

# The Young People's Magazine

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## “God Manifest in the Flesh”

Think of walking at sunset one day nearly 2000 years ago through Capernaum, a village by the Sea of Galilee. You see crowds of people gathering, many of them suffering from various diseases. As you wonder what is bringing them all together, you might see someone you had never seen before, touching the ill people. And, amazingly, they are all healed at once. Someone might tell you that it is Jesus, from Nazareth, who is restoring all these people to perfect health, some of whom perhaps had a defect from birth. It is obvious that here is no ordinary man; even with today's tremendous advances in medicine, many people cannot be cured. And what conclusion can you come to, as you see all these wonderful cures? It is God manifest in the flesh.

Now think of being in Jerusalem at a time when you are able to listen to Jesus in conversation with Nicodemus. You hear Jesus speak with total frankness and a tremendous degree of spiritual understanding. You hear Him tell the Pharisee that he must be born again. Then you hear Nicodemus asking: “How can a man be born when he is old?” for he has missed the point of Jesus' statement. And when you hear Jesus insisting: “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”, it is clear that the matter is of vital importance. And then, as the conversation moves on, you hear words you could never have heard before: “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven”. And Jesus is obviously speaking about Himself – He has come down from heaven and yet, at the same time, He is in heaven. What can you say except: This is God manifest in the flesh?

Think now of standing near Jacob's well at Sychar, in Samaria. You see Jesus sitting there, and He is tired. You see a local woman coming along and He asks her to give Him a drink. You hear the conversation that follows. You notice how He tells her that if she realised who He is, she would have asked of Him and He would have given her what He called living water. You hear them – Jesus and the Woman of Samaria – speaking about the worship of God, whether or not it should be in Jerusalem. And then He tells

her: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Then she begins to speak about the Messiah, who was to come as the great Deliverer, and He responds by saying: "I that speak unto thee am He". It is not just what He has said to her that is important; His words have been applied to her soul by the Holy Spirit. In this way Jesus has made an inward revelation of Himself to her. He has made Himself known to her soul as the Messiah. She is now a changed woman; she has a new heart; she has been healed spiritually; she now believes in Jesus as her Saviour. What can your response be but to say to yourself again: This is God manifest in the flesh?

But lots of people saw Jesus work miracles and heard Him say wonderful things; they must have realised that He was some truly wonderful person. Yet they did not believe that He was the Son of God; they did not receive Him as the Messiah (which is another word for *Christ, the Anointed One*). But there were some who did believe in Him. Among them were the 11 sincere disciples, and Peter would have spoken for them all when he said to Jesus: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". How did he understand who Jesus was, when so many others did not? It was not just that he had seen Jesus and His miracles and had heard Him speak, but, like the woman of Samaria, Peter too had received an inward revelation. As Jesus told him: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven". It was not human power that brought Peter to a living faith in Jesus as the divine Saviour, to believe in Him as God manifest in the flesh; it was the power of God.

But why did God the Son become manifest in the flesh? Why did He appear in human nature? It was for the salvation of sinners such as Peter and Nicodemus and the Woman of Samaria. He came to provide a salvation that could not have been brought about in any other way. Paul puts it like this: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh". In other words, sinners cannot save themselves by keeping the law – the law is too weak to bring about salvation – but God sent His Son, who took the same nature as sinners, and in that nature He suffered and died. Only a divine Person could be strong enough to work out salvation. Only a divine Person could be strong enough to bear the punishment of sin – and that is what Jesus was enduring in this world, especially on the cross.

Yet, if you had been in a position to look at Jesus as He hung on the cross, you would have seen nothing but weakness. That is because you could only

see Jesus in His human nature – unless you had faith to see beyond what was obvious to your eyes. Only by faith could you have accepted that Jesus was both human and divine. Even at Calvary, Jesus was God manifest in the flesh. And so He conquered death; He conquered the devil; He did all that was necessary for the salvation of sinners. Sin has been condemned in the flesh of Him who is the Son of God, for the Person who died was the Lord of glory. Let us be in no doubt that the One who died on the cross, and was buried in the tomb which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, was God manifest in the flesh.

On the third day Jesus rose again. During the 40 days that followed, He taught His disciples so effectively that they understood what it really meant for Him to come as God manifest in the flesh. There was a particular day of which Luke writes: “Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). And Jesus went on to teach them: “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day”. He was showing them from the Old Testament that it was necessary for the Messiah, the Saviour whom God had promised – in other words, Jesus Christ Himself – to suffer, to die and to rise again. Their faith was strengthened; they now believed, with a degree of strength and understanding that was missing before, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now they were able to go out, to all sorts of places, to preach that Jesus was indeed God manifest in the flesh.

But what about us, all these years later? We cannot see Christ Jesus in the flesh. We cannot go to meet Him at some place in Israel – in Capernaum or Jerusalem or anywhere else – to be healed of our various diseases. Yet we can find Him much nearer to home; indeed we do not need to go out of our homes; we may meet Him as we read our Bible. Yes, He is exalted to heaven; He sits on the right hand of the Father, in the place of power. But He is not far from any of us; by faith we may approach Him. In doing so we will experience spiritual healing. Then, for the first time, we will be able to love God and obey His Commandments from the heart; we will begin to value the Scriptures. We will read them in a new way, we will find Christ in them, and we will trust in Him as the Saviour of sinners.

You might think that we are now at a disadvantage, compared with the likes of Peter and Nicodemus and the Woman of Samaria, because we cannot meet Jesus Christ in the flesh. But we are not. He has finished His work in this world – what He needed to do while physically present here. Yet He is still spiritually present, and we are to go to Him. See how He calls us: “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Is 45:22).

## “As the Lord Commanded”

### 6. Preaching

*Rev D W B Somerset*

In the previous article we considered the reading of Scripture in the public worship of God. In this article we consider the place of preaching.

**I**t is clear that there is to be preaching during the public worship of God. There must be some instruction and exhortation during the service or else it degenerates into pure formality and ritual, like the Roman mass. In the Bible we find the examples of Christ instructing the multitude on the mount (Matthew 5-7), and on the plain (Luke 6), and expounding Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4). We find also Peter preaching at Pentecost (Acts 1), and Paul preaching and exhorting in various synagogues and Christian assemblies throughout the book of Acts (13:5,14-44; 14:1, etc).

Preaching is the chief means which God uses for the conversion of sinners: “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). The message which is preached seems foolish to the world: “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (verse 23). Also, the method of preaching seems to be foolish. The Athenians regarded Paul as a “babbling” “because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18). But this is the way that God has chosen; it makes clear that whenever a sinner repents and believes the gospel, it is because a divine power has enabled him to do so. “No man can come unto Me,” says Christ, “except it were given unto him of My Father” (John 6:65).

Because preaching seems to be foolishness, there are always people who try to introduce what they think are better methods of evangelism. Some methods are entirely biblical, such as speaking to people in the streets. Paul himself disputed “in the market place daily with them that met him” (Acts 17:17). But even these methods must be regarded as additional to preaching, and should not be allowed to displace it. Their purpose must always be to bring people under the preaching of the gospel, because that is the particular way that God has appointed for sinners to be saved: “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14).

Many other methods are commonly used, such as drama, films and gospel choirs, which are not biblical, and which show a sinful lack of confidence in God's sovereign power. These are methods more of desperation than of faith. When God has worked powerfully in the past, it has been through plain and

simple preaching. He converted 3000 people through Peter’s preaching on the day of Pentecost, nearly 500 through John Livingstone’s preaching on the Monday of the Kirk of Shotts communion in 1630, and 400 or more under the preaching of George Whitefield and others at Cambuslang in 1742.

Preaching is not only for the conversion of unbelievers, but also for the building up of the people of God. The Word of God is the food for their souls and, as they receive it by faith, they “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2). Peter had been commanded by Christ to “feed My lambs” and to “feed My sheep” (John 21:15-17), and in turn he instructed the elders to “feed the flock of God which is among you” (1 Peter 5:2). “Who then is that faithful and wise steward,” Christ asked, “whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” (Luke 12:42).

One question that arises is whether preaching should have the prominent place in public worship that is given to it in Reformed circles? Should we not, perhaps, devote more of the service to singing? The Bible does not prescribe for us in this matter, although we do have the example of Paul preaching at Troas. His sermon was by far the longest part of the meeting. He “preached unto them” and “continued his speech until midnight”, and thereafter, “talked a long while, even till break of day” (Acts 20:7,11).

Clearly we have to judge what is wisest and most profitable, and this will vary with the circumstances. When there is a thirst for the gospel, the sermons will be long, but in a “day of small things” they will be shorter. It is not useful to go beyond people’s capacity. The eminent Gavin Parker, minister of Bon Accord church in Aberdeen till he died in 1845, said: “Long sermons are not really useful; they should be short, scriptural, and addressed to people’s conscience”. Rev Alexander McPherson, when asked about the very long sermons of former times, often commented that the ministers were given grace to speak *and* the people were given grace to listen.

At the same time, we must remember that the Lord has given us the whole of the Sabbath for His worship, and we can have nothing more important to do on that day. It is a bad sign if we are soon weary of His worship and impatient for the service to be over. We become too like Israel in the days of Amos, asking, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? And the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?” (8:5). As a punishment, God gave them “a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word

of the Lord, and shall not find it" (verses 11-12). There is a similar famine in Britain at the moment, with people travelling many miles in search of the preaching of Christ crucified.

Another question that is often asked is: Does the sermon need to be based on a text, as it generally is? On reflection, it is difficult to see what other approach could be adopted. The purpose of preaching is to expound the Word of God, and this is exceedingly rich. A small portion of the Bible contains an immense amount of material. Every word is inspired and needs to be considered and repays study. Each verse, almost, gives us a slightly different view of the work of Christ and its significance for us. The aim of the preacher is to capture the particular view of Christ and His work that the verse provides, and to impress it upon his hearers.

When we are listening to preaching, we should be seeking to discern the voice of Christ. A minister is a herald sent by Christ to proclaim the way of salvation. "How shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15). We should be looking beyond the one who is preaching, with all the imperfections of this world, to the One who is speaking to us from heaven, in whom there is no imperfection, but only the most perfect love and holiness. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly" (Psalm 85:8). And we should be saying with the apostle Paul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

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## Solomon – the Wise and Wealthy King

### 2. His Kingdom and Writings

*Rev W A Weale*

The first article of this series looked at Solomon being set over Israel as king instead of David his father and then at his building projects, including the temple.

**Solomon's Kingdom.** We have already noticed that, when God asked Solomon to request whatever he desired, he asked for wisdom. And God was pleased with this; not only did He give Solomon great wisdom but also great wealth, so that we are told in 2 Chronicles 9:22: "King Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom". This wealth was necessary for maintaining his kingdom. In considering the kingdom that Solomon ruled over, we may notice, first of all, the King's Court, then the defensive measures which he put in place, and then we will go on to notice how he paid for all of this.

The first thing that strikes one in looking at Solomon's court is that it was much larger than David's. Twelve officials looked after the 12 districts into which Solomon divided his kingdom (we will have more to say of this later); a man named Azariah was over the officers and another named Zabud was a type of prime minister (1 Kings 4:5). There were also 550 supervisors of labour (1 Kings 9:23).

Along with all this there was the upkeep of his many wives and concubines, a total of 1000 (see the comments on his marriages in the next article). And no doubt there were many children who are not mentioned. Solomon must also have entertained very liberally, for we are told in 1 Kings 4:22,23 that "Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal. Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer and fatted fowl."

The second cause of expense for Solomon was the defence of Israel. Although he was blessed with a reign of peace, Solomon took the opportunity to fortify the major cities on Israel's borders, places like Hazar and Meggidon and Gezer (1 Kings 10). Solomon posted troops there, thus providing a wall of protection against foreign attack. Also, unlike David, Solomon provided 1400 chariots, 12 000 horses and 4000 stables for these horses. To staff all these cities with personnel and to maintain such chariot forces, not to mention the purchase of the horses from Egypt, would have been a very costly business for Solomon. How did Solomon pay for all this? A study of the narrative in Kings makes it clear that there were four sources:

(1) *Taxation*. We have already noticed that Solomon divided the country into 12 districts. Over each of these he appointed an officer, or tax collector, who was to make provision for the king's court for one month of the year (1 Kings 4:1-28), as well as for the soldiers and the horses. This was clearly a heavy burden on the people, as became clear later, when Rehoboam, Solomon's son, came to the throne.

(2) Solomon depended much on what was, in effect, *unpaid labour*. This came not only from the large number of Canaanites still surviving in the land, but also from many Israelites. This was especially the case with the building of the temple (1 Kings 5:13).

(3) *Foreign tribute and gifts*. Tribute, a forced payment, had been paid by several foreign countries since David's day and this continued in Solomon's. But there were also gifts from those who wished friendship with Solomon and who came to see his splendour and hear his wisdom. An example of this is the Queen of Sheba, of whom more later.

(4) There was *trade*. This seems to have been chiefly carried out by way

of shipping. In 1 Kings 9 and elsewhere we learn of Solomon constructing a fleet of ships in Ezion Gebar (present day Basra in the Persian Gulf) and of the ships going as far as Ophir (possibly India) as well as other parts of the world. The fact that they were away for trips of up to three years suggests they went far afield, as does the fact that they returned with such cargoes as gold, silver, copper, precious stones, iron, hardwood and animals. There was also, as already mentioned, trade involving horses and chariots, which Solomon not only bought, chiefly from Egypt, but sold also, to the kings of the Hittites and Syrians (1 Kings 10:28,29).

Trade was indeed Solomon's strong point and there is no doubt but that he made the most of the good relationships his father David had established with Egypt as well as with Tyre. The Phoenicians (the people of an area roughly corresponding to modern Lebanon) not only provided wood for the temple but also for the ships. And it is reckoned that the visit of the Queen of Sheba, already mentioned, resulted in a trade route opening to her country (possibly modern Yemen).

***His Writings.*** The time of David and Solomon has been referred to as "Israel's golden literary age". It was an age in which men such as Nathan, Gad, Ahijah and Iddo produced works of history, with much detail about both those kings (1 Chronicles 29:29 and 2 Chronicles 9:21). As well as history, music and psalmody was written, especially by King David in anticipation of the temple that his son was to build.

But we are concerned at present with the writings of Solomon, and these we have in the three books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. It is generally believed that the Song was written in Solomon's younger years – or at least that it reflects on those years, when he enjoyed a close walk with the Lord. This is indeed what the Song is all about; it is the Song of Songs, for it speaks of the most wonderful of all relationships, between the believer and his Lord. Sadly most modern commentators, as well as modern versions of Scripture, have reduced this song to a romantic love poem which speaks of Solomon's relationships. But this is far from true; the saints of God in every age bear testimony to receiving comfort, strength and direction from the rich material of this precious book.

The Book of Proverbs contains proverbs which were possibly gathered and written during Solomon's middle years. We are told in 1 Kings 4:32-34 that Solomon "spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spoke also of beasts and of fowl and of creeping things and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his

wisdom.” The example given in detail is the Queen of Sheba, who came “to prove Solomon with hard questions”. But he answered them all, to her great astonishment and, when she saw his buildings and retinue, “there was no more spirit in her”. She confessed, “The half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard” (1 Kings 10). It is very likely also, since he was an authority on all the subjects mentioned, that he wrote many books. This is suggested by Ecclesiastes 12:12: “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness to the flesh”.

This takes us to the third inspired book which Solomon wrote: Ecclesiastes. It would seem that it was written very late in his life and that he looks back in it, as Henry Morris puts it, “at his former dedication to wisdom, riches and fame, with apparent deep regret”. The final verses of this book, which some suggest were his final words, are particularly apt: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man, for God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil”.

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## Missionary to India

### 18. Around Britain

In 1850 Alexander Duff arrived back in Scotland after a second period, of 10 years, as a missionary in Calcutta.

For the next three and a half years Duff was to focus his attention on his own Free Church in Scotland. He wanted to organise a system, in all its congregations, of collecting money for foreign missions. But even more importantly, he wanted to stir up the spirit of prayer.

He also visited various other parts of the British Isles. September 1851 found him in Wales, where he attended a meeting of the Welsh Conference at Caernarvon. There was church business to be attended to, but the Conference was also an occasion for huge open-air services. One morning five students for the ministry were examined in Welsh. Then, as Duff told his wife, “suddenly I was asked by the Moderator to address them on the duties of the ministry, in English, which by God’s help I attempted to do”.

A few days later he wrote, “Yesterday at 2 o’clock I preached to the largest audience I have ever addressed in this world”. It was estimated that between fifteen and twenty thousand people were present, and Duff expressed surprise that so many people gathered for the services, considering it was such a busy time of year, when the harvest was being gathered in.

On this warm, clear, sunny day, there had already been “prayer, psalms and

two sermons” between 10 am and 1 pm, followed by hour’s break. Then Duff watched as “a living, moving stream of human beings” filled the broad street leading to the park where he was to preach. Every second person was carrying a chair, holding it by the back, with the legs pointing upwards to prevent it hurting anyone; when they reached the preaching place and sat down, two people shared a chair. Duff had been very reluctant to preach for two reasons. First, because he was afraid that his voice would reach only a small part of the huge congregation; and second, because very few could understand English. But the other ministers assured him that those who could understand would be impressed by hearing the great truths of the gospel proclaimed by a stranger, and that they would tell others what they had heard.

In the event Duff was glad to have been persuaded to preach; he was conscious that those who could understand him were responding to what they heard. And everybody could hear; a minister walked quietly round the edge of the crowd to check. “About half past four,” Duff reported, “the Welsh sermon ended, then a few verses of a psalm, short prayer and blessing.” Soon the congregation was once more on the move, again carrying their chairs above them. “A perfect forest in quick motion”, Duff described it.

He commented: “Such meetings sprang up naturally when there was a great spirit of revival in the land and a great thirst for God’s Word”. But he was less sure that such occasions were as useful “in ordinary times, when numbers without any such heart-thirstings attend,” purely because of custom. He was afraid, perhaps unfairly, that more harm would be done by so many young people gathering together, many of whom would have no real interest in spiritual things. Yet there is always the possibility that good will be done when people of any age gather to hear the Word of God faithfully preached. But it is always important that, when young or old gather for public worship, they give first place to their duty to profit from what they hear and to seek God’s blessing on their souls.

Later that month, Duff was in London. After the morning service a woman spoke to him. She said she was a servant, looking after an officer’s family. Because she was grateful to the Lord for all He had done for her soul, she wanted to give something to Duff to help send the gospel to the heathen. She had been in Edinburgh when Duff had spoken at his Church’s General Assembly, and she seemed to have been impressed by what she had heard. She put what she called “a mite” in his hand, but it was, in fact, a gold sovereign – and, considering how little she was probably earning, this was a significant amount of money. Someone noted that Duff “was more careful to acknowledge . . . the self-sacrifice of the humble than all that the rich gave out of their abundance”.

After returning to Scotland, Duff was in Wick in June 1852. The effect his address had on a man of some importance in the town is evidence of Duff's power to influence people, even where there may have been no saving change. This man did not pay much attention to religion but said that "he could listen for ever" to Duff and asked that the collectors would come to him when they were gathering money for the Indian mission. On his way back south, an exhausted Duff wrote to his wife from Golspie, telling her how little sleep he had over the past two nights, because of endless travelling. Yet he added: "I have experienced much of the loving-kindness of the Lord; and that makes up for all fatigues so far as the spirit is concerned."

On a visit to the Isle of Skye, Duff took part in services which began about 11 am and did not finish till around 6 pm. People travelled up to 30 miles to attend, from various parts of the island. "And", he reported, "all that time, the great bulk of the audience sat still without once moving from their seats." Though he had felt rather dull, he found "more than ordinary freedom in addressing sinners", and he could see that some people were impressed. He hoped that theirs would prove to be "living impressions wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost" which would not pass quickly away.

It was a time when many people were emigrating from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to other parts of the world. On the vessel that was to take Duff from Skye to the mainland there were 150 or 160 who were leaving the island for Australia. The boat stopped at Broadford to take some more emigrants on board. There Duff came in contact with a sailor who shocked him with how much he was cursing and swearing. The missionary went to him and rebuked him gently. "For a moment he was startled", Duff wrote. "But speedily he recovered himself and said, 'You pray too much; you pray too much;' and commenced his cursing and swearing anew. I could only leave him, commending him to the mercy of that gracious God whose long-suffering patience he was so fearfully abusing."

Spending some days near Aberdeen in November, Duff experienced a hard frost and a biting wind. He felt as if the cold was oozing through his whole body, and no doubt he was all the more uncomfortable because he had so long experienced the heat of India. Would he then give up his journeys through Scotland's winter? No, "most gladly would I bear all, and a great deal more, if possible, for the sake of Him who so loved us as to lay down His very life for us". But there was one condition that would make Duff willing to endure such hardship: that he would see "substantial fruit to [God's] praise and glory" – though he added: "I must leave all to Him". His great purpose in life was to see sinners brought out of Satan's kingdom, to believe in Christ and to live to His glory – whether in Britain or in India.

But the missionary was very conscious of his sins and imperfections. "My own shortcomings are ever before me," he wrote, and as he thought about them, he found them "increasingly painful. Nothing sustains me but the divine assurance that 'the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth from all sin'. Blessed Saviour, who would not then cheerfully toil and suffer for Thee?" Here was a man who, wherever he lived, was seeking God's glory, not only in fruit from his work but also in the life of his own soul.

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

## 14. Surrounded by Danger

The people on Tanna continued their uneasy peace with Paton. Most of them liked Paton, but they did not like his God; nor did they like the teachings of his God. From time to time, one or more of the warriors would make a plan to get rid of Paton, so that they could all live as they liked without him troubling their consciences.

One morning, when Paton got up, he found his house surrounded by armed men. One of the chiefs in the group warned Paton that they had come to kill him. There was nothing that Paton could do except pray. This he did, and when he got up from his knees, he went outside to face his would-be murderers. He talked calmly to them, pointing out that he was always kind and friendly to them but that they were often unkind to him. At last some of the chiefs admitted: "Our conduct has been bad; but now we will fight for you, and kill all those who hate you".

Paton, although happy that they were not going to kill him, was alarmed in case people who did not like him would be murdered. So he made the chief promise that he would not kill anyone because of him. While they were talking, the other warriors slunk away into the bushes, leaving Paton unharmed.

A few days later, a large group of islanders gathered at Paton's house talking with each other. All of a sudden, a man rushed towards Paton with a raised axe. A chief who was standing beside Paton snatched up the spade Paton had just been working with and used it to shield Paton from the blow of the axe. Paton was saved from almost certain death by the quick-thinking action of the chief.

The next day Paton had another frightening experience. A wild chief, armed with a loaded gun, followed Paton around wherever he went. Paton went about his usual activities, spoke pleasantly to the chief and prayed to God to protect him. The chief followed him, with the gun aimed at him

and ready to go off at any moment. But the trigger was never pressed and eventually the chief disappeared.

One night some time after this, Paton was wakened three times by a chief and his men trying to break into his house. They were armed with guns; but they were nervous because they knew that they were doing wrong. They were also very scared of the little dog which Paton kept. In the end the men gave up and crept away into the night.

Because the plan to shoot Paton failed, some men thought up another way to get rid of him. They would sneak up on Paton's house and set it on fire. If Paton and his teachers tried to escape, there would be other men standing by who would club them to death. One of Paton's teachers heard of this plan and told Paton. God helped them spoil the plan.

Danger came yet again. Paton was working on his house when the War Chief, his brother and a large group of armed men surrounded it. They had guns as well as clubs and spears. They watched Paton in silence and then each one raised his gun and aimed it at Paton's head. Escape was impossible. Speaking to them would have made the situation even worse.

Paton tried to keep on working as if no one was near but he was so alarmed that he could not see properly. But he could pray, and that is what he did. And the Lord answered his prayer. The warriors did not shoot; for some reason no one wanted to fire the first shot. Instead they drew back from the house with their guns still aimed at Paton. Then they all disappeared into the bushes.

Another terrifying incident took place some time later. A great feast was to be held to mark peace between different tribes. But, sadly, the food for this feast was going to be provided by killing six men. The names of the men to be killed for the feast was secret, known only by the witch doctors. Before daylight on the morning of the feast, a murderer was posted at the door of each victim. A gun was fired which was a signal to the murderers to do their dreadful deed. The bodies of the men were then taken to what the people thought of as a holy tree, and the bodies were hung up there as an offering to the gods. They were later taken down and laid out on the shore near Paton's house and placed under special guard.

Paton heard that he and his teachers were also marked as victims for this feast. Later on in the morning, Paton saw a band of armed men approaching his house. He called the teachers and their wives to the mission house and there they locked themselves in. They gathered in one room and prayed together, asking the Lord to protect them or to take them to heaven.

It was a long day. They could hear the warriors outside, tramping round the house, whispering to each other, and hovering around the windows and

doors. But no action was taken and eventually at sunset the warriors retreated. They went off to have their feast, taking with them the bodies of the poor men that had been murdered that morning.

Through all these experiences Paton trusted in God, believing that He would do all things well. Yet he himself had to do what he could, taking sensible action to try to reduce the danger he might be in. But it was the Lord who protected him and kept the Tannese warriors from murdering him, when they could so easily have done so.

Paton was following the Sixth Commandment, which is, "Thou shalt not kill". In obeying this commandment he took steps to protect his own life and the lives of his teachers. He also did not want anyone else killed because of him, and that was why he made the chief promise not to kill anyone who hated him.

We should be thankful that we are not in dangerous situations such as Paton experienced. But we must remember that no one is too young to die. We do not know when or how we will die. But when the time comes, only one thing will matter: Do we have Christ as our Saviour? Christ warns us: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

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*For Younger Readers*

## **Whiter Than the Snow**

**D**o you know what sin is? It is to do wrong. It is to do wrong against God.

But what if you do wrong against your father or mother, or your brother or sister, or your friends? Then you also do wrong against God. You sin against Him.

If your parents tell you to tidy up your toys, and you do not obey, you do wrong against them. And you sin against God.

If you get angry with your friends and hit them, you do wrong against them. And you sin against God.

Sin is filthy. It is like walking on nice white snow with dirty shoes; it leaves horrible marks. And you can never take these marks away. You can never make the snow nice and white again.

Or it is like walking through nice white snow with red paint, or blood, on your shoes. You can never take away the redness from

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the snow. You will never be able to make it nice and white again.

But God can. He has said: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). However filthy or red your sins may be, God can take them all away if you trust in Him.

Here is a verse for you to learn; it is a prayer to God asking Him to take away our sins and make us even whiter than the snow:

Do Thou with hyssop sprinkle me,  
I shall be cleansed so;  
Yea, wash Thou me, and then I shall  
be whiter than the snow. (Psalm 51:7)

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## Make the Bible Your Guide

*J C Ryle*

Another piece, slightly edited, from this noted nineteenth-century English minister. It follows the article last month on serving God. When Ryle speaks of dangerous reading, today's young people should think also of dangerous listening and viewing – on, for, instance radio, television, films and the internet.

**T**he Bible is God's merciful provision for sinful man's soul. It is the map by which he must steer his course through this world if he would reach eternal life. All that we need to know in order to make us peaceful, holy or happy is contained there. If a young person would know how to begin life well, let him hear what David says: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Ps 119:9).

Young people, I charge you to make a habit of reading the Bible, and not to let the habit be broken. Do not let the laughter of companions, or the bad customs of the family you may live in, prevent your doing so. Decide not only that you will have a Bible, but that you will also make time to read it. Do not let anyone persuade you that it is only a book for Sabbath school children and old women. It is the book from which King David got wisdom and understanding. It is the book which young Timothy knew from his childhood. Never be ashamed of reading it. Do not despise the Word (Prov 13:13).

Read it with prayer for the Spirit's grace so that you may understand it. Bishop Beveridge says well: “A man may as soon read the letter of Scripture without eyes, as understand the spirit of it without grace”.

Read it reverently, as the Word of God, not of man – believing firmly that what it approves is right and what it condemns is wrong. Be very sure that every doctrine is false which will not stand the test of Scripture. This will

keep you from being tossed to and fro and carried about by the dangerous opinions of these days. Be very sure that every practice in your life which is contrary to Scripture is sinful and that it must be given up. This will settle many a question of conscience and cut the knot of many a doubt.

Remember how differently two kings of Judah read the word of God. Jehoiakim read it and at once cut the writing to pieces and burned it on the fire (Jeremiah 36:23). And why? Because his heart rebelled against it, and he was determined not to obey. Josiah read it and at once rent his clothes and cried mightily to the Lord (2 Chronicles 34:19). And why? Because his heart was tender and obedient. He was ready to do anything which Scripture showed him was his duty. May you follow Josiah, not Jehoiakim!

And read the Bible regularly. This is the only way to become "*mighty* in the Scriptures". A hasty glance at the Bible now and then does little good. At that rate you will never become familiar with its treasures, or feel the sword of the Spirit fitting your hand in the hour of conflict. But get your mind stored with Scripture by diligent reading, and you will soon discover its value and its power. Texts will rise up in your hearts in the moment of temptation. Commands will suggest themselves to your minds in a time of doubt. Promises will enter your thoughts in the time of discouragement. And thus you will experience the truth of David's words: "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:11); and of Solomon's words, "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee" (Proverbs 6:22).

I dwell on these things more because this is an age of reading. Of making many books there seems no end, though few of them are really profitable. There seems a rage for cheap printing and publishing. Newspapers of every sort abound, and the tone of some, which have the widest circulation, tells that there is something wrong with the taste of the age. Amidst the flood of dangerous reading, I plead for my Master's book; I call upon you not to forget the book of the soul. Do not let newspapers and novels be read, while the prophets and Apostles lie despised. Do not let the exciting and the filthy swallow up your attention, while what edifies and sanctifies can find no place in your mind.

Give the Bible the honour due to it every day you live. Whatever you read, read that first. And beware of bad books: there are plenty today. Take heed what you read. I suspect more harm is done to souls in this way than most people have any idea is possible. Value all books in proportion as they are agreeable to Scripture. Those that are nearest to it are the best, and those that are furthest from it and most contrary to it are the worst.

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## Looking Around Us

### Thanking God

Thirteen years ago Karen Dyer had an operation. But it turned out to be far more serious than was expected. Doctors had thought that the growth they were going to remove from above her left hip was harmless. But it was far from harmless; this 15-year-old had cancer.

Afterwards she had to endure a lot of difficult treatment. But, thankfully, she is now free from cancer; she has not suffered any side-effects from her treatment; and she feels well. So, to celebrate 10 years of freedom from cancer, she decided to do something special. She went skydiving.

Now it may be worth noticing that *some* such pursuits are highly dangerous. So, because God has told us not to do anything that may put our lives in danger unnecessarily, we should not engage in them.

But that is not my main point just now. It is this: in all that was written about Karen in *Time* magazine, nothing suggested that she was thankful to God for bringing her back to good health. We ought always to thank God for the good things He gives us. But especially we ought to thank Him whenever we recover from illness. Although we should be thankful to doctors and other health professionals who have been involved in our treatment, we ought first to acknowledge God, who is in control of everything. It is He who gives us our health and restores it to us after a time of illness. And those of us who enjoy good health should thank Him for keeping us well.

### Living Longer

Many people have reason to be very thankful for modern medical treatments, including the huge variety of drugs which have been developed over the last hundred years. Countless lives have been saved and lots of people feel much better than they otherwise would.

One such group of drugs is called statins. They are used to reduce cholesterol, a substance in the blood which increases the risk of suffering a heart attack. A recent study has shown that those who took statins for a period of five years reduced their chance of a heart attack by 27%. This is just one reason why people in countries like Britain are living so much longer than, say, 50 years ago.

Again we should remember that God controls everything. In His long-suffering He is leaving people longer in this world, where they have the opportunity of turning from sin to find salvation in Christ. But how many, even of those who are in contact with the Bible, think of things in this way?

Sadly, very few. Not many people today think of themselves as sinners,

who must meet God at death, when He will send them to heaven or to hell according to how they lived in this world. The most important point, of course, is: did they believe in Christ or not?

Today, God gives many people a much longer time to seek salvation. But no one should say, I have much more time ahead of me, before death, than people had 50 years ago; I need be in no hurry to seek God. But it is in kindness that He gives us a longer opportunity to seek Him. So it is grossly sinful for us to delay, even for one moment, to do so. We dare not assume that we, as individuals, will have a long life. All the more reason for seeking God *now*. Remember, Jesus said, "Seek, and ye shall find" (Matthew 7:7).

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## Temptation

The billows swell, the winds are high,  
Clouds overcast my wintry sky.  
Out of the depths to Thee I call;  
My fears are great; my strength is small.

O Lord, the pilot's part perform  
And guide and guard me through the storm;  
Defend me from each threatening ill;  
Control the waves; say, "Peace, be still".

Amidst the roaring of the sea,  
My soul still hangs her hopes on Thee.  
Thy constant love, Thy faithful care,  
Is all that saves me from despair.

Dangers of every shape and name  
Attend the followers of the Lamb,  
Who leave the world's deceitful shore,  
And leave it to return no more.

Though tempest-tossed and half a wreck,  
My Saviour through the floods I seek.  
Let neither wind nor stormy sea  
Force back my shattered ship again.

*William Cowper*