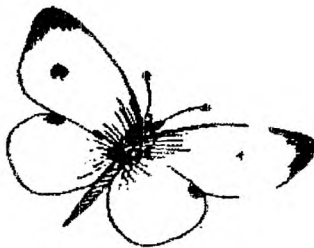
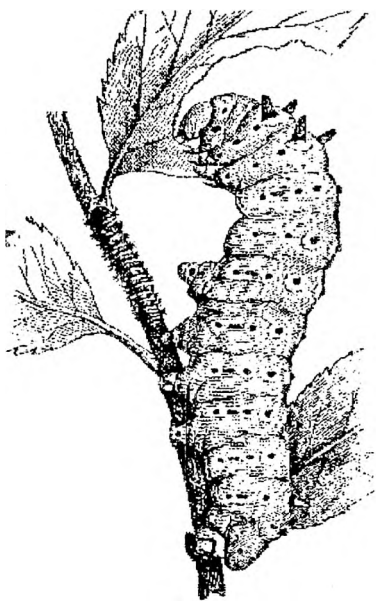


The

Endeavour

Magazine



*Let God transform you inwardly
by a complete change
of your mind*

June 2000

No 103

Christians all believe that God reveals himself to us and that we for our part need to seek him out. Both Old and New Testaments encourage us to seek him and promise us that he will then be found by us. See for example Jeremiah 29:13 and Matthew 7:7. The end product will hopefully be a meeting of minds, the divine and the human, which will issue in fellowship with the Father and the Son for eternity. (1 John 1:3) However, this process can sadly go wrong, the fault no doubt being on the human side. Unless we have never changed our minds about anything – unlikely, to say the least – we can all witness to having taken wrong turnings and to having gone down blind alleys. This is hardly surprising when we consider that we are involved in an interaction between the mind of the creator and the limited mind of the creature. It is the creature who is most likely, from his/her limited point of view, to deal in half-truths that can lead to false images of God.

What guidance have we got that will help to minimise the likelihood of us adopting and promoting unworthy conceptions of God? Having the Bible as a revelation from God does not prevent us from having such misunderstandings and, read in a particular way, the Bible itself can lead us to wrong conclusions. Jesus said to the Jewish authorities who were persecuting him, even seeking to kill him: 'You study the Scriptures, because you think that in them you will find eternal life. And these very Scriptures speak about me! Yet you are not willing to come to me in order to have life.' (John 5:39,40) What we must learn to do is to check our ideas against the revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Jesus is for us the wisdom of God, the touchstone of all that is true, holy and noble. To deal in ideas of God that do not match up to the revelation of God in Jesus is to deal in what are no doubt human ideas of God, human (mis)understandings of God's revelation, likely to be human projections that have been divinized. To engage with false ideas of God is effectively to be heading in the direction of idolatry in some form or other. This is confirmed at the end of John's 1st Epistle when he says: 'We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we know the true God. We live in union with the true God – in union with his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and this is eternal life.' and then goes on to close with the words: 'My children, keep yourselves from false gods!' (1 John 5:20-21)

Of course, we would all plead to be innocent of idolatry in its most blatant forms. We do not bow down to or pray to or worship literal idols. Such idolatry is lampooned in passages such as Isaiah 44:9-20: 'All those who make idols are worthless, and the gods they prize so highly are useless. Those who worship these gods are blind and ignorant – and they will be disgraced. It does no good to make a metal image to worship as a god!.....It makes as much sense as eating ashes. His foolish ideas have so misled him that he is beyond help. He won't admit to himself that the idol he holds in his hand is not a god at all.' Although

we may not practise idolatry in this way, such passages make the essence of idolatry clear: it amounts to worshipping a man-made god crafted in the form of some creature, in other words worshipping the creature rather than the creator.

However, idolatry can take on more subtle forms, familiar to us all, and that do not necessarily involve worship of a literal idol. Luck, lust, money, power and nationalism are all examples of forms of idolatry that can tempt us into forms of worship that do not honour God but divinize aspects of his creation and man's creations.

We have already seen that there are warnings against idolatry in both Testaments of the Bible. Let us look at one further passage from each Testament. From the Old Testament consider Deuteronomy 4:15-31. Here the people of Israel were told not to make an idol 'in any form at all - whether man or woman, animal or bird, reptile or fish. Do not be tempted to worship and serve what you see in the sky - the sun, the moon, and the stars....Obey [God's] command not to make yourselves any kind of idol, because the LORD your God is like a flaming fire; he tolerates no rival.' This latter description of God was clearly not an invitation to worship fire for Moses said at the beginning of this section that 'When the LORD spoke to you from the fire on Mount Sinai, you did not see any form.' The implication of all this is abundantly clear, that no one had seen the form of God and so they should not use any form to represent him.

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul has some comments to make on the same subject as he saw certain aspects of life in his generation of which he was ashamed. Although he says that God's invisible qualities, including his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen, perceived in the things that God has made, he in no way suggests that anyone knows what God looks like. On the contrary, he goes on to describe how some in his day, instead of worshipping the immortal God, worship images made to look like mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Again the implication is clear, that, although we can know something of the nature of God from his creation, we have no knowledge of his form that would enable us to represent him in the form of any of his creatures.

Now let us consider what, to me, is an even more subtle form of idolatry, for there are some who believe that we can deduce from other passages of scripture what is the true form of God. Doesn't Genesis 1:26 tell us that God made man in his own image and doesn't that mean that God must be in the shape of a human being? The argument is sometimes taken even further by saying that not only is God in the form of a human but he must be male too, for why else would Jesus call God his Father? And of course it then follows that sisters are seen as second-class citizens in the church. To some these are more than plausible arguments and are seen as part of revealed truth.

What should really make us suspicious of this line of thought is that it is most stoutly defended by males! But there are other good reasons for subjecting it to careful scrutiny. What an impertinence it is for any creature to pretend to

know the shape of God! Surely we have lost all sense of creaturely humility in pretending to such knowledge and particularly when it is based only on what is a deduction from a statement of scripture that can readily be understood in other ways. I know of no scriptural author who is in any hurry to proclaim such a truth which is regarded by some as being foundational. Jesus himself nowhere suggests anything of the sort. Not only so but both Testaments of our Bible warn unequivocally against such a notion as we have just seen in Deuteronomy and Romans. We should surely follow the plain sense of the many scriptures against the deification of creaturely forms and qualities. Let God be God and let us be honest enough to say that there are things about him that we cannot know, particularly his 'physical' form. It is surely important to note that we are nowhere in the Scriptures told to rejoice in being in the form of God in this sense but we are repeatedly exhorted to learn to live morally after the manner of God. Let us not impose upon him features of our own beings and natures which effectively demean him. It is of course convenient for males to divinize the male but we should certainly be prepared to test thoroughly the rightness of such a move.

And so I would wish to maintain that to follow the line of reasoning noted above is to engage in a subtle form of idolatry which is made difficult for some to detect because it is presented as a foundational teaching of scripture and so invested with an authority that it does not deserve. John tells us in his gospel that '...grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is the same as God and is at the Father's side, has made him known.' (1:17-18) Jesus says to Philip: 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Why, then, do you say, "Show us the Father"?' What matters is seeing 'God's glory shining in the face of Christ.' (2 Cor 4:6) This has nothing to do with 'physical' likeness as we judge that in this world but everything to do with the way in which God makes 'his light shine in our hearts'. In the same context, Paul makes it clear that the Good News is 'about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God' and, instead of going to Gen 1:27 to prove that God is corporeal, in the form of a human and male to boot, he goes to Gen 1:3 to show that just as God once said, 'Out of the darkness the light shall shine!' He now makes His light shine in our hearts to bring us the knowledge of God that we do require, the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ. Anything else, even though it may be deduced from scripture, is likely to pander to human pride and be heading in the direction of idolatry.

As well as scrutinising such ideas in the light of the revelation of God in Christ, we ought also to test them by how they might manifest themselves in our lives together. If, for example, the idea that 'God is male' is accompanied by a lifestyle that makes females second-class citizens in the church, then that should arouse our justifiable suspicions.

What do our readers think?

Les Boddy

New Booklet

The Most Important Doctrine Of All

(A Study of the Atonement)

Ron Coleman

Atonement means 'reconciliation', and though it might seem amateur etymology to describe it as meaning 'at one-ment' it is true that the noun did come from this phrase in Middle English. The general meaning of reconciliation (in connection with the difference between Jew and Gentile) is well described by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians: 'for [Christ] himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.' The meaning of 'atonement' is therefore the removal of the barrier between man and God, through the death of Christ.

It is thus no exaggeration to describe the Atonement as 'the most important doctrine of all', which Alfred Nicholls did in an Editorial in the November 1985 issue of *The Christadelphian*.

There is however deep irony in that the doctrine of the Atonement has caused divisions, not only among Christians in general, but also in our community. Among ourselves the root of the difference lies almost entirely in the interpretation of a single verse (Romans 8:3): 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh'. This is interpreted as meaning 'When man had failed, God sent Jesus ... to deal with sin – the root cause of all man's problems. Jesus shared the frail characteristics of mankind's physical mortality. Only in this way could He condemn sin on its own territory – sinful flesh.' (*Studies in the Statement of Faith*, 1991). In other words, although Jesus did not sin he had a sinful nature which had to be condemned.

There is however strong evidence that this interpretation of Paul's words cannot be sustained. This was set out in two articles in *Endeavour*, Nos. 83 and 84, ten years ago, which however attracted no attention. Because of this (and of the exigencies of publishing) a third and concluding article answering the questions never appeared. However, in view of the continuing advocacy of the traditional understanding, it is felt that an opportunity should be given for it to be debated and we now republish the first two articles, together with the originally envisaged conclusion. This booklet is in no way presented as the last word on the matter and we would welcome thoughtful comments and criticisms given in the spirit of Christ.

Please send your order form to: Les Boddy, 14 Meadow Drive, Healing, Grimsby. DN41 7RU Cheques for £1.20 payable to *The Endeavour Magazine*.

Loneliness – a positive approach.

In the light of her own experience, Margaret Ross discusses the problem of loneliness and some possible ways of taking a positive approach to dealing with it.

Loneliness is a terrible thing to experience. It can be acutely felt, especially among a crowd of our brothers and sisters when **they** all seem to be with someone and **we** are all on our own. Each of us should try to be more aware of the heartache that others often feel in such circumstances.

There are different kinds of loneliness. For example, loneliness after divorce, which is rather like that after a death; after all, it is the death of a marriage, more than likely after a period of extremely trying times. It leaves one feeling very rejected with little or no self-esteem. Having to tell the children that 'Daddy (or Mummy) is no longer going to live with us,' only adds to this feeling. The children may reject the parent left alone or, worse still, may feel that they themselves are to blame.

Often associated with loneliness is depression; not just a fed-up feeling or being low but clinical depression which strikes at the very root of one's being. Being a Christian often adds to the problem in such situations, as has been my experience. Deep down we know that we have a Saviour who loves us, but we feel so unlovable, so useless, the vicious circle goes round and round. How can it be that we are experiencing broken and bitter feelings? Well, let's stop being **NEGATIVE** and take a look at the **POSITIVE** ways in which we can overcome this terrible condition of loneliness.

Counting blessings

Try, for a start, looking at your own good points. At first it may seem that there are none but remember that God chose you to be His child. He loves you and sees what you can become. Try looking around you at the blessings God surrounds us all with: the sky, sun, moon and stars, the weather, sunshine and showers. Now there's a lesson, sunshine and showers – bright times and dull times. We can appreciate good times all the more **after** the bad times, and I speak from experience. Natural things like flowers, trees, grass and birds can remind us of God's promises. He notices the bird that falls to the ground and we are worth much more in His sight. You may not feel close to God, may be unable to pray or find comfort from Bible reading but take heart: our Lord is with us all the time, he **NEVER** leaves or forsakes us and better times will come. Just hang on in there! Sometimes reading from another version can help to kick-start Bible reading again. I found reading from the New International Version instead of the King James Version really made it come alive.

One day at a time

If today is a particularly bad day, just accept it and do your best; tomorrow is another day, another fresh start and, if that turns out to be a bad one too, one of these tomorrows WILL be better, however long it takes. Try to find something to do that will help you to keep occupied. Here are some suggestions of things you could do on your own and which I have found helpful:

(a). Music can help. Remember how David soothed Saul by playing the harp. Instrumental music can be a great help in lifting our spirits even if we just let it wash over us. Sounds of nature on tapes like the sea coming up the beach and then receding with a soft swishing sound... Try to imagine it taking away your loneliness and leaving you feeling refreshed.

(b). When I was feeling very lonely and depressed I found doing a jigsaw puzzle a great help. I have also found that puzzle books helped me not to just sit and stare out of the window feeling more and more sorry for myself.

(c). More creative activities like painting, tapestry, needlework can all help to take away the loneliness. Children's knitted garments are always required by the Jewish Relief Organisation and the yarn can be supplied by Edgar and Marjorie Hall of Jarvis Avenue Ecclesia in Nottingham.

(d). Reading can also help, especially of the humorous kind. I recommend Barbara Johnson's books - she has had some devastating experiences and has survived. Here are some samples of her writing:

'Life is about 10% how you make it and 90% how you take it.'

'Dark moments are short corridors leading to sunlit rooms.'

'When you're lonely, we wish you LOVE.

When you're down, we wish you JOY.

When you're troubled, we wish you PEACE.

When things look empty, we wish you HOPE.'

'Hope opens doors where despair closes them.'

(Barbara Johnson)

Be hopeful

Try to have a hopeful attitude. It is often not easy, but worth the effort. As children some of us, especially lonely children, had an imaginary friend. As adult believers we are promised that our Lord is 'with us always' and so we can talk to Him. Express your hope by reaching out to your Lord. We know this makes sense in our minds but we need to make it real in our hearts. How do we translate head knowledge into heart feeling? We learn by practice. He is our special friend so talk to Him; tell Him your problems - how you feel, your need of companionship - and think how He might talk to you. He *is* beside you. Ask yourself, 'What would He say?' Think of how He talked to people in different

circumstances and how He might react to you in your particular situation.

Get involved with other people

Activities involving other people are particularly helpful in taking you out of yourself:

(a). If interested in children, schools often need people to hear slow readers and help them understand the written word.

(b). Why not give a person that you know to be living on their own a ring and have a chat with them, to ask them how they are. Don't wait for someone to phone you, be the one to make the first move. You could find that this is just the right moment, both for them and for yourself, and you will feel all the better for talking.

(c). In our community there are various ways we can help in a 'long-distance' capacity: the CIL Sunday School, writing to brothers & sisters in isolation, and CBM correspondence work for example.

(d). Residents in rest homes welcome seeing another face especially if they are unable to get out. It may well take a lot of courage but there will be benefits on both sides.

For many years I suffered from loneliness and acute depression, so I really do feel for all who find themselves in this situation. I too know the deep feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, but it really does come to an end. One very **positive** outcome is that the experience enables one to empathise with those going through similar times. Please don't let bitterness creep in, it does no good at all; it only hurts the one feeling bitter and prevents them from moving forward.

Finally, try to be **positive** in outlook! Bad times are here but they WILL pass. Just hang on in there! Our Lord is with you through it all.

Margaret Ross

FURTHER READING

Eddie Askew Several books of Meditations & Prayers e.g. *Facing the Storm*. Eddie is a Christian and an Artist. He also worked with the Leprosy Mission for a number of years, and now leads Christian Retreats.

John Lockley Is a Doctor and a Christian, and has also been severely depressed. He has written a book: *Practical Workbook for the Depressed Christian*, which I found very helpful.

Barbara Johnson *Stick a Geranium in your Hat and be Happy* and others.

We are born helpless. As soon as we are fully conscious we discover loneliness. We need others physically, emotionally, intellectually; we need them if we are to know anything, even ourselves.

C.S. Lewis

Looking to the future

At the end of his editorial to the December 1999 issue of Endeavour, Les Boddy invited comments on the subject of the reintroduction of animal sacrifices in the Messianic kingdom. In this article, Paul Cooke offers some thoughts on this and related matters.

Introduction

'No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.' Jesus' words as recorded by Mark (13:31) teach an important lesson which is far truer for us than ever it was for the Son of God: the future holds events of which, thanks to the revelation of Scripture, we may have some knowledge (there will indeed be a Day of the LORD), but our knowledge of these things can only ever be partial (we don't know when that Day will come). Whenever we talk of future things, therefore, it seems to me that the most appropriate attitude to adopt is one of informed caution. I hope such a spirit will characterize the following thoughts. In the first part of the article I wish to focus specifically on the question of animal sacrifice before moving on to more general matters relating to the future.

Sacrifices

At school, I was always taught to avoid arguments from silence. I've since come to the conclusion that this advice is not always appropriate. There are occasions when authorial silence on a particular subject becomes positively deafening. The NT silence on the reintroduction of animal sacrifices subsequent to Christ's return is a case in point. Many first-century Jews were apparently wary of the freedom being preached by the early Jewish Christians. Given the strength of Paul's desire for the conversion of his people (Rom. 9-10) and his standard practice of becoming 'all things to all men so that by all possible means [he] might save some' (1 Cor. 9:22), it is amazing that Paul and others (such as the writer to the Hebrews) should have nothing to say to their fellow countrymen on the subject of the reintroduction of animal sacrifices in the future Messianic kingdom. What a golden opportunity to win more souls for Christ! How could they possibly have ignored it? The only answer I can think of is that they simply did not believe that animal sacrifices *would* be reintroduced after Christ's return. On the contrary, their faith was that 'we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.... By one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy.... There is no longer any sacrifice for sin' (Heb. 10:10-18). This seems to be pretty conclusive.

Those who believe in the restoration of animal sacrifice sometimes make the point that these sacrifices will have a different function from that which they had under the Mosaic covenant: the shedding of blood will not be performed to

achieve forgiveness for sins, but, rather, to commemorate the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Although this begs the question of why the present Christ-given commemoration of bread and wine should need to be replaced, it does at least have the virtue of taking the argument of Hebrews into account. However, at least one writer has raised a grammatical objection to the idea. As I have no knowledge of Hebrew, I can't vouch for the credibility of what he says; if anyone could either confirm or correct what follows, I should be delighted to hear from them. The suggestion is made, then, that the reintroduction of animal sacrifices on a commemorative basis would, ironically, violate the very principle used to underpin the idea in the first place — namely, the principle of the literal interpretation of prophecy:

For the Hebrew word used to describe the purpose of these sacrifices in Ezekiel 45:15, 17, and 20 is the *piel* form of *kaphar* (rendered 'to make reconciliation' or 'to make atonement'). But this is precisely the word used in the Pentateuchal description of the Old Testament sacrifices to indicate their propitiatory or expiatory purpose (see Lev. 6:30; 8:15; 16:6, 11, 24, 30, 32, 33, 34; Num. 5:8; 15:28; 29:5). If the sacrifices mentioned in Ezekiel are to be understood literally, they must be expiatory, not memorial offerings.¹

Ezekiel 40–48

But what, then, is a believer with a conservative view of biblical authority to make of passages such as those at the end of Ezekiel? Some scholars with just such a view of Scripture vigorously affirm the literality of Ezekiel's vision. Merrill Unger, for example, has no doubts at all: 'The Temple vision is part and parcel of the reality of Israel's restoration. If the restoration is to be taken literally, the Temple must also be construed in the same way.'² Others, however, are unconvinced by such an understanding of these chapters: 'To resort to dispensationalism and postpone them to a literal fulfilment in a yet future time strikes the author as a desperate expedient that sincerely attempts to preserve belief in an inerrant prophecy.'³ One obvious way of overcoming the dilemma is provided by the text itself. It's been suggested that Ezek. 43:8–11 could provide a key to this final section of the book in that the verses allow us to view these chapters as an example conditional prophecy.⁴ On this view, the LORD's promise to His people to 'live among them forever' was not made to some far off generation, but to the Jews of Ezekiel's day, if only they would 'put away from [the LORD] their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings' (43:9). Such a view is certainly encouraged by vs. 10–11, where Ezekiel is instructed to disclose the plan of the Temple to his contemporaries, 'so that *they* may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations' (my italics). The fact that the prophecy wasn't fulfilled in or immediately after Ezekiel's time implies that the

Jews failed to respect God's condition for living among them for ever.

This does not, however, necessarily mean that the prophecy won't be fulfilled at some time in the future. But what form might such a fulfilment take? It might be literal, but, as I've suggested, the restoration of animal sacrifice poses something of a problem from a NT perspective. A possible solution that I personally find helpful has been offered in an article by J. J. M. Roberts. He suggests that there are four distinct groups of OT prophecies. Firstly, there are those 'which have already come to pass' (e.g., Amos 7:9). Secondly, there is 'that group of predictions which did not come to pass and will never come to pass' (e.g., Ezk. 26:7-14; cf., 29:17-20; Jonah 3:9). Thirdly, there are 'those prophecies which are yet to be fulfilled and for which we longingly look for fulfilment (e.g., Is. 11:6-9). And, finally, there are 'those predictions whose fulfilment, whether already past or yet to be expected, must be regarded as taking place in a way that is less — or more than — literal'.⁵ It is in this final category that he places Ezk. 37-48, on the grounds that Ezekiel's vision is effectively given a new, specifically Christian interpretation in John's Apocalypse (note, in particular, the parallels between Ezk. 37 and Rev. 20:4; Ezk. 38-39 and Rev. 20:7-10; Ezk. 39:21-29 and Rev. 20:11-15; Ezk. 40:2 and Rev. 21:10). However, as well as these frequently observed parallels, there are also significant differences: although both accounts refer to a process of measuring, in Revelation there is no possibility of measuring the Temple (cf. Ezk. 41) since there is no physical Temple to be measured (21:22). Similarly, the reinstitution of sacrifice in Ezekiel (40:38-47; 43:18-27) is absent from John's vision, where Jesus is 'the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world' (13:8) whose blood cleanses his people (7:14). Where Ezekiel focuses on the Zadokites as the 'only Levites who may draw near to the LORD to minister before him' (40:46), Revelation sees the priesthood both as a present office for all believers (1:6) and as a blessing to be bestowed on those who share in the first resurrection (20:6). Finally, whereas in Ezekiel, it looks as though Jerusalem is to be ruled by a mortal, sinful Davidic priest (45:22), in Revelation the only throne belongs to God and the Lamb (22:3).⁶ Of course, it is certainly possible that John's vision, while based on Ezekiel's, is different precisely because it describes a different time period. However, I personally find Roberts' conclusion more persuasive:

God's people have a history, and within the light of later developments the expectations of the future change. In my opinion, this is what takes place between the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Revelation. In Ezekiel there is one expectation based upon the experiences of God's people until the time of Ezekiel. By the time the Book of Revelation is written there have been new experiences. Jesus has come and brought his teachings. There is a new realization of how God can deal with

people and what sacrifice is really about. This affects the character, the style of the expectation.⁷

The only thing I would want to add would be to emphasize that these changes in perception are always the result of God's activity in revelation.

Metaphors

In support of the idea that the future will not see a reinstitution of animal sacrifices, the NT's tendency to use the language of religious ritual in a metaphorical sense should also be noted. Apart from references to the literal Temple which then existed in Jerusalem, we therefore find that the term *temple* is used in purely metaphorical contexts in the NT. It is the body of Christ (Jn. 2:19-21); Christian assemblies are collective temples in which God dwells by His Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17); the body of each individual Christian is also a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19); faithful men and women from all ages of history are like individual stones making up the great temple of God's Spirit (Eph. 2:21); those who overcome will be (metaphorical) pillars in the (presumably equally metaphorical) temple of God (Rev. 3:12); the great multitudes in white robes serve God in His (heavenly, metaphorical) temple (Rev. 7:15); John is told to measure the temple of God (Rev. 11:1), but, again, the reference is presumably not literal,⁸ and, finally, John sees that there is no (literal) temple in the new Jerusalem 'because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple' (Rev. 21:22).

A similar shift from the literal to the metaphorical can be seen in connection with the concept of sacrifice (Rom. 12:1; Php. 2:17; 4:18; Heb. 13:15-16). Peter is particularly relevant in the present context as he brings together the concept of a metaphorical temple and metaphorical sacrifices: 'you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Pe. 2:5). Peter's use of the term *priesthood* here is picked up a few verses later: 'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (v. 9). The present tense here ('you *are* [...] a royal priesthood') should make us wary of treating Rev. 20:6 too literally: the fact that the saints are to be 'priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years' does not necessarily mean that there will be a reintroduction of a system of worship based on the Levitical pattern. Such an understanding of the verse is certainly possible, but it should be acknowledged that it receives no direct support elsewhere in the NT. In fact, the closest parallel passage (1 Pe. 2:9) provides an interpretive grid that leads in a rather different direction, one which is far more typical of the NT as a whole.

Paul Cooke

To be Continued.

(P.T.O. for notes.)

- ¹ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), p. 204.
- ² Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Guide to the Bible* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1974), p. 200.
- ³ Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, Word Biblical Commentary, 29 (Dallas: Word, 1990), p. 214.
- ⁴ This view is put forward by Ron Coleman, 'Questions and Answers', *Endeavour*, 100 (December 1998), 18-21 (p. 20).
- ⁵ J. J. M. Roberts, 'A Christian Perspective on Prophetic Tradition', *Interpretation*, 33 (1979), 240-53 (pp. 241-45).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-47.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 252.
- ⁸ Such a view is quite standard within our community. Cf. Robert Roberts, *Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse*, 7th edn (Birmingham: The Christadelphian, 1964), p. 85: 'Of course, you require not to be told that the temple and its courts are here used in a symbolic sense.'

No man ever sank under the burden of the day.
It is when tomorrow's burden is added to the burden of today
that the weight is more than a man can bear.

Never load yourself so.

If you find yourself so loaded,
at least remember this: it is your doing, not God's.
He begs you to leave the future to him, and mind the present.

George MacDonald

It is better to debate a matter
without settling it
rather than settling it
without debating.

Emmanuel

Allowing the Bible to speak for itself on the subject of the 'Holy Spirit' highlights the supreme majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ who, as the apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 1, is at the centre of all things.

Julia Booth invites us to join in a survey of New Testament teaching on the Spirit.

GOD IS SPIRIT (John 4:24; 2 Cor.3:17-18)

THERE IS ONLY ONE SPIRIT (1 Cor.12:4; Ephesians 4:4)

THE SPIRIT IS LIFE (Gal.5:25; John 6:63; Romans 8:10)

THE SPIRIT IS THE POWER OF GOD, likened to wind and fire.
(Genesis 1:2; John 3:8; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:2-3; 1 Cor.4:20)

THE SPIRIT IS THE MEDIUM FOR GOD'S OWN MANIFESTATION
(1 Cor.2:10-16). It is the divine essence, which determines his identity (his unchanging nature) and flows from him like water from an eternal spring, permeating everything it touches. This water is life (John 4:14), eternal life.

THE SPIRIT IS THE WORD OF GOD or word of life (1 John 1:1) which is equated with eternal life or the source of eternal life.

JESUS WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT and became God's ultimate manifestation, Emmanuel (Matt.1:18/23; John 1.14/18).

THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT is therefore perceived and understood in the nature of *JESUS CHRIST*, the word made flesh, the image of the invisible God. *JESUS'* own words are spirit and life (John 3:34; John 6:68) and he declared himself and his Father to be one (John 10:30).

JESUS CHRIST, EMMANUEL has been given this spirit without reserve (John 3:34) and does everything by means of it. He was led by it (Matt.4:1), rejoiced by it (Luke 10:21), cast out devils by it (Matt.12:28), was raised from the dead by it (Romans 1:4) and bestows it upon others (John 15:26). He is the life-giving spirit (1 Cor.15:45) and baptises with the spirit (Matt.3:11).

Men and women, like *JESUS*, must be **BORN OF THE SPIRIT** (John 3:5), i.e. become spiritual or holy. This they do by belief in *JESUS CHRIST*, the son of

the living God (Galatians 3:2; Ephesians 2:18; 1 John 4:15; 1 John 5:1) and then they are begotten of God.

Baptism in water is an outward, physical demonstration of an inward, spiritual baptism that has already taken place (Acts 10:44) and witnesses to the risen *CHRIST*. Rebirth needs the cleansing 'water' of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) through *JESUS CHRIST* (Acts 19:1-5).

THE SPIRIT SANCTIFIES (2 Thess.2:13) but unless we have the mind of *CHRIST* we cannot understand the spirit (1 Cor.2:14/15), so the spirit draws us to Christ (John 6:43) and into righteousness (Colossians 1:9-14).

Those who recognise the *Son of God* are turned into his likeness by the work of the spirit, which dwells in him (2 Cor.3:18) and in them, the temple of God (1 Cor.3:16/17). *Only CHRIST* can remove the veil which clouds the minds of those who adhere to the old law (2 Cor.3:14; Ephesians 2:13-18).

WE KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVES IN US because of the gift of the spirit - love! (1 John 3:16-24). The Corinthians' behaviour betrayed their unspirituality (1 Cor.3:1-4) but conversely, those under the influence of the Holy Spirit can be recognised by their attitude to *JESUS* (1 Cor.12:3) Their lives are spirit directed (Galatians 5:25), which spirit guides them away from self-indulgence (Galatians 5:16-18) and produces fruit (Galatians 5:22). Those in whom the spirit dwells acknowledge the divinity of Christ (1 John 4:13/14).

THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT is a co-operation between the spirit of God and the spirit of man, and an assurance of eternal life (Romans 8:9-17; Galatians 4:6-7). It proves that we are God's sons and heirs. It encourages interest in spiritual things (Romans 8:5), sets us free (Romans 8:2) and searches our hearts, teaching us wisdom (Romans 8:26/27; Hebrews 7:25) which is attributed to the mind of *CHRIST* and makes our prayers righteous. The requirements of the Mosaic law no longer hold sway because *CHRIST* is the fulfilment of it. We pray 'in the Holy Spirit' (Jude v.20; Ephesians 6:18) when we confess our belief in the risen *son of God*.

PEACE, JOY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS emanate from the Holy Spirit, and when these things are in abundance the power of that spirit will remove all obstacles to hope (Romans 14:17 and 15:13). There is no room for contention in God's kingdom.

THE HOLY SPIRIT and THE LORD JESUS CHRIST are inseparable (Matthew 28:19; Romans 15:30; 1 Cor.6:11; 2 Cor.1:21/22; 2 Cor.13:14) and the same spirit that is in *CHRIST* was in the prophets of old (1 Peter 1:10/11; 2 Peter 1:21)

because there is only one spirit and it is a spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).

THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN BE GRIEVED (Ephesians 4:30) when we do not allow it to direct us, resisting its power (Acts 7:51) or we come to reject *CHRIST* (Hebrews 6:4-6). There is no forgiveness, however, for attributing evil to the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:32).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS OF HEALING and suchlike were bestowed specifically as unmistakable witness to the risen *CHRIST*, i.e. the word, or spirit of God (Acts 4:31-33; Acts 5:32) and *JESUS* prophesied beforehand that there would be such witness (John 15:26/27) but not until he had gone away from the disciples (John 16:7) thus putting the seal on his divinity.

These special powers could be neglected (1 Tim. 4:14) and were not required for such tasks as serving at tables. Yet those who were chosen to perform these mundane jobs were expected to be filled with spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:2/3)

THE HOLY SPIRIT would seem to have a boundless field of operation.

Sowing therein (Galatians 6:8) will reap eternal life.

Julia Booth

We may take it as a rule of the Christian life that
the more we are filled with the Holy Spirit,
the more we shall glorify the Lord Jesus.

Frank Gabelein

Language about the Holy Spirit
is language designed to describe
the occasions in which the divine purpose
finds effective realization
in human life.

Maurice Wiles

Studies in Ecclesiastes

Part Eleven

(Quotations from the Revised English Bible unless otherwise stated.)

Chapter 7, verses 13-15: The Inequalities of Life

Already in 1:15 Qoheleth observes that 'what is crooked cannot become straight,' in other words life's misfortunes cannot be avoided. Now he directly puts responsibility for this state of affairs on God: 'Consider God's handiwork; who can straighten what he has made crooked.' In short, one must be prepared throughout life for what some might call 'bad luck,' even the premature death of the righteous contrasting with the longevity of the wicked. As we have noted before, Qoheleth moves beyond much Old Testament thought in the direction of the New. While Job probes at great length into the question why so righteous a man suffered accumulated disasters, Qoheleth insists that God so set up the world that events of that kind happen without apparent explanation. It was left to Jesus to state this more plainly and emphatically: 'Do you suppose that, because these Galileans suffered this fate, they must have been greater sinners than anyone else in Galilee? No, I tell you ...' (Luke 13:2-3).

Chapter 7:16-24: The Golden Mean?

At a first reading these verses seem to say that excess of both goodness and wickedness should be avoided: the mean is the ideal by which we can please God. We are accustomed to the writer's technique of shocking his readers or hearers into thinking deeply by making a bald statement that needs qualification, but if rightly understood this passage goes far beyond such things. Is he really asserting that one can be too righteous: a little walking in God's ways is correct, but not too much? The wording of the penalty for neglecting this injunction is inescapable: 'Why should you destroy yourself?' Something must be wrong with this interpretation because elsewhere Qoheleth puts the pursuit of Wisdom above all else even though no tangible, practical benefits result (2:12-16). Close examination of the words supplies the explanation. For 'Be not righteous over much' (A.V.) or 'Do not be over-righteous' (N.E.B.) the Hebrew is literally 'do-not-be righteous greatly.' This uses the verb 'to be' and the adjective *tzaddiq* 'righteous.' Hebrew uses the verb 'to be' much less than we do, and most naturally in Hebrew this idea would be expressed by use of the verb 'to-be-righteous,' just as in the parallel in verse 17 the Hebrew is literally 'do-not-be-wicked greatly,' using the verb 'to-be-wicked,' not the common

adjective 'wicked' and the verb 'to-be.' The second half of the injunction is also revealing: 'neither make thyself over wise' (A.V.), 'do not be over-wise' (N.E.B.). Here the verb 'to-be-wise' is used, but not in the simple form, but in a rare complex form that by the rules of grammar should mean 'make-yourself-wise,' as the A.V. with its literality takes it. Thus Qoheleth here is not giving a statement of what his hearers or readers may in fact be, but a statement of how they may wish to present themselves to others. The adjective *tzaddiq* is a technical term in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Rabbis for 'the elect of God.' It was noted, for example, that Noah was the first person in Scripture to whom this term was applied, so making him the prime of God's elect. Thus Qoheleth here, writing a post-exilic form of Hebrew, uses the word in that technical sense, and one could then paraphrase his words as follows, 'Do not always presume you are one of God's elect, and do not claim to more Wisdom than you actually have.' This fits perfectly with the words on Wisdom in the rest of the chapter.

The counterpart on wickedness is equally falsified if we take it in the light of the Golden Mean. The writer is not counselling his readers or hearers that sinning is perfectly acceptable so long as it does not go too far. Rather he accepts the judgment of, among other passages, Psalm 53 that completely righteous humans do not exist, but cautions that there must be restraint if we wish to avoid the judgments of God. The Golden Mean is a Greek concept, not in tune with Hebrew and Christian thinking.

Verse 18 sums up the substance of vv. 16-17: by not thinking too highly of oneself, and by not yielding to the temptations of sin it is possible to please God. Verses 19-20 round off the whole section with first a thought on Wisdom: it is far superior to worldly power, with no hint that it is possible to have too much of it, and secondly a reflection on sin: all sin, and there is not even one sinless *tzaddiq*.

Verses 21-22 introduce a topic not clearly related to the context: do not pay too much attention to gossip, as you might hear home truths about yourself, and no doubt you have been guilty of similar gossip. Verses 23-24 return to Wisdom, now as the pearl of great price, but one which in its fullness still escapes the author's grasp.

Wilfred Lambert

There is this difference between happiness and wisdom:
 he that thinks himself the happiest man, really is so;
 but he that thinks himself the wisest is generally the greatest fool.

Charles Caleb Colton

Women in a Patriarchal Society

Bill Davison takes a critical look at life in Old and New Testament times with an eye to how women fared in those days, particularly as concerns marriage and divorce.

Central to the Christian faith is the statement that 'God is love', where love is *agapē*, that is unconditional, self-giving love. Yet, in the patriarchal society of the church, *agapē* can easily become an overbearing male ideology, where women do all the giving and men the taking. Women are conditioned to the demand for obedience, service and unquestioning devotion to male forms of authority – self-giving is what is required of them.

This is not to say that self-giving is not required of women, but that it is required equally of women and men in the service of God. In a male-dominated society, women are manoeuvred into domestic and supporting roles and in the area of sexual relations are the property of men.

Note some of the Ten Commandments:

Remember to keep the sabbath day holy. You have six days to labour and do all your work; but the seventh is a sabbath of the Lord your God; that day you must not do any work, neither you, nor your son or your daughter, your slave or your slave-girl, or the alien residing among you.

This legislation gave the male householder total authority over his household, which included children, slaves, animals and foreign guests.

Do not commit adultery.

The purpose of this legislation was to secure for the male householder a legitimate heir. Intercourse between a married woman and an outsider threatened her husband's right to legitimate offspring.

Do not covet your neighbour's household: your neighbour's wife, his slave, his slave-girl, his ox, his donkey, or anything that belongs to him.

This piece of legislation reinforced the position of male householders as owners of human property – wives, male and female slaves, and animals and goods. One of the basic principles of Old Testament ethics was that a male head of the house owned his wife, children and slaves, and any attack upon them was an attack upon his property.

It was a man's world where polygamy and concubinage were permitted. A concubine was a female slave elevated to the status of a secondary wife and whose offspring were legitimate. Thus men could indulge their sexual appetite at will, procreate sons to carry on the family name, and keep replacing older wives as they became less physically attractive, with younger women. King

David, not content with his many wives and concubines, trapped Bathsheba in a sexual relationship, had Uriah her husband murdered and, after she had produced Solomon his heir, reneged on his 'love' for her – since in his old age, he shared his bed with Abishag an incredibly beautiful Shunnamite, 'to keep him warm'! When going into battle, an Israelite would take captive a beautiful girl (not an ugly one!), as part of the spoils of war, and on his return home make her his wife.

In the New Testament, the household is also hierarchically ordered, from the male head down through his wife, children and slaves, (the oppressive evil of slavery still persisted in society as in Old Testament times):

Wives, be subject to your husbands; that is your Christian duty.

Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for that is pleasing to God and is the Christian way. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, in case they lose heart. Slaves, give entire obedience to your earthly masters...Masters, be just and fair to your slaves.

The aim of perfection in an imperfect world.

But this passage of Scripture shows that morality cannot simply be read off the pages of the Bible, since relations between husband and wife are locked into a hierarchy based upon the master-slave relationship. In law a slave was merely the chattel of his master. The subjection of wives to husbands is assumed, and in daily living often meant a wife having to submit to her husband's sexual demands at any time, regardless of her welfare or state of health. This should not be so, if Christ has touched the hearts of men.

There is no detailed teaching about marriage in the Gospels, although when Jesus is driven into theological controversy about divorce, his opposition to it shows him both to approve of marriage as an institution, and to disapprove of the imbalance between man and wife which allowed husbands to divorce their wives for the flimsiest of reasons. When the disciples challenged Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage, they said to him, 'If that is how things stand for a man and his wife, it is better not to marry.' The disciples' line was simply a male chauvinist protest – equivalent to the rejoinder, 'Better not to marry at all if you cannot get divorced!'

Under the Law of Moses, a man could divorce his wife if he found 'uncleanness' in her, although a wife could not divorce her husband (if she found some 'uncleanness' in him!), since she was considered to be his property. In the times of the prophet Malachi, husbands were ridding themselves of the wives of their youth, on all kinds of spurious grounds, in order to marry younger pagan women. A bit like the modern business man, who ditches his middle-aged wife, to marry his attractive young secretary.

Jesus dismisses all the puerile excuses, which egocentric men use to divorce

their wives. He goes on to teach that it is only sexual infidelity that can actually sever the marriage bond. According to the Law of Moses, if a partner committed adultery, the punishment was death by stoning, and consequently the marriage was ended. Jesus seems to be saying that if a person commits adultery, he or she is spiritually dead, and the marriage over. Forgiveness, of course, can be sought from God. The Divine imperative is lifelong fidelity, but Jesus goes on to say that all men cannot achieve this ideal, and sadly that is so.

The expectation of an early Parousia, led the apostle Paul to advocate marriage as second best to remaining single. There is no guidance whatever in the Bible about the marriageable age of intending partners, about the form of vows, the content of any ceremony, and so the question arises, 'Why marriage?' If true love is absent, the romantic attachment which grew into courtship and eventually marriage, cannot be sustained when children arrive. When children are born many couples face their first crisis. Young fathers may intend to be supportive of their wives, but in reality the woman's burden in home-making, childbearing and rearing children is not substantially alleviated. Permanently tired, sexual relations deteriorate and couples draw apart, simply because the head of the household is not sensitive to his wife's needs and insists upon his conjugal rights.

Yet, where true love (*agapē*) exists, marriage should be a union of caring and sharing, a togetherness, and the ideal state in which to have children, bring them into the world, and watch them grow up in the communion of the Christian faith.

Even in a patriarchal society, a woman in love, who herself is truly adored, will be able, in the freedom of her own self-giving love, to re-echo the words of the Song of Songs:

'My beloved is mine and I am his.'

Bill Davison

Woman was made out of a rib from the side of Adam;
not from his head to rule over him,
nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him
but out of his side to be equal to him,
under his arm to be protected
and near his heart to be loved.
(Jewish comment on Genesis)

Crucified and Crowned

After a closer look at some words associated with the death of Christ in John's gospel, focusing on the concept of Jesus being 'lifted up', Michael Green encourages us to see Jesus on the cross in a new light.

In Alan Bennett's television play *A Question of Attribution*, Sir Anthony Blunt gives a lecture on art and considers a painting depicting events surrounding Jesus' agony in Gethsemane. In so doing, he touches on what might be termed the 'artistic licence' in Renaissance religious paintings thus: 'It is a world in which time means nothing. The present overlaps the future. Did the saint but turn his head, he could see his martyrdom through the window. Judas takes the pieces of silver in the Temple at the same moment as in the next field he hangs himself. Christ begs God in the garden to save him from the fate that is already happening higher on the hill.' The concept of time is so firmly rooted in our way of thinking, that we find it hard to approach the New Testament without trying to place the events in an historical sequence. Yet I think that in some ways the New Testament is like the Renaissance paintings. Time in its books is, at least in parts, rather confused to our twentieth century rationalist outlook. And if we recognise this fact, we can obtain a greater insight into the Lord whom we worship.

It is fruitful within this context to look at some of the language associated with the death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. John uses four words in connection with his death: *stauroun* – to crucify, *hupagein* – to depart, *hupsōthēnai* – to be lifted up, and *doxazein* – to glorify. This paper will consider the concept of Jesus being 'lifted up'.

Jesus speaks three times about being lifted up. The first occasion is in John 3:14: 'And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.' This 'lifting up' must refer to the crucifixion because of its juxtaposition to v.16. The second example is in John 8:28, where Jesus says: 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realise that I am he, ...' This too must be an allusion to the cross as it is those to whom he is speaking that will lift him up by condemning him to crucifixion. The final time that Jesus speaks about being lifted up is in John 12:32 where Jesus says: 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.'

It appears that John has been very careful in his choice of word. If we look at the first example, we will notice that John has chosen to use *hupsōthēnai* instead of *histanai* (to stand, put, place) as in the source text, Numbers 21:9 (LXX)¹. Now, this word translated 'lifted up' is interesting and many commentators see that it has been especially chosen by John because of its ambiguity. Not only can it mean lifted up on the cross, but it can also mean lifted up to

heaven. Thus Barrett writes in his commentary: 'The word is ambiguous and was chosen by John for that reason. Jesus was lifted up in execution and thereby exalted in glory.'² Let us explore this idea a little further by concentrating on the third example.

The context in John is a contrast between Jesus and the ruler of this world as we see in 12:31: 'Now is the judgment of this world, now the ruler of this world will be cast out.' Of course, Jesus is not referring to Tiberius Caesar; nor does he mean Pontius Pilate; nor does he mean Herod Antipas. He is referring to Satan. Satan is presumably cast out of heaven into hell.³ Similar language is used in Matthew 11:23 in respect of Capernaum: 'And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No you will be brought down to Hades.' Bearing this context in mind, it seems, therefore, that we are able to agree with a statement by Sanders and Mastin: '... in sharp contrast to Satan, Jesus for his part will be lifted up. This suggests exaltation in glory ...'⁴

The inescapable conclusion is that, in the phrase, 'and I, when I am lifted up from the earth', we have the language of the ascension and exaltation but it is referring to the crucifixion. John 12:33 makes this absolutely plain: 'He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.'

Jesus, then, is speaking of his crucifixion in language that also points to his exaltation. The question for us to ask now is what is the significance of Jesus' ascension and exaltation. There are a number of passages that give an answer, for example, Matthew 28:18, where Jesus speaking just before his ascension says: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.' The consequence seems to be that he gains the position of ruler over the universe.⁵ This is confirmed by Acts 2:33f, where Jesus is described in Peter's speech as, 'being therefore exalted at the right hand of God'. The result is that Peter is able to say in verse 36: 'Therefore let the whole house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Messiah.' The exaltation of Jesus seems here to be bound up with the crucifixion to make Jesus both Lord and Christ.

This is not the only place where this juxtaposition of the crucifixion and the exaltation occurs. It happens in the famous Philippian 'hymn' where Jesus 'humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ...'.⁶ This same combination is also found in Hebrews 1:3: 'When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ...' These texts place the crucifixion and the exaltation together and make no mention of the resurrection. They give an impression of the passion being followed immediately by the exaltation to heaven. Similarly, in John, Jesus is portrayed on more than one occasion as saying that he is

'going to the Father'.⁷ This way to the Father seems to be the crucifixion. Why else would he speak of the coming of 'the ruler of this world' in John 14:30, or prophesy that they will 'weep and lament' as he does in John 16:20?

The implication is that it is the cross that gives Jesus power. It is from the cross that he exercises authority. It is from the cross that 'he draws all men to himself'. It is from the cross that he is recognised as Messiah. It is on the cross that he is seen to have the authority of God himself.

What is the conclusion reached from all this? It is surely that the New Testament has two ways of looking at the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The first is the historical sequence with which we are all familiar. The second is more like the Renaissance religious paintings where time is ignored and the crucifixion of our Lord is seen as part of the same event as his exaltation into heaven. This might be seen as a spiritual way of looking at things where the writers are showing the significance of the events rather than describing their historical sequence.

The lesson for us in all this is that we should see that Christ on the cross is the Lord seated at the right hand of God having all authority both in heaven and on earth. Surely this is why Paul tells the Corinthians that he preached nothing but Christ crucified.⁸ It seems very much that this is the case, for he says in 1 Corinthians 1:24 that 'to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God'. Perhaps the Reverend J. Sparrow-Simpson expressed the thought when he wrote the words that go to Stainer's music in 'The Crucifixion' and presented Christ as quoting from Lamentations 1:12:

From the throne of his cross, the King of grief,
Cries out to a world of unbelief:
'Oh! Men and women afar and nigh:
"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"'

Christ rules from the cross. His authority is expressed in that being lifted up, he draws all men to himself.

Alleluya, sing to Jesus,
His the sceptre, his the throne;
(Hymn 226)

Michael Green

¹ 'Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it on a standard; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the bronze serpent and live.'

² Barrett C. K. *The Gospel According to St John* SPCK, London 2nd edition, 1978 p.427.

See also Ashton J *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* Clarendon Press, Oxford, ,

1991, p.493f.

- ³ See Jesus' words in Luke 10:18: 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.' (Note that I am simply commenting on the text and that I am not advocating belief in a personal devil.)
- ⁴ Sanders J & Mastin B The Gospel According to St John A & C Black, London, 1968, p.297.
- ⁵ I have heard it said that he has this power but does not at present use it, but this is a curious point of view; what is the point of power that is not exercised? He rules those who show allegiance to him. He rules by calling all men to him by love. He rules in that he brings men to a crisis (John 3:19).
- ⁶ Philippians 2:8-9.
- ⁷ See John 14:28 & 16:17
- ⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:2.

Truth

Most people have assumed that we have now entered the third millennium. In doing so they are assenting to the fallacy that a decade ends with year nine, that a century ends with year 99, and that a millennium ends with year 999. I have met very few individuals who agree with me, a lot who emphatically disagree, and lots more who dismissively say 'What does it matter anyway?'

What is Truth? Governor Pontius Pilate seemed to neither know nor care; to him the only thing that mattered was the pragmatic discharge of his duties; consequently he implemented the greatest miscarriage of justice in history.

Admittedly the precise date of commencement of the new millennium may be seen as a trivial issue, though many millions of pounds were squandered to celebrate it on the wrong date. Many nominal Christians could likewise say that the doctrine of the Trinity is a trivial issue, though you and I do not agree, because apparently trivial fallacies are the thin edge of the wedge of worldliness. Successful folk of this world insist that the only way to survive in the rat race is to ignore minor issues of right and wrong, and concentrate on what matters in the struggle for survival of the fittest. Pilate would emphatically endorse that perspective.

So what did Jesus stress continually? Two things: God's grace, and love of neighbours. By that He meant respecting them even when we don't want to, and honouring them as children of God, made in God's image, even when we don't think they fit that pattern. *Agapē*, not *philos*, not *eros*, but *agapē*. This is hard to learn; harder still to practise. These issues are never trivial

John Stevenson

The Centurion's Lament

(Mat 27:54 'Truly this was the Son of God')

I saw him there, beneath the cross, a Roman soldier, grim, and grey,
And as he faced the screaming mob, these words of scorn I heard him say:

'This was your King!

Who now – so still and cold, in death's relentless grip –
Doth hang upon that tree!

These were the feet – now pinioned to this wooden Cross –
But which, when free, did travel many weary miles
To heal *your* sick, or raise *your* dead to life again!

These were the hands, that on *your* children's heads did rest
And eyes that never saw before, did see,
When on their lids these gentle fingers laid!

This was the voice – so silent now, in this, Man's darkest hour –
But could be sharp as pointed sword,
Or soft as summer's gentle rain!

These were the eyes, now closed at last, in peaceful sleep,
But which, for one last dreadful hour,
Were filled with agonising grief and pain!

This was your King, a braver, nobler man I shall not see again!
He struggled not, nor murmured still,
When through His hands and feet the cruel nails we drove!

Now He is dead!

And so you Jews, it all is through,
His last despairing cry has rent the sky
And we have done to Him as *you* did wish us to!

Your King is *dead*,
As *you* would have it so,
And I could wish my hands I had not stained
With *such* a deed!

Bill Wright

Jesus is Risen!

Ian McHaffie explores the meaning of the Resurrection, its importance for us and how it ought to be influencing our daily lives in the service of Jesus.

The Resurrection of Jesus affects us on many levels. It gives us hope and personal meaning in life, for we are encouraged to have confidence that we who are 'in Christ' will also by the grace of God rise to eternal life. The Resurrection made possible the conviction in John 20:31 that 'Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life.' Life in Christ is something we experience now as well as something we hope for in the future in the Kingdom of God.

Had there been no Resurrection, Jesus would have been a dimly remembered figure, and our understanding, religious commitments and daily service would have been very different. On a simple but significant level, we meet on a Sunday – not a Saturday – because the early believers began meeting on the day Jesus was raised, and this took over from the practice of synagogue attendance on the Sabbath.

At a deeper level, '... he was shown with great power to be the Son of God by being raised from death' (Romans 1:4). The Resurrection is God's seal of approval on Jesus, his work and his teaching.

We can ponder many reasons why Jesus was killed, but a very immediate one was his confrontation with the religious leaders of his day. That Jesus was right, and those who killed him were wrong, is confirmed by the Resurrection. As Peter said, '... you killed him by letting sinful men crucify him. But God raised him from death...' (Acts 2:24).

The scribes and Pharisees chose to have rules for everything, and wanted people to keep to the rules. Probably most of us feel much the same. We feel comfortable and secure when we know what the rules are and when everyone abides by them. But when rules are used to damage individuals, it is necessary to oppose them. Jesus objected when the rules obscured the real religious message, when they restricted service to God, and when rules became more important than people.

We can see the seeds of confrontation between Jesus and his contemporaries in numerous details in the Sermon on the Mount. 'You have heard that it was said ... But now I tell you ...' – and then Jesus proceeded not only to go to the spirit behind the Law but to revise it too. He revoked the Law on vows, divorce, and treatment of enemies, and changed the style of worship, attitudes to the Sabbath, and the meaning of being good and pure.

Let us look at Jesus' approach to the Sabbath, to Women, and to Real Goodness, remembering that Jesus 'wasn't like the teachers of the Law; instead,

he taught with authority' (Matthew 7:29), an authority confirmed by God through the Resurrection.

Jesus and the Sabbath

The Sabbath was intended to be good for human beings, not for God. God doesn't need our worship; it is necessary for our benefit, to keep us close to God.

When the disciples picked corn, rubbed it to remove the husks and ate it, some Pharisees asked, 'Why are you doing what our Law says you cannot do on the Sabbath?' (Luke 6:2)

Two issues are involved, work and human need. Is picking corn and eating it really *work* in the sense of Exodus 20:10? And is human need subservient to the Law or vice-versa? By defining the rubbing of corn as (in effect) milling and grinding it, the Pharisees were being pathetically petty. And when human need demands it, need is more important than Law.

Jesus answered them, 'Haven't you read what David did when he and his men were hungry? ... Yet it is against our Law for anyone except the priests to eat that bread.' And Jesus concluded, 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.' (Luke 6:1-5)

There is no suggestion that Jesus intended to overturn the Sabbath, or that he wanted people to think about God less. The only acceptable way we can understand our not keeping the Sabbath is because we have (we hope) taken to heart the spirit of Jesus' teaching, and keep the whole of life special for God, not one day only. Sunday is not the Sabbath, and for us, Sunday trading is not in itself wrong. But its effects in stopping people from meeting to worship, in pressurising people to work continuously, in disrupting family life by preventing families from being together, cannot be in accord with the spirit of Jesus. As he said to his disciples, we must be 'more faithful than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees in doing what God requires.' (Matthew 5:20) When rules (religious or secular) get in the way of proper conduct, we must seek for that which is more important and do that instead.

The same points could not be more clearly illustrated than by Jesus' healing the paralysed man in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Then Jesus said to them, 'I ask you: what does our Law allow us to do on the Sabbath? To help or to harm? To save someone's life or destroy it.' (Luke 6:9)

Jesus sought to enhance our closeness to God, not to diminish it. And we who look back on these events with hindsight need to look also at ourselves, lest we profess to do what God requires, but in reality ignore it or evade it. The response to Jesus' healing on the Sabbath was that 'They were filled with rage and began to discuss among themselves what they could do to Jesus.' (Luke 6:11) Death became the ultimate solution; except that it was not!

For us, there is the uncomfortable reminder in Hebrews 6:6 that we can put

the Son of God to death again.

Jesus and Women

The first appearance of our risen Lord was to Mary. If she had simply been the first to go to the tomb, this might not have held much significance. But according to John 20, Peter had also been to the tomb along with 'the other disciple', yet he had not appeared to them. Subsequently he appeared to Mary, and said '... go to my brothers and tell them' Jesus could have appeared to Peter first – but Jesus didn't. Was Jesus making a point? The male disciples had run away, Peter had denied him, but the women had remained faithful. Perhaps that is significant. But, more importantly, this account shows the confidence Jesus was prepared to put in women and in their trustworthiness as witnesses, unlike those who held to Jewish traditions.

Josephus, for example, said: 'Let not the testimony of women be admitted on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.' (*Antiquities of the Jews* 4.219) Yet Jesus entrusted Mary with his message to the others.

When Mary, through her tears, recognised Jesus, she referred to him as 'Teacher' (John 20:16). Again, note the contrast with contemporary attitudes. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (c. 80-120 AD) was approached by a woman with a Biblical question. He refused to answer her because he thought women should stay at home and do housework. 'It is better for the words of the Law to be burned', he said, 'than to hand them over to a woman!' (Sotah III) He waited until she had gone before he answered her question – and he answered solely to his male hearers.

Jesus' approach is precisely the opposite, as we read in Luke 10:38-42:

Martha was upset over all the work she had to do, so she came and said, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!' The Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her.'

The right thing was to be instructed. This is the meaning of 'she sat down at the feet of the Lord and listened to his teaching', like Paul who sat at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Jesus said that this, not Rabbi Eliezer's idea about women being confined to housework, was what alone was 'needed'. Further, he said, '... it will not be taken away from her.'

We are not surprised, then, when Jesus teaches Martha at length in John 11, when she calls him 'Teacher' to her sister in John 11:28, and when Jesus ('Teacher') appears to Mary and gives her the message of his Resurrection and Ascension to pass on to the others (John 20:16-17).

This value placed on women by Jesus, confirmed by his Resurrection, continues to be affirmed in the early churches.

Peter at Pentecost quotes the words of Joel:

This is what I will do in the last days, God says: 'I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams. Yes, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will proclaim my message.' (Acts 2:17-18)

Whereas previously in the past only selected individuals proclaimed God's message, from Pentecost onwards this work would be extended to all believers, male and female. In 1 Corinthians 14 we have a description of how ecclesial meetings were organised in Corinth. Paul expresses his approval, other than when too many people speak at once.

This is what I mean, my brothers and sisters [adelphoi]. When you meet for worship, one person has a hymn, another a teaching, another a revelation from God, another a message in strange tongues, and still another the explanation of what is said. Everything must be of help to the church. ... All of you may proclaim God's message, one by one, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged. (1 Corinthians 14:26, 31)

The Good News Bible correctly translates adelphoi as 'brothers and sisters', just as 'Christadelphians' means 'brothers and sisters in Christ'. Note that Paul quite specifically writes 'All of you....' Why, then, do we not have more participation by the sisters in our services, following this first century pattern? Here is an account of a Christadelphian meeting in the early days of our ecclesias:

... I do not see how that little ecclesia ever could have lived had the sisters not taken an active part in the worship. Those eight, each and everyone, took a part in the meeting, and I have never since seen such zeal, enthusiasm and devotion. One brother read the lesson, a second prayed, a third took charge of the table, and a fourth led in singing. One sister read from the Christadelphian; second, the thoughts she had noted down during the week, when reading her daily lessons; third, selection of hymn; and fourth, she always did the same thing - read a few verses from the Bible.

(The Christadelphian, July 1st 1883, page 315)

Is this not almost identical with the practice described in 1 Corinthians 14?

In some respects, we have approached this at youth gatherings, conferences, Bible Classes, where sisters have taken a large part. In recent years, several ecclesias have started having sisters read the Bible at the Breaking of Bread. Not only is this biblical in the manner described above, but it is profitable: the

sisters gain more from the meeting by their more active participation and everyone benefits from a wider range of voices. It is in line with the teaching of Jesus, the teaching and practice of the early church and well deserves support.

So why has it not been done more often?

Because we have inherited an ecclesiastical tradition, like that of Rabbi ben Hyrcanus, who thought it better for the law to be burned than given to a woman. In Durham Cathedral there is a stone barrier at the rear of the nave. This marked the area beyond which (until after the Reformation) women were not allowed to advance. Cuthbert's bones at the front were thought too holy for women to approach. Such is an extreme, of course, but shows the distance the medieval church departed from the attitudes of Jesus.

That both male and female were actively involved, and Paul wanted them to be involved, has often been missed in 1 Corinthians. Why? Because we have read this passage through the eyes of a male-orientated church tradition which interpreted it as referring only to males. We have then taken 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as if it were stating the standard, instead of taking the rest of the chapter as the standard.

As with attitudes to the Sabbath, Jesus' enduring teaching is: Don't be petty. If the rules get in the way of sensible behaviour, change the rules. Get rid of traditions that restrict doing good!

Jesus and Real Goodness

The attention to minute detail – being petty again – and sticking irrelevantly to tradition is reported at length in Mark 7.

...the Pharisees, as well as the rest of the Jews, follow the teaching they received from their ancestors: they do not eat unless they wash their hands in the proper way.... And they follow many other rules which they have received, such as the proper way to wash cups, pots, copper bowls, and beds. (Mark 7:3-4)

The issue is not about hygiene but about Real Goodness.

When the Pharisees and teachers of the Law criticised Jesus' disciples, Jesus was heavily critical in reply: 'You are hypocrites ...', he says, then quotes Isaiah:

It is no use for them to worship me, because they teach human rules as though they were God's laws!

Jesus again: 'You put aside God's command and obey human teachings.'

... the teaching you pass on to others cancels out the word of God. And there are many other things like this that you do. (Mark 7:3-13)

Jesus' accusation is that they are finding ways round doing God's will, while pretending to themselves that they are keeping it. That was hard enough

to take, and we who seek to do God's will need to ask ourselves how much we are guilty of the same. It is a criticism which can only be applied to religious people.

Jesus then proceeds to explain:

Listen to me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing that goes into a person from the outside which can make him ritually unclean. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that makes him unclean. (Mark 7:14-16)

The disciples are puzzled, and we might be if we ignore the context. Surely there are things which go into a person from outside that make people unclean: bad company, advertising which promotes worldly values, pornography. But in the context Jesus is discussing ritual washing – and then by extension, as the evangelist notes, the food laws of the Old Testament: 'In saying this, Jesus declared that all foods are fit to be eaten.' (verse 19).

Jesus is concerned about our hearts, the kind of people we are deep down inside.

And he went on to say, 'It is what comes out of a person that makes him unclean. For from the inside, from a person's heart, come the evil ideas which lead him to do immoral things, to rob, kill, commit adultery, be greedy, and do all sorts of evil things; deceit, indecency, jealousy, slander, pride, and folly – all these evil things come from inside a person and make him unclean.' (Mark 7:20-23)

It is the kind of people we are inside, not the food we eat, or how we wash, which directs how we behave,

A good person brings good out of the treasure of good things in his heart; a bad person brings bad out of his treasure of bad things. (Luke 6:45).

Jesus indicates that we can control this. We do so by seeking moral goodness, and rejecting moral evil.

The removal of the ritual rules was carried over into the early church. Peter was taught by the vision at Joppa not only that the food regulations no longer applied, but that regarding Gentiles as unclean was also disallowed. He saw the application regarding Cornelius, the Roman centurion, though under pressure from others he at one point backed down (Galatians 2:12).

The idea that things can be affected by clean or unclean influences was not easily eradicated. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

Some people have been so used to idols that to this day when they eat such food they still think of it as food that belongs to an idol; their conscience is weak, and they feel they are defiled by the food. (1 Corinthians 8:7)

Yet the true position was understood. The ritual of the past was abolished. The distinction which matters is that of morality, of being in a good relationship with God.

Food, however, will not improve our relations with God; we shall not lose anything if we do not eat, nor shall we gain anything if we do eat. (1 Corinthians 8:8)

The changes brought by Jesus are of immense importance. In him we have a whole new approach. He reached to the heart of the matter. But he was treading a fine line, and his position worried the authorities. We can see why. If people don't have to keep the Sabbath, perhaps they will forget God altogether! If men are to work alongside women, then they can abuse the position. If food laws and laws against Gentiles don't apply, are there no rules any more? But Jesus brought the answers to those dilemmas. He was not getting rid of rules and putting nothing in their place! He put there His positive teaching on having the right attitude, in worshipping God from the heart, in treating others as we would like to be treated, in seeing the kernel of what God wants and not tripping up on traditions from the past.

So, let us rejoice in the Resurrection. It gives us hope – personally – of life in God's Kingdom. It confirms God's approval of His Son Jesus, and the radical new direction in which he led his early followers, and leads us still.

Ian McHaffie

Our first resurrection begins when we first show obedience to God, and is brought to completion by our perseverance in doing his will.

Our second resurrection begins with our glorification
and endures for all eternity.

If we continue in obedience till the end of our lives,
then we shall also abide in a glory that knows no end.

(Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, 12th century)

Wanted

Writers!

Where are you all hiding?

Please send your contributions to the Editor.

Taizé - a pilgrimage to the 'wellsprings of faith'

Richard Gaston and Becky Leng take us on a visit to Taizé in France and share with us their reactions to it and the challenges it left them with.

In 1940 the man later to be known as Brother Roger of Taizé, and often mentioned in the same breath as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, left Switzerland for France. Arriving in Cluny he found a house in the nearby village of Taizé and settled. A group of brothers drawn from many Christian denominations grew up around him committed to a life of chastity, obedience and renunciation of possessions. From 1957 onwards they invited young adults to join them in worship and the search for the 'wellsprings of faith'. In the summer of 1999 we joined 4000 others there.

A long overnight coach and ferry ride brought us to Taizé. We joined the other worshippers sitting on the carpeted floor of the Church of Reconciliation (a building which has been extended several times to accommodate the increasing number of visitors each year brings). The building was filled with silent worshippers as the brothers, dressed in white habits, filed into the space reserved for them in the centre of the church. Icons in the Eastern Orthodox tradition decorated the walls; candles flickered in terracotta pipes.

Many of you will be familiar with Taizé-style songs from *Praise the Lord* and elsewhere; simple choruses or passages from scripture sung to music and repeated many times. It is still moving to remember a single voice carrying a line of harmony above the sound of voices repeating praises, often in many different languages, often in four-part harmony. The ethos behind this style of worship is that it expresses,

a basic reality of faith, quickly grasped by the mind...these simple songs that enable us to keep on praying when we are alone, by night and by day, sometimes in the silence of our hearts when we are at work.¹

Not everyone is comfortable with this style of worship, nor should we let simplicity limit praise of our Father, nevertheless, there are powerful lessons to be learnt from simplicity, concision and continual prayer. It fulfils Paul's command to us: 'whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.' (Colossians 3:17)

The services, including the thrice-daily gatherings for prayer (a discipline hard at first, then eagerly anticipated) took the form of songs, sung and spoken prayer, Bible readings and a long time of silent prayer, contemplation and meditation.

We spent an hour each day being led in Bible study by one of the brothers. We traced the theme of Wisdom, 'learning how to live', from the Old Testament

Wisdom personified through to the wisdom of God which is the foolishness of the cross in the New. As the brother spoke in English impromptu simultaneous translation rendered his words into the languages of those in our group: French, German, Dutch, Polish, Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian; the division of Babel, the joy of Pentecost. The study had to keep pace with the translation so our progress felt slow, although the gaps between each phrase allowed for further thought to develop.

In the afternoons much smaller multinational groups (where there was a common language) met to discuss the work of the morning. We found ourselves seated under trees in a garden with two Methodists from Oxford, Catholics from Lithuania, Poland and Reading, a German Lutheran turned Pentecostal, a Korean Presbyterian and a Dutch Free Church member. A powerful lesson from Taizé grew out of our discussions: despite our very different national and denominational backgrounds the trials and problems of living as followers of Christ were identical, although we often found the example of *their* faith-in-action humbling.

We had one afternoon of disagreement, and that was over the nature of life after death. Whilst our minds might have read like pages from *Wrested Scriptures*, during those moments it was obvious that some in the group had never really thought through what they believed. Ideas of heaven and eternal torture were suggested, as was a clearly developed doctrine of the sleep of death, the second coming and hell as the destruction of the unrepentant that no Christadelphian could have found fault with.

There are many ways to spend time at Taizé and participate in the life of the community there. After spending one week at Taizé many stay on for another week which can be spent in silence or in working: cleaning, gardening, cooking; some choose to spend many weeks or months living as part of the community.

Outside the programmed events we spent time in silent thought, prayer and meditation at the Source St Étienne, a garden in a valley with pools of cloudy, intensely blue water and running streams. We watched videos describing the wider activities of the brothers of Taizé, the annual 'Pilgrimage of Trust' to a major European city, conducting interdenominational meetings and worship, drawing visitors from all over the world. Washing up for 4000 people after meals provided times of laughter and inevitable water fights; we learnt much from spending time together in friendship as well as fellowship.

We discussed our membership of the Christadelphian community with a group of Methodists from Oxford. Their minister had taught New Testament Greek to a Christadelphian and they were aware of the meeting hall in Tyndale Road. There were the inevitable loaded questions as to whether our parents had been Christadelphians and what made us different from other sects. We corrected a few misconceptions and smiled at their surprise that two Christadel-

phians should even countenance coming to Taizé.

Towards the end of the week we discussed our experiences with all the other British Christians there, under the guidance of one English brother. Some felt that some come to Taizé searching or returning for a spiritual high unprompted by any Christian commitment and showed no change in their lives once they left. There were also positive stories of attempts to translate Taizé-style prayer into churches back home.

We have both read and experienced criticism of 'ecumenicalism' from both inside and outside the Christadelphian community; when Christianity offers itself as an exclusive means of salvation (Acts 4:12) it is hard not to pursue rigorously defined Truth and rigid organisational behaviour. After 2000 years of a divided Christian church it might appear that the Gamaliel test (Acts 5:34-39) is a false measure of truth or that a richer definition of the body of Christ needs to be pursued.

The great strength of Taizé is that unlike other ecumenical movements such as that which grew out of the Anglican Lambeth conference in 1998, committed to the full, 'visible unity'² of the church as the true expression of Christian unity, it does not pretend that Christians don't have very real differences or that these can be argued away. Instead the community looks to the wellsprings of faith, the truth of the gospel that is so simple that a child can grasp it, so profound that it demands a lifetime's work and commitment.

Like so many others we looked forward to returning to our own church in Britain, strengthened and renewed by our experiences. Taizé teaches Christian unity, which is very different from the uniformity often pursued so zealously by some Christian denominations. We don't believe that Taizé's model of Christian unity, any more than any other, can be easily implemented in the day-to-day life of the church but are hopeful that its vision and lessons of practical living will translate into positive influences for us, our church and our community.

Richard Gaston & Becky Leng

*God is endlessly imaginative,
and the function of discernment is
to enter creatively into God's vision for the world
and to collaborate with the Spirit
in making that vision a reality.*

David Lonsdale

Heroes and Dragons

Paul Wasson describes the background to some of the picturesque language of the Bible and so helps to make sense of passages which would otherwise remain obscure.

Most cultures have had a story to explain the creation of the world. Nowadays there are scientific explanations, in ancient times there were myths concerning exploits among the gods. In the ancient Middle East a favourite story pictured the ordered world emerging out of a conflict between a great monster and a divine hero. The dragon symbolized the powers of chaos and the hero was the creator god. He slew the dragon, made the earth inhabitable and established his own dominion over heaven and earth. When we use the word 'myth' in this context we mean a story which may or may not be true in a scientific or historical sense, but conveys a deeper truth about the human condition, or some aspect of the world.

The myth of the hero who slays the dragon clearly arose out of the environment of the ancient Middle East. Every summer the snow melted on the mountains, the water rushed down the valleys and overflowed the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates. And what happened every year around them when the floods tried to obliterate the fertile land, happened, according to the myth of creation, in the beginning of the world when the gods of order and fertility vanquished the monsters of chaos and floods. The whole religion of Babylon was centred around an annual pattern of ritual reflecting the seasonal cycles of summer and winter, fertility and barrenness, death and renewal.

The Babylonian creation story was called *Enuma Elish* in which a primordial conflict took place between Marduk the god of order and Tiamat the dragon of chaos. Here is an extract:

Face to face they came, Tiamat and Marduk, sage of the gods.
 They engaged in combat, they closed for battle.
 The lord spread his net and made it encircle her,
 To her face he dispatched the *imhullu*-wind, which had been behind:
 Tiamat opened her mouth to swallow it,
 And he forced in the *imhullu*-wind so that she could not close her lips.
 Fierce winds distended her belly;
 Her insides were constipated and she stretched her mouth wide.
 He shot an arrow which pierced her belly,
 Split her down the middle and split her heart,
 Vanquished her and extinguished her life,
 He threw down her corpse and stood on top of her.¹

The narrative continues with Marduk capturing the army of demons who had

¹(*The Epic of Creation*, quoted in *Mesopotamian Myths*, Henrietta McCall British Museum Press).

helped Tiamat and then sliced her body 'like a fish for drying', from one half he made a roof for the sky, and from the other half he made the earth which keeps out the subterranean waters below. Upon this he built the large temple of Asharra where he founded cult centres for the gods Anu, Enlil and Ea.

Most nations had a story along the same lines. According to the Ugarit poem of Baal, written in the 14th century B.C., the hero was Baal, the god of storms and rainfall, and the dragon was called Yammu, Lord Sea. The god subdued the dragon as a necessary step in securing his own dominion over gods, man and the earth. That was the Canaanite story. In the Sumerian version the god Ninurtu fought against Asag and confined him between the banks of the Euphrates. Similar stories were told by the Hittites and the people of India.

It might seem that there is not much in common between these myths and the monotheism of Genesis chapter 1. There God simply gives the word and the various aspects of creation come into being. The earth began 'without form and void'. It was desolation and emptiness. And 'darkness was upon the face of the deep' - the *Tehom*, the great abyss of water. There is no suggestion of conflict. The darkness and the waters retreated, passive beneath the Creator's command. It is significant however that creation consisted of a series of divisions between opposites: light and dark, dry land and sea, the waters above the firmament from the waters below. All this is reminiscent of the division between the two halves of Tiamat's body to make the heaven and the earth.

Scholars have also pointed out the similarity between the Hebrew *Tehom*, 'the deep', and the Babylonian name *Tiamat*. Whenever the word *Tehom* occurs in the Old Testament - the great formless deep - it almost invariably denotes the idea of chaos and disorder beyond the boundaries of the ordered creation, something held in place only by the hand of God. In many passages it is identified with the sea, which to the ancient Israelite was always seen as alien and menacing.

For the ancient Israelites the natural order would have been seen as a balance, and at times a conflict between opposing forces; forces which sustained life and forces which brought death: light and darkness, order and disorder, dry land and floods. The land depended upon water which came either from the clouds of heaven or from the springs and rivers of the earth. Too little water meant drought, too much meant floods. Beyond the boundary of the cultivated land lay desert and wilderness which continually threatened to encroach and make the land uninhabitable. And beyond the dry land lay the sea; deep, mysterious and threatening, where chaotic forces reigned as though not really part of the created order. Only the hand of God maintained the fine balance between order and chaos.

And in the Psalms and prophets we find God's triumph over the powers of disorder described as a conflict with a great dragon. In contrast to Genesis 1 the

powers of the deep are represented not as passive instruments of God, but as a hostile force, a monster which He must subdue and beat into place.

Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise
thou stillest them. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces as one
that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy right
hand (Psalm 89:9-10).

This name 'Rahab', meaning 'Raging one', is often mentioned in the same context as tempestuous waters because it is a symbol, a personification of those waters. Elsewhere in the Old Testament we find the name Leviathan (coiled one), Tannin (Dragon). Perhaps the poetic use of this symbol was the Israelite answer to the pagan mythology. What other nations said of Marduk or Bel, Israel could say of the Lord God.

In this Psalm Rahab signifies the disorder in the sea or in nature generally. But elsewhere its meaning is broadened to become a symbol of chaos in whatever form it manifests itself, including the nations who were hostile to God. For they have the same characteristics as the waters of the tempestuous seas: something at once beyond the bounds of God's laws, yet at the same time within the scope of His sovereignty and on occasions used by Him to fulfil His purposes.

The Psalmist never speaks in isolation of God's power over the forces of the deep or over the heaven and the earth. His concern was not to satisfy curiosity about the means by which God created. Invariably he goes on to speak either of nature as a pledge of God's faithfulness to His covenant, or he appeals to God to exercise again His power in the deliverance of His people. His creative power was a token of His saving power. Psalm 74:12 proclaims God as 'My king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth'; but then goes on to describe the character of this salvation:

Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou brakest the
heads of dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of
Leviathan in pieces and gavest him to be meat to the people
inhabiting the wilderness. Thou didst cleave the fountain and
the flood; and driest up mighty waters.

The Psalm continues with God's control of day and night, summer and winter. Now these are not the sort of activities we normally associate with the word salvation. But the rest of the chapter concerns the desolation of the sanctuary by the wicked and an appeal to God to vindicate the elect. The Psalmist however, is not changing the subject. He is in effect saying, 'If God can divide the waters and slay the dragon of disorder then that same power can be exercised to deliver His people from the malevolence of their enemies.' In Jeremiah 51:34,44 the captivity in Babylon is compared to a swallowing up by a great monster of the sea:

Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.

But destruction is coming upon Babylon, the sea will come over her and she will be covered with the waves. It is a symbolic way of saying that she will be overthrown by the nations. It is worth comparing these words with the experience of Jonah who was also swallowed up by the deep.

The prophet Isaiah employs the symbol of Rahab's defeat to mock the power of Egypt: 'For the Egyptian shall help in vain, and to no purpose: Therefore have I cried concerning this: "Rahab that sitteth still."' (Isaiah 30:7). Thus the prophet pours scorn upon Egypt, picturing her as a great sea monster washed ashore in the mouth of her rivers, whose power has been taken away.

It is also typical of Isaiah's writings that he looks to the future and describes it in terms drawn from the past in order to show that what God had done in the beginning, either of the world or of Israel's history, He would do again for those imprisoned in Babylon. Chapter 27 looks to the Lord's coming triumph:

In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

But this is describing something that still lies in the future. Leviathan is no longer a monster that was overcome at creation, he has become a symbol of the evil that must yet be overcome, the evil embodied in the nations. Only then can the divine purpose be made secure. Again, in chapter 51 the prophet appeals to God, reminding Him of the deliverance He wrought for Israel in the 'ancient days':

Awake, awake, put on thy strength O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it that hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? (v.9)

And having thus described what God had once done for those whom He ransomed from the Egyptians, the prophet turns to another deliverance in the near future:

Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion: and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

In passages such as these the perception of God as Saviour was dependant not upon His activity in the creation, but His activity at the Exodus. The

powers of the deep are represented not as passive instruments of God, but as a hostile force, a monster which He must subdue and beat into place.

Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise
thou stillest them. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces as one
that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy right
hand (Psalm 89:9-10).

This name 'Rahab', meaning 'Raging one', is often mentioned in the same context as tempestuous waters because it is a symbol, a personification of those waters. Elsewhere in the Old Testament we find the name Leviathan (coiled one), Tannin (Dragon). Perhaps the poetic use of this symbol was the Israelite answer to the pagan mythology. What other nations said of Marduk or Bel, Israel could say of the Lord God.

In this Psalm Rahab signifies the disorder in the sea or in nature generally. But elsewhere its meaning is broadened to become a symbol of chaos in whatever form it manifests itself, including the nations who were hostile to God. For they have the same characteristics as the waters of the tempestuous seas: something at once beyond the bounds of God's laws, yet at the same time within the scope of His sovereignty and on occasions used by Him to fulfil His purposes.

The Psalmist never speaks in isolation of God's power over the forces of the deep or over the heaven and the earth. His concern was not to satisfy curiosity about the means by which God created. Invariably he goes on to speak either of nature as a pledge of God's faithfulness to His covenant, or he appeals to God to exercise again His power in the deliverance of His people. His creative power was a token of His saving power. Psalm 74:12 proclaims God as 'My king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth'; but then goes on to describe the character of this salvation:

Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou brakest the
heads of dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of
Leviathan in pieces and gavest him to be meat to the people
inhabiting the wilderness. Thou didst cleave the fountain and
the flood; and driest up mighty waters.

The Psalm continues with God's control of day and night, summer and winter. Now these are not the sort of activities we normally associate with the word salvation. But the rest of the chapter concerns the desolation of the sanctuary by the wicked and an appeal to God to vindicate the elect. The Psalmist however, is not changing the subject. He is in effect saying, 'If God can divide the waters and slay the dragon of disorder then that same power can be exercised to deliver His people from the malevolence of their enemies.' In Jeremiah 51:34,44 the captivity in Babylon is compared to a swallowing up by a great monster of the sea:

Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.

But destruction is coming upon Babylon, the sea will come over her and she will be covered with the waves. It is a symbolic way of saying that she will be overthrown by the nations. It is worth comparing these words with the experience of Jonah who was also swallowed up by the deep.

The prophet Isaiah employs the symbol of Rahab's defeat to mock the power of Egypt: 'For the Egyptian shall help in vain, and to no purpose: Therefore have I cried concerning this: "Rahab that sitteth still"' (Isaiah 30:7). Thus the prophet pours scorn upon Egypt, picturing her as a great sea monster washed ashore in the mouth of her rivers, whose power has been taken away.

It is also typical of Isaiah's writings that he looks to the future and describes it in terms drawn from the past in order to show that what God had done in the beginning, either of the world or of Israel's history, He would do again for those imprisoned in Babylon. Chapter 27 looks to the Lord's coming triumph:

In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

But this is describing something that still lies in the future. Leviathan is no longer a monster that was overcome at creation, he has become a symbol of the evil that must yet be overcome, the evil embodied in the nations. Only then can the divine purpose be made secure. Again, in chapter 51 the prophet appeals to God, reminding Him of the deliverance He wrought for Israel in the 'ancient days':

Awake, awake, put on thy strength O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it that hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? (v.9)

And having thus described what God had once done for those whom He ransomed from the Egyptians, the prophet turns to another deliverance in the near future:

Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion: and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

In passages such as these the perception of God as Saviour was dependant not upon His activity in the creation, but His activity at the Exodus. The

crossing of the Red Sea becomes merged into the language of creation. On both occasions God's power was made manifest over the sea, pushing it back to make dry land so that His purpose could be realised. In Psalm 77:16-20 the Psalmist speaks of the waters and the depths being afraid at the sight of God who has come to do battle with them:

The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

In passages such as this it is sometimes difficult to be certain which specific event is being referred to, the beginning of the world or the beginning of Israel's history. It is only from verse 20 that we know that the Psalm refers to the crossing of the Red Sea. But the whole emphasis is quite different from its parallel in Exodus 15:

And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths (*tehomoth*) were congealed in the heart of the sea (v.8).

There the waters and the depths were God's instruments for destroying the enemy in the person of Pharaoh. Here Pharaoh and his army are not even mentioned. Instead it is the sea which stands as the enemy to be vanquished before Israel can pass through safely.

The whole picture has a certain timelessness about it, as though God's triumph over the powers of chaos is an ongoing victory. He is continually defending His creation against forces that threaten to overwhelm it. And there is a fluidity to the symbol of the vanquished dragon, so that it can represent Egypt or Babylon, or in the Book of Revelation it can stand for the powers which work against the Church. The Dragon cast out of heaven is called 'That old serpent, which is the devil and Satan'. Every age has its dragon power which must be vanquished before the Lord God can establish His sovereignty. It is significant that right at the end of the book of Revelation we are told that in the Heavenly City John saw 'no more sea' (21:1). He means the sea in its symbolic sense, the powers of disorder and chaos in whatever form they have manifested themselves. The sea which God pushed back in the beginning but allowed to remain as a continual threat to the ordered creation has finally been dried up so that God's sovereignty can now last for ever and ever.

Paul Wasson

Does Elohim mean 'Mighty Ones'?

This article is intended to clarify comments made by Wilfred Lambert in reviews which appeared in our last issue. It is rather technical, unavoidably so, but the outcome is important and needs to be noted.

In the Christadelphian community it has been commonly asserted that 'Mighty Ones' is the meaning of this Hebrew term, and justification has been offered from such works as Strong's *Concordance*. The simplest reply to this view would be that the proposed meaning is either rejected or simply not noted in the more recent scholarly dictionaries, such as the now already quite old work of W. Gesenius revised by F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1906 and reprints) and the more recent one: D.J.A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, 1993). This rejection surely demands an answer from any who continue to hold this view. The present article will attempt a brief survey of the actual evidence.

Hebrew words are normally based on three consonants in sequence, for example: *melek* 'king,' *mēlākīm* 'kings,' *mēleket* 'queen,' *mamlākā* 'kingdom,' *mālāk* 'he reigned,' *yimlōk* 'he reigns/will reign,' *himlik* 'he made to reign,' etc. In this typical example the three consonants form what is termed the root on which are based the scores of actual words in use in the language. A small number of common nouns are based on only two consonants and have no associated verb, such as *ʾāb* 'father,' *ʾēl* 'god,' *yād* 'hand,' and *dām* 'blood.' The first two of these begin with the consonant 'aleph, called by some grammarians the glottal stop, a sound which is not used by most English speakers, but is a regular consonant in Hebrew. There is a tendency in the Hebrew language to convert these words based on two consonants into the regular tri-consonantal type when endings are added. Thus *ʾāmā*, 'slave girl,' is a biradical with the normal feminine singular ending *-ā*, but when the plural 'slave girls' is formed, not only does the feminine plural ending *-ōt* get added, but an *-h-* is inserted as well: *ʾāmāhōt*. The added *-h-* supplies a third consonant with the root.

The simple Hebrew word for 'god' is *ʾēl*, and a simple plural masculine is formed by adding the masculine plural ending *-īm* (cf. cherub – cherubim), and this results in *ʾēlīm*, which occurs, but rarely. Much more commonly the plural of *ʾēl* is *ʾēlōhīm*, with the added *-h-*. This is already known from the Ugaritic language, found on clay tablets from Ugarit (modern name: Ras Shamra), a site on the Syrian coast just north of the modern Latakia, the finds dating to c. 1400-1250 B.C. In this language, which in many respects is a kind of archaic Hebrew, 'god' is written *ʾil*, and 'gods' mostly *ʾilm*, rarely *ʾilhm*. (Vowels are only written in the script with the letter 'aleph.)

These matters of form are not controversial, but Biblical Hebrew does have two matters needing comment. First, there is a rare poetic singular 'god' *ʾēlōah*,

with an added *-h*. This is generally thought – and no doubt rightly – to be a back-formation from the plural *'ēlōhīm*, since it does not occur in other closely related languages such as Ugaritic or Babylonian. Secondly, though *'ēlōhīm* is used as a straightforward plural as when referring to foreign gods, it is commonly used as a singular when referring to the god of Israel. In such cases any verb or adjective with it is in the singular form despite *'ēlōhīm* having a plural ending. Late Babylonian scribes also from time to time write 'gods' when earlier copies of the same text and the contexts prove that 'god' in the singular is correct. There is no available explanation of why they did this: it is a fact that has to be accepted. In Hebrew there is no justification for translating *'ēlōhīm* in singular contexts as anything other than 'God.'

So much for form. Coming now to meaning, there are three techniques for ascertaining the meanings of Biblical Hebrew words; (i) context, (ii) tradition, and (iii) etymology. When available, contextual evidence is the most reliable method. For example, if the meanings of the words for metals in the Old Testament were unknown to us, we could study contexts and note that some words for metals refer to jewellery and expensive items, while other words are used of tools and weapons. We could speculate that 'gold' and 'silver' must occur in the first type, and 'bronze' and 'iron' in the second. With enough of the right kind of material, aided by actual objects from excavations of the periods, no doubt most meanings could be worked out correctly. With the Hebrew Bible, however, the method has limited value because there are so many rare words lacking helpful contexts.

Tradition has always been a source of knowledge of the meanings of Hebrew words. The Old Testament was passed down in a community that always had some scholars proficient in the language. Thus there has been oral transmission of what words meant, and it is possible to tap this tradition at various points in time, beginning with the Septuagint Greek translation made in Egypt c. 250-150 B.C. Often the meanings given in this tradition are clearly right, and modern scholars often have to depend on this tradition in rendering rare words for which there is no contextual help. But tradition is obviously also fallible. The theological views of the Septuagint translators have at times conditioned their renderings of words, and not infrequently they were clearly guessing, with no tradition having reached them about certain words. A simple example of meaning being forgotten occurs with the word *shēkār*, traditionally rendered 'strong drink' in the A.V., but inappropriately, since it most commonly occurs in a pair 'wine and *shēkār*,' where a particular alcoholic drink wine is not matched by an abstract term covering all such drinks. The old Testament world lacked distilling and spirits, but was familiar with beer brewed from grain, mostly barley. Thus context suggests 'beer,' for which there is other evidence, as we shall see.

Etymology (iii) is the science of tracing the development of words and their meanings. In some languages, such as modern English, it has limited use for establishing meanings since contextual evidence is superabundant. However, in Biblical Hebrew it has its uses because of the lack of sufficient contextual evidence for many words and the uncertainty attaching to many traditional meanings. The material available for such study has increased massively over the last 150 years with the recovery of ancient Egyptian, Babylono-Assyrian, Hittite, Hurrian, Ugaritic, and the vast expansion of knowledge of Aramaic and pre-Islamic Arabic. Work is still proceeding, and older sources of reference, including Young's and Strong's concordances, are often out-of-date and unreliable in consequence. One simple example concerns *shēkār*. Babylono-Assyrian is a Semitic language closely related to Biblical Hebrew, and its word *shikaru*, which is the exact phonetic equivalent of Hebrew *shēkār*, means beyond all dispute 'beer.' This confirms the contextual evidence of the Hebrew passages.

So, back to 'ēlōhīm. There is not one passage where the context plainly implies or even hints at the notion of strength. Normally the word certainly means 'god/God' or 'gods.' In a few cases this ordinary meaning has seemed unsuitable and translations such as 'angels' (Psalm 82:1 and 6) or 'judges' (Ex. 21:6, 22:8) have been offered, but whether right or wrong these few passages supply no evidence for 'mighty ones.' Similarly with Gen. 1:26: 'And God (Elohim) said, "Let us make man in our image . . ."' even if it is accepted that Elohim here means 'the angels' or 'God and the angels' (and note that 'said' in this context contains a singular subject form), it still constitutes no evidence for 'mighty ones.'

As for tradition, there is a little Rabbinic evidence for understanding 'sons of God (Elohim)' in Gen. 6:2 as 'mighty men,' but this is contrary to most interpretations of the passage and not strong evidence. One is thus reduced to inquiring whether etymology provides any evidence. If it could be shown that 'ēlōhīm arose from a root expressing 'strength' it could be argued that while the meaning is indeed 'god/God,' the word has the overtone of 'strong'. There are five passages which offer one and the same idiom including the noun 'ēl with the meaning 'power/strength,' Gen. 31:29, Deut. 28:32, Neh. 5:5, Pro. 3:27 and Mic. 2:1. To quote the first only:

It is in the power ('ēl) of my hand to do you hurt (A.V.).

The phrase is literally 'there is to the 'ēl of my hand.' The A.V. renders all the passages fairly literally, save that curiously it omits 'hand' in Neh. So in this idiom, though nowhere else, there is a noun 'ēl meaning 'power.' Unfortunately there is no certainty that 'ēl (god) and 'ēl (power) are the same word, indeed evidence is against their identification. First, it is improbable that one word would develop two meanings, one an abstract notion, the other the name of a

concrete being. Secondly, being written and pronounced the same is no guarantee that they are the same word. In English every one is familiar with the name of the wild animal 'bear', and the verb 'bear' meaning 'to carry,' which in origin and use are entirely separate words. Most languages have such pairs, and there is a technical term to express such words: homophones: words pronounced the same but in origin and meaning different words. The Hebrew noun 'ʾēl is certainly based on two root letters, since when certain endings are added the vowel shortens, and because in the Babylono-Assyrian equivalent, *ilu*, the *i* is short. But 'ʾēl 'power' could well be from a root with three consonants, the middle one being what is called a weak consonant, which would merge into a long vowel in usage. There is no evidence that the *e* of 'ʾēl 'power' can shorten. Thus the most recent dictionaries of Biblical Hebrew treat 'ʾēl 'god' and 'ʾēl 'power' as two separate words and if any one is of a different opinion, it is for such a person to present his evidence. But of course even if it could be proved that these two words are in fact one, it would not constitute proof that 'ʾēlōhīm means 'mighty ones.' It would be one argument in favour, but far from decisive.

Simple believers in Scripture who do not wish to be involved in such philological niceties may rest assured that whatever version they use correctly renders 'ʾēlōhīm as 'God' or 'gods.'

Wilfred Lambert

Reviews

We have received correspondence relating to two reviews which appeared in the previous issue of *Endeavour*. It goes without saying that any review is the result of one person's assessment of a publication and that a review by someone else may be entirely different. The nature of the review is bound to reflect the interests and relevant knowledge of the reviewer. Readers will, of course, read the reviews with all of this in mind and must then decide for themselves whether the work reviewed is likely to be worthy of further investigation or not. Their reaction will no doubt be affected by the respect or otherwise that they have for the reviewer (and for the author of course) who has the responsibility, as far as is possible, to be fair and accurate in judging the merits of the work in question. The reader of a review who has not read the work has to rely on the reviewer to give such an assessment. Reading an adverse review may not necessarily lead to a decision not to buy the book but, on the contrary, may arouse curiosity sufficiently to make one purchase the book in order to see for oneself.

Both authors/publishers of the works reviewed have written to us to express their dissatisfaction with the reviews in question. We publish their letters as received in order that our readers may see why they are dissatisfied and judge for themselves whether or not their observations are justified. It is difficult to do this if one has not read the books, and the reviews of course, and it is also not

necessarily an easy thing to do if one has! Some of the issues are not as simple as they are sometimes made out to be.

As a relative newcomer to the role of editor, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my apologies to any who may feel that they have suffered unnecessarily because of any lack on my part of good editorial skills. I still consider myself to be a learner in this strange field and hope that there might eventually be evidence of an upward learning curve.

However, I would like to make it clear that we have no intention of responding to calls to close down this magazine or to radically alter its policy. We are convinced that there is a much wider spectrum of views on many issues in our community than is currently acknowledged by most Christadelphian publications, particularly by those that will not cater for the expression of views regarded by them as deviant. There is still then a need for a magazine which promotes discussion of such issues, allows different points of view to be expressed, and encourages us to listen to one another, hopefully without being disagreeable, but with a view to learning from one another. Amongst other things, we may have to learn to be willing to accept nevertheless that differences may persist. It is in this spirit that we publish the following responses to the reviews in the hope that both the authors as well as the reviewer may have opportunity to make their views known and to listen to one another for their own and our mutual benefit.

It does not help the process if either party is too quick to ascribe unworthy motives to the other. On the contrary, the assumption ought to be that the other party is acting with the highest motives even though they may arrive at conclusions that differ from one's own. Otherwise, the result is simply that each seeks out the unworthy motives of the other and what should be a helpful exchange of views is likely to degenerate into a slanging match. If one wishes to occupy the high moral ground then one should not descend to practices that one complains of in one's opponents. The whole process is fraught with difficulty. Because comments in a review are critical in a negative sense that does not necessarily mean that they are delivered with any personal animosity. To go down that road is more than likely going to lead to being over-defensive, to falling into the trap of misrepresenting the other party, and to not really dealing with the issues raised by the critique of one's work. Clearly the reviewer should also abide by the same standards.

As editor, and as one who has no doubt committed some editorial indiscretions, I am rather concerned that the respondents feel that they can send their responses with conditions attached which effectively would prevent me from exercising any editorial function whatever, the one hoping that the response could be published without further comment from anyone, leaving the readers then to make up their own minds about the issues, and the other demanding that

either the whole response should be published or nothing at all. We are perfectly happy to allow readers to make up their own minds; we believe that they will do so anyway whatever we might do. But some things do need clarifying so that, as far as possible, misconceptions are not left in print to lead people to wrong conclusions. I have therefore taken the editorial liberty to make these comments and to add shorter comments to the respondents letters.

Editor

The following letter has been sent by Paul Danks as a response to Wilfred Lamberti's review of the booklet 'In the beginning God created.' published last year by the Appeal to all Ecclesias Committee.

Dear Editor,

When you took over as editor of the magazine, I wrote to you urging that you change the policy of the Endeavour magazine, and your own contributions to it, by desisting from continually citing secular philosophies and so-called "authorities", in order to concentrate on feeding the flock by bringing out the gems of scripture so as to encourage, and not mislead, those who subscribe to your magazine. I pointed out that the Endeavour magazine, whilst supposedly a Christadelphian publication, continually opposes the distinctive Christadelphian teachings - as summarised in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith - and appears to have a policy of undermining, rather than supporting the Truth as we understand it. I urged you to revolutionise your magazine, to make it constructive and supportive of the Truth as understood by Christadelphians, so as to edify your readership; the alternative would be to close the magazine down. Regrettably, you have done neither.

I turn now to the critique published in your last issue of the booklet "*In the beginning God created*" published by the Appeal to all Ecclesias Committee. It was something of a surprise to find our booklet reviewed in the Endeavour magazine. None of the previous eight publications from the Appeal Committee have been mentioned in your magazine although they were all sent to Endeavour supporters throughout the 1990's. The Committee was formed, as the reviewer must know very well, but failed to mention, principally to counteract the promulgation of wrong doctrine over many years by the Endeavour magazine.

The reviewer begins with a reference to the booklet being undated and seems unsure for who it was produced. This is disingenuous. With every copy of the booklet a letter dated September 1999 was inserted addressed "*Dear Brother or Sister*". The letter refers to the Appeal to all Ecclesias Committee, the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith, the brotherhood, the one faith and the Truth. The letter ends over the signature of the secretary: "*With love in the Master's Name, Sincerely your brother*". If your reviewer thought that the booklet was

produced other than by Christadelphians for Christadelphians he did not look at the booklet or the accompanying letter very closely. Or perhaps he was just pretending that he had never heard of the Appeal to all Ecclesias Committee. However, that would be no excuse, because the letter with the booklet refers to the Appeal to all Ecclesias Committee coming into existence in 1988 in order to oppose "*Certain false teachings and practices being aired by some within the brotherhood.*" In plain terms : to oppose the teachings and philosophies of the Endeavour magazine.

Now to deal with the body of the critique.

1. The criticism that the booklet is "strange" is matched equally by the Endeavour review, which is even more strange in its rhetorical approach, accusing the booklet of using arguments which are self-destructive and then giving no evidence of such, nor providing the slightest indication of where the basic teaching of the booklet is incorrect. It is the Endeavour review which is self-destructive, as we shall see.

2. W. Lambert states that the booklet is not easy to follow; yet the central teaching is clear and obvious to any who have read it : ie that short time periods are impressed upon the mind of the reader of Genesis in stark contrast to evolutionary theory and the false claims of palaeontology and geology. Unfortunately, rather than deal with these central issues the reviewer employs the age old approach of seeking to undermine a document by focusing upon and misrepresenting peripheral issues.

For instance, the reviewer concludes by saying that elohim does not mean "mighty ones" (which even he calls a detail) but provides no evidence. Even if this were true, how does it bear on the time periods in Genesis? Again he comments on the "circles" from which the author comes, indicated by his use of "Yahweh". What relevant has this? The booklet is about creation, and these petty criticisms only serve as a smoke screen to obscure the fact that the reviewer can find no comments of real substance to put against the work.

3. This subtle diversionary approach is further evidenced by the reviewer's insistence that passages stating that "God creating the universe by his spirit" have to be balanced with passages which say that the Word of God was the means by which the universe was created. But why do they? If the author wished to make the point that God created all things by his spirit, it is enough to cite only these passages. The pamphlet actually cites Ps 33 : 6. Again, how does this petty argument bear on the time periods involved in creation (or in the creative work at the resurrection for that matter, where myriads of dead will be involved) - truly this is "a brief and strange review".

4. Having ignored the scriptural evidences in the booklet which militate against long time periods, W. Lambert begins the second half of his review

by claiming that the author is relying on science. This is not so. the booklet refers to current scientific theories to show how contradictory they are when compared. Out of an 8 page booklet, 6 pages are given to scriptural argument. Four paragraphs on one page only examine scientific evidence. It is regrettable that the review ignores the other six pages to criticise the four paragraphs which demonstrate that the six literal days are not inconsistent with science.

5. The reviewer, himself then turns to science - that amongst "certain facts" is the assertion that rocks are of "great antiquity". Where did he obtain this information? Not from the Bible. He informs himself that these "facts emerge from the study of the rocks". So it appears that the author was wrong to have made reference to science, while the only piece of evidence W. Lambert uses against bible teaching in the whole review, is from the "rocks". We wonder who is "relying on the scientists".
6. The most worrying feature of the review is where W. Lambert challenges the reliability of the Bible in determining such issues. He says "The anonymous author's reply is that the Bible says so. But the Bible also speaks in terms which were long taken as proof that the earth is flat..... And those who believe in a supernatural devil also quote scripture and insist that there is no escape from the liberality of the words". This is typically confused Endeavour logic. Simply to say that "the Bible says so" and provide relevant scriptures is evidently not good enough for Endeavour's reviewer. The message Endeavour is putting across is, in effect: "People have used the Bible to justify wrong ideas, therefore, we cannot rely on what the Bible says". But this notion is patently flawed. The fact is that the Bible does not teach a flat earth or a supernatural devil. If the enemies of truth misrepresent what Scripture teaches, then it does not mean that we should not appeal to it - that it is unreliable to appeal to the Word for understanding, as the reviewer implies.
But why is it that the reviewer cannot accept that "the Bible says so" is sufficient. Because if this criterion is applied consistently to his teachings, and those of Endeavour, those teachings will not stand up to scrutiny.
7. So, W. Lambert criticises the pamphlet for allegedly relying on science, but immediately suggest that "the Bible says so" is not enough. Which is most reliable, a reviewer who presents only one piece of evidence, derived from the study of rocks to refute Bible chronology, who alleges that the Bible, by itself, is not enough; or an eight page pamphlet containing six pages of carefully referenced scripture?

We firmly believe the Bible's claim that about 6000 years ago God made heaven and earth in six days, and we are gratified that despite the empty rhetoric W. Lambert consistently employs in his review, he has been unable to indicate a

single piece of Bible evidence to contradict the booklet where this teaching is demonstrated.

Sincerely, by grace,

Paul Danks

Secretary to the Appeal to All Ecclesias Committee

123a Clevedon Road, Tickenham, Somerset, BS21 6RF

The above letter has been published as received at the insistent request of Brother Danks. The statement in the third paragraph to the effect that our reviewer was 'disingenuous' is based on a misunderstanding. Our reviewer has written to explain this to Brother Danks who has refused to reply until the above letter is published. In the meantime, I would like to make it clear that our reviewer has never in the past received any communication or publication from the Appeal to All Ecclesias Committee and only had sight of the booklet concerned and not the accompanying letter. It is of course normal practice to review a publication as it stands, for any accompanying letter is unlikely to forever remain attached to it. Whatever the author wishes to be clearly understood should be made clear in the publication itself.

The evidence regarding Elohim is provided by Wilfred Lambert on page 41 of this issue.

Editor

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

by **Roy Standeven**.

Author's reply to the Book Review appearing in the December issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to reply to the review of my book *The People's Choice*. My most direct answer is to say that Christadelphians and non-Christadelphians in this country and abroad have very warmly received the book referring to its 'helpful consideration of the text', 'its reader-friendly style', and 'its attractive lay-out and presentation'.

The series of Commentaries is a response to requests from numerous individuals who pressed for the information given in studies and talks to be put in print. I agree that standards should be high. However, your reviewer is surely too zealous both in finding fault and implying what I meant to say when I differed from his own views. The description 'Re-Constructive Commentary' is not another term for 'Homiletical'. As explained in the Preface, deduction and inferential reading are important. An integral part of the method employed is to encourage readers to 'think round' *the possible* thought processes and actions of individuals in the record for themselves. *The significance of this approach comes through more in some volumes in the series than in others.* The reviewer says that a definition of what I meant by 'Re-Constructive Commentary' 'is

something not to be found on the title page and the immediately surrounding pages.' The significance of the term is brought out on page vi. Of those six, two are title pages, two are blank and one shows publication details! After reading the review, I re-checked ten commentaries published by ten different professional publishers. Not one of them follows the pattern that the reviewer demands of me! The comment about 'Your Serenity' and a reference to a good English dictionary seems to be in the same unfortunate spirit. I was fully aware that this word's derivation could be traced to certain German titles because I had referred to not one but three of my own dictionaries as part of my routine systematic research. However, as I had also read in the work of two well-qualified professional commentators that there was a prior link with *seren*, I thought it was worth a mention. The reviewer's criticism of the **style of presentation** is of course one man's opinion and probably reflects his own conservatism. Certainly, reports from other readers both before and since the review, show that the outlined pages so disliked by him caused them no problem at all. These readers readily recognised that the device identified certain topics in the form of digressions or summaries that could be read or left for later consideration without the main flow of the book being interrupted. Similarly, the use of a large number of fonts on page 234 of *The People's Choice* reflected the wide range of handwriting, printing or block capitals individual participants used in the exercise being described in the 'brainstorm' session. I set page 234 over two years ago, but readers may see an extraordinary similarity to a presentation in the *Daily Mail Magazine Special Issue* on Jan 1st 2000 entitled '*the Dome*'. This was issued by 'Forward Publishing'. The same kind of 'exotic selection of fonts' is also currently a common printed backdrop to an increasing number of TV interviews. People are familiar with the style. It is a legitimate addition to traditional methods of presentation. It comes to a matter of choice but the modern 'professionals' are with me not my reviewer. **Repetition** is there but it follows the lead of the Bible text. For **information**, every single verse was analysed during preparation. Thereafter, an honest attempt was made to present a message for the benefit of the ordinary believer today. This is important in the whole approach. Understanding the text of Samuel is one thing. Applying its lessons for today in a practical way with **the help of other scripture** is essential. Consequently, twenty-five lines, eight of them quotations from Scripture about the spiritual significance of doors, are hardly a strain on the reader. Similarly, I do not consider devoting five pages to religious attitudes at the Breaking of Bread, the focus of our worship, 'distracting'. Within those pages, the modern parallel to the superstitious belief in the magical influence of the Ark was considered. In addition the significance of **the Apostle Paul's own direct quotation from Samuel as an exhortation to the Corinthian believers first in the context of the Breaking of Bread and then ecclesial fellowship**, was explored.

Again, I am happy to leave it to readers to form their own judgement about the fairness or otherwise of this kind of comment.

I am in the good company of many Christadelphian and non-Christadelphian, Jewish and Gentile writers when I suggest that there is sufficient inferential evidence to conclude that Samuel was the founder of the system that put a control on the existing bands of wandering prophets. I quote two of many 'One of the greatest achievements of the prophet Samuel was to bring into existence the prophetic colleges....' (H.A.Whittaker). 'Samuel established the schools of the prophets.' 'Perhaps Samuel's greatest claim to honour and the most permanent of his life's achievements were the schools of the prophets which he founded' (Rev. Dr. S Goldman, M.A.). Samuel is represented as a Principal at a gathering of prophets whom he taught in a building called 'Naioth', 'the house of instruction'.

The reviewer says 'the idea of him (Samuel) as an itinerant preacher is not in accordance with the wording of Scripture'. Itinerant means 'making journeys from place to place'(Chambers) At one stage, Samuel followed a very small annual circuit to designated towns based on Ramah. Scripture says so. 'From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel, to Gilgal, to Mizpah' (1 Sam.7: 16-17 quoted in my text). I do not think that I have implied anywhere that he was only a preacher or that I have belittled his position as a Judge as my critic implies in his phrase 'but the passage itself states another purpose' followed by the quotation 'he judged Israel'. Why invent a conflict? Time after time I had emphasised the significant role of a great Judge and Prophet. I let scripture speak for itself in that very passage. 'From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel, to Gilgal, to Mizpah judging Israel in all those places. But he always went back to Ramah where his home was and there he also judged Israel' (p.101). I quoted, 'Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.' I noted that, 'his name as a prophet faithful to the LORD became widely known.' (1 Sam.3:20 NIV.) 'Samuel spake to all the house of Israel....' (p.106). When Samuel needed help he obtained it by finding 'able men out of all Israel.' 'Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes' (p113). This underlies the extent of his work. As a Judge and a Prophet, Samuel faithfully instructed Israel during a period when the people chose not to observe God's will. Later the people 'lamented after the LORD.' 'It was a long time, twenty years in all...and all the people mourned after the LORD' (1.Sam.7:2 NIV). There is much more. Why imply that I restricted Samuel's activity to that of a minor preacher rather than a prophet and judge who stands in stature in Scripture alongside Moses? (Jer.15:1; Psa.69.6) Samuel's 'preaching' was important because it maintained a spiritual witness during those long dark years. Again, as I quoted, the Apostle Paul sets the great offices side by side. 'He gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet' (Acts 13:20).

Sacrifice. Samuel offered a 'sucking lamb' at Mizpah. 'Samuel cried unto the LORD *and the LORD heard him.*' It was at the moment of this sacrifice that deliverance came (1.Sam.7:9). Similarly, Samuel was TOLD to offer the sacrifice at Bethlehem. Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.' (1 Sam.16:2;4-5) These were places that the LORD chose. That is enough for most Christadelphians to indicate that in those difficult days such sacrifices were allowed at different places. (See also Bro. H.Tennant, The Man David p.20).

Concerning **Hebrew**, I am happy to give reasons for writing what I did except for the meaning of Urim which I have understood as 'lights' since childhood. Other commentators familiar with Biblical Hebrew have a very different outlook from the reviewer.

- I have been learning Hebrew for some time but this does not make me an authority on the subject. On the contrary, it makes one more aware of dangers inherent in Biblical exposition. I have said many times in public talks that care must be taken when advocating any teaching based on one's own view. 'Experts' do not always agree! Everything therefore that I have written has been with the support of several recognised and well-qualified commentators. I do not presume to interpret the language of the text on my own authority nor do I intend to give Hebrew an exalted place in our reply to my review. In the book he exposition.
- As far as the name Samuel is concerned I do believe the correct meaning by derivation is 'Name of God' as I said. However, there were plays on the word based on other similar roots that gave it other senses that were clearly understood in that way by the people involved. The scripture text says so e.g. (1 Sam.1:20).
- The information about aleph is the sort that often appears on page one of Primers. See R.K. Harrison: Biblical Hebrew chapter 1. It seems that methods used in illustration might have to be tightened to avoid misunderstandings.

Since reading the review, I have checked every reference to Hebrew in my book. I made very, very few observations that are interpretative and each of these followed the practice outlined above. ALL other references are to the meaning of names which is very important in Scripture. I checked every single one against the meanings given in a Dictionary of Bible Names widely known to the Christadelphian community but to which I had not referred previously. *Only three were not absolutely identical to the meanings I gave.*

The aim of this reply is not to enter into public debate with the reviewer but to let your readers see that although my book may show elements of human fallibility, it was prepared and presented with reasonable care in the hope that it would be helpful for the ordinary brother or sister. I ask your subscribers to read

for themselves *The People's Choice* and its companion volume *The Warrior Tamed* when it is published. They will then be able to give a fairer personal assessment on what I have written on *the whole* of the Books of Samuel.

Finally, I feel that the reviewer will have done far more damage to the credibility of Christadelphians by the tone and spirit of his review than ever I can do by any technical deficiencies in such a limited edition.

Roy Standeven

(Copies of *The People's Choice* can be obtained from Mrs M. Harris, Flat 17, Westroyd House, 2 Water Royd Lane, Mirfield. WF14 9SB and will be invoiced at £5.00 plus postage at current rates.)

The above letter is a shortened version of the original response of Brother Standeven which he shortened at the editor's request and after some correspondence with our reviewer. Brother Standeven has presented his reply as an account of what he did in producing his book and wishes to leave it now to the readers to assess whether or not this was reasonable. Since he does not wish to pursue discussion any further, our reviewer summarises briefly where the matter rests.

Wilfred Lambert replies:

While I am entirely in agreement with Brother Standeven that readers should now judge for themselves such issues as the possible merits of the lay-out and typography of p. 234, I much regret his unwillingness to debate the Scriptural issues further. There has been movement between his book and his reply to my review. In the book he assumed as a fact that Samuel founded the school of the prophets. He now accepts that this is only a deduction. Similarly he paid no attention to Samuel's disregard of the Law, but now he quotes some of the evidence which I failed to mention. We are thus closer than before, and it is my belief that with further frank discussion we might close the gap between us still more. Here too readers must judge for themselves. As to Hebrew, the article on Elohim, on p. 41 of this issue, was written immediately in response to an implied suggestion of Brother Danks, but it has relevance to this discussion too.

In response to the review of Roy Standeven's *The People's Choice* we have also received the following two letters:

Dear Brother Les,

Greetings in Jesus' Name.

I was saddened to read the review of *The People's Choice* in *The Endeavour Magazine* because it was written in such an uncharitable spirit. The comments about its layout, typeface and outlined pages seem nit-picking. There was plenty of good, interesting material about which more profitable

comment could have been made. I'm not a linguist so I cannot say anything about the use of Hebrew.

I felt the quotation on the front cover of the magazine was not considered when this review was being prepared.

We all need encouragement to build up our faith.

Sincerely your sister in Christ,

N.K. Pearson (Wakefield)

The following contribution was received from **Ruth McHaffie**:

D. I. Y.

As an old hand at 'do-it-yourself' in a variety of areas (with better results in some than in others), my attention fastened on Wilfred Lambert's review of *The People's Choice* by Roy Standeven, which was published in the December issue. Wilfred, referring specifically to D.I.Y. publishing, indicated his doubts on its merits.

The 16th century Reformation encouraged a hoard of 'do-it-yourselfers', though that was not its intention. As a continuation of the Reformation we claim to be a D. I. Y. community, and it is because professionalism was dismissed by our pioneers that we exist. True it is that today, courtesy of advanced technology, more and more literature of varying quality proliferates, and our reviewer was right that 'there are risks in self-publishing'. But books produced by professionals carry no guarantee of perfection nor that 'gaffs' will be avoided. And just as there is many a slip between cup and lip so also is there between author and printer. Writers are sometimes utterly dismayed when they see the finished versions of their laborious efforts. An eminent Professor of Ecclesiastical History, after writing a book with meticulous care, found that in the process of printing, the paging of the second volume had been thrown out of keeping with the index. In addition the book was obliged to carry a long list of errata. Woe betide any who, like myself, was silly enough to set out on his or her reading without consulting it!

My own impression of Roy's book was that it was attractively presented and contained a lot of careful, time-consuming study. I am sure a number of readers will find it encouraging. *Pace* Wilfred, I was glad that the author devoted considerable attention to the New Testament even if some of his comments were not directly related to his study of Samuel. As he explained, one of his purposes was to emphasise the 'primacy of the scriptures as a guide to life today.'

Valuable though the Old Testament is as it leads up to the New, it is the latter with its manifestation of Jesus which offers the supreme pattern for those not living under the old covenant with its battles and animal sacrifices, but under the new with its law of love and self-giving. Especially appreciated was the author's stress on the significance of 'if' relating to covenants between man and God (p.

64). As he wrote in italics, and as we often seem to forget, '*Simply because a statement appears in scripture as being a promise of God does not mean that that circumstance must inevitably happen.* Its fulfilment depends on an individual's response, on man honouring its tenets!' In addition (p. 62) he usefully urged the belief that God's Spirit 'is the agent of all His interventions in the affairs of mankind...'

I would be reluctant, of course, to challenge Wilfred's erudite scholarship, but although aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, is, as he said, a consonant and not a vowel, nevertheless, since its pronunciation is a 'light breathing', it seems to me more like an English vowel than a consonant. Roy has studied Hebrew for some time and as he was trying to explain to those of us who know nothing of the language, his explanation on so simple a level was reasonable. Wilfred was concerned that 'el and 'el should each be given its distinctive meaning but in the absence of some explanation how were readers to understand the obscurity? I do not think Roy's book has a 'fatal fascination' for Hebrew. Surely the pursuit of knowledge is only fatal (that is, to spiritual growth) when we imagine that it enables us to 'know it all'?

My general conclusion was that *The People's Choice* was more 'ready for publication' than the reviewer suggested. And there is no need to fear, as he did, lest it should fall into the hands of some who are not Christadelphians and 'who happen to know something about the Bible'. That much of Roy's work would not be appreciated by those who interpret the Scriptures differently from our community is indisputable. It was, however, written for the spiritual encouragement of Bible class Christadelphians. Moreover, whatever changes in interpretations or amendments we might wish to suggest, it has an excellency which has often been lacking in our community's literature and not only so in the past. It was composed without bigotry and harsh comments against any who might hold alternative views, and indulged in none of the acerbity which should be avoided, especially by those contributing to *Endeavour* with its avowed aim of amicable discussion.

Referring to the reviewer's criticism of the book's binding, I must add a defence of at least my own copy. Though seeming a little stiff initially, and though my gender prevented my man-handling it, yet with the good nature characteristic of its author, it accepted my unkind flattening of its pages with admirable tolerance, and forgivingly stayed all in one piece.

Ruth McHaffie

We cannot afford the luxury of careless thinking.
Irwin Moon

Christadelphia Redivivus

The following letter has been sent to us in reaction to George McHaffie's booklet.

Dear Bro. Boddy,

Following the reference on page 50 of the December 1999 issue of *The Endeavour Magazine*, I promptly ordered, received and carefully studied the new booklet *Christadelphia Redivivus* and I have to say that while for the most part it seemed to confirm the beliefs firmly held by us as fundamental Christadelphian doctrines, there were a few passages which I found a little disturbing.

One such passage is the reference to Dr. Thomas' letter to the Emperor of Russia, and I dare say this came as a shock to many current members of our community, but perhaps we can put that down to Dr. Thomas' somewhat idiosyncratic nature, and I mention this merely as a passing comment.

More importantly, however, do I regard the content of item 4, The Death State on page 27 where George McHaffie seems to imply that a certain ambiguity exists regarding the Death State which would possibly imply or lend credence to the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul and by implication, that of heaven-going, two doctrines which are, of course, contrary to Christadelphian beliefs. I can well imagine that one of my daughters, a staunch Anglican with whom I have had many debates in support of our views, would quickly seize on George McHaffie's booklet to prove her point.

I would like to point out, however, that I have looked up all the quotations mentioned in this section, and I am left in no doubt that reasonable consideration of each one supports the Christadelphian doctrine of the total termination of life and indeed a state of corruption awaiting the act of resurrection at the return of Christ, as attested by Job 19:25-27 and 1 Cor 15:5-57.

In every case the references to the 'pit', 'Hades' etc. consist in translations of the Hebrew *por*, *sheol* etc. with the clear meaning of a sepulchre and a state of corruption. This concept agrees with the clear teaching of Peter when he told the people at Pentecost in Jerusalem that even David was not ascended to the heavens and one also calls to mind the author of Ecclesiastes - 'For there is hope of a tree etc...'

I would be interested to read the comments of other brethren or sisters with regard to this booklet.

Meanwhile, I remain sincerely your brother,

R.C.A. Fawcett

We need to worship and adore
as well as to analyse and explain.

Isobel Kuhn

The

Endeavour

Magazine



*But the wisdom from above is pure first of all;
it is also peaceful, gentle and friendly;
it is full of compassion and produces
a harvest of good deeds;
it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy.*

December 2000

104

The Endeavour Magazine

For Christian Thought and Action

December 2000

No 104

CONTENTS

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Editorial | Les Boddy |
| 5. New Booklet: <i>The Power of the Risen Lord.</i> | Sheila Harris |
| 5. The Old Testament in the New | Sheila Harris |
| 8. Mission Statement | June Fitzsimmons |
| 7. Ecclesiastes | Wilfred Lambert |
| 9. Paul, Timothy, the Gnostics and Women. | Peter Baylis |
| 13. Looking to the Future | Paul Cooke |
| 21. Scriptural Reconciliation for Differing Beliefs | Peter Wright |
| 24. Poem | Bill Wright |
| 25. God and the New Cosmology | Ron Coleman |
| 35. Reviews: <i>Maps for the Journey</i> | Ros Lomas |
| 38. <i>Maps for the Journey</i> | Ian McHaffie |
| 41. <i>Which Translation?</i> | Wilfred Lambert |
| 45. <i>Modern Medicine & the Bible</i> | Steve DeWilde |
| 48. Reconciliation | Julia Booth |
| 51. Correspondence | Vicki Warwick |
| | Bob Burr |
| | Wilfred Lambert |
| | John Stevenson |

Editorial

Idle Words

READERS will no doubt recognise the phrase used in the above title as being part of a statement made by Jesus about judgement:

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (Mat.12:36,37. AV)

The Greek word here translated 'idle' is rendered 'useless' in the GNB and 'thoughtless' in the NEB. What exactly does it mean for words to be idle, useless or thoughtless?

Even those like myself who know little or no Greek will have heard the Greek word concerned used in talk of elementary science. We live on a planet with an atmosphere without which we could not survive. And what an atmosphere we've got! A mixture of various gaseous substances, some of them elements and some of them compounds, some well known and some not so well known. As well as the elements oxygen and nitrogen, there are the compounds carbon dioxide and water vapour. In addition to these, there are traces of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, hydrogen sulphide, sulphur dioxide and minute droplets of sulphuric acid together with inorganic and organic dust. But there still remains one other constituent of our atmospheric air that accounts for about 1% of it.

Air was subjected to serious scientific investigation towards the end of the 18th century. It was not too difficult to remove water vapour, carbon dioxide and oxygen from air, leaving a gas that would not support life and which was at first thought to be pure nitrogen. However, it was not long before a way of removing the nitrogen was also found but, try as they might, scientists were unable to remove a small residue which just could not be persuaded to react with anything else. Later, in the 19th century, it became possible to produce nitrogen chemically and to compare it with that produced from the atmosphere. Atmospheric nitrogen was found to be heavier than chemical nitrogen and was finally shown to contain a heavier gas that would not react at all with other chemicals and so was given the name **argon** from the Greek word for **sluggish**, *argos*, which is just how we often all feel until we get up and go out for a breath of fresh air! Argon was the first of a whole family of chemically idle, lazy or **inert** gases to be discovered.

The word *argos* comes from the word for work (*ergon*) with the prefix *a* which is a negative and so *argon* means literally no work, work-less, ineffective, doing nothing. In the parable of **the workers in the vineyard**, it says:

He went out again to the market place at nine o'clock and saw some men standing there **doing nothing**,.... It was nearly five

The Endeavour Magazine

o'clock when he went to the market place and saw some other men still standing there. 'Why are you wasting the whole day here **doing nothing**?' he asked them. (Matthew 20:3,6)

'Doing nothing' is here the translation of the word *argos*, obviously in its literal sense.

But, returning to **Mat 12:36-37**, now in the GNB:

You can be sure that on Judgement Day everyone will have to give account of every **useless** word he has ever spoken. Your words will be used to judge you – to declare you either innocent or guilty.

with its 'every useless word', how can words be idle, useless or ineffective ?

In 1 John 3:18 we read the following words:

My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

Now, although words can be **contrasted** with actions, as though actions do things and words do not, we do in fact use words to do things. Notice how the centurion asks Jesus to heal his servant in **Luke 7:6-7**:

So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the officer sent friends to tell him, 'Sir, don't trouble yourself. I do not deserve to have you come into my house, neither do I consider myself worthy to come to you in person. **Just give the order, and my servant will get well.**

And now notice how Jesus speaks to the woman who anointed his feet:

Then Jesus said to the woman, '**Your sins are forgiven.**' (7:48)

G.B. Caird¹, following J.L. Austin, suggests that such words might be called **performatives** as their purpose is not to **inform** but to **perform**, to do something. Such words commit the speaker to stand by his words which can be **active** or **idle** according as their task is performed or neglected. And so perhaps the idle words that Jesus refers to in Mat 12 are not just thoughtless words, like for example a carefree joke, but **deedless** words, what Caird calls '**loafers**', like the broken promise or the unpaid vow.

Read for example the parable of the two sons:

Now, what do you think? There was once a man who had two sons. He went to the elder one and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' 'I don't want to,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. '**Yes, sir,**' he answered, but he **did not go**. Which one of the two did what his father wanted? 'The elder one,' they answered. (Matthew 21:28-31)

One son said 'Yes sir!' but did not go, his words were idle, loafers. Readers will have probably all come across the little prayer that says: '**Lord deliver us from**

those who don't deliver!' Have we been the cause of others being led to pray this prayer? Are we keeping our vows to the Lord? Are our words idle, useless, loafers? The son who at first said 'I don't want to,' but then did go to do his father's will, is there perhaps to teach us that God gives us time to turn our refusals into willing obedience.

Now read what Jesus says at the end of the Sermon on the Mount:

Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do. When Judgement Day comes, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! In your name we spoke God's message, by your name we drove out many demons and performed many miracles!' Then I will say to them, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you wicked people!'

(Matthew 7:21-23)

Even though their 'Lord, Lord', was followed up with actions, these people were apparently not producing what Jesus wanted to see; they were not doing what the Father in heaven wanted them to do. The Sermon on the Mount no doubt tells us how Jesus wanted to see his disciples living their lives in the service of God and how he encouraged them to readjust their understanding and application of the Law of Moses. Jesus seems to be saying that the time has come for the Law of Moses to be fulfilled and transcended and so morality needs to move on to a higher plane than was generally the case in the time when the Law was like a schoolmaster leading to Christ.

Returning again to Mat 12:36, Christ's statement would seem to refer back to what the Pharisees had said about Jesus' miracles being done at the behest of Beelzebul. Jesus is implying that they had not thought through the implications of what they were saying. It was a case of lazy thinking resulting in statements that could not be substantiated and were in fact untrue. (Jeremias, for example, suggests that *argos* here bears the sense of not being in accord with the truth.) The Pharisees were too concerned with merely blackening the reputation of Jesus by suggesting that he was in the pay of Beelzebul and not in the service of God. They were guilty of not sorting out the essential fact – that the good deeds of Jesus could only truly and thankfully be ascribed to the power of God – from the trivia – their concern to misrepresent Jesus in order to direct attention away from the good deeds, that spoke for themselves, to questions of reputation and character which often fascinate us humans, particularly when someone can be gossiped about and be thought to possibly have underhand motives behind their apparently good deeds.

Are any of us arrogant enough to think that the process of sorting out the essentials from the trivia is ever complete? This is surely a permanent feature of life as we know it, however disturbing and unsettling that thought might be. Any

community that thinks otherwise has little going for it on the pages of history never mind in eternity. Each generation needs to re-examine the beliefs and practices of its forebears and so establish its own integrity, as far as that is possible. If, in all honesty, this means making changes, we need to pray for the courage to do so, in order to show that our words are not just idle but active. In particular, if we are to present the gospel to the ongoing world, as long as it lasts, we must take account of the increasing knowledge in all areas of life, always recognising that increased knowledge often makes us aware of how little we really know in fact. Exploring God's world, including His word, will forever be an unfinished task and so we ought to be humble enough to consider that learning, our own and not just that of others, is a lifelong process.

Idle words are words that achieve nothing in God's reality, that do not forward His purpose as revealed in Christ. The criterion of truth and good judgement must ever be Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. This is easy to write and say but often agonizingly difficult to accept and apply in our own lives. It would be idle to pretend that we have nothing more to learn, any of us, of the Way, the Truth and the Life. We should not cling to ignorance when God has given us the means of knowing better and, knowing better, we need to pray for the courage and strength to live out the better way in our own lives.

In Matthew 12.34,35 Jesus says:

You snakes – how can you say good things being evil? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good person brings good things out of his treasure of good things; a bad person brings bad things out of his treasure of bad things.

Useless, idle words are words that are untrue to the good purposes of God and so do not promote God's rule or reign but rather hinder its realization. Words reveal the heart and idle, ineffective, unproductive words are untrue to God and so to reality as God desires it to be.

Performatives commit the speaker to stand by his words. Jesus tells us that we all stand or fall by our words and so let us open our hearts more to Him and labour more in thought, word and deed to ensure that our words be not idle words. God's Word is not idle. It became flesh in Jesus, in Jesus crucified, showing us how real God's love is for us all and how serious God is about accomplishing His purpose for us and in us.

Les Boddy

¹ See *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, G.B.Caird, Duckworth, ISBN 0-7156-1579-3, 1988, pp.20-25.

The best Christians we have among us are only Christians in the making.
They are by no means finished products.

The Power of the Risen Lord**Sheila Harris**

THIS new booklet comes from the pen of someone who has devoted her life to the service of her Lord in the Christadelphian community. What she has written expresses the heart of the faith which has kept her devoted to her Lord throughout her life. It is not written to provoke argument but is intended as a meditation on her understanding of the Christian faith as she has known it in her own life's experience. In its few pages, she chooses to share with any willing to read it what has been the deep-seated motivation of her whole life. If it leads others to glorify the Lord Jesus more fully in their own lives it will have served its purpose well. In her own words: 'This booklet is designed to show how the New Testament provides ample evidence of the early disciples' experience of the risen Lord, how they faced the resurrection with wonder, awe and fear but proceeded to find His abiding presence with them in wonders, signs, guidance and comfort. To Paul, the living presence of Jesus was the dynamic reality of his whole life and in his letters he shows to his converts that the risen Lord, still present and alive, is the supreme answer to all problems and needs, both for them and for us, both then and now, if we open our hearts to Him and allow Him to work.'

Copies of the booklet may be obtained from the editor at £1, including postage.

The Relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

Below is a summary of the findings of two workshops led by Sheila Harris which explored this theme by looking closely at a series of passages linking the Old and New Testaments.

THE Old Testament is the account of the history of Israel, seen through the eyes of men of vision who encountered God within the framework of their own contemporary world and personal experience. So the God of Israel is their redeemer from slavery, provider of food and drink, giver of laws for their public and private lives, conqueror of their enemies and the centre of their worship in temple and kingship. As these securities begin to crumble, the vision changes to deeper experience of God as a relationship of personal acquaintance, loving concern for others and awareness of God's moving presence.

Beneath this framework of history lie also undying principles of God's purpose in creating a people for His name and ultimately a man in His own image.

In the New Testament this is fulfilled in Jesus. He is the bread, the light, the life, the consummation of God's creative word. It is in him that the glory of the Lord of Hosts is revealed. He is the ladder stretched between earth and heaven,

community that thinks otherwise has little going for it on the pages of history never mind in eternity. Each generation needs to re-examine the beliefs and practices of its forebears and so establish its own integrity, as far as that is possible. If, in all honesty, this means making changes, we need to pray for the courage to do so, in order to show that our words are not just idle but active. In particular, if we are to present the gospel to the ongoing world, as long as it lasts, we must take account of the increasing knowledge in all areas of life, always recognising that increased knowledge often makes us aware of how little we really know in fact. Exploring God's world, including His word, will forever be an unfinished task and so we ought to be humble enough to consider that learning, our own and not just that of others, is a lifelong process.

Idle words are words that achieve nothing in God's reality, that do not forward His purpose as revealed in Christ. The criterion of truth and good judgement must ever be Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. This is easy to write and say but often agonizingly difficult to accept and apply in our own lives. It would be idle to pretend that we have nothing more to learn, any of us, of the Way, the Truth and the Life. We should not cling to ignorance when God has given us the means of knowing better and, knowing better, we need to pray for the courage and strength to live out the better way in our own lives.

In Matthew 12:34,35 Jesus says:

You snakes – how can you say good things being evil? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good person brings good things out of his treasure of good things; a bad person brings bad things out of his treasure of bad things.

Useless, idle words are words that are untrue to the good purposes of God and so do not promote God's rule or reign but rather hinder its realization. Words reveal the heart and idle, ineffective, unproductive words are untrue to God and so to reality as God desires it to be.

Performatives commit the speaker to stand by his words. Jesus tells us that we all stand or fall by our words and so let us open our hearts more to Him and labour more in thought, word and deed to ensure that our words be not idle words. God's Word is not idle. It became flesh in Jesus, in Jesus crucified, showing us how real God's love is for us all and how serious God is about accomplishing His purpose for us and in us.

Les Boddy

¹ See *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, G.B. Caird, Duckworth, ISBN 0-7156-1579-3, 1988, pp.20-25.

**The best Christians we have among us are only Christians in the making.
They are by no means finished products.**

The Power of the Risen Lord**Sheila Harris**

THIS new booklet comes from the pen of someone who has devoted her life to the service of her Lord in the Christadelphian community. What she has written expresses the heart of the faith which has kept her devoted to her Lord throughout her life. It is not written to provoke argument but is intended as a meditation on her understanding of the Christian faith as she has known it in her own life's experience. In its few pages, she chooses to share with any willing to read it what has been the deep-seated motivation of her whole life. If it leads others to glorify the Lord Jesus more fully in their own lives it will have served its purpose well. In her own words: 'This booklet is designed to show how the New Testament provides ample evidence of the early disciples' experience of the risen Lord, how they faced the resurrection with wonder, awe and fear but proceeded to find His abiding presence with them in wonders, signs, guidance and comfort. To Paul, the living presence of Jesus was the dynamic reality of his whole life and in his letters he shows to his converts that the risen Lord, still present and alive, is the supreme answer to all problems and needs, both for them and for us, both then and now, if we open our hearts to Him and allow Him to work.'

Copies of the booklet may be obtained from the editor at £1, including postage.

The Relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

Below is a summary of the findings of two workshops led by Sheila Harris which explored this theme by looking closely at a series of passages linking the Old and New Testaments.

THE Old Testament is the account of the history of Israel, seen through the eyes of men of vision who encountered God within the framework of their own contemporary world and personal experience. So the God of Israel is their redeemer from slavery, provider of food and drink, giver of laws for their public and private lives, conqueror of their enemies and the centre of their worship in temple and kingship. As these securities begin to crumble, the vision changes to deeper experience of God as a relationship of personal acquaintance, loving concern for others and awareness of God's moving presence.

Beneath this framework of history lie also undying principles of God's purpose in creating a people for His name and ultimately a man in His own image.

In the New Testament this is fulfilled in Jesus. He is the bread, the light, the life, the consummation of God's creative word. It is in him that the glory of the Lord of Hosts is revealed. He is the ladder stretched between earth and heaven,

the true temple through whom we now have access to God – the enfleshment, the embodiment of all the outlines sketched in the past, demanding deeper personal relationship both with God and man.

But he is also, as David's greater Son, the Lord enthroned on high, who as a conquering king has ridden through the gates, with their heads uplifted, to his triumph on the cross, to reveal the true glory of God and lift us up into the heavenly places.

Life surrendered, life transformed, life shared.

Sheila Harris

The following is the beginnings of a possible Mission Statement for a Christadelphian Ecclesia put together by one of the two Church in Action Workshops at the Christadelphian Summer School, 2000.

Our Mission Statement

We believe in God and in Jesus his Son who came to show us how we should live our lives in their service. We try to follow His example of love, care and worship.

Our aims are:

- To seek God's wisdom and to have the courage to let it work in our lives.
- To share worship, prayer and praise.
- To remember to value all people and show understanding.
- To promote peace in all aspects of life.
- To reflect the love and concerns of Jesus in our lives.
- To encourage others not to give up hope.
- To be open and willing to learn from others.
- To be honest with God, ourselves and each other.
- To forgive others as God forgives us.

June Fitzsimmons

Wilfred Lambert presents Part Twelve of his study of Ecclesiastes.
 (Quotations from the Revised English Bible unless otherwise stated.)

Chapter 7 verse 25 – chapter 8 verse 1: More on the Pursuit of Wisdom.

MANY commentators accept the chapter division here and see 8:1 as the first verse of a new section. That the present writer prefers the less usual view that 8:2 is the new beginning points to the uncertainty about the thought of these verses, which have indeed some massive difficulties.

Verse 25 is generally clear even if the grammatical construction of the end is not certain and one word is of doubtful meaning. It helps to have two versions set out in full:

A.V. I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out, wisdom,
 R.E.B. I went on to reflect how I could know, enquire, and search for wisdom

A.V. and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly,
 R.E.B. and for the reason of things, only to discover that it is folly to be wicked

A.V. even of foolishness and madness:
 R.E.B. and madness to act like a fool.

While Qoheleth is almost completely prose, there is often a certain structure in the balance of phrases which helps very much to grasp the sense. First three roughly synonymous verbs are used for the pursuit of wisdom and of something else rendered 'reason', which is structurally a parallel or extension of 'wisdom'. The word, *heshbôn*, belongs to post-exilic Hebrew and is used for commercial accounts in non-Biblical texts. In this sense it fits well Qoheleth's concerns. He is totting up the facts at his disposal in the attempt to make sense of the universe under God. The continuation shows the folly of excessively literal translations. The immediately following Hebrew is 'and', but taken literally banal sense results. Was he really making such effort to know 'the wickedness of folly,' etc.? Has he not established that point long since? But if, with the R.E.B., we take the extremely flexible Hebrew 'and' to introduce the result of his drawing together his observations and study, then excellent sense appears. He has still not explained the universe nor answered every question, but the important thing is that life must be oriented to avoid wicked behaviour. This is expressed in two parallel clauses, as correctly in the R.E.B.

Verse 26 introduces something new to Qoheleth so far: a woman out to catch men, from whom the righteous will escape but by whom sinners will be trapped. It is not women in general who are referred to because the word is singular and has the definite article: 'the woman.' But she is dire: 'more bitter

than death.' The writer obviously expected his hearers or readers to catch the sense since he does not trouble to identify her. Proverbs 6:20-35 and 7:1-27 have much to say about women of loose morals, but chapter 9 is more relevant because it contrasts 'Wisdom' (a feminine noun in Hebrew) in vv. 1-12 with 'a foolish woman' (A.V.) or 'the Lady Stupidity' (R.E.B.) in vv. 13-18. The latter section ends with a statement that her guests become the dead. Qoheleth is no doubt following in this tradition. His 'the woman,' is in effect 'folly,' the opposite of 'wisdom,' a literary development from the seducing prostitute.

vv. 27-28 have one great problem. It appears that Qoheleth after all his reckoning comes to the conclusion that there is just one worthy man among a thousand, but no just woman. The wording is clear, and the contrast explicit. However, the statement is hard to accept, and is not paralleled either in Qoheleth or in any other Biblical book. Also there are difficulties in the words, of which the most important is that the word for 'man' is *'ādām*, normally a collective, which can indeed be used in the contrast 'men': 'women,' but in the 49 times it occurs in Qoheleth only here is it not used for 'humanity,' both sexes included, as indeed is the case in the following v. 29. Commentators have puzzled over the verse for long and come up with all kinds of attempted solutions. For example, it has been suggested that 'one man in a thousand' and 'not one woman among them all' are just literary variation meaning in effect 'no one.' This is surely going contrary to the plain meaning of the words, and the present writer takes seriously the possibility that the whole phrase is in origin a marginal gloss added by a scribe who thought it relevant to the 'woman' of v. 26, and, as often happened with marginal glosses, it was later incorporated into the text. It is a bold move to excise something without MS evidence, but when the phrase gives so many problems, and without it the text reads very well, it is worthy of consideration:

after searching long without success, this alone have I found:
that God, when he made man, made him straightforward, but
men invent endless subtleties of their own.

The sense given now is a clear reflection of Genesis' account of creation and the fall. God is not the author of sin, but man has used his freedom to walk in devious ways.

The section is rounded off very nicely by 8:1, which stresses that wisdom, even in small quantities, can transform people.

Wilfred Lambert

Conviction of ignorance is the doorstep
to the temple of wisdom.

C.H. Spurgeon.

Peter Baylis explores some of the influences of Gnosticism.

AS predicted by Paul, the 'falling away' or apostasy of sections of the early Christians from the true Gospel was swift. One of the greatest apostasies was the heresy known as Gnosticism. It was violently suppressed and driven underground by the power of the State Church, but it surfaced repeatedly amongst such groups as the Albigensian Cathars and still exists today.

What was Gnosticism about? Let's construct a 'statement of faith' for it:

- 1) That which is physical is evil; spirit is good.
- 2) Salvation is by your pure spirit escaping from your vile body and ascending to heaven. The means of such escape is 'special knowledge', *gnosis* in Greek, hence Gnosticism.
- 3) The Old Testament God had created the evil physical world. Hence he himself is evil and a deceiver.
- 4) The body is evil and to be treated harshly by fasting etc. But sexual immorality is fine because it breaks the law of the evil creator; marriage however is forbidden.
- 5) Creating more vile flesh by having children is evil. Women who give birth will be hindered from entering Gnostic heaven.
- 6) Eve is worshipped as a perfect, spirit being, Adam's creator and, united with the Serpent, the enlightener of mankind with the True Knowledge.
- 7) Knowledge of your origins via your family tree is important to salvation; Eve is the origin of all.
- 8) Christ being perfect did not have a physical body, he only appeared to have one.

1 John 4:2-3 is a prime example of a verse countering the Gnostic heresy and Christadelphians universally recognise it as such:

Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist.

This clearly refers to the Gnostic heresy of the Christ with no physical body. We suggest that the letters to Timothy are equally preoccupied with the Gnostic threat.

Consider 1 Timothy 1:4 which makes it plain that Timothy's congregation at Ephesus is beset by false teachers:

...Not to teach false doctrines...nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. (NIV throughout this article.)

Gnostic mythology turned the scripture on its head.¹ The false doctrines referred to in this verse are likely to be elements of Gnosticism such as: that Cain was a hero and Abel a knave; that Eve and the Serpent brought salvation; that you should oppose the evil Creator at every turn; that if he said 'thou shalt not', thou jolly well shalt! Gnosticism was a religion of revolt against every divine

principle. This same verse also points to the Gnostic obsession with genealogies.

Not surprisingly Paul has a great many other concerns:

They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods....(1 Timothy 4:3)

Here is Gnostic revulsion at maintaining vile flesh in both its main forms! Further:

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales.
(1 Timothy 4:7)

These 'old wives' tales' were the secret lore of Gnosticism, often taught to impressionable children and young wives by the older women.

...rather train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value ... for both the present life and the life to come. (1 Timothy 4:8)

Gnosticism taught the opposite; your spirit is already perfect, it only requires you to suppress your flesh by harsh ascetic practices.

The apostle's criticism of Gnosticism is seen particularly in **1 Timothy 2** which begins with a request for prayers to be made for everyone. Might this suggest that some groups in the congregation were not being prayed for? Then Paul underlines Christ's mediatorship 'for all', not just for some factions of the congregation.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all
(1 Timothy 2: 5-7)

What other mediators were competing with Christ in Timothy's Ephesus? Obviously the fertility Goddess Artemis held strong sway in the public imagination of Ephesus (Acts 19). Women mediated her to her followers. Gnosticism conflated spirit-guide Eve with many pagan mother-deities, including Artemis, and the hidden 'gnosis' was only to be learnt from feminine spirit-beings and women gurus. Paul is arguing against the idea that only women had the saving teaching; it was the man Christ Jesus who was the mediator! Note the emphasis on his body in 3:16. And there was not a false creator god and a true Gnostic god; there is but one God.

Paul continued:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first.... And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing.... (1 Tim 2:11-15)

Already, in the light of our comments on Gnostic teaching, this passage should be reading rather differently from the orthodox slant! Usually these verses are

quoted to 'prove' that women must never speak in the ecclesia. Good Christadelphian practice however is being ignored:

Any doctrine must be suspect when it rests on only one verse.

Much more so when the interpretation ... violates ... scripture.¹

Bro. Ron's principle is a Christadelphian tradition of pure, solid gold. There are four verses in the entire Bible which are taken to teach that women cannot speak and teach but there are the equivalent of a couple of chapters' worth saying that women should pray, speak, teach and lead. Common sense and Christadelphian tradition say 'Go with the majority of passages and doubt the face-value meaning of the minority.' Why is this sound principle driven away with blows over this raw issue, but sanely upheld in almost all others?

So what is this quietness (AV silence) Paul speaks of?

Silence (AV/RSV) in v.12 does NOT mean 'silence'; it is the Greek word *hesychia*, which carried the idea of 'quietness' – 'being less loud' – as in NIV. The adjective form is translated as quiet in verse 2 ('that we may live peaceful and quiet lives'). If Paul meant for a woman not to speak he would have used *sigan* which does mean, 'to refrain from speaking'. This fits our context; a woman should cooperate with sound instruction, and not be boisterous and rebellious like a Gnostic virago!

This contrasts with the foolish women referred to in 2 Timothy 3: 6-7 who are 'always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.' Note also the change from 'women' in 2:9-10 to 'woman' in verse 11; it appears husband and wife is being referred to.

The Greek words *gyne* and *aner* used here can be translated respectively wife/woman or husband/man depending purely on context. The use of the word 'submission' is probably contextual with Paul's use of the same word in his previous letter to the same congregation – the Epistle to the Ephesians. In Ephesians 5:22 Paul says, 'wives submit to your husbands.' Here in 1 Tim 2, the reference to Adam and Eve in v. 14 – the first husband and wife – and the reference to childbearing in v. 15 also point to a context of marriage.

So this quietness (silence) and submission is restricted to the relationship between husband and wife that the scripture DOES teach, the 'great mystery' of Ephesians 5:32. If it applies to every brother with every sister, what is special about marriage – just bed and board?

In verse 12 Paul says that a woman (wife?) is not to have 'authority' or *authentein* over a man (her husband?). When we want to understand the meaning of a scriptural word, we generally look at how the scriptures elsewhere use it; we can't do this with *authentein* because this is its one and only appearance! Koine Greek writings in general use it in several ways:

- 'Precedence (coming first)' which ties in with the Gnostic doctrine of Eve creating Adam

- 'domineering, usurping authority' like that of the Gnostic teachers.
- 'To murder a wife and take her place.' Again, extreme usurpation and violence!

Most of these meanings are about the abuse of power; I am certainly against that. The following translation is a perfectly permissible translation of the Greek text, and best suits the Gnostic context:

I do not permit (such) a woman to teach nor to represent herself as the originator of man; she is to be in conformity (to the scripture teaching) for Adam was created first, not Eve....

A woman who does not pedal Gnostic rubbish but who holds sound doctrine should teach and can hold proper authority, in line with Paul's teaching elsewhere! Eve was deceived and a sinner, not enlightened and perfect as the Gnostics taught! This is far removed from saying that because Eve sinned all women are unfit to speak or lead.

The clinching verse is 15, because out of the Gnostic context it makes no obvious sense at all; is it saying good women don't die while giving birth (they do) or that they are saved by having children? Paul was denying the Gnostic doctrine that having children would hinder a woman's salvation. Paul teaches that salvation depends on faith in Christ, not on whether or not you have babies!

In short, 1 Timothy 2 is saying not that women should not teach, but that they should teach what is right, and not that they should not exercise authority, but that they should exercise it properly. So should men! This is in perfect conformity with the rest of the New Testament: mutual submission on the part of all.

The final proof that Gnosticism is behind many of the statements of Paul in this letter comes in 1 Timothy 6:20:

Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, (A.V. 'science') which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.

The word 'knowledge' there is, you've guessed it, GNOSIS. (Strong's 1108) Could Paul be more plain?

Peter Baylis

References:

¹ *The Gnostic Gospels*, Elaine Pagels (The basic study on Gnostic doctrine.)

² *Wrested Scriptures*, Ron Abel (no date given) p.38

Other books consulted were:

I Suffer not a Woman, Richard and Catherine Clark-Kroeger, 1992

(This is devoted to explaining the Gnostic heresy with special reference to 1Tim 2. Believe me, I've only scratched the surface. Highly recommended.)

All one in Christ Jesus, Ian and Averil McHaffie, 1999 (Chapter 11)

Paul Cooke continues and completes his study of the future.

The NT View of the Future

(a) The Synoptic Gospels

TO those of us brought up in the Christadelphian community, it perhaps comes as something of a surprise to discover that the NT provides relatively little explicit detail about what will happen after Christ's return.⁹ The great events of this return, the resurrection of the dead, the judgement, and the transformation from mortal to immortal are all clearly stated. But precisely what Christ's future kingdom will involve is not spelled out.

There are, to be sure, a few fascinating glimpses. Jesus tells us, for example, that 'at the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven' (Mt. 22:30). During the Last Supper he states that he will drink wine with his disciples in his Father's kingdom (Mt. 26:29), presumably at the banquet already referred to in 8:11. And, also in Matthew (19:28), Jesus tells his disciples that 'at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel'. How we react to such words will depend partly on how we understand the word 'judging': does it refer to a (prolonged) administrative function, or to a briefer, juridical role? If the latter,¹⁰ then the verse will not necessarily be seen to imply belief in a Messianic kingdom centred literally on the nation of Israel (even though the judging itself may be of Israel racially conceived). However, there appears to be a new generation of NT scholars who favour a more administrative understanding of the verse. Here is Scot McKnight, for example:

Jesus' hope was not so much the 'Church' as the restoration of the twelve tribes (cf. Matt. 8:11-12; 10:23; and 19:28), the fulfillment of the promises to Moses to national Israel, and the hope of God's kingdom (focused on and through Israel) on earth. Thus, when Jesus sent out the Twelve (cf. Matt. 9:35-11.1), the 'disciples were not evangelistic preachers sent out to save individual souls for some unearthly paradise. They were couriers proclaiming a national emergency and conducting a referendum on a question of national survival.'¹¹

Christadelphians have been saying something similar for a century and a half. However, as Donald Hagner rightly points out and, of course, as our community has always believed, Jesus' message (even in Matthew's account of it) is not exclusively directed to the Jews: 'On the other hand, and seemingly against this

particularism, there is an implicit universalism throughout the Gospel (i.e., the good news of the gospel is for Gentiles too).¹² This can be seen for example in 1:5; 2:1-12; 8:5-13; 12:21; 13:38; 15:21-28; 21:33-43; 22:1-10; 24:14; 27:54; and 28:19. It is important to try and retain both emphases and remember that Jesus' words are not just to be interpreted in the light of his original audience, but also in the light of the (perhaps rather different) situation of the evangelist's original readers (generally thought to be living between thirty and fifty years later in Matthew's case).¹³ As far as these particular words of Jesus are concerned, it has to be admitted that the reference to the *twelve tribes* is somewhat problematic from a literal point of view (cf. Js. 1:1) and it is worth noting that the only other NT reference linking the twelve apostles to the twelve tribes occurs in the highly symbolic penultimate chapter of the Apocalypse (Rev. 21:12-14). This is presumably why Jeremias, for example, sees the reference as being not to 'contemporary Israel, but the eschatological people of God'.¹⁴

Similar observations could be made concerning Gabriel's announcement to Mary that the Lord God will give her son 'the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end' (Lk. 1:32-33). Again, the verses could certainly be taken to imply that the Messiah will rule over a literal kingdom in Israel in the age to come. However, such an interpretation is not the only one possible. One has only to think of Ac. 15:13-18 to see that a prophecy apparently concerned with literal Israel can turn out to have a fulfilment in the lives of spiritual Israel. In Luke 1, it is clear that some of the terms in the angel's prophecy are not to be viewed absolutely literally: *throne* is presumably being used metonymically here and *father* is clearly an idiom for 'ancestor'. Rather than simply to those who are ethnically descended from Abraham or who profess the Jewish faith, the term *house of Jacob* could perhaps refer to what Paul refers to as 'the Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16; cf. Rom. 2:28-29).¹⁵ Commentators have mixed views: Joel Green, for example, while remaining open to other interpretive possibilities, finds the 'nationalistic, socio-political reverberations' of Luke's language difficult to understand other than in terms of 'a nationalistic restoration of Israel'.¹⁶ Howard Marshall, on the other hand, states that: 'The early church clearly associated the reign of Jesus with his resurrection and exaltation and linked this with the Davidic promises (Acts 2:30-36). This will have been Luke's understanding of the matter'.¹⁷ Finally, when we turn to 1 Cor. 15:28, we can see that even Luke's clause to the effect that 'his kingdom will never end' is not quite as straightforward as it might at first appear. Since, therefore, some degree of non-literality is already contained in the very language of the prophecy, it may not be entirely unreasonable to look for a non-literal fulfilment (perhaps along the lines suggested by Marshall).

(b) Acts

References to what exactly we can expect from Messiah's future reign are even scarcer outside the gospels. It is evident from Acts 1:6 that the apostles understood their resurrected Lord's mission in terms of 'restor[ing] the kingdom to Israel'. But were they right to think in these terms? The narrative is ambiguous. In his reply to their question, Jesus neither approves nor criticizes the apostles' expectation, he merely tells them that they were to remain ignorant of 'the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority' (v. 7). One cannot use this reply to prove anything conclusive about the nature of the kingdom of God, though it certainly seems more likely that had the apostles been entirely misguided, the Lord would have corrected them.¹⁸ This suggestion may be reinforced by the fact that, speaking to those gathered in Solomon's Colonnade, Peter states that Jesus 'must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets' (Ac. 3:21). The Greek noun translated by the English verb *to restore* in this verse is not used elsewhere in the NT, but it is closely related to the Greek verb used in Ac. 1:6. The same verb is sometimes used in the LXX with reference to the restoration of Israel to their land after their captivity (see, for example, Jer. 16:15 and Ezk. 16:55). It seems likely, therefore, that Peter was thinking primarily in traditional Jewish terms in Ac. 3:21.¹⁹ That said, it is important to note that the restoration of which he speaks actually refers to *everything* and is not limited to the Jews. Indeed, in v. 25 he goes on to quote God's promise to Abraham: 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'

As we progress through Acts and see the gospel being preached, not just in Jerusalem, but 'in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (1:8), the idea of the restoration of a Jewish kingdom fades away. Quite why this should be is difficult to determine, though perhaps the answer is implicitly contained in this eighth verse. For F. F. Bruce, for example, the question posed by the apostles in v.6

appears to have been the last flicker of their former burning expectation of an imminent theocracy with themselves as its chief executives. From now on, they devoted themselves to the proclamation and service of God's spiritual kingdom, which men and women enter by repentance and faith and in which the chief honor belongs to those who most faithfully follow their Lord in the path of obedience, service, and suffering.²⁰

Perhaps the apostles' change in emphasis was also due to practical considerations: what may have been highly effective preaching material in Israel's capital perhaps seemed less relevant as the good news about Jesus was taken further afield. Perhaps the apostles' own understanding shifted as they came to terms

with the inclusion of gentiles within God's salvation. It is true that Paul refers to 'the hope of Israel' (Ac. 28:20) when preaching to the Jewish leaders in Rome, but this phrase does not obviously refer to a national restoration. Within Acts, the word *hope* is particularly closely related to a belief in the resurrection of the dead (see 23:6; 24:15; 26:6-8), while, in Paul's own writings, as in the OT (e.g. Jer. 14:8 and 17:13), the term refers primarily to *someone* rather than *something* (note the flow of Paul's argument before Agrippa in Ac. 26:4-23 and compare the use of the word *hope* in Col. 1:21-27; 1 Thes. 2:19; 1 Tim. 1:1). Paul was not in chains for proclaiming the restoration of the Jewish state; he was in chains because he identified Jesus as the risen and exalted Christ whose death inaugurated a new covenant for both Jew and Gentile based on the Spirit rather than the Law.

(c) The Epistles

As James Dunn points out, Paul has very little to say about the kingdom, preferring rather to focus on righteousness and life in the Spirit.²¹ The fourteen occurrences of the word *kingdom* in Paul's writings are balanced between a future realization of this divine rule (as in 1 Cor. 6:9) and a present experience of its benefits (as in Rom. 14:17). It is the gift of the Spirit which provides the link between the two, hence the Pauline images of the 'firstfruits' (Rom. 8:23), the 'deposit' (2 Cor. 1:22), and the 'seal' (Eph. 1:13). For Paul, the Spirit is 'the first part of the inheritance which is the kingdom'.²² This, of course, accords closely with the presentation of Jesus' ministry in the gospels and shows up the inadequacy of the view that the kingdom is a purely future phenomenon.²³ Richard Bauckham's substantial entry on 'Eschatology' in the *New Bible Dictionary* offers an excellent discussion of the issues involved. Since he puts matters so clearly, it is worth quoting him at length:

The distinctive character of NT eschatology is determined by the conviction that in the history of Jesus Christ God's decisive eschatological act has already taken place, though in such a way that the consummation remains still future. There is in NT eschatology both an 'already' of accomplished fulfilment and a 'not yet' of still outstanding promise. There is both a 'realized' and a 'future' aspect to NT eschatology, which is therefore probably best described by the term '*inaugurated eschatology*'. The note of eschatological fulfilment already under way means that OT eschatology has become, in a measure, present reality for the NT. The 'last days' of the prophets have arrived [1 Pet. 1:20; Heb. 1:2; 1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Jn. 2:18]. [...] On the other hand, NT writers oppose the fantasy that fulfilment is already

complete (2 Tim. 2:18). [...]

Inaugurated eschatology is found already in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God [Mt. 4:17; 10:32f.; 12:28f.; Mk. 9:1; 14:25; Lk. 17:20f.]. [...]

For NT writers, the death and resurrection of Jesus are the absolutely decisive eschatological event which determines the Christian hope for the future: see, e.g., Acts 17:31; Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thes. 4:14. This accounts for the second distinctive feature of NT eschatology. As well as its characteristic tension of 'already' and 'not yet', NT eschatology is distinctive in being wholly *Christ-centred*. The role of Jesus in NT eschatology goes far beyond the role of the Messiah in OT or later Jewish expectation. Certainly he is the heavenly Son of man (Dn. 7), the eschatological prophet (Is. 61; cf. Lk. 4:18-21), the suffering Servant (Is. 53), and even the Davidic king, though not in the way his contemporaries expected. But the NT's concentration of eschatological fulfilment in Jesus reflects not only his fulfilment of these particular eschatological roles. For NT theology, Jesus embodies both God's own work of eschatological salvation and also man's eschatological destiny. [...] So now the most adequate statement of our destiny is that we shall be like him (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2).²⁴

'We shall be like him' — the promise is certainly rich, but also (necessarily) difficult to comprehend. Perhaps this is why the NT pictures of the future tend to be rather general. The writer to the Hebrews speaks of 'a Sabbath-rest for the people of God' (4:9) and of being 'made perfect' (11:40) without expanding on either of these concepts. Peter refers to 'an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you' (1 Pe. 1:4) and of 'participat[ing] in the divine nature' (2 Pe. 1:4). We are therefore 'looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness' (2 Pe. 3:13), but without any detailed indication from Peter as to what this new heaven and new earth will be like. According to Paul, following the Lord's descent from heaven and the resurrection of the dead, 'we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever' (1 Th. 4:17). This will be the time 'when perfection comes, [and] the imperfect disappears', when 'we shall see face to face', when 'I shall know fully, even as I am fully known' (1 Cor. 13:10-12).²⁵ We will need a 'spiritual body' to enjoy the fullness of the kingdom (1 Cor. 15:44), but Paul does not elaborate on what we will actually do in these bodies. Some would see vs. 24-25 earlier in this same chapter as referring to the millennial reign of

Christ and, by establishing a link with Rev. 20:4, would argue that, equipped with their spiritual bodies, immortal saints will help Christ in the work of destruction and reigning described in 1 Cor. 15: 24–25. However, it is important to note that Paul himself makes no mention of the saints at all in this passage, nor indeed, of the millennium. It may be legitimate to make the connection with Rev. 20, but then again it may not²⁶ — perhaps all one can say with any certainty is that dogmatism in either direction should be avoided.

(d) The Apocalypse

The same should be true when it comes to interpreting the pictures and symbols of Revelation (it is the last three chapters of the book which are particularly relevant to the present discussion). Within the Christian community at large, there are three major views of the millennium: amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism — the latter being further subdivided into classic (or historic) premillennialism and pretribulational (or dispensational) premillennialism (itself further subdivided into pre-, mid-, and post-tribulational rapture views)! Anyone interested in trying to sort out this rather tangled web will find a very useful chapter in Wayne Grudem's recent magnum opus.²⁷ Most of the readers of this magazine will probably feel happiest with the premillennial view, as this is the one into which all Christadelphian commentaries on the Apocalypse (as far as I'm aware), whatever their other differences, fall. The premillennial view has the benefit of providing a framework for incorporating as yet unfulfilled OT Messianic prophecies. However, it should again be noted that while Revelation draws extensively on the imagery of the OT, it makes no explicit appeal to the idea of a future kingdom literally focused on Israel and/or OT patterns of worship. The degree of (dis)continuity between Jerusalem as we presently know it and the new Jerusalem of chapter 21 is not altogether clear. Whatever our view of the millennium (and it is worth remembering that the only explicit references to the concept in Scripture are to be found in Rev. 20), we would do well to apply to ourselves the caution which Wayne Grudem urges on his evangelical readers:

it is important to realize that the interpretation of the details of prophetic passages regarding future events is often a complex and difficult task involving many variable factors. Therefore the degree of certainty that attaches to our conclusions in this area will be less than with many other doctrines. Even though I will argue for one position (classical premillennialism), I also think it important for evangelicals to recognize that this area of study is complex and to extend a large measure of grace to others who hold different views of the millennium and the tribulation period.²⁸

Conclusion

Where does all of this leave us? Well, it seems to me that we have to be prepared to accept a considerable degree of latitude when it comes to conceptions of what the future will or will not hold. Some will want to believe that as yet unfulfilled OT visions (including the reinstitution of animal sacrifice) will be fulfilled literally when Christ returns. Their problem is that they will find very little support for such views in the NT. Others will prefer to align their expectations more on the basis of the NT perspective. The problem for this group (at least if they hold to a conservative view of Scripture) will be how to incorporate specific OT prophecies into the (rather vague) NT view of the future. Both positions are biblically based and can be defended by appeals to Scripture, but they are underpinned by different understandings of how the two Testaments relate to each other. There can surely be no room for dogmatism on either side. Who, after all, can be totally sure of what the future holds? All we can really do is 'look forward to the day of God and speed its coming' (2 Pe. 3:12). Only then will all be finally revealed.

Paul Cooke

References:

⁹ Cf. G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, completed and edited by L. D. Hurst (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 277: 'As to the nature of the life to come, the New Testament writers are reticent about giving details, preferring rather to provide powerful images.'

¹⁰ As argued, for example, by D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), p. 426.

¹¹ Scot McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 10–11. His quotation is taken from Caird's *New Testament Theology*, p. 361.

¹² Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, Word Biblical Commentary, 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), p. lxvi.

¹³ There is also, of course, the need for each subsequent generation to appropriate the teaching of Scripture in a way that is meaningful. That problem, however, is not my direct concern here.

¹⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (London: SCM, 1958), p. 21.

¹⁵ Cf. George A. F. Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), p. 349: 'The NT writers are aware of an essential identity between Israel of old and the Church which has come into existence through Christ (Acts 7.38; 15.14; Rom. 9.25–26; 11:16 ff.; Gal. 3.7, 29; 6.16; Phil. 3.3; Heb. 4.9; 1 Peter 2; Rev. 7.9). They hold firmly to this belief, despite the paradoxically opposite corollaries which result from such a faith. These corollaries are (a) that the Church is still Israel, is the *continuum* from the OT People of God; and (b) that the Church, being a community of grace, is marked at the same time by discontinuity with that same Israel

of old.'

¹⁶ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 88.

¹⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), p. 68.

¹⁸ As Tom Wright judiciously puts it: 'Jesus reaffirms the expectation, but alters the interpretation [by his words in v. 8]' — see N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 374. See also Les Boddy's review of *Jerusalem, Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, in *Endeavour*, 96 (December 1996), 20–29 (pp. 28–29).

¹⁹ Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1996), p. 47: 'this is an eschatology, and a relatively imminent eschatology, which Luke does not seem to promote elsewhere'.

²⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, rev. edn, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 36.

²¹ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), pp. 190–91.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

²³ See further the recent articles by Les Boddy and Ron Coleman in the June 1999 issue of *Endeavour* (no. 101).

²⁴ R. J. Bauckham, 'Eschatology', in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd edn, ed. by D. R. W. Wood and others (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), pp. 333–39 (p. 334).

²⁵ The view which sees an allusion to the completion of the NT canon in these words has little to commend it. See the discussions in D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), pp. 67–72 and Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), pp. 294–96.

²⁶ Those interested in pursuing the second option should consult Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 751–56. His argument rests on the thesis (not altogether convincing to my mind) that the 'then' at the start of v. 24 does not refer to 'another event in the sequence begun by Christ's resurrection. The "order" of resurrections is only two: Christ the firstfruits; the full harvest of those who are his at his Parousia. Paul shows no interest here in anything beyond these. The "then" in this third instance is sequential to be sure, but in a more logical sense, meaning that following the resurrection of believers at the Parousia the final two "events" transpire. [...] On the one hand, the resurrection of the dead will mean that Christ has subjugated, and thereby destroyed, the final enemy death, expressed in this case in the terminology "every dominion" and "every authority and power." [...] On the other hand, with the final defeat of the last enemy the subjugation of all things has taken place, so that Christ might turn over the "rule" to God the Father' (pp. 753–54).

²⁷ *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), pp. 1109–39.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1114.

Following Richard Gaston and Becky Leng's very interesting item, Taizé, Peter Wright offers for consideration and encouragement some thoughts on sins of ignorance (AV), or unintended sin (NIV), starting with a careful look at Numbers 15:22-31. (Quotations are from the NIV with some AV comparisons.)

THIS passage is the most beautiful expression of God's merciful love for errant mankind, providing evidence that disputed doctrines should not divide Christians.

Verse 22: '... if you unintentionally **fail** to keep any of these commandments...' **Fail** may indicate something omitted. The Hebrew word for 'unintentionally' is *shegagah* meaning a mistake or inadvertent transgression, error, unaware, unwittingly. In the AV the word *shegagah* is rendered 'ignorance', see verses 25,27,28 & 29.

Verse 24: '...if it is **done** unintentionally...' **Done** may indicate something committed, so we have accidental error omitted and committed.

Further understanding of Nu 15 is added in Lev 4:14, 'when they become known' or verses 23 & 28, 'he is made aware of it' (unintended sin) certain offerings have to be made, resulting in 'atonement' (v.20) and 'forgiveness' (vv. 26,31,35). The subject is again amplified in Lev 5:17 stating that until these offerings are made the offender is, '... even though he does not know [he sinned] he is **guilty** and will be held **responsible**.' In all probability guilt and responsibility were attributed to unintended sin to deter wilful ignorance and encourage enquiry of God. If unintending sinners were not guilty or responsible those bent on self-serving (and that is practically all of us in one way or another) would be excused by ignorance, without atoning sacrifice. Today the unintended errors of Christians are expiated by a superior sacrifice. Hebrews 9 explains in scenic glory that the Law's sacrifices prefigured Christ's personal offering.

Verses 7,11 & 12: '... the High Priest entered the inner room ... only once a year and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in **ignorance** ... when Christ came as High Priest ... He went through ... the more perfect tabernacle ... not ... by ... the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood having obtained eternal redemption [for *shegagah*]. This text combined with the following citations clearly demonstrate that the Law was given to define sin and its sacrifices should have been comprehended spiritually as a shadow cast by the superior reality of Christ. Therefore sacrifices were God's gift to man - Christ - and not man's gift to God. (See Jo 1:29; Ro 3:20, 7:14, 10:4; Gal 3:19&24; Col 2:14&17; 1Pe 1:18 & 19.) The book of Hebrews frequently uses the word '**better**' when comparing the old and new covenants. (See 1:3,4; 6:20; 7:7,19,22; 8:6; 9:23.) Other examples of Christ's superior '*shegagah*' sacrifice for those in erroneous doctrines are found

in:

1 Tim 1:13. Paul speaking of himself writes, 'who was before a blasphemer but I obtained mercy, because I did it **ignorantly**.'

Heb 5:2, when speaking of Christ, says, 'who can have compassion on the **ignorant** and on them out of the way,' (See also Acts 3:17.)

The inescapable conclusion being that today's mistaken believers are atoned for by Christ's superior sacrifice. An individual or believing community need only love and enquire of God, believe in and try to practise His Word to benefit from His one-off but continuous offering for unintended error. Thus the '*shegagah*' rule and all the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ. As it is written, 'I have ... come to ... fulfil (the Law)' Matt 5:17, and 'Christ is the end of the Law so that there may be righteousness for **everyone who believes**,' Ro 10:4.

Num 15 also explains another type of sin, verses 30,31, 'But anyone who sins **defiantly** (Hebrew *yawd*, meaning 'with a high hand', not unintentionally, but in full knowledge) must be cut off because he has **despised** (Hebrew *bazah*) the Lord's Word his guilt remains on him.' Even here, God's mercy extends by differentiating between those committing one-off '*yawd*' sin and those regularly practising it without care. 2 Sam 11 & 12 provide a good example. These chapters tell of David's adultery with Bathsheba culminating in the arranged killing of Uriah, her husband. Nathan the prophet confronts David with his sin, asking him, 'Why did you **despise** '*bazah*' the word of Yahweh?' (12:9) The word '*bazah*' furnishes proof that David knew he was doing wrong. But God is ever merciful. Mic 7:9 says, 'because I have sinned against Him, I will bear Yahweh's wrath until He pleads my case and establishes my right. He will bring me out into the light.' Verses 18-20 continue, 'who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression ... You do not stay angry for ever but delight to show mercy ... You will again have compassion on us ... and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea ... and show mercy to Abraham as pledged' Christians are also Abraham's children, Gal 3:29. This mercy in which God delights benefited David and all who sincerely attempt to 'love me and keep my commandments', Ex 20:6, but who may inadvertently '*shegagah*' or in certain cases, as the above example shows, knowingly '*yawd*' fail to get everything right. David loved God. Ps 18:1; 26:8; 145:20. He was a man after God's 'own heart.' 1 Sam 13:14. Ac 13:22. Because David predominantly loved God more than all else he was forgiven. In Ps 51 he speaks of the Bathsheba incident, his repentance and love of God. Even so he does not escape unpunished, (See 2 Sa 12:11-13 and compare with 16:20-22.) but through his love of God and repentance, he was forgiven. Therefore anyone in similar circumstances may hope for the same.

In Job 42, a truly magnificent example of God's love and mercy occurs

towards those in unintended erroneous doctrine. When all Job's trials are over God spoke to Eliphaz, one of Job's comforters.

Verse 7: 'I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have **not spoken of me what is right.**'

These three people were in doctrinal error by teaching misrepresentations of God. Was God going to act against them bringing the same condemnation for error implied by some Christian divisions?

Verse 8: God tells them to offer 'bulls' and 'rams' and tells Job to pray for them, saying 'and I will accept his prayer.'

Since atonement is offered their error was '*shégagah*', unintended. The Word of God now shouts to us all if the blood of bulls and goats sanctify how much more the blood of Christ? Heb 9:13 & 14. We have to answer that question about any we consider to be in doctrinal error. Is their error intended or accidental? Failure to prove intended '*yawd*' sin must confirm '*shégagah*', removing the excuse for sectarian divisions and providing reason for loving, brotherly intercession for those in doctrinal error.

Regarding Job 42:8, another question is posed in 1Jo 2:1, '...if any man sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' The NIV says, '... we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence....' Consider too the testimony of Heb 7:25, '...he [Christ] is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God, seeing he ever lives to make **intercession** for them.' The NIV says, '...he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to **intercede** for them.' Again scripture implies the same question as before. if the prayers of job were effective on behalf of his unwittingly errant comforters, how much more effective are the **advocacy** and **intercession** of Jesus for those who come to Him in accidental doctrinal error? Are not such Christians like Job's 'comforters', in unintended error? If so don't they enjoy the same or even superior forgiveness? Many Christians already acknowledge that within every persuasion believers exist who qualify as being in love with God, enquire at His Word, have faith in their understanding, produce works accordingly and thereby benefit from the sacrifice and intercession of Jesus despite erroneous beliefs.

The power and extent of Jesus' intercession on behalf of *shégagah* error is seen in Lu 23. While enduring a torturous death our Lord requested, verse 34, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' By comparing this verse with Peter's words to the crowds after Jesus' resurrection we see how effective this intercession was on behalf of the most profound accidental error, the killing of Christ. Acts 3:17, 'now, brothers, I know that you acted in **ignorance**, as did your leaders.' Shortly after, 'five thousand' took advantage of God's mercy on unintended sins, Acts 4:4. Because of our Lord's forgiving advocacy, countless

millions have poured into various churches taking advantage of the *shagah* sacrifice for unintended error. No accolade or praise of God can adequately express gratitude for such a beautiful outstanding forgiveness. Fellow Christians, should we deny for others what we largely accept for ourselves? If our unintended errors of belief are hereby forgiven, then it is certain, so are the misbeliefs of others.

Denominational doctrines are traditionally accepted by their adherents as those propounded by Christ. Many were born into these beliefs and being fully persuaded, embrace them unquestioningly. If those with more accurate knowledge mistakenly regard such believers as **enemies** rather than **brothers and sisters** (2 Thes 3:15), then we shall be continually impoverished by sectarian divides. Those with the truth possess the wherewithal to influence its direction if they are motivated by love of a wider brotherhood rather than conflict with it.

Peter Wright

Falling Leaves.

*Down, down, down, fall the autumn leaves.
The faded, tattered garments
Of yet another year!*

*How many kindly things might I
Have said, or done, or even thought!
How many tired steps made lighter -
How many weary hearts refreshed -*

*Since first as tiny buds,
These dead brown leaves I saw -*

*Had I but thought!!
HAD I BUT THOUGHT!*

Bill Wright

Ron Coleman explains how some scientists now feel that their science is pointing them in the direction of God.

Recent advances

DURING my lifetime, and that of many readers, more has been found out about the Cosmos, the Universe, than in all the previous centuries that men have lived on the earth. By the Cosmos I'm not thinking only of astronomy, but about everything from the very small to the very great. To give you an idea of the scale of this, the size of the human body is about halfway (the geometric mean) between the size of an atom and that of a planet. Many of the discoveries have been about things at these two extremes.

When we cast our minds back most of us can probably think of some incident which brought this increase of knowledge home to us. For me, it was when I was working and I had to go and see the manufacturers of a video recorder. Video recorders then were very new and were only seen in television studios. The problem I was concerned with was just how much work had to be done in this country to qualify one as having been manufactured here. The manufacturers of course showed me one; it was as big as a good sized upright piano. To-day's recorders are smaller than an attaché case and produce pictures hard to distinguish from the original broadcast. All this in just over 20 years.

So too with genetics. In 1951 I bought an excellent book for its time: *The Universe, Plan or Accident?* by Robert E D Clark. Writing about the importance of nitrogen for human life, he mentioned the amino acids, compounds of nitrogen which are an essential part of proteins which, Clark said, are essential for reproduction. Actually they are important for much else in the body; there are about 100,000 different *kinds* of proteins in the body all performing essential tasks. But then Clark went on to say, 'In the minute structures known as *genes*, upon which reproduction ultimately depends, there is an elaborate pattern of molecules joined together and laid out in *two* dimensions – the shape being perhaps, like that of a ribbon.' Clark was thus on the track of the double helix. But then he said that there didn't seem to be any experimental support for the idea and his suggestion wasn't intended to be dogmatic. That book was written in 1949. Just four years later, Crick and Watson discovered that two such ribbons formed the three-dimensional double helix which we now know as DNA, which led to an unimaginable increase in our knowledge of heredity, and to genetic engineering. Clark's book wasn't out of date; he wrote just before a great leap forward in knowledge.

What are the implications of this advance for our religious belief? Many of us are wary about science, feeling that it is a threat. What I want to do in this article is to show that that is an unfounded fear. The title of this article is the title of a book which has impressed me tremendously and also has a subtitle *The*

Anthropic Design Argument. *Anthropos* means 'man' of course and the anthropic principle is that there must be a certain delicate balance in the universe if it is to be able to produce conscious beings like ourselves, something beyond the scope of coincidence. The author, M A Corey, quotes Agatha Christie in justification: 'Any coincidence' said Miss Marple to herself, 'is always worth noticing. You can throw it away later if it is only a coincidence.'

Corey's book is full of examples of this delicate balance. The important thing about the anthropic principle is that it is not something which theologians, or believers, have thought up. It is what many scientists themselves have come to accept as a result of their discoveries. The authors were two leading cosmologists, Frank Tipler and John Barrow who published in 1986. Corey says that most of the support for the anthropic principle has come from within the ranks of modern theoretical physics. There is considerable variation as to how strong the principle is and one can read about the Weak Anthropic Principle, The Strong Anthropic Principle and the Final Anthropic Principle. But all of them, Corey says, lead to a revival of something that had been about to be buried – natural theology.

Natural Theology

What is natural theology? A short answer is that it is what Paul is talking about in the first chapter of Romans when he said 'Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things God has made.' In other words we can see something of God's nature in creation.

Actually it is ironical that science has so often been felt to be the enemy of religious belief for it was religion which gave birth to science. Our modern understanding of the structure of the physical world originated in the scientific revolution of the eighteenth century. It was the Christian doctrine of creation which enabled this step to be taken in Western Europe. It hadn't proved possible in China, which was equally technically advanced. Actually science was set on its way by the belief that nature was God's handiwork. Most of the seventeenth century theologians said that since nature had been made by God for man's benefit, men *ought* to try and understand what God had done for them. They ought to search out the marvels of His creation. They even went so far as to say it was sinful not to; that was ingratitude to God. And so 17th century theology made it possible for science to embark on its task of investigating the pattern and structure of the physical world.

Isaac Newton is the name that immediately comes to mind in this connection. He was responsible for discoveries which are the basis of modern physics. His laws of motion and force, particularly gravitation, enabled him to explain

how the newly discovered solar system worked. Why, for example, the moon goes circling round the earth and the earth round the sun instead of flying off somewhere else, like a space probe, as we would say. And he also discovered the basic theory about energy, the two laws of thermodynamics, far more important than they sound. Some have even said he was the greatest scientist ever, taking account of what was known when he started work.

But Newton was a deeply religious man (although unorthodox – he didn't believe in the Trinity, or in the incarnation although he managed to keep this a secret). The famous quotation 'but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell, whilst the great ocean of truth lay still undiscovered before me' was not about his science, but about his religion, particularly prophecy.

Design

And so natural theology and science moved forward together, although it was never felt that knowledge of the physical world would displace the revelation that we have in the Bible. It would merely support it. The best known description of the argument from design is that of William Paley who lived from 1743 to 1805. In his book *Natural Theology* there is a passage which is still quoted today:

In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone and were asked how the stone came to be there: I might possibly answer that, for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever: nor would it perhaps be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But supposing I had found a watch upon the ground and it should be enquired how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly think of the answer that for anything I knew the watch might always have been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? For this reason, and for no other, viz, that when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose.

This argument served well for some time; even Charles Darwin confessed that he had been deeply influenced by Paley while a student at Cambridge. The trouble was that no one then realised what a complicated thing a stone is. John Polkinghorne says, in his book *Science and Creation*, 'That solid-seeming stone is mostly empty space and what is not is a weaving of wave mechanical patterns.' How much empty space? If a whole atom was the size of a football stadium the nucleus would be no bigger than a pea placed at the centre of the

pitch. All the rest would be empty space.

The situation then was summed up in Alexander Pope's couplet: 'Nature and Nature's laws, lay hid in night: God said "Let Newton be!" and all was light.' But as J C Squire responded a couple of centuries later: 'It did not last: the Devil, howling "Ho! Let Einstein be!", restored the status quo.'

Actually of course it was not Einstein that brought about the eclipse of natural theology but Charles Darwin and his theory of natural selection. This seemed to explain the appearance of design without there having to be any Designer and turned out to be an atheists' charter which has lasted for more than a century.

In replacing religion it borrowed some of the clothes of religion – persecution for example. Not of course in the old physical way but by making it seem intellectually foolish to differ from the entrenched position. 'In the heat of the battle scientists uncharacteristically became dogmatic and arrogant. Even today this persists in some quarters.' These are the words of James Lovelock whom I shall be mentioning later. However, now, says Corey, 'at the very time when many moderns have been prepared to bin natural theology it has suddenly appeared back on the intellectual scene, this time, armed with an imposing array of new scientific support.'

Complexity

One reason for this support of natural theology is the realisation that things are not so simple as they used to seem. Take the brain for instance. It was at the time of Darwin that phrenology was all the rage, in which Robert Roberts was involved. This divided the skull up into areas of character and ability. If it bulged out in any particular spot that showed the person had the characteristic in question. We know now that the human brain is the most complicated thing in the universe. Inside the central cortex there are 10 billion neurones or brain cells, each one of them connected with 10,000 others. And the central cortex is only one tenth of the size of the whole brain.

In a lecture given 10 years ago John Polkinghorne said 'The feeling that there is more to the world than meets the scientific eye encourages the thought of an intelligence behind the processes. It is the scientists themselves who have seen things that way while their theological colleagues have remained surprisingly unconvinced.' (Polkinghorne was formerly Professor of Mathematical Physics at Cambridge but then became an Anglican Priest.)

It is this feature which makes the book *God and the New Cosmology* so convincing. The author does have some religious connections but the book consists largely of accounts of what non-theistic scientists themselves have said. And here I come to a difficulty which has made me regret the impulse to start

this article. I am not a scientist; it is sixty-five years since I learned my Maths, Physics and Chemistry and things have changed tremendously in that interval. But nevertheless I still remember some of the basic vocabulary. Without that vocabulary it is difficult to understand some of the more complex aspects. So I'll have to confine myself to some of the easier instances of design.

Evidence of design

First of all the earth is just the right distance from the sun. If it was nearer it would tend to be intolerably hot like Venus. If it was further away it would be too cold, like Mars. But it isn't just the average distance that is important, it is the shape of the orbit round the sun. The earth's orbit is nearly circular. Its distance from the sun varies only 3 per cent during the year. But the other planets have elliptical orbits. For example, the orbit of Mars brings it 7 per cent or 50 million kilometres nearer the sun at some points as it goes round it compared with only 4.5 million in the case of the earth.

However, although the earth is at the right distance for warmth, it is a bit too close for ultraviolet radiation and if nothing was done about that we would be bombarded with an excessive amount. As we all know today, protection is provided by the layer of ozone high in the stratosphere. More recently, we have all become aware that this protective layer is under threat by some of the chemicals we let loose into the atmosphere.

But ultraviolet light is not the only dangerous cosmic radiation. There are deadly sub-atomic particles from elsewhere in our galaxy or even coming from outside it. Most of these particles however are deflected away by the earth's powerful magnetic field. This is generated by the seething molten radioactive iron core of the earth. But this radioactivity has to be carefully balanced; the core must be hot enough for it to remain fluid, but not too hot for the heat to seep up to the surface and make the earth uninhabitable.

Volcanoes too are necessary. Geochemists say that originally they produced the water to fill the lakes, oceans and rivers. Until very recently they were necessary to produce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to produce the greenhouse effect and trap the heat from the sun. At the moment, of course, we make too much carbon dioxide by burning fossil fuels but that can't go on for ever. On the other hand too much volcanic activity would be deleterious to life for an opposite reason, it would darken the atmosphere so that there would not be enough sunlight for crops to grow. Once again we see that there is a delicate balance at work.

The strength of the earth's gravity must also be finely balanced; it depends on the size of the earth. It must be strong enough to make sure that the life-supporting atmosphere of oxygen, nitrogen, carbon dioxide and water

vapour is kept here and doesn't go floating off into space. On the other hand, if it were stronger, through the earth being bigger, it would imprison too much ammonia and methane, which are poisonous in quantity. They are produced naturally by various forms of life such as ruminant animals, and of course there would be more of these in a bigger earth.

We all know of course that the earth's axis is tilted and it is this which causes the seasons and the varying length of days, so essential to many forms of life. But if that tilt were any greater the temperature differentials between different regions would be too big. So too with the speed of rotation. If the earth revolved more slowly on its axis the temperature differences between night and day would be too great for some kinds of life. On the other hand, if it revolved more quickly, wind velocities could be too extreme.

The moon is just the right distance away from the earth for its size. Nearer and the tides in the oceans and in the atmosphere would be too great and the speed of rotation of the earth increased. If it were further away there could never be a total eclipse of the sun.

The moon is exactly 400 times smaller than the sun. The orbit of the moon round the earth is exactly 400 times smaller than the orbit of the earth round the sun. That means that the moon is 400 times closer to the earth than the sun and so able to black it out from time to time. Computer studies have shown that this cannot happen to any of the other planets in the solar system that have satellites. Now, of course, this could be due to blind chance but is it credible that out of the millions of possible variables, these two figures should be exactly the same for the only planet in the solar system where there are people?

If cloud cover on the earth were to increase markedly more heat would be reflected into space and we could have a new ice age. If it were much less deserts would spread enormously.

The proportion of oxygen to nitrogen in the atmosphere is roughly 20 per cent to 80 per cent. If there had been more oxygen, plants and other combustible material would have burned too readily. If there had been less, animals, including ourselves, wouldn't have had enough oxygen, as climbers on high mountains know. So too with thunderstorms. Too many, would cause too many fires. But lightning has a beneficial effect because it makes the nitrogen in the air combine with the oxygen to make nitrates. These are chemical compounds which are essential for most kinds of vegetation. Although the nitrogen cycle takes care of most of its production through recycling, topping up is needed from time to time. So fewer thunderstorms would be a bad thing.

Then there is the recycling that the Earth uses to convert waste products into usable forms of matter and energy. Thousands of exceedingly complex structures and mechanisms cooperate so that no unrecyclable form of waste are ever produced anywhere in the world (except by man). Consequently, if human

beings didn't exist the earth could happily continue its life-supporting mode for ever.

As an example of this recycling, when cattle-farming was first started in Australia the farmers ran into difficulty. Cow-pats stayed where they were deposited and gradually spread till they covered all the grass, killing it. What to do? In Africa there are dung beetles which happily deal with elephant residues. So these were introduced into Australia and the problem was solved.

Gaia

I referred to James Lovelock earlier. He is the man who introduced Gaia to environmentalists in 1972. Gaia was the pre-classical Greek goddess of the earth. Lovelock has personified her so much that he has been accused of believing that the earth is a living organism. He denies this and says it is really only a metaphor. But it leads him to describe the earth in such a way as to bring out coincidences similar to those in *God and the New Cosmology*. His latest book, *The Practical Science of Planetary Medicine* treats Gaia as a sick patient needing the attentions of a doctor.

Several other writers have taken up the anthropological principle while others have dealt with the subject independently. John Postgate, Emeritus Professor of microbiology at Sussex University is one of these. His 1994 book *The Outer Reaches of Life* is a non-religious treatment of what he calls 'the world of microbes' by which he means, bacteria, viruses, protozoa and the like; something else bringing out the facts of design in creation. Robert Matthews in his 1992 book *Unravelling the Mind of God* ventures into Natural Theology, dealing with what he says are: 'Mysteries at the Frontier of Science'.

All this covers only about 30 pages of Corey's book out of more than 300 and I realise that it may be boring to those not interested in science. However, before closing this article, there is one more topic that I wish to consider a little more deeply.

Water

Water – the one chemical compound whose formula everybody knows, H_2O , and something which we take very much for granted until we have a drought. Water is however very far from ordinary; there is nothing else that could possibly take its place. Water is one of the substances known as hydrides. They are compounds which contain hydrogen and just one other element. But it has properties which set it apart from all other hydrides. For example, if you draw a graph of the boiling points of various hydrides against their atomic weight the graph shows that water should boil at about minus 100 degrees Celsius, namely

200 degrees below what it does actually boil at. If it did boil at minus 100 degrees, water would exist only as a gas on earth and we wouldn't have any rivers or oceans, or indeed any life at all

And there are many other peculiarities. Solids are always heavier than their corresponding liquids. But ice is lighter than the corresponding amount of water. Then again most substances contract as they get colder. Water does, but only down to 4 deg. The result is that when water freezes the ice floats. The ice on the top protects the marine life below from additional cooling because it stops, or seriously reduces, convection. Equally, when the weather gets warmer it means that the ice warms up first and so melts. If it were at the bottom it would be very slow to melt and would be likely to remain from one winter to the next.

But this is only the beginning of the anomalies of water. It has one of the greatest capacities for absorbing heat of any known substance. If you put paraffin in a hot-water bottle it would get cold much quicker than if you had put water in it, as Alan Hayward pointed out in his book *Creation and Evolution*. Water also has a high specific heat of vaporization. That means that it takes a lot of heat to turn it from a liquid into a gas. It doesn't make the gas hot; that heat is, as it were, put into the bank, it is stored by the gas inside its molecules, and given up when it turns back into a liquid. So this makes water a very good temperature regulator. When the sun shines on water it turns the surface layers into water vapour which rise up in the atmosphere. When the vapour condenses back into water it gives up that heat and warms the air. But the clouds it forms reflect the heat of the sun back into space and so the effect is to tend to equalise the temperature in that particular area. The fact that it takes a lot of heat to turn water into water vapour is invaluable to us humans, and to many other animals as well, because it makes sweating so efficient.

But there is a difficulty over the weather process. Water vapour is not very good at forming clouds because it needs something solid to condense on. Dust might help but there are many areas where there is little dust. Why do clouds form so readily? The answer, said R E D Clark in his 1949 book, was that throughout the world ocean rollers are for ever breaking on coastal rocks sending up volumes of sea spray. The tiny drops of sea water evaporate and the minute specks of salt are carried by the winds over great distances, where eventually they act as nuclei for the water-drops in clouds. More recently, James Lovelock has said that there is a chemical called dimethyl sulphide, produced by algae in sea water, which also provides nuclei. Either way, however, we have another of these fortunate provisions.

Water is also very good at dissolving other substances. In fact the only other solvents that approach it are rather exotic, such as molten urea or hydrocyanic acid which are dangerous and unpleasant. Water is absolutely essential to

produce those dozens of chemicals that are continuously being manufactured by the cells in our bodies, without which we could do nothing, not even think. There are other special qualities of water – its high surface tension and, extremely important for our bodily chemistry, its special role in the formation of the walls and membranes in the cells of our bodies.

When Clark wrote his book it wasn't known how and why water should have these special qualities but it has now been discovered. It is called hydrogen bonding and you can find it described in most popular illustrated science encyclopaedias.

Other important compounds

There are several other elements that are necessary for life besides hydrogen and oxygen. Carbon is by far the most important because of its unique capacity for forming compounds. But there are compounds of many other elements that are absolutely necessary for life: nitrogen, sulphur and phosphorous come high on the list, some of them for reasons that wouldn't occur to us. Take phosphorous, for example. Ah, bones!, we might say. Yes, but that is only the beginning. Phosphates are part of the backbone of the double helix. But even more widespread is another phosphorous compound called ATP for short – the 'P' stands for phosphorous. There is some in every cell in our bodies. It's a bit like an electric battery; it can store the energy needed to power the working of the cell, releasing it when it is required, and then recharge itself from glucose in the bloodstream. Then there are numerous trace elements of which only small quantities are needed but which too are absolutely essential.

God's patient plan

In years gone by nobody bothered very much how and when these elements were made but the increased understanding of the enormous size and age of the universe has thrust them into prominence. The first reaction to this size of the universe was to say with increased emphasis – 'How can such minute specks as us be of any importance at all against this background?'

But then it began to be realised that, on the contrary, we are of immense importance. It turns out that the universe needs to be of the size and age it is in order for us to be here in the first place. The new cosmology says that the very elements of which our bodies are made were not present in the universe at the beginning. They could not have been created until the universe had reached a particular point in its expansion, at which the clouds of hydrogen and helium were cool enough to condense into the galaxies which formed the first stars. Stars are the great nuclear furnaces in which all the complex elements are made.

Their metals and minerals and gases are released into space in giant supernovae explosions. These can only happen when the balance between the internal pressure of a star and its own force of gravity breaks down and the star explodes. All these processes, the forming of the stars, the slow cooking of the elements, the explosive release into space, took millions of years to complete.

Now I do not think that this theory of the Big Bang is sheer speculation (like Darwinian evolution). There is clear evidence for it in the way the galaxies are rushing ever outwards at unimaginable speeds. It solves a problem that has always been lurking just under the surface for the last 200 years at least. Why is God concerned with us, so tiny in the vast recesses of space? However, if a universe of this size and this age is necessary to manufacture the elements out of which we are made, it all falls into place, as does the unimaginable complexity of our bodies which I have only just hinted at in this article.

Genesis tells us that in the beginning God created. He made this and He made that and He saw that it was good. And He created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them. There is much we could say about the image of God, but one thing seems clear. We were created to make things, to do things, to discover things. The history of mankind has been essentially how that was done. We took wrong steps and went our own way and work, which should have been a pleasure, became a curse. In the sweat of thy face. . . . But in these latter days we have begun to do at least one thing of value, we have come to appreciate more and more the immensity and wonder of God's universe. Was that not part of His purpose from the very beginning?

There is a verse in Hebrews which by analogy suggests that this is so. I say 'by analogy' because the writer is obviously referring to moral goodness and moral progress. After the long catalogue of the faithful in chapter 11 we are told: 'What a record all of these have won by their faith! Yet they did not receive what God had promised, because God had decided on an even better plan for us. His purpose was that only in company with us would they be made perfect.'

In his poem *Rabbi Ben Ezra* Robert Browning makes the Rabbi say of his own life: 'Our times are in His hand, Who saith "A whole I Planned, Youth shows but half, trust God: see all nor be afraid!"' Might not what is true of a single life be also true for the whole life of mankind?

Ron Coleman

All I have seen teaches me
to trust the Creator
for all I have not seen.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Maps for the Journey: Finding Your Way Around the Bible

by Edgar Wille. Published by the Baca Press. ISBN 0-9537419-0-7 2000.
Obtainable from Edgar Wille, 24 Durrants Road, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 3PF.
(Cheque for £6 to Edgar Wille.)

There follow two reviews of this book, the first by Rosalind Lomas and the second by Ian McHaffie.

THIS is a very personal kind of review of Edgar Wille's book, and so may not make much sense to some of those people brought up in 'the Truth'. Maybe they will find it trivial, but it is written from the heart.

When I read through what I have written, I could weep with mirth and pity at my old naive self. I was introduced to the Bible when I was twenty-two. I'd never possessed one, and never read it. This was during the early 1950s when prophecy was very much in vogue. I was introduced to incomprehensible and outlandish creatures with unnecessary numbers of heads, wings and disagreeable dispositions, and these were allied to countries and times unknown to me. I liked some of the New Testament, though couldn't understand Jesus at all; he seemed just too good to be true, and didn't really interest me much, but I was terrified by the thought of his return.

Because of my lack of knowledge I was ripe to be recruited into Christadelphia, and the fear was instilled into me, (I now understand, with the very best of intentions), that if I didn't look sharp and be baptised, the Kingdom would come and I'd be left outside to perish.

As a result of an odd childhood and an already faltering marriage I'd very little self-esteem, and insufficient confidence and knowledge to challenge these theories.

I wonder how I squared my impressions with the kindly folk in the Meeting which I'd joined, whose warmth and gentleness in those days seemed so much at odds with what I now perceive as their exclusive and fundamentalist attitudes? I can only think their friendship and love kept me going, whilst I kept my feelings to myself, and left most of my questioning brain outside the door.

Edgar Wille's most helpful book is written with the loving enthusiasm which is so typical of him. Would that I could have had a copy of his *Maps for the Journey* in the 1950s! I recommend it to every person interested in Christianity, indeed to all who enjoy a good read. They will surely be drawn to God through the love of Christ which Edgar expresses so well when he is writing about both Old and New Testaments. His book is exactly what it purports to be – an aid to intelligent reading. I know if I, as a Bible student, had had a copy in the 50s I might have come to Christ through love and not through fear.

Edgar doesn't tell his readers **what** to believe, instead he constantly reminds them to think for *themselves* and make up their own minds. His lively

style, laced with short personal anecdotes, lures his backpacking pilgrims on their own spiritual adventures from the Map 2 of Genesis into Egypt and Map 3 of Exodus. Then follows a quick overview of the Laws, Statistics and Principles of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Maps kindly untangle the complicated contour lines of the route past the conquests and settlement of Joshua and Judges and the intrigues of Kings and Chronicles based on the Israelites belief about God in those times, while Edgar assures us that these violent ages were later reinterpreted on the basis of the teaching of Jesus and the early Christian Church. We travel past the reformers and administrators of Joshua and Judges with the comment that 'the tone of the Book of Judges is not greatly edifying, though these heroes in their own way showed great courage and faith in God. The book has its place in the Bible as part of the unfolding history of Israel. It is not there to be admired.' What a relief!

The Rise of the Monarchy – Map 6 – covers the books of Ruth and Samuel I and II. Map 7 – The Divided Kingdom – deals with Kings I and II and Chronicles I and II with their 'cameos of faith and cameos of evil,' in a clearly expressed 'bird's-eye view of more than 300 years of the life of the nation.'

Map 8 deals with The End of the Exile in a view of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. I've always been fascinated by the dramatic story of Esther. 'Though God's name is never mentioned explicitly, he is perceived as present everywhere, influencing affairs on behalf of his people. It shows things working out for the survival of Israel, even if the actions taken are far removed from the principles of Jesus Christ.'

Map 9 is one of the best guides I have yet found to answer the question of why bad things happen to good people, and Edgar lingers with the explorer to marvel on the instructive sufferings of Job.

Map 10 is described as 'Israel's Hymn Book'. The traveller is wisely advised not to read all the 150 Psalms at one go, but to take short walks of one or two at times between other expeditions.

Map 11 deals with Proverbs where 'an awareness will grow that respect for God and fellow man, love of God and love of neighbour, as Moses and Jesus said, underlies it all.'

Map 12, Ecclesiastes or The Preacher, 'emphasises the futility or pointlessness of life when regarded as an end in itself.' It is 'a masterpiece of literature.' Now I know why it has always appealed to me so much.

I remember a very elderly Sister telling me that her husband found the Song of Songs (Map 13) quite reprehensible and never understood why it was in the Bible at all. I didn't agree with her but, trying to keep my feelings to myself, I thought how much happier her life might have been had they both been able to understand this beautiful private exposition of love and sexuality.

In Maps 14 to 22 the dizzy heights of the Prophets and Daniel come into

view and are demystified for me, and while evoking awe and reverence they now hold no terror! Some of these great men have now become my favourite biblical characters, so brave, so offbeat, so devoted to God that they could rise above ridicule, pain and want. The 'minor' prophets are dealt with in a similar fashion: their backgrounds are given, they are fitted into their time scale and their messages are clarified. (If I seem to have skipped rather a lot here, that's because I'd so love you to travel these mountains and valleys with Edgar for yourselves, but I'd need to write a book about his book myself.)

'The bridge which is Jesus' is now highlighted for the novice as the link between the Old and New Testaments, encouraging those dismissive travellers who regard the Old Testament as a dead land, to *think again*.

Edgar's style is invigorating and without condescension to the beginner when he writes on the Old Testament and becomes most lyrical when he deals with the gospel writers and the Acts of the Apostles.

Edgar quotes William Tyndale's definition of a Gospel: '*Gospel is a Greek word and signifies good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that makes a man's heart glad and makes him sing, dance and leap for joy.*' I wonder how many church congregations give out such vibes?

Map 23 shows us the similarities of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and highlights their differences of emphasis. Maps 24 and 25 speak clearly of the Ministry of Jesus in Galilee and The Road to the Cross.

Map 26 tells of the unique contributions of Mark and Luke, defining these interesting details in plain, simple but thrilling terms. In Map 27 all four gospel writers are combined to tell the story of Jesus' Death and Resurrection. Edgar speaks of the excitement, the emotion, the spirituality and the moral effect of the impact of this story. Now that I know Jesus better I can only cringe, and marvel at how patient he was with my early disparagement.

Maps 28 and 29 are both devoted to the Gospel of John. I most earnestly recommend the traveller to use Edgar's guide for the story of Divinity and Humanity Blended in Jesus, and of Christ's Other Self, the Holy Spirit.

Edgar devotes two Maps, 30 and 31 to the Acts of the Apostles, through the waiting in Jerusalem, Pentecost, Peter's speech, the miracle of the lame man, the prosecution of the Apostles, Stephen's wonderful defence of the gospel and its terrible ending, and the subsequent persecution of the Christians. Then follow the conversion of Saul (Paul) and on through Paul's missionary journeys. Edgar's enthusiasm draws the explorer to the original scriptures like a stirring trailer to a marvellous film.

Maps 32 to 39 deal with Paul's letters, filling in the background and inspiring this particular voyager to be far less selective in her reading. Here I must explain that all my spiritual life I've had problems with parts of Paul's writing, since what appeared to me to be his male chauvinism has so often put

me off reading him at all. This has been my loss, and has now been put into perspective, mainly by visits to the Christadelphian Summer School. After all, Paul was writing for the men and women of his own times. Edgar has also enlightened me a good deal regarding Paul's character, though personally I'm still more at home with James' 'tract'. How different we all are, and how excellently the scriptures can cater for all of us if they are read with perseverance and an open mind. Edgar's almost three-dimensional map of Revelation is terrific!

Do read *Maps for the Journey* for yourselves. I would like to be able to give everyone I know a copy.

To summarise, I feel that this most valuable book will enlighten walkers of all denominations, strengths and ages. I began my forty-seven year-long spiritual journeys with a rucksack full of great rocks of doctrine and unnecessary stones of guilt. Gradually I've been able to heave them out where they belong, on the stony ground. Some of this shedding has been achieved with the help of Christadelphians and some with Christians taking other spiritual routes, but now I thank God with all my heart that even I can experience the love and freedom in Christ Jesus, though I still have so much wonderful learning to do.

Rosalind Lomas

EDGAR wrote this book to fill a perceived need. He works in Eastern Europe, teaching businessmen accustomed to operating, previously under communist regimes. Under the free-market system, Edgar shows how to run business successfully following ethical principles: legal, honest, and 'with a human face' – in other words, business conducted on Christian principles.

But where are the Christian principles to come from in a society officially brought up on atheism? This question is no longer one only for Eastern Europe for most of our own society is now also in that position. To answer 'From the Bible' is correct, but presents a daunting task. To begin reading any book from the ancient world is difficult. Without some sort of introduction to give context and overall outlook, most people are disinclined to persist. Anyone who has read the Bible to people unaccustomed to it soon becomes aware of another difficulty. People may no longer be brought up in a Christian-believing society, but they are imbued with sufficient principles that ethnic cleansing, victimisation of women, blanket condemnations and an angry, jealous God all cause affront: and each can quickly be encountered when starting to read the Bible. But, as we who are privileged to know from our own commitment, this is not what the Bible is really about, and Edgar has set out in *Maps for the Journey* to help people see the message without being put off by what seem morally-dubious assessments from a previous world-view.

Edgar's plan is ambitious: to give a summary and an overall-view of each

book of the Bible. This makes his book long (464 pages) for obvious reasons, and it is perhaps therefore better to dip into the book than to read it continuously! The author himself suggests this, and tries to make each chapter comprehensible within itself, while stressing the interconnected nature of the Bible.

There are features which some will find uncomfortable such as his occasional use of more conventional church terminology – ‘Eucharist or Holy Communion’ (p.356). He is writing primarily for people not from a Christadelphian background but for an audience whose only acquaintance with things spiritual – if any – will have been in a church context.

Edgar spent most of his life as a Christadelphian and will still be remembered by many as a well-known speaker and as publisher of *Glad Tidings*. He is now a church warden and lay reader at St Clement’s Anglican Church in Prague. He has moved a long way from when he used to write for *Logos* promoting literal animal sacrifices in the Kingdom. This book therefore represents Edgar’s mature thought and as one who is better acquainted with Christadelphian history, controversy and doctrine than most Christadelphians alive today, his analysis merits careful consideration, especially on areas where he no longer follows the position he once held. We will not all agree with him on every assessment, particularly with his comments on literality and inspiration, but as he says (speaking of the Bible): ‘Often we will have to reserve judgement to a later stage, and always we should be ready to have an earlier understanding modified by a later one’ (p.5). This book represents his judgement after a lifetime of study and spiritual contemplation and should therefore be taken seriously.

Edgar is extremely well-read, but does not allow his detailed knowledge to obscure the message. He has the ability to convey complex ideas simply. He is particularly good at being able to get to the kernel of the matter.

‘Matthew often uses an Old Testament passage as a peg on which to hang a wider fulfilment involving the whole work of Jesus. He is not just quoting proof texts, though many Jews who were used to such artificial procedures would have been impressed at even that level, irrespective of context.... Matthew and the other writers and apostles had discovered in Jesus the fulfiller of something that is basic in the whole of the Old Testament; in Jesus there was an overall fulfilment at the deepest level of what Old Testament scripture as a whole reflected.’

Edgar’s manner of writing is lively, with an enviably good turn-of-phrase, as he guides the reader to see the relevance of the Bible to modern life, and to see Jesus as the ultimate revelation of the character of God.

He warns against simplistic interpretation: ‘These chapters [in Deuteronomy] suggest that the sufferings of a nation are always the results of sin and that things

go well when they are obedient. Care needs to be exercised about accepting this as a universal principle' (p.37).

His style and presentation, however, is nondogmatic. He encourages readers to study the Bible for themselves, not to take his or others' word for what is said, though he makes his own understandings clear: 'There has been too much spiritual dictatorship in the history of religion' (p. 4). In this respect, his work is similar in approach to the 'How to Read the Bible Effectively' seminars which promote personal search in the hope that understanding and commitment will follow: a sound procedure.

Since place names are frequently mentioned in the Bible, a few geographical maps would have been useful – something I wish writers of books in general would give attention to! If, however, the proof of a pudding is in the eating, the success or otherwise of this book can really only be judged by how useful previously non-readers of the Bible will find it. Only time will tell. But everyone of goodwill and sensitive conscience can benefit from Edgar's overview and be encouraged, stimulated and challenged by this lively retelling of the Bible message.

Ian McHaffie

*However we do it,
the Christian faith
requires us to have sensitivity
to social need and oppression.
This is not a social gospel.
This is not the gospel.
It is a fruit of the gospel.
Alan Kreider.*

Which Translation?

The Testimony, Norwich, 2000. pp. 124.

DESPITE the title this has nothing to do with the Consumers Association and its numerous *Which?* publications. It is, as explained in a subtitle on the front and back covers but curiously not on the title-page, *A Compilation of Articles from The Testimony Magazine*. Seven articles are reprinted under their authors' names, but the original dates of publication and page references are not specified, though this is normal in such reprint volumes. No editor of the book is named, but Tony Benson, editor-in-chief of *The Testimony*, wrote the brief Foreword. It is a nicely printed and produced book, and the pages are sewn.

The reason for its publication is a concern that modern translations are gaining in popularity in our community, some Ecclesias having adopted one for public worship. The reasons for this concern are three: first, the freer modern translations often do not render word-for-word as the AV usually does, and so prevent verbal study of the Bible. Secondly, some of the new versions have doctrinally biased translations of some passages which we cannot accept. Thirdly – and this applies to the New Testament only – many of the new translations are made from MSS which lack words and passages found in the AV.

The first article, 'Is Your Bible Complete?' by Richard Purkis, is fired by this third concern. He argues that the 'Majority Text,' essentially that used for the AV, is the best, while the Revisers, influenced by Westcott and Hort's text, and most other recent translators have generally preferred the shorter text of the earliest MSS, which, it is argued, is less reliable. The case is unfortunately spoilt by an astonishing lack of knowledge of the subject, and by a spirit of invective which pervades the whole article.

Thus on p. 21 'two of the earliest Greek manuscripts yet found (dating from the mid-fifth century) ...' refers to the codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. But these are universally dated to the fourth century, as stated by Bernard Butt on p. 57, and by Peter Moore ('believed to date') on p. 69. Secondly, while these two MSS were the earliest in 1881/82, when Westcott and Hort's text was published, older MSS have since come to light and have received much attention. Of the Chester Beatty papyri, known since the 1930's, one, dating to c. 200, contains some three quarters of a codex with ten Pauline epistles and Hebrews. Two others of third century date contain a lesser percentage of the four Gospels, Acts and the Apocalypse. Then the Bodmer papyri, which came to light in the 1950's include one dating to c. 200 with the greater part of John's Gospel, and two of third century date, one with the whole of I and II Peter and Jude, the other with parts of Luke and John. In the late 19th century the choice in this matter lay very

much between the then two oldest MSS and the mass of later and late MSS, and vigorous battles were fought over the matter. Now, as a result of the new finds and further study, the questions are quite different. It is everywhere accepted that Westcott and Hort placed too much confidence in these two MSS, though they were not in fact the first people to have followed this course. Thus this article is fighting a battle long since won on one front, while unaware of vigorous activity on another front. The whole issue is no longer clear cut. Many experts today would operate with four groups of MSS, of which only one is the 'Majority Text,' and no one will assert that any one of these four is always right.

This article is also wrong in standard matters of principle. It is argued that since the vast majority of MSS support the text behind the AV this is to be taken as the best text. In textual criticism of any ancient work it is never right to decide the best reading simply by counting the MSS which support it. As correctly stated by Bernard Butt on p. 56, 'generally the older the manuscript the more valuable it is considered to be for the translator.' There can be exceptions to this rule, but appeals to 'well over ninety per cent' and such like are misleading. Further, items pressed hard as evidence are wrong. For example, the Christian writer Tertullian is quoted to prove that in his day two very different kinds of NT text existed: 'the genuine text . . . (and) mutilated Greek texts . . . from Alexandria in Egypt (pp.17-19)' This is a false claim. Tertullian is concerned to establish his own credentials, so he argues how God sent Jesus, Jesus sent out the apostles, and the apostles established churches in Asia Minor, Greece and Italy, in which churches genuine apostolic works were read. In another chapter in his usual attacks on heretics, especially Valentinus and Marcion, he accuses the latter of using the knife, not the pen. Marcion had indeed created his own Bible by excision: no Old Testament, one Gospel only (Luke with omissions) and ten epistles of Paul, again with deletions. There is no contrast in the text of Tertullian between genuine apostolic works and Marcion's Bible: the passages are quite separate. The genuine apostolic works were no doubt meant to contrast with apocryphal Gospels, Acts and epistles, which abounded at this time. Further, Alexandria and Egypt are not mentioned at all and there is no sound evidence that Marcion worked in Egypt.

Much is made of the short form of the Lord's Prayer in Luke (pp. 13-15). It is said, 'In fact, only five ancient manuscripts omit parts (not one of them leaves out all) of these omissions!' (p. 24) Again, the information is long since out-of-date. The standard edition of Luke with many MSS readings is *The New Testament in Greek. The Gospel According to St. Luke, Part One*, Oxford, 1984, and – to take the first so-called omission only – the shorter 'Father,' rather than 'Our Father which art in heaven,' is attested in eleven manuscripts, one being the third-century Bodmer papyrus. In addition the writer seems not to know that 'Abba, Father', in Romans 8:15 and Gal. 4:6, is commonly taken to be an

allusion to the short form of the Lord's Prayer. The use of the Aramaic excludes the possibility that 'Our Father' has been abbreviated to 'Father,' since in Aramaic it is a single word of three syllables which cannot be abbreviated. That Aramaic is used (with Greek translation) proves that Paul did not invent this key-word himself, since he does not coin Aramaic. It was clearly something well established in the early Christian community, and since it was obviously considered an important key-word it would be surprising if it were not based on a saying of Jesus found in at least one of our Gospels.

Much more could be written, but cannot be put here. It is a matter for regret that this article from beginning to end tries to sway readers by rhetoric. The conclusion sought is presumed in the title and is endlessly pressed throughout the 15 pages. One wonders whether it would be necessary to use such devices if the case were as certain as it is endlessly asserted?

The short article of Neil Mullen, 'Beyond Babel,' argues that to have 'knowledge concerning God and his purposes' we must choose the most accurate translation possible, which is then, it is asserted, a literal rather than a free translation. This is a debatable point. Is the simple brother or sister of no scholarly disposition unable to achieve salvation because they happen to have used a free translation? The writer surely excuses himself too lightly from not having learnt Greek and Hebrew in view of his approach to the matter. Using concordances can be dangerous. The translations they give are not trustworthy in all cases. There is no reason to take the word *rosh* 'gall' as the same word as *rosh* 'head,' as done on p. 32: they are homophones, different words that are pronounced the same.

Andrew Perry on 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Text of the Old Testament' has obviously taken pains to get his facts right so far as practicable, and is to be commended for that, but there is a certain slant to the article. There is a predisposition to prefer the Masoretic text to alternatives. The examples quoted at length always come to this conclusion. Perhaps for balance he might have quoted one of the other kind, say Gen. 4:8 as a brief one, and more extensive ones from Samuel?

Bernard Butt on 'Bible Translations and Bible Study' makes many a shrewd observation on no less than 14 English translations dealing with both text and translation, but has not informed himself adequately on various matters of fact. The titles of the Psalms, we are told, 'are part of Scripture (p. 61).' This is denied by many. While the various witnesses to the text of the Psalter differ very little from each other in the text of the Psalms, there are substantial differences in the prefatory matter put at the head of some Psalms, from which it can reasonably be concluded that these are editorial additions not an original part of the book.

Peter Moore on 'Bible Translation - the Catholic Influence' takes a long

time to get down to this actual subject but concludes with evidence of a trinitarian bias in the NIV as compared with the AV. Of course if Roman translators translate, their result will reflect their theological stand to some extent, but Protestant translators may also support the Trinity.

Stephen Pinfield on "Neither Male nor Female." Gender Inclusiveness and Bible Translation,' offers a well informed and balanced article on the subject, not pressing any doctrinaire conclusions, and noting the problem of using the AV for modern preaching when many are not familiar with its language.

Finally, Stephen Green on 'For or Against Modern Versions?' is essentially a long review of a book by James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy – Can you trust the modern translations?*, which the present writer has not read or seen. Lengthy extracts of the book are quoted, and it appears that the writer of the article has given a balanced account of White's arguments. The review deals virtually exclusively with the New Testament, and argues against free translations, and for the longer New Testament texts. But in the course of the arguments many fine observations are made, and here the faults of the AV are not glossed over. But the final arguments for the longer New Testament texts are weak. Ancient scribes were not as likely to omit a phrase as to add one from a parallel context. In copying out the LXX ancient scribes were often aware of different readings, and they deliberately copied out the two alternatives side by side so as not to lose anything, though it results in rather chaotic sense for the passages. The textual history of Homer is another case where scribes added lines over the centuries, and since there is no *odium theologicum* in this case there is no problem in stating the fact.

Discussion of the value of recent translations is very welcome, and on principle then a book such as this should be extremely useful. But when facts are too often wrong its value is seriously debased.

Wilfred Lambert

**God's promises are like the stars;
the darker the night
the brighter they shine.**

David Nicholas

Modern Medicine and the Bible

Alan Fowler

Pp. vi + 232 including Glossary, Index of Bible quotations and General Index. 20 black and white figures in main text. 4 tables. 33 chapters with references. Undated. Obtainable at £5, including postage, from Alan Fowler, Ortho Books, High View, Lichard Rise, Bridgend, CF31 1QJ.

AN examination of the contents page of *Modern Medicine and the Bible* immediately excites interest at the eclectic nature and range of the subjects dealt with, but also fails to reveal an overriding theme to this book. Chapters are more or less thematically related to their immediate companions, but that is about all the structure that can be discerned. This makes the book much less easy to read throughout than it might otherwise be, although it suits it well to the alternative approach of 'dipping in' to chapters that seem interesting. Chapter titles like 'Dietary Magic', 'Fever - friend or foe', 'Contraception, abortion and assisted conception' and 'Near-death experiences' give an idea of the range of subjects covered. There is truly something here of interest to everyone, and many readers will learn a great deal of general value to their health from reading this book.

The presentation is generally good with the exception of Figure 4 which charitably can only be assumed to be a rough draft that somehow found its way into the final copy. The back cover suggests that there is a thematic connection between this book and Alan (and Margaret) Fowler's previous books, *A Drama of Creation* and *Exploring Bible Language*. If there is, it is not evident to me. It is stylistically very similar to its author's previous works, being written in a rather terse manner which economises on space, but which may contribute to the didactic tone of much of the book and also may make some arguments look like special pleading. Each chapter is referenced, mainly to medical journals such as the *BMJ*. Some of the references are rather old, which may sometimes mean that the conclusions based upon them are not supported by more modern research, but I believe overall that the references offer adequate support to the statements in the text.

The preface begins:

Although medical matters in the Bible are incidental, we hope to show that Bible teaching has important impacts on the practice of medicine and that medical science throws light on many incidents described in the Bible.

This is the general remit of the book and it follows it in the piecemeal fashion already mentioned. A great deal of time is spent in dealing with diet, dietary

supplements, alcohol, smoking, salt and exercise; all of which are subjects of great importance to health. The arguments are robustly made and are largely sound advice. For the most part, reference to the Bible in these sections is largely incidental, except for chapter 6 which deals with Biblical dietary laws. Some of the advice given in these sections is a little idiosyncratic. The advice regarding alcohol underplays its probable value in increasing longevity – moderate drinkers tend to live longer than teetotallers – whilst emphasising its undoubted negative effects. The advice to avoid spirits has no solid epidemiological foundation, however plausible the reasoning. Alan Fowler's obvious enthusiasm for Soya products reflects the considerable scientific interest in the properties of these foodstuffs. Some recent research has suggested that Soya products may not be wholly beneficial, however.

The sections in the book dealing with other matters are a mixed bag. The good parts include the discussion on Mosaic hygiene laws and leprosy in chapter 11. The chapters on sex, sexually transmitted diseases and homosexuality reflect Bible-based morality, and yet manage to present a proper Christian approach to those who are suffering for whatever reason. Thus he argues strongly against the idea that AIDS represents direct divine retribution, and he reminds us that there are many more references in the Bible to heterosexual rather than homosexual sin. Somewhat less satisfactory is the chapter on the Bible and Childbirth, which is an interesting general account of the influence of more natural approaches to childbirth on modern obstetric practice, but which has little reference to the Bible except for an argument regarding the meaning of the words translated as 'sorrow' in God's punishment to Eve in Gen. 3:16. The author attempts to demonstrate that this should be translated as 'labour' in an effort to dispel the notion that pain in childbirth is both inevitable and a punishment from God. Whilst I am sympathetic to the viewpoint he espouses I did not find his argument at all convincing. To some extent this would be my criticism of his chapter on Alternative Medicine in that, whilst I almost entirely agree with his conclusions regarding the mechanisms and effectiveness of most alternative therapies, I felt that his arguments were unbalanced and sweeping. My observation has been that many Christians have dabbled with these therapies and will not be impressed by comments such as those he makes in dismissing iridology, reflexology and the like:

All these weird projections have no scientific basis and belong to the realms of magic. (p173)

I may agree with his conclusion entirely, but I do not feel he will carry his audience. In many of the chapters he claims to present the facts in order to allow his readers to draw their own conclusions. Whilst I am certain that this is his intention, I often felt that most time was spent in developing his views, and possible objections were swept aside with little consideration. Some of this

reflects the difficulty of presenting complex subject matter in a small space, but nonetheless I do not feel that the book is as balanced as it claims to be, or could be.

A few chapters are very unsatisfactory, in my view. Chapter 13 'Fever – Friend or Foe' could be subtitled 'A Polemic against Paracetamol.' The evidence he presents is of some interest, but he dismisses the major benefit of using paracetamol, which is the substantial reduction of unpleasant symptoms that its use in feverish illness achieves. His advice to adults with the Flu to heat themselves up to a body temperature of 40°C has never been tested in a clinical trial, might be dangerous, sounds extremely unpleasant and cannot be recommended in the absence of further evidence. His chapter on drugs is oversimplified. He fails to point out, for example, that his graphical representation of the descent into addiction (Figure 7) is not true of all drugs, and does not apply to all drug users. There are also factual inaccuracies, such as his statement that cannabis is addictive.

In general I feel this book lacks focus. This may be because its only real attempt at a unifying theme is not clearly explored and is open to some debate. In several places the author states that the human body is 'optimally designed' and elsewhere suggests that a healthy person cannot improve on what God has designed by the use of drugs, vitamins, et cetera.

I am sure that the word 'optimally' was chosen carefully, since to use the word 'perfectly' would beg the question of why the human body goes wrong at all. There is no real discussion as to what is meant by 'optimally' in the context of this book, although the concept is generally linked to a state of good health and so is to a degree a tautology. As I have already suggested, 'optimal' design, if it is only manifested in healthy people, does not explain why we all eventually become ill and die. If we are 'optimally' designed, then the design is one that deliberately includes degeneration and death as a part of it. This is wholly in accord with Bible teaching about the state of man, and fits with evidence at a cellular level that indicates that we are *designed* to die after a certain time. The force of some of the arguments in this book is reduced when 'optimal' design is looked at from this viewpoint, and interventions to improve or maintain health in the short term can be understood as not being necessarily doomed to failure.

Whilst I have a number of reservations about this book, in its style, theme and content, I would still recommend it as an interesting read for people who wish to maximize their general health, learn more about the ingenuity of the design of the body and understand the way in which ideas which only now have been recognised as medically sound wind their way unobtrusively through many parts of the Bible.

Steve DeWilde

The following thoughts were stimulated in the mind of Julia Booth by a reading of Ron Coleman's recent booklet on the atonement.

Reconciliation

ONE thing at least is clear from Ron Coleman's booklet *The Most Important Doctrine of All*: I am not so alone as I once thought myself to be. My honest admission now is that, for a very long time, I never really understood the atonement, in whatever shape or form it was inconsistently presented, and have feared at times that I was stumbling, like the Jews, over the central core of my faith.

But why, during all those years of concern, had I not read J. Hargrave James' book, *Why Christ Died*, published in 1948? The answer, I am sure, is that I hadn't seriously taken the matter to God. When I did pray about it, there it was – a gift through the post from a brother I had never met!

I do not, I must emphasise, agree with all of James' arguments and conclusions in the book, but on the subject of sacrifice I am with him all the way. First of all, he emphasises the importance of recognising Jesus' total victory over the inherent temptation to sin within him; Christ's life was a daily conflict against sin and sinners, but he challenged his persecutors to accuse him (John 8:46) and they could not legitimately do so.

With reference to brother Ron's remarks (p.13) about the curse of the cross, the point is made that the Law wasn't designed to condemn a perfectly sinless man, and it was precisely on account of his sinlessness that Jesus had already rendered it null and void. He had inaugurated a *New Covenant* before his arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, and without realising it his murderers brought the old law to an abrupt end as soon as they hung Jesus upon the cross. A law which apparently condemned the Son of God could not possibly come from God.

The Genesis (3:15) prophecy is seen to support this. If the bruising of the serpent's head was to occur before that of the conqueror's heel, then the work of salvation was completed prior to Christ' death and resurrection.

James makes much of the fact that the whole of the Law of Moses, according to the apostle Paul (Col.2:17), is a shadow of the substance of Christ, and that 'substance' must necessarily exist before its shadow can appear. This is not an argument in favour of the pre-existence of Christ, but for God's foreknowledge of the extent of mankind's propensity to evil deeds. In other words, 'the blood of Christ would have been shed upon the cross even if the Law of Moses, requiring the shedding of blood for the remission of sins, had never been designed.'

God's plan was to produce out of the family of man a Son who did no sin – something that man could never do for himself – and in the meantime men and

women would continually act out before their Maker their ultimate deed of wickedness, the slaying of the Lamb.

God permitted evil to continue in order to demonstrate His mercy, and only chose symbols of blood in His dealings with mankind because He foresaw how frequently His adversaries would shed the blood of His servants, from Abel to Christ and ever afterwards. In reality, sacrifice was man's choice – not God's – but in recognition and repentance of his sin, man could be forgiven.

James finds no scriptural justification for the idea that God *required* the sacrifice of His Son – quite the reverse. We read in Matthew 23 of Jesus' own bitter condemnation of those who shed righteous blood.

There is no demand for retribution or satisfaction which negates free forgiveness; no punishment of the innocent for the guilty; no suspicion of divine injustice (only men's); no addition of torment to a death sentence; no paganesque human blood sacrifice; no theological expiation nor propitiation of a disapproving God; no ritualistic penal condemnation of sinful nature, or of men's sins mysteriously transferred; no divine self-justification by publicly declaring God's righteousness. *Salvation comes not through the crucifixion of a Saviour but through a Saviour who has been crucified.*

It is James' belief that, in his submission to death on the cross, Jesus was simply cooperating in a plan which would prove to be the most effective in reconciling man to his Maker; a plan born of divine sympathy with human frailty. As brother Ron suggests towards the end of his study, in the process of reconciliation the one who forgives must enter into the experience of the one who has offended.

What should more surely create love in the hearts of men than the knowledge that he who asks for our love willingly laid down his life, that he might not ask us to suffer for him more than he was prepared to suffer for us.

God's will, surely, was and is to reconcile man to Himself (not Himself to man, as has been emphasised) and it is an ongoing process. It never made sense to believe that this atonement could be achieved for all believers at all times by one horrific act of sacrifice, especially since Jesus was frequently forgiving sinners beforehand, during his ministry.

But it does make sense that God allowed His son's murder as final proof of His grace; it was the fact of the resurrection that set faithful hearts aflame and founded the Christian church, and what God has done for Christ, Christ, the champion of the human race, will do for those who believe in him.

It is so refreshing to read brother Ron's balanced views (supported by others, of course) on biblical interpretation – even Hargrave James has arrived at

some confusing and contradictory ideas as a result of too much literal analysis. However, in the light of Ron's comments about the story of Adam and Eve (p 20) I was interested to re-read an observation of James, namely that life for the sons of Adam is incomparable with that of their first parents.

Born in the midst of similarly corrupt sons and daughters, they are exercised in a struggle for existence in an environment of oppression, poverty, sickness, or of war, and in continual fear of disease, calamity or death ... which circumstances provide ample justification for the exercise of mercy and forbearance.

This bears out Ron's explanation of 2 Esdras 3:21,22, 'the society that descended from (Adam) became a formative instrument for sin.'

God, through Hosea, was adamant; 'I desire mercy (steadfast love) not sacrifice.'

Julia Booth

Ron Coleman's booklet, *The Most Important Doctrine Of All, A Study Of The Atonement For Christadelphians*, is still available from the Editor. Cheques for £1.20, including postage, to *The Endeavour Magazine* please. .

A few copies of Wilfred Lambert's *Creation* are still available at £1 and of George McHaffie's *Christadelphia Redivivus* at £1.50.

There is no readier way for a man
to bring his own worth into question,
than by endeavouring to detract from
the worth of other men.

John Tillotson

Dear Editor,

Having just picked up the December 1999 copy of *Endeavour* and read Joan White's very positive words on the Jubilee 2000 campaign, I was very disappointed to receive, that same day, Tearfund's report on the G8 conference at Okinawa in July 2000. Lots more words (at a cost of \$750 million, enough, apparently to cancel the debt service repayments of 9 of the poorest, heavily indebted countries!) and no real progress since the G7 summit of 1999.

Rather than give up hope, I feel that we should redouble our efforts to pray and to write to show our support as Christians for this campaign. If we have not been actively involved then now is an opportunity to give the matter some serious thought.

Of course, we must attend to the needs we find on our own doorstep as best we can, but that does not stop us from caring and doing what we can to help in the wider world; neither precludes the other.

**Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.**

(Prov 31:8)

Further information can be obtained from:

Tearfund's Global Action Network,
100 Church Road,
Teddington,
Middlesex,
TW11 8QE.

Jubilee 2000 UK Coalition,
1 Rivington Street,
London
EC2A 3DT.

Vicki Warwick

In the beginning God created

Dear Editor,

It was with great interest that I read the letter from brother Danks. When I first saw the booklet with the above title, published by the Appeal to all Ecclesias Committee, I was surprised that only two possible views were considered: that the heavens and earth were created by God in six literal days about 6000 years ago; or that the universe came into being without God. Another possibility, that all things were created by God over a longer time span, was not discussed. That God could have created all things in a moment of time is not in doubt. The question is whether, in fact, he chose to do so.

I suggest that it is not the *acceptance* of the Bible that is in dispute but our understanding of it. There are many statements in the Bible that are plainly at variance, or have at times been taken to be at variance, with current perceptions

of the world. For example, the belief that the Bible teaches that the earth is flat was based on such passages as Ex 20:6 and Ecc 1:3. It was considered a violation of scripture to suggest that 'above' and 'under' could be taken to be other than completely literal. Furthermore Psalms 136:6 would have contained the words 'stretched round' rather than 'stretched out' if a globe had been intended.¹ In Jos 10:13, the Bible seems to imply that it is the sun that moves, not the earth for, at Joshua's command, 'the sun stood still.' What are we to make of the various statements about the stars? For instance in Gen 1:16 ('he made the stars also') or Is 34:4 ('all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine') and what is the meaning of 'stretching out' or 'rolling up' the heavens? (Jer 10:12; Rev 6:13-14). One would infer from these passages that present day views about the sizes and distances of the stars (and of the time light has taken to travel from them to us) are totally false. Furthermore it is salutary to learn that the anatomical region of the human body responsible for thinking and for the exercise of faith is the heart (Mat 15:18-20; Rom 10:10). This notwithstanding that the heart pumps blood while thinking is nowadays considered to take place in the brain as evidenced, among other things, by the observation that localised injuries, strokes, tumours, etc, in the brain can result in changes in speech, memory, aggressiveness, personality, etc. That cardiac arrest can result in brain damage or that emotional changes can cause alterations in heart rate are easily explained by well recognised physiological processes consistent with the notion that thinking is done in the brain not the heart.

We must either adjust our views of astronomy and human physiology to accord with the Bible or we must assume that the Bible describes things 'as they appear'², that it speaks to men in terms that could be understood or were believed at the time and that it contains poetry, metaphor and parable. The six days may be days of revelation, of divine fiat³, or of drama⁴.

What is it that leads some of us to think that rocks are of great antiquity? Reliance is usually placed on the relative abundance in them of certain atomic isotopes. These data are generally considered definitive, but their validity is not universally accepted. In recent years the search for oil and minerals has led to drilling of rock cores to depths of up to 15000 ft in many parts of the world⁵. This has made it possible to study rock strata to those depths. Fossilised coral reefs are of special interest. Coral reefs are currently forming in the oceans at shallow depths. They do not occur in fresh water. Eventually dead coral is converted to limestone or dolomite. The rate of growth of coral is limited by the concentrations of oxygen and salts in the seawater and it is not reasonable to suggest that growth rates in the past can have been very different from today. One drilling at Eniwetok atoll in the Marshall Islands passed through 4610 ft of reef deposit before striking the basalt base. The estimated length of time for the formation of this depth of reef deposit is a minimum of 176000 yrs. The

existence of fossilised reefs deeply buried far inland from the oceans gives further pause for thought. one drilling in north western Alberta encountered the top of an ancient reef 5866 ft below the surface and some 450 miles from the present sea coast. A large number of other underground reefs were found in the same area, some of them nearly 800 ft high. Above them lay a complex series of sedimentary rock strata mostly formed in shallow seas and evidencing alternating episodes of very quiet conditions, and of very turbulent conditions. There were also some of arid coastal conditions. The whole required many hundreds of thousands of years for its formation. To dismiss these rock formations as the product of a few years or centuries really does not do justice to what has been observed.

Whether 'rocks are of great antiquity' is a key issue in the present discussion. Rocks have an appearance of great age. Either that is a reality or God made them to look like that. Why might he have done so? 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' (Rom 1:20). This is usually understood to mean that the things God has made provide us with evidence of his existence. Now if he made the earth 6000 years ago with an appearance of much greater age, and if such great age is evidence that God did not create the world, then God has made the world in such a way as to deny his own existence. Surely not! Creation supplies us with evidence of a Creator, not the reverse.

The Creation Science movement began as a laudable attempt to reinterpret the data of geology in terms of a 'young' earth. Opinions as to the success or otherwise of this venture differ, but as a 'test case' we may consider the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Creation Scientists have suggested that, with the exception of the strata at the very bottom of the canyon, all the rocks (the vertical sequence in the whole area is well over a mile in thickness) were laid down during the course of a year or so following Noah's flood⁶. Now while the majority of the strata are limestones and sandstones that originated as water-laid deposits (albeit many of them deriving from relatively tranquil conditions rather than the turbulence of a violent flood), sandwiched between these water-laid strata are two deposits of an altogether different character. These are the Coconino sandstone of Grand Canyon and the Navajo sandstone of Zion Canyon. The cross-laminated structure of these deposits as well as the frosting of the grains of which they are composed are characteristic of wind-blown sand dune deposits. There is no evidence whatever of disturbance associated with thrusting or reversal of these strata. The rocks of the Grand Canyon series could not possibly have been formed as a result of one great flood.⁷

The Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith with its appended scriptural references simply affirms God as Creator. This I accept. The words 'He spake and it was done' (Ps 33:9) could refer to the instant effecting of what was

decreed. Equally, it could mean that the divine pronouncement was certain of fulfilment ('my word ... shall not return unto me void', Is 55.11). Which view we take of this is a matter of interpretation, not of the acceptance or rejection of scripture. However, we do no service to the Bible to insist that it teaches about the earth what most people today find impossible of acceptance.⁸

Sincerely your brother by grace, **Bob Burr**

References:

¹ *The Testimony*, Sept 1949, Vol 19, No 225, pp 308-311).

² B Ramm: *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, Paternoster, Grand Rapids, 1954.

³ A Hayward: *Creation and Evolution*, Triangle, London, 1985, p 167 ff.

⁴ A Fowler: *A Drama of Creation*, Ortho, Bridgend. 1996.

⁵ D Wonderly: *God's Time Records in the Ancient Sediments*, Crystal, Flint, 1977.

⁶ J C Whitcomb & H M Morris: *The Genesis Flood*, Presbyterian and Reformed, Philadelphia, 1964, p 153.

⁷ A N Strahler: *Science and Earth History*, Prometheus, Buffalo, 1987, p 217.

⁸ D A Young: *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*, Zondervan. Grand Rapids, 1982.

Reply to Correspondence in Endeavour no. 103, pp. 46-53.

Two of your correspondents took exception to my adverse criticism of *The People's Choice* by Roy Standeven on the ground that it was uncharitable. If our body were a social club, the point would be well made: the aim would be to maintain a friendly spirit among members. But we profess to be much more than a social club: a community devoted to spiritual development and to spreading the Gospel. The comments of prophets, apostles and the Saviour himself on their respective generations are frequently critical, and one is then justified in asking what might a prophet were he alive today have to say about us? It is a question we rarely face. The present writer, with no authority of course, suspects that those of us in the British Isles and North America would be condemned for two things in particular: first for accepting too readily the current prosperous middle-class standards and style of living, and for preaching a Gospel based far too much on factual error. Advances in knowledge over the last century in Bible study have mostly passed us by. Any one who has these opinions is not only entitled to express them, but surely has a duty so to do. The second of your correspondents, Sis. Ruth McHaffie, has vigorously opposed false claims that some well-known early Reformers were in effect good Christadelphians.

While in the late 19th and early 20th centuries serious study of the Bible was

not readily available to every one, there is now an abundance of evening classes in big towns, day courses at week-ends, and week-long courses in the summer in Universities, and most recently Alpha Courses have received wide publicity. It is surely important that our preaching should not be of an obviously lower standard if we wish our distinctive doctrinal position to be considered seriously. We live in a superficially polite world in that people generally do not criticise each other to their faces, though they commonly have firm opinions. Also higher education is much more widespread than it was a century ago, and our message must not ignore that change. We should not appeal only to those with minimum education and no knowledge of the Bible.

Of course in a small community criticism is often resented, but our responsibility to our Lord and Master should help to overcome this. It is a fact that inept preaching can do harm. One devout Christian lady who had been instructed in our Faith and was on the point of asking for baptism was completely put off when a member informed her emphatically that 'We take the Bible literally.' Another well-educated devout Methodist explained her rejection of Christadelphianism as the result of having pamphlets on prophecy pushed at her in her place of work. When Birmingham Central was still a very large Ecclesia the speaking brother one Sunday night explained that he believed in a flat earth because the Bible so taught. What might the impact of this have been on visitors for that occasion?

Those who, like your correspondents, take much satisfaction from bringing together material from both Testaments might surely ask what is the modern equivalent of bringing as an offering to the Lord only animals with not the least imperfection. It is surely that our equivalent offerings should also be (so far as we can make them) without spot or blemish. And our preaching (for which we all have a responsibility, though only certain ones actually speak publicly) should surely be as perfect as we can make it, so that it will have the greatest chance of success. It is too easy to make excuses. The book under discussion was, we are told, 'written for the spiritual encouragement of Bible class Christadelphians.' But does spiritual encouragement conflict with factual accuracy? And do not 'Bible class Christadelphians' have a right to material which could stand in other contexts? Or can we excuse second-rate material on weeknights? Opining that 'a "light breathing" seems to me more like an English vowel than a consonant' might, were it given out on a Sunday evening, put off a person with university training in languages, where the teacher may know something of phonetics. Of course there are real problems and difficulties here, but resisting criticisms is not going to help the situation. Some of those professing to know 'Hebrew' know in fact the modern not Biblical.

Wilfred Lambert

Revelation, Persuasion and Presumption.

May I respond to the leading article and others in the previous *Endeavour Magazine*? If God created the universe, He cannot be part of the universe. On the other hand we can understand that God would be interested in and concerned for His creatures. If we humans construct a fishpond or an aviary and stock it with fish or birds, we do not leave them to fend for themselves, but we exercise a continuing interest in their welfare. In Genesis one, when the Elohim said 'Let us make man in our image', if physical image is meant then I reckon it would be the image of the angels, not the Creator, whose image could not be comprehended by creatures within the universe.

As Les has pointed out, worship of idols has largely gone out of fashion in the modern world, but people can still become guilty of idolizing spectator sport, hobbies, economic rationalism, profit motive, political platform, or a creed or statement of faith. I will demonstrate my point with a false allegory of the judgement scene given by our Lord in Matthew 25, vv 31 ff:

'When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall he gathered all nations, and He shall separate them from one another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on His right hand "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For you have upheld your creed or statement of faith,, you have disfellowshipped the doubters, you have warned against reading dangerous tracts, and you have issued tickets for the Lord's Table so as to exclude those who were not worthy to take the memorial elements." Then shall He say also to them on His left hand, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, for you have doubted your ecclesiastical elders, you have studied disapproved literature, you have thought upon dangerous theological doctrines, you have openly discussed issues that were disapproved by ecclesial leaders."' Here endeth the lesson.

My point is that the above parody gives the diametric reverse of our Lord's teaching, besides being irrelevant to what he said about judgement day. And while I believe it is important and desirable to be confident and clear in our minds about what constitutes true theological dogma, nevertheless that is not what we shall be judged on. Jesus said 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

I now turn to the subject of gender. In English we use 'he' or 'she' only in relation to humans and animals in which the sex can be determined. In some other languages it is not so. In German, many inanimate objects are referred to as 'he' and many others as 'she', and still others as the neuter 'it'. I do not know

what is the situation in the Greek language. In Hebrew, a person, any person, is referred to as 'he' unless it is definitely known that the person is female. A group of people of unknown gender or of mixed gender are referred to by the masculine pronoun for 'they' or 'them'. Only if it is known that the whole group consists entirely of females, is the feminine form of 'they' or 'them' used. So, when the Hebrew states that a woman will give birth to a child, it is wrong to translate that as 'man-child' because the male form of 'child' is always used for a child whose sex is unknown. I suspect that there is a semi-subconscious tendency for some of us to think and speak in a similar way, because I have occasionally heard someone (usually female) address a mixed group in this manner: 'Come on, guys, you need to hurry up', even when the group being addressed was mostly female. It is as though we agree with the Hebrew that masculine terms can equally refer to males or to a mixed gender group, but female terms are reserved for a special type of human. And women are indeed special; they can do what no man can do, conceive a child, grow it within her body, give birth and nourish it at her breast. That is her physical speciality, but she is also mentally and emotionally specialized more than men to love it, nurture it, protect it, and teach it the necessary skills for living and growing.

The gender issues I have discussed should make it crystal clear that when God is referred to as 'Father' it could never mean that He is masculine in the animal sense. There is absolutely no need to make a fuss about 'gender-friendly' terms in our worship. Likewise, anyone who uses gender arguments to put down women is right out of order. Furthermore women's special qualities, instincts, and intuitions should be appreciated and respected particularly in contexts of dispute and strife. She is by nature more caring and considerate and cooperative, and less aggressive and competitive than men.

I am definitely in favour of women having an active part in preaching, teaching, prayer, and administration, if they are ardent and able. Ian McHaffie seems to support this in the middle section of his article 'Jesus is Risen.' In my professional life I have come to know women well. I can testify that generally women are more gentle than men, they are more polite, more friendly, more helpful, more loyal, and more faithful. They tend to accept the verdict of an umpire without acrimonious fuss. They are less spiteful. They do not start wars. In a word, they are more godly than men. I have heard it argued that women are too easily misled with particular concern about false doctrine; but where are all the men who are so infallible with truth? I am inclined to wonder how any ecclesia or church would survive if women withdrew their diligent, humble and zealous ministrations.

I wonder if any of your readers are old enough (as I am) to remember the leaflets and booklets of the late Sister Mary Thomas, of Little Neston, South Wirral, Cheshire, who campaigned strongly, amongst other things, for the status

of women in the Old Testament and in the primitive Church, and for the rights of women in modern Ecclesias. I will quote a little of her writings;

EQUAL THOUGH DIFFERENT

This paper is intended to draw attention to the fact that God regards men and women as equal. There are of course differences, delightful differences, between the two sexes; tone of voice, dress, etc. Men generally dress in sober colours, but women choose a variety of colours and dress more decoratively. Such differences are pleasing. It is a sad mistake to aim for similarity in dress or in other ways by either sex. It was surely a delightful thought of God to endow the two sexes with different ways, different temperaments. But at the very start He shows that He regards men and women as equal before Him. Both were made in the image of God, 'In the image of God male and female created He them.' And from that time He has shown no favouritism for man or woman. 'Are not my ways equal?' said God. It is our ways that are not equal.

The idea that because the woman was provided as a 'help' for man, she is therefore inferior has no support in scripture. The word 'help' used of the woman in Genesis is also used for help from God in many passages. Also the woman was not given to the man as a possession, but given 'to be with him', to use Adam's own words. God 'brought her to the man', He did not give her to him. God's ways are indeed equal. What He demands from man, He demands also from woman.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

When God spoke these commandments He spoke to every individual man and woman in the assembly, when He used the word 'thou'. He did not regard the man as 'head' of his wife, or He would have added 'nor thy wife' to the law concerning the Sabbath. 'But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son nor thy daughter, thy manservant nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.

Sister Thomas refers to Romans 16 v.7 where Paul refers to the man Andronicus and the woman Junias as fellow prisoners and notable apostles, but they are called 'menin' most translations because of prejudice. She also refers to the first two verses of the same chapter in which Phoebe is referred to in the A.V. as a servant of the church and a succourer of many, and she insists that the correct translation would be 'minister!' of the church and a 'leader of many, and of myself.' Her crusade on this subject is comprehensive and enlightening.

Someone amongst our readers must know of her literature.

May I also respond to Bro. Fawcett who invites comment regarding George McHaffie's booklet *Christadelphia Redivivus*. Bro. Fawcett says, 'While for the most part it seemed to confirm the beliefs held by us as fundamental Christadelphian doctrines, there were a few passages which I found a little disturbing.' As I read the booklet I gained the impression that the author fully intended to be disturbing, more than just a little. Probably some of the readers in 1959 were very disturbed.

George McHaffie states on page 20, 'The fault with such swashbuckling is that it causes its exponents to see things largely in black or white, to exaggerate differences, and to make erroneous judgements through over-simplification. It also attracts to its banner a type of person who glories in debate for its own sake (and to some extent enjoys strife), and therefore desires to have a good case to argue about. Such people hold the fundamentals of Christian love loosely, and show only a minimum of concern for the salvation of opponents.' He then refers to a passage from *Elpis Israel*, page 199: 'The key of knowledge has been given, but unfortunately it has been stolen again by Peter's pretended successors, and upon a smaller scale by every other ecclesiastic who would discourage or throw hindrances in the way of a free unbiased and independent examination and avowal of Bible truth in their churches, or an unrestricted advocacy of it....', and he refers to Dr. Thomas' objection to Campbellism branding as speculators and infidels, Christian men who have the independence to think and act for themselves according to their own understanding of what God says to them in His Word. And George comments, 'In writing these thoughts Dr. Thomas expressed essential truths for a vigorous Christian church: infringe them and we have a stuffed image but no vital, living community', and he regrets the subsequent history of Dr. Thomas' followers. On page 21 he says, 'Many people fear to apply themselves to a reconsideration of their own beliefs, because "You never know where it will lead you." Even a minor reassessment of one topic is feared - "...how far would it go?" Still others think that there is no intermediate position between faithful adherence to a traditional stand and complete chaos where everyone has his own views and all differ from each other. All these attitudes, I feel ... to be faithless and wrong.' I feel very strongly that these comments are pertinent to not only Christadelphians but also to every professing Christian.

On the bottom of page 25 he says, 'But we can thus show that the consummation of God's plan comes through His working in history to bring a crisis of judgement in which the evil hearts of men are revealed by their reactions to His witnesses.' and, on the next page, 'It would also reveal a desired co-operation between man and God in advancing His purpose. The Christadelphian position at present is more that of a community of spectators, avoiding the

passing of judgement on current evils because they are done in a world for which Christadelphians believe they have little responsibility.' If the elect are to be priests and kings in the Kingdom, can it be right during probation to keep their hands in their pockets so that they will not be soiled by worldly quandaries? Or should we be proclaiming to the citizens of this dispensation what is right and what is wrong, and why it is so? I personally advocate the latter.

It is apposite to note that when a new religious group breaks away from the established sects, it is 'on fire for the Lord' in the first generation and to a considerable extent also in the second and third generations, but by the time you get to the fifth and later generations of followers, it settles down to become just another sect, more interested in conformity than lively discussion, and with the faults indicated above by George McHaffie. He says, on page 21, 'Happily the corner has been turned: there is a growing awareness of this danger, and reappraisal desired.' It seems to me that unhappily no such corner has been turned, and that the overwhelming danger of conformity and censorship has become ominous. Let him who readeth understand, and do not dismiss it as irrelevant illusion; if the cap fits, wear it.

Yours in the hope of Israel,

John Stevenson

We have received letters expressing disapproval of articles that appeared in the last issue from two brothers, David Sutcliffe and Paul Danks. The writers who were criticised have nearly all responded directly to the two brothers concerned and await their responses. It is possible that some of this correspondence will appear in our next issue.

We should be always wearing the garment of praise,
not just waving a palm-branch now and then.

Andrew Bonar.

Our object is to promote a faithful Bible-based response to issues which confront us both in thought and in day-to-day living. *The Endeavour Magazine* is published so that the range of views which exist within our Christadelphian Brotherhood may be discussed and represented, and so that issues of wider concern may also be studied and analysed. We therefore encourage discussion and criticism of what appears in our pages, provided it is done in a Christ-like spirit and with a concern that truth should prevail. The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editorial Committee but are published because it is believed that they will make a useful contribution to discussion, and help us all to a deeper understanding of our faith. Articles appearing in this magazine should not be published elsewhere without the permission of the author and the editor.

Correspondence and articles for the next issue should be sent to the Editor by **April 21, 2001**, at the latest, please.

Les Boddy, 14 Meadow Drive, Healing, Grimsby, N.E. Lincs., DN41 7RU.

Prices for two issues, including postage:

U.K. £3.50

Overseas £5 by Surface Mail, £6 by Air Mail.

Subscriptions should be sent to:

(Mrs) Ruth Marsters, Quercus, Hilgay Road, West Dereham, King's Lynn.
PE33 9RW.

Cheques (or currency notes) should be in Sterling only.

Please make cheques payable to *The Endeavour Magazine*.