

Publishing Editor's column

THIS MONTH the media is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the publication of Charles Darwin's book *Origin of Species*. An article in this issue looks at the historical background to Darwin's work. It highlights his erroneous conclusion that the variations that he observed within species by natural selection could account for the development of all living organisms.

A similar extrapolation of the data for global temperature and CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere has given rise to great concern over global warming. For example, the British prime minister, Gordon Brown, claimed at a recent meeting of ministers from seventeen 'major economies' held in London that we have "less than fifty days to save the planet"! Considerable media attention has been given to the idea that rising levels of CO₂ are responsible for rising global temperatures since the early 1970s. Computer models, based on this assumption, predict dramatic rises in global temperature.

Various scenarios, such as widespread drought, heat waves, hurricanes and melting polar icecaps causing major flooding by rising sea-level, have been predicted. Many politicians are now convinced that drastic action is required despite the astronomical cost involved. However, very recent data indicates that global temperatures are falling. Inevitably there has been a reaction by some scientists who question the assumptions that predict a disaster scenario. Some even claim that fear of disaster is being used, without sound basis, to promote the idea of environmental catastrophe.

Irrational fear has also been evident with the emergence of the swine-flu pandemic. Government publicity and newspaper stories promoted a panic response by many who were not infected. Other factors, such as a perception of a rise in violent crime, and the apprehension of child molestation, add to the fears that people have.

The above is mentioned to identify the climate of fear that seems to be a feature of society today. Jesus predicted that at the end-time there would be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Lk. 21:25,26). While we may rightly expect that

the powers of heaven that are to be shaken will be the replacement of the kingdom of men by the Kingdom of God, we should not therefore discount 'things coming on the earth' as being physical upheavals and catastrophe caused by man's exploitation of it. Indeed, one of the reasons for Divine intervention is because He will "destroy them which destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18). It is probably only in the last fifty years, or less, that man has had the capability to destroy the earth physically, or at least life upon it—hence the relevance to our days.

Another meaning of the word 'destroy' in Revelation 11:18 is 'corrupt'. A feature of the days of Noah, to which Jesus likened the days of his coming, was that man "had corrupted his way on the earth" (Gen. 6:12). Such corruption is very evident in today's society in its rejection of God's Word and way of salvation.

What is the disciple's position in this environment of fear? Jesus called his disciples to follow his commandments and his example so that they would act as salt and lights (Mt. 5:13-16). Paul says to the Philippians, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life . . ." (2:14-16).

In a society which is becoming more opposed to the teaching of Christ we must remain resolute in declaring the whole counsel of God. We are to be intimidated neither by opposition to the gospel message and to those who are committed to live by it, nor by the fears of a society apprehensive of global catastrophe. For "ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but . . . let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:4-9).

This is the time to "look up, and lift up [our] heads; for [our] redemption draweth nigh" (Lk. 21:28). Man will neither destroy nor save the planet. Our Father is in control. He will fill the earth with His glory.

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