

The

Endeavour

Magazine

*I am telling you the truth:
a grain of wheat remains no
more a single grain unless it is
dropped into the ground and
dies.*



*If it does die,
then it produces many grains.*

June 2002

107

The Endeavour Magazine

For Christian Thought and Action

ISSN 1474-404X

June 2002

No.107

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Editorial

Hocus-pocus.

We all have difficulty at times in seeing the wood for the trees. Words can often get in the way of understanding if we focus too much on individual words and too little on the overall context in which they are used. When we have such difficulty it may be that we have locked on to one possible sense of the word(s) and neglect to consider that there may well be other ways in which they can be understood. (Anyone who does cryptic crosswords will understand all this immediately.) The problem is heightened in religious language where, by the very nature of what is being discussed, there is a greater dependency on the symbolic and figurative. Matters are even worse when we are discussing the meanings of words written long ago such as those in the Scriptures. One of the regular moves that we tend to make, supposedly to ease matters for ourselves, is to take words at their 'face value', literally, but this does not always solve the problem often rather making matters worse.

The incidents in John 3 & 4, concerning Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, are good illustrations of such difficulties. Nicodemus came at night seeking enlightenment and there may well have been an element of satire in his observation that if he needed to re-enter his mother's womb to be born again (assuming she was still around to oblige) it was just not possible! However, it is also likely that he was confused by Jesus' language, unable immediately to face up to its challenge and able only to take it at least partly literally at the time. To the Samaritan woman, 'living water' was fresh, spring water that she had come to the well for, whereas Jesus may well have been thinking of OT passages such as Jer 2:13 and Isa 12:3, 55:1 where God is spoken of as a spring of fresh water capable of quenching human thirst and where the life-giving qualities of the gospel are described.

No one has ever taken Jesus' words in John 10:7,9, 'I am the door' literally, but the case is altogether different with his words 'This is my body', Mk 14:22; 1Cor11:24. Arguments have raged over the interpretation of these words, *Hoc est corpus meum* in Latin, pronounced by the Catholic priest at the high point of the Mass and believed to provoke the transubstantiation of the bread into the body of Christ. It seems that this may well have been the source of the phrase 'hocus-pocus', used as the title of this editorial, and possibly invented as a parody on the words *Hoc est corpus* to be used by magicians as a way of changing the nature of physical objects. The gullible may well believe that there is a power in such mumbo-jumbo words but, as the root of the problem is the extent to which we take words literally, we should heed the warning, encapsulated in the phrase 'hocus-pocus', against being too ready to force literal meanings on words that really don't require them. We need to learn to be more sensitive to the poetic, symbolic, figurative and metaphoric use of language, particularly in relation to God and His ways.

The well-known Jewish prayer, the Shema, to be found in Deut 6:4-6, is followed by instructions to tie God's commands on one's arm and forehead (Deut 6:8, 11:18; Ex 13:9,10). There is no evidence that such instructions were originally taken literally; rather they were understood in a purely symbolic or figurative sense. Whereas the Samaritans have never taken them literally, the Jews, or some of them, did begin to do so around the time that the Septuagint was produced. So began the practice of tying phylacteries (or *tefillin*) to the left arm and on the forehead, and nailing a *mezuzah* to the doorpost. These were little boxes containing the Shema and other portions of Scripture written on parchment. All of these practices were intended to keep the user from committing sin and were not too different from the pagan practice of wearing amulets.

Jesus was fond of drawing attention to the Shema, as he does in Mk 12:29-30, but there is no evidence that he or his followers ever wore phylacteries. (The term 'phylactery' comes from the Greek verb *phylatto* meaning to protect. *Phylakterion*, meaning any kind of safeguard, eventually being used to denote an amulet. *Tefillin* is an Aramaic word for phylacteries.) The only time they are mentioned in the NT, Mat 23:5, Jesus refers to them while warning his disciples against the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. The Shema was meant to lead people to devote their lives to the service of God and neighbour but, by highlighting the instruction to wear the commands on arm and forehead in a literal manner, it had become more a matter of personal decoration. It was significant that the little box containing the Shema worn on the head could not be seen by the wearer but only by the observer, who no doubt was expected to respectfully note the righteousness of the wearer and presumably admit their own sinfulness. There was a sense in which it was intended to be seen by others to remind them of the wearer's devotion to God, whereas the Shema was meant to remind everyone in their heart of their own duty to God.

Jesus has some difficult things to say about the Law. In particular Mat 5:18 with its parallel in Luke 16:17 are not easy to understand on the lips of Jesus in a straight, literal sense. The Matthew version – '... that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point nor the smallest detail of the Law will be done away with – not until the end of all things.' – is often brought into discussions when one party suspects that the other is in some way downgrading the OT and needs to be reminded that all the 'jots and tittles' (AV) are important. And yet there is no evidence that our Lord handled the OT in the literal way that such advocates are usually pleading for. In his talk about the Law and the Shema already referred to, Jesus seems to be perfectly happy to go for the general principle – Love the Lord your God – rather than getting too involved with all the jots and tittles. Actually, the tittles were not part of the Law anyway but rather an addition to it, for they are usually regarded as scribal ornaments added to certain letters in the Hebrew alphabet not unlike serifs, marks that distinguish a T from

a T in English. The 'jot' is usually taken to be a reference to the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet, iota.

Mark 10:1-12, a paragraph in which Jesus discusses divorce with some Pharisees, makes it very difficult to accept Mat 5:17. In Jewish terms, Jesus puts forward a critique of a part of the Law about divorce, Deut 24:1-4, on the grounds of another part of the Law, Gen 2:24. How then can the Law remain in force as long as heaven and earth do not pass away? The context of the Matthew verse itself also makes it difficult to accept because no sooner has Jesus said these words than he launches on a critique of several aspects of the Law putting forward his own understanding as a challenge to the received understanding. Luke's parallel statement – 'But it is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the smallest detail of the Law to be done away with.' – suffers from the same problem, for both the verse before it and the one after it seem to tell another story. Verse 16 says that 'The Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were in effect up to the time of John the Baptist; since then the Good News about the Kingdom of God is being told....' If this is the case then surely the implication is clearly that something better than the Law and the prophets has now come on the scene and so the Law has in a sense been superseded. The following verse, a summary of the divorce teaching of Jesus in Mark 10, already referred to, shows how for Jesus what the Law of Moses taught needed to be changed.

In Luke, this difficulty is easily solved if we notice that the paragraph concerned starts with a reference to some Pharisees making fun of Jesus. Jesus then chides them for making themselves look right in other people's sight and for getting their priorities wrong. In this context we only have to ask who in the Gospels are always concerned about highlighting the Law and their own ability to keep it, and not to let go of even a jot or a tittle of it, to come up with the answer to our problem. In Luke 16, in front of his disciples, Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees, the champions of the Law, always ready to see others as sinners, and the simplest way of taking Jesus' comment in verse 17 is as an example of deliberate overstatement (hyperbole), and bitter irony, for, of all people, these men did not want to let any part of the Law out of their grasp and insisted on telling others that they should obey it all. There is all the evidence we need in the writings of Paul that he had had to learn that Jesus had now to take the part in his life which the Law had played during his life as Saul. So this comment on the Law does not concern the eternity of the Law but the obstinate conservatism of Scribes and Pharisees who wanted to hang on to 'every jot and tittle' and oppose Jesus' new teaching.

We find another clear example of hyperbole in Mark 10:25 – 'It is much harder for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.' At least two well-known attempts have been made

to tone down the force of this saying. The first pretends to have discovered that there was a gate in Jerusalem regularly referred to as the 'eye' but there is no clear evidence of this in any of the literature and the idea appears to have surfaced first in medieval times. The second suggests that *camelos* (camel) is a mistake for *camilos* (cable or rope) in the Greek but once again there is no clear evidence of such a mistake having been made. On the contrary, there is evidence of other Jewish teachers commenting on the impossibility of some other vast object, such as an elephant, going through the eye of a needle. Both suggestions are attempts to make the saying conform more literally to the world with which we are familiar but both inevitably take the punch out of the saying in so doing. It is surely meant to make us react strongly and to take its message seriously rather than trying to explain it away. Hyperbole is a figure of speech common to all languages but is particularly characteristic of Semitic peoples.

These few examples have, I trust, made it clear that there are times when approaching the Scriptures unimaginatively and attempting to force on them literal interpretations is simply inappropriate. Much of the Bible is written in figurative language and we need to learn to be aware of the false trails that we can go down if we put too much trust in unquestioned literalism. The writers of our Scriptures were not naive literalists unaware of the figurative nature of much language, rather they used to the full the whole gamut of figures of speech in order to get their message across to their readers. Jesus in particular was a skilful storyteller who knew how to make good use of his own language. If we open our Bibles without this understanding we are likely to waste much time going down blind alleys and repeating the same sort of mistakes as the legalistic and literalistic Jews that Jesus had to deal with throughout his ministry. What is more, we are likely to reduce the impact that certain challenging passages might have upon us.

Les Boddy

(Much of this editorial is based on material to be found in chapter 3 of *The Wisdom and Wit of Rabbi Jesus* by William E. Phipps, 1993, Westminster/John Knox Press.)

Beginnings and Endings: Comparing the Four Gospels

Luke

In the first article in this series I looked at the beginning and ending of Mark, concluding that the writer is concerned with the question of Jesus' identity. Mark leaves the answer to this question, and the continuation of the story of the work of Jesus, to his readers. In the second article I described the way that Matthew, through prophecy, seeks to prove that Jesus is the expected Jewish

Messiah. Matthew's story of Jesus ended with his followers, commissioned to 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Mt. 28:19, all quotations from the NIV); the Jewish Messiah became the saviour of all nations, and us. Mark and Matthew end their stories of the life of Jesus with the beginning of a new story: that of his followers, past, present and future. I will now look at Luke, in the same way that I dealt with Mark and Matthew, by focussing on the way the gospel begins and ends.

We might describe Luke as the 'universal gospel': 'universal' in the ethnic groups which it includes, 'universal' in the social groups which it describes, and 'universal' because it seeks to show the continuity between Jesus and God's past dealings with humanity, and between Jesus and the early church. This continuity is the work of the Holy Spirit, and Luke is the first NT book in our Bible to mention its work.

The opening verses of Luke are like the opening sentences of classical Greek biography:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (1: 1-4)

Unlike Mark or Matthew whose gospels begin with allusions to the OT and Jewish history, from the start Luke tells his story so as to appeal to a 'universal' audience. Whilst the writer is keen to stress that his work is the result of the evaluation of evidence: 'I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning' (1: 3) it is still 'an account of the things that have been *fulfilled* among us' (1: 1, italics mine). Luke, like Mark and Matthew, stresses that the facts of Jesus' life are filled with prophetic meaning.

Luke begins, as Mark and Matthew did, by looking beyond its own beginning to earlier beginnings in the Bible. Zechariah and Elizabeth 'were upright in the sight of God' (1:6) like Noah (Ge. 7:1), with 'no children' (1:7) like Abram and Sarai (Ge. 16:1), and sing psalms of praise (1:68-79) like Moses, Miriam and Hannah. Luke creates a context for the birth of Jesus filled with allusions to faithful people blessed by God. For Luke, the birth of Jesus, like these other interventions by God, is good news.

More importantly, Luke's story begins by firmly establishing the focal areas of its story of the life of Jesus. Firstly, Jesus' mission to the poor is foretold by Mary's song: '[God] has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.' (1:53) It is the poor shepherds who hurry to the child Jesus rather than the Establishment figures, kings and wise men, of Matthew's account.

Secondly, the work of the Holy Spirit is emphasised in the work of John the Baptist (1:15), the conception of Jesus (1:35), prompts Elizabeth to recognise the mother of Messiah (1:41), is upon Simeon (2:25), descends on Jesus (3:22) and then leads him into the desert to be tempted (4:1). Finally, in the temple Zechariah is told of the birth of John (1:9), Simeon is led to the temple courts to see Jesus (2:27), Anna 'never left the temple' (2:37), as a boy, Jesus questioned religious leaders in the temple (2:46) and as an adult the devil tempts him 'on the highest point of the temple.' (4:9) It is the temple where Luke ends with the disciples 'continually at the temple, praising God' (24:53).

The key to Luke's gospel, and to its beginning, is its 'universal' theme, its appeal to all people. Luke is careful to situate the story of Jesus in relation to history and the leaders of different nations: to 'Herod king of Judea' (1:5), 'Caesar Augustus' (2:1). Simeon is moved to praise Jesus as 'a light of revelation to the Gentiles *and* for a glory to your people Israel' (2:32, italics mine). John the Baptist is described as: 'A voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him..."' (3:4, quoting Isaiah 40:3) and this is recorded in Matthew, Mark and John but only Luke continues the quotation: 'And all mankind will see God's salvation' (3:6 quoting Isaiah 40:5). Matthew traced Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people but Luke goes back to Adam (3:37) the father of all people. In historical context, audience and origin, the life of Jesus is lived and offered to become a blessing for Jew and Gentile alike.

Luke ends with Jesus telling his disciples:

Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (24:44, 46-47)

Consistent with the opening of the gospel the writer reminds his readers that the evidence he has collected shows that prophecy has been 'fulfilled'. The past of 'Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms' and the recent past of suffering and resurrection are brought together. The fulfilment of all these stories begins new ones. For Luke, the life of Jesus began in the temple with Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, Mary and Joseph, and Jesus. As the gospel ends the temple becomes the starting point of another new life, the life of Jesus' followers. This new life, and the fulfilment of these closing verses, will be told in the second part of Luke's story about the life of Jesus: the Acts of the Apostles. The message is 'universal', preached to all nations, and it is a story that is now preached to us. Luke's story begins, ends and begins again with the 'universal' scope of the story of Jesus.

(To be continued)

Richard Gaston

The Triumph of Love

'Behold thy son,' to Mary Jesus cried.
'Behold thy mother, standing by thy side.'
For in his pain he thought of others more,
Their loneliness and grief, their travail sore.
He gave his life mid strife and hatred too,
Yet turned that anguish into triumph true.
He called it glory, for he bore its shame
Without resentment, cursing, taunts or blame.
Upon the cross he reigned a king indeed,
His battle won, his spirit wholly freed
From earthly cares, his peace with God assured.
No other crown he sought, nor man's reward,
For on that stake he lifted up to God
All those who'd follow in the path he trod,
Who'd face with faith and hope life's trials sore
And seek to help the frail, the sick, the poor.

For every sacrifice has healing power.
Within each dying seed there lurks a flower.
The hidden blue that lies behind the cloud,
The mists of Autumn folding like a shroud
The golden tints that gleam from branch and tree,
And shady woodlands wrapped in mystery,
The winter's cold that clothes the ground with snow
Yet hides the growth that burgeons forth below,
The dark of night that turns to glow of day,
The dawn's pale streaks that tint with gold the grey,
All show that out of darkness comes forth light,
The Master's hand displayed before our sight.

The victory Christ won upon the cross,
Is ours as well, if we will share the loss
Of earthly fame and glory, pomp and show,
And live to serve mankind on earth below.
For from his sacrifice there flows a power
To enrich our lives with strength for every hour,
Whate'er life brings of sorrow, grief or pain,
To see a ray of sunshine through the rain.

The Genesis Flood: Was It Worldwide?

Many of us still believe that the Flood described in Genesis chapters 6-8 was worldwide in spite of the growth in knowledge, particularly in geology, that has occurred over the centuries. It still persists in Evangelical quarters and the history of the belief is the subject of a recent lengthy book by Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood. A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence* (Paternoster 1995). Young's reason for writing was that he is 'a professor of geology at a self-consciously Christian college with strong denominational ties.' He has frequently been asked by various Christian colleges and theological seminaries, to speak about the relationship of geology to Scripture and Christian faith. While audiences usually accept his talk, quite often however, he encounters those who are disappointed and distressed at what he says. The reason is that there is no evidence in geology supporting a belief in a worldwide flood and much against it. In his book Young does not explicitly commit himself to denying a worldwide flood but the argument of his book is overwhelmingly against it, chiefly by showing, at great length, that arguments in favour over the centuries have not succeeded, largely because they were mistaken about the facts. Or in other cases that they were beyond credibility, for example that kangaroos and other such creatures were guided by God to Eden and then, after the Flood, back again to Australia.

Initially it might well seem that the Flood described in Genesis was worldwide. 'For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. . . . [the waters] rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet.' (Genesis 7:17,19,20 NIV)

However, Ernest Lucas in his book *Genesis Today* (Scripture Union 1989) says 'The Hebrew word translated 'earth' in the story (*'eret*) does not mean the same thing as the English word. In three-quarters of its occurrences in the Old Testament it is better translated by the word 'land', meaning a particular place or area, rather than 'the earth' meaning 'the globe'. An example is Genesis 12:1 where *'eret* is translated 'unto a *land* that I will shew thee.' The context has to be the guide.' To confirm this Lucas says 'there is a special Hebrew word for the whole inhabitable earth (*tebel*) and it is not used in the flood story.' (p 127) Young however does not seem aware of this, although his book is so lengthy that one cannot be absolutely certain.

A further difficulty over the events, as related, is: what was the sin which merited such severe punishment? It is unique in Scripture, even though there is much about other human sin, often extremely grave and persisting for

long periods, which did not attract such punishment. I believe that a solution to both questions can be found initially in a study of the circumstances; the place and the time of the Genesis story.

Taking these in reverse order, how large was the population of the earth in Noah's time? According to the genealogies, (Genesis 5) the Flood took place in 2344 BC, 1656 years after the Creation. But the genealogies show that in those times a first child was not born until its father was (respectively) 105 years old (Seth), 90 (Kenan), 70 (Mahalele), 65 (Jared), 162 (Enoch), 65 (Methusaleh), 187 (Lamech), 182 (Noah), 500 (Shem, Ham and Japheth). So, on the basis of Scripture, the world population at the time of the Flood after say ten generations, could only have been a few thousand, at most. (It has been estimated that between AD 1630 and 1930 the earth's population doubled only every 130 years.)

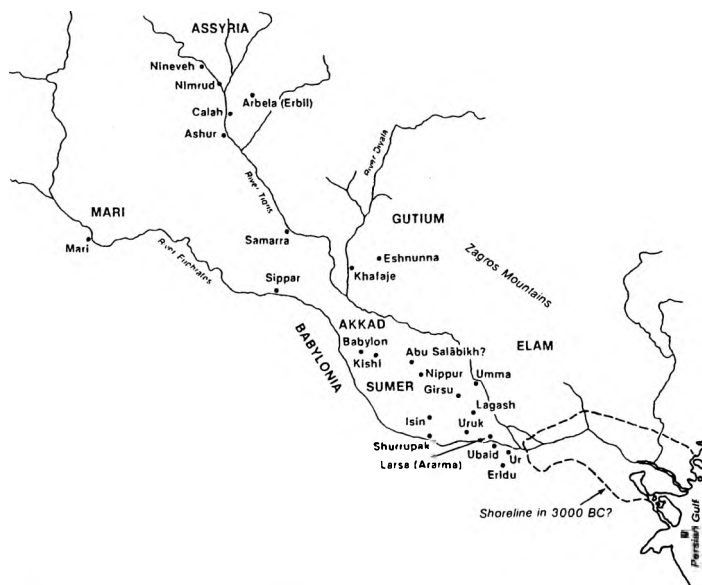
Of course the longevity of these early characters has been a matter of doubt. How long was a 'year'? Treating it as a lunar month makes sense of the longevity in many instances, and the Hebrew means literally 'a change'. But whatever the precise facts were, the population of the world must have been relatively small and therefore could not have been widely dispersed. So there was no need for a worldwide flood if the object was to destroy the human race. Secondly, as regards the place: there can be no doubt that it was somewhere in Mesopotamia, 'the land between two rivers': namely Euphrates and Tigris, which is highly significant.

The most helpful contribution to understanding the Flood passages in Genesis that I have encountered is by William Todd in his book *New Light on Genesis* (1978) which Young does not mention. Todd says 'history is governed by geography. Nowhere is that more apparent than in Mesopotamia, where all the early scenes in Genesis are laid.' He continues, that it was only in recent years that the physical formation of this extraordinary land has been appreciated. This enabled the imprecise accounts of old geographers, and the Babylonian legends, to be dispensed with. While the theologians, philologists and archaeologists had laboured hard in a complex field, few geographers had applied their knowledge to the Hebrew text. (Todd himself had travelled extensively in the area for many years and was very familiar with the geography.)

Thirdly, the circumstances. What was the wrongdoing which required punishment so much severer than that inflicted on any other people in subsequent history? No indication is given in Genesis as to what it was. And when Jesus referred to it (Matthew 24:28,29), it was as an example of failure to see what was coming in the near future, not of sinfulness: 'people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.' It is foolish to be oblivious of what is going to happen, but not

necessarily sinful. The same is true of the passage in 1 Peter 3: 18-20 in which the building of the ark is said to be a symbol that should have alerted Noah's contemporaries to the forthcoming flood; 'This water symbolises baptism that now saves you also.'

One difficulty to a fuller understanding of Genesis is that we live in a land with sufficient rainfall for our needs. With us water is relatively cheap and plentiful. With us land is a criterion of value. In Eden, land was not important in itself: water was. (Eden is an Akkadian word which means 'a plain', the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates). Here in Europe rainfall enables each farmer to work independently. There, individual smallholdings could not arrange irrigation independently and cooperation on a tribal scale was needed. That there was irrigation, even in the garden of Eden, is inferred at the beginning of chapter 2 of Genesis. 'When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up; the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth (or land: NIV marginal note) and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.'



This is the most important fact to realise about Mesopotamia. At first sight the land appears largely flat, though it does slope gently, over very many miles, to the sea. In the course of time the silt brought down by the two rivers had caused their beds to rise until they were nearly as high as the neighbouring land. Every year in the spring there was a rise in the river levels caused by melting winter snows in the high mountains where their sources lay. The rivers then became broad torrents which, unless controlled, would flow over the land devastating crops (although bringing rich silt to the ground). But in the summer water had to be diverted from the rivers to sustain the crops, and this necessitated the digging of side channels at intervals. Dykes had to be built to contain the rivers themselves, and side canals leading water to the crops in the summer had to be capable of being opened and closed as necessary. Consequently the land became very fruitful, rivalling the Nile valley in productivity.

The first people to undertake this work were the Sumerians, named after their land Sumer (the 'plain of Shinar' Genesis 11:2). This was the nearest part of Mesopotamia to the sea, the Persian Gulf as it is known today. Ur of the Chaldees was in their territory and was then a seaport. (The delta has extended over the centuries and the site of Ur is now 70 miles from the sea.)

However, another people migrated later into the area, the Akkadians, named from Akkad whence they came. They settled higher up the plain (Babylon was later in their territory). There follows a mysterious incident which commentaries find difficulty in understanding. Widely varying explanations are offered but none seem related to the actual situation. 'When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and they married any of them that they chose. . . . The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterwards – when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.' (6.4). (The Sumerians regarded themselves as descended from Adam, unlike the Akkadians.)

Who and what the Nephilim were is a mystery. They were obviously not warriors. The only other reference in Scripture to them is in Numbers 13:33, when the spies who had reconnoitred the promised land with Caleb reported about the people they had encountered: 'The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there . . . We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.'

Todd's explanation is that the newcomers, the Akkadians, were amazed at the irrigational skills of the Sumerians and so described them as giants – in hydraulic engineering. The offspring of the mixed marriages developed the same skills. These skills were applied by the newcomers in their territory further up the Euphrates. It is clear that such development would reduce the amount of

water available to the original population, particularly if the newcomers were wasteful and diverted too much water to their own land. This could well be a source of enmity. The vital factor, peace, on which the strenuous work of maintaining the channels depended, gave place to strife (wickedness), no doubt on both sides.

It was after a considerable period that God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark.' (9:13,14). (It is clear that 'all people' and 'the earth' cannot mean 'throughout the globe'.)

It is at this point that we have to remember the lesson that God taught Jeremiah in the potter's house: 'O house of Israel, if at any time I announce that a nation is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.' (18:7-9). This is a statement of principle applicable to all prophecy. God's words are not a prediction of something bound to happen but of something that would happen if it were not averted.

The state of affairs was that the discipline and cooperation imposed on men seeking to control two mighty rivers were thrown away, the greed for water bringing fear, jealousy and finally the use of force. It is this that would 'destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.' Not the whole world, but the cultivable land subject to the annual inundation. So Noah's Flood was not the act of God deliberately destroying all mankind. Nothing could be further from the truth. The annual inundation was rendered catastrophic by the wickedness of men.

That there was such an impending catastrophe that could be avoided is hinted at in a mysterious way towards the end of chapter 5 of Genesis. When Lamech's son was born he named him 'Noah' and said 'He will comfort us in the labour and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed.' Note particularly 'labour' and 'toil'. We can be sure that *God* did not curse the ground. His words are not a threat, but a warning. The discipline and cooperation required to master a mighty river in full flood had given way to violence and corruption. What was wrong with the ground was caused by the wickedness of men, which God had not intervened to stop. Lamech was looking forward by an act of faith to something Noah might do to avoid a catastrophe that had been foreseen. And so what Noah did was to obey God and construct the Ark so that all would not be lost if things continued as they were.

And furthermore, Noah's salvation was not going to be achieved by a miracle but by obeying the instruction to build an 'ark'. For some reason the commentaries, in describing what followed, treat the cubit as being 18 inches, although the cubit was not an invariable length but depended on what it was applied to.

The dimensions given in the NIV make the ark 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high, not perhaps as big as a transatlantic liner, but the size of a cross-channel vehicle ferry. It does not seem to have occurred to the commentary writers that four men could not possibly build such a vessel, doubtless because of the underlying belief that the Flood was worldwide and so had to be big enough to accommodate thousands of creatures. Todd's dimensions are: 100 feet long, 17 feet wide and 10 feet high, based on the size of the barges made of reeds on the rivers in his day.

This gives an idea as to how it was possible for four men to build a vessel large enough to carry the animals that were to be saved. The NIV says that Noah was told 'Make yourself an ark of cypress wood, make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out' (6:14). The NIV notes that the meaning of 'cypress' is uncertain. Todd says that the Hebrew for 'rooms' (*qinnim*) is now known to mean 'reeds' and the ark 'may have been made of the giant reeds which grow in the marshes to a height of 25 feet and are as thick as punt poles.' The flood was not something unexpected. Many translations say 'a flood' but it should be 'the flood'. Todd says the annual flood was not sudden. Slowly, but gathering in momentum, the river swelled until after six or seven weeks, the normally broad and placid stream had grown into a turbulent and raging torrent. In 1995 a masonry dam was completed across the Tigris at Samarra to make extra flood-water escape along a 60-mile canal into a vast depression in the desert. When filled this creates a reservoir from which water may be passed back into the Tigris when the natural level falls and more water is required.

But the ancients controlled the Euphrates in a similar way by means of an escape into a depression in the western desert, in area about 150 square miles, it is now called lake Habbaniyah. The effect of this is that in the early stages, when the snow begins to melt, the rise in the lower part of the river is less than it would be otherwise. But when the reservoir is full there is a great increase in the lower part of the river which becomes a turbulent and raging torrent 'some sixteen feet above its normal level, and twelve times its normal volume' says Todd.

The Genesis account seems to reflect this. To begin with, 'Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth' (7:6). In vv 7-10 there is an account of how all the animals, and Noah's family, entered the ark concluding 'And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.' But then there seems to be a new beginning (v 11, 12) 'In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventh day of the second month, on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.'

Traditionalists say that this great deep was a store of underground water that was released by God. But no evidence is produced of this, and the geology of

the region renders it unlikely (although there is plenty of petroleum!). Surely it reflects the fact that the reservoir in the mountains was full and the real force of the floods was then felt in the valley below. Then they overtopped or broke down the dykes, which had not been maintained properly (because of the strife between the Sumerians and Akkadians) and the flood would sweep far and wide across the hollow plain between the river.

There follows a statement regarded as confirming a worldwide flood: (7:19,20) 'The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet.' This would be a strange statement even if the mountains were no more than 2,000 feet high. But, as Todd remarks, 'There are no mountains in the plain; it is flat as far as the eye can see; but in this flat country mounds of even two or three hundred feet could be regarded as 'high hills' just as in London Ludgate Hill is rightly called a hill, though in the country it would not merit the description.'

And so Noah and his family would float in the ark, gently drifting throughout the summer on a vast inland lake, downwards towards the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates, to Ur of the Chaldees, where Noah's descendants settled, including Terah, Abraham's father.

The duration of the flood is given as 150 days and this would bring it to October when the river was low and floodwater could drain back into the natural channels. Then the ark would ground upon a shoal, a mound below the surface, and come to rest. Draining being a slow progress, two and a half months elapsed before the tops of the mounds emerged above the retreating waters.

A small detail confirms the accuracy of the story. 'By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry. Then God said to Noah 'Come out of the ark, . . .' (8:13-15) Why the delay? Because the subsoil would be saturated and the ground like a swamp, due to its long immersion. Noah would have to wait until sun and wind had made it possible to take up his habitual way of life.

Ron Coleman

*Thankfulness
is a flower that will never bloom well
excepting upon a root of deep humility.
J C Ryle*

To Be Or Not To Be

Part 2

In my previous article, (see *Endeavour* 105) I argued that unwillingness to reflect on our community's weaknesses is preventing us from facing some unpleasant truths, particularly the causes of the steady decline of our U.K. community.

It is not, in general, because our theology is perceived as irrelevant. I suspect that most of those who leave our community (and the considerable number of young people who do not join) leave it believing core Christadelphian doctrines. It is simply that our ecclesial organisation and function meets the spiritual needs of an ever-declining minority only.

Likewise people 'outside' are just as spiritually needy and searching as they ever were in the days of the Apostles or the 'Pioneers'. But they are 'coming from' completely different 'starting points' compared to the potential converts of 1850. The way that we present the Gospel is simply out of date and therefore irrelevant to the vast majority of those seeking a sound spiritual and religious foundation. Our community often prides itself on 'keeping itself from the world', but misapplies the concept to mean that no allowance should be made for cultural changes in society. Therefore we are still having services and ecclesial organisation that are Victorian in culture rather than C21st! This implies a lack of reflection upon how others see us, and therefore an unhealthy lack of awareness of our own nature.

Many Christadelphians labour under the illusion that we are organised on scriptural lines, utterly divorced from any practice of 'Christendom'. How many are aware, for example, that our unscriptural ritual of 'the right hand of fellowship' after baptism is carried over exactly from our origins as a Baptist splinter-sect, created to reinforce the exclusive sectarianism within the Baptist movements in that era, or that 'exclusion for disorderly walk' is a Calvinist tenet?

The Bible Reading Seminars are a rare step in the right direction; they are delivering what people need, in a medium they can access, and are reaping tangible results. They are even being imitated by other churches! Yet how rare such innovation is!

I previously recommended that readers get hold of a copy of bro. Jim Bilton's superb talk 'The Church's Mission Statement' from Hoddesden, which cites evidence as to why some churches are growing and others are dying. The video suggests how to build up your congregation using tried and tested methods that work. The evening lecture did work in 1850; it was culturally relevant. Today it does not work. Jim gives some examples of culturally relevant services used in other churches that increase membership figures, relevance and participation.

I wish to share with you a conversation that I had with a member of a Baptist Church in Crewe whilst attending 'Spring Harvest'. I asked him what his Church was like and he replied by recounting how it was 27 years ago in contrast to now. 27 years ago it was practically closed and at that point a new Minister came to serve the congregation. This Minister was aware that his Church needed to be relevant to the community around it, which was a poor area of Crewe. He radically altered the Church approach so that it related to and served the community in a relevant and 'real' way. The moment the Minister implemented these radical ideas, a big chunk of the Congregation left the Church and went elsewhere. Does this sound familiar?

I asked this member of that Church, what happened to it? The answer was that it had grown from approximately 30 then to 1,100 today! He told me that each Sunday they have at least four baptisms and on one particular Sunday thirty people were baptised! They have their own restaurant and library; furthermore they have a full-time team working with both the local social services and the probation office. They have a social life that the young can relate to which includes Christian bands. (Yes, electric guitars! Shock, horror!). They have a youth group of 300 people because the services are, in a deep and meaningful way, relevant to them. What is equally impressive about this visionary Baptist Church in Crewe is that many of the members were genuine first-time converts to Christianity, not previously members of other churches. I was impressed with this Church for bucking the general trend of most U.K. churches, which are in decline.

A reason often expressed in our community for general decline in Christianity in society is that materialism has diverted people away from God; it is a partial truth. Yes, the U.K. is the fourth richest country in the World; but the other side of the picture is that during Mrs Thatcher's 'loads of money' Britain era there was a church revival, primarily within the evangelical movement and in house meetings (Brierley, 1998:pp 14-15). Furthermore a considerable proportion of the relevant, sociologically-connected, growing churches today are in deprived areas, where affluence is not an issue. Poverty, as defined by the government, has increased from approximately 8% in 1979, to 25% today (Seymour, 2000:p.43). Conversely, as the poor have got poorer the rich have got richer - much richer (ibid:p.55). So, like that church in Crewe, working in a deprived area and being incredibly successful, we need to have that vision to relate to the community near our Christadelphian congregation. Many meeting rooms are sited in poor areas and attended by people living outside the area whose main concern with their neighbours is how to guard their cars from them during the services! The Handsworth meeting is a rare exception and has reaped the benefits.

Some will say that it is pampering to worldliness and 'unscriptural' to relate to people! I strongly disagree, and I will now demonstrate this from two very powerful pieces of scripture. In Acts chapter 17 Paul had an apparently impossible situation in Athens, 'the city ... full of idols.' (v.16) If Paul had given a standard Christadelphian lecture from the Old Testament on idolatry, the audience would not have understood him, as they probably had never heard of the Old Testament or the concept of idolatry as a sin. Although Paul was upset by the idols he noticed the inscription 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD' (v.23) and proceeded to preach from that starting point. Furthermore, Paul cited a pagan poet and never referred to the Old Testament once. He challenged the elitist intellectuals of his own day using their own philosophy and by addressing their own 'hot issue', and he gained some converts (v.34). What an inspiring way of relating to potential converts in a culturally relevant manner in such a pagan situation. But the second passage is far more compelling (*italics are mine*):

'Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I have become weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessing.' (1 Corinthians chapter 9 v19-23)

Is our community 'all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some'? Definitely not! How many times has your meeting advertised talks on 'How to get peace of mind' or 'How to build a good marriage' or 'How to get off drugs'? Probably never, but these are the kind of issues that are dealt with in a realistic way by the churches that are growing - they are 'all things to all men.'

So how did Paul put into practice this idea? In the case of the Jews he went into their Synagogues instead of waiting for them to come to us as we often do. Paul did the equivalent of preaching in their church or going to 'Spring Harvest'. It is worth noting that Synagogues were far more than simply a place of worship. They were the equivalent of the social services, probation, market place, social life etc.; the secular and the religious met there. (This is fundamentally different to the culture of most churches in decline). And that Synagogue model is the same basic approach used by that Baptist Church in Crewe. It is likely that the first churches planted by the Apostles were along the same lines as the Synagogue model.

What does 'all things to all men' mean to us today? It implies that we need to reflect on how our community is not relating to its own members *and* to others

and then act upon it. It means that to those who do not understand Jacobean English (which is the vast majority) we provide modern language Bibles. It means we provide clear and accessible hymns delivered in a lively and relevant musical medium. (As an aside, in the C19th when organs were adopted in place of lively congregational bands in non-conformist churches there was massive resistance, on the grounds that they were Papist. (*The Dissenters* vol.2 pp 185-187) Now, to suggest deviation from the organ is to attract the heresy-hunter!

To those whose sons/daughters are in trouble with the Police we provide support and support groups. To those who need a counsellor we provide a counsellor, to those who are depressed we provide a listening ear and supportive hands. To those who relate to an interactive service we provide interactive services. (If like me, you are at college, you will be aware that interactive teaching is the order of the day now). Our formal services put people off attending, informality is now the cultural norm. 'Formal' or 'informal' are not scriptural concepts and yet this concept has repeatedly been used to support, for example, unscriptural definitions of what sisters may or may not do in the congregation.

There are some excellent characteristics within our community that I respect and love and it would be a shame to see us disappear. Our Bible knowledge is better than most (though not all); our doctrinal understanding of the Bible is superb. Our emphasis of the Kingdom of God on Earth is as it should be. And yet I am a realist: there is little evidence that, nationally, we are becoming 'all things to all men.' Only radical reform will save us and it is most unlikely to happen. I am preparing myself for what seems inevitable, the decline and death of our (U K.) community.

Our decline has been steady since 1960. At that rate we will have gone in twenty years. The greater probability is that the rate will accelerate. The Central Fellowship, like every other human group, consists of a 'right', 'middle' and 'left' and yet in our community these are effectively separate bodies and the gap between them is widening. The principle of exclusiveness appears to be not merely a major group dynamic, but the *only* dynamic holding many meetings even nominally together. 'Establishment' magazines refuse to acknowledge the 'left' or to fairly represent their views; it is only a brief matter of time until they jump or are pushed, and that will involve not a trickle of expendable 'malcontents' but hundreds of brothers and sisters and a swathe of meetings. The open and two-sided debate and practical brotherliness needed to halt this alienation are simply not happening. I challenge those promoting 'harmony' by pushing for uniformity and conformity and 'submission to the will of the majority' that such an agenda is not merely unscriptural but anti-scriptural, and

that it will hasten our decline, not halt it.

Meetings are closing and many more are appealing for members. Soon many long-established and presently well-attended ecclesial halls will be empty and up for sale. The funds will go to finance the future of our community – full Christadelphian Care Homes for an ever-ageing community. As our numbers decline it will get ever harder to marry ‘within the Truth’ and doubtless many meetings will continue to expel those who marry outside, simply accelerating decline. I suspect that we will not slowly grind to a halt, but that the ‘pressure-cooker’ that our community has become after decades of denial and avoidance will simply explode, as rapidly as Communism collapsed in the eighties.

If I am correct you may ask what is the purpose in writing this article? I have no illusions that I am likely to make a realistic difference to our decline, therefore I write this article to find and join forces with those who wish to save the worthwhile parts of our approach to Christianity. I do not say these things lightly but, based on the evidence, I believe them to be true and for me pursuing truth is an essential doctrine of Christianity. (Readers may well be protesting that I have not considered the possibility of Christ’s return arresting our decline. I have. That strong possibility simply reinforces the urgency of radical reform. I would also entreat readers distressed by the picture I am painting to address the issues, not to ‘shoot the messenger’.)

We are a conservative church attempting to follow a radical Messiah and it does not work. Paul had the vision to put himself in other peoples’ shoes (part of the essence of loving your neighbour) and to be ‘all things to all men’. If he had not done this Christianity may not have survived! So let us stop thinking that being respectable or ‘in the middle’ is going to save our community; the evidence points to the opposite, we are dying of terminal respectability, and the middle is the ‘clique’ least likely to survive our collapse! Are you going to follow the scriptural advice of Paul and be ‘all things to all men’ or continue using Victorian patterns and die? Are you going to ‘turn the world upside down’ as Paul and our Messiah did, or die of blandness and a lack of creativity? To be or not to be, that is the question.

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Grace (Part 2)

John Newton (1725-1807), captain of a slave ship and known previously for his blasphemy and unbelief, underwent conversion during a storm at sea in 1748. He later greatly influenced William Wilberforce in the campaign for the abolition of slavery. He wrote two famous revivalist hymns: 'How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds', No. 204 in the *Christadelphian Hymn Book* (new version), and 'Amazing Grace', No. 134 in the *Praise the Lord* hymnal.

'Amazing grace' always brings a lump to my throat. Imagine a dying daughter and a grieving father at her bedside, and two tremulous voices struggling to sing 'Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.' Lost in tears we could not sing any more. But the grace of God was with the two of us to grant us peace of mind.

How can we achieve the high standards of the Christian life? How can we live to the Divine ideal of the Sermon on the Mount – humbleness of mind, meekness of spirit, thirsting after righteousness, being merciful, acquiring purity of heart, letting go of murderous and adulterous thoughts, turning the other cheek, loving one's enemies, being perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect? Totally impossible! Yes, impossible in our own strength, but God has given us the means to achieve such heights, by His amazing grace, through the power of the Spirit.

Something is 'amazing' when it is not predicted and not in the ordinary course of events. What we are experiencing here is a powerful force originating outside the human consciousness, but which nurtures our growth as spiritual beings. We cannot touch it, although it is real. We cannot measure it, yet it exists. The Bible puts a name to it: Grace, God's grace. John in his gospel announces: 'For the law was given by Moses; but grace (charis) and truth came through Jesus Christ.' (John 1:17).

Charis

There is a family of grace words in the New Testament, illustrated in the chart on the next page. As can be seen from the chart the Greek word for grace is 'charis'. It expresses free and spontaneous giving and joyful receiving. It has been defined as 'unmerited favour', 'God's love towards the undeserving' and 'God's free gift'.

Grace is the Divine transforming influence upon the heart, for which we give thanks to God. The older we get, the more conscious we are that we shall not attain the coming Kingdom of God by our own efforts, or by sheer will-power, in the overcoming of temptation and sin. Salvation is not a matter of personal striving but a willingness to be open and receptive to the Holy Spirit and to the

Greek	Occurences	Translated as	AV	NIV
Charis (noun)	155	Grace	129 times	119 times
		Favour	6	6
		Thanks	4	5
		Thank	3	3
Charitoo (verb)	2	Highly favoured	1	1
		Make accepted/ Freely given	1	1
Charizomai (verb)	23	Forgive	11	5
		Give/forgave	6	3
		Deliver/ cancelled	2	2
Chara (noun)	59	Joy	53	44
		Gladness/ happiness	3	2
Chairo (verb)	74	Rejoice	42	17
		Be glad/glad	14	13
		Joy	5	3
		Greetings	1	6
		Delighted		6
		Overjoyed		3
		Rejoicing		3
Charisma (noun)	17	Gift	15	8
		Free gift/gifts	2	7

grace of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ:

'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose' (Phil 2:12).

'For it is by grace (charis) you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast' (Eph 2:8).

Is then grace irresistible? I know from personal experience that I am capable of resisting, and stubbornly refusing, God's grace. We can close our hearts to its influence:

'We urge you not to receive God's grace (charis) in vain.' (2 Cor 6:1)

Let us reflect on Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who was full of the grace of God. At the close of his defence before the Sanhedrin, when his murderers were closing in on him, he bursts out in righteous anger:

'You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like

your fathers: you always resist the Holy Spirit!’ (Acts 7:5).

What did Stephen mean? To resist the Holy Spirit is to resist God’s grace. Stephen’s Jewish adversaries prided themselves on being the elect of God, as possessing His truth, but they were frustrating the grace of God which could have softened their recalcitrant hearts and turned them from stoning Stephen to death.

We recall that Jesus prayed for the men who murdered Him, when dying upon the Cross: ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’ (Luke 23:34). Stephen, as he was dying, followed his Saviour’s example; ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ (Acts 7:9). How could Stephen pray in such a forgiving way? Where did the strength come from to do so? It came from the Lord Jesus. Stephen was brimming over with God’s grace.

Charitoo

This word occurs in the beautiful verse in Luke’s gospel, concerning Mary the mother-to-be of our Lord, when she is confronted by the angel Gabriel:

‘Greetings, you who are highly favoured (charitoo)! The Lord is with you.’ (Luke 1:28).

Mary was disturbed by the angelic visitation, since she was but a young woman of lowly social standing, and could not grasp how it was possible for her to be addressed in such lofty tones. Gabriel, after telling her not to be afraid, explains: ‘Mary you have found favour (charis) with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.’ (Luke 1:30-31).

She was, in a unique sense, a highly blessed person in whom God delighted.

Charizomai

Grace encompasses forgiveness which is one of its vital ingredients. But ‘charizomai’ is not the normal Greek verb denoting forgiveness; that is ‘aphiemi’ which is found 115 times in the New Testament. ‘Charizomai’, used only 23 times, is a very special word for forgiveness. It means ‘to be gracious to’, not simply to forgive but to be gracious and happy in one’s forgiveness. Human forgiveness can at times be given grudgingly with conditions attached: ‘I will forgive you but do not do it again’; ‘I will forgive you just this once.’ But God does not deal with fragile human beings like that!

In Luke chapter 7 there is a story of amazing grace. Jesus is having dinner with Simon the Pharisee. The seating arrangements consisted of divans around a low table. The well-off entertained in the large courtyards of their houses. On this occasion a woman of ill repute slips into the courtyard and approaches Jesus. Full of emotion, tears roll down her cheeks, and actually drip onto the feet of the Lord. She drops on her knees and proceeds to wipe His feet with her long tresses. Incredibly, she breaks open a phial of perfume (probably reserved to anoint her bed before embracing a lover) and pours it over His feet, smothering them promptly with kisses.

Such intimacy in public was staggering, quite unheard of. It was all rather shocking and Simon, the punctilious Pharisee, was disgusted. This woman, this harlot, embracing the feet of the supposedly pious prophet from Galilee, and He allowing it to happen!

Simon was very likely an astute businessman so the Lord Jesus meets him on his own level. Jesus recounts the tale of the moneylender, who in a fit of generosity, cancels the debt of two men, one who owed him £500 and the other £50. Jesus poses the question: 'Now which of the men will like him the more?' (verse 42) to which Simon replies: 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled (charizomai)' (verse 43). Jesus acknowledges that Simon has judged correctly then, listing the woman's acts of love towards Him, He says to Simon: 'Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven for she loved much' (verse 47). Christ's final words to that dear woman were: 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.' (verse 50). Forgiveness is forgiving the unforgivable!

Chara

'Chara' is joy! Joy and gladness are the hallmark of our relationship with Jesus. It has been said that the Holy Spirit dwells only with joyful people, but if we do not believe in the activity of the Spirit in our lives, perhaps that is why we are so miserable!

What is joy? It is one of the Father's great gifts. It is a quality not just an emotion. In the New Testament joy is consistently the sign of the true believer and indeed that of the whole Church of the Living God. Joy is an inner happiness, a contentment with life which brings the security of peace. I sometimes wonder, when folk pass by our Ecclesia, and we pass by their houses, do they think of us as a people of joy? Do we radiate joy as we smile and pass the time of day? Are we genuinely happy people? Is this our spiritual condition? 'For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy (chara) in the Holy Spirit. (Rom 14:17). We have to be living and experiencing the joyous life of the Kingdom now, if we are to enjoy the happy future of the Kingdom of God in eternity.

A besetting failure of our beloved Community is the continual harping on about our 'sins'. There seems to be a constant beating of breasts, the berating of self, as if sin can never be forgiven, and that all our secret sins of the past will somehow be dredged up at the Judgement Seat when Jesus returns! It is true, of course, if we are secretly pursuing sin (such as viewing the rubbish spewed out over the Internet) then this must stop, and we need to plead for forgiveness. Our Father not only forgives sin, but He forgets as well:

'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9).

Therefore:

'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and protector of our faith, who, for the

joy (chara) set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God' (Heb 12:2).

Let us remember that Jesus bore the cost of grace which is so freely given to us. Calvary was an exorbitant cost. The Father gave up His own Son, rather than give up on humanity. Jesus died for you and for me, as the apostle Peter says: 'Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy (chara)' (1 Pet 1:8-9)

Chairo

This is a lovely word meaning 'rejoice'. We have so many things in life about which we can rejoice and be delighted. Our friendship and fellowship with one another, which will continue on into the coming Kingdom of God, and our friendship with the Lord Jesus which makes us happy. We rejoice with The Shepherd who comes to the rescue of a 'lost sheep':

'What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he has found it, he puts it on his shoulders, rejoicing (chairo)' (Luke 15:4-5).

We are not to sit back, as it were, vaunting our own righteousness when a brother or sister strays from fellowship, imagining that we belong to the exclusive '99 Club' and are to be commended because we never went astray! In the parable of The Prodigal Son, the father welcomed him back with open arms and without question; but the pious elder brother resented the redemption and return of his one-time wayward brother. Our Father sets the pattern for us all: 'We had to celebrate and be glad (chairo) because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found. (Luke 15:3).

Charisma

We are all familiar with this word which is now part of everyday speech. It is usually taken to refer to a person who has charm and is talented and gifted. An eloquent preacher is said to be 'charismatic', having a gift for words.

'Charisma' basically means 'a gift', but having its root in 'charis' it means more than just a gift. It is a gift of grace, which can never be earned or merited; it is an undeserved kindness. As the apostle Paul declares:

'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift (charisma) of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom 6:23).

The whole gospel is revealed in this contrast; both what we are by nature and would become if left to our own devices and, on the other hand, what we are by grace. The word here rendered 'wages' is the same as used for a soldier's pay: 'Be content with your wages (opsonion)' (Luke 3:14). In contrast God does not give wages. He gives us the free gift of eternal life. As John says in his gospel: 'And this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus

Christ, whom you have sent.' (John 17:3)

John is saying that we can experience eternal life in the here and now. It is an apprehension of God, an awareness of Jesus and His presence in our life, now. It is a quality of life we share with the Father and His Son Jesus, now.

This brings the calm assurance of life everlasting in the Age to come, when we shall see our loved ones again. In Jesus, by His grace, death is robbed of its horror and the grave of its victory. How glorious this truth is, when with sad hearts we stand by the open grave in which we have laid a loved one to rest. But thanks to God's grace, death is merely a falling asleep to awake with a new energy, to a new life and a higher service in the Kingdom. But eternal life begins here and develops here:

'I am come (says Jesus) that they might have life, and that they may have it more abundantly' (John 10:10).

Conclusion

What about our letter writing? How do we greet those to whom we write? How do we conclude our letters?

In Paul's letters to his brothers and sisters in the Faith, in the ecclesias of Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae and Thessalonica, and in those highly personal letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, see how he starts: 'Grace (charis) and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' And see how he ends:

'The grace (charis) of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.'

The wording varies slightly from letter to letter, but in all cases he invokes the blessing of grace upon his readers, including us who are privileged to read his epistles in the far off 21st century. The beginnings and endings are prayers, an opening prayer and a closing prayer of benediction, upon his hearers.

Why the opening salutation of grace and the closing entreaty of grace? Because on the road to Damascus he was struck down by the blinding light and converted to Jesus. He himself had received grace, unearned, unmerited and totally undeserved, since at one time he had persecuted the Church of God. Thus he can say to us:

'The grace (charis) of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.'

Grace is certainly amazing!

(Concluded)

Bill Davison

*'True grace always produces vigilance rather than complacency:
it always produces perseverance rather than indolence.'*

Jerry Bridges

Although he was brought up in a Christadelphian family, and shares many beliefs and practices espoused by Christadelphians, Peter Wright has never joined our community. In this article he pursues his study of the grounds of Christian unity.

Rahab, The Ecumenical Example

Five principles are referred to in this article which require a brief preliminary mention. The first four of these are - **love**, (or its substitute **fear**), **enquiry**, **faith** and **works**. My studies over several years have led me to conclude that anyone who loves or fears God, enquires from His word, has faith/belief in that enquiry and works accordingly may be accepted by God despite unintended doctrinal error. If this is not the case, then any fault in Christadelphian doctrine excludes all Christadelphians from God's Kingdom as a consequence of their teaching that possession of correct doctrines is essential for salvation. With such a belief, it is very risky to think of oneself as doctrinally perfect. Since further explanation of these four principles would be too space-consuming here, a lengthy demonstration of them is available from the author on request. The fifth principle is seen in Nu 15:22-29 which deals with '**unintended error**', Hebrew-*Shegagah*, (for a full explanation of this word see Endeavour No 104 page 21). The ecumenical claims embodied in these five words - love, enquiry, faith, works and *shegagah* - are evident in many scriptural examples such as the one dealt with in Endeavour no 105, page 45, where it was shown that David's doctrinal ignorance was not a barrier to unity with God. Scripture abounds with examples of such unity, and Rahab's story in the book of Joshua also offers powerful evidence of unity despite doctrinal inaccuracies and ignorance through the principles of love, enquiry, faith, works and *shegagah*. Using the NIV with the Tetragrammaton the event commences in chapter 2.

Verse 1: '... Joshua ... sent two spies ... [to] Jericho ... they went and entered the house of a prostitute, named Rahab...' As one might imagine, Rahab's house saw many visitors, therefore the choice of lodging was wise, they should blend in. But somehow Jericho's intelligence network became aware of their presence.

Verse 2: '... the King of Jericho was told, "... Some ... Israelites have come here tonight to spy..." the King of Jericho sent this message to Rahab, "Bring out the men who came to ... your house..." '

Verses 4 and 5: 'But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. [on the roof, verse 8] She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where ... from. At dusk ... the men left..." '

The reason she hid the spies becomes clear in **verses 8-10:** '... she went up on the roof and said to them, "I know that Yahweh has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us We have heard how Yahweh dried up

... the Red Sea [forty years previously, and more recently] ... and what you did to Sihon and Og ... whom you completely destroyed." ' These and other events (Ex 15:14-16 & Nu 14:13,14.) were so monumental that concealment of them was impossible.

Rahab's opportunities for intelligence regarding Israel's fortunes as they advanced towards Canaan, were probably more numerous than average. Her profession ensured a constant flow of travellers to her home and some would no doubt carry the latest relevant information. By such means, her **enquiry** concerning God's people led her to conclude that Canaan would inevitably be subdued. Next she expresses ultimate **faith** in her **enquiry**.

Verse 11: '... Yahweh your God is God in heaven ... and ... earth ...'

Rahab's enquiry and belief were acquired prior to the spies entering Jericho and explains why she hid them. The sequence of events for Rahab was, **fear** of God through **enquiry**; **faith** in the enquiry and a single **work**, giving life to the whole sequence. Like so many before and after, her starting point was fear rather than love. As it is written: 'The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge,' Pro 1:7, 9:10. Given time, fear would convert to, or mingle with love, the more perfect relationship with God.

From **verses 12-21**, the treaty of salvation in response to her faith and work was agreed and the spies departed. That this treaty was honoured by God is comprehended in verse 15: '... the house she lived in was part of the city wall.' By combining this verse with 6:20: '... the wall collapsed ...' and verse 22 where Joshua tells the spies: '... Go into the prostitute's house ...', we see that not all the wall collapsed. Since God alone controlled what remained standing, Rahab was ultimately saved by God. But the pertinent question is, what did she know about true doctrines at the time of her salvation? The textual answer is contained in 2:11: '...Yahweh your God is God in heaven ... and ... earth.' This statement is the only recorded true doctrine Rahab possessed. Since there is nothing textual to verify otherwise, our conclusion must be that the myriad absent doctrines had no bearing on her preliminary salvation. Like a single small candle illuminates vast darkness, one truth with one work initiated light and life to Rahab and her family and by them she gained instant union with God and His people.

An ex-polytheist like Rahab is intrinsically possessed of various ritual or mechanical beliefs and superstitions. Just as when other Hebrew and Gentile polytheists (Jos 24:14 & 15, 1 Cor 8:4-7) forsook their former deities, becoming Yahweh worshipping henotheists, (one who believes in many gods, but worships only one of them) she like them did not clear instantly from mind all her former habitual convictions. (Again, since space here is limited, substantial evidence of this statement can be sent to those who would care to contact me.) Such beliefs remain awhile in most cases, being counted as dead precisely

because they lacked works as described in Ja 2:14-26. Thus manifold, unpractised, false beliefs associated with polytheism are to be found on salvation's path in converts like Rahab. Thereby the love and mercy of God sets aside false doctrines, affording time to acquire truth after commitment and union. That Rahab's conversion was permanent is evidenced by two further texts, Jos 6:25: '... Joshua spared Rahab ... and she lives **among** the Israelites [not on the periphery, verse 23] to this day.' She also, albeit it arguably, turns up in the genealogy of Christ, Matt 1:5. Had the spies considered Rahab's habitual false beliefs to be a barrier, no compact would have been agreed; they could have killed her then escaped. Had Joshua been like today's doctrinal dogmatists, he would have disallowed the spies agreement with Rahab. Had God required doctrinal accuracy as a precondition of salvation and union, He would have collapsed the entire wall. Furthermore Ja 2:25 says Rahab was: '... justified by **works**...' (KJV) or '... considered righteous for what she **did**.' (NIV). Accordingly Rahab and her family were united to God and Israel at the moment, as James suggests, when '... she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction.' Precisely at that moment, the likelihood is that she was not only ignorant of true doctrines, but also seized by false; therefore possession of correct doctrines must fall well short of **essential** for salvation or **union**. Of course this is not an invitation to **remain** ignorant, that would be wilful, and not covered by '*shegagah*' – unintended error. Since Rahab and her family were integrated into Israel despite their ignorance, the precedent is set by God for Christian unity without doctrinal harmony, which should be a completely separate issue.

To those still insisting on doctrinal accuracy as a precondition of union, I ask the following question:

Is it **likely**, at the time she hid the spies, that Rahab and her family knew :

- A. Every correct doctrine?
- B. Some correct doctrines?
- C. No correct doctrines?

Given her polytheistic history would she not at the time she hid the spies **likely** believe in.

- D. Many false doctrines?
- E. Some false doctrines?
- F. No false doctrines?

Those convinced that possession of accurate doctrines is a requirement for unity must select 'A' and 'F' from the above. Failure to do so would indicate that possession of every correct doctrine is not essential for salvation or union (for clearly Rahab was both saved, united with Israel and declared 'righteous') and so the doctrinally dogmatic position would become untenable if 'A' and 'F' were not selected. On the other hand, those who do select 'A' and 'F' have the

impossible task of showing when, where, how and by whom Rahab acquired Mosaic law (doctrine) and when she divested herself of the habitual belief in many gods. All of which must take place before she was declared righteous, i.e the time she lodged the spies, (Ja 2:25) for she can not be righteous with God and at the same time disunited from Him.

When addressing some of the doctrinally learned of his day Jesus had this to say '... prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.' (Matt 21:31). They possessed simple beliefs, being united to Christ by love and works, whilst entrenched dogmatists prohibited harmony. (Lu 7:36-50)

Brothers and sisters, by acknowledging the love, enquiry, faith and works of others, rather than highlighting what we consider to be their false beliefs, we may understand as did the spies, reasons for unity with **misbelievers**. It should be remembered that since no scriptural mandate to dismember Christ's body exists, denominationalism is itself a contradiction, because by definition it attempts to defend truth by unscriptural segregation.

My previous items in 'Endeavour' have attracted both favourable and critical comments; and whilst amicable discussion of objections is always offered, it is not always taken up. Some prefer to snipe unseen, but through defective sight, they always miss. Others perpetuate their unjust trials by disallowing my defence; they do not contact me, but merely publish unrepresentative editions of my work on the net or amongst others of like prejudiced minds. Prosecution in the absence of defence can hardly fail, but all reasonable people recognise this as profound injustice. Still others enter into initial correspondence with me only to break our agreed guidelines and drop out, presumably when my questions get too difficult, (as in this item perhaps). May God overlook the harm they do themselves. Thus far only one leading Christadelphian objector has completed correspondence with me and he finally agreed the ecumenical point. My items are not intended as new radical doctrines, but merely to promote further ecumenical discussion on questions drawn from Biblical scenarios as above, which perhaps have not previously been considered in this light. Without satisfactory answers, these scenarios suggest that doctrines should not divide true believers from **misbelievers**.

Readers concerned by my conclusions, who would like further clarification, are invited to contact me directly, **but in keeping with 2 Tim 2:24-26**, at: 14, Park Street, Barnoldswick, Lancashire, BB18 5BT. Phone 01282 817473 or by email at theos.unity@btinternet.com.

Peter Wright

**The only kingdom that will prevail in this world
is the kingdom that is not of this world.**

Anon

Fellowship (Part 2)

2. New Testament background and our position regarding fellowship in modern times.

A Christian fellowship should find its ultimate authority in God's Word. If it professes to be part of God's fellowship it should accept any well-reasoned view of that Word, even if it does not entirely agree. Any group insisting it holds the only valid view on certain issues or that anyone who subscribes to another view must be wrong, is not showing the attributes of a true believer as taught by our Lord, and reiterated many times by Paul.

Of course, there must be general agreement on a code of behaviour and a purpose for existing based securely on the Word of God. The errant behaviour so often criticized by Paul was mostly concerned with sexual immorality or those who twisted God's word to allow them to pursue a way of life or belief that was incompatible with the Christian disciple, rather than difference of opinion about beliefs. True Christian believers will agree that any behaviour designed to hurt other people is against God's teaching; even so, the only unforgivable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31). It is our responsibility to love and support our brothers and sisters, regarding others more highly than ourselves. Jesus was always ready to teach that no one disciple was superior to the other, see Mark 9:33-37.

Bible teaching concerning faith, love and respect, the future, our basic sinful nature and salvation through Jesus makes a good basis for fellowship. Areas of Bible teaching which are seen to be unclear because of their circumstance or lack of relevance to our time, are better left to individual interpretation. Countless hours of debate have so far failed to resolve such (usually) trivial issues. Individuals will naturally wish to use their different knowledge and expertise in the process of trying to understand the meaning of such passages, yet often different conclusions will be reached by equally well-read and sincere believers. Unless such studies are done with all parties willing to 'agree to differ', the discussion is likely to cause contention. Historical or futuristic interpretations, teachings found in only one place in Scripture or with a specific local application, or those which result in judgement of the worthiness of other members of a particular fellowship, make weak foundations for a Christian community. They should be embraced with extreme caution (if at all!). Likewise, man-made rules will not do. We are too prone to prejudice, jealousy and self-interest. *'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.'*

A simple faith, like that of the widow who gave her last mite or the sick people Jesus helped along the road, is just as powerful as one worked out through much study. Our spiritual development depends on our attitude towards

faith and works, and our love for God and other people. These form a stable basis for our fellowship, since they can be achieved by anyone who tries. An inherent danger in much 'deep' study is that we may think that our faith is superior to that of others because we have greater factual knowledge. This attitude of mind can so easily lead to an inclination towards ever more detailed rules in order to keep the faith 'pure'. Although deep study of facts and ideas stimulates some people and strengthens their belief, others find they cannot cope with 'profound' philosophies, and need a much simpler faith. We must not insist on any particular understanding of God's Word which leads to the danger of keeping others out of fellowship, and thus making judgement on their worthiness. That is not our responsibility, but God's! *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, ... so that no one may boast before him.* (see 1 Cor 1:19-31.) God does not expect us all to be intellectual or academic in our faith.

Jesus taught us to serve each other. Even the Master washed his disciple's feet. See Luke 22:14-27 and John 13:1-17. New Testament teaching always puts one party in debt to another. Consider the following instructions from Jesus: *'love your neighbour as yourself'*, *'love your enemy'*, *'turn the other cheek'*; and from Paul: *'wives submit to your husbands'* and *'husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church'*. These teachings are just as applicable, if not more so, to our relationships within Christ's body as well as to those liaisons outside the Christian belief.

Division in the Church

The early Christian Church taught the central theme of salvation through Jesus Christ and the good news of the Kingdom of God. Early problems were largely to do with personalities (see 1 Cor 1-4.) and the erroneous doctrines of the Gnostics for example. The split of the Church of England from the Catholic Church was one main historic event which divided the Christians in Europe, caused so much evil on all sides of the argument and may have set the precedent of division rather than agreement in the wider church. Many smaller sects have since begun God's work with renewed enthusiasm, only to subdivide again, usually for similar reasons of arrogant manipulation of God's Word, pride and self-interest. We are stubborn and slow to learn the humility taught by Jesus and that our salvation is due to the grace of God, not our empire-building. It is likely that there will always be 'splits' which demonstrate the weakness and danger of the human ego. They are not from God.

All one in Christ

Believers are all different, but we are all members of 'one body'. Human nature was designed so that we each take on an individual personality. Intellectual ability, social and personal skills, taste and physical nature all make up our complex and different characters. Paul explains that this is good because we *complement* each other to form one whole, but that we cannot be each other. See

Rom 12:1-8, particularly v 4 & 5; 1 Cor 12:12-31 (NB v 25 & 27).

We are baptized by One Spirit, into One Body, 1 Cor 12:13. See 1 Tim 2:5&6. Nothing can stand in the way of the true believer Rom 8:38&39. Why should we prevent a fellow-believer from being part of the body of Christ since there should be no division between believers caused by prejudice, Gal 3:26-29?

There should be no division around the Lord's table, although Paul accepted that there were differences - 1 Cor 11:17-19. He did not advocate the exclusion of those who differed, but he did put the onus on the individual to be worthy vv. 27-29. He certainly reminded the Corinthians of the important, special and spiritual meaning of the Lord's Table, that it was not an excuse for a good party!

There may be more than one leader, but only One Head of the Church who is Jesus. Each leader will have their own understanding, but we are all fellow-workers together with the main purpose of PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD and there should be no division between Christian workers. It is easy to misrepresent the beliefs of others because of a different emphasis or lack of appreciation of their understanding. The point is that JESUS IS OUR HEAD, 1 Cor 1:10-13; 3:3-9, and if any do not only acknowledge this but also live by it, then they should not be part of the fellowship. If another fellowship professes to be Christian (followers of Christ), Jesus will be at the centre of their teaching anyway, so we have common ground on which to build a good relationship.

Persons with whom we should not be associated

God wants all men to come to Him, 1 Tim 2:1-4; Christ died for all, v 6, and we are all sinners, Rom 3:22-24, justified by His grace. We should assist men to come to God, not put obstacles in their way. Paul tells us not to be yoked together with unbelievers. This should apply to any partnership, but we should consider that if the partner is willing to submit to God's laws, (as discussed in relation to aliens in Ex 12:43 etc.), then perhaps we can do good. Jesus demonstrates this approach to preaching when he ate with sinners.

We must take care not to judge others as being part of any of the categories below, because we will be judged according to the level of our mercy, James 2:12 & 13.

1. Sexually immoral, greedy, idolater, slanderer, drunkard, swindler - 1 Cor 5:9-11 (This relates to a particular individual, condemned by Paul) see also chapter 6:12-20; Eph 5:1-7.
2. Unbelievers - 2 Cor 6:14-18, also 2 Tim 3:1-9.
3. False apostles - 1 Tim 4:1-8. See also Paul's warnings about false teaching 1 Tim 6:3-7. He does not say to throw them out of the Church, but rather not to be misled by their teachings - 2 Cor 11:1-4, 13-15; Gal 1:6-10; Col 2:18-23; 2 Pet 2:1-3; 2 John 2:20-23. The wicked will not inherit the

Kingdom – 1 Cor 6:9&10.

We must remember that Jesus had frequent contact with 'undesirables', and that he was criticized for eating with publicans and sinners Luke 15:2. We must also remember that eating with people was a sign of friendship. We should of course follow Jesus' example, and so we must be careful when deciding who may be undesirable that we are not making prejudicial judgements. See also Mark 2:13-17, and the case of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-9.

Do not judge others

Judgement on ourselves through self-examination and not the criticism of others, is the only judgement we should make 1 Cor 11:27-29; Gal 6:1-5, being well aware that we reap what we sow vv.7-9. We are judged with mercy according to the way we view the behaviour of others Mat 7:1; 12:36,37. Jesus' teaching about this is clear! Matthew 7:1-6. We need to remember that God is judge, 1 Cor 4:3-5; Romans 14:1-13,19 (this concerns weaker members) and to beware of thinking that we are better than we really are, 1Cor 3:18, by giving God's Spirit the credit for our abilities, 1 Cor 14:36-38. It is arrogant to believe that we are more worthy to have fellowship with selected believers, since this must imply that we feel above those believers whom we reject. Paul warns us against this way of thinking, see Rom 12:3-8.

(To be continued)

Graham Longfils

Out of Season

O little town of Bethlehem,
How fraught we see thee lie!
In thee no deep and dreamless sleep
For tanks came roaring by.
And in thy dark streets streameth
The flow of bitter tears.
The vengeful spite of man 'gainst man
Brings naught but wounds and fears.

O Jesus, child of Bethlehem,
Come now to them we pray.
Cast out their hate and enter in:
Be born once more today.

April 2002

Anon.

Studies in Ecclesiastes

Part 15

Chapter 8:11-9:10.

A reiteration of conclusions

Chapter 8, verse 11 is exceptionally clear and lucid. It argues that people are encouraged in criminality because the wheels of justice turn too slowly, a thought which has occurred to others in other civilizations. But vv. 12-13 seem to run counter to much of Qoheleth's teaching, including the immediately following v.14. Despite the longevity of some sinners the writer affirms ('I know') that the righteous will be protected by God for their piety, while the wicked will experience misfortune and premature death. How can this be reconciled with the assertion in v.14 that just people sometimes suffer the fate that should befall the wicked, and wicked people sometimes enjoy what should be the lot of the righteous? There are two complementary answers to this problem. The first is that Qoheleth does not affirm that this reversal of rewards and punishments is the rule, only that 'sometimes' it happens. The second is that the sentiments introduced by 'I know' are not necessarily the writer's own unqualified conclusions, but they can be – and no doubt are – the then current popular opinion about the matter. In short, 'I know' here introduces the orthodox thinking of the period. While Qoheleth might have wished to espouse it, he was constrained to observe that this was not always what in fact happened. There is in fact grammatical confirmation of this interpretation of the verses. In this passage 'I know' is expressed in Hebrew by the participle and the independent first person pronoun, while in 1:17 (AV: 'I perceived'), 2:14 (AV: 'I myself perceived') and 3:12 and 14 (AV: 'I know'), the first person singular of the perfect tense of the verb is used for what is the writers own understanding of the matters involved. One could make this clear in an English translation by using quotation marks after 'I know':

I know that 'it will be well with those that fear God' ... (REB)

In short, what follows 'I know' here is current opinion, not the conclusion of Qoheleth.

Thus the writer recommends his readers to 'eat, drink and be merry' (v.15) because that can be relied upon as a sure and satisfying reward for the toils of life. The dilemma Qoheleth had discovered was, he stresses in vv. 16-17, incapable of solution despite every effort, because God had so ordered things that not even the wise could find a solution.

Chapter 9 begins with an elaboration of the points made in the latter part of ch 8. The outcome of human effort, it is argued, is entirely in God's hands, something that humans cannot alter. And both righteous and unrighteous meet the same end – in death (v.2). It is a wrong, Qoheleth asserts in v.3, that both categories of people meet the same end. While alive, they may have evil

thoughts, but eventually they die, and death is the end of all activity and consciousness (vv. 4-6). Thus Qoheleth returns with his previous advice: to enjoy life to the full and to act with enthusiasm since death is the complete cessation of all consciousness and activity (vv. 7-10).

As Christadelphians we are inclined to quote this passage of Qoheleth to confirm our teaching from Scripture that there is no immortal soul in man, and so death is what it appears to be: a cessation of all life. This is sound up to a point, but it is not as secure an argument as it should be. Would Qoheleth have written this, in the context of his reasoning, if he believed in a future resurrection of the righteous? One can quote the passage as it stands for what it asserts, but one should also be prepared to acknowledge that the writer had no knowledge of any future life after death, something which occurs only rarely in the Old Testament, though it is common in the New.

Wilfred Lambert

Issues 1 to 74

We would like to thank Sister M D Lambert for kindly donating her copies of Issues 1-74 of *The Endeavour Magazine* in response to our request in the last issue. These have been delivered to the British Library in London by her brother Wilfred Lambert and should soon be available to anyone who may wish to consult them. All issues of the magazine have now been lodged with The British Library.

An extract from an article on
The Truth and Art
Endeavour 5, Autumn 1962, p 27

The Christian life itself is a creative development toward God, it passes through the processes of effort and pain and joy, of insight and vision and of frustration, of weakness and of faith, which are the company of all creative effort. God has provided the materials and the spirit by which they may be worked. He has given each of us the spiritual longing which is the life force of creation.

This work can only fully progress if life is faced fully and honestly, and the highest good sought in every sphere of activity. We cannot acceptably bury our treasure in the earth. In other words, the only valid religion is that which can take hold of all the elements of life and experience and (in the grace of God) weld them into a pattern pure and consistent in its search for Truth, Beauty, Goodness and Love – a pattern of life which is itself praise to God.

Geoff Marsters

A Christian Response to the Materials of Pagan Education?

And as we have compounded healthful drugs from certain of the reptiles, so from secular literature we have received principles of inquiry and speculation, while we have rejected their idolatry, terror and pit of destruction.

This statement was made by Gregory of Nazianzus, one of the three so-called Cappadocian fathers of the fourth century. Was he voicing a common early Christian response to the materials of pagan education?

His statement poses three questions. Firstly, why should the Christians regard secular literature as 'idolatry, terror and pit of destruction'? Secondly, what were the attitudes of different writers concerning the value of studying pagan literature? And lastly, how did the Christians resolve the problem; was a 'healthful drug' compounded which taught 'the principles of inquiry and speculation'?

The first question concerns the distaste of Christians for secular literature. Whereas the first Christians had been simple Galileans with a Judean background, now many Romans, brought up in the strict tradition of classical culture, were being converted, notably of course, Constantine himself. The schools of the time were classical, based on the litterator, grammaticus and rhetor. In the words of Marrou: 'children passed from learning their syllables to lists of the names of the gods, and the texts used in the classroom were taken from poems as impious as they were immoral.' Christianity taught that salvation was 'through grace' whereas pagan literature taught that man could perfect himself. Christianity was based on a person who actually lived while classical literature was 'a pagan cult and figments of the imagination'. Augustine advises 'avoid superstition and idolatry' for 'has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world.' (1 Corinthians ch 1 v 20) Even the grammatical rules of Donatus and rhetorical education involved being steeped in the mythology of Greece and Rome. This was a concentration on brilliance of style which blinded its followers to the void which lay behind. As Lactantius said: 'the devil was blinding people with the appearance of light.'

To summarize the dangers of following classical literature, we have a moral drawn by Tertullian. He tells of a man who was so busy studying the heavens that he fell into a pit and warns that the same mishap will befall, metaphorically speaking, all who occupy themselves with the stupidities of philosophy. The dangers of following secular literature are that they turn one's mind from the simple salvation in Jesus. I do not think it is insignificant that Gregory used the figure of a reptile. He probably had in mind the serpent in Genesis who turned man from God.

The problem was considerable and occupied the minds of many Christian

leaders. It was widely thought that an education was necessary but the education available was based on secular literature. Opinions varied. Some were opposed to any such study, some approved while the majority accepted some form of compromise. We hear of Alcinus of Avitus, bishop of Vienne, who followed the fashion of educated laity, which advised making conscious efforts to use rhetoric and 'echoes of Virgil' in their writings while, on the other hand, Caesarius of Arles accepted a warning in a dream and turned his back on non-Christian writings. We should consider the opinions of Tertullian who was influential and very concerned with the dangers of studying secular literature. He wrote: 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, the Academy with the Church?' He was against the 'folly of philosophy' and regarded heretics (such as Gnostics) and philosophers (Plato) as equal. He reasoned that to believe that Jesus was the Only Son of God implied that all other gods, including Caesar, were fraudulent. There does not have to be a study (science) to discover the Truth because it has been revealed (faith). He believed the command of Jesus to 'render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, but unto God the things which are God's.' In other words, subscribe to Roman law as it is necessary, but true allegiance of the spirit belongs to God.

However, the majority of writers accepted some form of compromise. Basil put it very well when he said that the Christian student must read these pagan works as the bees make use of the flowers - to take only the honey. He in fact wrote a book *The Value to the Young of the Reading of Ancient Authors* and was supported in his beliefs by John Chrysostom and, of course, Gregory of Nazianzus. Jerome, who incidentally translated the Bible into Latin, was confused in his own mind. He had received, as had the other Christian writers, a classical education which he had appreciated. However, he was told in a dream to forget his admiration for Cicero which he did try to do although the classical influence in his writings remained. He believed in a 'via media' in which secular literature could be used in the teaching of the young but must certainly be abandoned as a pleasure to be pursued in later years. He said that the words enchant the heart but one finds that they are empty. He did put forward the view that, as the woman in Deuteronomy could be taken to wife after purification, so secular literature could be employed.

The most influential writer of all was probably Augustine. He believed that Christians should 'take the gold and leave the dross'. No help to the study of the Scriptures was to be despised. His book *De Doctrina Christiana* provided the foundation for Christian education which was still used during the Middle Ages. This book demonstrates how the Liberal Arts were able to provide the principles of inquiry and speculation to which Gregory refers. Firstly Augustine said that 'useful study' is superior to the 'dull sloth of ignorance'. Secondly, the study of languages was necessary; not only Latin but also Greek and Hebrew, so that the

Scriptures could be studied in their original texts. Thirdly it was necessary to study the rules of interpretation. Language brings the student to the door of interpretation but dialectic, the study of reasoning, will help to search and unravel the questions to be found. Scriptural truth, invisible to the superficial observer, may be found by an understanding of the allegory and imagery contained within. To understand the imagery, education must provide a knowledge of all sciences, history, the nature of animals, plants and stones, the symbolism of numbers, weights and measures and the whole mass of human arrangements. The Liberal Arts are the servants of the Christian in this study. In fact it was necessary to turn all the fruits of human experience, investigation and learning to a new objective. Rhetoric was also to be taught to the clergy as it was their responsibility to pass on, in as successful a way as possible, the knowledge which they had learnt. There was also a need for them to defend their position. As the schools of the Empire closed, Christianity became the dominant culture. The mass of Christian literature increased. There were hymns, stories based on the Gospel, compilations of knowledge and writings of the Fathers. There were over 200 volumes of the *Patrologia Latina* (Collection of the Latin Fathers) alone. It was no longer necessary to use secular literature although schools, such as those in Athens and Alexandria, still did.

To conclude we can see that in the fourth century, there were genuine fears that an education based on secular literature would be harmful to the Christian faith. Various influential writers expressed opinions concerning the advisability of using or discarding the old forms of education although most favoured some sort of compromise. They took what they considered to be useful to them and used it as a basis of an education which had classical origins, a mixed content and a Christian purpose. There is no doubt something to be learnt from background reading but it is surely more profitable to concentrate on the 'received wisdom' which we have in the Word of God. '*God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ... that, according as it is written, 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.'*' (1 Cor ch 1)

Lydia

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The Language of Metaphor Sheds Light on the Mysteries of Genesis.

The early chapters of Genesis are not easy for our generation to understand. Within our community, different approaches to it have been taken by different people. This sometimes leads to fierce disputes. The author of this article does not wish to claim to have found the answer to the problem, does not wish to provoke argument but simply wishes to briefly outline an approach which he has found satisfying and rewarding and which may prove helpful to others. Some of the ideas are taken from New Light on Genesis by William Todd.

It has been pointed out that the Hebrew language is poor in abstract terms, so that ideas often have to be expressed by symbols using metaphoric language which, if taken literally, could be the cause of misconception. By way of illustration, here are two examples:

1. In Isaiah 64:8, God is not a potter literally but may be considered such metaphorically speaking, insofar as He has the power to fashion material to conform to His will.
2. In Isaiah 40:11 it says: 'He shall feed His flock' etc. Now Jesus is not coming back to feed sheep and carry them in his bosom etc. but we know exactly what this metaphorical language means.

Countless other examples could be quoted from the Bible but these two may just help us to appreciate the meaning of metaphors and to recognise them when we see them. An outstanding example is to be found in Gen 2:21-23 where metaphor is used in much the same way as we use the term 'bosom pals' to indicate an intimate degree of closeness between two individuals. In this case the metaphor describes the suitability of Adam's partner, a help-meet for him i.e. 'close to his side' (rib).

The 'creation' of humankind had already taken place, as narrated in Genesis chapter 1, together with the rest of the 'living creatures' which the earth was commanded to 'bring forth' by the Word of God. It is in my view helpful to read this chapter and chapter one in conjunction with the opening chapter of John's gospel. Just as there is much metaphor in John's description of the beginning of the new creation, we might expect to find the same in the account of the creation in Genesis. How could it be otherwise?

By combining these two passages we understand that it is by the Word of God that all things consist and have their being, and the Genesis narrative expresses this truth by the preamble to each creative event - 'and God said, Let there be etc. ... and it was so.' As we read in Isaiah 55:10,11: 'My word shall not return unto me void but it shall accomplish that for which....' It needs to be noted that we are not told anything of the manner of the creation nor of the time

interval required between the utterance and the accomplishment of the fiat in question, which are irrelevant seeing that God is timeless and almighty. What is important is the inevitability of the fulfilment once the Word has gone forth as we have just seen from Isaiah. Note the phraseology carefully: 'and God said' followed by 'and it was so.' Adherence to a literal interpretation of what should be understood as metaphorical nullifies and makes nonsense of John's theology as expressed in the first chapter of his gospel whereby the divine voice of command, i.e. the Word of God, acting on Mary's womb, 'became flesh and dwelt among us,' making Jesus the *raison d'être* of the entire cosmos.

What has been termed the fundamentalist approach to the Genesis story, stressing above all else a 'literal' reading of it, has been the cause of much unnecessary discord within our community, and the sad thing is that it could have been so easily avoided by accepting what the sciences have revealed to us which need not be seen as in any way incompatible with the teaching of the Scriptures, provided that it is recognized that any talk of the beginning is bound to make use of symbolic and metaphoric language.

The well-attested findings of modern science include the incontrovertible fact of the age of the earth, i.e. approximately 4.5 billion years, the 'singularity' giving birth to the universe as we know it, sometimes referred to as the 'Big Bang, a concept well supported by the detection of the background microwave radiation, and the fossil record, from which we are able to trace the development of life forms from approx. 600 million years ago up through increasing degrees of complexity. A true perspective can be obtained by remembering that by the time Adam (the Adamic race or 'Sons of God') came on the scene, the dinosaurs, together with the other great reptiles, had been extinct for approximately 65 million years. The fact that Adam was not the first human being on this planet is irrelevant. What is important is that he was the first in the line of descent which led to Abraham and through to the Messiah, to Jesus the Word made flesh.

The fact that the earth was well and truly peopled before the Garden of Eden episode took place presents no obstacle when it is understood that the verb used in the original Hebrew of Gen 2:7 is *yatsar*, translated in the AV as 'formed', and is not a term exclusively reserved for creation, in the sense of creation out of nothing. (For example it can be used of the creation of Israel (Isa 43:21).) In other parts it is rendered variously as 'called' (as in the case of Abraham), 'chosen' (as in the case of Israel), 'appointed', etc.

Now we have ample evidence of prehistoric man hunting and gathering and living a nomad existence in caves and other primitive dwellings for hundreds if not thousands of years before the emergence of the Adamic family and many of their cave drawings depict them hunting animals long since extinct until relatively suddenly these Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) people begin to be replaced

by Neolithic (New Stone Age) people, who replace the hunting and gathering mode of existence with a settled agricultural and stock-raising form of living, which correlates with the calling of Adam 'from the dust' (i.e. from the desert of Mesopotamia) into the well-irrigated 'Garden of Eden' 'to dress it and to keep it.' Subsequently, a 'help-meet for him' (metaphor 'close to his side') was found, presumably from the same source, i.e. the local population, the same people who Cain feared would all want to kill him because he had murdered his brother Abel.

Going back to the beginning, date unspecified, we have six utterances by God followed by the implementation of the divine will through the power of the Word - 'And God said'... 'and it was so.' The fossil record, plus carbon 14 dating and evidence left in caves etc., all demonstrate that considerable periods of time elapsed while what we would call 'natural forces' played their part in responding to the divine dictates. God is not in a hurry as He has from everlasting to everlasting at His disposal.

We must remember the format of the divine command i.e. 'Let the waters swarm etc.' and 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature after their kind. Male and female created He them.' These passages both seem to imply that God leaves His creation to get on with it, at least to some extent. The Word having gone forth, the result was inevitable, in conformity with the natural processes of development set in place by God Himself. Above all, we must not limit the power of God, or insist on bringing Him down to our (human) level. He does not wave a magic wand and frustrate the physical laws He has inaugurated and with which He has complete control. And we must remember that insistence on 'literal' where metaphorical interpretation should be understood can put a strain on the credulity of brethren and sisters who, from one source or another, for one reason or another, have come to realize that they are living on a 4.5 billion year old planet, orbiting one of approximately 400 million stars (suns), in one of several million similar galaxies each containing millions of stars, all resulting from the singularity ('beginning') of about 15 billion years ago, well confirmed by the background microwave radiation which persists to this very day.

This vast cosmological scale of things serves to remind us that God's ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts, but those who persist in a literal interpretation of the Genesis story are in fact doing just that - bringing this all-powerful, all-seeing and all-knowing God, in complete control of the universe, down to our own human level. To accept that the emergence of life on this planet has taken not just six literal days but possibly billions of years, as we count years, in no way denigrates the power of the God we worship. Rather to the contrary, and by way of illustration let us try to envisage the implementation of the command 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle etc. (and this sixth utterance of the Word goes on to include man) male and

female created He them.' What imagery does this passage evoke – animals (including man) popping up here, there, all over the place, just like that, or a process beginning with simple, single-celled forms gradually increasing in complexity as the fossil record suggests? I am inclined to accept the latter and in doing so I see no conflict with Genesis whatever in spite of the time-scale involved. What happened on the 'day' in question was the going forth of the Word, as John so rightly puts it in the first chapter of his gospel record. Just as the coming of the new creation took time, and Jesus came 'at the right time' although the Word was there from the beginning, so the implementation of the divine fiat of Genesis also required time subject to the laws of nature that God Himself had initiated.

I would urge therefore that, free from misconceptions and with an open mind, the texts of the Genesis record and of the opening verses of John's gospel be read together, paying careful attention to the wording and to the use of metaphor, where applicable, this being a well-known and much used method of portrayal in the Hebrew language. This could help us to recognize that we need have no fear of Science. Although we will still want to argue with those scientists who will have nothing to do with God, we do not have to defend the truth of the Bible against the truth of Science.

Charles Fawcett

The Christadelphian, April 1st, 1896, p.136.

Extract from Robert Roberts' diary of a voyage to Australia.

'... How extraordinary that such an immense country should not have been discovered until so recently in the world's history. How extraordinary that it should fall into England's hands. There are some other extraordinary things about it. The animals natural to that country are not to be found in any other part of the earth; and the creatures natural to other parts of the earth are not to be found here. Yet the natives (now few in number, and rapidly disappearing) bear evidence of affinity with the races of Africa. There are problems involved in these facts which it is hard to solve. For one thing, it excludes the idea of Australia having been involved in Noah's flood: for had it been covered with the waters of that catastrophe, all its peculiar creatures (such as the kangaroo) must have perished, and any creatures subsequently introduced must have been identical with those in other countries. It seems, indeed, that while all other countries bear evidence of submergence, the soil of Australia shows no token of having been under water. So the students of Australian geology say. If we suppose (which is a very probable supposition) that none of Adam's descendants before the flood had reached so far as Australia, there would be no reason for subjecting it to a deluge intended to destroy the human species. ...'

Who Owns the Holy Land?

Lloyd Geering

(St Andrews Trust for the Study of Religion & Society, 2001)

This 66 page, A5 booklet is the publication of four lectures given by the Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University, Wellington, NZ. It is the 18th in a series of annual lectures given in St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Wellington, all of which are very well attended and subsequently published.

While few Christadelphians outside New Zealand would have heard of Lloyd Geering, his name is widely recognised throughout this land by Christians and non-Christians alike. As Professor of Old Testament and Principal of Knox College (Dunedin NZ) he published an article denying the physical resurrection of Jesus, but when he wrote further in 1967 that the immortality of the soul was not a biblical doctrine, he was tried for heresy but exonerated.

Why this review, from the far ends of the earth? Firstly, many years ago, Prof Geering the 'radical' Presbyterian saw fit to pass the exam scripts of a 'conservative' extramural Christadelphian student, and thus I have always been interested in his writings. Secondly, in my opinion, our beliefs regarding the modern state of Israel and especially the role of Britain in its establishment, should be open to scrutiny, and modified if necessary. Thirdly, the current crisis has brought the problem into worldwide focus.

The booklet has for its cover a simple outline map of modern Israel showing the boundaries with its neighbours as they now exist. It is printed on glossy paper with a good typeface for those of us whose eyesight is not as good as it once was. Topic headings within each chapter make the lectures very readable. While there is no index, a list of eleven books for further reading includes Barbara Tuchman's *Bible and Sword* and Stewart Perowne's *The Life and Times of Herod the Great* and *The Later Herods*. At NZ\$10, this booklet is very affordable.

The first chapter, **The Jewish Claim**, would hold little new information for most Christadelphians, as it notes the importance of the eastern Mediterranean coast as a trade and military route between ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, reminds us that the Canaanites were the earliest inhabitants of whom we have historical knowledge, and that the Philistines were a non-Semitic people from which the name Palestine is derived.

Geering notes that 'all devout and religious Jews, supported by many Christian fundamentalists, take the divine promises to Abraham very seriously.' With that I can agree, but differ from him when he states that 'in the Bible we do have some genuine historiography, but only from c900BCE onwards' and when

he follows this with the additional assertion that 'the biblical figure of Joseph is entirely fictional.'

In the sections relating to invasions by foreign powers useful information is given concerning the Roman domination. Finally, he summarises the Jewish Claim to the land, on the grounds of divine promise, occupation, and anti-Semitism in the Diaspora.

The Palestinian Claim. The structure of this lecture is basically a summary of how Islam gained control of the land. It is noted that until the early 20th century 'the word Palestinian simply referred to the inhabitants of the land called Palestine whether they were Arab, Muslim, Jew, Samaritan, Christian or Druze. Only since 1948 has the term come increasingly into use to refer to all the non-Jewish inhabitants of the Holy Land at the time of the establishment of the state of Israel.'

Under the heading 'Islam Reshapes the Holy Land', a valid point is made that 'too little is known about the nature of Islam in the post-Christian West.' This statement could apply especially to those Christadelphians with a preoccupation with the continuous historical interpretation of the book of Revelation, although it is pleasing to observe that in our literature there are now appearing articles about the beliefs and practices of this religion which is becoming more visible in Britain and New Zealand, not only due to migration but also to conversions.

For me, this lecture was the most useful, and leads on to the question of 'who, if anybody, must bear chief responsibility for this almost insoluble conflict (over the land)?'

The third lecture, **The British Responsibility**, traces British interest from the formation of "The Jews' Society" in 1808 until the formation of the State of Israel 140 years later. Fuller details may be found in *Bible and Sword*. This lecture provides further evidence that Dr Thomas' belief concerning the restoration of Israel and Britain's (Tarshish?) role in it did not arise in a vacuum, but that he was rather only one of a number who saw the return of Israel to the land as a necessary condition for the return of Jesus to the earth.

In some Christadelphian literature much is made of the support given by Britain to the Jews, especially in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. However, what is less known is that 'the British made a commitment to the Arabs in return for their support against the Ottomans. An exchange of letters between the British High Commissioner in Egypt and the Emir of Mecca in 1915-16 shows the Arabs, including those in Palestine, were led to believe Britain was promising them independence.'

Who Resolves the Conflict? is for me the most unsatisfactory lecture. While the outline of Israeli-Palestinian relations from 1948 is useful, and the Professor states that 'Israel and the Palestinians cannot do it on their own,' he can offer no solution. This is not surprising, for in his book *The World to Come* (Bridget

Williams Books Ltd, NZ 1999) there is no place for a second advent, but merely an unknown future. He sees a world which is both global and post-Christian, and when he explores a possible future for a global society resting upon the rise of a global culture he lists possible scenarios: a thermonuclear holocaust, World War III, authoritarian dictatorship, mass starvation, pandemics, destruction of the ecological balance, collapse of the global economy, global spread of terrorism, and a sliding into social chaos.

I would recommend this booklet, for not only does it give a summary of the historical background to the conflict, but it shows us how others view the competing arguments. It is past time that Christadelphians who wish to preach on this subject in the 21st century need to move from a 19th century mindset.

John Stephenson (NZ)

(N.B. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the above booklet should send me a cheque for £4, made out to *The Endeavour Magazine*, and I will arrange for John to send you a copy by airmail. **Editor.**)

An extract from an article entitled *The Sinners' Friend*
from *Endeavour* 5, Autumn 1962, p 6

The Jewish rulers had no time for Jesus, while the people of the streets – the unclean, the uneducated, the riff-raff – hailed Him as a miracle-worker. And it is clear from a study of the Gospels that Jesus was particularly friendly to those people who were 'black-listed', or cast-off, by society. These included the type of person whom we might find repulsive today drunkards, prostitutes, traitors, petty-minded bureaucrats, toadies and nameless bad characters. The Saviour could make these castaways aware of their need of His Gospel. But the religious leaders were only conscious of their superiority over the mass of mankind, looking down upon them as inferiors, whilst priding themselves on their own exclusive advantages. Jesus told the chief priests and the elders decisively, 'Tax gatherers and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God ahead of you' (Matthew 21:31 (N.E.B.)).

Ken Camplin

**The only way to have a friend
is to be one.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sacrifice & Mercy

Paul Wasson

(2001, 32pp.)

This booklet is subtitled 'The Essence of True Religion' which might seem a touch arrogant were it not so true! Our Master himself reproached his critics with the words from Hosea 6:6 *... go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice"* For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.' (Matthew 9:13). We are considering, therefore, how sinners may acceptably come to God.

Paul Wasson follows the process through from Old Testament to New, observing how the people were regularly criticised by the prophets for their worship. So did God not actually want the sacrifices listed in the early chapters of the Bible, or was it that these were desired by Him but not offered in the correct spirit?

Several answers can be given. The sacrifices described in Leviticus were part of God's education, teaching that we must approach God on His terms not ours; they also instilled a sense of guilt, and stressed the seriousness of sin: there is a risk that simply being forgiven can lead us to think that sin does not matter too much. Paying a penalty demonstrates that sin is a serious offence and we should seek not to repeat it. Sacrifices also pointed forward to Jesus who fulfilled the law and the prophets and offered the one sacrifice which took away the sin of the world.

The prophets repeatedly faced the difficulty, however, that offering sacrifices could easily be divorced from true worship; hence time and time again they put the emphasis on having a knowledge and love of God: 'I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings' (Hosea 6:6). The prophets denounced depersonalised worship, where ritual is followed but is not matched by a life lived in close relationship to God. God cares how people conduct their lives. And sin means more than violation of religious taboos: it refers to moral offences, injustice, dishonesty, bribery, oppression.

Before looking at the New Testament, Paul Wasson considers how the vision in Ezekiel of a future temple with animal sacrifices is to be fulfilled. In a recent address it was said that the literal details given in Ezekiel, such as the measurements of the temple, leave no room for interpretation – it will happen exactly as described. But a careful look at the details, as Paul Wasson demonstrates, does indicate that interpretation is necessary. Where does Jesus in his future glorified position fit into this picture? Is he the Prince? What about the elect? Are they the servants? But the prince has to offer a sin offering for himself and for all the people (Ezekiel 45:22); he has sons and servants, to whom he can make gifts

from his inheritance (46:16-17); the prince is not allowed to take people's inheritance by oppression (46:18); the priests are given instructions about marriage, and are mortal (they can leave widows 44:22).

'It is inconceivable,' says Paul, 'that the prince is Christ, and that his sons and the priests are the elect' (page 13). The New Testament points away from a literal fulfilment, considering the Law a 'schoolmaster to bring us to Christ' (Galatians 3:24), while Hebrews says that the old dispensation was a preparation for the new.

How then is Ezekiel and its detail to be fulfilled? Paul Wasson says that Ezekiel and the other prophets built up a future picture of pure worship in terms drawn from worship familiar in their age: a temple made with hands, animal sacrifices, distinctions between priests and laity, clean and unclean. It is not the outward form that will find fulfilment but the spiritual reality behind these pictures of pure worship.

The New Testament already sees this coming to pass: believers are the temple of God (2 Corinthians 6:16, compared with Leviticus 26:12), they present their bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), and the more distant future when the purpose of God is complete is described in the Book of Revelation using the imagery of Ezekiel's temple to describe the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem.

In the second half of the booklet Paul looks at the New Testament in more detail, observing that the clash between Jesus and the religious establishment often concerned the difference between the ritual and the inward aspects of religion. Not everyone opposed Jesus. It was a scribe who said 'to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices' (Mark 12:33). To which Jesus replied, 'Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.'

Paul takes up the challenge to each one of us as to whether we personally fall into the trap of putting more weight on religious observances than on the true inner religion as it should be shown towards other people. When travelling to the meeting, if we see a person in need, do we stop and help, or leave it to others? It is very easy to absorb ourselves in worthwhile ecclesial work and service, but then have too little time to visit the sick or write a get-well card. Other spiritual dangers to acceptable Christian service can arise from constant repetition in which our minds can be numbed by familiarity; or we can make artificial distinctions in services between formal and informal; or we can pretend to observe a principle, but in reality deny it by our behaviour; or we can be lulled into feeling that we acquire spiritual merit by doing something which has been commanded. 'Whatever we put at the centre of our religion, whether it be ritualism or an academic study of the Bible, can degenerate into a form of idolatry, an end in itself, a substitute for a heartfelt awareness of the moral

demands of God.' (page 23)

Finally Paul looks at how the terminology of the literal sacrifices in the Old Testament is reused metaphorically to describe the work of Jesus and the actions of believers. Paul examines several ways in which the sacrifice of Christ is understood. Particularly memorable and inspiring is what he says about the sinlessness of Jesus. We are inclined to think of this in a negative way: he avoided doing wrong. But Jesus had 'a positive and dynamic goodness which flowed out of Him continuously and spontaneously. He could not help Himself from feeling compassion for others, putting the needs of others before His own, giving Himself fully to others, helping them in their infirmities, leading them by sheer example to repentance. His was a life of self-emptying, self-giving and benevolence. Sacrifice, for us as for Him, is not just a negative activity – giving up something bad in our lives, or something which impedes our spiritual progress – it is positive. It means giving ourselves to God and to others.' (page 26).

This booklet helps to guide us to the same dedicated service that Jesus gave.

Ian McHaffie

(Copies of the above booklet may be obtained from the editor for £1.50, including postage. Cheques to Les Boddy please.)

Europe's Inner Demons

by Norman Cohn, Granada Publishing, 1976.

Whenever we read about the persecution of minorities, of ethnic cleansing, of the Holocaust, the question must arise in our minds, how can otherwise civilized people treat their fellow humans in such a despicably cruel manner? The answer is simple; they do not regard their victims as fellow humans. They demonize them, seeing them as something less than human, as the very embodiment of evil and malevolence. Norman Cohn's book *Europe's Inner Demons* is both a history and a socio-psychological study of this dark aspect of human nature as it found expression in the religious persecutions of the Middle Ages.

Cohn had previously written two other books, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, a study of millenarianist movements in the late middle ages, and *Warrant for Genocide - the Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This, his third book follows the same general theme: the influence of fantasy upon European history, in this case the paranoid conviction that society is under threat by a secret fraternity, small and clandestine, engaged not only in a ruthless drive to subvert and overthrow the existing order but

addicted to the most depraved and abominable practices. This perception is then used as justification for violent persecution.

The story he tells begins with the vicious persecution of the Christians by the Roman Empire in the 2nd century. The cause of this viciousness was not simply because the Romans saw Christians as slightly eccentric, but because they accepted without question that these sectarians held meetings at which small children were ritually slaughtered and devoured, that they conducted promiscuous orgies and worshipped strange divinities in the form of an animal. With these presuppositions it was easy to read sinister meanings into the teachings of Christianity. The Eucharist was the 'flesh and blood of Christ', their Lord was the 'Son of Man', an expression which could have the meaning 'child'. The *agape*, the love feast was therefore perceived as the scene of orgiastic cannibalism and child sacrifice. Christians looked forward to the overthrow of the present world order, therefore, it was assumed, they must be the enemies of mankind, deserving of the most violent persecution.

This set the pattern for persecutions of later centuries when, ironically, Christians themselves became persecutors. But they went further in the demonization of dissidents. Whereas the Romans saw the Christians as the enemies of the state, Christians saw their victims as enemies of God and servants of Satan. Throughout the Medieval period it was taken for granted that Jews habitually kidnapped and murdered Christian children and drank their blood at Passover. In time a similar fantasy was projected onto any group who were seen as outsiders to the Catholic faith.

This was an age when many people, especially monks and priests, had an obsession with the overwhelming power of the devil and his vast army of demons. In the early centuries of Christianity the Church had been full of optimism, convinced that Christ had dealt the devil a blow from which he could never recover. The powers of darkness may have been active among the pagans, but Christians were safe if they trusted in the grace of God. By the Middle Ages however, the devil and his subordinate demons were seen in every corner of life, even the hearts and minds of monks, priests and the pious, for the powers of darkness concentrated their malevolence upon the faithful. This terrifying obsession led to the conviction that Christendom was threatened by a vast conspiracy of human beings under the direct command of Satan.

Thus there arose the fantasy of secret societies of devil-worshippers, endued with the conviction that Lucifer and his fellow rebels had been cast out of heaven unjustly. One day they will return to cast God and His angels out and take command of the heavenly realms. Until then his earthly followers must do all they can to offend God. Magistrates and inquisitors gathered evidence of such groups who met in nocturnal gatherings where they renounced God and the Christian faith, indulged in incestuous orgies and murdered children and ate

them. These vile proceedings were presided over by the devil himself or one of his demons in the guise of a giant toad or cat or a creature half man, half goat. These accusations gave momentum to the most violent persecutions against heretical groups such as Cathars, Bogomils and Paulicians. And yet, apart from the accusations of persecutors and confessions signed under torture, there is no evidence that such practices were ever performed.

In 1227 a fanatic called Conrad of Marburg was appointed Germany's first official inquisitor. Helped by two shady characters, Conrad Torso and Johannes, they intimidated magistrates into burning anyone they designated, claiming that they could detect a heretic simply by his appearance: 'We would gladly burn a hundred if just one among them was guilty.' These three, with the blessing of Pope Gregory IX, terrorised German society from top to bottom. Rich and poor, aristocrat and peasant were all victims of their purges. Unsurprisingly, all three were eventually assassinated, after which the German church fell silent on the subject of heretics. The great satanic menace had no real existence, it was nothing more than the paranoid creation of a few obsessed minds.

Even groups who were widely respected for their piety and moral uprightness were branded. The Waldenses or Vaudois, founded around 1173 by a rich merchant of Lyons called Valdes or Valdo practised voluntary poverty, chastity, devoted themselves to preaching from Scripture, refused to take up arms and rejected the Church of Rome as worldly and apostate. (They are included among the 'Protestors' by Brother Alan Eyre). Despite their reputation for piety, charity and chastity they too were accused of worshipping Satan and his demons, of indulging in wild orgies and the murder of children. Their violent suppression was inevitable.

Sometimes these fantastic charges were cynically invoked as a means to discredit and destroy groups who stood well within the Catholic tradition, such as the vicious attack by Philip IV of France against the Knights Templars, an order of crusading knights devoted to the protection of pilgrims to the Holy Land and to fighting the infidel. Their Catholic credentials were impeccable, but they too fell prey to the charge of devil worship, wilful sacrilege and the basest sexual promiscuity.

Another favourite bogeyman in the Middle Ages was witchcraft. Inquisitors and magistrates wrote manuals and Popes issued bulls describing in lurid detail the 'sabat', a blasphemous parody of the Christian sacraments in which Satan appeared and received the homage of his followers and children were ritually slain and eaten. Based on such documents and the many confessions extracted from accused witches, historians have long interpreted these groups as the remnants of a pre-Christian fertility cult which survived throughout the Middle ages as an underground protest against an all powerful Church. Yet, says Cohn, there is not a shred of historical evidence that organised witchcraft ever existed.

Folk magic existed, but the covens, the Satan worship and the rest of the phantasmagoria was nothing more than the product of the imagination of witch-hunters. Confessions were extracted under torture and simply recorded what their inquisitors wanted to hear.

Witches were believed to be in the grip of a demon, a grip which could be broken only by torture. This was administered for the good of the witch's soul. If he or she confessed and perished in the flames they had a chance of purging their souls and achieving salvation. Some historians have estimated that as many as 120,000 people died in Western and Central Europe during the great witch hunts.

Cohn invokes a psycho-analytical approach to explain this enduring fantasy, drawing a parallel between the stereotypes projected upon dissidents and the subject matter of European mythology and folklore in which the villain is a wicked queen, a hag, a giant, a wicked stepmother or stepfather who murders and devours children. It can be seen in Tantalus and Cronus, divine beings who devoured their own offspring, as well as the stories of Hansel and Gretel and Snow White. Like the villains of these stories the perception of heretical groups represented something that lurked deep in the European psyche – their innermost fears and anxieties, their temptations and neuroses, their unacknowledged desires. This may well explain the more bizarre elements in the imaginations of inquisitors. The point could also have been made that rigid dogmatism and intolerance in religion is often a sign not of strong faith, but of deep-rooted insecurity and self-doubt. Such people feel threatened by a view of the world that differs from their own, and respond by lashing out against it and demonizing those who adhere to it.

Cohn tells a story both fascinating and disturbing as it describes the depths of cruelty to which men will descend in obedience to what they believe to be the will of God. It describes also the passivity of rulers and common people alike who, out of fear, self-interest or gullibility, either looked the other way or gave their support to extremists. Human nature never changes, nevertheless, we can only be grateful that we live in a society where self-appointed heresy hunters no longer have the political clout to burn at the stake those whom they have accused.

Mark Robertson

It should always be remembered that the prophecies of the Old Testament, where they are typical, come under the authority of Jesus, and will be fulfilled as He wills.

Ron Storer

(From an article on Ezekiel's Temple in *Endeavour* 4, Summer 1962, p 31.)

Correspondence

Finding Founders and Facing Facts.

Dear Les,

Following our conversation on the phone I am commenting on feedback (of a critical nature) which has been received since the publication of *Finding Founders and Facing Facts*. Perhaps these observations will stimulate some of the calm, reasoned discussion which you would like to publish in *Endeavour*.

All letters received have been written in a Christlike spirit and more interest has been shown than expected. The latter is due, I think, to the enthusiasm many have felt for the works written by the much-loved Bro Alan Eyre, the books which, looking back over earlier centuries, claimed to present individuals who composed 'a people who so closely identify with the stand of the Christadelphians.' Many of them, we were told, lived in a 'golden age' of the Truth when 'a characteristic Christadelphian faith flowered so richly.'

So far no corrections have been received of the various doctrinal stands which I concluded those 'people' held, but in fairness it has to be said that readers can only decide whether Alan's or my conclusions are correct by consulting sources for themselves. One Brother considered that whether my 'critique of Bro Eyre's books' was correct or not, he did not consider 'that it is the best use of our time and powers.' Perhaps whether that was so depends on how much we are concerned about just criticism which we are liable to receive from 'outsiders', and whether or not we have an interest in the convictions of heroic, persecuted dissenters to whom we owe gratitude for our freedom today. Professor David Daniell, author of *William Tyndale, a Biography*, and a modern spelling version of *Tyndale's New Testament* (both recommended reading by *The Christadelphian*), 'found the unscholarly errors by Alan Eyre troubling' and considered 'It is good that work is being done to establish the truth.'

A few correspondents were concerned lest tolerance toward other believers should lead to an 'open table'. Offering the elements only to 'our own' is, of course, the existing rule, but some of us think appreciatively of the practice observed by members in our early community – not adopted generally but to which John Thomas raised no objection. Their precept was, as he explained, that the 'table' was 'the Lord's' and so, for each person present ('in the faith' or not), it was 'his or her own' responsibility whether or not to rise, walk to the table, and help 'himself' (*The Ambassador*, 1866, p222).

One Brother, writing in connection with 'Salvation', felt that I wanted to use 'a much broader paint brush than traditional Christadelphianism paints it with', and did not take into account 'that God deals with mankind by means of a covenant'. Admittedly, I did express the hope of salvation for others as well as

ourselves. Approval of Alan's books by leading Christadelphians has, I think, encouraged painting with such a broad brush for those living in earlier centuries that the narrow one wielded today has become an anomaly.

As you know, Bill Davison, who seems to be a very determined brother (I have had contact with him only recently), has been anxious to learn the opinion of the editor of *The Christadelphian*. Bro Michael Ashton, as editor, gave a reasonable answer to him indicating that my comments were being taken 'very seriously indeed', and 'that there are many documents that need to be perused to be sure of the accurate position.' He added that 'Before deciding about the right reaction' to the material 'we are obviously undertaking our own review, for "does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" (John 7:51)'.

I am unsure whether his quotation was referring to Alan, to the subjects of the proposed review or to myself, but in each case it was appropriate except that we are really talking about 'assessing' conclusions and not 'judging' people. As I explained in my book (p. 214), I have not proposed that Alan's extensive work, nor the promotion of it by his publishers, has been motivated by anything other than an attempt to convert men and women to apostolic faith.

Michael wrote again after a reminder from Bill which perhaps was sent to him prematurely, for 'perusing the many documents' would be a lengthy procedure. The reply received allowed that some of my work 'extends what was discovered by Brother Alan Eyre, and would no doubt be incorporated if any future reprint of his works was contemplated.' He took exception to some (unspecified) comments I had made in connection with the Brotherhood but doubtless he is aware that most, if not every one, of the matters raised would find agreement with a growing number in our body.

With regard to Alan's works, he commented:

The question turns, as you have indicated, on whether the Brotherhood has been misled into thinking that there were groups in past generations who held not only some of the beliefs that make up the fundamental teaching of the gospel, but all of them. Yet, in our view, this is not Brother Alan's claim. In the Introduction to *The Protesters* he speaks about 'the efforts of men to preserve from decay and corruption various elements of the truth through the long years of the Master's absence.' And if it was not his aim to show that there were groups in the past who held all the same basic elements of the gospel as we do, it is surely unjust to claim that he has misled the Brotherhood into thinking exactly that.

While those observations removed the need for a 'review' of any 'documents' other than the Introduction to *The Protesters*, they did not face the facts nor answer the issue. The purpose which Alan proposed was commendable, (as acknowledged on my page 9), but the difficulties lie in the specific claims made

subsequently. In summary, his research evidently convinced himself, his publishers and members that there existed in earlier centuries 'faithful believers of the Truth'³ who composed 'a community with essentially the same doctrines as ourselves.'⁴ Our attention was drawn, for example, to the 'brilliant scholar' who, we were told, was 'an intrepid 16th century "Christadelphian".'⁵ The groups identified were described as 'the Brethren in Christ',⁶ and as people who were 'faithfully contending for the same promises and doctrines as the Christadelphians today.'⁷ Moreover, in the introduction to the review of the second edition of *The Protesters* published in *The Christadelphian* (July 1985), it was stated that Alan had 'shown us in his book' that there were 'those whose faith did not differ from ours'.

Like others, I find it difficult to understand from these words anything other than that the 'faithful believers' identified were considered to hold 'all the same basic elements of the gospel as we do' (using Bro. Michael's phrase).

For some eighty years I have been hearing that any referred to as being 'in the Truth' or having it, were people who believed 'all' those 'basic elements', and they would not be allowed membership otherwise. That is the traditional conception among us as Michael himself explained in *The Christadelphian* for April 1994, when he wrote that it is 'apostolic preaching and the full gospel message' (i.e. not merely some of the 'basic elements') which we refer to as 'the Truth'. So when we were informed by Alan that a 16th century individual 'worked hard for the Truth for many years',⁸ when we were given to understand that another had 'the Truth',⁹ and that a 17th century enthusiast tried to persuade other denominations that 'the Brethren in Christ had the Truth'¹⁰ and to convert them to it, what were we intended to understand? If Alan had known and had told us that the first of those 'protesters' wrote that baptism was not necessary for salvation, the second was a Trinitarian, and the third declared his recognition that a Christian may 'repel invaders by armed force' then wouldn't both he and his publishers have been inundated with enquiries?

In a letter Alan clarified his stand. He referred to the 'scholars of integrity' with whom he had 'collaborated' and who 'certainly would agree that in the 16th and 17th centuries there were Bible believers "with essentially the same doctrines as ourselves"....' He was adamant that there are no 'substantive errors' in his two books requiring amendment should either be reprinted and that any corrections sent to him had already been made. He stressed that he had never suggested that there were communities who 'expressed their biblical faith in language identical to, or even close to, the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. But that there were many thousands of Bible believers, in several hundreds of what we now call 'ecclesias', that rejoiced in the fundamentals of truth as required for salvation by Holy Scripture, *there is not a shadow of doubt whatsoever* [his italics].'

To have enjoyed the academic help which Alan did must have proved valuable though it has not resulted in faultless work (a description which, of course, I could not apply to my own). But so much depends when discussing 'fundamentals of truth' on how far Alan's 'collaborating' scholars were aware of the importance placed by Christadelphians on the intricacies of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith, and that non-acceptance of any one point is liable to result in refusal of membership. As we were reminded in the April issue of *The Christadelphian*, where reference was made to the 'doctrinal basis summarised in the Statement of Faith' - 'These doctrines are fundamentals of our faith and should not be compromised.'

In April, the editor of *The Australian Christadelphian Shield* published, very fairly, a reply from Alan to the October and December reviews of *Finding Founders*.... In his impressive style Alan again referred to the creditable scholars who had worked with him on 'all aspects' of his books. But some of us were left wondering not only how much those scholars knew of Christadelphian doctrinal exactitude, but also whether they were in a position to detect the significance for our body of Alan's omissions when he quoted or referred to early documents. While each of the four early Statements of Belief given in *The Shield* (unreferenced) contains some Christadelphian basics, how many of those basics did the individuals named in *The Protesters* and *Brethren in Christ* hold? And would the Statements qualify any for brotherhood today?

Alan told readers that if he is 'spared' long enough he intends 'to complete another book on one of the greatest pioneers of Bible truth, Andrzej Wiszowaty'. I am confident that his book will be written attractively. But I do hope that so worthy a character will have his views and his brotherhood's views presented so as to include not only those which carry Christadelphian approval, but also those which do not.

Alan asks me the pertinent question, 'How do you see your books contributing to our witness to saving truth?' Admittedly, discussing whether or not other believers, either living in the past or present, are 'Brethren in Christ' is not a spiritually uplifting exercise, though learning from their dedication and courage is. I can well believe that my criticisms seemed pretentious and unseemly, and if that were so I am sorry. There was no need for my writing so extensively, yet each character merited the attention given him. If we set out to present 'saving truth' by referring to earlier believers then I feel we should try, in spite of our human fallibility, to present their beliefs accurately, refraining from letting emotionalism blind us to facts, and without pouring scorn on 'outsiders'. 'Reason' and thinking on 'whatsoever things are true' seemed to insist on the point I most wished to make - that we are not a consistent nor creditable community preaching 'truth' if we include as Brethren those living in the past who widely differed from us, while we exclude contemporaries who believe much as they did, and even those who believe much as we do (but not quite 'all').

as well as excluding the dedicated 'Unamendeds' from fellowship. Nor are we consistent and creditable while we continue our traditional practice of ecclesias breaking up and individuals being disfellowshipped over a point of difference on what is or what is not that 'truth'.

Without hesitation I share Alan's admiration for the Polish Brethren. As observed in *Christadelphia Redivivus*, written in the late 1950's,¹¹ (when I first learned of those heroic characters), it is apparent that they held principles which were 'a type of witness' such as adopted by our body. And there is 'little doubt' that Dr Thomas was greatly influenced' by their thinking (observations which dismayed the then editor of *The Christadelphian*). I certainly hope those dedicated people will be found acceptable to our Father, even if I cannot agree with some of the beliefs clearly defined in their Racovian Catechism – for example, that 'eternal life' will be 'passed in heaven...'.

Alan tells us of his work that 'God has richly used my books to bring many sincere seekers after Truth into the 'fellowship' of the Christadelphian brotherhood...'. It is understandable, therefore, if he feels that his effort has been well worthwhile. I would feel similarly so if the day were to dawn when I could write that 'God has richly used my book to bring many sincere Christadelphians to realise that if the fascinating 16th/17th century "Protesters", scattered across Europe, those earnest thinkers who held so wide a variety of doctrines, can be counted as our Brethren, then so also can many of our contemporaries.'

On a different matter, one reader considered that on page 215 I had misinterpreted Brother Wilfred Alleyne's meaning in *The Christadelphian* (Dec. 2000) regarding the destiny of our loved ones who have not accepted Jesus. While that exposition offered the most surprising hope I have ever seen in traditional Christadelphian literature, I find it difficult (after several readings before and after my publication) to see how we could be expected to understand it in any other way. But perhaps some readers or its author could explain how it might be read differently?

While writing I would like to take the opportunity of mentioning general feedback you receive. Readers seem more ready to inform you when they are critical than when they enjoy articles, including the valuable editorials. I must admit to being guilty on that score. When I felt worried that our professorial Wilfred Lambert was being overcritical of Bro. Roy Standeven's work (Roy being held highly in the affection of the community) I felt moved to say so. On the other hand I have been reading Wilfred's contributions to the magazine over forty years, and even if I have sometimes felt he was being too stern with us less erudite mortals, I have greatly appreciated his specialised knowledge which, so far as I am aware, no one else in the community possesses. Often I've thought to myself 'Lang may your lum reek!'¹² – but have never thought of writing to the magazine to say so. I hope you are getting a good response to the pamphlets

being published, not only on devotional matters such as Sheila Harris' contribution but also on the controversial subjects. For not only Wilfred's discussion on creation, but also Ron Coleman's work on the sacrifice of Christ and Paul Wasson's on God's will and human freedom offer valuable research into beliefs which puzzle many of us who find it difficult to accept the traditional expositions.

Ruth McHaffie

¹ *Brethren in Christ*, back cover.

² *Ibid.*, p. 87

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5

⁵ *The Christadelphian*, 1983, p. 128

⁶ *The Protesters*, (1985 edit.), p. 107

⁷ *Brethren in Christ*, pp. 5-6

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131

¹¹ G. McHaffie, reprinted 2000 and 2001.

¹² For the benefit of Sassenachs this is a Scots saying, meaning

'Long may your chimney smoke'

(i.e. 'Long may you live!').

The following booklets are still available from the editor:

Creation by Wilfred Lambert @ £1

Christadelphia Redivivus by George McHaffie @ £1.50

The Most Important Doctrine Of All by Ron Coleman @ £1.20

The Power of the Risen Lord by Sheila Harris @ £1

Brethren Indeed? by Ruth McHaffie @ £2

God's Will and Human Freedom by Paul Wasson @ £2

All the above prices include postage and packing.

Please make cheques payable to

The Endeavour Magazine.

Brother Les,

The roots of badness

Bro. Paul Wasson is to be congratulated on his scholarly and convincing refutation of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. But his exposition of the fall in Eden is far from convincing. Bro. Paul suggests that Adam and Eve were like innocent children in the nursery of Eden who had to learn the lesson of obedience to their parent. He therefore regards the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as imparting an understanding of right and wrong and suggests that when they partook of the fruit they lost their childlike innocence, their dependence on God and their moral neutrality.

This thesis prompts two questions:

- (1) Would Adam and Eve have been punished for an act of disobedience when they were unable to distinguish between right and wrong?
- (2) If God was teaching innocent children the importance of obedience, would a first offence have been punished by death?

The problem centres around the meaning of 'knowledge of good and evil'. Since natural justice precludes just knowing the difference between right and wrong, it must have a deeper meaning. The expression is idiomatic because the word 'know' in Hebrew has subtle shades of meaning. Thus we have 'to know' meaning to have sexual intercourse, and when God says of Israel, 'You only have I known', it implies a special relationship. So I suggest that knowing good and evil means **judging** what is good and what is evil i.e. claiming moral authority.¹

This rebellious tendency is described in Isaiah 5:20-21 which reads:

'Woe to those who call evil good and good evil;
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and are prudent in their own sight!'

Here we have the essence of Adam and Eve's transgression; in deciding that it was right to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they were wise in their own eyes and were setting themselves up as judges of what was right and wrong.

Adam and Eve were created adults and from the beginning God spake to them in adult language and gave them a clear commandment which they must have understood. Moreover, if they had any doubts, the serpent made it clear that they were grasping at nothing less than divine authority when it said, 'When you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' Thus the offence was nothing less than a deliberate rebellion against the authority of God and as such it clearly merited the death sentence.

Far from being a nursery which Adam had to leave in order to grow up, Eden

is a paradigm of God's paradise kingdom. Adam was the prototype of all humanity, and I agree with Bro. Paul that we are all 'in Adam' in the sense that we, like Adam, have fallen prey to our rebellious human nature and so, like Adam, we are all guilty and we are all dependent on the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, to give us an entrance into the paradise of God.

With fraternal regards,

Alan Fowler

¹For a detailed exposition of this idiom see *Exploring Bible Language* ch. 11 Ortho Books, High View, Litchard Rise, Bridgend, CF31 1QJ. U.K.

Paul Wasson replies:

Dear Brother Alan,

Thankyou for your letter in response to my article. I think you may have misunderstood what I was saying about Adam and Eve being 'childlike' in their perceptions. I have never suggested that our first parents were children in a physical sense. They were both created as adults and lived together as man and wife. I simply used the difference between children and adults purely as an analogy to describe the difference between the couple before their 'Fall' and after it. Although physically adult they began as naive, inexperienced and immature. Expelled from Eden they were like children suddenly thrust into the world of adults, with all the responsibilities, hardship and burdens which attend adulthood and which children cannot anticipate.

You define the phrase: 'the knowledge of good and evil' by reference to Isaiah 5, which suggests that it means judging what is good and evil, claiming moral authority. Certainly that was involved, since the couple took it upon themselves to decide what was right and wrong thus making their own rules. However the expression 'the knowledge of good and evil' occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament, (Deuteronomy 1:39, II Samuel 19:35, and Isaiah 7:16). In all three passages the phrase seems to be an idiomatic expression describing the knowledge and experience of the adult in contrast to that of the child. ('... before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good')

Having eaten the fruit, a change came over the human couple which gave them a different perception of their state. From then on they and their descendants were given a greater capacity both for good and evil, an opening up of possibilities in both directions, in the same way that the innocence and naivety of children is replaced by the understanding of the adult.

You raise two questions:

1. 'Would Adam and Eve have been punished for an act of disobedience when they were unable to distinguish between right and wrong?'

But they could distinguish between right and wrong. Just because they lived in a state of innocence did not mean that they had no understanding of the

difference between right and wrong, obedience and disobedience. God had told them the difference and clearly expected them to comprehend.

2. 'If God was teaching innocent children the importance of obedience, would a first offence have been punished by death?'

Many have pointed out that to threaten them with the death penalty for the first lapse of obedience seems severe whatever age-group they belonged to. (The problem is compounded by the fact that having made the threat so emphatically, the Lord did not carry it out in 'the day thou eatest thereof'.)

As for the motives of the couple for disobedience, you state that 'the offence was nothing less than a deliberate rebellion against the authority of God.' It certainly amounted to this, because all sin is rebellion against God. However, the precise motives of the man and the woman for obeying the serpent is not made clear in the text. The woman heard the serpent promise that 'Ye shall be as Elohim, knowing good and evil.' We are not told in so many words that she aspired to godlike omniscience, only that the fruit looked good, tasted good and was 'to be desired to make one wise.' This last expression comes closest to what the serpent had promised. Perhaps we are meant to understand that she had only a limited understanding of what the serpent was promising. To be like Elohim, knowing good and evil, was beyond her comprehension and experience. What decided the matter was the allurements of the senses. The full force of the serpent's words was lost on her. And so she experimented to see what would happen, like Pandora opening the magical box, having no clear idea of the consequences.

As for Adam, we are told nothing of his motives. 'She gave her husband with her and he did eat.' Unlike his wife, he made no attempt to argue the point but simply did as she suggested. There is no suggestion of any great moral struggle taking place within his heart. I Timothy 2:14 suggests that his sin was that of misplaced loyalty to his wife.

Your Brother,

Paul Wasson.

GOD'S CRUISE OF OIL

It cannot fail, God's cruise of oil thro' endless
ages shall endure.

Who gives in fullness shall receive,
He who withholds alone is poor.

I open wide my human heart to all who ask
And, as I give, the cruise is filled.

If I withhold I lose the draught from which I live.

Ethel Battey

(From Endeavour 3, Spring 1962, p 10)

Extract from *Endeavour* 4, Summer 1962, p 5, article on The Balanced Life

When the lawyer put the question to Jesus as to the great commandment, the first part of the reply was in fact the complete answer, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind'. At that point, without going any farther, Jesus might have added, 'upon this ONE command hangs all the law and the prophets', for the greater includes the less, and the love for God naturally embodies trying to keep all His commands, including the love of one's neighbour. It would certainly not have done the other way round, for while it is possible to love one's neighbour without loving God, it is quite impossible to truly love God, without loving one's neighbour.

Why then did Jesus add this gratuitous, unrequested, and apparently unnecessary piece of information? Surely it was because He saw that this was why things were going wrong. By and large, men were observing the other commands, they did not steal, they did not bear false witness, they did not commit adultery; but nevertheless they lacked that generous, all enveloping sweep of love which formed so important a part of Jesus' teaching. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

Donald Smith

In 1962, two members of the *Endeavour* committee resigned after being disfellowshipped by their ecclesia for entertaining the view that members of other Christian groups could well be acceptable to Christ on his return.

The following is part of

A Committee Statement on p 32 of *Endeavour* 4:

Already, we are living on borrowed time. Yet still, the church cannot tolerate any serious attempts to face contemporary problems which, calmly and courageously considered in the spirit of Jesus, can be overcome. Still, for the most marginal of differences, we will cut off, in the name of the purity of the Truth, those who could contribute to the progress of the church, perhaps to its very survival. By such folly we erode its strength, dim its witness, and crush its life.

The love of Christ does not seek to cast out, but to welcome in. Too often, like the disciples, we know not what manner of spirit we are of. We forget that mercy rejoices against judgement. We create differences where none exists, and exaggerate those that do. We imitate the Romans of old, who made a city into a desert, and called it peace.

It is therefore with deep regret that we have to announce the resignation from our editorial committee of two of our members, brethren Steve Gibbons and Colin Russell, who have been disfellowshipped by their ecclesia.

For such actions neither the church as a whole, nor its members individually, can escape a final responsibility. For they can take place only in a climate of opinion which allows them.

The

Endeavour

Magazine



They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh and presented them to him.

December 2002

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The Endeavour Magazine

For Christian Thought and Action

ISSN 1474-404X

December 2002

No. 108

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Editorial

O Son of Man

When we sing hymn 212, which begins with the words 'O Son of Man', we are asking our living Lord Jesus to be our comrade or companion in life, to share our joys and our sorrows. We ask him to speak words of comfort, love and power that will stimulate us to show love in whatever tasks we have to do. We acknowledge that it is his company and fellowship that will keep us strong and make us glad. But, in doing all this, we do something that is almost never done in the New Testament, we address Jesus as Son of Man.

Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and Thomas says to him 'My Lord and my God.' A common Christian confession is that 'Jesus is Lord' which, as Paul tells us, can only be truly said by someone guided by the Holy Spirit. No one ever confesses in the NT that Jesus is Son of Man and he is rarely referred to as such by anyone else. The only place where anyone is recorded as referring to Jesus in this way is in Acts 7:55,56. In the narrative verse 55 Luke says that Stephen saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right hand side of God. Then Stephen says: 'I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand side of God.' What an effect this had on the council – they rushed at Stephen, threw him out of the city and stoned him! Apart from this case, the phrase 'the Son of Man' is to be found only in the Gospels and, with one exception, always on the lips of Jesus himself. It needs to be noted that Jesus refers regularly to *the* Son of Man, suggesting that he has some particular son of man in mind.

The last recorded use of the phrase by Jesus has significant links with Stephen's appearance before the Jewish Council. It is to be found in Mark 14 where, after his arrest, Jesus was taken before the Council himself, to be examined concerning certain accusations that were made against him. Unable to make any of the accusations stick, the High Priest asked Jesus, 'Have you no answer to the accusation they bring against you?' As Jesus kept his peace, the High Priest questioned him further: 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God?' This time Jesus answered saying: 'I am and you will all see the Son of Man seated at the right side of the Almighty and coming with the clouds of heaven!' At this the High Priest tore his robes saying, 'We don't need any more witnesses! You heard the blasphemy. What is your decision?' They all voted against him considering that he was guilty and should be put to death. The reaction of the Council to Stephen was just what it had been to Jesus. The phraseology of Jesus' reply, some of it straight from Daniel 7, suggests strongly that the Son of Man that Jesus had in mind was Daniel's son of man.

It should be noted that there is an important link between the two questions that the High Priest put to Jesus. It had been King David who first desired to build a Temple for God and it was his son, King Solomon, who realised the plan.

This suggests that, for the Jews, there was a close connection between kingship and responsibility for the Temple. The Temple, as restored under Ezra and Nehemiah, lacked, amongst other things, the important element of an independent prince and so could not be seen as the fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy. The Maccabaeans cleansed the Temple and for a while established a measure of independence. King Herod tried to woo the Jews by rebuilding the Temple but none of all this satisfied the longings of Israel for a king who would bring full peace, freedom from pagan rule and a purified, if not, rebuilt Temple as the centre of their worship.

When the High Priest asked Jesus what he thought about the Temple allegations that had been made against him, and Jesus refused to answer, the High Priest's next question was almost bound to be about kingship as the two so clearly went together in the Jewish mind. This time Jesus answers, but cryptically, making reference to Psalm 110 and Daniel 7 implying that they were about to be fulfilled. This is even more obvious in Matthew and Luke. Matthew, in 26:54, has Jesus saying in response to the High Priest's second question: 'So you say. But I tell all of you from this time on (AV hereafter) you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right side of the Almighty and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Luke, in 22:67-69, has: 'If I tell you, you will not believe me; and if I ask you a question, you will not answer. But from now on (AV hereafter) the Son of Man will be seated at the right side of Almighty God.' The AV 'hereafter' has in the past made it easy to understand Jesus to be talking of 'the hereafter', something out of this world, something that could only be contemplated after his return. Modern versions (e.g. GNB as above), however, make it much more likely that Jesus had in mind something much more imminent, to be experienced and demonstrated in the near future.

Certainly, the 'sitting at the right hand side of God', in fulfilment of Ps 110:1, is uniformly witnessed to throughout the NT (see my article in E86, 1991): Jesus has been there for 2000 years, reigning in his Father's name (see Editorial, E101, 1999). Isn't this confirmed by Matthew, at the climax of his gospel when he reports what Jesus said to his disciples in Galilee before he left them? 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age' (28:18-20). The all-embracing nature of this authority could not be more greatly stressed than by Jesus speaking of 'all authority, all nations and all the days (always). Doesn't Matthew finish his gospel in this way in order to leave no doubt in the minds of his readers that Jesus now reigns as king in God's Kingdom? Matthew had earlier shown us Jesus being tempted by Satan to receive from him all the kingdoms of this world (4:8,9), later shows Jesus restricting his mission to Israel (10:5,6) and finally shows that God has now given him all nations, but not only

so for all power *in heaven* as well as on earth is given to him.

No prophet of Israel spoke more of the Kingdom (Reign) of God than Jesus. No prophet of Israel spoke more of the Son of Man than did Jesus. Knowing what we do about him and who he is, should we not expect him to know the mind of God his Father far better than any other prophet? Shouldn't we expect from him what others would have only partially understood and revealed? If anyone is going to tell us how to understand Daniel, for example, should it not be the one who had more to say about both the Son of Man (Dan 7) and the Kingdom of God (Dan 2&7) than anyone else? It may be a struggle to learn how to see the kingdom and Son of Man passages in Daniel as fulfilled 2000 years ago but shouldn't we be prepared to make the effort when Jesus seems to be so insistent about the matter? We are so used to pushing these things so firmly into the future that we blind ourselves to what Jesus is saying. Both Dan 2 (see my article on OT Stones and NT Meanings in E88, 1992) and Dan 7 speak of the kingdom of God, and Jesus, (who, in the parable of The Tenants of the Vineyard, presents himself as the **last** prophet to Israel (Mk 12:6) and, as the 'son', clearly the most important one) with more to say about it than anyone else, is surely more qualified to present us with the truth of the matter. Far too often, we let OT prophets override what Jesus has to say.

We should not miss the significance of the fact that Jesus is the only one to use this Son of Man language. It is particularly noticeable that he starts using the phrase more frequently after Peter has confessed that he is the Messiah, the Son of God. This would suggest that Jesus did so deliberately in order to challenge his disciples view of Messiahship. He was just not going to be anybody's king, as he showed in his temptation in the wilderness, and after the feeding of the 5000 in John 6:15: 'Jesus knew that they were about to come and get him and make him king by force; so he went off to the hills by himself.' As he said to Pilate in John 18:36, 'My kingdom does not belong to this world ...' He was intent on receiving what the Father wanted to give, just as Dan 7:13,14 shows a son of man, surrounded by clouds, going to the one who had been living forever where he was given authority, honour, and royal power so that the people of all nations ... would serve him. The wording is more than reminiscent of Mat 28:18! Isn't Jesus saying that Dan 7:14 has been fulfilled? This is not to say that there is nothing more to come. The fulfilment has to be worked out in history before reaching its full consummation at the return of Jesus when he will hand back the kingdom to the Father (1Cor 15: 28). However, in the meantime, the reality of the situation should not escape us and Jesus and the gospel writers have done their best to see that we do not miss the point.

No doubt one of the major reasons for Jesus insisting on referring to himself with 'Son of Man' language was that the one 'who looked like a human being' referred to in Dan 7 was in deliberate contrast to the beasts that preceded him.

Jesus would want it understood that he had no intention of introducing yet another beastly kingdom but one that would be truly humane, that is a kingdom of men and women as God would want them to be, truly displaying humanity in the image of God. Jesus wanted none of a kingdom established by man's wisdom and methods, one based on power to force compliance. The power that was at the heart of God's Kingdom would be love that appealed for reciprocation and was prepared to serve others with self-effacing humility.

In Daniel 7, just as the beasts represent the pagan nations that persecuted God's people so the Son of Man (v.13) is later interpreted as representing 'the people of the Supreme God'(v.27). After having suffered at the hands of four successive persecuting pagan nations, the people of God are vindicated by God and given royal power. Now G B Caird suggests that there are two significant differences between the situation in Daniel 7 and the situation faced by Jesus. In Daniel, the enemies of God's people are the Gentile nations but for Jesus, as the representative of the new Israel that Jesus was gathering round himself, the enemy was now the unbelieving nation of Israel itself. When Jesus stood before the High Priest, by presenting himself as the Son of Man was he not thereby implying that before him stood the new form of the beast in the person of the High Priest representing the whole of unbelieving Israel? Here man and beast faced each other. Jesus was about to be judged worthy of death by the Jews but was maintaining, by presenting himself as the Son of Man, that in the court of heaven he would be vindicated and the judgement would be given in his favour and so against Israel. Jesus had frequently warned his own people that they were heading for disaster unless they heeded his pleas for them to give up their fight against Rome. Trying to bring in the kingdom by waging war was only going to backfire on them. Anyway, the Kingdom that he had come to inaugurate was 'not from this world' and could not be brought about by using the methods of the enemy. Jesus presented to his followers a different way of bringing in the Kingdom.

This brings us to the second major difference between the situation as spoken of in Daniel and Jesus' understanding of what his Father wanted him to do. Daniel's Son of Man was to be served by all (vv.14,27) but Jesus presented himself as the servant of all (Mk10:44f). This was how Jesus learnt from his Father to live and reign in this world and how our 'Son of Man' looks to us to learn to do the same. To the extent that we do, so the Kingdom or Reign of God will become more of a reality to ourselves and others.

We have a choice to make. Will we insist on Daniel's version of events still remaining to be fulfilled *au pied de la lettre* or will we follow Jesus' redefinition of things and not only recognise him as the Son of Man but devote ourselves to following his example of service to all. After all, was he not openly and publicly vindicated by God when his warnings to the nation proved to be only too true in AD 70?

Les Boddy

Eden – The Difficulties of Literality

I remember six years ago seeing an account of a Fraternal Gathering in the Botanical Gardens, Edgbaston in May 1928. A group photograph showed about two thousand present. This revived memories among them of another such gathering fifty six years earlier. 'After meeting in the Athenaeum Hall some two hundred brethren and sisters took a short train trip to Olton. The brethren found themselves in a lovely piece of country scenery. Three minutes walk brought them to Dr. Thomas's lonely home' said the caption. A photograph showed them (including the unmentioned sisters) grouped round a marquee in the garden. A *photograph* in 1872? It was in fact an albumen print which preceded the silver halide process invented by Fox Talbot still in use today. (Dr Thomas died before he could actually live in the house.)

What was particularly interesting was the identification of some of those present. The account said: 'The tall man in a dark coat is Bro David Handley. His hand rests on Bro Robert Roberts' shoulder on whose left hand is Bro Edward Turney.' However by the following year this close relationship had ceased. Handley and Turney and their followers were expelled because of their belief about the garden of Eden, which was described as 'Renunciationism'. David Handley and his followers returned a few years later but Edward Turney did not. His followers still exist as a small group although they no longer call themselves 'Christadelphians' but 'The Nazarene Fellowship'. (Anyone on their mailing list receives a constant flow of argumentation.)

Both sides accepted the literality of the Genesis account but a dispute arose over the details of Eden in chapters 2 and 3. This section (which actually begins in the middle of verse 4 of chapter 2) as we all know commences by describing the earth before there was any life. God's first act is to create a solitary man and install him in a garden replete with all manner of vegetation, which the man is to take care of and cultivate. Only at this stage does God decide that he must have a suitable companion and, as a first step, forms all the animals and birds. These are brought to Adam to be given names. Adam undertakes this stupendous task but decides (understandably) that none of them is a suitable companion for him. In default God takes one of Adam's ribs and creates a woman from it.

This is obviously a fable. Even today, with all our experience, no one presented with a great herd of animals for the first time could think of, and, even more difficult in the absence of writing, remember names for them. Since Adam was (presumably sexually) a male this procedure was unnecessary, for obviously he was designed to live with a woman. On the other hand, the account in chapter 1 avoids all these difficulties, for it tells us that man and woman were created together with the object of having children and populating the earth.

In the light of this it seems strange, almost perverse, that the quarrel between Robert Roberts and Edward Turney centred on the meaning of chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis, so different from chapter 1. It arose, to some extent understandably, at a time when little was known about genetics and in particular about the immensity of the task of creating Eve from Adam's rib. This would entail the deletion of the 'Y' element in chromosome 23 in his genetic code, and its replacement by a second 'X' element in every cell of the millions in the rib. (Actually, all human foetuses are female for the first eight weeks; only then does the 'Y' element in chromosome 23 begin to take effect. Hence male nipples.) And apart from the difference of sex, we know now that Eve would have been Adam's identical twin! Surely the solution is that chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis have all the features of a *parable*?

These difficulties were of course not appreciated in the 1870s. What caused the dispute was verse 3 in the eighth chapter of the letter to the Romans, which states that God sent his own Son in the *likeness* of sinful flesh and thus condemned sin in the flesh. Robert Roberts argued that though Jesus had 'fashioned his mind according to his Father's word, so that all his actions were in harmony with it, only the condemnation of sin, which he experienced in his own mortal frame, hindered him from entering into the fullness of perfection with God.' As was shown in my booklet, *The Most Important Doctrine of All*, 'condemnation' is a forensic word – it comes from the law court and is a description of winning a dispute. The verse means that Jesus, by his example, his teaching, his love and his self-giving, enabled sinners to follow his example and overcome the power of sin.

Edward Turney endeavoured to reach something like this position in a surprising way. He argued that God had offered a sacrifice which redeemed Adam and Eve so that they were no longer under condemnation. There is of course no mention of a sacrifice in the Genesis account, but Turney argued that when God made coats of skins and clothed Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21) this involved killing the animals, a sacrifice which undid the condemnation. This is contrary to the whole teaching of Scripture. A sacrifice is a gift by a sinner to God as an act of repentance. It establishes, or strengthens, communion between the worshipper and God. It had to be offered by the *sinner to* God as a costly mark of repentance. This was obviously not the case in Genesis.

However, later references in the Old Testament do not regard Eden as being a disaster. In Ezekiel 36:35 God promises the repentant and restored Israel: 'Everyone will say that this land, which was once a wilderness, has become like the Garden of Eden' (Ezekiel 36:35). In the oracle against Tyre, God says 'How wise and handsome you were. You lived in Eden, the garden of God and wore gems of every kind. You lived on my holy mountain and walked among sparkling gems. Your conduct was perfect from the day you were created until

you began to do evil.' (Ezekiel 28:13-15) A prophecy of restoration looks back to the perfection of Eden, with no mention of a fall: 'I will show compassion to Jerusalem, to all who live in her ruins. Though her land is a desert, I will make it a garden, like the garden I planted in Eden. Joy and gladness will be there.' (Isaiah 51:3)

Where did the story of the garden of Eden originate? William Todd, in *New Light on Genesis* (p 32) suggests that it was based on the experience of a people migrating from a desert land to one watered by rivers, where cultivation for the first time was possible. Not only was the new land rich in vegetation good for food, but there were animals and birds which were quite new to the immigrants. This explains the detailed reference to rivers in the story in Genesis which otherwise do not figure in the text. The snake, with its stealthy and unseen approach, is aptly used as a metaphor for temptation. If Jesus taught a new way of life by parables based on scenes familiar in his time and country, is it wrong to suggest that God taught his people about life through a prophet by a parable based on scenes in Mesopotamia?

But this is only the beginning of the difficulties of literality. Is it conceivable that the whole future of the human race should be determined by a single decision by one couple, immediately after their creation, a couple who had had no experience whatever of life, or moral instruction, and to whom no opportunity of repentance was given? Then too, many believe that God knows the future infallibly. But even dismissing this, why should God run the immense risk of imperilling the future of his new creation right at the outset?

The snake brings another set of difficulties with it. It is impossible for snakes to speak. They do not have the brain power. Human beings only develop this ability when brought up from a very early age in a human-speaking environment. This was demonstrated centuries ago by one of the King James's of Scotland who was convinced that if children did not learn another language they would automatically speak Hebrew. (He did not understand that Hebrew was actually 'the language of Canaan' Isaiah 19:18.) So he took two newborn children and placed them in the care of deaf mutes on an uninhabited island in the Firth of Forth. The result was that they never learned to speak at all. Similarly, when newborns have been nurtured by animals, they cannot talk and they behave, so far as their bodies allow, like their nurturing animals.

Recent research has shown in detail why speech can only be developed in (human) babies by hearing speech. An adult brain has about 100 billion nerve cells (neurons), a similar number to that of the stars in the Milky Way. A baby's brain contains most of the neurons it will ever have. But the newborn brain weighs only one quarter of that of an adult. What brings about the increase? Almost entirely, growth in the wiring, the intricate network of connections between the cells. These connections allow individual cells to respond in

particular ways to other cells which have the ability to grow their own connecting lines.

Making these permanent connections is what new brain cells live for. As a cell matures it sends out multiple branches to make contact with other cells. Some branches send information out of the cell, others bring information into it. When two lines meet (a synapse) they set up a special kind of communication – neurotransmission.

Children's brains are much more active than those of adults because of the amount of learning necessary to make the connections. This activity can be measured by the amount of glucose the brain is using. At three months the brain areas involved in seeing, hearing and touch are burning up an increasing amount of glucose. The brain's energy consumption of this reaches full adult level at about 2 years. At 3 years a child's brain activity is twice that of an adult, and this continues until the age of 8 or 9, when it starts to decline, reaching adult level at 18. At birth each neuron in the cortex has about 2,500 connections with other cells. The number reaches its peak at two to three years of age when there are about 15,000 synapses per neuron (actually more than in an adult brain). But as we get older, brains do not go on for ever making more connections. In fact, by full adulthood, more have been grown than are needed, and we start getting rid of some. The synapses which carry the most messages get stronger and survive, while the weaker are cut out. (*How Babies Think* : A Gopnik, A Meltzoff, P Kuhl. Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1999)

It is thus obvious that if Adam and Eve (by some miracle which we cannot even begin to understand) were created as adults they would not have been typical of men and women generally. They had no experience. Their knowledge of their surroundings would be minimal. Why then should God determine the history of mankind by subjecting this inexperienced, atypical, couple to a test which would determine the fate of all their descendants? Especially as there is no record of their having received any instruction, moral or otherwise.

As for the snake, it could not have spoken, not only because it lacked the necessary brain power and experience, but also the essential physical organs (larynx, tongue, teeth, lips, glottis and pharynx). Nor do snakes have ears to learn with as babies do. It is not the music but the swaying of the charmers and their instruments, taught in secret ways, that makes them behave as they do. Snakes do not eat dust, and their method of locomotion is not a curse, but highly suitable for their physical construction. All this confirms that the account must be a *parable*.

To crown it all, the sequel shows that the event could not have been at the beginning of time. Adam and Eve's son Cain was a farmer, but even today we do not find farming among very primitive peoples. They are hunter-gatherers. Where did the seeds come from? How were the necessary tools made? How did

Cain learn when and how to sow and the time to reap? Even more difficult, how did Abel manage to tame wild animals (sheep) and herd them? Why was Cain so fearful of his fate after he had killed his brother? 'I will be a homeless wanderer on the earth and anyone who finds me will kill me' – just one generation after the beginning when the world population could only be numbered in dozens. And how could the newly-created Eve understand that pain in pregnancy and giving birth would be increased when, as yet, she had experienced neither?

It seems clear that we do not have here a literal account of an event at the beginning of time, but a parable reproving some greater sin than eating forbidden fruit. This is confirmed by the name of God, *Yahweh Elohim*, which appears in Genesis 2 and 3, uniquely here in Genesis, and only once otherwise in the Pentateuch (Exodus 9:30). Elsewhere in the Old Testament the combination is found only occasionally in isolated places, in five books, of which the earliest is 2 Samuel. (*What is His Name* Alfred Norris, 1986, p 58.) It is clear then that chapters 2 and 3 reflect a later time.

A parable does not need to be literally true. We do not argue that the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 12: 16-21) requires us to believe in a literal burning hell. Jesus used a story featuring a current belief to point the lesson that if a man cannot be humane with the Old Testament in his hand and Lazarus on his doorstep, no sign will teach him otherwise.

When the seventy-two came back from their preaching mission, filled with joy because 'even the demons obeyed us when we gave them a command in your name,' Jesus did not say that there were no such things as demons. He said 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.' The existence of Satan and of demons were what people believed in, and Jesus used these beliefs to drive home moral lessons, but without necessarily endorsing their literal truth.

It is argued however that the Genesis story is different. It is part of the divine history of what actually happened, written by Moses as a result of a revelation he received from God. Human authorship was precluded, especially of the early part of the book, and so it all must be literally true. Until recently it has been accepted that the early parts of Genesis could not have been based on documents written at the time of the events and therefore the account must be true because it can only have come from God. God must have communicated the facts. However it has now been shown, from internal evidence, that there were documents from a very early time. If there had been no documents, God must have been responsible for communicating the facts to Moses the author, and therefore they must be literally true as recorded. Human authorship would leave the question open.

The reasons for believing now that Genesis was compiled from earlier records have been set out in P J Wiseman's *Clues to Creation in Genesis*, revised and edited (1977) by his son Donald J Wiseman, Professor of Assyriol-

ogy in the University of London. They maintain that there has been a general misunderstanding of the crucial phrase 'these are the generations' which occurs first of all in Genesis 2:4 'These are the generations of the heaven and earth', repeated ten times in succeeding chapters.

This was generally interpreted as referring to the genealogy of the person named. Thus 5:1: 'This is the book of the generations of Adam', implies that Adam is of sufficient importance to mark a break in the genealogical series and that he and his descendants will form the subject *of the section which follows*. This is wrong, the Wisemans say, and they go through the succeeding eight names in Genesis to show that in no instance is there a genealogy of *the forbears* of the named person. Each list is one of *descendants*.

Punctuation in most versions suggests however it is a list of *ancestors*. Chapter 2 of Genesis in most Bibles begins with three verses which obviously belong to chapter 1. Then, in my copy of the KJV, there is a paragraph mark before verse 4: 'These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day the LORD GOD made the earth ...' But this obviously refers to what *precedes* it in chapter 1, not what comes later. This pattern is repeated in the eight cases following, right through the book.

The reason for the misunderstanding is twofold. We associate 'generations' with genealogy, but it really means 'a beginning', as in the title of the book - Genesis. Why has this misconception arisen? Chiefly because it was not appreciated that the 'books' referred to were tablets, say the Wisemans.

It is generally known that at the time when tablets were written a link was made between a tablet and its sequel. On early tablets this toledoth (or colophon, as it is also known) was written on the edge of the tablet in a short passage summing up the contents, and also introducing the succeeding tablet by a catchline. It was the equivalent of the title page in our books, but necessarily written at the end. Later it was written on the baked clay envelope which served as protection for the tablet.

So we have: 'This is the book of the generations of Adam' (5:1). Then: the generations of the sons of Noah (10:1); Shem (11:10); Terah (11:27); Ishmael (25:12); Isaac (25:19); Esau ((36:1); and Jacob (37:2). In every case it is not the *beginning* of a new tablet but the *end* of the current one. While scholars generally accept the importance of the formula, the Wisemans maintain that the majority have misunderstood its use and meaning. It is not the preface to a new section but the title of what has gone before. Thus when we read 'This is the book of the generations of Adam' we learn nothing more about Adam, except his age at death. Similarly 'These are the generations of Isaac' is not a history of Isaac but that of Jacob and Esau. So too, after 'These are the generations of Jacob' we read mainly about Joseph. In every case 'this' is what happened before, not what comes next. The peculiarity has puzzled most commentators.

In *Clues to Creation in Genesis* the authors say 'It will be seen therefore, that the word [toledoth] is used to describe history, usually family history in its origin. The equivalent phrase in English is: 'These are the historical origins of . . . ' or 'These are the beginning of . . . ' It is evident then that the phrase in Genesis points back to the origin of the family history and not forward to a later development through a line of descendants. This is made clear by the only occasion of its use in the New Testament. In Matthew 1:1 we read: 'The book of the generations of Jesus Christ', but following it is a list of ancestors, not of successors. The phrase points back to what has gone before, not forward to subsequent events. It is clear therefore that this section of Genesis was based on documents which, incidentally, can reflect the outlook of the human authors.

It suggests a very different view of Genesis. It is generally believed that Moses wrote it under the direct inspiration of God, who revealed the facts to him and therefore guaranteed their accuracy. It is clear now that Genesis is largely based on human accounts or beliefs of what happened and is not necessarily part of a divinely communicated history of the world. That does not discredit it, but it means that we have to exercise our judgment as to what is literal. What then of the story of Eden? It cannot of course be a document from the time of creation. I would suggest that it is a parable from some later date, in circumstances we cannot be sure of. If it was among the documents that Moses possessed it would be natural for him to include it in his account at the place it now occupies.

Ron Coleman

The Jews made a dreadful mistake in that they could not leave behind them the old path which was intended to lead them to a higher way. They desired to return, as Paul said, to 'the weak and beggarly elements', and by so doing they denied themselves the freedom which is in Jesus.

All progress has been made through change. All progress has been hindered because some have refused to see the need of new ways. Our Heavenly Father, with His unchangeable moral attributes, never changes. It is our understanding and appreciation of Him that must change, and that must change us.

We either go on forward or go backward. We cannot stand still. Let us see to it, then, that we do go forward with our eyes looking upward, lest we should miss a new vision because of blind prejudice, and so lose our part with those who, at last, will be changed into the likeness of their Lord.

E5, Autumn 1962, p2, conclusion to Editorial.

'God is not a man'

It is fashionable today to say that our concept of God's kingdom is too materialistic – I have said it myself! – and to decry the longings of our brethren and sisters of 150 years ago. And yet I can appreciate that to most of our African brethren and sisters, for example, an earth where clean water is abundant, where the rains fall and the land can be cultivated, would be 'heaven'. The same argument would apply to the poor 150 years ago in this country: clean water, good sanitation, enough to eat, freedom from disease, how wonderful!

It is salutary, therefore, to realise how they – many ill-educated as well as poor – sought to come to grips with the things of the spirit. I can imagine them sitting round a table, their Bibles open, their candles or lamps throwing a mellow light, and they pouring over this, from the Declaration of 1867:

That the Spirit is not a personal God distinct from the Father, but the instrumental power of the Father, radiant from his person and presence, filling universal space as the medium of his omniscient perceptions and omnipotent behests, whether in creation or inspiration; the distinction between the Father and the Spirit being (not that they are two persons, but) that the former is Spirit in focus so intense as to be substance and light inconceivable, and the latter, Spirit in diffusion continually outflowing from the Divine Centre, and therefore with the Father forming a unity in the stupendous scheme of creation, which is in revolution around the Supreme Source of All Power.'

(My thanks to Bro.A. Nicholls and his book *The Spirit of God* for inspiring me with this definition.)

Why did we lose such a thrilling concept and allow a couple of dumbed-down, banal statements to take its place?

'God is spirit'; and we should be very careful not to bring Him down to our level, to anthropomorphize Him. 'You thought that I was altogether such as you' (Ps.50) God had to expostulate on one occasion, and it was to covenant people. God's statement about our respective situations, His and ours, tells us – 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways as the heavens are high above the earth, so are my ways high above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts.' (Is 55) This being so, we have to realize that at best we can only reach out to God for knowledge and understanding of Him, even though Jesus said 'He who has seen me has seen the Father.' How many of the disciples really knew and understood Jesus, and do we do any better?

What then did our early brethren and sisters make of their declaration that the Father is spirit in focus so intense as to be substance? It is almost as if they had a preview of the photographs shown to us by Nasa and the Hubble telescope that

give us a wonderful insight into how galaxies are formed by gaseous matter becoming so intense as to be substance. Translate this into spiritual terms and we can only marvel at the intensity of spirit that is 'our Father', creator and upholder of the universe, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus – our Father.

In order to help us get some approximation of what He is, God frequently comes down to our level in describing Himself: 'Can He who implanted the ear not hear? He who fashioned the eye not see?' (Ps.94) But does He need ears and eyes such as we have when His spirit permeates the universe? Again, 'His ears are open to their cry', and 'the Guardian of Israel never slumbers, never sleeps' are concepts meant to help us. And sometimes the faculty of seeing is described as 'outside' God himself, as when Ezekiel saw the wheels of the cherubim-chariot as being full of eyes (a concept that was horrendous to my childish imagination!). Yet when Ezekiel tried to describe the 'person' he saw he could only say that He looked like 'a man from the waist up, but from the waist down he looked like fire'; and 'I saw something like a hand.' He couldn't find words to describe for us a spirit being, perhaps a representative of THE Spirit Being. Daniel, too, could only use phrases such as 'something like a human hand', and so on. As an aid again for us, God has mostly described Himself as male, a Father, a progenitor – Yet in reality He is genderless – as we shall be!

But all these are but aids for us as we try to understand 'God is spirit.' We stand in awe at the power and knowledge of the One who, by the spirit force emanating from Him, upholds the whole vast universe and yet is aware of the smallest quantum particle. Now a complete understanding of what the Godhead is like is, fortunately, not a matter of fellowship or disfellowship. So if we prefer to think of God as being in form like us, then we have the liberty to do so. And on the other hand, if we are reaching out to concepts such as eternity, and immortality, then we also are at liberty to come to other conclusions.

The Greeks 'felt after' God, and made Him in human form and imbued Him with most, if not all, of human sins and weaknesses. Our early brethren and sisters felt after Him as spirit so condensed as to be matter. And of course we must accept that that phrase now describes the Lord Jesus, too. Yes, he, Jesus, could take on human form when necessary, as when he talked to the eleven subsequent to his resurrection, but is he like that in the presence of his Father? 'This Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature.' (Heb.1. 'The Message'.)

This brings us to the question, What of us? what shall we be like if, as John says, we shall be like him? I do think we as a community have been (still are?) a bit grudging in our acknowledgement of our status as divine beings when our Lord shall have completed His saving work in us at His coming. When we are, as Paul says, clothed upon with our house from heaven, we also shall be spirit so

condensed as to be spirit matter. The spirit body that Paul envisaged (I Cor 15) is so different from our present bodies that, in other instances, he calls it 'metamorphosis' – a change of form. Think of the parts of our bodies we shan't need any more – heart, lungs and circulatory system: stomach and evacuation system: kidneys, liver and spleen, and more. If we think along these lines we are left with 'mind', and, if it is different from mind, 'personality'. These are things we cannot see at the present time, when mind/personality inhabit a mortal, fleshy body. To be 'clothed upon with our house from heaven', means that mortality will be swallowed up of life: then, logically, 'mind' will inhabit spirit 'so intense as to be substance'! (N.B. I do not believe we have an immortal soul!)

So for us there is a tremendous change ahead – so tremendous that Paul, as I have said, used the concept of metamorphosis. The most familiar example of this is the life cycle of the caterpillar/chrysalis/butterfly, where the final beautiful creature seems to bear no relation at all to what has gone before. The caterpillar is an eating machine, no more, no less. It eats and eats, sheds its skin several times, and eventually that outer skin hardens into a shell while the caterpillar inside dissolves into a sort of protoplasmic soup! Out of this, from cells which were present in the caterpillar but which had no function at all in that first earthbound state, is formed the butterfly which is designed to soar heavenwards. What a beautiful spiritual picture this is: the seed of God implanted in us, only able to grow as our earthly desires dissolve, until a creature is formed utterly unlike our present selves, no longer earthbound but now able to soar to the throne of God Himself.

'It is God who works in you.' May He in His grace complete our metamorphosis.

Margery McGregor

Jesus was the true Servant of the Lord in all its aspects. It was not just that He fulfilled the Songs of Isaiah in His life and death but that He also left us an example, to use, Peter's words, to follow in His steps. It is for us to take these Songs, written years ago by Isaiah, to ourselves and to try to fulfil them in our own imperfect lives in service to others. If this is not so, why should Paul write to the Galatians, 'Bear ye one another's burdens' and then exhort, 'Do good unto all men' (Galatians 6: 2 and 10)? If, in our zeal to be the true servant of the Lord, we should serve others to the exclusion of our own brethren and sisters, then comes Paul's gentle reminder, 'especially them who are of the household of faith.' Yet there is no excuse for refraining from serving all men. There is an order of priority. Jesus has shown us the way. It is for us to follow.

Beginnings and endings: comparing the Four Gospels John

This series of articles has looked at each of the gospel stories in turn, focusing on the way they begin and end. Mark asks the question: 'Who is Jesus?' but leaves the answer, and the continuation of the work of Jesus, to his readers. Matthew identifies Jesus as the expected Messiah of Old Testament prophecy and ends his story with the great commission: the Jewish Messiah is to become the saviour of all nations. Luke portrays a 'universal' Jesus whose life impacts all, beginning the story of the 'universal' message of salvation which continues in Acts. In this final article I will look at John, in the same way as I dealt with the other three gospels, by concentrating on the way the gospel begins and ends.

Matthew, with the genealogy of Jesus beginning with Abraham, took us back to the beginnings of Israel, and Luke, with the genealogy of Jesus leading back to Adam, took us back to the beginnings of human beings, so John takes us back to the beginning. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God' (Jn 1:1, all quotations from the NIV); the gospel begins by taking its readers back to Genesis and God speaking the world into existence:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light (Ge 1:1-3).

Jewish tradition describes the Spirit of God hovering like a dove over the waters and perhaps John reminds us of this in the testimony of John the Baptist: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on [Jesus].' (1:32) John's gospel sees this significance in the life of Jesus: the word that God has been speaking since the beginning of the world has become visible in Jesus: the beginning of the life of Jesus is the beginning of God's purpose for the world.

The gospel continues, recalling the first act of creation: 'In him was life, and that life was the light of men' (1:3), before moving quickly to 'the Fall': 'The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.' John is describing the conflict of Jesus' mission: 'I have come into the world as a light, so that no-one who believes in me should stay in darkness.' (12:46). This story of Jesus begins by tracing the pattern of the opening chapters of the Bible, from creation to Fall, but will continue by showing how Jesus is lifted up from this low of human experience.

The 'prologue' to the gospel (1:1-13) makes no mention of Jesus until v.17: John writes of 'the Word', then John the Baptist, then 'that light', then John, and so on before finally making his identification of the Word: 'For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (1:17).

Having progressed through creation and fall, John's gospel arrives at the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. Having received the law, Moses was allowed to see the glory of God but as John reminds us: 'No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known' (1:18). The prologue shows us how the beginning of the life of Jesus echoes, and yet goes beyond, the beginning of the Bible narrative: Moses was given the law (and passed it on 'second-hand' to Israel) but grace comes directly through Jesus; Moses saw the glory of God but Jesus has made God known.

I began this series of articles with the story of the two disciples travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The disciples believed the following facts about Jesus: that he lived and died, a 'prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people' (Lk. 24:19). Jesus taught the two disciples the meaning of these bare facts by looking beyond the beginning of his earthly life to what the Scriptures said about him, enabling Cleopas and his companion to recognise Jesus as the risen Lord. In the same way the men at the empty tomb reminded the women 'the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again' (Lk. 24:7).

John ends, as it began, by interpreting the facts of Jesus' life to show a continuum from the creation of the world. The risen Lord Jesus appeared to his frightened disciples and 'breathed on them [*enephusesen*] and said, 'receive the Holy Spirit' (20:22), recalling the moment when God, having created Adam, 'breathed in his nostrils [*enephusesen*] the breath of life, and the man became a living being' (Ge. 2:7). The disciples are 'recreated' by Jesus.

The continuum from creation escapes the ending of the gospel and reaches forward into history – even the gospel itself 'ends' at least twice (20:30, 21:23) as though its writer(s?) do not know when to stop. John finally concludes with a reflection on the process of recording the life of Jesus:

'Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written' (21:25).

In Ecclesiastes such abundance is wearisome to unredeemed humanity: 'Of making many books there is no end' (Ecc. 12:12); in John it is a joyful reflection that the redemptive work of Jesus cannot be contained by the world.

The stories that Mark, Matthew and Luke tell about Jesus never really end: their 'endings' are really pauses in the story of the work of Jesus which continues in the lives of their readers. John also pauses and looks forward to the continuation of this story. Jesus tells his disciples: 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you' (20:21) and predicts how their stories will end. For Peter, Jesus indicates the manner of his death: 'when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go' (21:18). Jesus also looks forward (enigmatically) to the death of the beloved

disciple: 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?' (21:22). This pointing forward, to events which will end after its narrative has concluded, are examples of the principle with which John challenges us, its readers: Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (20:30-31).

The four gospels tell stories which end only by seeing the continuation of their stories in the lives of their readers. As readers we can decide whether we agree with the meanings which the gospels ascribe to the facts of the life of Jesus. As readers we can decide if the stories end on the page or begin again in our lives:

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.
(TS Eliot, 'Little Gidding' from Four Quartets.)

Richard Gaston

I am as certain as I could ever be of anything in this mortal life, that our greatest fault as a body has been in this fundamental matter of love. The love of the Truth, which means the love of God, and the love of the brethren which alone can reveal our love for God, and apart from which all our professions of love would be rejected.

We have been zealous for purity of doctrine in other matters. We have 'strengthened our basis' until it has become too complicated. Faults which a generation ago were reprov'd and then left to the judgement of the Lord have been made tests of fellowship. We have, been zealous, perhaps commendably zealous in these things; but we have, as a body, failed in that which is greater. It is futile for us to deny it or to excuse ourselves. The Master laid down the supreme test. 'A tree is known by its fruit.' We can see some fruits of love or our position would be hopeless, but there is much other fruit too, evil and poisonous fruit, nourished from bitter roots. As wise men and women we ought to recognise the facts and take the lesson to heart. Remember that love *as the Apostle defines it* is absolutely essential. Even Christian martyrs will not be saved without it. If we do not agree with some of our brethren and controversy arises, that is not an occasion for forgetting the law of love. It is just the time when we need most to remember it.

**E6, Winter 1962, p14, extracts from An Appeal to Christadelphians
by Islip Collyer**

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE

Lord, I have looked within, and trembling find
A heart divided, and a doubtful mind;
A faith that grapples with a lurking doubt,
Nor finds the strength to drive the demon out.

Alas! I lack the weapons I would wield,
Too frail my armour, and too weak my shield.
The gifts I need Thou hast not granted me
Which lead thy saints to joyful victory.

* * * * *

Dost thou not know Me, child? Thy faith is weak
If thou believest I would ever seek
To ask of thee a gift thou couldst not give
Or hide the hope of life, yet bid thee live.

Doubt not that I will hear when thou dost pray;
Dread not the dark, for I will light thy way.
All that is needful I have given thee
To keep in trust, and then give back to Me.

* * * * *

Lord, for this word I thank thee; I will go
Dowered with Thy strength, not mine, for well I know
All I could ever ask is found in Thee –
Open my eyes, dear Lord, and make me see.

Edith Ladson

Doctrines Essential for Salvation

Or

The Emperor Has No Clothes

Orthodox Christadelphians believe that only a very exclusive group of people will be given eternal life, namely those:

- a) attaining to a rigorous moral standard,
- b) assenting to BASF doctrines and conforming to approved practices,
- c) remaining in the Central Fellowship.

In my experience at least some members of the far Right presume other meetings not matching their 'purity' to be among the damned, while the 'Middle-of-the-Road' hedge and speak tactfully of 'not claiming to possess absolute truth', while operating a closed table and officially hoping that all who leave their fellowship for another church will reconsider 'before the coming of our Lord.' The clear implication is that if you are out of 'the Truth' when Jesus returns, you will be rejected. So in reality, in spite of window dressing, their belief is the same as that of the hardliners. And even many left-wingers, when the chips are down, appear to fear this to be true.

What is the basis of this belief, which causes us to be isolationist, closed, and to regard all other Christians as 'the enemy'?

I suggest it stems from the reasoning of Dr. John Thomas, who effectively founded our community c. 1850. Take for example *Elpis Israel* p.223, where bro. John explains that those who do not understand that the kingdom of God will be on earth, rather expecting to go to heaven, will not be saved.

"According to your faith be it unto you." This is the first principle of religion delivered by the Great Teacher himself. It is just and right it should be so. No one can blame God for not bestowing on them what they do not believe in; and, consequently, do not want, or seek after. This is precisely the position of the present generation of religionists in relation to the kingdom of God. They have faith in a sort of kingdom which He hath not promised; and in the one He has promised they do not believe. Hence, they believe in a non-entity; and, believing in what is nothing, they will get nothing but confusion of face.

In *Phanerosis, Introduction p.1*, he writes:

From this testimony we learn...

3.—That the attainment of this [eternal] life by those specially given to him [Jesus] is consequent upon their **intellectual enlightenment** (emphasis mine) concerning what constitutes "the only true God"...

This is his conclusion from John 17:2-3. I will examine this passage in detail later, together with the logic of the *ELPIS ISRAEL* quote!

Let's look at this reasoning in practice, as outlined by one of our most active and brilliant members, bro. Duncan Heaster. In the foreword to *The Devil and Satan: What Does the Bible Say?* he explains that the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith and the Christadelphians are identical, except for the following doctrines believed by the CGAF:

- 1) Resurrection of everyone who has ever lived;
- 2) The First Resurrection only for the faithful;
- 3) Immortal emergence
- 4) Substitutionary atonement
- 5) Original sin
- 6) Many but not all believe in a personal devil

He continues:

With such wide areas of differences existing between them, there is no way in which the two groups can be in fellowship together without major changes in belief taking place... correct understanding of [the nature of the devil] is essential to salvation.

I suggest that this is a fair representation of the 'orthodox' viewpoint; I believe it is accurate to label it 'salvation by correctness' and I now propose to challenge it. Why?

- 1) I suggest this view of God misrepresents God's character. I will go on to demonstrate that this is serious sin, effectively blasphemy, and that if we don't repudiate it we're in big trouble.
- 2) I suggest that, in the absence of a full-blown miracle our community is already too late to reform its isolationist stance, and consequently will become extinct in the next few years. Call me a heretic if you will, but my desire and effort has been to see the community growing and thriving. Ask yourself, will the continued conservatism of the middle or the reactionary stance of the right prevent the steady decline of our numbers since 1960, a decline soon to go critical? Who has really been the 'troubler of Israel'?
- 3) I suggest that our insistence on being an insular, isolationist, 'closed' sect stems from the worldly Victorian obsession with maintaining one's place within exclusive social groups. It fits with the patterns of association in Calvinistic sects at the time the Christadelphians formed, and I simply cannot respect it. Many now appeal for unity between Christadelphian groups. They forget that accepting differences is very subjective, especially when we are founded on schism from 'Christendom' over precise doctrines.
- 4) Many Christadelphians push the idea of 'distinctive doctrine', phrasing our own beliefs (or selecting our hymns!) to make ourselves look different from every other group and to admit no common ground. In practice this distorts our

own teaching, particularly on God Manifestation, the Holy Spirit and the devil, and, as I shall demonstrate, it was not Jesus' policy! I recall an orthodox writer saying Christadelphians could not claim to have the holy spirit; how could we then reject the claims of other denominations to have it? My reply, pointing out that the presence of the Spirit can be objectively detected by its fruits, was simply ignored. This is cutting off one's nose to spite one's face, and I will not practice such a religion!

Let's look at that quote from *ELPIS ISRAEL*; '*According to your faith be it unto you.*' It is a saying of Jesus in Matthew 9:29. What is the context? Two blind men ask for mercy from the 'Son of David'. He asks them if they believe that he is able to heal them. They answer that they do. '*According to your faith (Strongs 4102, pistis: persuasion, i.e. credence; conviction, reliance) be it unto you.*' Did they perfectly understand the nature of his messianic mission? Even his close disciples did not. Did they understand the exact relation between him and his Father? Improbable. The exact nature of the Spirit that would effect the miracle? The purpose of the miracles? 'The things concerning the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ?' No. They trust the man in front of them. They recognise that he is the promised saviour, probably with a very muddled understanding. They trust that he will save them, in this case from blindness. They go away seeing. What a shame John Thomas didn't.

All this passage 'proves' is that if you trust Jesus to save you, he saves you. The blind men acknowledged him in public, then they made the effort to come to him in private. He didn't ask for a discourse on the operation of the Holy Spirit. He healed them. They had a trust that was emotional and practical in nature. 'Intellectual attainment' did not figure.

Instead, from John Thomas, we get an ugly picture of an ugly god, God the Bureaucrat, who can't wait to trip people up and damn as many as he can; it's the style of the devil of the Faustian pact, eager to renege on the deal. Bro. John calls this misapplied quote of his *the first principle of religion delivered by the great teacher*. It is nothing of the kind; it is a personal response by Jesus in a specific instance to an individual need. His first principle of religion was not this metacosmic bureaucracy but the commandment to love God with the whole being and your neighbour as yourself.

I appeal to all Christadelphians to consider that in effect this is the primary doctrine of Christadelphianism – salvation by correctness. In reality our separation from every other group precedes reflection on any actual doctrine!

What about John 17:2-3? 'Now this is eternal life, to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.' Does *know* here mean 'intellectual enlightenment' as to the exact nature of the Godhead? *Ginosko*, (*Strongs 1097*) we are told, has 'a great variety of applications and with many implications' so clearly we are going to have to delve a little deeper to get at Jesus' meaning...

The context is Jesus saying he has completed the work the Father gave him (John 17:4). He had succeeded in revealing the Father to 'those who you gave me...' (John 17:6). Clearly, since in this passage Jesus says he has revealed the Father to his disciples, their state of understanding will be crucial. Only a couple of days before (Luke 18:34) we are told the disciples did not understand anything about Jesus' death and resurrection. Since before the ascension, after forty days instruction about the kingdom of God, they had still not understood that the Kingdom was not about to be restored to Israel (Acts 1:3, 6), clearly in Gethsemane their understanding of the 'things concerning the kingdom of God' was very limited (Note Peter's knife wielding antics!).

Jesus implies that their knowledge of the Father consisted of recognising that 'everything you have given me comes from you' (17:7) and that 'They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they knew that you sent me...' (17:8) Jesus had essentially said the same thing in John 14:6-12. It is not about Incarnational metaphysics and definitions, it is about relation and trust.

The Christadelphian approach is generally a creditable attempt to interpret the scriptures in a holistic fashion, that is to say, to take into account all scripture teaching on a particular issue rather than reading too much into an isolated passage here and there. There are occasional blind spots, such as the orthodox dogmatism on the role of women, where the policy I've just described is reversed, but on the whole it has rewarded us with some very well-balanced insights into scripture.

Now 'sola scriptura' is an excellent principle, but if we refuse to take into account contemporary context we will soon lose the context of the scriptures themselves. Trying to understand 1 Timothy without understanding the Gnostic doctrine Paul was addressing is an excellent example. (This has been discussed quite adequately elsewhere.)

Let's consider the reality of the world Jesus and the Apostles witnessed to, and note what they *didn't* comment on. Most Greeks and some Jews (i.e. Pharisees, Essenes but not the Sadducees) believed in the immortality of the soul. To Orthodox Christadelphians this is the 'Serpent Lie', the ultimate false religious idea. Curiously neither Jesus nor the Apostles ever directly refuted the idea! In fact Paul said at a hearing, 'I am a Pharisee' (Acts 23:6) not 'I was a Pharisee but now I utterly repudiate their false doctrine and teach distinctive doctrine etc...' In fact he tries to identify common ground with a non-Christian group! Worse still perhaps, the Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection or afterlife at all! (Acts 23:8) Yet Jesus came announcing 'Woe' to the Pharisees and Sadducees, without ever qualifying with 'because you expound false doctrine on the afterlife' but instead condemning them because their attitude and behaviour toward God and their neighbour was wrong! He only told the Sadducees that they erred, not knowing the scriptures, when they themselves

brought up the issue of the Resurrection in an attempt to attack him. (Luke 20)

'The Rich Man and Lazarus' parable, which millions of Christians have subsequently misunderstood (with fatal results according to J.T!) is another example of Jesus showing no Christadelphian preoccupation with distinctiveness. He uses a Pharisee parable (actually derived from an Egyptian fable!) with a twist without seemingly considering that later generations would miss the context and believe it to be the Master's own teaching on the afterlife!

However we interpret Jesus' teaching on the devil and demons, he did not invent the concepts. It is a fact that many Jews and Greeks believed that demons were real beings: many believed in a personal devil, and the idea that they were fallen angels had existed for centuries, even though scholars agree that this was not an idea original to Judaism but derived from Persian Zoroastrianism...

I emphasize that I find our contention that the scriptures do not teach the 'fallen angel Lucifer' mythology unshakeable; however, either the devil is a personal being or the Spirit considers it helpful to us to think of it in such terms; I cannot take the orthodox line, that belief in a personal devil damns you, remotely seriously.

It would have been so easy for Jesus to avoid terms like 'Satan' 'devil' and 'demons' that carried so many preconceived ideas in the culture he lived in yet he used them freely. At the very least we can deduce that he did not share Christadelphian priorities.

'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if...'

You have distinctive doctrine? You operate a closed table?

No but only if 'You have love one for another.'

Does the BASF mention love for each other as a Christadelphian doctrine?

Moses asked to see God's glory and God's response was to describe His moral character. (Exodus 34:6)

Job's friends' fatal error was to misrepresent God's moral character, not the 'nature of the Godhead' (Job 42:7).

Many Christadelphian prophetic interpretations have been proved wrong by events; does that count as doctrinal error? Are all those who 'fell asleep' proclaiming a latter-day alliance of Soviet Communism with Catholicism damned?

God wants us to be 'perfect' meaning 'grown-up' or 'mature' because that is what He is Himself (Matthew 5:48). My appeal to Orthodox Christadelphians is to concentrate on walking the walk, instead of avoiding the cracks in the pavement. The time is too short by half.

(To be continued.)

Steve Cooper

**The end for which God instructs the mind
is that he might transform the life.**

(Al Martin)

Studies in Ecclesiastes

Part 16

Time and Chance

Chapter 9:11-10:3 (Quotations unless otherwise stated from the N.E.B.)

If one sought for a single word to express the thought of Qoheleth 'bafflement' it could be it. With his unfaltering belief in an all-powerful and just God so much in the world was simply inexplicable. This general position is further elaborated in Ch. 9:11-12. Those best qualified at particular things do not necessarily succeed in them. The best runner does not necessarily win the race, nor does the best fighter necessarily win the battle. The general principle then leads to the particular case: there are those endowed with great wisdom, but they do not necessarily enjoy material prosperity. Now, however, an answer comes: time and chance happen to all ('govern all' N.E.B.). Just as some fish, but not all, are caught in the fisherman's net, and as some birds only are caught in traps, so misfortune happens randomly to the human race. Its incidence is haphazard.

A more detailed elaboration of the restricted practical value of wisdom is developed in vv. 13-18. A small city besieged by an overpowering army was saved by the wisdom of a poor sage, but afterwards he was forgotten and no gratitude was shown to him. Generally a poor man is not respected for his wisdom, though he should be. The final verse of this section adds the rider that though wisdom is ultimately the key to success, it must be maintained throughout a whole course of action. One unwise move can ruin everything. Ch. 10:1-3 continues the theme with a further example. Small flies alighting on a bowl of expensive ointment are caught in the fluid and die, turning the whole bowlful rancid. Similarly one act of folly can spoil a whole course of wise conduct.

This section ends with some general comments on the all-pervasive qualities of wisdom and folly. The minds (literally 'hearts') of wise men turn to the right, those of fools to the left. 'Right' and 'left' had metaphorical connotations throughout the ancient Near East, and some of these have survived into the modern western world. In Genesis 48 Jacob's right hand confers the greatest blessing on Ephraim, while his left hand confers a lesser blessing on Manasseh. In modern German and English *recht*/right means both the direction and 'correct', 'morally correct', while *sinister* is something obnoxious, derived from the Latin *sinister* 'left'. Thus Qoheleth divides the human race into two classes, the good ('wise') and the bad ('fools'), and further declares that, even on a journey where he is previously unknown, the fool will not fail to let his true character be seen.

Time and chance is not a common theme in Scripture, and for the closest parallel one must turn to the New Testament, to Jesus:

'Do you suppose that, because the Galileans suffered that fate, they must have been greater sinners than anyone else in Galilee? No, I tell you . . . (Lk 14:2-3).' Not for the first time have we found Qoheleth's message a bridge between Old and New Testaments.

For life-long Christians this doctrine is easily assimilated, but it was not at all obvious in an old Testament environment. God's chosen people came into being as a people led out of Egypt to a promised land, and as a people they were cautioned at length that obedience to God would bring success and prosperity in the land, but disobedience the opposites (Deut. 30). Individual salvation for personal piety was not part of this covenant. Even after the exile, when Israel no longer existed as a sovereign state, there was a religious community where service to God was still performed in the rebuilt temple. The prophets had indeed denounced individual acts of moral depravity, but collective punishment by exile was threatened as the consequence. Ezekiel, preaching in the early exilic times, explains at length in Ch. 18 that people justify themselves to God by their own lives and conduct. They are not held guilty for what their fathers did. Similarly wicked people who reform and thereafter live good lives are not condemned for their previous failings, and vice versa with good-living people who change and commit grave sins. But the rewards and punishments in this regimen are alluded to only generally as 'living' for the godly and 'dying' for the ungodly. What was involved in this life and death is not explained.

The questions raised by Qoheleth were preparing the way for the Gospel. His chronological position is after the exile, not in the early monarchy.

Wilfred Lambert

God wants His children to be happy. To those who trust in Him He gives the desire of their hearts. Let us receive gladly what God gives us; for each blessing is a means to further grace. There is no greater victory than joy: happiness is always invincible. To those who are sorrowful and lonely, the message is, 'With God's help, find that activity which will bring you joy and freedom - a home, a garden, a hobby and through it God will bless you to others,' 'God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ.'

**E6, Winter 1962, p18, from More than Conquerors, Loneliness,
by Sheila Harris**

Fellowship (Concluded)

3. Breaking bread, drinking wine – a symbol of fellowship

A) Old Testament bread & wine.

The use of bread and wine has a far more universal application than some church traditions imply. Melchizedek offers bread and wine to Abraham after Abraham's triumph in war, Genesis 14:18. This was a symbol of welcome, and could be seen as a foreshadowing of the Christian act of fellowship. In Judges 19:19, it appears quite an ordinary feast. The bread was adopted as part of the Passover meal, although for this purpose it was unleavened. (Bread and wine are still used as a symbol of welcome today, quite apart from their Christian application.)

i. **The Passover meal** includes *bread* (unleavened), *herbs*, *roast lamb*, symbolic use of the *animal's blood*, but no wine, Exodus 12:1-11. *Yeast* was removed, a symbolic removal of corruption from the house.

ii. **Participants.** The Israelites may have been the only ones allowed at the first Passover, there were no foreigners (the Egyptians were of course God's target), Ex. 12:43, 44, but they could be included in subsequent feasts, vv 48,49. Their circumcision was a demonstration that they accepted God's Law rather than the heathen code of conduct, and made them compatible with God's household. It did not make them into Jews. This emphasises that division from the table of the Lord then was, as it is now, between believers in God and unbelievers, not between different categories of believer.

iii. **Purpose.** Firstly to save the Israelites from God's judgement, to visit punishment of death on the Egyptians, and later to commemorate their salvation.

B) New Testament bread & wine.

Wine was generally used as an accompaniment for meals, e.g. John 2 (wedding at Cana). Paul suggests it had some medicinal properties, Eph 5:18 (it was probably safer than the water). Jesus links water and wine in the miracle at Cana. (We remember Jesus' death by a sip of wine, and our baptism is symbolic of the death of our sins.)

Bread was used for food, e.g. Luke 9 (feeding of 5000).

Jesus uses bread, wine, yeast (the Pharisees' yeast was suspect Luke 12:1) and herbs as powerful symbols in his teaching.

Jesus is the bread of life (manna) John 6:35. His blood is the new covenant 1 Cor 11: 25; Heb 9:20; our atonement, Rom 3:25.

i. Last supper - breaking of bread or communion - a symbol of Christian fellowship

Jesus was God's lamb in the New Testament. The bread was unleavened, i.e. without the 'corrupting' yeast, and a symbol of Jesus' body, and wine was drunk

as a symbol of the shed blood of Jesus. Jesus uses the existing feast as a basis for His remembrance feast, and whilst there are common themes, it is essentially a new feast rather than an extension of the old Jewish Passover. Jesus appears to institute the remembrance act after the main feast (see Luke 22:20).

ii. Purpose of the communion act

The symbol of bread and wine was an aid to remember Jesus, his life, teaching, death and resurrection Luke 22:19. It is a symbol of our association with Jesus' death and resurrection, our repentance, the Kingdom.

iii. Participants

The first participants were Jesus' disciples, 'the twelve'. N.B. Peter was very soon to deny Jesus and become a liar, whilst Judas was to be the traitor. They all squabbled about their position of greatness and Jesus knew that one had the intention to fight with a sword, yet at least* all the twelve broke bread with him. Matthew 26:20-31, Luke 22:14-38 John 13. (*Were Mary & Martha and any others serving at table present? The Passover feast was a very strong and important occasion for the *whole family!*)

The early Christian Church broke bread in homes Acts 2:46, probably on the first day of the week, Acts 20:7, and probably at feast/gatherings etc. see 1 Cor 11:20-22. They were criticized by Paul for using it as an excuse for a good time together, causing divisions etc. (1 Cor:11v17-26), thus losing the special meaning Jesus gave to that particular meal.

Later participants will be Christian believers who are 'grafted onto the olive tree' according to Paul, but following Jesus in the new law above the Law of Moses.

Fellowship and the breaking of bread

There are two commands of Jesus – to love God and our neighbour. (Mark 12:30,31). The believer should strive to lead a good life as described in the Sermon on the Mount, and in Paul's lists of the fruits of the spirit. We might reasonably assume that faith in God, love for Him and mankind and good works to all men are the prime requirements before we should break bread. There is no list of specific beliefs in the Bible to which the Christian believer must subscribe before being allowed to take communion. We do not have the right to deny the bread and wine to another believer except, probably, on the grounds of extreme sexually immoral behaviour, or denial of the Holy Spirit. Since Jesus *included* all his disciples (none of whom properly understood the situation even though they professed to be his followers, and their number included at least one liar and traitor), it would be reasonable to conclude that this is an *inclusive* feast for *all believers*. Since only the Twelve Disciples are mentioned as being at table with Him, would it be reasonable to conclude that only men can break bread? That idea is unlikely to find much support, but it highlights how easily the path of *exclusivity* can mislead us, especially if it is based on a particular or biased

understanding of one part of scripture.

There is no instruction to withdraw the meal from a believer because he/she has a different viewpoint to that of Paul. An *unbeliever* is excluded, as was *the foreigner* in Old Testament times (See sections on fellowship in modern times and Passover above.) Jesus teaches us to accept another believer who does good in His name. The man, about whom we read in Mark 9:38-41, obviously upset the exclusive view that the Twelve held about their discipleship. Jesus was much more inclusive in his outlook '*do not stop him,... whoever is not against us is for us.*'

4. Baptism - a symbol of individual commitment to Christ

John the Baptist baptised for the remission of sins; his work foreshadowed that of his cousin, but was based possibly on Old Testament ideas of purification by water e.g. Numbers 15:18. There are other Old Testament allusions to symbolic baptism such as the crossing of the Red Sea and the curing of Naaman, but it was not a 'membership' requirement in those times. In the New Testament baptism acquires a new meaning.

Baptism is an act of obedience for the remission of our sins, an outward declaration of our inner belief in God, an acceptance of our mortal state and a symbol of our salvation. It is *exclusive to* Christian believers, but it is not an entrance ticket to a private club. Jesus instructs us to believe and be baptised. Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:19 John 3:3-8. Paul explains the association with the Death and Resurrection of Jesus in Romans 6. There can be no doubt that baptism is an essential part of Christianity, but it is no guarantee of salvation. According to James, who makes no mention of baptism, faith and works are very important (see all of James, noting chapter 2:17,24,26.) whilst Old Testament examples show God's displeasure with the subsequent behaviour of those symbolically baptised in the flood and the Red sea.

Jesus' baptism was a symbol of God's authority bestowed on him, not for the remission of *his* sins, as he was without sin, but as an example of his obedience to his Father.

Fellowship and Baptism

There is no record of the 12 disciples being baptised, although Paul and other first century Christians were baptised. There is no specific instruction that we should be baptised before we can break bread. Baptism is not mentioned alongside the two commandments of love, which Jesus teaches are the requirements for eternal life, Luke 11:25-28, but mercy is mentioned as part of this teaching (v. 37). We are bound to show mercy, not judgement!

There is mention of baptism of the Spirit alongside baptism by water, so it is clear that we need to change spiritually as a result of our baptism. Fellowship is mentioned in connection with the Spirit, as well as tenderness, compassion, love, having one purpose and being like minded in attitude with Jesus, Philippi-

ans 2:1-5, (but there is no specific link to baptism here.)

Most early believers were baptised, often immediately after the confession of their faith and in large numbers, Acts 2:38-41. Their journey in fellowship with Christ began from that time. Peter's message had been to repent and be baptised into the saving name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. From the following few verses we might assume that he taught the meaning of the breaking of bread and warned them about immoral behaviour, but there is no record of a list of beliefs and customs to which they had to subscribe. Clearly fellowship was a benefit enjoyed by all the believers, however young in faith and whatever their state of spiritual awareness. Paul even says that he was not sent to baptise (1Cor 1:17 !), but to preach the gospel. He puts little value on who baptises whom, but rather emphasizes the salvation of the cross.

Jesus used an existing custom of fellowship, the giving of bread and wine, *a symbol of welcome*, allied to the Jewish Passover feast, for his disciples to use as a remembrance act. It may be that only Christian believers will wish to remember Jesus in that 'special' way with bread and wine, since that communion has special significance for them, but the tradition of bread and wine as a symbol of love and welcome still has a wider application. Bible teaching does not say that we must be baptised before the taking of bread and wine, but it is symbolic of the death of our sin and a new life in Jesus. We can see a link with the practice of removing all yeast from the house before Passover, and washing away our sins *before* joining in the meal, and thus we might find good reason that we should be baptised before breaking bread.

Since we have a duty to work out our own salvation, and the link to Jesus' death and resurrection is with our own repentance and baptism, it is reasonable to view the act of remembrance as a personal one between Jesus and the individual believer. It is certain that no one else needs to take responsibility for another person's act of remembrance.

The right hand of fellowship is only once referred to, in Gal 2:9. It was a common symbol of friendship. The right hand would normally be the one in which a weapon would be held and so to extend it openly indicated friendship rather than hostility. Verses 4 & 5 of Gal. 2 imply that the new-found freedom in Christ was in jeopardy from those wanting to tighten up on the old laws. On this occasion the hand of fellowship was a signal of recognition by James, Peter and John, (who did not always agree with each other) that the teaching of freedom by Paul to the Gentiles, was from God. The right hand of fellowship was not necessarily associated with the breaking of bread.

The Samaritan - a lesson in fellowship

The Samaritans were despised and outcast from Judaism, yet they believed in the same God as the Jews, and worshipped Him. Their Bible consisted only of the Pentateuch so they did not accept the rest of scripture and their knowledge of

God was limited to His revelation in those five books. They were believers, but regarded as being 'outside the camp' by the Jews.

On three of the four occasions the Samaritans appear in his ministry, Jesus does not endorse the Jewish view. He accepted the belief of many of the Samaritans as readily as that of any Jew. He did not tell them to go away and read the rest of the scripture in order to make their faith valid. On these three occasions they are commended for their love (Luke 10) or faith (Luke 17) or testimony (John 4). (On the fourth occasion a Samaritan town did not want him to go there because he was on his way to Jerusalem Luke 9:51-56, yet even then, Jesus would not condemn the town.)

The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, shows care, love and fellowship without prejudice. It illustrates particularly the second of the two commandments of love. The lack of action by the Priest and the Levite, two supposedly learned, knowledgeable and respected men, was motivated by selfish concern for their own reputations and well being. Neither would run the risk of being defiled or attacked and so both failed to show love or care to the beaten and helpless victim. They behaved against the spirit of the Law, although they would no doubt argue that they were keeping the law! The one commended was a Samaritan, a foreigner hated for not being a Jew, whose knowledge of God according to the Jewish fraternity was limited!

Luke 17:11-17 records that Jesus healed ten lepers. One returned to praise God and it was he, the Samaritan, who was praised for the faith that had made him well. The other nine (Jews?) took advantage of Jesus' compassion, but had not the humility to praise God for their salvation.

On another occasion, related in John 4:4-42, Jesus asks for a drink from a well, from a Samaritan woman, and so ran the risk of being ceremonially unclean. He declared himself to be Messiah to a *Samaritan woman*. Jesus may even have forgiven her dismal marital situation since he did not condemn her, and her faith and evangelism made many of her countrymen approach Jesus, and then believe that he is the Saviour of the world.

The Bible teaches unity not division, tolerance not criticism, simple understanding not clever wordplay, humility not arrogance. The difference in God's eye is between believers and unbelievers, not between one sincere follower of Jesus and another. We are all sinners and beholden to God's mercy; none of us can claim a superior or inferior position before Him! Fellowship should include as many believers as possible, rather than be for the exclusive few. We are here to spread the Word to the world, not keep it a close secret it for ourselves. The more we judge a fellow believer unworthy to be part of our fellowship, the greater is the danger that judgement on our own behaviour will be harsh, and maybe we will find ourselves excluded! '*For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*' Matt 12:37.

It is hoped that this series of articles will have stimulated many brothers and sisters in Jesus to consider their attitude to the true purpose and meaning of fellowship. The Bible message is to find room in our hearts to widen God's wonderful fellowship to many more believers so that we walk to the Kingdom more strongly in harmony and not in disagreement.

Graham Longfils

There are some who find in loneliness a sense of freedom for the service of God and man. Their battle is already won. To others, however, loneliness brings a feeling of unwantedness. Although they may be courageous enough to rise above the deadly evil of self-pity which comes from comparison with others, yet they may slip imperceptibly into a feeling of being no use, which ultimately destroys all self-esteem and confidence. Unless one really knows, it is very easy to say to such people that God understands and is sufficient for their needs: He, is the Friend of the friendless, Who 'binds up the broken-hearted and gives 'the oil of joy for mourning' - and then to leave it at that. Of course He is sufficient. The limitation is never with God but with us. The deficiency is in our receiving, not in His giving. We must put ourselves into the place of blessing. It is not enough to say to such, 'Be ye warmed and filled.'

The first need is to build up an inner confidence. Life itself depends upon the realisation that we each have something to give to someone. Prayer, reading and meditation are essential to this end. As the angel said to Jacob, thou hast 'power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.' Power with God is essential for power with man. But where can this prayer life be built up? Some will have found their answer to this need, a place of retreat, a moment of quiet, a secluded spot, a creative activity, or a satisfying hobby; and from it they come invigorated, refreshed, replenished within, their battle won, able to go forth, conquering and to conquer. Perhaps their experience could help others' needs.

New Jerusalem

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. We are assured that such things were written by the finger of God and were divinely inspired. Our problem is that we do not think as God thinks; our thoughts are not His thoughts and the difference is as high as the heaven is above the earth. It takes a very long time to even begin to understand God's ways, especially with the disadvantage of having a mind that tends to be at enmity to Him. Instinctively our thoughts are likely to be contrary to what God has said, 'for the natural man receiveth not the things of God, they are foolishness to him.' It is right then to enquire carefully and prayerfully for His guidance (Ps 73:21 & 25:1,5). Our approach can also be a great help or a hindrance as Coverdale said: 'It shall greatly help to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written but 'of whom', 'to whom', 'with what words', 'at what time', 'in what circumstances' and 'considering what goeth before and what followeth.'

Apart from forthtelling, Scripture also foretells showing evidence of a progressive plan and purpose. The Apostle said that the Law was a schoolmaster, a tutor, to *bring us unto Christ*. He is the top stone, the stone of the corner, now possessing a Name above every name, unto whom every knee must bow and every tongue confess, the ruling influence *now* and in the age to come (Eph 1:21), finally to give up all such power to the Father, the source of such power. He is the beginning of the *new* creation, the spiritual outcome of that progressive plan of God.

We have the whole of God's revelation today to instruct us in that purpose, so we cannot claim any superiority over those who failed to see in former times. Had we not been told, we would be as ignorant as them, in the main, though some did see and died in that faith 'having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them and embraced them.' In our day 'we stand on the shoulders of giants', those who have done the spadework, and it is left for us to progress in our understanding.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is full of 'better' things: better hope, better testament, better covenant, better promises, better sacrifices, better country, better resurrection, better possession, more excellent etc. The New Testament also speaks of 'new' things: new commandment, new creation, new man, new name, new song, new heaven and earth, new Jerusalem etc. The word which is translated 'new' means not that which is new in time but in quality, different in character from the old with which it is contrasted. (Vine)

The Lord Jesus himself said, 'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time ... but I say to you.' Then he gives us a more elevated teaching, a 'filling full' of what the initial teaching was really saying; not an entirely new teaching,

never before heard, but the reality of what the old was all about, a progression from 'letter' to 'spirit'. This is the goal towards which God is working, an advancement upon 'carnal' ordinances ... imposed *until* the time of reformation, a time when the imperfect, the inadequate, would be superseded by a better order of things (Vine).

'God is Spirit' and *not* flesh, therefore everything must ultimately become 'spirit' if we are to become part of Eternity. For 'that which is born of the Spirit *is* Spirit, and that which is born of the flesh *is* flesh.' So the sacrifices under the Law became spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:7). The Tabernacle and Temple became a spiritual dwelling place of God (Eph 2:21,22 and 2 Cor 6:16). Worship became a spiritual worship, anywhere, and accepted if 'in spirit and in truth' (John 1: 21-21). The priesthood is now a spiritual priesthood. (1 Peter 2.9) Offerings, even the furniture etc. of the Tabernacle and Temple were all fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

The Epistle to the Hebrews gives us a masterly revelation of all types and antitypes showing a clear progression from flesh to spirit, earthly to heavenly. 'Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither had pleasure therein which are offered by the law: then said He, Lo I am come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that He may establish the second.'

Ultimately, *all* things must be spirit, when God, who is spirit, will be All in All. 'Change this vile body that it might be fashioned like unto His Glorious body.' Only then can we possibly inherit eternity and truly be *one* with God and the Lord Jesus. (John 17:21) The, realisation of this phenomenon has already been underlined and indicated by many scriptures, which take on a new significance, a foretaste as it were of the ultimate.

'As Christ was raised up from the dead ... so we *also* should walk in *newness* of life.' 'Our old man *is* crucified ... no longer to be in bondage to sin.' 'Reckon yourselves *to be* dead unto sin.' 'As those that *are* alive from the dead...' 'But Now being made *free* from Sin.' 'For we *were* in the flesh.' 'But ye *are not* in the flesh but in the Spirit.' There are many more such references, as we well know, which, it is our hope, will be fully realised; it is what God has called us to and it is His good pleasure to give us this status.

But already we enjoy a spiritual standing in being children of 'the Jerusalem which is above *which is* our Mother.' Of the 112 times that Jerusalem is mentioned in the NT, 136 are literal, actual and geographical, but the other 6 are extremely interesting and if we have understood them correctly, confirm that spiritual status which we have *now*.

First, Galatians 4:25,26. Is the apostle directing a reproof to the traditionalists? Were they loathe to progress in spiritual learning (v21)? Yet the Law itself spoke of its own limitations: 'tell me, ye that *desire* to be under the Law, do

ye not *hear* the Law?' ('Go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy not sacrifice.') Even the history of Abraham, their 'father' was more than just a series of domestic incidents. Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman, and one by the free. He of the bond woman was by 'nature', after the flesh, but the one by the free woman was not so, he was by 'promise', by spirit, for by nature it was literally impossible for them to produce a son (Romans 4:19-21). The natural seed was in bondage, not only to Rome, at that time, but also to the Law, that was the Jerusalem 'which *now* is, and is in bondage *with* her children.' 'But the Jerusalem which is above is *free* which *is* (not 'will be') our *Mother*.' (RV Gal 5: 1, Rom 6:18,22).

So, we have divine parentage: God is our Father, and Jerusalem (the one above) is our Mother. (Ps 87: 2,3,5,6). The Apostle Paul uses OT prophecy as a confirmation of this fact. (Isa 54: 1-2; 11:13,17; 45: 24-25) The reference to Revelation 21 is unmistakable. *Our* citizenship *is* in Heaven, we *are* a colony of Heaven, our life is hid with Christ in God, we have been translated into His Realm, understood as Romans 4:17 says. God who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which are not, as though they are with the certainty of their ultimate fulfilment.

Hebrews 12:22

Again the context is a freedom from carnal, physical, natural things to spiritual conditions.

(v 18-2 1) 'But ye are come unto Mount Zion (Ps 87:1) unto the City of the *Living God*, the *heavenly Jerusalem* and to (v22-21) that which is *real* with God (for *all* live unto Him).

Abraham looked for *this* city (11:10) whose architect (RVM) and maker is God. For He hath prepared (to furnish, equip, make ready, of one who makes anything ready for a person or thing) for them a city. 'For we have not *here* an abiding city, but we seek the city which is to come.'(RV)

So God's city is Heavenly Jerusalem which agrees with Revelation.

Revelation 3:12

'I will write upon him the Name of my God, and the Name of the city of my God the *New Jerusalem* (RV), which cometh down *out of heaven* from my God, and] Mine Own *New Name*.'(3:12) For such, the recipients of this promise are to be made pillars in God's Temple or Sanctuary (Eph 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:5 etc) and he shall go no more out. It should be noticed that the priests and the High Priest who went out of the tabernacle or Temple, out of God's presence, to the world of Israel, to continue 'human' life, whereas the child of God *remains* in God's presence?

The sixth and final reference is Rev 21:2-3. The Holy City *is* the Bride, *is* the New Jerusalem, *is* the Sanctuary of God (John 17: 20-23) which John repeats in ch 21:10.

'He showed me that Great City the Holy Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God, having the Glory of God' (John 17:22) 'And I saw no Temple therein for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it, for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof' (21:22).

The Lord Jesus will rule from Jerusalem – but from which one?

Basil Allsopp

The true reformer has a duty to his community – to stir it to action, to urge it toward progress. The community has a duty toward him. Left to himself many a reformer would go too far. He often borders on being extreme and fanatical. As it is the work of a reformer to shake his community, so it is the work of the community to steady the reformer, and to stabilise the effects of his efforts. It is easy for an individual wishing to press his own opinion on others, to see himself playing the role of a martyred reformer, when, in reality, he is merely an odd man with peculiar ideas. It is equally easy for other individuals to imagine themselves as valiantly upholding the true faith, when, in fact, they are upholding only a human interpretation of divine precepts, which because it is manmade is unlikely to be flawless.

Some are horrified at the thought of our conducting a life-long search for truth, when we already have the Truth. Others of us are just as horrified at what we consider to be unjustifiable presumption. The simplest mind can know essential truth, but not one of us knows so much that he cannot search for more. Are not the ways of God past finding out? Should we not heed the words of our Lord that He does not reveal Himself to those who say, 'We see'? It was the Wise Man who said, 'Be not wise in thine own eyes', and could any of us deny that there are parts of Scripture which are exceedingly difficult to interpret? Though we may delight to study them, they yet serve to convince us of how inadequate is our knowledge of truth, and we are humbled at the littleness of our understanding. It is then with relief that we remember that it is not by depth of knowledge, but by faith that we are made whole. Moreover, it is ever a sobering thought that the distinguishing characteristic of Christ's disciples is that the world should be able to observe their *love* for one another.

Perhaps true wisdom lies in allowing our minds to remain receptive, so that we may be more and more enlightened by the light of truth. Then, and only then, can the reformer revivify the community and the community contain the reformer.

ES, Autumn 1962, p29, article on Reform –its danger and need.

George and Ruth Mchaffie

Attitudes

An Exhortation

I may be sitting in my chosen place waiting for the meeting to begin. Someone walks in shortly afterwards and sits close to me, on a chair next but one to mine. There's a chair in between us. The chair between us has my hymn book and Bible on it and other things. There is no room for anything else. Do I think to make space for the other person to put her hymn book and Bible there? ... No! Little things like this speak volumes. They speak volumes about me! Maybe you think I should not have stopped at making room for the other person to put her things; I should also have moved everything off the chair so that she could have sat next to me.

My exhortation today affects everyone: male or female, old or young, handicapped, infirm, or bounding with energy! It concerns our attitudes. Has it been said of us, 'He has an attitude problem?' The word is often used in this way. Or have we ever said something like, 'Don't give me attitude my girl!' meaning don't act in such a hostile way. Our attitudes generally – and I don't just mean extreme attitudes such as these – say a lot about ourselves in whatever situation we find ourselves, however peculiar it may be, whether here or elsewhere. We have displayed our attitudes many times already today and we can never replicate the situation. Every situation is peculiar in itself in so many ways: in time, in the characters involved in the drama, in our mental and physical condition. If we regret the attitude we took, we can never replay the scene and act in a different way to see if the outcome would have been any different.

We can have an attitude of thoughtlessness. It becomes evident in our lack of interest in someone else; not listening to what they are saying; an absence of asking questions; or asking the wrong questions which prove we have not been listening; saying what we have to say without listening to what the other person is saying. We give the game away not only when we open our mouths, but also as soon as we put our leg out of bed in the morning. It's evident in everything we do, or fail to do.

Paul writing to the Corinthians says: 'We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body' (2 Cor 4:10), that is in our attitudes. Especially to those we meet day in and day out, our attitudes reveal our characters, but how much more do our attitudes reveal ourselves to God. We do so in our disposition, in the way we strike an attitude, the way we look at someone, assume a position, and by our settled behaviour and by the indications we give of opinion of mind, mode of thinking, openness. They all speak volumes.

Attitudes others have about us are largely outside our control.

There is a hymn, which is in and out of our hymnbook. It is presently in the new hymnbook (number 344); it was not in the 1964 book although it was added as a supplementary later.

‘Few in number, little flock,
By the world despised, forgot...’

Whether that is true or not about the attitudes people have about us, I’m not sure. Or even whether we want it to be true, I’m not sure, but the last verse goes:

‘Ye who have the truth received,
By God’s grace to you revealed;
Should you dare to keep it back,
You the rich reward may lack.’

This ‘should you dare!’ is unhelpful, childish. We can only fail to keep it back by it not being in us at all. Because if it is in us it will be apparent in our attitudes, in all that we do. It will be automatic. After all why are we here?

We are thankful that we are able to come here today and remember Jesus, have sweet fellowship with each other, with those who share our wonderful hope and faith. And not only when we are here, but also outside – glad to be alive. Sometimes we do feel like that! It may not be too often for some of us and it may not last for very long. Maybe for just a rare moment... when we say to ourselves, ‘This is just what it should be. Life is going right. I have got everything I want in life and everything is wonderful!’

We praise God when we feel like that and we thank God for everything, and such feelings do dramatically affect our attitude to life for good. We are good to each other, understanding, encouraging, more loving... and we do more! And why? Because the life of Jesus is being ‘revealed in our body.’

Paul wrote to the Philippians:

‘I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him that gives me strength.’

We often talk about lack of response. But people only respond when they want something. That’s not to say we’re all mercenary, but when the phone rings at home you know it’ll be someone who wants something. Or when the door bell rings, someone is there who wants something. Sometimes it is someone who very kindly has taken a parcel in for you and wants to give you it, but more often than not it’s someone who wants to part you from your money. And it’s the same with letters we get in the post. It’s only friends that are close who phone or write or call and don’t appear to want anything, certainly not something you could easily explain or put down in words.

If people don’t want to pursue anything, they don’t respond. Hence, the tons

of circulars that end up in the recycling bin without even being looked at. Approaches we make to other people – to do with our job maybe – very often receive no response. But if people approach us personally, we can't help but respond, even if it is only to turn away. In this way we show our attitude: 'the life of Jesus being revealed in our body.' We have to respond.

If we get a phone call and we're not in, and the person leaves a message, do we respond like we ought to without delay or do we leave it and leave it and leave it? Sometimes even if the person doesn't really expect you to get back to her, it's helpful if you can – just to confirm you got the message. In this also we display our attitude. Small things such as this are 'the life of Jesus being revealed in our body.'

We respond to our children. We would be heartless if we didn't. In this we show our attitude, 'the life of Jesus being revealed in our body.' Moreover, God our father responds to us: 'Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him.' (Psalm 103:13) God responds. He knows us from the beginning; he knows our thoughts before they are our own. But he looks at how we reveal our attitudes before he responds.

God knew how Hezekiah would respond before the prophet Isaiah told him that he would need to organise his affairs because he was going to die. (Isaiah 38: 1) God knew he would take it badly. Hezekiah prayed to God and then wept bitterly, vv 2-3. God waited for a response. God could have acted knowing what the response was going to be, but he didn't. It was only after Hezekiah prayed, and wept bitterly that God said: 'I have seen your tears.' Anyone who is close to God, God sees his or her tears. Because of our direct response, God will respond directly. 'I will give you fifteen more years in which time I will deliver you and the city from the hand of the king of Assyria.' God even goes to the extent of intervening in the rotation of the earth by causing the sunlight to go back ten steps on the stairway of Ahaz. This as proof that he will do as he has promised

He goes much, much further than Hezekiah really expected and that's just what we should do in much, much smaller measure, the extra mile. In addition, I would like to suggest that God sees our attitudes displayed whatever they are, whatever gives us joy or sadness. 'We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that Jesus may also be revealed in our body.'

In little things as well as big things, we show it all of the time. For instance, if I absentmindedly omit to acknowledge, or in other words thank by waving, another driver who has stopped for me to proceed on a narrow road then I am not revealing the life of Jesus. I try to remember that's what I must do, and also smile at the same time. It shows gratitude and speaks volumes of our disposition, it even suggests what our attitudes may be in other things. Whether such things are reciprocated, doesn't matter.

Earlier in Isaiah, in chapter 6, we remember the dramatic account of the vision of the Lord and the seraphs and the live coals taken from the altar with which he touches the prophet's lips. Isaiah felt guilty that he was a man of unclean lips and had seen the Lord, but the touching of his lips was the atonement. He hears the voice of the Lord, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' Isaiah says, 'Here am I. Send me!' We have had our sins purged through the blood of Jesus and we have the confidence to exclaim, 'Here am I. Send me!' And this means, 'We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body' that is in our attitudes, in our everyday living.

We are his ambassadors, his representatives – in the same way that a foreign country has an ambassador in the United Kingdom. We are God's ambassadors. This is a great responsibility. The AV puts it, 'Bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.'

We are called upon to manifest him in all our ways, in all our attitudes. Now having heard what I have had to say it'll be in me to move the hymnbooks and Bible off the unoccupied chair next to me if someone sits on the next chair. It'll be in me to do it. Or will it?

Peter Williams

Jesus Christ,
with a confidence
that to the timid traditionalism of his time
appeared blasphemous,
asserted that he knew the Father
and was prepared to let others into that knowledge.
He did so,
not by handing down a new tradition about God,
but by making others share in
his own attitude to God.

C H Dodd

Parables of God's Unfairness

The Lord Jesus was often criticized by the Pharisees for showing favour to those people whom the Pharisees themselves held at arms length, the outcasts of Jewish society, tax-collectors, sinners and harlots. And his reply to such criticism was usually in the form of parables in which God is represented as an employer, father or creditor dealing with his employees, sons or debtors.

Yet when we read this group of parables we must soon be struck by the strange behaviour attributed to the central character in the story, behaviour which is radically different from what we might have expected from such a figure. What father would give preferential treatment to a spendthrift, wayward son over a son who had never left his side? What employer would pay all his workers the same amount, even though they had all put in different hours of labour? And would a creditor really cancel debts owed to him simply because his debtors could not afford to pay? The reason why the Lord taught such unlikely stories was to illustrate the contrast between the principles of justice by which human relationships are often conducted and the mercy by which God deals with sinners who repent.

The men who criticized Jesus for His attitude towards the sinful conceived religion as a kind of legal transaction with God. It was a matter of trying hard to accumulate merit. Inevitably, those who thought they had succeeded in these endeavours felt a certain superiority over those who had not. And so they heartily rejected the teaching of Jesus that God is concerned with the welfare of sinners, of those who were less successful than themselves at obeying the law.

But Jesus took this legalistic view of religion and turned it upside down by insisting that the starting point of salvation is the righteousness not of man but of God. These stories in which God acts the opposite way round to a human employer, father or creditor were both a vindication of His own attitude towards sinners and at the same time a criticism of His detractors. They all make the same point: that since God shows favour to the undeserving then it is only right that He as God's representative should do the same.

Matthew records the parable of the vineyard workers (20:1ff), in which a man goes into the market place at various times of the day from early in the morning until the eleventh hour and hires various groups of workers, some of whom work twelve hours through the heat of the midday sun and others work just one hour in the evening, and yet at the end of the day they all receive one denarius, no more and no less.

We can assume that the vineyard owner acted in this fashion simply because he was motivated by compassion for the unemployed. Having stood in the market place all day no one had offered them employment. How then could they provide for their families with no wages? So, out of sheer generosity the owner

not only gives them an hour or two of employment but also gives them a full day's wage. And at that point the story could well have ended (v.10), because it has illustrated the attitude of God towards penitent publicans and sinners; it tells us that He will grant them quite undeserved, a share in His Kingdom alongside those who have subjected their whole lives to the discipline of the Law.

But at that point the story does not in fact end. There is a further section, and the purpose of this section is to portray the censorious attitude of those who heartily resented the whole situation. This second section contains the real point of the story. We are shown the attitude of the other workers:

These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.

(v.12, English Standard Version)

They could have been modern trade unionists; the whole situation offended their sense of natural justice. But we notice the courtesy with which the employer addresses their ringleader, which contrasts with the man's embittered attitude: 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?... Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge me my generosity?' (v.13-15)

The attitude of the labourers was – It's not fair; only we who have served faithfully through the heat of the day should be rewarded, not those who have come in at the last hour. From a human point of view it was unfair, very unfair, but the lesson of the parable is that God does not operate according to human notions of fairness, but according to His mercy. And what was the answer to the employer's question? We are not told. Jesus left it to his hearers and Matthew to his readers to make their own answer by their response to his Gospel.

There are several comparisons to be drawn between this story and that of the Prodigal Son in Luke chapter 15. If we put them side by side we see that both narratives share the same broad structure. Both are in two parts. And both are directed at the censorious attitude of the critics of Jesus. At the beginning of the chapter the Pharisees murmured, as they often did: 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.' (v.2) In reply Jesus taught the parables of the lost piece of silver and the lost sheep, both of which make the same point; that God rejoices in the repentance of the sinner. But then he speaks the parable of the Prodigal Son which, in the first half of the story, makes an identical point, but then goes further, and is followed by an additional section which vividly portrays the censorious attitude of those who found fault with Jesus for his unconventional attitude toward sinners. What we call the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus might have called the Parable of the Elder Brother, for it is clearly he who is the main character in the story.

And so we are shown (Luke 15:13) the younger son setting out for a distant land, free at last from parental restraint, his head full of ideas, his pockets full of

money. But then the money ran out and he soon learned, as all who turn their back on God must inevitably learn, that the reality of sin is not freedom, but misery, deprivation and bondage. The behaviour of the young man conforms to a universal pattern of rebellion against God, in which sin is seen as liberation. To cut our moorings from God leaves us free to fulfil our own destiny, to reach out for a fuller life, a higher plain of existence. At that stage a sinner cannot easily be talked out of the course upon which he has set himself. It is only later that he learns the hard way that mortal man cannot turn his back upon the source of all blessing and goodness and still find happiness: 'And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.' (v.16)

Wherever that pattern of disobedience is enacted the truth is learned that there can be no independence from God. The Prodigal Son, sitting among the swine and sharing their food, or any man who imagines that the allurements and attractions of this world are the source of happiness, all have freedom either to conform to God's will or to turn away from it. There can be no freedom in the sense of independence from God. The paradox is that true freedom is found in conformity to God's will, for such conformity fulfils the purpose of our creation. The young man found this truth the hard way. He allowed his circumstances to teach him something. He could have remained in that far country, sitting among the swine, too proud to admit his errors, and sunk deeper into misery. He had to make the first move. There is no compulsion in conversion or repentance.

And so the first section of the story concludes with a beautiful picture of the father's love for the returning son; he ran out to meet him, treating him as an honoured guest and laying on a banquet in his honour. There was no hint of censure or reproach, only of compassion. The past was wiped clean. Once again the story could have ended at that point (v.24), for it has illustrated the compassion of our heavenly Father towards sinners who return to Him in penitence. But again, the story does not end at that point. Like the parable of the vineyard workers, it also continues with a further section, which contains its most important point: the attitude of the elder brother, who responds with reproaches against his father, contempt for his brother and a surly refusal to join in the festivities:

Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. (v.29)

What an embittered young man. He could not understand why this miscreant should be welcomed back into the family and be treated as well as himself who had never disobeyed his father. And we can feel a certain sympathy for him. He didn't even know what was going on until he asked one of the servants. Yet the way he speaks of his own good qualities suggests that deep down he harboured a secret envy for his younger brother, and that his own motive for serving his

father was not one of love, but merely of duty and ingrained habit. And we notice the courtesy of the father in contrast to the embittered attitude of the young man. He came out and entreated him:

Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost and is found.' (v.32)

The response of the elder brother to his father's words is not mentioned. In both stories the final question is left open – Ought I not to do with my own as I will? Ought I not to forgive? Again, the questions are left unanswered so that the Lord's hearers could make their own answer by their response to his Gospel.

We meet such a legalistic attitude in Luke chapter 7, embodied in a man called Simon who invited the Lord Jesus into his home for a meal. We might think that this was uncharacteristic of a Pharisee to be so hospitable to Jesus, but we are given a clue as to his motive in verse 16 where we read that a rumour went round that 'a great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has visited His people.' We can therefore assume that Simon's motive for allowing Jesus into his home was curiosity, to see whether there could be any truth in this popular rumour.

He soon convinced himself that there was not, for while Jesus was there another visitor came to the house, uninvited, a woman of the streets, perhaps a prostitute, and she wept over Jesus (v.38), and washed his feet with her tears and anointed him with expensive ointment. And Simon, like the Elder Brother of the Prodigal Son, felt no gladness at this heartfelt expression of penitence, he felt only contempt for Jesus for allowing such a woman to come anywhere near Him:

If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner. (v.39)

He concluded that those rumours about a great prophet were quite unfounded, because his own conception of a prophet was of one who would be as rigorous as himself in avoiding the corrupting presence of sinners. But the truth was that it was precisely because Jesus was the greatest of the prophets that he not only knew what manner of woman this was, but actually welcomed her into his presence. And the Lord Jesus answers the unspoken criticism of Simon by means of a parable in the same style as the other two, the money-lender who released from debt two debtors for no other reason than that they could not afford to pay:

A certain money-lender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both.

Now which of them will love him more? (v.41)

In this parable Jesus brings home to Simon the truth that God is even more mercifully disposed towards sinners than any human creditor towards his debtors. And the parable concludes with a question put, not to one of the

characters in the story, but to Simon himself. 'Now which of them will love him more?' This time we are told what the answer was and we can almost hear the reluctance in Simon's voice as he gives the only answer that he can give: 'The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.' (v.43)

That woman of the streets knew how much she had been forgiven, and her heart overflowed with gratitude. The same could not be said for Simon. His was a heart devoid of gratitude or love for God because he was unaware of anything in his life which needed forgiving. The irony was that Jesus saw more hope for that woman than for Simon. She had become aware of her true condition, Simon had not.

There are two kinds of obedience: that of the slave, and that of the son. A child can obey his father out of fear, fear of the consequences of disobedience. That is natural enough in a small child. But a true son who has grown into maturity, who understands his father's mind, loves and admires his father and knows that he has it in him to be like him and sees all things from his point of view, his character becomes a reflection of his father's. He fulfils his own potential in the act of growing into his father's likeness. Blind obedience to commandments which are imposed upon us from above is the spirit of bondage. It is the attitude of the Elder Brother. Obedience which is willing and spontaneous is the glorious liberty which God has willed for His children.

The complaint of the Jewish legalists against the Gospel which Jesus preached was that it made God appear unfair in His distribution of rewards: He rewards those who do not deserve salvation. But those who truly appreciate what the Lord Jesus has done for them will rejoice that God is unfair; that He does indeed bestow salvation upon those who have not deserved it. His is an unfairness which works in His people's favour:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing: it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph 2:8,9).

Mark Robertson

To sum up.

We must come to the Bible without any preconceived notions of what we ought to find. Think of the unexpectedness of nature. Who could have dreamt of her store of wonders and perplexities? The Bible, like nature, is unique and they both came from the same workshop.

**E6, Winter 1962, p4,
article on 'Some Reflections on the Inspiration of the Bible'
by John Simpson.**

Future Church

My previous two articles in Endeavour (To Be Or Not To Be parts 1 & 2) suggested that decline in membership of both the Christadelphian community and the wider Christian community (within the U.K.) was primarily caused by outdated and therefore irrelevant ways of 'doing' church. Furthermore: 'Far from the image of the stereotypical backslider, the majority of leavers have been deeply involved in the Church in the past and continue to grow in faith outside it.'²

It therefore follows that the largest group of Christians are those that do not go to any Church, as authors such as Gerard Kelly⁴ have pointed out. But, I repeat, most 'backsliders' (both Christian and Christadelphian) do not leave their Church/Ecclesia to 'lose their faith', as is often stated/insinuated in the Church/Christadelphian Magazine. So, where are these so called 'backsliders' going for their spiritual needs, if most of them are growing in faith outside of any Church? If you want to find the answer to that question, you will have to read the bibliography at the end of this article! But, to give you a hint, the Victorian way in which Christadelphians and most other churches 'do' church will be replaced by something that is sociologically relevant today – TO OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN IN THE FUTURE!

Let us go forward in time to the year 2040 when Christadelphianism has all but died out and Christ has not yet returned. There are 50 Christadelphians remaining in the country and they have become ever more inward-looking, hard-line and irrelevant to postmodernist Britain. Furthermore, there have been several splits over sillier and sillier issues – one was over whether they should go back to using the 1934 hymnbook, another was over the length of hair for women and others, and some were not even sure what it was over! Because of the divisions, the 50 have divided into a handful here and a handful there! Here in the U.K. every Christadelphian hall but one, has been sold, and even the Home and Hospital has been taken over by a secular organisation.

The main old-style churches are in major trouble – the recent General Synod of the Anglican Church was held in a back room of the Rose and Crown in Tooting! In previous visits to 2040, I found that some of the reasons for the demise of Christianity were bureaucracy, outdated church styles and increasing detachment from community. Postmodernism has arrived in full and rejected the old modernist way of doing church. Your grandchildren are desperately trying to rescue Christianity from extinction in the U.K. You will recognise little of the service about to be described. We are in the house of Petra, my daughter. Welcome to church invisible.

After a few minutes chatting, the young man who had been putting the cloth

on the table brought in some food which was shared around the group. Then – with no obvious break in the proceedings – we began to share in a sort of church service.

It was very different to anything I had ever been involved with. I guess it was nearer to a housegroup than anything else. Most people contributed. An older woman gave a short talk about an answer to prayer that she had received. Someone else read a passage from the Bible and there was a short discussion. There was some singing, including some songs which were familiar to me and which they referred to as 'golden oldies'. A teenager opened a scruffy leather bag and pulled out a painting – at least I think it was a painting – which was an abstract mess of colours and textures, some of which seemed to shimmer and move like holograms. I could not really relate to it at all, but the others in the group asked questions and the young girl explained why she had painted it and what kind of feelings she was trying to get across. Then there were prayers, both for the people in the group and for other groups that were mentioned. There were more prayers for the alienated, the lost, the homeless, the alcoholics and drug addicts, and for prostitutes – the very people Christ was often to be found with when on Earth.

Finally a simple piece of bread was broken and shared, an old, chipped mug of wine was passed around the group and some old phrases I recognised were said. Petra my daughter prayed for the group and the meeting ended. People drifted away, some cleared up. The atmosphere, sense of community and involvement was overwhelming. This small group were sharing – sharing food, sharing insight, sharing something sacred something holy. They were sharing their lives together – it reminded me of when the first century church had 'all things in common' – it was a delight.

I had so many questions for Petra: 'Is it usually like this?' I asked. 'Sort of', she replied. 'We are kind of a 24/7 church. Most nights people gather here. But we only do this every week or two.' 'So who's the church leader?' 'Well it's my house' she said, 'so I suppose I have responsibility for calling it together. But there is not really a leader.' 'And does it always follow the same pattern?' She laughed. 'Was there a pattern there? I did not notice. No, things change, and we try to respond to what is actually happening in our lives at the moment. We might tell a story, listen to some poetry or ... well, anything, really.'

I looked around at the room. Without the people in it, it looked quite shabby and bare. 'Do you always have paintings?' 'No' she said, 'but we always have art. People express themselves in different ways. Aruna loves art – it is the one thing that brings her alive. So we encourage that. Wherever people have a passion or a skill we try to help them use it in worship.'

'How many churches like this are there?' I asked. 'I thought they had all disappeared.'

'We are not exactly sure. They are hard to keep track of. There is no bureaucracy, nobody administering the whole thing. The churches keep moving to where the people are. One of the traps the church of your time fell into was always expecting the people to come to it; they had to come to your building. Well, we go to where the people are.' She gestured around her. 'We chose this house because it was near to Whitehall, so we could work among the homeless people there. Other groups have gone to different areas and they do church in different ways. They do whatever they can to involve people.'

'I never realised. I got the impression that the church was virtually dead now.'

'Oh it is,' said Petra. 'In numbers anyway. We just woke up to the danger too late. But, you know, the one good thing about a near-death experience, is that it makes you appreciate life so much more. So now we do things very differently. The church in the U.K. now is small in numbers so we call it 'church invisible' but it is big in ideas. And God is doing amazing things through his church here. Then again he loves bringing people back from the dead.'

'And are all churches like this?'

She looked shocked. 'Of course not. Bazzing heck, Granddad have you not learnt anything? They adapt themselves to the needs of the people in the group. Some still provide what you might call a 'traditional' model. Some are much more music-based. Some are basically discussion groups with some prayer thrown in. Each one looks around for the right model. Do not go back and tell people to do it our way. Tell them to go back and do what works.' She thought for a moment. 'What you can tell them is to make sure that it's about real life. Our aim is to help people embody the values of Jesus. Real church begins when they walk out of the door.'

For the first time I felt some optimism – maybe 'church invisible' was going to become visible again.

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Peter Baylis

Ever since God had a church of redeemed sinners on earth
the future of her destiny has been brighter than her past history.

(William S Plumer)

A Review of *Legalism vs. Faith* by David Levin

Many feel that legalism is a serious problem within the Christadelphian culture. However, even those who struggle against this tendency, either internally or within the larger culture, often lack a good understanding of exactly what legalism is, why it is so very dangerous, and also of what is its very necessary alternative. Legalism is not discussed as much as it should be in the Christadelphian culture. There has been a need for a resource which scripturally and persuasively confronts legalism. Such a resource should also show us the alternative, and help us to understand how necessary that alternative is.

For this reason I do not hesitate to recommend *Legalism vs. Faith* by David Levin to the readers of this magazine. David Levin is uniquely qualified to write this book. He is a Christadelphian living in the USA. Many brothers and sisters in North America have benefitted from his scriptural knowledge and background in counselling psychology. He was an Orthodox Jew before converting to Christadelphianism, so he understands to a great degree how legalism can affect a culture.

Levin's book is challenging, even uncomfortable at points. We often think of legalism as a problem which is found in other persons, in other groups. Levin demonstrates that legalism is a problem common to all of us. We all want to take the 'easy way out' in our spiritual lives, in our relationship with God. But the legalistic mindset is the product of human nature, and is not of God.

The first short section of the book introduces us to its major theme, the difference between legalism and faith. God often teaches us through the use of contrasts. Levin invites us to consider this question about Jesus Christ: 'If Jesus was the perfect representation of faith, who represented the *opposite* of faith?' There were many groups that we might have chosen as 'public enemy number one' at that time. The Canaanites, who God commanded Israel to destroy completely many hundreds of years ago. Polytheistic Romans, atheistic Greeks, the great sinners of the day. The answer surprised many, for it was the Pharisees, a group of Bible students and spiritual leaders who were well known for their 'holiness' and 'piety'. Why was this group such a focus of Christ's attention? Why did he use them as a contrast to his message of faith, often with very strong words? Because the true opposite of faith is not 'sin', but legalism. A sinner can learn, repent and lead a different, better life. On the other hand, the legalist usually does not recognise how far they are from God (Matt. 9:12-13).

The second section is the most academic, but provides a firm scriptural foundation for the rest of the book. We learn that legalism was with us from the very start, and played an important part in the first sin, when Adam and Eve ate the 'forbidden fruit'. Later, the people of Israel were given the Law of Moses, a system of rules and rituals which God required them to obey. This 'gift' has puzzled many. If God wanted us to relate to Him through grace and not legalism,

why did He give the Hebrews a legal and religious regime which seemed to have little to do with grace? Again, the theme of contrasts, Levin writes: 'God showed us law so we could see grace in perspective' (2 Cor. 3:4-9, Gal. 3:19-25).

The Pharisees, and Jesus' conflict with them, are given several chapters worth of attention. We see how Jesus deliberately chose to act in ways which would provoke the Pharisees and spiritual leaders. For example, he healed men and women on the Sabbath, when he easily could have waited a few hours until the Sabbath was over. What lesson was he trying to teach them, and those who were watching the conflict? The Pharisees had taken the Law, and built it into a baroque, cumbersome and oppressive structure, and failed to understand the 'spirit' of the Law. Jesus healed on the Sabbath to demonstrate the original purpose of the Sabbath. It was a rest from labour for humans, and their beasts. It was to benefit humanity, not to oppress it. It was a gift from God, which the Pharisees had turned into a burden (Mark 2:27-28, Matt. 23:2-4).

After Jesus died, a group arose which claimed that Jesus was alive again. The Pharisees continued their struggle against Christ and his message, and persecuted the early Christian church. Persecution came from without, but also within there was a group called the Judaizers, who wanted to reintroduce legalism into a community which was just beginning to understand the good news of God's grace. Paul and other apostles struggled against these forces; they were fighting for the very life of the ecclesia. Would it return to the Law of Judaism, which had been pronounced 'dead'? This would be its deathknell, it would merely become a sect of Judaism. The letters the apostles wrote to the ecclesias under their care continue to help us to understand grace and faith, as the crucial alternative to legalism.

A necessary and strong scriptural foundation has been laid for us in the second section. The third section is perhaps the most directly helpful, because it concerns our own spiritual growth. How exactly is legalism a danger to spiritual growth? What is faith, particularly in contrast to legalism? What is true spiritual growth? The New Covenant is not a new Law to replace the 'Law of Moses'. Laws and rules can describe desired behaviour, and provide systems of rewards and punishments to encourage us to modify our behaviour. But they cannot legislate attitude or identity. The New Covenant tells us that God not only wants our obedience, proper behaviour, but He also desires us to be transformed completely, so that our attitudes and even our identity have been changed so that we become like Him. This process is completed at the resurrection, but begins now (1 Cor 15:51-54, Eph 1:18-22). Such a radical change cannot be accomplished through mere rule-keeping. Instead, it is a journey made possible by our faith and trust in God.

Much more could be said concerning the third section, but one chapter stands out in this reviewers opinion. Reading *Legalism vs. Faith* will accomplish nothing for the reader unless you are willing to take a hard look at yourself and

see how and where it applies to you. Chapter 21 is a powerful 'visual aid' for this scrutiny. Levin provides a table of contrasts between the minds of the 'legalist' and the 'faithist' which could be used as something similar to one of those quizzes that appear in psychology magazines and other places. You might be surprised at how high your 'Legalism Quotient' is. But we all start with this human tendency towards legalism!

The book concludes with a short section entitled 'Practical Matters'. Here Levin reminds us that rules still have a place, a function in our lives, and in our community. (By rules, Levin means the manmade regulations which are outside of the commandments of Christ, such as dress code, curfew at gatherings, etc.). Rules provide a clear description of desired behaviour within a particular context, such as a Bible school or other event. All ages and levels of maturity may be present at such an event, and without this structure chaos may result. In addition, we may need to make additional rules for ourselves, for our own benefit. The recovering alcoholics may need a 'no drinking rule' for themselves. But they should not seek to impose that rule on other persons who do not have a problem with alcohol. Jesus was trying to teach the Pharisees a principle which we also need to understand: rules are our servants, not our masters. They are for our benefit, and as such, should be created, modified and implemented with flexibility and love.

In this fourth section Levin also writes on submission. Here is where I unfortunately have to take issue, in part, with this book. I wish that Levin had been a bit more nuanced here. Submission is, in principle, a good thing. Submission to good rules and laws is right. Submission to bad laws and rules becomes more problematic. Some rules, while bad, can be tolerated. However, there have been circumstances where bad rules (or absence of rules) have allowed abuse and abusers to flourish. Then the question becomes much more difficult. Should we simply submit to the abuse or take action against it in a prayerful and Christlike fashion? If there is no change in the abusive situation, do we remain or do we leave? These are not easy questions, which can be answered by simply saying 'submit!'. Otherwise, submission for the sake of submission can be a form of legalism in its own way.

True spiritual growth and faith are rarely easy or comfortable. Legalism adds a burden (more rules and a false system of rewards and punishments) while claiming to take one away (uncertainty and risk). For many in the Christadelphian community, the burden that legalism adds has become very heavy. For those suffering under this oppression, *Legalism vs. Faith* will help to free minds and hearts for faith and service.

Trevor Brierly, USA.

UK readers wishing to obtain a copy of this book should contact Malcolm Cross for details on 01759 318362 or malcolmcross@hotmail.com, price about £5.

Others should contact Don Styles, 42076 Hartford Dr., Canton, MI 48187, USA or Donstyles@email.msn.com.

The Flood

Dear Bro Les,

I enjoyed reading Ron Coleman's article on the Genesis Flood. I agree it was local. A worldwide flood would have been unnecessary and impossible. Water five miles deep would have been needed to submerge Mount Everest (if we take the narrative literally) which is absurd. The Apostle Peter confirms that it was local when he says 'the world (of people) that then was (that then existed) being overflowed with water perished (1Pet3:6).'

Although the scenario depicted by Bro Ron is excellent, I feel it is inadequate to fully explain the causes of the flood. More than the annual snow melt, even if exaggerated, would seem to be required to produce the cataclysm described in Genesis. The flood appears to have been a one-off occurrence of exceptional magnitude and I would like to suggest an additional item to complete the hypothesis.

If we bring our modern knowledge of meteorology to bear and apply it to the situation we can imagine how it might very well have been arranged by Divine control of the elements. So, imagine an area of high pressure over the Indian Ocean and at the same time an area of extreme low pressure centred over Mesopotamia (the sort of low pressure which causes hurricanes in the Caribbean). If the low pressure persisted for forty days it would produce the torrential rainfall described in Genesis. At the same time, the pressure gradient between this low and the high pressure I postulated over the Indian Ocean would create strong winds from the south-east (air flows from high to low pressure areas). These hurricane force winds would scoop up water from the Persian Gulf and deposit it on the low-lying flood plain between the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris thus completing the picture as depicted in Gen 7:11. We know the wind was blowing in this direction because the ark was driven before it and grounded on Ararat, to the far north-west. (I rest my case!)

When the rain stopped and normal weather patterns once more prevailed, the water would drain back into the Persian Gulf and the dry land appeared.

It appears from scripture that God often uses normal forces of nature, which he has created, to accomplish His will — in this case judgement on a wicked generation. No doubt something of the kind remains to happen in the future.

Sincerely your brother,

Arthur Mallinder.

Response from Ron Coleman

Dear Les

Thanks for the copy of Arthur Mallinder's letter about the Flood. I think the first thing we have to understand is that in a map of the climates of the world the Euphrates/Tigris valley is classified as 'Desert', as is the rest of Arabia. Its fertility was due to irrigation from the rivers originating in the mountains to the north (in the temperate zone) where rainfall would be normal. Melting snow on

the high peaks would cause an extra surge in the spring.

Not only did the rivers bring the water necessary for the crops, but also a fertile silt overlying the desert rock. I understated the amount of silt when I said in the article the river beds were nearly as high as the surrounding land. I have since seen that they were actually about 5 feet higher, due to the containing dikes. This showed how necessary it was to keep these in good condition and how disastrous breaches would be.

I mentioned William Todd's book as the source of information on the character of the rivers. Todd described the annual flood, as currently experienced by him about 50 years ago:

The annual flood is never sudden. ... Slowly, but gathering in momentum, the river swells until after six or seven weeks the normally broad and placid stream has grown into a turbid and raging torrent, some sixteen feet above its normal level and twelve times its normal volume.

This is an account by an experienced traveller who had been there.

It is of course stated in the Genesis account that God said that he would send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights and this is usually interpreted as rain falling from the skies. But is it feasible to think that God would describe what was going to happen in terms that would mean nothing to Noah who would never have seen 'rain falling from the skies'?

Confirmatory evidence is found in the account of Woolley's excavations in 1929. From the surface down he described, first, stratified rubbish. Below this there was about 10 feet of perfectly clean waterlaid clay which was identified as having been left by the Flood. Then there was about 3 feet of ashes and rubbish, containing masses of pottery. Finally the virgin soil on which the original settlement of Ur was built. This was accepted as confirmation of the Bible account of the Flood caused by river water from the Euphrates and/or Tigris. There was no suggestion that it might have been caused by local rain.

I cannot claim much knowledge of meteorology but I have a definite impression that high pressure systems are dry, hot, and associated with land masses (although they can spread over neighbouring areas of sea, for example the Azores high). On the other hand low pressure systems originate over the sea (the Atlantic, here) and drift into the high pressure areas destroying them. I saw an account a few weeks ago of the recent weather in Germany when an exceptionally violent thunderstorm tore through a high pressure system in the north-east of the country and set off flash floods.

Arthur's picture however is of a stationary high pressure system out in the Indian ocean while an active stationary low pressure system dominates the land causing excessive rain. Strong winds would blow from the high to the low scooping up water from the ocean he says, causing the Flood. In confirmation he mentions the sort of low pressure which causes hurricanes in the Caribbean.

However the Caribbean is *sea*, and the low pressure systems generated there migrate up the American coast.

On the other hand there seems to be no reason to doubt that rain from the mountainous north of the country, plus uncared-for irrigation works, would be sufficient to cause the flood that Woolley was the first to identify on the ground.

Arthur also refers to Ararat 'in the far north-west'. It is some time ago now, but, in issue No 86 of *Endeavour*, Wilfred Lambert showed that there was no evidence that the biblical Ararat was the mountain in the far east of Turkey which appears in some atlases.

Ron Coleman

The Faith(?) of the Clergy

On Thursday, August 1, 2002, The Times 2 Cover article entitled *The Faith(?) of the clergy* concerned the high proportion of priests in the Church who do not believe in the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection. Most of the published replies spoke of unfaithfulness to the Creeds but Sheila Harris felt that the challenge should have been made at a more basic level and so she wrote the following letter:

Reply to Times 2 Cover Article Thursday August 1 The Faith(?) of the clergy.

Dear Sir,

All religious faith is based upon a belief in the supernatural, an awareness of a power, an influence, a dynamic, a spiritual quality which infuses the natural world of physical, material being with meaning, purpose and radiance.

The Christian faith is founded upon the understanding of a God whose breath initiated the first awakening of life in the dormant matter which was also His creation. And it is this breath that inspired prophets, seers and ordinary people to see infinity and eternity in the world of the senses.

The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the culmination, the consummation of this whole work of God. The spirit of God, breathed into his mother, produced a child fully infused with God, who nonetheless had to face the challenge of submission to his physical instincts or response to the impulse of the spirit through temptation, trial and supremely Gethsemane. His willing offering of himself, his total yielding to God, proclaimed him gloriously, triumphantly the victor. The bonds of death could not hold him; he rose the conqueror, the fulfilment of God's purpose from the beginning to give life to us.

Sheila Harris

Reply from The Times:

Dear Ms Harris,

Although we thank you for your letter to the Editor, dated August 3, which was read with interest here, we regret that we were unable to publish it.

Yours sincerely, Tony Patrick, p.p. Ivan Barnes, Letters Editor.

Although the letter was not published it merits a wider audience.

What happened to Jubilee 2000 and Drop the Debt?

Jubilee 2000 was a global campaign to end Third World debt by the dawn of the new Millennium. When it finished, at the end of 2000, some individual Jubilee 2000 campaigns in different countries decided to keep the issue alive, even though the milestone date had passed. In the UK the **Jubilee Debt Campaign** was set up as the new coalition of local groups and organisations wanting to continue campaigning on debt. Jubilee Scotland, which is a member of JDC, was created to handle the campaign independently in Scotland. Jubilee Research was also established to focus on analysis, research and advocacy. These three organisations work in close co-operation to carry forward the mission of Jubilee 2000 in the UK.

(Note: Drop the Debt was formed as a short-term hard-hitting project aimed at the Genoa G8 Summit in July 2001 and ended in September 2001.)

Hasn't the UK cancelled all the debts owed to us?

Yes and no. The UK has cancelled the debts owed to it by the 26 countries that have qualified for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, but has not cancelled all debts owed to it by other very poor and indebted countries.

What more can the UK do?

The promise to cancel 100% of bilateral debts (i.e. those owed to the UK) is welcome, so far as this has actually occurred. But the biggest slice of the debt owed by poor countries is to the so-called multilateral institutions, primarily the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Together with other rich nations, the UK has a controlling role on these two institutions, and hasn't gone nearly far enough to ensure that they offer deeper and faster debt cancellation.

The vision of the Jubilee Debt Campaign is a world in which the people of the poorest countries are liberated from the crushing burden of debt, and in which the future financial arrangements between rich and poor nations are founded on fairness, accountability and transparency.

Jubilee Debt Campaign (JDC) can be contacted at:

www.jubileedebtcampaign.co.uk

(Thanks to Joan White for this reminder.)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free the oppressed and announce
that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.
(Luke 4:18-19 Isaiah 16:1-2)

Tools for Self Reliance

works with experienced local anti-poverty organisations
in Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Aims

To empower artisans working in developing countries so that they can better participate in the development of themselves and their communities. To achieve this we work with local partner organisations to provide hand tools and skills training, and raise awareness in the UK of the causes of poverty.

You can make a difference

From Orkney to Jersey over 700 volunteers collect and refurbish hand tools and sewing machines for village development groups. We send tools worth over £500,000 each year to partners in six countries in Africa. You can help too. For every £10 you give **Tools for Self Reliance**, we will put tools worth £30 into the hands of people working to feed their family and build their community.

What it costs

£10 buys the hacksaw blades, files and items to complete a tool kit for a community workshop.

£30 ships a tool kit from the UK to Africa.

£100 purchases a blacksmith's anvil.

£1000 pays for a sewing machine maintenance course for 20 people in Tanzania.

£2624 paid for a recent shipment to Uganda 97 crates of hand tools and sewing machines.

Contact Information

Tools for Self Reliance, Netley Marsh, Southampton, S040 7GY

Phone 023 8086 9697

Fax 023 8086 8544

Email info@tfsr.org

Website www.tfsr.org

Registered charity 280437

Thanks to Charles Woodin for the above information.

Forty Years ago A SAMARITAN FUND

We are pleased to know that the Committee of the Central Benevolent Fund is opening a Samaritan Fund to alleviate distress outside the brotherhood.

In this magazine we intend, from time to time, to advertise the needs of the world's sufferers, toward whom, in the spirit of Christ, our community is becoming increasingly sympathetic. On the back of our cover an appeal will be found for the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief.

(From p22 of E5 Autumn 1962)

THE CHRISTINE WITCUTT CENTRE, SARAJEVO

When Alan & Christine Witcutt's involvement in helping victims of the civil war in Yugoslavia ended in the tragedy of her death in 1993, it would have been easy for Alan to have given up in sadness, or disillusionment. Sustained, however, by his deep commitment to the life and teaching of Jesus, Alan could say to the world's press on his return to Britain that his beliefs teach him to forgive. Over the last decade Alan has proved that in practice, and in September 2002 his and Christine's work found particular fulfilment in the opening of a new **Special Needs Centre in the Vladimir Nazor School, Sarajevo**.

Many people contributed to the fund to make this possible: members of the public who were moved by Christine's death; former colleagues of Christine, from sponsored events and school fundraising activities; supporters of 'Edinburgh Direct Aid'; and very substantial Christadelphian contributions from individual brothers and sisters, ecclesias and some of the brotherhood's welfare and care organisations.

The Centre, a year on, now has 28 children who receive day-care tuition; previously they were unable to receive any education, as their special needs were too severe. The Centre is able to provide the kind of care which such children would receive in Britain, and thus a new level of excellence is being provided, and a standard set which will hopefully provide something to aim at throughout the former Yugoslavia. In addition, a home-support worker is employed to help those who are too handicapped to be able to leave home, but who are particularly in need of extra help. After the war, the economy was in tatters and the social support systems virtually non-existent. It is not easy to cope with a special-needs child in any circumstances, but particularly difficult in such conditions.

In two areas, therefore, the **Christine Witcutt Fund** is making a meaningful contribution to helping the helpless. This help is expensive: we have only sufficient money to run the Centre and home-support worker for two years; we need to keep it going for five, after which the authorities have agreed to fund it.

A 15 minute videotape is available on loan, and Alan regularly gives talks and slide shows about the caring work being undertaken.

For more details, or to make contributions or offer financial support, please contact **The Christine Witcutt Fund**, 176 Granton Road, Edinburgh, EH5 1AH (0131 552 3615), or to arrange for Alan to give a talk/slide show, he can be contacted at 79 Old Manse Road, Netherton, Wishaw, Lanarks ML2 0EW (01698 374 557)

Ian McLaffie

'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

*Truth,
in any case,
is not so feeble as some would appear to think.
Especially is this so of divine truth.
So long as there are earnest searchers,
truth will be found.
Only prejudices need artificial barriers
to protect them from the cold winds of inquiry.*