demanded of the priest, "as to enter into this church of Christ to profane and defile it with this abominable idolatry?" Foster jumped up and accused Taylor of being disloyal to the Queen. "I am no traitor," Taylor replied, "but I am the shepherd that God my Lord Christ has appointed to feed this His flock; wherefore I have good authority to be here." And he commanded Foster, in the name of God, to go away and not "to poison Christ's flock". He went on: "I resist only, with God's Word, your popish idolatries, which are against God's Word and the Queen's honour". Soon Foster and his men forced Taylor out of his church. Taylor's wife had followed her husband into the building and, when she saw him being driven out, she knelt down, held up her hands and said in a loud voice: "I beseech God, the righteous judge, to avenge this injury that this popish idolater does to the blood of Christ". She too was driven outside.

A day or two afterwards, Foster and Clerk reported Taylor to Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, who summoned the minister of Hadleigh to appear before him in London to answer the charges Foster and Clerk had

made. Taylor's friends could see what the outcome would be – imprisonment and a cruel death – and they tried to persuade him to flee. They reminded him of the Saviour's words: "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another", and told him that he should preserve himself for the future, when the Church would have great need of diligent, godly pastors.

But he told them: "I am old and have already lived too long, to see these terrible and most wicked days. You flee and do as your conscience leads you. I am fully decided, with God's grace, to go to the Bishop, and to his beard to tell him that he acts wickedly. God will hereafter raise up teachers for His people, who shall with much more diligence teach them than I have done. For God will not forsake His Church, though now for a time He tries and corrects us. As for me, I believe before God I shall never be able to do God so good a service as I may do now. I know that the papacy is the kingdom of Antichrist, altogether full of lies." Then he asked them to pray for him and assured them: "I doubt not but God will give me strength and His Holy Spirit so that all my adversaries shall be ashamed of their doings".

Within a few days, Taylor was on his way to meet the Bishop. He left behind him a godly old minister called Richard Yeoman to take his place in Hadleigh church. He too was to be burned, at Norwich, for his faithfulness to God's truth. After Yeoman was removed, a godly man by the name of Alcocke used to read a chapter from the Bible every day in the church. He also was arrested and brought to London, where he died after a year's imprisonment. Such was the terrible opposition to the activities of good men during Queen Mary's reign.

After reaching London, Taylor came before Gardiner, who was now Lord Chancellor of England, occupying one of the highest positions in the Government. The Bishop berated him as a traitor and heretic and asked: "How darest thou look me in the face for shame? Knowest thou not who I am?" "Yes," Taylor told him fearlessly, "I know who you are. You are Dr Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, Lord Chancellor, and yet but a mortal man. But if I should be afraid of your lordly looks, why do you not fear God, the Lord of us all? How dare you for shame look any Christian man in the eyes, seeing you have forsaken the truth, denied our Saviour Christ and His Word, and done contrary to your own oath and writing? With what face will you appear before the judgement seat of Christ and answer to your oath made first to that blessed King Henry VIII, of famous memory and afterwards to blessed King Edward VI?" Taylor was referring to the fact that Gardiner had continued to hold office as a bishop after Henry VIII had broken with Rome, and even under the more consistently-Protestant Edward. Taylor lived in the fear of God but did not fear the face of man.

## The Book of Ruth

### 81. "Bought with a Price"

*Rev Keith M Watkins*

Ruth 4:10a. "Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife."

**B**oaz bought all the land that belonged to Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion. But that was not all. He also purchased Ruth to be his wife. He called on the people of Bethlehem to witness the transaction, saying: "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife . . . ye are witnesses this day". Ruth had been married to Mahlon, but he died before they had any children, and she had to be "redeemed" in order to marry again. Only by paying the appropriate price could Boaz marry her. This he did, and so he became her husband and redeemer, and she became his wife.

The Lord Jesus Christ paid a price for His bride too. She is described as "the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Like Ruth, the Church also had a former husband. That husband was the first Adam, her head and representative in the covenant of works. Ruth's first husband was an Israelite, but he had forsaken the land of Israel and died in Moab. Divine judgement seemed to rest on him. So it is with the Church. Through his fall into sin, her first husband Adam brought death on himself and on them. For Ruth to be rescued from the reproach of her widowhood and her connection with Mahlon, her new husband Boaz had to pay a redemption price to marry her. Likewise, for the Church to be delivered from spiritual death in Adam, her new Husband Jesus had to redeem her by paying the price. Boaz did pay the price for Ruth. And Jesus paid the price for His Church. He can say: "The Church, which was formerly married to Adam and under condemnation, have I purchased to be My wife".

The Lord's people have become His "purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:14). They are "a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9). That does not mean that they are odd, but that they are a *special* people who have been *acquired* by the Lord, just as Ruth became a special person in Bethlehem because Boaz had acquired her to be his wife.

What price did Jesus pay for the Church's redemption? The highest possible: His own blood. "The life . . . is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11), and it was nothing less than His life that Jesus gave to ransom His Church. "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). He purchased His wife at Calvary's cross, by sacrificing Himself to God, to meet the demands of divine justice for her sin.

“To redeem them that were under the law”, the Redeemer had Himself to be “made under the law” (Galatians 4:4,5). Sinners were under the law’s condemnation and curse because of their total failure to keep its rules. To redeem His people, Jesus put Himself in their place, so that the curse which they deserved fell on Him instead. That was the price He paid for His wife. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.” How? By “being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

Boaz must have greatly valued Ruth, for we pay only for what we value. How much Christ must value His people! Jacob served 14 years for the hand of Rachel in marriage because he valued her so highly. The Redeemer valued His people from all eternity and spent 33 years as “the Man of Sorrows” to marry them. How greatly He values them! He could say of them as the son of Hamor said about Dinah: “Ask Me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto Me: but give Me the damsel to wife” (Genesis 34:12). Whatever bride-price was required – even the death of the cross – Jesus was willing to pay in order to have the Church for His own.

Ruth was bought with a price. She would never want to be anything other than the wife of Boaz. She belonged to him. He had shown her such love, and she felt herself to be so unworthy of it. The nearer relative had not been willing to help, but Boaz had paid the price to redeem her. How could she not love him? She would be devoted to him all her life. Any alternative was unthinkable to her. She could never turn aside to anyone else. She belonged to Boaz, and only to Boaz.

How much more this applies to those who are redeemed by Christ! He showed them the greatest love, paid the highest price and made the greatest sacrifice. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). They were not redeemed with the things of this world, like silver and gold, but “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18). What an effect that has on them! They feel so unworthy of their Saviour’s love. As Boaz won the heart of Ruth through his kindness to her, so Jesus wins the hearts of His people through dying for them.

Paul reminded the Corinthian believers of this. When urging them to a life of Christian devotion and holiness, he exclaimed: “Know ye not . . . that ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). Believers can say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His” (Song of Solomon 2:16). It is wonderful that Christ belongs to them, that the King of Heaven is their Husband in the gospel. But that lays a great obligation on them.

Yes, He is theirs. But they are His: bought to be His wife, and bought to be a faithful wife. They no longer consider themselves to be their own. Life

to them is no longer about pleasing themselves, but pleasing Him who has become their spiritual Husband.

The more believers think about the sacrifice Christ made for them, the more they love Him. The more they consider the price He paid for them, the more they serve Him. This is what Paul meant when he said that “the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge . . . that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:14,15). They are not their own! They have been bought with a price. Therefore they do not live for themselves, but for Him – for Him who died for them and purchased them with His blood.

This was the secret of Paul's devotion to the Saviour. Speaking of the Lord, he testified: “Whose I am, and whom I serve” (Acts 27:23). He belonged to Christ, who had purchased him with His blood. Therefore he served Christ. No longer could he serve Satan or sin or the world. No longer could he serve even himself. He could only serve Christ. Unfaithfulness to Christ was out of the question. Denying the Lord who bought him was unthinkable. Paul was truly “bought with a price”.

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## How Did it all Begin?

### 1. Aliens and the Big Bang

**H**ow did the universe, the world and you and I come into existence? The Bible tells us in Genesis, chapter 1, that God created everything out of nothing by just speaking the word of command. He did this in six days. On day one He created light by saying, “Let there be light”. On day two He created the land and seas and so on, until day six, when He created man.

Many people do not believe this Bible account of creation. They say it does not fit in with science. They prefer to believe in the idea that the universe began with a “big bang”. There are various versions of the “big bang” story, but generally those who believe it say that, between 10 and 20 billion years ago, all the matter and energy in the universe was compressed into a tiny “cosmic egg”. This “egg” then exploded: some scientists like to describe it as an expansion – a massively huge, powerful and speedy expansion resulting in all the different galaxies in space being formed and the earth appearing in one of them. Nobody knows where this “cosmic egg” came from, or how it got to where it was, or why it exploded.

Now that the evolutionists have their universe, they need to explain how living creatures came to exist. There are various ideas which propose



that, with the right combination of chemicals and a certain amount of energy, a cell was produced. This cell then reproduced and, over millions of years, various other life forms evolved and eventually human beings came into existence.

But a cell is an incredibly complex unit, and even today scientists are continuing to make new discoveries about the intricacies of what was once termed, the “simple” cell. To think that an intricate and complex unit like a cell materialised from a random energy burst in a “chemical soup” is an absurd idea. It is a bit like thinking that if you took apart a watch and put all the pieces into a box and then shook the box as hard as you could, the parts of the watch would all fit back together. And not only fit together correctly but automatically start working! Maybe – just maybe – a couple of pieces might join up in the right place. But what about all the other pieces? Do you think that if you shook the box harder, or shook it for longer, that all the parts would eventually fit together perfectly? Of course not! You know that someone would need to put the watch together again by using their brains and hands.

People who believe in evolution think they have science on their side, but this is not the case. They select certain facts and then interpret them in ways that help to support their ideas. Sometimes these “facts” are not reliable, and sometimes the interpretations are not only unscientific but are the result of a vivid imagination. For instance, evolutionists cannot fully explain where the first gases came from, nor can they explain how these non-living gaseous substances suddenly became alive. A scientist called Francis Crick, who became famous in 1962 as one of those who discovered the structure of DNA (DNA is the chemical information in every cell, which is unique to each individual), suggested that some form of life was shipped to earth billions of years ago by aliens! Now ask yourself, which is more believable: that the world as we know it has been planned and created by an intelligent designer, God – or that it is the result of aliens depositing on earth a container of chemicals which contained life, which then evolved into the world as we know it?

There are so many wonderful things in our universe that could not possibly have come into existence by accident or the activity of supposed aliens. There is one cause behind everything: God, who planned all things by His wisdom and created all things by the word of His power. Scientists who do not believe in Biblical Creation continue to be amazed at similarities between many different organisms and use this to try to prove that living organisms have evolved from one common source. They refuse to admit that there is a possibility that one Creator created all things, with the result that striking

similarities run through much of what was created. They shut their eyes to this possibility because they do not want to admit that there is a God. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

However, we are to remember the account given in the Bible – that God created everything, and that He "saw everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good". And we are to believe that this is the true account.

*S M Campbell*

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## God the Father

### 4. The Family Likeness

*Rev J R Tallach*

Last month's article was the first of three on God the Father adopting sinners into His family and making them His children.

Adam was our representative in the Garden of Eden. He stood in our place and so, when he sinned, we sinned; when he fell, we fell in him; and when he, as the first prodigal, left the Father's house, we all went with him to the far country. The great work that the Saviour did was to take the place of His children. His obedience, even to the cross, was the answer to their disobedience; the ransom He paid in His death was the answer to the debt they owed to God.

They had removed themselves from the Father's care and now had no longer the right to call Him Father. But Jesus took their place under the wrath of God, and on the cross He lost the sense of His Father's nearness, so that He cried out in the darkness: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Before this He had addressed His Father in these clear terms: "O holy Father". And after the darkness had passed, but before He died, He addressed Him again as Father: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (John 23:46). He experienced that far-off-ness when His Father withdrew Himself from Him, in order that His children might become the sons and daughters of the Father and be able to say in truth: "Our Father which art in heaven". Thus the Saviour met the demands of a broken law and a way was opened up from the far country, just where the prodigal is – a way to the Father's arms and the Father's table and all the provision which has been made for all the needs of all His children.

The standing of God's children depends on the person of Jesus. Adam was made in the image of God in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness but he was liable to fall. And fall he did under the temptation of Satan. Now Christ, as the last Adam, is "God's own Son", His "only begotten Son";

and He could not fall into sin. Christ is the rock of the faith of His people and against this rock the gates of hell will never prevail. He speaks of His sheep as those that know His voice and follow Him. He says of them that they are in His Father's hand and no one shall pluck them out of His Father's hand. The divinity of Christ is the security of His children. This makes His righteousness a divine righteousness, so that Samuel Rutherford could say in words which were later turned into verse:

"I know no other stand,  
Not even where glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel's land".

Again, the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of adoption. Christ prayed the Father on behalf of His children. And the Father, who bestows every good and every perfect gift from above, sends the Spirit of Christ into the hearts of those for whom Christ makes intercession. Paul says that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). The Spirit is the One who speaks to us in our hearts, while Christ speaks on our behalf in heaven. The Spirit teaches God's children to look to Him as their Father and to pray to Him, saying, "Abba, Father". They are thus taught to approach God with reverent boldness and entire trust. The Spirit of Christ also speaks to their spirits to assure them that they are God's children by free grace through Jesus Christ. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," as Paul writes in Romans 8:16.

The Spirit also works in the heart to give a likeness to the whole family of God. If you meet a child whose parents and grandparents you know well, you will commonly see in the child a likeness to an older generation. "But we all," Paul says in 2 Corinthians, "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." In this way the children of God are not merely so in name but are changed in heart and life, so that they have features in common with all the other members of God's family that ever were on earth. They will have a spirit of repentance like David (see Psalm 51), and of faith like Moses, who chose the reproach of Christ rather than all the treasures of Egypt. This is a work which usually proceeds with many stumbles, falls and searchings of heart, and it is a process which is never completed in this world. But it is part of the hope and inheritance of the child of God that it will be completed at last and that, "when we shall see Him, we shall be like Him".

The last difference I would mention between the sonship of creation and the sonship of the gospel is that it is restricted to those who are united to Christ by faith. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"

(Galatians 3:26). And again, “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12,13).

These and many other passages show that someone is an adopted son only as he is united to Christ by faith. The Shorter Catechism states that “faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the gospel”. Since Christ is the only source of the blessings of adoption, and faith is a receiving of Christ, the necessity of faith is obvious.

The Children of Israel, as God's typical family travelling through the wilderness, were without water on one occasion. God provided water for them by commanding Moses to smite the rock; water flowed from the rock, and all the Israelites drank and were satisfied. Paul applies this incident to all believers trusting in Jesus for salvation. He says, “They all drank of the rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ”. As the Children of Israel drank the water from the rock and were saved from death, so every child of God receives Christ by faith. And in receiving Christ, he receives life – the life of an adopted child of God. The human family is united in Adam, and the spiritual family is united by faith in Christ.

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*For Younger Readers*

## **Visitors**

**A**re you expecting visitors to come to see you some day this week? I am sure there are some people you love to see coming to your home.

Long ago two sisters and their brother lived together in a place called Bethany. The sisters' names were Mary and Martha, and their brother was called Lazarus.

One day they had a special visitor. Jesus came to see them. Indeed he seems to have often visited their home in Bethany.

After Martha brought Him into their house, she was very busy. I am sure she wanted the meal she served to Jesus to be the best possible. But she was far busier than she needed to be.

Mary was doing nothing to help. Was that not selfish? No, it was not. She was doing something better. She was sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to what He was saying. And I think Mary would

already have done her fair share of work in preparing the meal.

Martha was upset that she was now being left to do all the work on her own. She complained to Jesus. Did He not care that Mary had left her to serve alone? she asked. She wanted Jesus to tell Mary to help her.

What did Jesus say? Did he tell Mary to go away and help Martha? No. He told Martha that she was troubled about many things. But Mary was doing something far better. Listening to Jesus was far better than spending too much time preparing a meal for Him.

It was nice of Martha to want to prepare a special meal for Jesus. But what Mary was doing was far better. She was making the best possible use of her time with Jesus.

Have you ever asked Jesus to visit you? Do you think that is possible? No, you cannot expect Jesus to visit you like He visited Martha and Mary and Lazarus. But, though you will not see Jesus in the way they saw Him, Jesus can come to your home too.

Whenever someone feels the words of the Bible are “speaking” to him or her, Jesus has come to visit. That is specially so when they see something of the wonder of what the Bible tells us about Jesus as the Saviour. Nothing can be better than that.

So you should pray that Jesus would indeed visit you. And if you feel that He is speaking to you through the words of the Bible, you must not let anything stop you listening. Remember how Mary sat at Jesus’ feet to listen to what He was saying.

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*For Junior Readers*

## **Bad Language**

**R**obert M M’Cheyne was once a minister in Dundee. He wrote about a young boy in his congregation who was ill and later died. One day, some time before he died, the minister asked his sister what sort of boy he had been. She told him that he used to be as bad as other boys, except that he did not swear. After the minister left, he confessed to his sister that he often used to swear when he was among his friends. But he never used to swear at home because he was afraid he would be punished for it. He now

felt so grieved about this sin that he added, "Ah, it is a wonder God did not send me to hell when I was a swearer".

I hope that none of you are guilty of using bad language of any kind at any time. You know that, even though your parents do not hear you, God does. In heaven He sees and hears all that you do and say. Sadly, it is such a common sin today that you cannot go very far without hearing swearing or blasphemy (taking God's name in vain). Indeed these sins are so common that many people do not even seem to notice them, far less be offended by them.

God has given us some teaching on this matter. What commandment has He given us to control our tongues? It is the Third Commandment, which says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain". The Shorter Catechism explains that this commandment requires "the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works". We are never to use God's name lightly, nor any of the names or titles used in the Bible to refer to any of the three Persons of the Trinity – the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit.

I hope none of you would ever do such a thing. But what about the attributes of God? First of all, what do we mean by the attributes of God? You will find them listed in answer 4 of the Shorter Catechism: "God is a Spirit, *infinite, eternal and unchangeable*, in His *being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth*". These attributes are not to be used lightly, or as an exclamation either. So to use any expression referring to these qualities – for example, "my goodness" or "for goodness' sake" – is actually to break this commandment. God so hates this sin that He told Moses that whoever blasphemed His name was to be put to death by stoning. Although this sin is no longer to be punished by stoning, we should still be afraid to offend God by breaking this commandment in any way.

The widespread habit of swearing is also clearly forbidden in Scripture. The Saviour emphasised this in the Sermon on the Mount: "I say unto you, Swear not at all". And the Apostle James tells us: "Above all things, swear not". You should be very careful not to use any form of bad language. Not only is it sinful; it can very easily become a habit, and such bad habits are much harder to stop than they were to start. Not only is swearing itself wrong; so is using any crude expressions. We read that, when Lot was in Sodom, he was, "vexed with the *filthy* conversation of the wicked", and I am afraid that much of the conversation you hear from worldly companions may be described in this way. How careful you should be not to pick up any such expressions!

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Will you not resolve as the Psalmist did: “I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle” (Psalm 39:1)? You should also make his words in Psalm 141:3 your daily prayer:

“Set, Lord, a watch before my mouth,  
keep of my lips the door.  
My heart incline thou not unto  
the ills I should abhor.”

*J van Kralingen*

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## Confusion

We were having breakfast when Marina arrived. She had come to my father’s house to borrow the newspaper. She needed to find a job to help her mother earn a living, as they live on their own and are quite poor.

She joined us for breakfast and soon we were able to talk about spiritual matters. She told me that she went to church, although she was very unhappy about the church she was attending. She felt that there was something wrong with what the minister said in his sermons. He did not seem to preach the truths of the Bible. For example, he often put pressure on people to give more money to the church, even when he knew they were poor and could not afford to. He warned them never to give money to anyone else, insisting that it was only right to give the church as much of their money as possible – even their last penny.

I felt very burdened about Marina’s church situation. I advised her to read the Bible and pray to the Lord for His blessings on it, for His Spirit is able to teach us and to guide us into all truth. All afternoon I thought about young Marina; I felt that many other teenagers in that town might be in the same plight – not able to find a good church. The religious situation in Brazil is one of utter confusion: there is a great number of false religions and sects and they have taken advantage of thousands, misleading them into thinking that they are on the way to heaven when, in reality, they are being deceived and taught false doctrine.

Then my thoughts turned to the young people who read this Magazine. Perhaps you have been brought up having the Bible read and explained to you since you were a child. Perhaps you have attended a good church where the truth is taught, as it is revealed in God’s Word. This is a privilege that very few people have nowadays, even in Great Britain.

If you attend a good church, where the pure gospel is preached, you have no reason to doubt the truth of what your minister says as he preaches, because he explains the Word of God faithfully. Marina can never trust what

she hears from the pulpit in her church, because she knows that so much of what is said is not true. She told me she tried attending another church but she found that the minister there was also saying strange things to his congregation. So she is left once again in doubt and confusion, knowing that precious souls are being put at risk by the work of these false teachers.

Some may find the pure preaching of the Word of God too strict, too hard to accept. You may think that your church is too strict in its teaching about the way we should live. Perhaps Satan is whispering in your ear: "You do not have to be so strict; a little lightness, a little worldliness doesn't do any harm!"

What does God tell us in His Word? We are to keep "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27), and in 1 John 2:15 we read: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world". The people of God are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). How are they to live? "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15). This is what a minister once said: "When we find ourselves before the Saviour – who shed His precious blood for such sinners – and see His glory and His beauty, will we ever think that we served Him in too strict a manner? Far from it, we will think that we have not loved and served Him as we ought to have done!"

Is it not time then to consider your position if you are under the preaching of the gospel of Christ? Do not let your heart get harder and harder each Sabbath day. If you allow yourself to be influenced by the world, your heart will become hardened against the things of the Lord! Do not let Satan deceive you into thinking that you would serve Christ if only the way were less narrow. This is what Jesus said about the way to heaven: "Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life" (Matthew 7:14). It is most solemn to think of others being deceived in unfaithful churches, but how much more solemn to think that there are those who now sit under a faithful ministry but will at the last day hear these awful words from Christ: "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). Why? Because they refused to pay attention to the truth of Christ's own warnings!

We need to pray earnestly that the Lord would send many more ministers to all parts of the world – but such ministers as are described in Jeremiah 3:15: "I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding". I am sure Marina would want to be in your place when it comes to the faithfulness of your ministers. How blessed it is to have godly ministers, called by the Most High, to instruct us in the ways that we should go, and to have them caring and praying for our souls.

*C Johnson*



## Scripture and Catechism Exercises

### Prizes and Awards 2004-2005

#### Senior Section

**Prizes:** *Dingwall:* Joanna Mackenzie. *Inverness:* Chloe Fiddes. *London:* Naomi Rowland, Josie van Kralingen.

**Awards with Merit:** *Dingwall:* Neil MacLean. *Farr:* Ruth M MacQueen. *Rotherfield:* Edward Hanks.

**Awards:** *London:* Rebecca Munns. *North Uist:* Rhoda Cameron, John Macdonald. *Portree:* William S Mackinnon, Finlay MacRailld.

#### Intermediate Section

**Prizes:** *Bonar Bridge:* Rebecca and Sandy Campbell. *Dingwall:* Kathryn Mackenzie, Sarah MacLean. *Glasgow:* Kenneth Gillies. *Inverness:* James Fraser. *London:* Alexander Turnbull. *Scaynes Hill:* Abigail Main. *South Harris:* Stewart MacLean. *Stornoway:* Anne R Dickie.

**Awards with Merit:** *Dingwall:* Beverly Mackenzie. *Dunoon:* Esther Maley. *Farr:* Caitlin R MacQueen. *Fort William:* Sarah Smith. *Glasgow:* Neil Freeke, Donald MacLeod. *Inverness:* Mark Campbell, Lois H Fiddes, Jonathan Schouten. *London:* Elizabeth Munns, Justin van Kralingen. *Scaynes Hill:* Martha Main. *Stratherrick:* David Fraser. *Tomatin:* Lois V Cameron-Mackintosh.

**Awards:** *Barnoldswick:* Sipho Ncube. *Bracadale:* Neil Campbell. *Guildford:* Matthew Risbridger. *London:* David Rowland, Jeremy van Kralingen. *North Uist:* John Cameron, Kerri Macinnes. *Oxon:* Emily Sayers. *Stornoway:* Karina Ferguson. *Swordale:* Murdo S Macleod.

#### Junior Section

**Prizes:** *Aberdeen:* Rebecca Buchanan. *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Crowborough:* Heidi Woodhams. *Dingwall:* Alastair Mackenzie. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan. *Glasgow:* Catherine Freeke, Hugh Gillies. *London:* William Munns, Constance Turnbull. *North Tolsta:* Mark Mackenzie. *North Uist:* Christina Macdonald. *Stratherrick:* John Fraser.

**Awards with Merit:** *Edinburgh:* Jonathan MacDonald. *Fort William:* Rachel M Mackinnon. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Catherine Schouten. *London:* Rupert J Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Alasdair Gillies.

**Awards:** *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin. *Farr:* Alasdair MacQueen. *Fort William:* Joshua Smith. *Glasgow:* Neil Gillies. *North Harris:* Donald R MacLeod. *North Tolsta:* Sean MacLeod. *North Uist:* Laura MacInnes. *Scaynes Hill:* Philip Main. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

#### Upper Primary Section

**Prizes:** *Dingwall:* Andrew MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan. *Gairloch:* Mairi Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Ewen and Fiona Beaton, Ian Gillies, Kate Gillies, Rachel MacLeod, Peter MacPherson. *Inverness:* Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton. *London:* Rachele Strata. *North Uist:* Fraser MacDonald. *South Harris:* Catherine MacLeod. *Trowbridge:* Joanna Broome. *Vatten:* Sabrina Annand.

**Awards with Merit:** *Barnoldswick:* Robert Ross. *Dingwall:* Alasdair MacLean, Ruth MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Isla MacDonald. *Glasgow:* Iona Gillies, Ruairidh MacLeod. *Haywoods Heath:* Hannah Woodhams. *London:* Lucy Turnbull, Amy Van Kralingen. *North Tolsta:* Lucy Anne MacLeod. *Peasmarsh:* Alasdair Bailey. *Salisbury:* Jill Buchanan. *Stornoway:* Tormod Mackinnon. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Uig:* Murdo George Mackay.

**Awards:** *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Donna Chisolm. *Inverness:* Peter Schouten. *London:* Edward Munns. *North Tolsta:* Sheena Mackenzie. *North Uist:* Margaret Cameron, John MacDonald. *Stornoway:* Sarah Gillies, Lauren MacDonald, Andrew MacQuarrie.

#### Lower Primary Section

**Awards:** *Aberdeen:* Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* David Martin, James and Rebecca Ross. *Croydon:* Andrew, Marcus and Susanna Hickman. *Dingwall:* Laura and Sheena MacLean, Graham MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle and Daniel Macdonald. *Farr:* Muriel Cramp. *Fort William:* Anna

and Gerrit Smith. **Gairloch:** Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. **Glasgow:** Grant Beaton, Cameron Gillies, Callum and Kenneth Macpherson, Rachel Smith. **Haywards Heath:** Edwin and Kate Woodhams. **Inverness:** Jonathan Fiddes, John and Rebekah Maton. **Kyle:** Nathan Whear. **Laide:** Nikki Macleannan. **London:** Claudia, Edward and Oliver Martin, Andrew and Samuel Munns, Angus Pontin, Benjamin, David and Elizabeth Strata, Henry, Jemima, Jeremy and Joseph Turnbull. **Longcot:** Samuel Cooper. **Ness:** Johan MacInnes. **North Tolsta:** Isla Macdonald, Innes Mackenzie, Scott Macleod. **North Uist:** Iain Boyd, Eilidh Cameron, Angus Macinnes. **Perth:** Emma Norris, Calum Patterson. **Raasay:** Joseph MacGowan. **Staffin:** Neil Angus Matheson, Carey Ross. **Stornoway:** Leah Beaton, Cirsty Gillies, Aimee Macleod, Eilidh Macleod, Ryan MacSween, Finlay and Uilliam Murray. **Ullapool:** Lewis Mackenzie. **Vatten:** Jayne-Anne and John Fleming.

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## Looking Around Us

### So Near to Death

At the beginning of August, an Air France plane from Paris burst into flames after coming down at Toronto airport in the middle of a thunderstorm. With 309 people aboard, it skidded on the runway and fell into a ravine at the edge of the airport, beside a major highway, with its tail pointing up to the sky.

The first reports could not say that anyone at all had survived the blaze. In fact everyone on board was able to escape from the aircraft through the emergency exits, and only 24 had to be treated for minor injuries. It was a wonderful, merciful escape. They must all have been very conscious that they had come very close to death. Certainly one passenger confessed that they “were really, really scared that the plane would blow up”.

But did they think seriously about the fact that they were very close to meeting their Maker – God, with whom we have to do, who will send us to heaven or to hell according as we have lived in this world? Did anyone resolve to seek Him while He may be found – while they were still spared in this world, before it becomes too late?

That is surely how we would expect that those on that plane would think if they took seriously what God says in the Bible. But did they? And if they considered the state of their souls, when they were so near to death and eternity, did they go on thinking seriously? Or did they, dangerously, tell themselves that there was no longer any real hurry?

But what about yourself? You may not always notice when you are near to being involved in a serious accident; day after day you may be kept safe from all danger. But you can never be sure death is far away. So, surely, you should seek salvation earnestly. Do not let the devil tell you that there is no hurry. He is a liar. Do not listen to him. Instead seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Yes, do so *now*.