

# The Explorer

June 2009



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Young folk are encouraged to complete the various puzzles in the magazine and send them in to:

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Younger readers who find the questions too hard may like to do a drawing based on one of the articles and send it to the same address.



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# Rebuked by the Lord

*From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (Matthew 16:21-23)*

Simon Peter has confessed Jesus Christ, believing in his heart that he is truly the Son of God. Jesus has pronounced him blessed, for it is the Father who has taught Simon this great truth. But soon afterwards Simon finds fault with something Jesus says and has to be scolded sharply. It shows us once again that Peter, though a good man, had much to learn about the Lord. It is the same with us all.

### Jesus going to Jerusalem

The Lord Jesus chose twelve men to be his disciples. A disciple is like a pupil enrolled in a school or college. In your early years you are taught by others the things you need to know for life and work in this world. You learn from what your teachers both say and do. In a similar way a disciple is instructed by his master's words and example. Jesus trained his disciples over several years to be his faithful followers. They honoured him with the title 'Rabbi' and sat at his feet. He taught them about eternal life and prepared them for serving God as preachers of the gospel. Jesus was a very patient and wise teacher.

Of the many things that Christ taught his disciples during his ministry there was one thing that stood out. Jesus did not say much about it at the beginning but after Peter's confession he spoke openly. He told his disciples that he must go up to Jerusalem and suffer there at the hands of the elders, chief priests and scribes, and be killed and rise again. We can imagine that when he said this his manner was very solemn.

### Peter rebuking Christ

We can imagine too how the disciples felt as these words came from the lips of their Lord. They were anxious and even afraid. No-one likes to think of someone they love dearly suffering greatly, especially at the hands of others. The disciples knew only too well what the religious rulers were like: arrogant, hypocritical and often cruel. They could easily believe that what Jesus had told them would indeed happen if he went to Jerusalem.

How different Jesus was to the Jewish leaders! In his character he was "holy, harmless, undefiled" (Heb.7:26). In his conduct he was "meek and lowly" (Matt.11:29). When he preached it was "as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt.7:29). His words were "gracious words" (Luke 4:22) and "the common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37). Publicans and sinners sat down with him and followed him, for he was their friend. It was this kind and merciful Saviour who was now to be put to death and the

disciples were troubled for they looked up to him and admired him.

When Jesus had spoken Simon Peter could not refrain himself. He immediately reached out his hand and took the Lord aside, telling him that such a thing must not happen. His emotions were confused. There was a note of concern in his words, as he thought of what could happen to Jesus. There was also a hint of anger, for he thought that Jesus was mistaken. But there was real affection too. Simon had come to love Christ as his Saviour, for his sins had been pardoned by Christ. Despite this we must realise that here was a disciple rebuking his master, and not any master but *the* Master, the Lord Jesus Christ! And the truth is that Simon was not just speaking for himself but for all the disciples.

### Christ rebuking Peter

Jesus turned about, looked on the disciples and then looked at Simon Peter, staring him straight in the face. He said something to him which reminds us of what he said to the devil when he was tempted by him in the wilderness. Jesus said to Simon, "Get thee behind me, Satan." These were strong words – but they were appropriate words. You see Simon, without realising it, had been acting the part of Satan.

How was Peter so to blame? Firstly it is always wrong to criticise the Lord's words or the Lord's ways when we know so very little. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa.55:8,9) God has his perfect plan which he is working out in this world and he knows the end of it from the beginning.

Secondly God has shown us something of his plan in the Bible. The prophets foretold what would happen to Christ. Moses revealed that in destroying the devil and his works Christ would suffer himself (Gen.3:15). David predicted how powerful men would consult together "against the Lord, and against his anointed," desiring to rid themselves of them (Psa.2:2,3). Isaiah showed that Christ would be brought "as a lamb to the slaughter" and put to death (Isa.53:7,8).

Simon had forgotten these Scriptures and was thinking as a man of the world rather than as a man of God. His words were like a whisper from hell to Christ, a device of the devil to draw the Saviour away from the path which he must take to Calvary. No wonder that the Lord spoke to Simon as he did! Simon would have kept Christ from the cross where he had to die for the sins of his people!

What was Simon's problem? Perhaps it was *pride*. As the first of the disciples to publicly confess Jesus as the Messiah he received a commission from the Lord to preach the gospel before the others did. He had been honoured and he felt confident. He had the best intentions. But he was mistaken, even foolish in what he said and did. Yet the Lord loved him still.

How different this rebuke was from the one which Peter gave to Christ! It was fully deserved for Peter was at fault, not the Lord. This is always how it is with ourselves too. Let us seek grace from God to walk more humbly with Jesus, who does all things well.

## He Who Gets The Son

The story is told of a wealthy man who used to collect art treasures, especially oil and watercolour paintings.

The man's wife died and left him with an only son whom he loved very much. As the little boy grew up, his father used to take him with him as he went around the world seeking and buying up these beautiful oil and watercolour paintings for his collection. They would bring the paintings home and hang them on the walls of his big house. This went on until the walls were almost covered with these valuable paintings. The years passed and when the boy had grown to be a young man, war broke out and the young man was called up to serve in the army. Sad to say, some time later his father received the dreaded communication which told him that his son had been killed in action. His father was heartbroken. Some months after this the man had a visitor. It was a young soldier who had been a friend of his son and who had served with him in the army. The young man explained that the son had been very kind and friendly to him and he wanted to come and express his sorrow to his father for the loss of his son. The young man then opened a parcel he'd been carrying. He explained to his friend's father that he was an amateur painter and had painted a portrait of his son which he wished to give to him.

"I'm afraid it is not very good," said the young man.

The father took the painting and saw that although it was very amateurish it nevertheless was a good likeness of his son. He received it with much appreciation and put the painting with the valuable masterpieces which hung on his walls – not because the painting itself was worth much but because it reminded him of his son – and he treasured it greatly.

Eventually the man himself died, and his art treasures were put up for auction. Art lovers from all over the country came to bid at the auction. When the day arrived for the paintings to be sold, the very first painting to be offered was that of his son.

"Don't waste your time with that rubbish!" shouted someone amongst the bidders. "Get to the good stuff; the valuable stuff," he said, pointing to the magnificent paintings hanging all around the room.

But the auctioneer refused. "The owner insisted that this painting of the son must be the first one offered and we cannot proceed until it is. So who will make an offer for this painting?"

There was silence. No one was prepared to bid. Then a poor man who had come along just to witness the event, held up his hand and said, "I bid five pounds!"

Some of those present laughed at his evident lack of art appreciation and no one else bid for the painting.

"Sold to the man in the grey coat standing by the door!" cried the auctioneer. "And that concludes the auction!" he said as he closed the book and prepared to leave.

"What's going on?" the crowd cried. "Get on with selling the rest of the paintings!"

"They have all gone," said the auctioneer. "The terms of the will stated that he who got the son, got everything! The poor man who has just purchased the painting of the man's son is now the possessor of all these art treasures!"

Now this is just a story, but it illustrates the wonderful Gospel truth that he who gets the Son gets everything. When as a sinner, God joins us to his Son through faith, we receive more than our hearts or minds could ever desire or imagine. When we get the Son we receive pardon and forgiveness, a new mind, heart and will, everlasting life and all the blessings of being in heaven with Jesus the Saviour. He who gets the Son gets everything!

[This story was told by Rev. M. Roberts when he preached on Ps. 138.6]



# THE CROSS ABOVE THE CRESCENT

**T**he world's media frequently focuses on the Middle East. Countries like Iraq and Iran frequently feature in news reports. At the present time these countries and the region in which they are found are unstable and dangerous places. Over one hundred years ago there was a young man growing up in the United States of America who would spend his life in missionary service in that part of the world. The young man's name was Samuel Zwemer. As his name suggests his family had originally come from Holland but it was in Michigan USA that Samuel was born in the year 1867.

### **HIS FAMILY AND BACKGROUND**

Samuel Zwemer was born into a Christian home and from an early age he was very aware of the Lord and of the things of God. He found it very difficult to pinpoint an exact time at which he was converted. This can often be a problem for young folk growing up in Christian homes. However as the years passed it became very clear that his devotion to the Lord was not a passing childish phase but something real and lasting. We do not know when he was born again, but whenever it happened, the rest of his life demonstrated that he was truly saved. As so many people have said down through the years, it is not being able to go back to an exact day or time that is important but rather the continuing evidence in our lives that we have passed "from death unto life". Little babies do not know their dates of birth but that does not mean that they were never born. While it is good, in order to know your age and to celebrate

birthdays, to be able to say exactly when you were born you do not need to know your date of birth to know that you are alive. You know that you are alive because you are breathing, thinking, walking and speaking. The same thing is true as far as our souls are concerned. The important thing is not some certainty over the time of our conversion but the question of whether we love the Lord and all that belongs to him, such as his Word and his people. That we wish to obey, honour and serve him, these are evidences that we are truly saved. As young Samuel Zwemer grew up it was very obvious that he did wish to serve the Lord and tell others about his Lord and Saviour.

### **A DESIRE TO BE A MISSIONARY**

While Samuel was still a teenager he came to believe that the Lord was calling him to be a missionary. This was strengthened through a talk he heard from a man called Robert Wilder who spoke of the great need for missionaries to go with the Gospel to the Indian subcontinent. That day he resolved, "God helping me, I purpose to be a foreign missionary". His mother would later tell him that none of this came as a surprise to her. While he was just a little baby she had dedicated him to the service of the Lord and laid him in the cradle with the prayer that he might grow up to be a missionary. In order to fulfil his desire to serve the Lord as a foreign missionary he began theological studies. At the same time he helped the church with evangelism, visiting the poor, giving them food, helping with their

problems and always directing them to Christ as the Saviour of sinners. He also undertook some studies in medicine, believing, rightly, that some knowledge of medicine might help him in his missionary work. He became very friendly with another young student who was in college at the same time. This young man's name was James Cantine and they would remain lifelong friends and fellow workers in the service of Christ. They both felt a special burden for the millions of Muslims who had never heard of Christ and often they prayed together the words of Abraham that we find in Genesis 17v18, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee".



Modern day Beirut where Zwemer began his work

### BEGINNING THE GREAT WORK

On completing their course Samuel and James approached different missionary societies to see which one would send them as missionaries to the Muslim world. To their disappointment not one missionary society was willing to send them. The various societies felt it was too dangerous to attempt to go to Arabia with the Gospel. Despite this setback they firmly believed that the Lord had put this work on their hearts and they set about raising funds themselves.

In June 1890 Samuel left America on the first stage of his work as a missionary to the Muslims. Eventually he met up with James Cantine in Beirut and together they set about learning Arabic. From there Samuel visited many cities in the Arab world, including Aden and Cairo. In this way he got to know the people and their ways and also joined up with a convert from Islam called Kamil Abdul Messiah. Kamil was to prove a great help to him, teaching him the language and the customs of the people.

### THE ARABIAN MISSION

Settling in Basra the men were able to open a shop selling Bibles and other Christian literature. There was a lot of opposition and at times it looked as if the work would have to close down. To their great sorrow their friend Kamil died in Basra and they were suspicious that he had been poisoned. Moving on to Bahrain Samuel opened another missionary work and was joined there by his brother Peter. They were helped in the work there by two young Australians, one of whom, Amy Wilkes, would become Samuel's wife. Like many other pioneer missionary couples they shared great hardships including the death of two young daughters.

In 1905 they returned to the United States and Samuel toured the country informing people of the work and urging them to help with money and more importantly with prayer. In 1912 they moved to Cairo in Egypt and from there Samuel directed the growing work of the Arabian mission. His zeal in distributing tracts got him into trouble from time to time but the Lord honoured his faithfulness and

souls were blessed. Amongst his many travels he was able, on several occasions, to visit China where there was a large Muslim population. As well as travelling all over the world he somehow found time to write. For thirty-five years he was the editor of a magazine called *Moslem World*. He also wrote about fifty books and hundreds of articles. Many of these books are still available to this day and are consulted by those who followed him into the work.

In the 1920's he was appointed as Professor of Religion and Christian Missions at Princeton Theological Seminary. Whenever the seminary was on holiday he and his wife would set off on their travels, addressing meetings and taking every opportunity to set before the church the great need of prayer and missionaries to the Arab world. He was able to continue his involvement in the work into old age and indeed when he passed away in 1952, in his eighties, he was still engaged in the work he loved and to which he had been devoted since his student days many years earlier.

His enthusiasm encouraged others to follow in his footsteps and today all over the world there are many missionaries reaching out to the Muslim world with the love of Christ. And there are also, by the grace of God, many converts from Islam who are thankful for those early missionaries who refused to be put off by danger or difficulty and were determined to go out with the Gospel.

Jeremy Tiss has studied closely the life of Samuel Zwemer. He says that the way in which Zwemer lived continues to be an example and an inspiration to Christians everywhere. He left behind, according to Tiss, a great example of perseverance, availability and boldness. "Learning the Arabic language was tedious, Islamic converts to Christianity were few, the desert heat was exhausting, and persecution came often, yet Zwemer persevered through the hard times by the grace of God. Through gracious boldness, Zwemer was able to confront, reason and witness to the Islamic leaders and throngs in mosques all across Arabia."

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# SABBATH SCHOOL SYLLABUS

Here are the final samples from the Sabbath School and Bible Class Syllabus. You will be able to see that there is so much in them that is similar to the monthly puzzle page. See how you get on with this month's examples.

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## Bible Class Workbook 2008-2009 Block 5: Christian Ethics - The Spirit-filled Life

Lesson 3: Parents and children — Read Ephesians 6:1-4

1. Write down TWO responsibilities which children have towards their parents:

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Write down TWO responsibilities which parents have towards their children:

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Explain what the following phrases mean:

(a) "in the Lord" (v.1) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (v.4) \_\_\_\_\_

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Lesson 4: Masters and servants / Employers and employees — Read Ephesians 6:5-9

By using the wordbank below, fill in the blanks in the following paragraph. Words may be used more than once if necessary:—

**Wordbank:** high, equally, employees, obey, judgment, ability, heaven, holding, best, favouritism, watched, accountable, work, all, always, enthusiasm, Master.

Employees have to \_\_\_\_\_ their employers and should \_\_\_\_\_ work to the \_\_\_\_\_ of their

\_\_\_\_\_. They should undertake their \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ and maintain

a \_\_\_\_\_ standard \_\_\_\_\_, not just when they are being \_\_\_\_\_. Employers should

treat \_\_\_\_\_ their employees \_\_\_\_\_, showing no \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

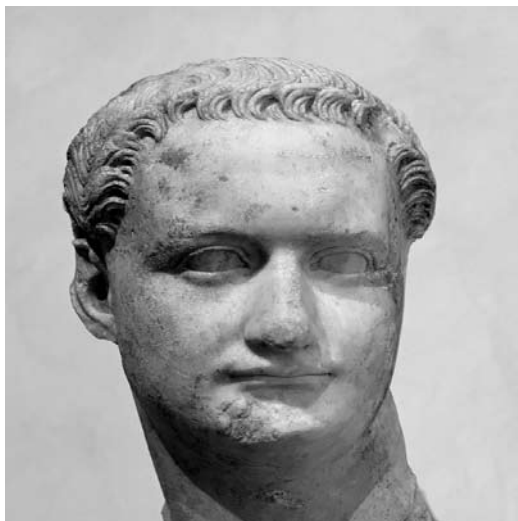
\_\_\_\_\_ no grudges. Both employers and \_\_\_\_\_ must remember that they have a

\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ to whom they will be \_\_\_\_\_ on the day of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

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If you want to know more about the Sabbath School Syllabus you should contact Rev. David Blunt, Free Church Manse, Knockintorran, Isle of North Uist, HS6 5ED. Tel. No. 01876 510305. Or if you are tuned in to modern technology you can email him at davidblunt@fccontinuing.org or by going to his congregation's web site at [www.northuistandgrimsayfcc.org.uk](http://www.northuistandgrimsayfcc.org.uk).



# The First Two Centuries

Opposite is a bust showing Domitian the persecutor of the Church who is mentioned below.

## THE CHURCH IN 100AD

By the year 100AD all the Apostles were dead and the Canon of Scripture was closed. The written revelation was complete (Jude 3) and the Age of Apostolic signs and miracles was over. During the previous fifty years the churches had faced internal problems (Acts 20) and external persecutions (2 Tim 4). Church government by Presbyters (Elders) had been established (1 Tim 5:17, Titus 1:5, 1 Peter 5:1) and the Gospel had been carried as far as Spain, Babylon and Africa, the excellent roads of the Roman Empire providing the preachers of the Gospel with a pathway to reach the furthest corners of the Empire.

Problems had arisen in various churches. The Thessalonians were falling into apathy and idleness as they mistakenly thought that the Lord would return in their lifetime. The Colossians were dabbling in speculations about angels, the Galatians and Hebrews were in danger of returning to the practice of the Law as the foundation of their salvation. On the other hand, James had to warn professing Christians that their knowledge of biblical doctrines would not save them if it did not lead to Christian behaviour. These were not the only problems. Then, as now, the visible church numbered believers and unbelievers, wheat and tares. Two heresies in particular had infiltrated the visible church.

1. Docetism: This was the teaching that Jesus did not have a real soul and body. (The Apostle John wrote against this opinion in his first Epistle.)
2. Gnosticism: These people believed that verbal messages were still being received from God and that the Bible was not enough in order to know Christ – you needed a further special teaching.

By 100AD persecution against Christians by the government was widespread. Domitian became Roman Emperor in 81 AD and immediately began to persecute those who did not give him God's place and worship. The Apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos and many others were killed. Domitian died in 96 AD. Two years later Trajan became Emperor and continued to punish those who did not worship the Roman gods. Persecution by the Jews ended in 70AD when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem (as Christ had foretold) and deported the Jews that they did not kill. James had been stoned by the Jews, Paul had been beheaded by the Romans and John died about 100AD, probably still in exile.

The headquarters of persecution was Rome where there was also a church. For the time being, the church in Rome

was steadfast and faithful to the Apostolic doctrines.

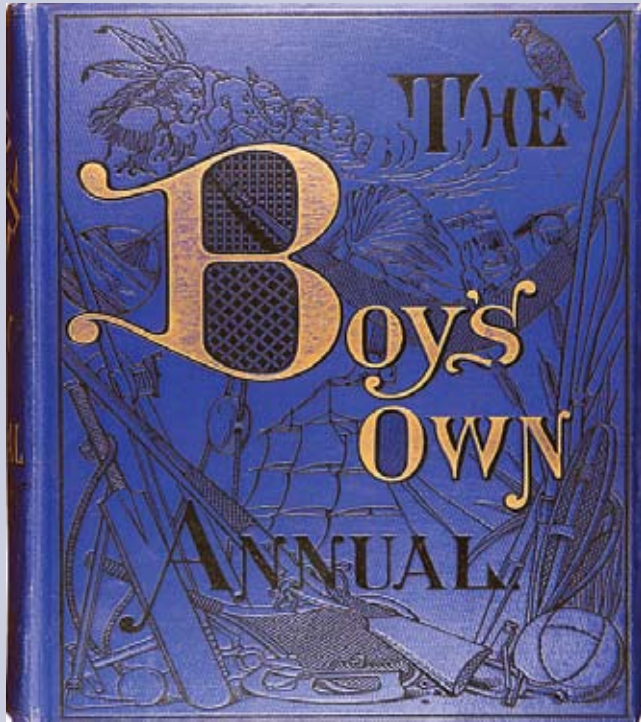
## THE CHURCH IN 200AD

The early Christians still met in houses. It was not until the 4<sup>th</sup> century that specially designed buildings were used for worship. The word 'church' refers to the people called by the Lord to himself. Despite continuing persecutions by the government, the number of Christians increased in the second century. Many Christians died courageously, in good hope. They died as witnesses, 'martyrs' to the Lord Christ. About 115 AD, Ignatius, the pastor in Antioch, was thrown to the lions in the arena at Rome. He was followed in death, in 156 AD, by the eighty-year-old Polycarp of Smyrna and then by the ninety-year-old Pothinus of Lyons in 177 AD. Christians were unpopular and were regarded in many places as unpatriotic because they put loyalty to God before obedience to the Government, as in Acts 4:19.

Another heresy arose, called after its inventor, a man called Marcion. He taught that some verses in the Bible were not genuine and should be removed: he thus became the first 'Higher Critic'. It was mainly the Christian writer Tertullian, who lived in North Africa, who attacked this heresy. Other notable defenders of the faith, 'apologists', were Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.

The church was united, it was 'catholic', which means 'worldwide' – to be distinguished from 'Roman Catholic', which means 'allied to the church of Rome'. Christians were respected for their care of the poor and their devotion to one another when condemned to prison or to work in the mines. Persecution actually drove them together in unity against a common enemy. A 'Confession of Faith' for those wishing to join the church was drawn up. It was called the 'Apostles' Creed' and agreement to these fundamental articles of the Christian Faith was required for admission. (This Creed is still recited in some churches today e.g. the Church of England).

Early symptoms of innovating departures from the faith by the church of Rome were now appearing. For example, about 160AD a new festival called 'Easter' was appointed in Rome. Moreover, the church in Rome, based in the capital of the Empire, was now beginning to assert her authority over churches outside of Italy. An unhealthy emphasis on outward ceremonies in worship also began to arise. Furthermore, the apostolic form of church Government i.e. by ruling and preaching Elders was being increasingly replaced by 'bishops' who ruled over large areas and many congregations.



On my bookshelves are some copies of a most interesting book. It is The Boy's Own Annual. Over a number of years now I have managed to buy these from secondhand book shops and have built up a little collection.

The Boy's Own Paper started on Saturday January 18<sup>th</sup> 1879 and was published each week price one (old) penny. The weekly parts could be bought annually, bound up in one volume and then known as The Boy's Own Annual. After some years it became a monthly paper but was still available each autumn as an annual. It was a very good read — remember these were days when there was no radio, television, or records — full of exciting short stories, serials, hobbies, nature study and all sorts of things. There was also a Girl's Own Annual but I confess that I know almost nothing about it.

My copies of the BOP — as it became known — are, some of them, the worse for wear. Well, they would be — some of them are over a hundred years old, and have been much read. The Annual always had a deeply embossed cover in bright colours — reds, blues, greens and even gold. Now they are faded. When I look at them I have to imagine what they looked like when a boy might have unwrapped his present, for that is what they often were. I know that to be true because inside might be written, "To Allen with much love & heaps of good wishes from Auntie Win." One copy really does say just that. Another says, "Harleston House School, Prize, Awarded to Gordon Le B. Gibaut of the 6<sup>th</sup> form for General Improvement during the year 1926."

Now they are old, their spines are a little cracked and the glue that holds them together is brittle. I should really put them into the hands of a bookbinder for repair, but that would be a costly business.

What is happening to these dear old books is what happens to everything and to all of us. Many years ago H F Lyte wrote, "Change and decay in all around I see." This is very true for nothing improves with the passing of time. Cars rust, washing machines break down, wood goes rotten, and our clothes wear out — everything eventually breaks down. Everything in process of time decays, deteriorates and dies.

That is why the theory of evolution — that we are all climbing up; first from some slime, then to a sort of plant life, simple animals, monkeys and then man — is just not true. We can observe and know by experience that it is not so. All is subject to what scientists call 'the second law of thermodynamics'. Many scientists by this second law, know evolution to be unproved and unprovable.

All things decay and die. The truth is that God made man in his own image. He made all things in six days and all very good. It was because man sinned that all things started on this downward path.

We too are on this downward path because of sin. But God has provided a way whereby our sins can be forgiven, and for us to inherit eternal life. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9), and in another place, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).