

The

Endeavour

Magazine



*Beautiful words fill my mind
as I compose this song for the King.*

*Like the pen of a good writer
my tongue is ready with a poem.*

Psalms 45:1

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The Coming of God

Around 1700 BC, Jacob and his family went down into Egypt, effectively into voluntary exile, because there was a famine in the land where they were living. Their stay in Egypt turned out to be longer than was perhaps anticipated and eventually turned into captivity, when they became slaves and were not allowed to leave. Their exile was no longer voluntary but imposed.

It was in about 1250 BC that God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush saying: 'Tell them that **I have come** to them' (Ex 3:16 GNB; AV 'I have surely **visited** you'). Later, Aaron tells the people that **the Lord had come** to them (Ex 4:31; AV the Lord had **visited** the children of Israel). Then the exodus took place and the people were rescued from their slave labour. The Lord had truly visited them and helped them in their time of need.

Moving forward in time to about 600 BC, when Judah was being threatened with extinction in the time of Jeremiah, he encouraged them by telling them that after 70 years in Babylon God would **visit** them (GNB 'show his concern for them' Jer 29:10-11). He follows this up with the promise of a new covenant in Jer 31:31-34 where, in v32, he contrasts what is to happen with the exodus out of Egypt. The implication is that they were to expect something like the exodus to happen again – in fact a new exodus. The new covenant of which he spoke was to bring, not freedom from human enemies, but the forgiveness of sins, v 34. Isaiah too, in 43: 14-21, speaks in similar terms of a new thing that God would do, a new exodus, v 18-19. Exodus imagery abounds in this part of Isaiah.

How was this new exodus to be achieved? Isaiah, in 40:9-11 and 52:7-10 makes it clear that the Lord God will come and He will reign. This amounted to the hope of the saving visit of God who would come and reign in power.

Now, although some did return from Babylon to Jerusalem, and so there was a new exodus of a kind – certainly they were allowed to leave freely this time as Isaiah had said in 52:12 – it was never fully achieved, they were never truly free from their enemies. Above all, the promised new covenant had not materialised and so it remained their hope that God would still come and reign and properly fulfil the salvation represented by Isaiah in language referring back to the exodus.

With this background in mind, let us now go to **Luke's Gospel** and see how Luke weaves these ideas into his account of the Good News. Luke, and only Luke, in his record of the transfiguration of Jesus, chooses to make use of the Greek word for the exodus when he presents Jesus as speaking to Moses and Elijah of his departure (exodus) to be accomplished at Jerusalem (Lk 9:31). Luke is making sure that we do not miss the point that in heading for Jerusalem, where Jesus clearly anticipates having to die, this is in fact in fulfilment of that OT hope of a new exodus, a new experience of freedom, not this time from their human enemies but from captivity to sin. In other words, the promised new covenant bringing forgiveness of sins would come through Jesus being lifted up

on the cross. In Luke's eyes, the true second exodus is about to be inaugurated.

Now Luke in his gospel, (and only Luke), speaks of the ministry of Jesus four times as a divine visit, as God coming to his people to help them in their time of need. On three of these four occasions God's visit is recognised openly. Twice in Luke 1, Zechariah, at the birth of his son, John the Baptist, in the poem known as the Benedictus (because of its first word meaning blessed), speaks of God's visit: 1:68 (AV) the (Lord God) has **visited** and redeemed his people

1:78 (AV) the dayspring from on high has **visited** us

Notice how, in the same context, the forgiveness of sins is highlighted in v. 77.

The third occasion is in Luke 7 when the raising of the son of the widow of Nain is recognised by the crowd, in 7:16, as a clear case of God (in the person of Jesus) visiting his people (AV God has visited his people).

The fourth occasion when Luke highlights the coming of Jesus and his ministry as a divine visit is to be found in Luke 19:44 and this time the visit is not recognised as a divine visit. Jesus is approaching Jerusalem, where, as we have seen, he is to accomplish the second exodus. He has **deliberately** chosen to go into Jerusalem riding on a young foal, a donkey's colt, to make again a **deliberate** reference to Zech 9:9 indicating that he was the promised King coming to them to save them and reign over them. However, near the Mount of Olives, Jesus stops and bewails the fact that Jerusalem had not recognised the time when God came to save them (AV the time of your **visitation**). Notice how Jesus is taking the initiative, in order, no doubt, to explain his own understanding of how God was going to show his hand and come with power to save his people. Also notice that the divine visit spoken of here links together the ideas of God coming both to save his people **and** to exercise his reign over them.

We have seen enough evidence to show that Luke has done his best to ensure that we do not miss the point that, in his eyes, the promised coming of God to save his people and introduce His reign has taken place in the coming of Jesus.

Further evidence is not difficult to find in the rest of Luke's Gospel. See, for example, Luke 2:29-32 where Simeon, holding the baby Jesus in his arms, says, in the familiar words of the Nunc Dimittis AV v 30, 'mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' Also, in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus, in the synagogue at Nazareth, **deliberately** (again taking the initiative) opens the Isaiah scroll at what we know as 61:1 and reads: '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.' And he follows this with, in v 21, the statement that this has come true for them today.

It becomes clear that, in the mind of Jesus, the coming of God to save his people is accompanied by the coming of the promised reign of God when we find Jesus, in v 43 near the end of ch 4, saying that he must be off to preach (that

is to announce the coming of) the kingdom of God (or reign of God) to the rest of Galilee. In order to save his people God needs to deal with or reign over the enemy of the people and in this sense salvation and the kingdom are inseparable. This is also made clear when Jesus is accused, in Luke 11, of casting out demons by Beelzebub, and replies in v 20 that it is by God's power (by the finger of God) that he drives out demons and so the kingdom of God has already come to them.

Throughout his ministry Jesus was involved in visits, visits to people's homes to have meals with them. Here is how one author puts it:

'Table fellowship has an essential place in a saving ministry which frankly associates with sinners, not least because the sharing of food and the proximity to others form a natural setting for the visit of Jesus. The shared meal can create an atmosphere of community in which people are drawn to communion and revelation: as Barbotin has observed, 'the table has a power of epiphany.' Throughout his ministry Jesus hallows the meal as an occasion of fellowship and forgiveness and as an image which reveals something of the unseen reality of the kingdom of God. In offering table fellowship to outcasts and sinners Jesus incurs the anger of his opponents, whose complaints reflect the belief that only the righteous should eat with the righteous; but Jesus uses the meal as a way of coming to righteousness. In the context of the meal Jesus announces the good news; he brings sinners to an understanding of their worth before God and offers them salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. In that understanding the meal is an education and an opportunity for commitment: it is a time of discovery and a challenge to change, both of which take place in the social setting of the human community.'

(Emmaus: the gracious visit of God according to Luke. Denis McBride, Dominican Publications 1991 ISBN 1-871552-18-4, p 50)

In other words, Jesus made it clear that he came to minister to sinners, to the poor, the downtrodden, the underprivileged. The good news that he preached to the poor had to be good news for **them, there and then**, in their circumstances. The kingdom or reign of God had to become a reality for **them, there and then**. Jesus used **meals together** to help to bring that about for them. He focused on the poor, on the sinners, on the despised, to **assure** them that God cared for them, that despite being told by others (the Pharisees for example) that they were worthless and to be shunned they were nevertheless worth a lot in the eyes of God. The table fellowship they had with Jesus gave them the opportunity to discover themselves, their true selves, and to discover God by facing the challenge of Jesus to change and to commit themselves to a God who did **not despise** them but loved them. This was the reality of God's reign that Jesus came to promote and inaugurate, to bring people to a deeper understanding of the involvement of God in their lives. In Jesus and through his ministry, life, death and resurrection, God **visited** (came to) the poor, the oppressed, the

shunned, to show them that far from wanting to shun them God wanted to dwell with them.

This was the Good News of God's coming and of His reign, Good News that we reaffirm every time we partake of bread and wine on Sunday morning, a token meal taken in the presence of God and of Jesus and of one another, the forgiven sinners that we are, meeting together to rejoice together in God's grace.

To close, let me just remind you that in his last chapter, 24, Luke shows us two discouraged disciples, perhaps a man and his wife, on the way to Emmaus, probably their home, wondering how it was that God could have let them down so badly. And it was while they were sharing a meal with the stranger who had accompanied them - and spoken so ardently of God's purpose being accomplished in spite of all their disappointment - that the penny dropped! They now recognised that the salvation of God, the Kingdom, Rule or Reign of God that they had been hoping for, had in fact arrived but in an unexpected way. Jesus was the Messiah after all but his kingship had been demonstrated paradoxically on the cross and in his subsequent resurrection.

Les Boddy

Though our hearts may burn within us with the revelation of God's word, though we may, in fact, believe all that the prophets have spoken, yet if we would truly know Jesus in our lives, it is necessary to say in all sincerity and faith, 'Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' Then He will enter in to tarry with us.

(From E7, p5 '*Art Thou Only A Stranger*' by **Norman Fitchett**)

A great feature of Scripture is that it is absolutely true to life's experience. Ecclesiastes 12 is a marvellous description of old age: to live for God from youth will yield a wonderful store when sight is dimmed and one cannot read; when hearing fails and we cannot hear. What have we, then, to fall back upon if the heart is not *established* in grace?

How this comes to life in visiting, and what a lesson! One seems to live many lives in listening to the sorrows (sometimes joys) of others. Often to listen is all one can do, for all are glad to have someone to talk to. How one could wish to have the insight and power of Jesus, Who, when there was responsive faith, healed. Then we should say just the right and helpful word in season 'that would comfort and strengthen.'

'It is not the magnitude or otherwise, of the work we have to do that should concern us, but the magnitude of the love with which we do it.'

(From E7, p11, *A Reader's Thoughts*, arranged by **Sheila Harris**)

A New Beginning

Frequently in the past doubts were expressed strongly as to whether it was right to use ordinary bread in our Communion Services rather than the 'unleavened' bread which was undoubtedly used in the Passover meal at the Last Supper. (This was reflected in Graham Longfils' article on *Fellowship* in the last issue.) Recently a more open feeling has been expressed, perhaps because of the inadequacy of the belief that the yeast used to make bread 'rise' is a symbol of corruption. What seemed not to have been taken into account is that if yeast makes bread unacceptable, it does so in the case of wine. If we explore this thought I believe it can lead us to a more profound belief, so my aim is to be constructive.

If yeast is a corrupting agent in bread it is even more so in wine. When leavened bread is baked, the yeast is destroyed and the products of the fermentation (ethyl alcohol and carbon dioxide) escape. The function of the carbon dioxide is to create 'bubbles' in the dough to give bread its crumbly, light characteristic. When the dough is baked the alcohol escapes as a gas because of its low boiling point, and the yeast is destroyed. (The carbon dioxide is replaced by air.) Thus the bread is free from anything which could be described as 'corruption'.

On the other hand, in wine the whole object of fermentation is to produce alcohol and other organic chemical compounds, which give wine (particularly in fine wines) its attractive and distinctive taste. Additionally, traces of the yeast remain in the 'lees'.

What then was the significance of the unleavened bread in the Passover? It was clearly a symbol of the escape from Egypt, which had been so rapid that, in the event, there was no time to bake the bread, or even put leaven in it. (Exodus 12:29) Thus it was a powerful symbol of a change, a new beginning, particularly because the 'leaven' was in fact leftover dough from previous bakings. This was mixed with new dough so that yeast spread to the whole quantity. Thus unleavened bread became a powerful symbol of change, of escape from the old, and of a new beginning.

It was in its way like the poppies of the Armistice of 1918. Poppies had bloomed so extensively in the disturbed ground of the Flanders fields that they symbolised the fighting there, which had now ceased. The unleavened bread was thus a powerful symbol of the birth of the nation, and of the new dispensation brought by settlement in the promised land. We can thus see how significant it was for Jesus to choose the occasion of the Passover to inaugurate the new and greater beginning brought about by his death.

Our traditional interpretation was possibly influenced by the fact that yeast is a fungus, and some fungi do not have a good reputation because of the dirty (but often essential) things they do. We have also to remember that Jesus used yeast

on another occasion to illustrate *good* growth, namely that of the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:20, similarly Matthew 13:33). It is, of course, an anomaly that does not disturb us that we still speak of 'breaking bread' when we (mostly) use leavened bread, which breaks noiselessly when divided into portions, unlike 'crispbread'.

To continue a positive approach, it would be useful to describe what actually took place at Passover at the time of the Last Supper, as described by William Barclay in the commentary on Mark's gospel in his *Daily Study Bible* series. The meal commenced with the head of the family drinking the cup of the Kiddush. (*Kiddush* meant sanctification or separation.) This showed that it was not an ordinary meal. He took the cup, prayed, and then all drank of it. Next, he washed his hands in a particular prescribed way. A piece of parsley was then taken, dipped in a bowl of salt water, and eaten. This stood for the hyssop which had been used to smear the lintels of their dwellings with blood to avert the angel of death. The salt symbolised tears shed in Egypt and the waters of the sea through which Israel had been brought to safety.

There followed the actual breaking of the bread, over which a blessing was said thanking God for the provision of bread for his people. The bread was laid out in three circles and a small quantity taken from the middle one and eaten by the family, its significance being that the slaves in Egypt never had so much as a whole loaf, but only crusts. The head of the family contrasted it with what was available after the escape from Egypt. 'Let whoever is hungry come, and keep Passover with us.' (This is the point where today there is added the well-known 'Next year in Jerusalem'.)

The youngest then asked why the day was different from all others, and the head of the house explained. After this Psalms 113 and 114 were sung from the praising Psalms (113-118). A second cup was then drunk: it was called *the cup of the Haggadah* meaning 'explaining'. All present then washed their hands as a preliminary to the main meal (there were of course no knives and forks). A grace was said and pieces of the broken bread were distributed. Some of the bitter herbs were then put between the pieces, dipped in the salt water, and eaten. This was called 'the sop', another reminder of slavery and of the bricks which they had had to make in Egypt.

Then the main meal took place. The whole lamb was eaten, and if anything remained it had to be thrown away. More hand washing, and the remainder of the bread was eaten, followed by a prayer of thanksgiving and a petition for the coming of Elijah, the herald of the Messiah. A third cup followed, with a blessing over the cup, and the singing of Psalms 115-118.

Finally the fourth cup, 'the cup after the supper'. This is often supposed to mean 'after the whole ceremony was over' and not part of the observance. The reference is actually to the main meal that had just been eaten. Following it there

were two short prayers in which the righteous were said to be praising God 'for it is good to praise Thee, and pleasure to sing praises to Thy name. For from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God and beside Thee we have no king, redeemer or saviour.'

It is sometimes suggested that there was significance in the fact that only male disciples were present at the Last Supper. I did however show, in the article *Personal Mark* (E 94) that it is almost certain that it took place in the house of Mary, Mark's mother. We cannot imagine that she would not be present in her own house at what was normally a family occasion. **Ron Coleman**

Are we to believe that Christ's Kingdom will revert to Judaistic practice?

One of the most insistent reasons given for the restoration of animal sacrifices is the need to instruct backward nations in the elements of righteousness. The Scripture does not give or support such a point of view. On the contrary the temple of Ezekiel was offered on condition of the repentance of Israel (Ezek. 43: 10-11) and as a mark of the glory which would then be seen in the worship of the restored Israel. The opportunity was missed during the restoration from Babylon, and the worship in Christ now far exceeds that which might have been achieved under Ezra.

If there should be any doubt as to the Christian interpretation of Ezekiel, we suggest that the use of the passages in question in the book of Revelation be observed. In this book Ezekiel is reborn, as it were, into a Christian setting. So we have Ezek.37:10/Rev.11:11 and Ezek.39:17/Rev.19:17. But most important for present purposes is the way in which the Ezekiel chapters from 40 onwards are echoed in Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. There is the same carrying away in the spirit (Ezek.43:5/Rev.21:10): the presence of the glory of God (Ezek.48:35/Rev.21:3); the twelve gates (Ezek.48:31-34/Rev.21:12); the river of the water of life, the trees, the monthly fruit (Ezek.47:1-12/Rev.22:1-2); the two Revelation chapters are a gathering together of Kingdom passages from Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah for the express purpose of showing how these expectations are to be fulfilled in the Kingdom of Christ when 'By its light shall the nations walk, and the kings of the earth shall bring into it all their splendour,' a quotation from Isaiah 60:3, found in Rev.21:24 (N.E.B.). But doubtless conscious of the Jewish expectations John says categorically, 'I saw no temple therein' (Rev.21:22). The reason given, too, is the same as that which pervades the rest of the New Testament: 'for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.'

The force of this has, perhaps, been missed by the setting of Revelation chapters 21 and 22, which would appear to make them post-millennial. Comparison of the Old Testament passages quoted should, nevertheless, indicate the stage of the Messianic Kingdom which is being referred to.

(From E8, p35, Editorial)

'These who have turned the world upside down!'**The Impact of the Gospel**

This was the reaction of the Jews of Thessalonica (Acts 17:6) to Paul's preaching. The evidence of the Roman historian Tacitus attests to the existence of an immense multitude of Christians in Rome by the middle of the sixties. How can we account for this phenomenon? The message of Jesus enshrined within the Sermon on the Mount – non-aggressive, non-resistant, seeking the Kingdom of God, peacemaking, merciful, seeking righteousness – was not a revolutionary programme to draw popular support. It was in fact very much the same teaching that the prophets had proclaimed centuries before, as Jesus himself declared in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4.) He had claimed then that the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 61, to free the captives, give sight to the blind, liberty and healing to the bruised, was now fulfilled. So where was the difference? Was he not in the tradition of the prophets?

The Ministry of Jesus

The difference lay in the fact that what had been foretold was now being fulfilled before their very eyes. The blind were given their sight, the lepers were cleansed, the sick were healed. And above all these healings were not just external, physical healings. They were emotional, psychological and spiritual restorations. It was, as Jesus said, their faith that had healed them. They were called upon to respond, to take up their beds, to offer hospitality, to go back home etc. – all acts of mental and psychological restoration – Zacchaeus, Legion, the Leper, Bartimaeus etc. In Jesus' hands the prophecies were being fulfilled, as he said. The outcasts, the despised, the 'sinners' were accepted. But they put him to death!

The Resurrection

This is the vital key to the whole story. He rose again! Jesus was not just a teacher, a healer. He became a living presence then and now. Through the resurrection he became a spiritual being, unlimited in space and time and as he promised (John 14) an indwelling in the lives and experiences of his people. So his work did not stop. It continued through the ministry of his apostles. And through them people found a new dimension in life. The prophets (Jeremiah 31:33-34, Ezekiel 36:26-27.) had foretold a New Covenant that God would make with His people – a covenant not of external laws but a relationship of the heart with God, 'I will put my spirit within them and give a new heart'. Was this just wishful thinking or realised fact?

The Apostolic Ministry

The Acts of the Apostles reveals how this conversion experience laid the foundations of the Christian faith. But as with the ministry of Jesus, who had dealt with every individual differently, appropriately and personally, so different

people found their need, their hunger, their problem being answered suitably. On the Day of Pentecost the mob, guilt laden for the crucifixion of Jesus, flocked to repent, be cleansed and start afresh.

The Jewish converts saw in Jesus the fulfilment of their prophetic hopes of a Messiah.

The Ethiopian eunuch, a Jew who had been excluded, because of his condition, now found himself accepted into God's family. The Gentile proselytes 'the God-fearers', previously barred from membership of God's people, became a part of the community. We read frequently of leading, influential women, devout worshippers such as Lydia. Did they find a new status in the Christian community, where there was no division between Jew and Greek, male and female, bond and free (Galatians 3.28.)? So the slave, although required to be obedient, as his Christian faith demanded, was in Christ equal to his master, as his Christian brother (Philemon). Did the devout and God-fearing Cornelius rejoice in the experience of a personal, living Lord? And did many in cities such as Corinth, Ephesus, Athens turn from the worship of idols of stone and gold to a belief in a living God, Creator of the world, Who had sent His son to reveal Himself?

The Apostle Paul

The supreme example however is the Apostle Paul, whose whole life was changed by the encounter with the risen Jesus on the Damascus Road. This experience which proved to him the total validity of Jesus' claims and the reality of his living presence, required for him a period of reorientation. We are told that he spent three years in Arabia, no doubt meditating and assessing the impact of this amazing experience. No longer was his religion a matter of rules and obedience to laws. It was a matter of a relationship to God through a personal interchange with Jesus himself. 'For me to live is Christ' he declared. He had experienced a freedom to which he exhorted the Galatians to return (Galatians 5:1) And for him this live encounter was a spiritual power, an influence providing strength, guidance and continuing support through trials and temptations. (Romans 8:37-39)

The Christian Hope

Perhaps above all for many the new found faith provided hope (1 Corinthians chapter 15) which the pagan world with all its trappings and enticements could not provide though the Mystery Religions and the pagan cults sought to do so. This was a real hope of future life. As Christ was raised from the dead, so would his people be. For, declares Paul, 'This mortal shall put on immortality.' And the end would be the glorious triumph promised throughout the Word of God that finally 'God will be all in all.'

No wonder that people flocked to this joyful message of the future but also for the present, as it offered faith in a risen Lord who had shared our humanity

and therefore understands our needs.

'For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' (Hebrews 4:15-16)

Thanks be to God!

Sheila Harris

.. It was because the Pharisee had so strong an admiration for the things of God that he fell into fatal temptation, and it is no accident that the zealous Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee and not a Sadducee; it is precisely those of us who value the things of God the highest who will be the greatest offenders in this way, because the urge is so much the greater.

Once the parallel between ourselves and the Pharisees is seen, the whole of this chapter ceases to be divorced from our present circumstances, and becomes of direct application to us. 'Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.' They were so busy with their 'act' that they had no time left for the real things of God which mould the personal life, they were convinced, themselves, that they were in reality spending all their energies on the things of the Spirit, and deceived not only themselves, but those who were attracted by their evangelism. Those, therefore, whom they drew as a result of 'compassing sea and land' became the same meaningless bearers of a facade of righteousness, and they also were too busy bearing the mask to give that necessary attention to those things which alone could take them into the kingdom. So, we, in our attentions to win the public applause as portrayers of godliness, can lure men into the same way, and shut up to them that very kingdom which we are proclaiming.

We are, indeed, the children of our fathers, and just as the Pharisees, who viewed with such horror the murder of the prophets, were about to kill the Son of God, so we also can be drawn into the same fatal maelstrom while motivated with the best of intentions. We may seem very far removed from the crowd who thronged the judgement hall of Pilate and blackmailed that governor to fulfil all their will, but we can still press hardly upon those in authority concerning one of whom we disapprove – in whom we see potential danger – and can cry 'if you let this man go you are not fit to rule in the ecclesia.' There may seem little parallel between some faulty brother and He Who was 'the holy one of God,' but we have His own assurance that 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' We call to mind His sorrowing words – 'it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem' – and take solemn warning that it was in the city of God, where God Himself had placed His name, that all the prophets died.

(From E7, p13-14, *The Hypocrites*, by **Ralph Lovelock**)

The 'Giving of Offence' in a Christian Context

It is right to abstain from eating meat or drinking wine or from anything else which causes a fellow Christian to stumble, Rom 14:21 (REB). Over the years I have heard various conversations and comments of church members on this subject of the 'Giving of Offence' and have also observed the different ways in which the matter has been dealt with in practice. It seems to me that the Biblical concept of 'Offence' has often been misunderstood, and sometimes misused.

The word translated stumble in the quotation above, from Romans 14, is this same word: offend. It is a word often used in the Gospels by Jesus, and the same word Paul used in 1Cor 8:13 in that well-known saying: 'Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.'(AV) This biblical word means: TO CAUSE TO STUMBLE. Obviously it is not talking about tripping up in a physical sense, but in the religious sense. Paul, in both of the chapters referred to, makes it perfectly clear, both from the contexts of the chapters and by what he actually says, that he is talking about causing a person to stumble in their faith. He is talking of causing a person of weak faith to act in a way which goes against their conscience – in other words, to compromise their faith.

In the Corinthians chapter he is dealing with the matter of someone who has scruples about eating meat which may have been offered to idols. In Romans 14 it seems to be a similar case and Paul's advice is (v.1): 'Accept anyone who is weak in faith without debate about his misgivings.' Paul agrees with his Corinthian correspondents that, as an idol has no real existence, neither has the meat which may have been offered to it any significance. The Corinthians may eat it, but, as he points out, if they do eat they will be none the better; if they do not eat, they will be none the worse – it is not food which commends us to God. Paul's main concern here is for them to deal in a loving manner with the person who has the scruples about eating; they are not to take any action which will cause the weak person to partake against his own conscience. He explains (v.7): 'There are some who have been so accustomed to idolatry that they still think of this meat as consecrated to the idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled by eating it.' Again, as he explains in the last verse of our Romans chapter: '...anyone who has misgivings and yet eats is guilty, because his action does not arise from conviction, and anything which does not arise from conviction is sin.'

The eating of meat which has been offered to idols is hardly likely to be a problem for us today, so how do we apply these chapters to ourselves? We could, quite conceivably, be joined by a person similar to the one mentioned by Paul, very weak in faith and understanding and having perhaps some modern problem or scruple, who we could equate with the man of Paul's time. In such a case it would obviously be our duty to show the love admonished by the Apostle

– we would treat such a person very gently and avoid anything which would compromise their already weak faith. In such a fragile state they would need for some time to be fed with ‘milk, instead of solid food’ – as Paul describes it elsewhere.

Having said this, let us nevertheless be clear about one thing: Paul’s admonition was NOT a blanket pronouncement. He does not forbid us to indulge any habit, to take any action, or to hold any considered view – which we ourselves in all conscience are comfortable with – but which another happens to disagree with or consider wrong. I have known a number of sensitive, well-meaning members, who have taken the words as applying in almost every case in which a strong disagreement arises; they will ‘lean over backwards’ in order not to ‘give offence’. This, I believe is an unwarranted application of Paul’s words for, in nine cases out of ten, the ‘offended’ person does not in any way equate with the case of the man with the weak and fragile faith, which Paul was dealing with in the chapters mentioned. Our problem, in most cases, is of a different nature.

To take an example: a certain view has traditionally been held in the church, but on his examination of the matter a member comes to a rather different conclusion. On his sharing of his thoughts on the subject, a second person who believes that the traditional view is the correct one, becomes concerned that he dares to question the generally accepted view and gets annoyed that his own opinion is rejected. He is seemingly unable, or unwilling, to acknowledge the other’s right to hold a different opinion. In some unfortunate cases which I have witnessed, in order to get his way, he makes it absolutely clear that he intends to be offended. This is the point at which the sensitive and well-meaning person, referred to above, gives in. He or she henceforth refrains from voicing the disputed views, or carrying on with the action objected to, in order to keep the peace. Sometimes, of course, neither side will give in; tempers become frayed and the contestants more and more irate – not a very Christian atmosphere!

It may be thought that the more commendable of these cases is where the person gives in; perhaps, on balance, that may be so. But, the fact remains that in both cases there has been a misunderstanding of what Paul is telling us; in both cases the word ‘offend’ has been misused. It has been seen in its everyday modern usage, rather than in its Scriptural meaning.

Now, if all church members took the view that whenever we come up against a disagreement someone should give in, then I cannot see that there can be much chance of spiritual growth in the church. We would be rather like the characters in the fable, going along the road with their donkey – alternately being criticised as cruel if they ride the beast and stupid if they walk when they have the chance to ride. With their continual wavering and giving in to every criticism – jumping on and off the donkey – their progress is going to be slow indeed. In the case

where both sides in the argument get irate with each other, neither intending to give in, and the matter continues to fester, then the same thing applies: progress is going to be either slow, or non-existent. As already suggested, in nine cases out of ten – perhaps in ninety-nine out of a hundred – neither of the contestants can genuinely be said to equate with the weak character who Paul is speaking of.

Consider his language (Rom.14.21); it is quite positive. He does **not** say 'anything which might cause a fellow Christian to stumble' (which, possibly, we could interpret as applying in all cases of dispute). He says: 'anything which causes a fellow Christian to stumble.' There is a difference! In the case in point, we know that the fragile faith of this man will most probably be compromised if we encourage him to follow our (normally legitimate) action. The difference between such a case, and the dispute between the two members as described, is obvious. In their case, neither of them is likely to be led into following the other's example, against their better judgement. Nothing is less likely! Both sides are so right in their own minds, and the other so wrong, that neither would even dream of following the example of the other. So, what is the answer in the case of the two disputants?

Paul gives the answer in this very same 14th chapter of Romans. Having introduced the problem of dealing with the 'weak' brother (verse 1) and before coming back to that problem later (verse 13 onwards), he lectures them on how they – who, for convenience, we will refer to as the 'typical' church members – should behave to each other. Perhaps we can apply what he says to the 'typical' member of today. He says such things as the following (REB):– Those who eat meat must not look down on those who do not, and those who do not eat meat must not pass judgement on those who do; for God has accepted them. Who are you to pass judgement on someone else's servant? Whether he stands or falls is his own Master's business; and stand he will, because his Master has power to enable him to stand. This is why Christ died and lived again, to establish his lordship over both dead and living. You, then, why do you pass judgement on your fellow-Christian? And you, why do you look down on your fellow-Christian? We shall all stand before God's tribunal... So, you see, each of us will be answerable to God.

From those words it is patently obvious that Paul did not regard a difference of opinion between two Christians as putting in jeopardy the salvation of either one of them. When we insist that the way in which we view a matter is the only right way, that the other person should discard his own view and agree with us, we seem to imply that the other's views will somehow harm us. We ought to remember, as Paul in fact teaches, that it is our own views and actions for which we shall have to give account – not those of another. It seems to me then, that if we look at this subject in a balanced way, giving full weight to all that Paul says in this chapter, rather than taking the matter of 'offence' on its own and out of

context, we see:-

- a) in the matter of giving of 'offence' he is dealing with a special case, and
- b) the normal interaction between brethren and sisters should be one of

Christian acceptance of each other.

We have to realise that we shall inevitably see things differently sometimes and, furthermore, are entitled to do so – without being judged or looked down upon. To deny this, as unfortunately we sometimes do, is to place each other in a straightjacket, which will limit our thinking and restrict our spiritual progress. Ultimately, we are each responsible for our own lives and it is before God that we individually stand or fall. As Paul tells us: Our 'Master has power to enable us to stand.'

Cyril Marsters

In the prosperous West we have the privilege of happily gathering round a good meal. We can have celebratory occasions by employing all the best that culinary art can devise. We may rightly regard this as a blessing for which we may give God thanks. But in enjoying this right let us have regard for the corresponding obligation towards those who go hungry.

In the presence of human misery the whole western world is on trial and not least the Christians in it. This is the 'rich man' and 'Lazarus' of the parable on a colossal scale. The beggar may not be physically at the gate but only by deliberately turning our backs can we disclaim knowledge of the needs or the avenues of help. To borrow from another parable it is still possible to 'pass by on the other side' even if only in our hearts. The most efficient proclamation of the gospel is bound to meet with indifference so long as it fails to proclaim the judgement of God on this situation.

'The kind of religion which is without stain or fault in the sight of God our Father is this: to go to the help of orphans and widows in their distress and keep oneself untarnished by the world' – James 1:27 N.E.B.

(From E8, p22, a report on the 1960 Freedom from Hunger Campaign)

What shall we say, then? Let those of us whose concern is already aroused on behalf of natural life, reverence it as God-given, having expectation of the Kingdom when nature will be perfected. Let us teach our children to have the same reverence, to leave the bluebell wood untrampled and the nest of the bird unmolested. Our concern for nature will not take the place of our concern for the plight of man, nor replace the activities of our high duties to God. Research into the mysteries of nature, even if designed for its preservation, will be enhanced by the insight that can only come from believing that all nature is the creative work of God.

(From E8, p33, Some Reflections on National Nature Week, 1963,
by **Ron Storer**)

Obituary Neville Smart 1917 - 2003

Neville Smart will be remembered for his service to the Christadelphian community as an effective speaker and writer whose hope and trust was based firmly on the Lord Jesus. Those who knew him well will remember the determination, faith and fortitude that he showed in the face of difficulties.

Born in Birmingham, he was educated at Waverley Grammar School and Birmingham University where he read English and French. At the university he met Fred Barling and, as a result of their discussions, was baptised on September 23rd 1939 (at Rowley Regis on behalf of the Worcester ecclesia).

During September 1939 Neville began his teaching career at Cheltenham but the outbreak of war in that same month interrupted his work as a teacher. He returned to Birmingham where he joined the Small Heath ecclesia. It was there that he met Heather (née Wilkinson) and they were married in December 1943.

In the following year they joined West Hendon ecclesia where they remained for the next fifteen years. It was during this time that their children, Tim, and Bryony, were born. Neville began speaking at various ecclesias in southern England and in 1955 his book, *The Epistle of James* was published. His fluency in French enabled him to take part in a number of campaigns in France between 1949-57.

His love of the English language, both prose and poetry, and his ability to communicate, made him an inspiring and respected teacher as many of his former pupils have testified.

Both in public speaking and in his books he took care to use words that precisely expressed the meaning he wished to convey. It was all the more distressing for him to find that parts of his book, *The Epistles of John* (1980) were rejected by some who had misunderstood what he had written.

It became necessary for him to publish his last three books privately. These are collections of his studies, exhortations and meditations over many years of service to the Christadelphian community that he loved.

In 1985 he and Heather attended the Summer School for the first time but thereafter sought to attend each year as opportunity allowed. They enjoyed the fellowship and open spirit of enquiry that they found there.

At the tender age of two years Neville suffered an attack of poliomyelitis that impaired the growth of one leg. He made light of this, engaging in games with his children and grandchildren who occupied a special place in his affections.

In later years age-related macular degeneration led to almost total blindness and late onset diabetes reduced his vigour. Throughout these difficulties he showed the determination to live as independently as possible. His last book,

Come unto me (2000) was written and published when his sight and health had deteriorated. It was with Heather's help and loving care that this achievement was made possible.

Neville's last exhortation was on the theme of kindness which he saw as the quality that should underlie all our actions. He believed that if we meditated on some words of Jesus each day it would be of great spiritual benefit.

Following a number of strokes, Neville fell asleep in Jesus on 11th January 2003 at Olivet. Our deep sympathy is with Heather, Tim. and Bryony and their extended families.

Barry Henderson

I would like to sum up by making the following points:

1. As a community we apparently fail enter into the activity of prayer to anything like the same extent as the faithful ones of old. This may, in part, be the result of the pressures of modern life, but at least it seems to be true.
2. Without adequate prayer we shall fail to do the work of God as He would have it done. Prayer serves God, and is effectual to the salvation of men and women.
3. A good way to encourage the use of prayer is by meetings of brethren and sisters convened essentially for the practice of prayer. It is believed that this would improve the spiritual tone of ecclesias and individuals and also give a stimulus to private prayer. In meetings for prayer, we can help one another to pray. The meetings themselves will both glorify God and allow Him to bless and sanctify those who pray.
4. We are a disciplined body of believers. Experience has shown that where meetings for prayer have been held in our community they have been only beneficial and edifying.
5. Because meetings for prayer occur very infrequently in the ecclesias as a whole, it is suggested that an attempt should be made, if necessary through the efforts of a special or 'central' organisation, to hold them more frequently and more widely throughout the brotherhood.

(From E8, p9, *Meetings for Prayer*, by **Henry Hacking**)

We cannot bear the sorrows of the world as we bear the sorrows of those bound to us by the closest ties. Only God is equal to such a burden; that He bears it, is part of the significance of Christ's Cross, and that Cross rebukes us for our indifference to others' needs. The care we seek to give to our own children should remind us of those other children whose requirements are no less than those of ours.

(From E7, back cover, by **S Cave**)

Studies in Ecclesiastes

Part 17

More on Time and Chance, etc.

Chapter 10:4-11 (Quotations, unless otherwise stated, from the R.E.B.)

Verse 4 is not particularly connected either to the preceding denunciation of 'fools' or to the following verses about the vicissitudes of life. Such lack of strict arrangement is striking to us, but it would be easily understood in the ancient world. Wisdom teaching was normally oral, often no doubt ad hoc. A particular circumstance or use of particular words would provoke parent, relation or acquaintance to give voice to a relevant wise saying. Use of the saying was stimulated by the context in life and came from a well-stocked mind, not from a column of a scroll. Such sayings were written down in due course, but the material developed without having any fixed order. That had to be imposed when the Wisdom was written down, and often there was no self-evident sequence to be found. Similar and related sayings were observed and grouped together but there would often be some sayings too valuable to be jettisoned, but lacking any obvious place within a written collection. There is, then, no need to evolve devious explanations for particular sequences, though often reasons are clear.

Verse 4 gives advice on handling a ruler, cautioning an employee not to run away if the ruler becomes angry with him, because 'submission makes amends for grave offences.' Whose offences? If the employee's, then the advice is to keep a low profile and sit it out. If the ruler's, then the same advice is given. Qoheleth gives similar advice at more length in 8:2-5 on handling a king, but that does not clear up the ambiguity here. It could be deduced that the offences are the ruler's because the following verses denounce the follies of persons in high positions, and that would explain how v. 4 and vv. 5-7 came to be juxtaposed. The translations of the A.V. and R.E.B. offer 'ruler' in the two verses 4 and 5, but the Hebrew words are entirely different; *moshel* in 4, *shallit* in 5. The latter is now known from extra-biblical documents of the post-exilic period to refer to wealthy landowners who had de facto power over employees and tenant farmers, and that is the most likely sense here. These bosses unwisely promoted fools while the 'rich' had lowly stations. There is a certain problem in the contrast of 'fool' and 'rich' but the following verse contrasts 'slaves' and 'men of high rank', so 'rich' here presumably alludes to their social status rather than to their wealth. Verse 17 of this chapter also stresses the benefits of noble birth contrasting this with the behaviour of slaves. Vv. 5-6 thus continue the theme of the vicissitudes of life. Rich landowners promote the least qualified under them. The mention of slaves riding horses has to be understood in the light of ancient conditions. Horses were extremely expensive to buy or rear and keep. Donkeys

and oxen were the normal beasts of burden.

Vv. 8-11 offer four examples, or pairs of examples, of the risks and foibles in daily life. The first (v.8) is a pair: being trapped in a hole one had dug, and being bitten by a snake while pulling down a stone wall. The first of these has a current English equivalent: 'when in a hole stop digging.' It is difficult to ascertain whether the modern ultimately derives from the Biblical or not. The wall is the Palestinian rough-stone-walling like that of the Cotswolds or Northern English equivalents, in which snakes in the Palestinian environment can easily hide. The second (v.9) stresses the dangers of workmen being injured while quarrying stone or cutting wood. The third (v.10) argues the need for sharp tools to avoid unnecessary effort: something a skilled worker will understand. This can be better translated than either A.V. or R.E.B.:

If the iron (tool) is blunt and one does not sharpen it first, one must work with greater effort. There is advantage in acquiring wisdom.

The final observation (v. 11) concerns snake charmers and can also be better rendered:

If a snake which cannot be charmed bites, there is no advantage in having a charmer.

Two more general comments in conclusion. The A.V. comes off very badly in these vv. 8-11, often failing to give any good sense. Then the word translated 'acquiring' in v.10., and the word rendered 'be endangered' (A.V.) and 'runs a risk' (R.E.B.) in v. 11 have these meanings in the whole Hebrew Bible only in Qoheleth, but they are common in post-Biblical Hebrew, a further indication of the date of the book.

Wilfred Lambert

Spirit

Spirit is breath – the outward expression of the inner life force – the power to move, to create, to transform, yet infused with the character, the will, the disposition of its source. It was this breath of God which brooded over the waters at creation, inspired prophets and kings, moved through and guided the history of Israel until its consummation in the birth of Jesus – the life force of God through Mary. Jesus' whole life was so completely infused by this breath of God that death could not hold him and so he rose, a spiritual body, no longer limited in space and time. From then the breath of God flowed out through him, imbued with his whole character and personality, so that the risen Lord is the spirit that is accessible and available to dwell in and through his people.

The spirit is the vehicle, the channel through which God communicates with the world and now through Jesus is for us the true Paraclete, the Comforter which is Jesus Himself as he was and is and always will be.

Sheila Harris

Preaching

Throughout the history of the Christadelphians it has been the custom to concentrate our preaching largely on the distinctive doctrines which separate us from other churches. But the main problem today lies in the fact that a vast number of the population in the West are either agnostics or atheists. To them our Sunday vocabulary is meaningless, even though most of our associates tolerate our convictions and often hold us in their affections. Seminars attract a few believers but most fall away once they find we are preaching our distinctive brand of Christianity or learn of the complicated Statement of Faith. In the Third World there is more enthusiasm for a 'good news' message whether advocated by Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics, Christadelphians or whomsoever. But for most of us any preaching we attempt is to disbelieving or doubting 'locals'. Despite prevailing scepticism more than a few have a vague yearning for something beyond today's materialism, and perhaps more of our efforts should be geared to convincing people that there is a God and that He offers a secure anchor in our turbulent world.

The pages below contain material which possibly could make a leaflet – to be followed by a second. But perhaps readers could offer alternatives – kept simple and brief but more convincing?

Is Anyone There?

The Problems

Britain is no longer a Christian society though there are still many who like to feel that there is or might be a God. Others have dispensed with what they consider is merely a primitive notion and consider that scientists have explained our world and its beginnings entirely to their satisfaction. They often conclude that it's people's enthusiasm for their religion that's caused most of the wars. The Bible might be a best-seller – but aren't the buyers eccentrics? Apparently they don't notice its ghastly stories – and if they do, well – it was all 'God's will'. If anyone is 'there' then obviously he, or possibly she, is a devil who delights in making men and women – and even children – suffer. No other way, sceptics are convinced, to explain all the pain and misery, not only in the past, not only in the Third World but right here today on our doorsteps. And wasn't it faith in their Allah and the expectation of instant entry to paradise which encouraged the terrorists to commit their dastardly crime of killing thousands of innocent people trapped in New York's Twin Towers in September 2001?

Any Answers?

Doubts about any kind of a good being are not surprising in view of the misery

endured by a large proportion of the world's population. Firm believers regard all the suffering with dismay and even find themselves in troughs of despair. They look at those around them who disregard God, and at others who not only disregard him but who have no regard for morals, who are full of selfish ambition. Yet they are flourishing.

But, in reality, aren't they, like ourselves, skating on ice? Any of us can be swirling round – all smiles, waving merrily and not a care in the world. But then we unexpectedly reach a thin patch and the ice cracks. We're still waving – but now it's because we're drowning. There are plenty of caring people who will throw us a rope or a lifebuoy if there is one. They'll frantically grab their mobiles and hopefully the emergency services will arrive before we've vanished. Just look at the magnificent rescue operations in New York on that unforgettable day, when rescuers lost their own lives for the sake of their fellows! But for thousands engulfed in the tangled burning mass, believers and atheists alike, death was inevitable.

Sooner or later every skater on our world pond gets on a thin patch and sometimes manoeuvres off it. But often we're helpless. Everyone eventually comes face to face with the inevitable. Just about the only thing we can be sure of in life is death.

There was our friend, last week full of life and fun but now killed outright. We are stunned with shock and disbelief. We go to the funeral. We remember his laughing eyes and jolly face. Gone – gone for ever – and all his talents with him? As we go on our way home, thoroughly depressed, we feel it can't be like that. There must be something else. We vaguely hope that there *is* some power, somewhere, who'd do something for him.

We go on a cruise. Everything's great until the fire. We're not going to make it to the lifeboats. Survival unlikely. So what do we do? What *can* we do except scream or pray to a god (even if we've never believed in one)? And praying to some 'outside' power with greater ability than any human, is just what most doubters and disbelievers do, together with those who believe, when they find themselves in life-threatening dilemmas. Even if faith had seemed plain mad, suddenly it's needed. After every disaster most of the relatives and friends flock to the memorial service, not only to remember their dead, but to find comfort and hope.

That doesn't prove the existence of a god but, nevertheless, most of us **do** experience some vague feeling even in good times that we want something else, something 'other' than we already have, though goodness knows what. And the older we get and the more problems we meet, the more we feel it. Strange that it seems universal – and has been throughout history. Even if we think we've had enough of life – been there, seen it, done it and are no longer impressed, yet it seems unreasonable that eventually we should just be snuffed out.

Organised religion in Britain has lost much of its hold. But it hasn't gone away. None today goes to worship merely to look respectable or because an employer insists, as often happened in the bad old days. Those who do go (including a lot of the well-educated) go because they believe. Doesn't it tell us something that even yet millions in our 'post-Christian' Britain switch to BBC 1 every Sunday evening so that they can watch *Songs of Praise* and listen to people discussing their faith with the presenter? And *Sunday Half Hour* on Radio 2, the programme of hymn-singing originally started for overseas troops in the 1940s, even yet, attracts hundreds of thousands.

There are still many who find that a reflective pause on a Sunday gives a welcome relief from the stresses of the week – time to assess life and what it's all about. Churches can be pretty dull (though they aren't all) but either way our mind is our own and in the quietness we can think our own thoughts. Most of us, whatever our interests or difficulties, like to join up with others on the same wavelength, who speak the same language. There are support groups for almost everything. And a thought group, whether formal or informal, concentrating on finding something beyond ourselves helps to satisfy that indefinable longing and can take us beyond the littleness and frustrations of everyday life. Often we find it helps to sort out troubles when we talk to, or listen to, others who have known the ice to crack beneath their feet.

Is it really true that 'religion' caused most of the wars? It depends on what we mean by religion and what we mean by wars. Trying to overpower other human beings and treating them like slaves as in the old colonial days (and sometimes even yet), has never been the aim of those who let God rule their lives. Believers are far from perfect, sometimes pathetically small-minded and quarrelsome, but do any of them go in for sectarian violence and mob fighting, vandalism, housebreaking and drug pushing? Neither do lots of people who don't believe. But where did the morals come from in the first place? Human nature in the raw is pretty selfish, will fight for what it wants, and the fittest will survive. Maybe the moral people without a moral god are drawing from the bank of decency and kindness built up over the centuries by those who *did* believe in God? But the account is likely to end up in the red as the generations roll on and the authority rolls off.

Believers *have* been fighters – and still are. Throughout the centuries they have been fighting wars on want, wars to abolish the chasm between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. Who was it in the past that rescued the unwanted babies thrown out to die? Who nursed the sick during plagues? Who was it that fought for social reform? Who battled to educate the masses and to care for the 'ineducable'? They weren't all believers, but most of them were.

And what about the children? No longer to be seen but not heard. Instead, lack of discipline and indifference to rules wreck many a family, many a

classroom, and many a teacher. Don't young people need channelling in their pursuits, and friends who are being channelled in much the same direction? Street violence is largely caused by boredom, lack of guidance and of respect for the rights of others.

Isn't there some significance in the fact that as the churches empty the prisons fill? And as the worship of an ethical being declines, the worship of pop stars, football heroes or a Princess Diana takes its place. Most of the idols are fabulously rich though few are oozing with generosity and thought for others. Humans, it seems, must have some kind of god. And the god we choose helps to determine the kind of characters we are.

The Bible does need a lot of explaining. Some of it has to be taken literally and some as picture language, and opinions vary on which is which. Nobody knows all the answers. But however we interpret its content there are sufficient grounds for accepting that it is composed of ancient documents which describe the (sometimes abominable) behaviour of men and women over the ages who having been given freewill have for the most part mismanaged it. And it offers an explanation of how 'someone out there' called God has struggled to bring them back from their wilderness and offer them a way of escape from their frightening dilemma.

Perhaps the greatest problem and the one which prevents many from believing is if there is a benevolent someone why do the good suffer while the evil thrive? In 'A God Who Cares?' we will try to find some answers to that thorny question.

Ruth McHaffie

New Book
Once Upon A Pig Farm

by
Arthur Mallinder

This book takes a light-hearted look at the experiences of several brothers who worked on a pig farm at Anlaby in East Yorkshire during the Second World War because they were conscientious objectors. Towards the end the author comments that '... you must remember that when food was scarce, the sight of all that meat on four legs must have been a great temptation!'

It is an A4 hardback book of 75 pages with large print containing many black and white illustrations drawn by the author at the time of the incidents described, including one of the author chasing two pigs down the road.

Orders to Arthur Mallinder, Flat 4B, 4 New Road, Bannockburn, Stirling.

FK7 8LW. Tel 01786 818494 Price £10 including p&p.

Ever Learning

A brief enquiry into one of the (infinite?) variety of pearls of wisdom contained in the Word of Truth.

Not your normal, routine approach.

Our headline is, of course, a quotation, from 2 Tim 3:7 actually. If we didn't know that, at least we all know how it continues: 'and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.' That is the normal, routine way we approach scripture quotations; we remember how they normally go and we always remember them going that way. Not in this series, however. From here on, it will (I hope) be the different angle, slant or pitch of a well-known verse or two which may catch us unawares – unaware that there's another gem to be pondered by looking at a scripture from what may even appear a strange approach. And so it is that one can be 'ever learning' yet still able to come to a better knowledge **and deeper appreciation** of truth.

The following gem suddenly revealed itself to me when reading Acts 9. At verse 7 we see Ananias addressing a young Pharisee as 'Brother Saul' (AV), and restoring miraculously the sight which had been destroyed by a millisecond's glance at the risen, ascended and glorified Christ. Here was one instance of the use of the term 'Brother' which the body of Christadelphia has adopted to distinguish between baptised members of our fellowship and those who are aliens, 'so as (in the terms of many an ecclesial Constitution) to maintain the scriptural precedent.' The discovery prompts the obvious question: How many more times does the title 'Brother/Sister X' appear in the Word? Is it a scriptural precedent we should follow, as we have done scrupulously hitherto?

The March of Time...

Years ago, Cruden reigned supreme – and almost alone – in the realm of Bible reference systems. Messrs. Young and Strong were beyond the financial reach of the youngsters we used to be. Computers were not in their infancy – they had not even been conceived. Now the 21st century has brought gigabytes of capacity and megahertz of speed to millions of PCs worldwide, and I can, at the click of a mouse, not only list every verse which contains the term 'brother' but distinguish between 'brother' and 'Brother', thus showing me which are references to a third party and which are direct addressing of a fellow-Christian. Suddenly, I can answer my own question in nanoseconds!

Surprise, surprise!

The result of the mouse-clicking produced not one but two surprises. The first was not really all that much of a shock; one would expect, with the Old Testament's greater length and its concern with family and tribal relationships, that it would contain the lion's share of 'brother' usage. In fact, not once does 'Brother' appear there, at least in the AV or NIV. So, as one might assume, the practice of addressing or referring to someone as 'Brother or Sister So-and-so',

if it really is a scriptural precedent, is exclusively a Christian one. The second surprise is that, although the term 'brother' (singular – the plural 'brethren' often denotes both males and females) appears dozens of times in the NT, without exception being used to refer to a male member of the Church rather than to address him, the word 'Brother', used as a form of address, occurs just **three times**, two of them describing the same event.

You have probably already identified the third use of 'Brother' in the well-known parable in which both forms of the word appear side by side: *'Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.'* (Luke 6:42)

A singular occurrence?

However, even this is not the usage we're looking for. It appears that 'Brother X' was used by two Bible characters to describe only one occasion, despite all the meetings and discussions there were between brethren in the establishment of the infant ecclesias. It was not used even by Brother James, when he was the presiding brother over the meeting of the Jerusalem elders in committee. Now that is one time you would really have expected him to rise and address the assembly thus:

'Brethren and Sisters, Brother Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.' (Acts 15:14)

Had it been a special business or Arranging Brethren's meeting of several ecclesias I have belonged to, that would certainly have been the practice, but Brother James did no such thing. Could it be that our insistence on this special, exclusive title stems from the fact that our pioneers were a little over-anxious to destroy completely all memory of the rank-and-status career structures of the churches from which they came out, to follow the teachings of the man who had shown them the form of sound words used by Brother Paul – the 'brother' so frequently given the title 'Doctor' in our community? Or maybe the proliferation of the titles, in full spelling, throughout much of our literature (except, strangely, when the names of brothers and sisters who write books appear on the covers thereof) has been allowed to grow unchecked, to the extent that an ecclesia will have two sets of headed notepaper, one headed 'The Bruddersfax Christadelphians' with the name of the 'Secretary' there, while the other has 'Bruddersfax Christadelphian Ecclesia' and the 'Recording Brother's' name below it. One mix-up is enough for the Secretary to start receiving letters from suppliers etc. addressed 'The Rector Brother, Bruddersfax Christadelphian Ecclesia... (Yes; it has happened; I've seen it!)

The pattern

So what is the scriptural precedent for our community's practice? Who initiated

the prescribed form of address and title which we endeavour to follow? It was a humble disciple in Damascus, Brother Ananias who, quaking in his sandals and with heart thumping, entered the room of a lodging house and, placing his hands on the head of the sightless fellow lying there, said, *'Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight ...'*

Amazing! Not just the fact that this man was known as the scourge of the WAY, the avid persecutor of all followers of the Lord, but that **before** he was interviewed, **before** he witnessed a good confession, **before** he had been baptised into the saving name of Christ, while he was still a stranger from the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world; when still one whom we would guide to the back row and forbid the taking of the emblems, **he was addressed as 'Brother Saul'!** And he remains the one and only Bible character ever to be called 'Brother X'!

Maybe – just maybe – it is time to ponder whether we should signify our separation, not merely from career-path ministries but from monastic and other institutions, with whose constant use of 'Brother' and 'Sister' we would not wish to be tainted. It is also just possible that possessing no title whatever could evoke more humility – that vitally necessary but exceedingly rare quality – in many of us. After all, Shakespeare said:

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose
Would smell as sweet by any other name.*

And it is certainly a savour of sweet smell that our Lord wants in his Paradise Garden, is it not? So why don't we devote less time, thought, effort and print space to handing out titles to all and sundry, following a scriptural precedent that doesn't exist? After all, there are plenty that do – all the Law and all the prophets hang on two of them!

Brian Morgan.

The belief that Jesus will return in power and glory to vindicate God's righteousness and gain victory over the world of sin is fundamental and unquestionable. Not quite so obvious among us, is the belief that God has set Jesus, now, 'Far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all' (Eph. 1: 21-23). And lest we might think only of Christ's power in the world, Paul immediately reminds us that 'You bath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.'

(From E7, p4, *Art Thou Only A Stranger*, by Norman Fitchett)

Jesus Won't Ask

JESUS won't ask what kind of car you drove,
but will ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.

JESUS won't ask what your highest salary was,
but will ask if you compromised your character or morals, to obtain that money.

JESUS won't ask the square footage of your house,
but will ask how many people you welcomed into your home.

JESUS won't ask about the fancy clothes you had in your wardrobe,
but will ask how many of those clothes helped the needy.

JESUS won't ask about your social status,
but will ask whether you clothed or fed any of His Family.

JESUS won't ask how many material possessions you had,
but will ask how they dictated your life.

JESUS won't ask how much overtime you worked,
but will ask if you worked overtime for your family and loved ones.

JESUS won't ask how many promotions you received,
but will ask how you promoted others.

JESUS won't ask what your job title was,
but will ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.

JESUS won't ask what you did to help yourself,
but will ask what you did to help others.

JESUS won't ask how many friends you had,
but will ask how many people to whom you were a true friend.

JESUS won't ask what you did to protect your rights,
but will ask what you did to protect the rights of others.

JESUS won't ask in what neighbourhood you lived,
but will ask how you treated your neighbours.

JESUS won't ask about the colour of your skin,
but will ask about the content of your character.

JESUS won't ask how many times your deeds matched your words,
but will ask why your deeds did not match His words.

(Author Unknown)

Sent in by Rosalind Lomas

God Was In Christ

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself (2 Cor 5:19). The very words send a tremor down one's spine. How can the Divine Lord and His transcendence reside in a human to redeem humankind? How and in what sense can the God of absolute power, the King of the universe, dwell in a man to restore mankind? It is an enigma, a paradox, a mystery, a mystery which deepens as we read further: 'In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' (Col 2:9) Who was the 'him' in whom God was manifested, the one bearing the name and title of 'Christ'?

As a 17 year old, and six years before I had ever heard of Christadelphians, I used to mingle with students of Cliff College who in the main were training to become Methodist Ministers. They were flush with the idealism of youth. Things were either 'black' or 'white'; there were no shades of grey. The pressing question was that of 'The Historical Jesus'. Was he a real person in the historical sense of the word? Or, was he a made-up person, put together by the Gospel writers from the so-called 'Sayings of Jesus'? The writings of various eminent scholars were avidly read - Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Kierkegaard, Teilhard de Chardin - in the search for 'the Truth' about Jesus. Students pored over Sir John Seeley's *Ecce Homo*, which emphasized the reality of Jesus' life; Albert Schweitzer's *In Quest of the Historical Jesus*, which portrayed 'the Christ' not as an earthly person, but one to be manifested in glory from heaven on the Day of Judgement; Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology* which seemed to be saying that Jesus was a Parable not a Person!

The apocryphal leg-pull doing the rounds was that of the Pope and Paul Tillich. The story went something like this. The Pope was told by his cardinals that the remains of Jesus had been dug up in Palestine, no doubt about it! All the eminent Roman Catholic archaeologists agreed that it was Jesus. 'Oh' said the Pope, 'What do we do now?' 'Well,' said the cardinals 'there is only one hope left. There is a Protestant theologian in America ... you could give him a ring.' So the Pope phoned Tillich and the problem was explained to him. There was a long silence, at the end of which the voice spoke: 'You mean to say that he really existed!'

Of course, to those earnest young students, Jesus of Nazareth was a real man, a concrete reality, someone who genuinely existed. But quite naturally Jesus was pictured in all kinds of ways: an itinerant Jewish Rabbi who worked wonders and miracles; a Zealot who determined to overthrow the Roman rule, but it all came unstuck and he ended up being crucified by the authorities he had come to topple; a Pacifist who taught men 'to turn the other cheek'; a Socialist who fed the poor and the hungry. Most saw him as the sinless Son of God who

offered salvation to all mankind. Others loaded on the theological baggage that he was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity! Personally, I could not go along with Trinitarianism, but how was one supposed to interpret the verses in John's gospel: 'Before Abraham was I am' and 'I and my Father are one'?

It has been said that the man who made such audacious utterances must have been 'either mad, bad or God!' As we know the Jews considered Jesus to be both mad (demon possessed) and bad (a Samaritan) but certainly not God!

As a schoolboy the doctrine of the Trinity caused me considerable grief. Our R.I. man, a certain Reverend Large B.D., lived up to his name, being a six foot gangling character, with phraseology to suit. His favourite mantra which he intoned, when speaking of Jesus, was: 'The manifested Creator of us all', a reference to Christ as the pre-existent Son who assisted his Father in the creation of mankind! We had to memorise the Athanasian Creed known to us as the 'Quicunque Vult', which was formulated around AD 451:

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic (meaning Universal) Faith, which Faith except every one do keep the whole undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity: neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God is God and Man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world: Perfect God and Perfect Man.....

No question about it, I was destined to perish everlastingly!

I had no idea at the time that this formula taught that Christ had two natures in one person: Divine and Human. To my mind that would have made him a kind of quick-change artist, at one moment Clark Kent and the next moment Superman. When declaring that he knew neither the day nor the hour of his return, that was his 'Humanity' showing itself. But when he overcame temptation and sin, that was his 'Divinity' revealing itself. Whatever his birth by the Holy Spirit might mean, it seems from Scripture that he bore the same nature as his mother Mary.

To reinforce the doctrine of the Trinity we sang in school Assembly Bishop Reginald Heber's famous hymn, the first line of which reads: 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, God in Three persons, Blessed Trinity.' This we did with typical schoolboy reluctance, bored rigid with all that religious stuff! As a 13 year old, not very bright at maths, struggling with quadratic equations and the formula $e = mc^2$, I simply could not grasp the piece of Trinitarian arithmetic that

'three are one and one is three!' It was all incomprehensible jargon to me.

The philosophical language of the Athanasian Creed is far removed from the terminology of the New Testament when describing the relationship of the Lord God to His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The wording might even have confounded the apostles John and Paul, from whose writings it is claimed by the orthodox Church that the doctrine of the Trinity is derived.

Back to the Bible. Who did Jesus of the Gospels consider himself to be? He describes himself as 'Messiah', 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God' – certainly not as the Second Person of the Trinity. Jesus himself asked his disciples: 'Whom do men say that I am?' The reply came back: 'Some say John the Baptist, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But whom do you say that I am?' The courageous Peter answered: 'You are the Christ (Messiah) the Son of the Living God.'

When we read 'God was in Christ' and look up the passage in a Hebrew New Testament, it reads: 'Elohim was in Messiah', with all its Jewish connotations. Hoskyns and Davey, in their book *The Riddle of The New Testament*, are at pains to point out that the New Testament has an Aramaic background: 'The four evangelists agree in setting the life and death of Jesus firmly within the context of the Old Testament scriptures; and each evangelist presumes that no other context can provide an adequate understanding of the nature of the action that God wrought through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is equally true that the New Testament throws fresh light on the Old Testament, but in our desire to try and grasp the saying 'God was in Christ', we need to consider some statements in the Torah about the Messiah God was to send into the world.

The concept of a triune Godhead is one of the stumbling blocks to Jews accepting Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah. The foundation of Torah is the oneness of the Lord God and Israel's loyalty to Him. The essence of Judaism is expressed in the 'Shema':

Shema, Yisrael: Yahveh elohenu, Yahveh echad.

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

The Shema is the core of the liturgy of the synagogue. It is recited in private prayer. For the Jew who perished in the Shoah, the Holocaust, that was the prayer on his lips as he entered the gas chamber. In the hands of the Spanish Inquisition, Jews were given the option, recant in your belief of the One God and confess belief in the Trinity, or die on the rack or be burnt at the stake. Thousands died rather than convert to Roman Catholicism. Monotheism is the quintessence of Judaism, as it was of first-century Christianity.

I have said that the New Testament can illuminate Old Testament scriptures, and Deuteronomy is a case in point:

'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.' (18:15) Jewish commentators see

Joshua fulfilling this prophecy, but both John and Luke see its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus, the greater 'Yeshua':

'Philip found Nathaniel and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."' (John 1:45)

'That he might send the Christ ... For Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you."' (Acts 3:20-22)

There is no thought in Deuteronomy of a pre-existent Messiah. The prophet to be born at some future time was to be of Jewish descent. In Charles Gore's book *The Reconstruction of Belief* he quotes from Dalman's *Words of Jesus*: 'Judaism has never known anything of a pre-existence peculiar to the Messiah, antecedent to his birth as a human being.'

It is John in the prologue to his Gospel who focuses on 'God was in Christ': 'In the beginning was the Word (*logos*) and the Word (*logos*) was with God, and the Word (*logos*) was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that had been made.' (1:1-3). 'The Word (*logos*) became flesh and made his dwelling (skennō – tabernacled) among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, full of grace and truth.' (1:14)

The Greek word *logos* expresses the creative activity of God. It is His mind, character and purpose in action; and it is that Word which became flesh when His Son was born of Mary. The apostle John was probably connecting up with Genesis and the Psalms:

'And God said (*amar*, Sept. *eipon*) and it was done' (Gen 1:3); 'By the word (*davar*, Sept. *logos*) of the Lord were the heavens made.' (Ps 33:6).

The Word of God is part of God in the same way that a man's words, thoughts, purposes and intentions are part of a man. Some have a problem with the Word personified as 'He', but John, as a Jew, was using typical Jewish Wisdom language. 'Wisdom' is strongly personified in the Book of Proverbs: 'Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrance, she cries aloud.' (8:1-3) John apparently envisaged Jesus as the embodiment of the pre-existent Wisdom of God:

'The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old: I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.' (8:22-23) Further we get the plain statement in Proverbs:

'By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place' (3:19).

When John wrote: 'The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us and

we beheld his glory', very likely he was using three Aramaic expressions: Word = Memra = God in action; Tabernacled = Shekina = God abiding; and Glory = Yeqara = God's glory. Jesus was the Word incarnate, not God incarnate. He was the Word in action, abiding with believers and illuminating the world with glory.

In the next issue we will look at the 'mad, bad or God' passages of Scripture and then move away from the theological disputation, the theory, to ask 'What is our experience of God in Christ?' **Bill Davison**

The first nine chapters of Mark bring out, in all clarity, the change which took place in Jesus' ministry after the unsuccessful work in Galilee. It was the same Jesus, filled with the same love and compassion for mankind, but His goal was now changed. In Galilee the cry had been, 'The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.' The Twelve carried the same cry throughout the land. But the repentance did not take place and the kingdom did not therefore come. After the return of the Twelve this cry is heard no more. But the message of the kingdom is not forgotten: the term received a new application. This was possible, thanks to a flexibility of the Aramaic word for 'kingdom,' which the English lacks. To us a kingdom has strongly political meaning. A concentration on the when, where, and how of the kingdom suits a political interpretation, for the kingdom will, of course, be a political reality. But to Jesus the what was equally important. God's kingdom is where God rules. The full kingdom, the kingdom with power as it is called in a few places, could not appear at once, due to lack of repentance on the part of the chosen people. But the kingdom could come at once in a more limited sense. Those who voluntarily submitted to God's will were, in this sense, His kingdom. Thus the community of true believers was the kingdom, for God ruled over them. In this sense the term first appears in Mark only after the return of the Twelve, perhaps in 9:47, and certainly in 10:14-15, where believers are said to receive the kingdom as little children. This obviously refers to conversion, not to immortality at Christ's return.

Against this background it is possible to reappraise the words of the writer to the Hebrews, that Christ 'learned obedience by the things that he suffered.' This suffering is usually taken to refer only to the trials, scourging, and crucifixion. Yet this hardly exhausts the words, since Jesus had little opportunity to learn after His arrest: He was too much at the mercy of His captors. Indeed, the submitting to these indignities was obedience, so that He must have learnt this obedience by previous suffering. The truths that Mark's record brings out provide the key. The humiliation of being God's Son, but of failing to convert the chosen people, was a form of suffering by which Jesus learnt that the only way to save mankind was the way of the Cross.

(From E7, p10, *A Life of Jesus, The Turning Point*. by **Wilfred Lambert**)

The Thousand Year Kingdom

When we speak of 'the Kingdom of God' we usually mean the thousand year reign of Christ during which, helped by the immortalized saints, he will reign from Jerusalem over a world inhabited by mortal nations. What is the scriptural basis for this hope? There is only one passage in the whole of Scripture which tells us in so many words that there will be such a thousand year reign of Christ and the elect. Revelation 20:4-6 makes a clear distinction between an interim Kingdom of one thousand years followed by the final state when God makes his tabernacle among men:

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6, English Standard Version).

Commentators have been far from unanimous in their interpretation of this passage. Broadly speaking, there are three main views.

'Premillennialism' is the doctrine which claims Christ's second Advent takes place at the end of the present age, and the millennium is founded immediately afterwards. This is the Christadelphian view, although surprisingly, Revelation 20 is seldom quoted in our preaching literature or in Sunday evening lectures on the Kingdom. Speakers and writers turn instead to passages in the prophets to build up their descriptions of this future Utopia.

'Postmillennialism' puts the sequence of events the other way round; the world is first converted to Christianity and a new order is founded by missionary effort and human endeavour, and then Christ returns at the end of this time.

Thirdly, 'Amillennialism' is a denial of a literal thousand year reign on earth, John's vision being a symbol of the reign of Christ in men's hearts, or the eternal order beyond history.

Strictly speaking, it is inaccurate to speak of the Millennium as the Kingdom of God, nor does John use that phrase to describe what he sees. What he describes is the Kingdom of Christ and the elect. The Kingdom of God comes later, after their thousand year reign is finished.

What then are we to make of this vision? As always, John has drawn upon the Old Testament to provide his imagery. The timespan seems to have been drawn from Psalm 90:4, 'For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday

when it is passed.' The role of the elect is clearly based upon Daniel chapter 7, which describes the four world empires as beasts who are destroyed and their bodies burned, and then the 'Kingdom is given to the saints of the Most High'. Daniel says also that 'judgement was given for the saints of the most High' (v.22). There is an ambivalence in this statement. It could mean either that judgement was passed in their favour, or it could mean that the saints were given the role of jurors in the divine court. It is this latter meaning which John takes up when he describes 'thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed' (v.4). This is not the last Judgement in which men's eternal destiny is determined. That will take place only when God passes sentence from the Great White Throne at the end of the Millennium. Until then the elect are given power to judge and rule over the nations which had previously persecuted them.

The function ascribed to the elect is that they 'shall be priests of God and of Christ' and they will reign with him. They are the 'Kingdom of priests' and the 'holy nation' of Exodus 19:6 (cp. Revelation 1:6 and 5:10). It is significant that John does not speak of the resurrected bodies of the martyrs. Instead he saw 'the souls of those who had been beheaded'. This description directs our minds back to chapter 6:9, where John saw 'under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God', and who cried 'O Sovereign Lord, how long before you will judge and avenge ...?' What John sees now is the final answer to their prayer.

If we take John's words on their face value, then it is difficult to escape the conclusion that only the martyrs are raised from the dead in the first resurrection, to reign with Christ. This admittedly, is not the usual understanding of the verse, and it may be that the reference to those who 'had not worshipped the beast, or its image ...' applies to those who are faithful, but have not suffered martyrdom, but this is not the most natural meaning of the words.

Significantly, there is no mention of a judgement to determine the destiny of those who are raised at this time; they are not divided into sheep and goats. Instead we read: 'Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power' (v.6). Presumably any verdict on the martyrs is a foregone conclusion; they have paid with their lives for their loyalty to Christ, and for this reason they and they alone have the privilege of living and reigning. The 'rest of the dead' who 'did not come to life until the thousand years were ended', are those who have not suffered martyrdom. This is the General Resurrection involving the faithful and the wicked together. They stand before the 'Great White Throne', where those who are accepted are allowed into the Heavenly City, while those who are rejected are consigned to the 'second death'. The first death is that which all men die at the end of their mortal lives, 'the second death' is the final annihilation of the

wicked. The descent of the Heavenly City is the closing chapter in the drama of salvation; the place where God makes His dwelling among men, after which there will be no more death.

John says nothing about the political or social arrangements which will prevail during the thousand years. This gives commentators plenty of scope to exercise their imagination and read into it numerous passages from the prophets concerning the material blessings upon mankind, the peace, prosperity and justice which will fill the world, as well as the restoration of Temple worship and animal sacrifice. How much John would have agreed with some of these Utopian speculations is another matter.

The other passage in the New Testament which is often placed side by side with Revelation 20 is the scenario described by Paul in I Corinthians 15, where, like John, he makes a distinction between the Kingdom of the Son and the final state to supersede it when the Father assumes authority:

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (v.24,25).

Although both writers seem to be speaking about the future Millennium, their emphasis is on different aspects of the reign of Christ. The Old Testament background to Paul's picture is Psalm 110: 'The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool'. It is clear that for Paul, the reign of Christ begins not at his Second Coming, but at his resurrection and exaltation to heaven. Paul does not define what he means by 'every rule and every authority and power', but we can be sure that he does not mean the nations and their rulers who live during the Millennium, but rather, what he calls the 'principalities and powers' who now govern the world, the spiritual forces behind the human, political powers (Ephesians 1:21, 3:10, Colossians 2:10). They will finally be brought under subjection to the authority of Christ.

Their subjection has already begun. In Colossians 1:13 he makes mention of the 'Kingdom of his beloved Son', into which his people have been transferred after they have been delivered from the 'domain of darkness'. Not will be transferred, but have been. The risen Christ is already reigning, as he himself declared in Matthew 28:18, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me'. The conflict with the hostile powers of darkness began at the crucifixion, (Colossians 2:15) and has been continuing ever since. The final subjection of these enemies takes place at the Second Coming when the very last enemy to hold out is destroyed which is death itself. Its defeat marks the final victory over all the powers which have opposed him. Then he hands back his sovereignty to the Father, and the Kingdom of Christ gives place to the Kingdom of God: 'then the Son himself will also be subject to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all' (v 28).

For Paul then, the victory over death is the immediate prelude to the handing over of the Kingdom by the Son to the Father. This victory can only be the general resurrection, the first thing that Christ accomplishes after his Coming. And with this the reign of Christ is complete. This raises several questions. For a start, what opportunity is there for those who died in Christ to share in his reign? Elsewhere Paul has said that 'the saints will judge the world', and that 'the saints will judge angels' (1 Corinthians 6:2,3), but he does not limit them, as does John to 'the souls of those who had been beheaded', nor does he say anything about a thousand year reign. His description almost demands a further interim period when those whom Christ has raised are allowed to reign for a period with him. Perhaps this is a question that John is answering with his vision of the martyrs living and reigning for a thousand years.

Also lacking from Paul's scenario is a last great resurgence of evil and a second resurrection, when 'the rest of the dead' are brought back. Neither here nor anywhere else in his writings does Paul betray any awareness of these extra elements which John's vision supplies. He mentions the Judgement elsewhere in his Epistles; that 'we shall all appear before the Judgement throne of Christ', but implies that this will be immediately after the Second Coming, not a thousand years after.

John too believes that the Lamb has already received his power: 'the ruler of the kings on earth' (1:5). He sees the present age is dominated by demonic power symbolized by the Dragon, Beast and False Prophet. Their tyranny goes unhindered throughout the age, until their overthrow along with the armies of the world at the coming of Christ, when he makes visible his sovereignty. This follows the scheme in Daniel 7 where the four world empires dominate the earth, until they are destroyed and 'the saints of the Most High' replace them.

The predictions of John and Paul differ slightly in details and in order of events. This is because they were basing their respective visions of the future upon different Old Testament passages, and because they were writing at different times and in different social conditions. Their respective views of the future were influenced by their present. Paul was writing earlier when there was room for optimism about the final success of his missionary work, and when there was no state sponsored persecution against the Church. It must have seemed that very soon the Gospel really would be taken to every corner of the earth. Christ had begun his reign and there was nothing to prevent all mankind from hearing his Gospel and submitting to his sovereignty. The powers of darkness would retreat until the end came and Christ himself would appear in glory and bring the process to a glorious completion when he hands all things over to his Father. Paul's writings give support to the 'postmillennialist' interpretation.

John was writing later, possibly in the 90's, during the reign of Domitian,

when the Roman state had identified Christians as an enemy to be wiped out. His picture of the present age could not be more pessimistic. In chapter 13 he describes a persecution which had already started, in which as many as would not worship the beast would be killed (v.15). The Beast from the earth compels all to receive a mark in their hand or in their forehead, so that no one could buy or sell without it (v.17). John seems to have envisaged the worst possible outcome to the distress upon the Church, in which all true believers would face death before the end. Therefore only the martyrs figure in his vision of the first resurrection. His vision lends support to 'premillennialism'.

Yet despite the differences between them, John and Paul are both trying to convey the same basic truth, that eventually the hostile powers which now dominate the world and work against the divine purpose will be replaced by the unchallenged reign of God, and that eventually the whole world will be brought into subjection to Christ. Both make a distinction between the Kingdom of the Son and the final state, the Kingdom of God, a time when the hostile powers are disarmed, in one writer gradually, in the other suddenly. Both are trying to express the truth that the purpose of God in human history must find its completion within the arena of history, and yet finally transcend history in a state where God will reign unopposed and be 'all and in all', and 'make His tabernacle among men'.

Mark Robertson

Why doesn't the sun have whiskers?

Funny question – out of the blue. But two-year-old Kathryn Abigail wanted an answer. After all, the heavenly light illustrated in her daily readings 'clearly' had whiskers. Yet when she looked in the sky none was to be seen.



Some three hundred years earlier Sir Isaac Newton was having a similar problem. His readings (Genesis, to be precise) contained a description of the sun which didn't match up with his 'observations'. So he decided the account must have been written for the benefit of 'ye vulgar' with their limited comprehension. And I suppose, though I would use rather different terminology to describe Kathryn Abigail, she is in that category. Consequently she was confusing picture language with reality. She saw whiskers and not rays of light. What a pity it is that because Christians throughout the centuries have differed in determining which verses in Scripture 'clearly' are picture language and which 'clearly' are not, they have repeatedly fallen out and squabbled like aggrieved two-year-olds.

Ruth McHaffie

Infants, Idiots & Bible Teaching

The Emperor's New Clothes part 2

Part 1 dealt with general orthodox Christadelphian priorities.

Now let's focus on a particular doctrine.

Doctrine to be Rejected 22 of the BASF reads:

That "heathens", idiots, pagans and very young children will be saved.

This clause is curt and ambiguous. It begs several questions: what the difference is between a heathen and a pagan; what an idiot is; why a young child can presumably be saved but not a *very* young child, and what the difference is; and, of course, the overall rider of whether we are required to affirm that they will not be saved, or merely not to affirm that they will.

In 1905 Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon were asked by the French minister of public instruction to devise an intelligence test in order to identify and classify mentally subnormal children as 'morons' (slightly subnormal), 'imbeciles' (severely subnormal) or 'idiots' (profoundly subnormal). Binet and Simon came up with a scheme that gave the mental age ceiling of morons as 11, of imbeciles as 5 and of idiots as 2. Of course the BASF clause predates 1883 and so cannot be subjected to such scientific nicety, though it would be interesting to know what the author of the clause had in mind.

That's enough sterile picking of holes in the BASF, my serious purpose is to address the question of what the Bible teaches about the fate of dead infants and 'people with learning difficulties', as we say nowadays. I am aware that meetings have been torn apart over whether or not someone with a low IQ should be baptized, and parents caused great distress by their meetings requiring them to accept that their lost children were damned. And so, if we can add to the sum of understanding, it may well create harmony and hope.

When we search the scriptures, we find no direct teaching on the subject. Mental subnormality is never discussed or mentioned in scripture. One passage only can be advanced about children. In 2 Samuel 12:23 David says of his dead baby: 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' Some take this to mean that David believed the child would never be raised, but this is only inference; all it strictly says is that David believed that he himself would die without the child being raised. This is unsurprising, as he knew his Seed would appear 'many generations' in the future. The purpose of his comments at the time was not the exposition of the doctrine of salvation.

Even where the scriptures do not offer direct teaching on a matter, facts can be inferred. When the Sadducees, who accepted only the Pentateuch as scripture, challenged Jesus to establish the resurrection from that alone, he was able to do so. I suspect that Christadelphians would have pointed out that Abraham had not inherited what was promised, and so therefore could only do so in the future by resurrection, but in fact Jesus found it implied in the fact that

God is the God of the patriarchs.

The line of argument that produced the clause is based on the principle that he who believes and is baptized shall be saved but whosoever does not believe shall be condemned (Mark 16:16) and this is understood not only to include 'enlightened rejectors' (deliberate sin of omission) but those who had no opportunity, those who died without hearing the gospel, including infants and those incapable of comprehending it (unintentional sin of omission). In *Christendom Astray*, lecture 4 p 67, Robert Roberts writes regarding these classes of the unenlightened including 'very young children':

'God is just and in this his justice is made manifest. He could not punish them with justice, and He could not reward them with justice, therefore he puts them aside.'

How fortuitous then, that we are not under law which requires the exercise of such sweeping justice, but under grace! We are back in the territory we explored in our first article. Robert Robert's conception of God's justice seems as faulty as that of John Thomas. Both seem to forget that God ordained justice to protect the weak!

Robert and Jane Roberts lost four children in infancy. In *The Christadelphian Magazine*, July 1884, p 320, Bro. Roberts wrote:

'When David said concerning his dead child "I will go to him" he meant to the grave. It was the language of resignation, not of hope. It would be pleasant for the parental feelings of all of us if God had provided for the salvation of dead children. But what we have to do is recognize truth, and not follow desire. There is no promise or provision for unjustified sinners, which all our children are, in relation to divine principles, however interesting they may be to the parental instincts of nature. God has a higher rule of working than the gratification of an animal state ... eternal life is available only for the enlightened and obedient faith that works by love.'

I have already discussed David's child. Note that Robert Roberts dismisses parental love as 'instincts of nature ... gratification of animal state.' That effectively bins God the Father, denies the Father and the Son, ignores Bible teaching on the importance of holy parenting, and once again forces us to face the fact that 'the Pioneers' understanding of God was massively flawed!

The above quote is cited in Sis. Ruth McHaffie's *Finding Founders and Facing Facts* pg 24-25 where she adds that in 1876 R.R. wrote that while it was impossible for infants to be raised to eternal life perhaps they might be raised to a probationary existence in the Millennial age.

'We simply can say nothing about it, but wait and see ... [he would] be glad to see positive ground for expecting their restoration.'

This is ironic! R.R. leaves the question open but saddles us with **Doctrine to be Rejected 22** in the BASF, that canon of Christadelphian doctrine which, we are

so often reminded, is not open to question! Nor does any mechanism exist for its amendment! Would Robert Roberts be content that we had mired ourselves with such a situation?

Luke 12: 48 talks about the issue of understanding God's will:

'that servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. For everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.'

A dead baby, I suggest, has not been 'given much' of anything at all, and someone with profound 'learning difficulties' has not much opportunity to acquire a correct understanding of 'the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ'. And the brightest mediaeval peasant, without a Bible in his own language or the education to read one if he had, is hardly a different case.

So already, I suggest, we have a picture of a God who is not out to trip people, hell-bent on excluding as many as possible from salvation. 1 Timothy 4:10 describes God as 'the saviour of all people, and especially of those who are trustful'. I freely confess that I don't understand this passage. I don't know how you can be especially saved – surely you either are or are not – and it is clear from other scriptures that some – even many – will be condemned. But it suggests a rather more gracious God than the contractual chiseller depicted in *Elpis Israel*. If someone is born so mentally impaired, that they cannot be saved by comprehending the Gospel, then in the light of this passage they clearly cannot be categorised as human, and Hitler was right to consider them fair game for euthanasia. They would be victims of Adam's estate outside the Lord Jesus' redeeming brief. God forbid!

Consider also the passage 2 Peter 3:9: God 'is patient with you, not intending anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance.' If God is willing to allow a child to be born e.g. with Tay-Sachs Syndrome, which will unfailingly profoundly impair and then kill the unfortunate infant before it is five, and that child is to be refused any future chance of hearing the gospel, then He intended it to perish.

Consider also the silence of scripture. In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul tells his readers not to grieve for the dead in Christ 'as those who have no hope'. This would be the ideal place to say 'but grieve for your dead infants (and in the 1st century world there would be very many) just like everyone else' but Paul doesn't say it. In fact in 1 Corinthians 7:14 we are told a believer's offspring are 'holy' – holy ones, saints with all that implies. When I was a child my mother and even my arch-*Logosite* grandmother both taught me that children were 'covered' by their parents, what my facetious older sister calls a 'dependent inclusive

BUPA policy'. This creates problems. If I was born holy why did I need baptism? Does it wear off? If so when? But it satisfies our focus – believers' 'infants' at least are not just so much Adamic dead meat.

Consider the saying of Jesus in Matthew 19:14: 'Allow the little children and do not prevent them coming to me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.' Some Christadelphians have got very stressed by the verse and emphasized that it means adults with child-like characteristics, although one rarely sees these actually expanded on much in mainstream Christadelphia. Right! But the context is of mothers bringing their actual, literal, little ones to Jesus, and the disciples taking it upon themselves to decide that they are not worthy of Jesus' attention. Jesus saying is in the context of him blessing actual little children. Jesus values children! Lets say it! Jesus values children!

Consider a different tack. God says he refuses to show partiality to the rich and has compassion on the poor, yet many more children in poverty die than in affluent environments. Many believers have had their children killed by persecutors because they themselves were faithful. Jesus tells us that only God can throw into Gehenna. Now if God cannot or will not save an infant then anyone who kills a child has power to throw into Gehenna. It makes no sense.

Let me conclude with one further example. When Jesus was born the angels announced: 'Tidings of great joy which shall be to all peoples'. Two years later Herod killed every boy under two in Bethlehem, surely including sons, grandsons, nephews and other relations of those shepherds. The angels' optimism must have sounded pretty hollow. To add the doctrine that those 'innocents' were lost would just add insult to injury. Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31:15 – the 'Rachel weeping for her children' passage – and claims that this atrocity fulfilled the prophecy. Interestingly, when we read this prophecy in context, it primarily refers to the captivity and regathering of Judah in Jeremiah's era: Jeremiah 31:16-17 continues:

"Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears for your work will be rewarded," declares the LORD. "They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your future ... Your children will return to their own land." 'Matthew appears to be leading us to conclude that the murdered infants of Bethlehem will be resurrected.

I suggest that the evidence points to a God who is not a legalistic saviour, but a father who wants to give opportunity for salvation. Robert Robert's glimmering hope of future possibilities seems set to shine out incandescent.

Steve Cooper

To be much like Christ, be much with Christ.

Ecumenism In The Good Samaritan Parable

There are in the Good Samaritan story (Lu 10:25-37) profound ecumenical factors which clearly demonstrate that personal or denominational possession of every correct doctrine is **not** essential for salvation or unity. (Using the NIV unless otherwise indicated)

Two questions asked by a lawyer give rise to this parable. The first, verse 25, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' The lawyer's own assessment of the priorities for eternal life appear in verse 27: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul... strength and...mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.' Jesus confirms this answer and adds: 'Do this and you will live.' In verse 29 the lawyer retorts, 'Who is my neighbour?' He appears to have no difficulty in who to love, God and then neighbour, but, despite his description in verse 25 as '...an expert in the law', he seems unable to identify his neighbour. Yet he must have been familiar with texts like Lev 19:34, 'The alien, who resides with you shall be to you as a citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself.' NRSV. So, in order to be fully instructive, Jesus' parable must contain the answer to both questions, namely 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' and 'Who is my neighbour?' The two, we will find, are intrinsically linked, i.e. love of neighbour equals eternal life.

Four main characters appear in the following verses: the victim who fell among thieves, who is, by the tenor of the narrative, generally taken to be a Jew, and three others, namely a priest, a Levite and the Samaritan. One of the most notable features in the answer to the lawyer's questions is that the promise of salvation goes not to the doctrinally accurate priest or Levite, but to the doctrinally inaccurate Samaritan. One may gather the depth of Samaritan imprecision and the animosity between them and Jews from John 4:4-42. Jesus' phrase in verse 22, 'you Samaritans worship you know not what', exemplifies their doctrinal inaccuracies. Whilst verse 9, 'Jews do not associate with Samaritans.', demonstrates animosity (see also verse 27). Consequently the prospect of eternal life for this doctrinally imperfect Samaritan was obtained through nothing other than love and works, whilst somewhat shaky beliefs appear to be entirely omitted from the judgement.

Demonstrated Love

The Samaritan, it should be noted, had, by stopping to help, taken a great risk – were the robbers still in the area and could he be their next victim? Now he adds to his risk four further elements. First, in verse 34, 'he ... bandaged his wounds pouring on oil and wine', – this is **personal expense**, '... then he put the man on his own donkey' – **personal discomfort**, '... took him to an inn and took care of him.' – **self-sacrifice** and **time consuming**. Verse 35, 'The next day he took out two silver coins (Gr. two *denarii*, equivalent to two days pay, see Matt.

recognise that no judgement based on it exists in the biblical text. Therefore inadvertently spurious doctrines cannot be the basis of judgement and so doctrinal diversity should not divide.

If in modernity the Good Samaritan parable could become the Good Palestinian or Muslim parable or any other faith, to what extent is unity through love and ultimately Kingdom citizenship being offered? Perhaps the suggestion in this question goes too far for some. If so tell me about it or anything else in this item. Your input on the subject will be very welcome. Of course I hold that the Bible, and especially this parable, excludes from unity, though not from love - Ro 12:17-21, every radical whose hatred inspires murder, destruction and suppression of freedom etc. Those bent on world domination who hold captive their adherents, initially by sanction and ultimately by death threats, frequently carried out, can never be part of a global unity. Contradicting such radicalism, the Koran says, in The Heifer 256, 'Let there be no compulsion in religion'. Legal freedom of expression and action are hard won and easily lost, but individual freedom of choice is essential for unity.

Some readers will no doubt wonder if my conclusions transcend the original meaning and intent of this parable. Am I exporting modernity into textual antiquity? Whilst this prospect is possible in some instances, I doubt for the following reason that it is the case here. To eliminate the ecumenical element, Jesus need only have slightly amended the roles of two players. The Samaritan could have been portrayed as the victim, and the original victim could become the hero. By this minor adjustment, ecumenism is entirely removed, since the hero is a Jew under covenant with God via accurate doctrine, and so doctrines would remain vital components for eternal life. The fact that Jesus did not take this line clearly demonstrates his ecumenical intention. As Matt 8:5-13 puts it for the faithful centurion - verse 11, '... many will come from the east and the west, (faith and works, not doctrine being the only criterion in the incident verse 10), and will take their places ... with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (who were also under faith and works, not law and doctrine - Gal 3:8,9) in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the subjects of the Kingdom (the doctrinally accurate, but faith and works deficient) will be thrown outside.' So unity despite doctrinal diversity is not only possible but desirable and spiritual. Consequently I do not believe that I am exporting modernity into antiquity; rather, by exploring the parable's full potential, I import textual antiquity into modernity.

One final point concerning the implied salvation of non-Christians. Have I forgotten Acts 4:12, '...there is no other name under Heaven given among mortals by which we may be saved.' NRSV. Does this mean that non-Christians cannot qualify for salvation? My answer is that the Samaritan epitomised qualification for life regardless of his lack of accurate knowledge. The *shegagah* law of Nu 15:22-29, (see my item in Endeavour no. 104) verifies forgiveness for

unintended errors. Love originated with God, 1 Jo 4:19, and is the zenith of Jesus' teaching, Mk 12:28-32. Now link Nu 15, 1 Jo 4:19 and Mk 12 with Rom 2:14 & 15, 'When Gentiles who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, those, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts.' (NRSV) In like manner, love was undeniably written on the Samaritan's heart and in turn on all like him, regardless of their unintended ignorance. Where loves law is practised among non-Christians, they demonstrate the spirit of Christ in themselves. On what pretext then could they be adversely judged? Absence of accurate knowledge perhaps? But what about presence of accurate spirit? The condition of Acts 4, 'no other name', is met by the spirituality of Rom 2, 'written on their hearts' and the mercy and forgiveness of *shegagah* law in Nu 15. Inadvertent omission of Christian knowledge is therefore an excuse especially when the highest principle of Christianity – love – is practised.

If we conclude that perfect knowledge is salvation, whilst anything less is damnation then Stephen the first martyr is damned, since he did not know about salvation of the Gentiles, probably regarding them – as did Peter – as 'impure' or 'unclean', Ac 10:14-16. Yet God's love taught Gentile salvation centuries before Stephen, in Isa 11:10, 42:6 & 7, 49:6, Mal 1:11. Jesus himself taught it in Matt 12:18 & 21 & Lu 2:32. God, whose mercy is infinitely higher than the anti-ecumenists, accommodated Stephen's ignorance, receiving him into glory (Ac 7:54-60) and so with all like him who are sometimes influenced by habitual tradition, rather than God's Word. We are all of limited knowledge, but we can still bandage wounds and pour in oil, i.e. perform acts of love. Each according to their ability, Matt 25:15, and not only those with towering intellect, are God's children. The whole issue of salvation for Christians and non-Christians turns upon demonstrated love. To balance this with knowledge, Nu 15:30,31 emphasises that wilful ignorance is inexcusable. Therefore, where opportunity exists, acquisition of God's knowledge is vital.

God is the judge; our mandate is to represent His love and mercy; our authority to judge is presently limited towards fellow Christians, not those outside of Christ. (1Cor 5:12&13, 6:2&3). Even here it is confined to judgement of undoubted sin, not disputed opinion. (Matt 7:1 & 2, Ro 14:4, 10-13, Ja 4:11 & 12) The ecumenically enlightened pray especially for the salvation of all people of love, regardless of their religion and the above are some of the textual reasons for doing so.

Finally, I thank those who wrote encouraging me after my last ecumenical piece in *Endeavour* and am happy to report it attracted no adversarial comments. However, all comments on this present item in keeping with 2 Tim 2:24,25 are invited to 14, Park Street, Barnoldswick, Lancashire, BB18 5BT or e-mail theos.unity@btinternet.com.

Peter Wright

Eden – The Difficulties of Literality

Dear Bro. Ron,

I would thank you for your article in the December 2002 issue of *The Endeavour Magazine* under the title *Eden* and would immediately say that I concur all that I can comprehend but must admit to a complete inability to understand the argument which starts at the bottom of page 9 and continues on page 10.

The paragraph [on p.10] which commences 'This was generally ...' includes the words '... he [Adam] 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 Each list is one of descendants.'

I tried to check this out with the succeeding eight, but Gen 5 has nine succeeding names, so perhaps it meant the seven names in the bottom paragraph on page 10.

But then I met the real problem. If the names given in Gen 10:1 for example are to be read as 'These are the historical origins of Noah', am I to believe that Shem, Ham & Japheth were part of Noah's ancestral line? Or is the argument that these words appear at the end of a list of antecedents? In which case I can find nothing which could be interpreted as an ancestral lineage of Noah back as far as the beginning of Ch.9, and v.18 makes a categorical statement of the descendants of Noah. It is clear, of course, that Ch.10:1 is a repetition of Ch. 9:18, but that does not really help me.

(Continued)

And another point: if the toledoth was a short summary of the contents and also a connection with what follows, (like my '(Continued' above, it would mean that the transcriber was so stupid as to copy the words from the tablet itself and then copy the summary from the envelope.

I must admit that I have always believed that at least the early chapters of Genesis must have been oral tradition or may even be written evidence. What matter which? – but Divinely approved.

Very sincerely your brother in Jesus, **Gordon Reed.**

(I produced the lists below so that I could check the actual numbers.

1	Adam	Noah
2	Seth	Shem
3	Enos	Terah
4	Cainan	Ishmael
5	Mahalaleel	Isaac
6	Jared	Esau
7	Enoch	Jacob
8	Methimiah	
9	Lamech	
10	Noah	

Ron Replies

Dear Bro Gordon

Thank you for your letter which Les sent on.

The difficulty in dealing with a complicated subject like this is that if you go into considerable detail you are likely to lose the attention of a number of readers. On the other hand, if you don't, you may not deal with the subject sufficiently enough to avoid misconceptions. I should therefore perhaps have stressed a bit more forcibly that 'these are the generations of Adam' in chapter 5 vv 1&2 refers to what has gone before i.e. the creation of the universe, not what comes next, since the word 'generations' means 'beginnings', as in 'Genesis'.

I did of course contribute to a misunderstanding when I miscounted and said eight succeeding names when I should have said 'seven'. In the NIV, for example, v 1 of Genesis 5 is divided by a space thus: 'This is the written account of Adam's line' [Space] 'When God created man he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, at the time they were created he blessed them. . .'. Then follows the beginning of a list of Adam's *descendants*. It seems clear from this that 'Adam's line' is a reference to the preceding chapters in Genesis. It will perhaps help to quote Wiseman (pp 36, 41,42) exactly.

Consequently it is of considerable importance to ascertain the precise meaning of this phrase 'These are the generations of . . .'. The Hebrew word for 'generations' in this phrase is *toledoth* and not the ordinary Hebrew word *dor* which is translated 'generations' 123 times. Fortunately there can be no reasonable doubt about the meaning of this word *toledoth*. Gesenius, the pioneer Hebrew critical scholar, in his lexicon, explains its meaning as 'History, especially family history, since the earliest history among oriental nations is mostly drawn from genealogical registers of families. Then also for the origin of anything, i.e. the story of their origin; Genesis 2:4 'this is the origin of the heavens and the earth' i.e. the story of their origin.

Tablet series in Genesis

Contents

- | | | |
|------|-------------------|--|
| 1 | 1:1 to 2: 4 | This is the book of the origins of the heavens and the earth |
| 2 | 2:5 to 5:2 | This is the book of the origins of Adam |
| 3 | 5:3 to 6:9a | These are the origins (or histories) of Noah |
| 4 | 6:9 b to 10:1 | These are the origins (or histories) of the sons of Noah |
| 5 | 10:2 to 11:10a | These are the origins (or histories) of Shem |
| 6 | 11:10b to 11:27a | These are the origins (or histories) of Terah |
| 7&8 | 11:27 b to 25:19a | These are the origins (or histories) of Isaac |
| 9-11 | 25:19b to 37:2a | These are the origins (or histories) of Esau and Jacob |

The toledoth was not written twice. In the earliest times it was written on the edge of the tablet itself. Later, when tablets were put inside baked clay 'envelopes', it was written on the container instead.

I bought my copy of *Clues to Creation in Genesis* in 1977. In the foreword there is a reference to Wilfred as the joint (first) translator of *Atra-hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, 1969, about which Wiseman comments: 'It is evident that the Genesis narratives were not derived from the very different and polytheistic Babylonian records.' Consequently I could agree with you that early Genesis was 'Divinely approved'. Unfortunately, however, this is so often interpreted as meaning 'literally true'. Perhaps the most extreme example is the story of the tower of Babel, which can only be a legend. It is not known how many different languages there are in the world, but there are certainly as many as 4,000 and perhaps even 6,000. (Steven Pinker *The Language Instinct*.) Apart from the immense complexity of language, it is incredible that these all should emerge (by a miracle) on one single occasion.

Yours, too, very sincerely, Ron

More on the Flood and Eden

Dear Les,

Ron Coleman's article *The Genesis Flood: Was it Worldwide?* (Endeavour 107, June 2002, pp. 8-14) aimed to popularize material from a little known book of William Todd, *New Light on Genesis*, Furnival Press, London, 1978, but written earlier since Todd died in 1967 aged 78. The book, which I know thanks to Ron, covers the whole of Genesis and not only the flood, and deals with the book in a highly original way. Todd writes with full self-confidence on many issues about which he is clearly not well-informed. But to review the whole book, (of 224 pp.) could easily take up 50 pages, which is inappropriate when our readers generally will not have access to it. It is more appropriate to comment only on that material which Ron has reproduced.

The general argument is that the Sumerians in the far south of Iraq developed an irrigation system which rendered the land very productive, and that while this state of affairs continued the Akkadians migrated into the area upstream and ineptly tried to copy the Sumerian irrigation techniques. This led to intercommunal strife referred to in Genesis 9:13-14 as 'violence.' In consequence the irrigation system was neglected and a massive flood resulted, from which Noah and his family were saved in a reed boat.

Archaeology does not support this theory. A sophisticated irrigation system was developed in the far south of Iraq, but only written evidence allows us to know which people was responsible. The earliest written clay tablets, of the Uruk period, c. 3200-3000 B.C. give no certain result in this respect, but tablets written after 3000 were certainly written in Sumerian, and the language continued in use for nearly a millennium. There is no direct evidence that the Akkadians migrated into the general region while this irrigation was in full

swing. The Akkadians spoke a Semitic language like the Hebrews, Arabs, Arameans, etc. unlike Sumerian, which is not Semitic. Since a wave of migration c. 2000 B.C. brought the Semitic Amorites into Mesopotamia, and another such wave c. 1000 B.C. brought the Arameans into the Tigris-Euphrates valley, it has been proposed that the Akkadians similarly arrived in Mesopotamia from the Syrian desert at an earlier period. There is no direct evidence for or against this idea, and to be helpful in the present context this suggested migration would have had to take place after the irrigation of the far south was flourishing. In contrast there is clear archaeological evidence that areas upstream from the Sumerians were gainfully occupied long before Sumerians can be identified in the far south. Further, the suggestion of disputes over irrigation and water between Sumerians and Akkadians is pure fiction invented to support a preconceived theory. Before 2500 B. C. we have no historical records, but, after there are such records and they know nothing of such ethnic strife. Further, in administrative documents c. 3000-2500 there is attested a mixture of Sumerian and Akkadian personal names which does not support any idea of racism at this period.

Thus on general grounds Todd's theory is not supported, and details are not well-informed. The word *edin* (p. 10) is a common Sumerian word, attested once only in Akkadian in a lexical list, which is never good evidence. Such an occurrence may be a scribal invention. In Sumerian it has a range of geographical senses, but it is not used for the whole Tigris-Euphrates plain. 'The Akkadians named from Akkad from whence they came' (p.11) is false. Akkad was a town, the home town of a Semitic dynasty, c. 2350-2200 B.C. which the founder of the dynasty claimed to have built. The 'Akkadians' (our term not so used by the ancients at this period) existed long before the town was built. 'The Sumerians regarded themselves as descended from Adam, unlike the Akkadians' (p. 11). There is a *primaevial* man in Sumerian literature called Adapa, which some scholars searching for Biblical parallels have identified with Adam. This identification is not well-founded, and in any case Adapa was not the father of the human race in Sumerian traditions. That is reading back from Adam. '... the commentators ... treat the cubit as being 18 inches, although the cubit was not an invariable length (p.12). There were indeed different cubits in the ancient Near East, but all of them are based on the forearm (elbow to hand) so they do not vary substantially. 'Todd says the Hebrew for 'rooms' (*qinnim*) is now known to mean 'reeds' and the ark may have been made from giant reeds (p. 13). The Hebrew consonants can be equally vocalized *qanim* ('reeds') or *qinnim* ('nests'), it is a matter of judgement. But since the text says quite clearly that the ark was made of wood Todd seems to be alone in trying to read 'reeds.' The map on p.10 is not taken from Todd, but from some other source, but it is not reliable. Nineveh is not on the west bank, but on the east bank of the Tigris. A

town Nimrud is put some way upstream from Calah, but Nimrud is the modern name of the ancient Calah which is in fact some little way east of the Tigris, not on the river.

It is sad to have to observe that so much effort has been put into promulgating ideas which have no solid basis, but it is clear why Todd's book is not generally known. Its obscurity is unfortunately well deserved.

Ron Coleman's further article *Eden - The Difficulties of Literality* (*Endeavour* 108, Dec. 2002, pp. 5-11), draws on an equally unreliable source on pp. 9-11: F. J. Wiseman (as edited by his son D. J. Wiseman). The work referred to, *Clues to Creation in Genesis*, is a combination of two originally separate books, and again a systematic review would take up far too much space, so it is fair to deal only with the material which is reported in *Endeavour*. Like Todd, P. J. Wiseman writes with great authority while not displaying any mastery of the material he uses. First it is alleged that 'these are the generations' in Genesis refers to what precedes, not to what follows. One may freely admit that in Gen. 2:4 the phrase is a little awkward, but in the other eight passages alluded to the meaning is completely clear. The word translated generations, Hebrew *toledoth*, is based on the root *yld* meaning 'beget' or 'bear (a child)' and occurs only in the plural, literally 'begettals' or 'bearings.' Hence the sections correctly begin by taking up the name of the one being alluded to and by then giving his descendants, but not detailing the person's history. The comparison with Matt. 1:1, Greek *genesis*, is misleading, since that is a singular Greek word commonly meaning 'birth,' and the chapter gives a genealogy of Jesus.

The contention that the early chapters of Genesis go back to clay tablets falls for lack of supporting evidence. Cuneiform colophons on Babylonian and Assyrian clay tablets have nothing to do with 'begettals' or 'bearings.' They often give a catchline to the following tablet if the tablet is one of a series; they often identify the text of which this tablet is part, or state its category; they often name the scribe and occasionally give the date of writing. Nothing in Genesis resembles one of these. Further, the assertion that the colophon on clay tablets was written on the edge of the tablet reveals lack of knowledge. In fact the colophon follows the last line of the text, and if there was an abundance of space under the last line within the column, the colophon could be put anywhere within that space. Only if the text continued to the bottom of the last column would the colophon (of necessity) be written on the edge of the tablet. The further assertion, 'later it was written on the baked clay envelope which served as protection for the tablet' is false. Such envelopes were used for legal documents (for security) and less commonly with letters (for confidentiality). They were not used for literary texts.

Wilfred Lambert

Ron Replies

Dear Les

As I mentioned when we spoke about it, Wilfred sent me a copy of his letter to you about my article on the Flood. I do of course have to accept that Todd's ideas about the Sumerians and Akkadians are unsupported by subsequent authorities, but I do not think that we must therefore disregard everything he says. His explanation shows that we are not restricted to thinking that God is an impatient Deity who decides to destroy all his human creation with the exception of one family. Instead we see a God who does not intervene to avert a disaster that human foolishness and wickedness is about to bring upon itself, but makes provision by which one family can be saved through faith, and by cooperating with Him.

The Flood has of course throughout history been the subject of belief that it was a worldwide disaster and you may have seen Davis A Young's recent *The Biblical Flood* which chronicles the long centuries of argument that this was so. Consequently I am sorry that Wilfred should criticise Todd, without proffering any alternative explanation that supports non-literality, in particular without considering that the Flood was due to the failure of an irrigation system.

Genesis says that the Flood was the result of 40 days and 40 nights of rain. As I mentioned in my letter to you about Arthur Mallinder's explanation, this could only be the result of a fantastic miracle but even so would not be sufficient to produce a flood of the severity of the Genesis account. The two average wettest places in the earth are Tutunendo, Colombia and Mt Waialeale, Hawaii, both which average 460 inches of rain *in a year*. The greatest amount of rainfall recorded in any one year in history was in Cherrapunji, India, which had 1,042 inches in 1861 (New York Public Library Science Desk Reference). So 40 days and 40 nights rain could not possibly be the cause of the Flood described in Genesis.

This is all the more unlikely when one considers the meteorology of the Northern Hemisphere. This is determined by three 'cells'. In the Hadley cell, heated air rises near the equator and drifts northward, shedding its moisture, to sink again near 30 deg. Slightly north of 30 deg is the Ferrel cell in which heated air rises, drifts northward, to descend at about 60 deg. The Euphrates-Tigris valley is approximately 30 deg N, in the dead area between the cells, the reason why it is so arid.

A further complication is what is known as the Coriolis effect, due to the differential speed of rotation of the atmosphere compared with the earth itself. This in the northern hemisphere makes low pressure systems drift in an easterly direction. So there is no possibility of weather systems from the Indian Ocean bringing rain to what is now Iraq. Nor can such systems travel this far from the

Mediterranean or the Atlantic. This is further confirmation of the flood being due to a human failure in controlling irrigation systems. The fact that Todd mistakenly attributed this to a quarrel between Accadians and Sumerians doesn't rule out the possibility of the Flood being caused by a breakdown due to some other cause. In particular there is no reference to Todd's graphic descriptions of the fierceness of the floods in the rivers today, or indeed of his long familiarity with the country.

The reason I mentioned the length of the cubit was in order not to insist unreasonably that the Ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high and therefore quite beyond the capability of construction at the time. Todd says that there could have been other measurements of length for smaller objects, just as today a horse's height is mentioned in 'hands', and on such a consideration the ark could have been only 100 feet long and 17 feet wide, similar in size to vessels made in Todd's time, the method of construction being from reeds which 'grow to a height of 25 feet and are as thick as punt poles'. Wilfred however denies this and maintains quite clearly that the text says that the ark was made of wood. Indeed the text does say 'gopher wood' but the commentaries are unable to say what kind of wood this was. One might also ask where, in the country of the lower Tigris and Euphrates, trees could grow, and how, in the absence of modern tools, timber from them could be made and joined together to form a hull and three decks with compartments.

As regards the map, I included it because I think the majority of readers might well have only a general idea of the Euphrates-Tigris basin. It came from a Bible dictionary (not one I possess although I do have several) and I chose it because it would fit easily on to a page of *Endeavour*. I did not think it necessary to check it in view of its source. In any event the errors are trivial.

Concerning Wiseman Ron wrote:

Dear Les

I cannot remember whether you have a copy of *Clues to Creation in Genesis* or not. If you have you will see how mistaken Wilfred is. If you haven't, the most important fact is that Wiseman *filis* was a Professor of Assyriology in the University of London and previously 'Assistant Keeper, Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities, the British Museum.' The foreword in itself is a refutation of Wilfred's criticisms. He describes in detail his father's experiences on the ground in Syria and Mesopotamia in the twenties and thirties of the last century, telling how he visited the principal excavations and had many discussions with the scholars of his day. In consequence he had rejected the theories of Wellhausen and that of his 'school' and says that they would hardly have been conceived, had the tens of thousands of cuneiform tablets which have since been discovered been known about.

Donald Wiseman continues: 'many members of various professions have

Correspondence

expressed their gratitude for the part the two original volumes played at crucial periods in their intellectual and spiritual lives. They take the view that, of all the various ways in which Genesis and science have been interpreted and related, this approach appears to be the most rational, the most true to the text of Scripture and the most free from difficulties.'

As regards his own experiences he says that he spent several years in 'the land that was Babylonia (modern south Iraq)' visiting the various excavations at the ancient sites, and that he was in constant touch with the latest discoveries.

To show the extent of his interests he mentions the translation by 'W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard of *Atra-hasis. The Babylonian Story of the Flood* 1969'. Amongst others, there are individual chapters on 'Methods of the Scribes in 3000 BC, The Key to the Structure of Genesis, The Great Age of the Book, Who wrote the original Tablets?' It is no exaggeration to say that the whole approach of Wiseman is that Genesis is based on contemporary accounts. It is true that it was published in 1976 (I bought my copy in 1977) but what has happened since then to disprove Wiseman's main idea?

Ron Coleman

In a reply, Wilfred wrote:

Dear Les,

... what matters to me is what the evidence is, not who said something. To the question what do people think now, I am at home and do not want to spend time looking through old issues of journals, but here I have a copy of the commentary on Genesis by G J Wenham, which is very detailed and distinctly conservative. He says on Gen 2:4: 'This is the history of': *elleh toledoth*. Elsewhere in Genesis (cf. 6:9, 10:1, etc.) this is translated "This is the family history of" and it always announces a new section of narrative, which makes it natural to suppose that it fulfills the same function here rather than serving as colophon to what precedes.' So he knows of the P J Wiseman colophon theory, but rejects it and does not think it worth while to quote the book. Writing on Genesis one has to be selective.

So, cuneiform colophons are nothing like what is quoted from Genesis: I have read hundreds and there is a book with 563, of which I own a copy. Wellhausen was certainly right in principle: Genesis was compiled from pre-existing written sources, but one could question whether he has correctly divined what they were. One has only to compare Samuel+Kings with Chronicles to see how ancient Hebrew authors used their sources.

Thus I accept most of Ron's arguments about literality but cannot accept all of them. I have left his literality case for him to put with his usual acumen, but have to object when facts are not presented.

Wilfred Lambert

The following booklets are 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

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The

Endeavour

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... I urge that petitions, prayers, requests and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people; for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life with all reverence towards God ...

December 2003

110

The Endeavour Magazine

For Christian Thought and Action

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The Least and the Greatest

When I had finished reading the June issue of *Endeavour* the thought came to me that certain seemingly unrelated articles had, nevertheless, a connection with each other which centred on Steve Cooper's reference to Jesus blessing little children

This incident is at once so heart-warming and profound that it is remarkable how preconceived notions of doctrine have obscured its relevance to both children and adults alike. Mark is quite explicit: 'And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.' (Mark 10:16, RSV)

To be blessed means, quite simply, to be in a state of happiness, either spiritually or materially. Indeed, when Jesus later blessed the bread and wine at the Last Supper, wasn't it in order that those who received it shared in the joy of his victory over death? A writer in the New Bible Dictionary puts it this way: 'What is significant about the early form of the Eucharist is the note of joy which stems directly ... from the post-resurrection appearances, many of which are associated with a meal between the victorious Lord and his own.'

There is no doubt that those little ones and their parents would have left Jesus' presence with a very real sense that it had been good to be with him. They trusted that his voice, his touch, his love, could only benefit them beyond anything they could do for themselves. Jesus had made them happy

Simple trust, or faith, is the foundation of everything good we hope for and, very importantly, it is not based on complete knowledge or understanding; we are told this very clearly in Hebrews 11. It is precisely the absence of definitive answers that compels us to turn from ceaseless questioning and rest our hopes in the One whose very presence is synonymous with peace, contentment and joy. Without hope there can only be despair, but despair is for those who know the future without any doubt whatsoever, and *none* of us is in that position.

Let us repeat Jesus' words: 'Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.' How does a little child receive a gift except in joyful expectancy of something wonderful and good?

Taking up Peter Wright's opening sentence in *The Good Samaritan*, therefore, I would say that possession of every correct doctrine can *never* be essential for eternal life because it is not only quite beyond our capability but also the antithesis of everything the New Testament writers teach us about childlike trust or faith. The 'wilful ignorance' condemned in Numbers 15:31-32 is very specific - it refers to God's word, or His law, which in the New Testament is epitomized in the person of Jesus Christ.

'Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God. and every one who loves the parent loves the child.' (1 John 5:1) As every parent knows, the love of a child is unconditional, and the implications for us are clearly set out in Peter's article. Are we not on rather dangerous ground when we refuse to extend our love and fellowship to anyone God has chosen to call His child? If the

doctrinally 'weak' are among the least of Christ's brothers, all the more does he expect us to succour them (Matt.25:45), which we can never do if we remain separate and aloof.

What then of the 'meaty' matters which the apostle Paul urges the church at Corinth to assimilate? He has made a passionate appeal to them to be united 'in the same mind', deploring their lack of spirituality and contentious quarrelling. But he is talking about 'the mind of Christ' which is essentially the mind of God, made known to us through the Spirit (1 Cor.2:11-16) The church needed to put away childish things like jealousy and strife, and seek wisdom in childlike simplicity.

So we are reminded, in Bill Davison's first article on the subject *God was in Christ*, that John saw the Lord Jesus as the embodiment of Wisdom, and Wisdom goes on to say in Proverbs that 'happy are those who keep my ways.'

Jesus does value children; he wants to bless them, or give them happiness, and he can only do that when they come to him freely, recognising God's goodness and love and, ultimately, accepting his instruction. How I love Ruth McHaffie's little gem *Why doesn't the sun have whiskers?* We can imagine that Jesus would have delighted in such a question from a two-year old, and would no doubt have turned it into a lesson for more perceptive bystanders!

Seldom have I heard Christadelphians discuss the fact that they are not the only Christians who have (hopefully) formed a personal relationship with Jesus through prayer, and Bill's comments about the doctrine of 'the Trinity' highlight a flaw in much of our community's thinking - namely, that we assume every mainstream Christian's understanding of the mystery of God conforms to our own interpretation of their doctrine. It does not!

Furthermore, if Christadelphians have moved on in their thinking (as evidenced by articles in *Endeavour*) is it so strange that mainstream Christianity should also have done so? It comprises a vast number of intelligent, prayerful, faithful followers of the Son of God who are looking anxiously for his return to this troubled, evil world. Are they enemies of Christ because they prefer to live by the simple gospel message than delve into the unfathomable mysteries of God's existence? There are many, it must be said, who can comprehend neither the doctrine of the Trinity nor the convoluted arguments against it!

Children do not need to know what their parents are made of in order to appreciate the good gifts they offer, but they recognise love when they see it, and so did the man born blind in that wonderful story John relates to us in the ninth chapter of his gospel. If ever we needed an example of childlike faith, we could find no better than this.

Someone once said that human experience is 'the granite rock against which all verbal juggleries burst in vain'. John's story may bring a wry smile to our lips, but how often do we attach more importance to the meaning of words than to the rock of human experience? Many prayers are being heard and answered 'out there'; many Christians of all sects know they walk with God because they 'see'

His operation in their lives, and they love Him and often have much to teach us about loving our neighbour. We are childish, not childlike, when we refuse to accept this.

Theological wrangling is the product of fear and doubt, not love and faith. We do not know and we do not need to know how the Spirit works or what exactly eternal life will consist of. Faith rests on the knowledge that the Spirit *does* work, and that eternal life *will* be more wonderful than anything our finite minds can imagine. We can be sure that whatever our hearts long for in Christ, we shall either receive it or be given something supremely superior and unexpectedly marvellous in lieu. Eternal life is a gift, a blessing; it will make us happy!

A willingness to hear Jesus' voice demands not only that we pray, but that we listen to other Christians' points of view, because there will be times when Jesus speaks through them, and if we do not discern those times we shall be spiritually poorer. 'Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.' (Luke 22:26) Brian Morgan has taken a novel approach to this lesson in that 'exceedingly rare quality' of humility, but this is yet another child-like attribute which tends to disappear with age and the acquisition of self-importance.

If we think the orthodox church has let Christ down at times, then so has ours, and a fragmented church can never be anything other than weak. As I write, division looms in the Anglican ranks, but who are we to pass judgement, when our history of divisiveness is second-to-none? Perhaps we don't take the apostle Paul seriously enough when he asks 'is Christ divided?', but on the basis of our general attitude to those around us, I would guess he would accuse even us of unspirituality, despite our pride in scriptural knowledge. True humility would bring us to the realisation that we have so much more in common with fellow Christians than we think, simply on account of being equally in need of God's grace. We share a common enemy; why make enemies of each other?

As for 'sound doctrine', Paul did not exhort Timothy on theology but on Christian practice, citing lawbreakers as the opposition - the profane, murderers, the immoral, sodomites, kidnappers, liars, perjurers. etc. - and he went on to urge that the church prays for all men, including kings. All men? I have heard (occasionally) public prayers for national leaders, but what about our fellow Christians of other persuasions; what about bishops, or even the Pope? ... 'that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way' (1 Tim.2:2)

Perhaps, if such a prayer were constantly on our lips, Christ's church would not now be divided. Isn't it significant that the latest furore has nothing to do with the Trinity, the resurrection or a personal devil, but immorality? Of course, we cannot pray for unity of the church if we don't believe in it and seek only to maintain our separation from it; that would indeed be hypocrisy!

We have not received the kingdom like a little child if we are obsessed with the largely unknown future and forgetful of those parables of Christ which consis-

tently describe the Kingdom in terms of growth - the mustard seed, leaven, etc. Even Elijah's mistake should be a warning: it has echoes of God's reminder to Job that man knows a good deal less than he thinks, and God always knows a good deal more!

In his book *Reason to Believe* the Rev. Peter Mullen makes this point: 'If "ask and ye shall receive" means anything, it must mean that there are some things which, if you ask for them, you will get.' He then goes on to say: 'Why should we pray for the sick, when we know that God will not always heal them? It shows we care. It demonstrates our solidarity, for 'all flesh is grass', and it may be that we can give practical help and comfort. Acts of charity destroy our self-pity and self-obsession and thus assist our spiritual growth. What we can ask for ourselves, and *will* receive, is an increase in charity, or any other spiritual virtue

If we really have faith, or trust, in God's promises then we must have love, or charity, because it is greater than faith and the means by which God's blessings are made available to all His children. It must be unconditional - God does not choose whom to love - and it must be active; we cannot pray for love and then exclude from our prayers any who are in need of it. The least we can do for God is pray that all men and women might come to *Jesus* (not necessarily to us) to find true happiness, and know that it is always good to be with him.

Julia Booth

'Humble listening,' John Stott once wrote,

'is indispensable to relevant preaching.'

Humble listening is also indispensable to good relationships

and therefore to effective evangelism.

But it is precisely because humble listening is so rare that it is so prized.

As David Augsburg put it:

'Being heard is so close to being loved

as to be almost indistinguishable.'

Mark Greene in article entitled *Listening to Agnostics* in recent Cambridge Papers.

(Sent in by Cyril Marsters)

Preaching

In E109, Ruth McHaffie wrote an article entitled Is Anyone There? as the possible basis of a leaflet that might be useful in preaching activities. She now follows that with this second article which could also possibly form the basis of a leaflet. But perhaps readers could offer alternatives – kept simple and brief but more convincing?

A God Who Cares?

A group of six-year-olds were invited each to write a 'letter to God'. One wrote, 'Dare god Whie did my wee bruthars gold fish die?' Young though he was, that child was already experiencing the unfairness of life – 'Why him? W h y u s ?'

If we don't believe in a god, then the world is a matter of chance, and suffering just happens to be part of it. Yet maybe there *is* some kind of supernatural being – an evil one who inflicts misery on those he created? And that would explain life's tragedies. But then we would have the problem of finding a source for the love and the laughter, the care and the kindness that most of us share from time to time. And why 'on earth' should there be so much beauty – the moving symphony, the delicacy of the rose, the scent of the honeysuckle, the glimmering ocean, the snow-capped mountain and the sun setting in a brilliant sky? It's not easy to explain suffering and no one has ever been able to find the whole answer. But if there isn't some sort of a god who cares, then the source of love, laughter, kindness and beauty is even harder to explain.

Even so, how can we give any sensible explanation of atrocities – the six million Jews and countless other 'undesirables' murdered by the Nazis? Why, if there is a god of love, didn't he strike down the murderers and save the innocent? Could the answer be that human beings have been given freedom and are only free if they can choose to do good or evil? If God were the creator and had decided to do so, he could have made us like pawns on a chessboard, pawns which he could move as he wanted. But would we then be human beings or merely models made of flesh and blood? We can't have it both ways. If we are free to choose our actions then there is the risk that we will choose deadly evil – and that is what many have chosen – to the devastation of their victims.

What of illness and disability? We are doing all we can, we think, to overcome disease. But are we? Despite all warnings: smokers go on smoking, drinkers go on drinking, drug addicts go on getting their fixes, the overfed go on overfeeding and most of us go on spoiling the environment. In earlier days in Britain, and still in Third World countries, disease and death have been the result of appalling living conditions, lack of sanitation or malnutrition. Most of this has been caused, not by a shortage of the earth's resources but because of

mismanagement by its occupants. There is enough for all – but too many of us are taking more than our fair share. Maybe we don't feel personally responsible. We are caught up in the society where we have been born. But how many of us are really willing to go without so as to leave enough for others? We don't mind being a bit 'green' but not enough to make fundamental changes in our life-styles.

But can we, in any way, be held responsible for inherited weaknesses? Well, no one lives to himself or herself. And each of us is affected not only by our contemporaries but also by those who have gone before. Could it be that over the years neglect, carelessness and selfishness have been added to more of the same and nature has been thrown out of gear? Could it be that because parents have eaten sour grapes the children's teeth have been set on edge? 'Unjust!' we cry. But how often do we protest at the 'injustice' of our enjoying inherited benefits?

At least we can't be responsible for earthquakes and other natural disasters? But, again, we can't be physical beings unless we are ruled by physical laws. Our earth could never have been the earth as we know it unless it were living, with movement deep down within it affecting the surface. Many a community chooses to live where it is known that earthquakes or volcanic eruptions occur. Some living in those areas may be helpless, too poor to move away or build suitable houses – and their poverty has resulted largely because of other people's greed. Violent storms and hurricanes arise from the atmospheric conditions which must prevail if our world is to be the physical world it is. But devastating floods with widespread damage could have been reduced had we not deforested vast areas, adopted new farming methods which destabilised the soil, and built housing on the flatlands known to be in danger.

What about accidents? Why are good men and women injured and killed through no fault of their own or of others? Here again we are up against the physical nature of our planet. For example, we are held to the earth by the force of gravity. If we climb a ladder or a mountain, gravity is operating, and if we slip then we are drawn back to the earth with a bump and possibly an injury which could prove fatal. Supposing gravity could be switched off when a climber was falling? Then the rest of us would career off the earth.

It would be so easy wouldn't it, for a caring god to prevent many of the incredibly unfair things which happen? Surely he could work miracles? There is no doubt at all that an almighty being could break through nature, as it were, or could extend it, or change circumstances so as to allow what we would call a miracle. And many think that at times their God does do that. But what if those who believe in a good God could say to all around them, 'See! Everything's fine with me. Everything I touch is a success. If the plane crashes or the boat sinks I'll survive because I'm one of God's people, and he will save me'? What an attractive carrot!! How eagerly everyone would rush to enlist!! But the motive would be purely selfish, merely to gain benefits. And what a peculiar world! No real dedication, no genuine concern for others. Just everything's fine for me and mine.

Scientists, but not all, have dismissed theological belief. The more known about the universe, the more fascinating it becomes. And the more they discover, the more they realise there is to discover. They are fantastically clever, and make phenomenal advances. So clever, in fact, that mankind has learnt how to destroy lives wholesale. But who ever thought we would land on the moon? Who ever thought a spacecraft could not only carry a camera but be guided on to an asteroid? Who ever thought we would be able to make a gene map which could revolutionise the treatment of disease – and discover that a roundworm's genome has about half the number of genes compared with a human's? The conditions for life are exceedingly complex and our existence on the earth is only possible because of a finely-tuned environment. Is it really possible that our intellectual ability to search out the universe, as well as to understand our own physical and mental make-up, together with that precise 'tuning', all happened by chance? Isn't it more likely that the roots of our intelligence and the planet's structure lie in the 'super-intelligence' of a higher being?

A lot of suffering is, of course, caused directly by our own stupidity. But much of it is not, and people who are kind and good often have a bigger share of disappointments and tragedy than the self-seeking and corrupt. To some extent we can see the value of pain. It warns us that something is wrong: without the warning we could be severely injured. If we are careless enough to touch too hot a surface we get a burn – which says, 'Keep off!' But this doesn't explain why there is so much unavoidable pain. We could say that suffering can ennoble the character of the sufferer and draws love and sympathy from others. Yet that isn't always true. Sometimes it embitters, and leaves the victim exhausted and irritated – and the carer exhausted and irritated, too.

Christians maintain only God can see the whole picture. Our vision is strictly limited. It is as though we were looking over the countryside, but part of the scenery is hidden by thick mist. We see only the nearer end of a bridge, but the other end is hidden. And it is at that other end the full answers to life's problems lie. It is certain that I can't say to you, 'Here is my God' in the same way that I can say, 'Here is my cat'. You cannot see God and you cannot touch him and you cannot hear him. So you might say, 'Therefore, I do not believe he exists.' But do you believe in the atom? If you heard from an authoritative source that nuclear warfare was to begin tomorrow, would you just laugh, and say that you don't believe in nuclear weapons? You haven't seen one. You've heard reports and seen pictures. The whole thing could be a hoax – and yet you know it isn't.

Ancient writers (as well as those who wrote the Bible) have recorded the presence in the first century A.D. of a struggling community, known as the Christians. It could be expected that so small a band fighting against such great odds, enduring one persecution after another, would fade into oblivion. But the few carried on in the belief that if God were for them, who could be against them? No matter how great the opposition, the things they stood for would survive. So it

was from an insignificant and despised beginning that Christianity spread throughout the world. Something must have happened?

When we are young most of us enjoy life, but as we grow old it loses some of its attraction. Many get tired of a dull and often lonely 'caterpillar' existence. But if we have a faith, a faith which has roots in the past but which many people find has relevance to the present, may we not find a valid hope for the future? Some people say they are quite happy just to live their lives and then die. Yet, inconsistently, most hang on to life 'like grim death' as long as they can. Even if it's not really enjoyable, woe betide any medics who won't prop them up just that bit longer. Few relish the idea of eternal nothingness – our very own selves extinguished. If that's what really happens we have no choice. But perhaps it's worth while investigating a conviction that could revolutionise life both before and after death?

Ruth McHaffie

By The Waters of Babylon

The period of the captivity was in fact a stage of spiritual growth and widening vision of God's covenant with Israel. They were still His witnesses through suffering, failure and defeat but also through redemption and restoration. They still carried His message to the wider world, for from this time the nation was scattered abroad and the centre of their worship was concentrated in the synagogues throughout the Mediterranean world and beyond, providing bases for worship and education. Moreover it was in this period that their records were compiled, their laws formulated and their songs of praise collected together to form the Hymn Book of the restored Temple and all in preparation for the new age in Jesus.

The Old Testament provides the backcloth to the story of Israel's history, shot through with divine radiance and woven throughout with a developing pattern of God's purpose to be consummated in Jesus and to be worked out in the fabric of the everyday, mundane life of the believer; for we all have our Red Sea crossings, our wilderness training, our walls of Jericho, our challenge of faith and our need for cleansing with God's spirit.

Sheila Harris

The Holy Spirit

*This article is based on a talk given at the
Christadelphian Summer School, July 2002*

I present this article as 'a plain man's thoughts on the holy spirit'. Many others have explored and written about this subject in deeper and more erudite terms. I would prefer not to be controversial, but I think we should find a definition of 'controversial' which excludes a sincere attempt to explore God's word. All Christians can agree at least that this subject is important. I believe it is crucially important, for at least two reasons: (i). the holy spirit is the power that God the Father and Jesus wield, by which all their work is addressed and completed; (ii). it is one of the two vital elements at work at – and onwards from – our baptism. I want to come back to that. There are at least two prerequisites in coming to this subject – a large slice of humility and a truly open mind.

Is this a difficult subject, as it is often said to be? It is, if we have preconceived ideas, if we have to accept received dogma, if we have closed minds, if we believe the holy spirit was withdrawn towards or at the end of the 1st century, if we have to try to harmonise Bible teaching with laid down dogma! In contrast, coming with an open mind to the Bible on the holy spirit (or indeed any subject) removes (at least some of) the difficulties and presents an exciting, moving, challenging – if humbling – concept of God the Father's power working in us, through us and for us in our lives on our Christian journeys, and developing His purpose. We can also discover and recognise more common ground with other Christians (which for me is an exciting, positive and encouraging prospect, but for others, I know, is less attractive). We might find it hard to agree with the most extreme 'charismatic' Christians. We may wonder about the use of 'he' rather than 'it' to label the holy spirit – something which the established church seems very keen on, although is that such an important issue? It does after all have a strong scriptural and linguistic precedent, and we will look later at John 14. We are familiar with the Bible's personification of wisdom in Proverbs: for example 'Love wisdom and she will make you great. Embrace her and she will bring you honour. She will be your crowning glory. Listen, wisdom is calling out'. What does this style of writing do for us? Surely it makes wisdom prominent, something with which we can identify, something very real!! Perhaps the personification of the holy spirit can have a similar effect, while it clearly remains a power, a concept, a force – NOT a person, any more than is wisdom!

The subject is difficult, too, if we believe there are two spirits, as is sometimes the interpretation of Ps 51: 'Create a pure spirit in me, O God, and put a new and loyal spirit in me. Do not banish me from your presence, do not take your Holy Spirit away from me'. Does this quotation support two distinct spirits – a free spirit *and* the holy spirit? We are familiar and happy to accept the Hebrew use of parallelism elsewhere, so why not here too? Ephesians 4 is clear: 'There is one body, one spirit, one hope' –

ONE SPIRIT, multi-purpose of course, but only one: God's power is God's power is God's power. And 'Holy' is not always attached to 'spirit' even for the usually accepted purposes, e.g. in Ezek 2:2: 'While the voice was speaking, God's spirit entered into me, and raised me to my feet, and I heard the voice continue' (what we think of as God's inspiration) and Isa 11:2: 'The spirit of the Lord will give him wisdom.....' So there is one spirit, not two – let's not make a difficulty where none exists. I would venture to suggest that we should not consider the holy spirit to be a difficult subject – indeed it is rather sad if we do see it as such – but one which is truly a vital subject, as we shall see more and more as we consider it.

'Inspiration' for me on this subject came from a book by Dr Jack Deere – formerly a fundamentalist Christian with a background much like Christadelphians. The book is titled 'Surprised by the power of the spirit', published by Kingsway, and I recommend it. The title is particularly appropriate and challenging – should Christians be SURPRISED by the holy spirit?

It is clear from God's word that we need the holy spirit to help us interpret (not add to!) the Bible. Eph 1:15ff: 'For this reason, ever since I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks to God for you. I remember you in my prayers and ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the spirit, who (NB the personification) will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him...' (so, it is rather important to have the spirit!) '... I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, and how very great is his power at work in us who believe. ...' (NB the effects of believing!!) '... This power working in us is the same ...' (i.e. ONE Spirit!) '.. as the mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right hand side in the heavenly world.' John 16:12ff: 'I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear. When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but he will speak of what he hears, and will tell you of things to come. He will give me glory, because he will take what I say, and tell it to you'. 1 Cor 2:13ff: 'So then, we do not speak in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the spirit, as we explain spiritual truths to those who have the spirit. Whoever does not have the spirit *cannot* receive the gifts that come from God's spirit. Such a person really does not understand them; they are nonsense to him, because their value can be judged only on a spiritual basis. Whoever has the spirit, however, is able to judge the value of everything, but no one is able to judge him... We however have the mind of Christ.' These words demonstrate, surely beyond doubt, that having the spirit is really rather important for the Christian; without it we are in a fairly sorry state! There is a story – I cannot recall its source, but others may recognise it (or perhaps it is apocryphal): a speaker was propounding Bible teaching on the holy spirit and concluded that the holy spirit is given to and possessed by Christians throughout the ages and today. He was challenged afterwards by a lis-

tener: 'Well / haven't got it anyway'. The speaker replied: 'well, if that's your view you probably haven't!' What a very sad story.

Indeed, having the spirit seems, in Eph 1:13/14, to be the stamp of a Christian: 'And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the holy spirit as he had promised. The spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people, and this assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who are his. Let us praise his glory.' Note also Eph 4:30: 'And do not make God's holy spirit sad; for the spirit is God's mark of ownership on you, a guarantee that the day will come when God will set you free.' It is clear here that 'holy spirit' and 'spirit' are interchangeable. Notice too that the holy spirit not only provides a guarantee of salvation, it is also a support for strengthening the inner man, as in Eph 3:15-21: 'I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his spirit to be strong in your inner selves. And I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love. Yes, may you come to know his love – although it can never be fully known – and so be completely filled with the very nature of God. To him, who by the means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of: to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, for ever and ever! Amen.' I find it to be very revealing and exciting that the holy spirit can move us (or it should do so) to praise and worship God. Notice too, in 1 John 3:19ff, that being 'in the truth' (in the Biblical sense) *requires* spirit possession: 'This then is how we know that we belong to the truth; this is how we will be confident in God's presence. If our conscience condemns us, we know that God is greater than our conscience and that he knows everything. And so, my dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, we have courage in God's presence. We receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. What he commands is that we believe in his son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as Christ commanded us. Whoever obeys God's commands lives in union with him. And because of the spirit that God has given us we know that God lives in union with us.' How can we possibly ignore the Bible's message about the promise and importance of God's spirit in us, which, from the context, is clearly more than our God-given natural breath?

There is still more on the 'possession' teaching – and let us not fall for the suggestion that all references to possession of the spirit refer only to those in the 1st century, after which it was withdrawn. Why should they be so limited? Does the Bible tell us only what those Christians were blessed with? Blessings denied to later Christians? So why record it? Why tell us how vital is the spirit within us and then withdraw it? Surely not! I want to come back to the 'withdrawn' concept later but we will stay now with the positive. We look at John chs 14-16 (basically about Jesus going, ... but

staying!!), and which consistently personify the holy spirit: 14:16-18 'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper, who will stay with you for EVER. He is the spirit, who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive him(!), because it cannot see him or know him, but you know him because he remains with you and is in you. When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you.' And 14:26,27: 'The helper, the holy spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and make you remember all that I have told you. Peace is what I leave with you'. Again, John 15:26: 'The helper will come – the spirit, who reveals the truth about God and who comes from the Father. I will send him from the Father, and he will speak about me.' And John 16:13: 'When, however, the spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all truth.' Of course, I am aware of the view that the Bible is seen as the spirit's word to us, and that, now that *it* is available to us, the holy spirit's withdrawal after the first century is no problem! But, when was the Bible available to the people – really accessible to them? Many years after the end of the 1st century – and, in any case, is that really how the words of Jesus in John come over to us? Is not Jesus saying that the holy spirit will be with us for ever? Is not he saying that, without its constant presence, we will not be led into all truth? Is the printed word of the English versions of the Bible really enough for us to approach a fuller understanding of its meaning and messages? Does not erroneous teaching claimed to be based on the Bible – a problem to which all sects are prone - illustrate the need for extra help and guidance in its interpretation? Why else do we pray constantly for help in correct interpretation?

We look now at some more 'possession' evidence, in Romans 8. We ought to read the whole chapter, but look for example at v23ff: 'We who have the spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves, as we wait for God to make us his sons and set our whole being free... In the same way the spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the spirit himself pleads with God for us...' So much for the view that *claims to possess the holy spirit* are about pride or arrogance...!! So v2: '...The law of the spirit .. brings us life in union with Christ who has set me free from the law of sin and death'. v 5ff: 'Those who live as the spirit tells them to, have their minds controlled by what the spirit wants...To be controlled by the spirit results in life and peace.' v9ff: '...You live as the spirit tells you to – IF IN FACT GOD'S SPIRIT LIVES IN YOU(!). WHOEVER DOES NOT HAVE THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST DOES NOT BELONG TO HIM (!). But if Christ lives in you, the spirit is life for you because you have been put right with God. .. If the spirit of God...lives in you, then he who raised Jesus from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of his spirit in you'. Can we now doubt the crucial importance of the spirit in us? Is it not clear also from this chapter that the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ are one and the same spirit – these terms are clearly interchangeable, not separate concepts as some would insist. v14ff: 'Those who are led by God's spirit are God's sons...the spirit makes you God's children, and by the spirit's power we cry out to God: "Father, my Father." God's spirit joins himself to

our spirits to declare that we are God's children.' AND, 1 Cor 6:19: 'Don't you know that your body is the temple of the holy spirit, who lives in you and who was given you by God? You do not belong to yourselves but to God; he bought you for a price. So use your bodies for God's glory'. Perhaps there's the rub!! It is a huge responsibility to be a receptacle for the holy spirit. Is that why some do not want to accept this teaching of Scripture?

We now consider the implications of John 3 on baptism for the beginning of our Christian life and for our subsequent Christian journey.. John 3:5ff: 'No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the spirit.' But John 3 then goes on to emphasise the spirit element of baptism more than the water – i.e., the spiritual more than the physical: 'He is born spiritually of the spirit',... 'you must be born again.....It is like that with everyone who is born of the spirit'. This emphasis is reinforced in Acts 1:5: 'John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the holy spirit', following the model – though over a longer period – of the baptism of Jesus by John. Of course Acts 1 refers first to the apostles at Pentecost, but to other Christians too, and to us? Acts 2:38: 'Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the holy spirit. For God's promise was made to you *and your children*, and to all who are far away – *all* whom the Lord calls to himself.'!! So, what is implied by the baptism 'formula' – 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the holy spirit'!! We say it, but what do we mean? Indeed what is the Biblical basis for this 'formula' of words? Matt 28:19,20: 'Go then to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples; baptise 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 earth.' (Just by the way, the order of the processes here in becoming disciples is interesting: baptism, teaching, obedience – and the holy spirit always with them.) How will Jesus be with his followers always? Surely, through the holy spirit – this vital element of baptism. Some Christians, Christadelphians among them, choose to emphasise the water element of baptism (a physical process) – some other Christians (and indeed John's gospel) emphasise the spirit element (a rather deeper aspect). Is one emphasis less appropriate or important than the other? Perhaps the spirit aspect is more important, since washing by water is entirely symbolic, whereas the indwelling of the spirit is an ongoing crucial aspect in our Christian lives? Recognising both aspects is of course important – *both* seem to be crucial precursors to entry to the kingdom!! *I am not denying the important symbolism of believers' baptism following 1st century custom, but I am trying to suggest that perhaps all Christian sects need to address important Bible teaching on baptism, and take on board the emphases in scripture.*

We look now at the 'withdrawn' evidence. I start from the simple but direct comment: I believe that the notion that the holy spirit was withdrawn at around the end of the 1st century is perhaps the saddest, most depressing, most damaging of incorrect teaching that comes to my mind. I know of no scripture that supports this notion, and

I have quoted much that does not. I am of course aware of some fundamentalist Christians' concerns, e.g. where is the evidence today (in contrast to that of the 1st century)? What about the false claims and abuse of so called holy spirit-given powers? Could possession of the holy spirit lead to adding to Holy Scripture? Is not the Bible enough for us? If we admit that other Christians have the holy spirit, do we not lose any credibility in our claims that they are all in serious error? I also know of sincerely presented and really rather convincing evidence of the holy spirit working in the lives of (possessed by?) Christians. In response to these questions, above all it is surely not necessary for us to see or expect spectacular miracles or amazing demonstrations in order for us to believe God's word that Christians receive the wonderful gift of the holy spirit and that it is necessary both to guide our lives and to help us to understand the Bible's messages. Guidance that we receive from the holy spirit is not adding to God's word – rather it illuminates our understanding of it. Surely also it is unfortunate if we need to 'throw out the baby with the bathwater' – by thinking that abuses and false claims negate clear Bible teaching. With our firm belief in the definition of 'faith' in Hebrews 11 – '...to be certain of the things we cannot see,' – it would surely be inappropriate to lack belief in the gift of the holy spirit, just because we feel we cannot always see its working and effect.

The evidence claimed for withdrawal is especially in 1 Cor 12 and 13. Do these chapters show the holy spirit first given, and then removed? 12:1: 'Concerning what you wrote about the gifts of the holy spirit'... (v3): '...no one can confess that Jesus is Lord unless he is guided by the holy spirit.' [It really is just not good enough to say that well, of course, we have the Bible today.] v 4-11: 'There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served... The spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.' Then the gifts are listed: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working miracles, speaking God's message, discernment between gifts from the spirit and gifts not from the spirit, speaking in tongues, interpretation BUT 'it is one and the same spirit who does all this...' v13: 'In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptised into the one body by the same spirit, and we have all been given the same spirit to drink.' (By the way, we see again here the emphasis on the spirit in the baptismal context.) AND THEN, IS THE SPIRIT TO BE TAKEN AWAY? ch 13:8-10: 'There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge, but it will pass. For our gifts of knowledge and of inspired messages are only partial; but WHEN what is perfect is come, then what is partial will disappear... Then we shall see face to face. What I now know is only partial; then it will be complete – as complete as God's knowledge of me.' So at most three gifts appear to be withdrawn, but *only* when perfection comes, when we shall see face to face. Surely, therefore, this withdrawal of the holy spirit will be when Christ returns, when its possession for guidance and the gifts listed will no longer be necessary – but not at around the end of the 1st century.

Incidentally, withdrawal of the *holy spirit* (which some see as the particular extra aspect of God's spirit) is linked to periods of spiritual darkness, false teaching and wickedness (rather a sober and challenging thought) e.g. Micah 3:6,7: 'Prophets, your day is almost over; the sun is going down on you. Because you mislead my people, you will have no more prophetic visions, and you will not be able to predict anything. Those who predict the future will be disgraced by their failure. They will all be humiliated because God does not answer them.'

We look now at the purpose of the giving of the holy spirit. It was not just for establishing the Church, as some would suggest (the argument that the church is now established, we have the Bible, therefore there is no need now for the possession of the holy spirit). The holy spirit gift is also to *strengthen* the church, as important now as it was in the 1st century: 1 Cor 12:7: 'The spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all' (and, of course, this chapter, from which I have already quoted on the gifts of the spirit, is followed by the reference to the body and all its parts – and the need for each part, each gift, for the health of the whole body). 1 Cor 14:26ff: 'This is what I mean, my brothers. When you meet for worship, one person has a hymn, another a teaching, another a revelation from God, another a message in strange tongues, and still another the explanation of what is said. Everything must be of help to the church' (NIV: 'All these must be done for the strengthening of the church'); or again 1 Cor 14:3,4: 'The one who proclaims God's message speaks to people and gives them help, encouragement and comfort...the one who proclaims God's message helps the whole church.' Since it is clear now that effective preaching needs the guidance of the holy spirit, it would seem odd if any body which engages in a good deal of preaching were to believe that the holy spirit gifts had been withdrawn.

There is also the whole issue of answer to prayer. All Christians believe in the power of prayer. By what means are our prayers answered? Is it not through the working of the holy spirit? Is it not by the holy spirit working through us – God's gift to us as believing Christians? Not by our own power, and thus nothing to boast about, but in response to our surges of faith, and to remind us that we are but vehicles for God to show his power, mercy, love, grace – and that he still works today. Are not answers to prayer miracles – sometimes in fact quite spectacular miracles after all? We *can* believe in miracles – *and* the power of the holy spirit today!

We can be 'dry as dust' theoretical believers; but instead we can accept God's gift with joy, admit the holy spirit into ourselves, and see its working through us to demonstrate God's power, and to His honour and glory. We can be too 'dry'. Perhaps if we thought more about God's gift of the spirit to us, within us, we would be more demonstrative, perhaps in many different ways. It makes us think – how do we demonstrate this God-given power within us? How does it show? If we really believe in this gracious gift from God – how does it show? 1 Cor 14:12: 'Since you are eager to have the gifts of the spirit, you must try above everything else to make greater use of those which help to build up the church.' Perhaps admitting to having this wonderful gift within us is rather a difficult admission on which to act?

Examples in our times of the working of the holy spirit are probably very personal to each of us. We might all have our own examples, and we might all have personal reactions to examples shown to us. For me, Jack Deere's book, for example, provides masses of convincing evidence of spirit gifts working through sincere, believing Christians. We should not be put off by the inevitable abuses, or a perceived lack of directly personal manifestations of the holy spirit. We can be positive, not negative!! After all, that part of 1 Corinthians to which we have already referred is quite strong on desiring the gifts of the holy spirit – 1 Cor 12:31: 'Set your hearts then on the more important gifts', and 1 Cor 14:1: 'It is love then that you should strive for. Set your hearts on spiritual gifts, especially the gift of proclaiming God's message', and even 1 Cor 14:39: 'So then my brothers set your heart on proclaiming God's message, but do not forbid the speaking in strange tongues.'

I want to bring our thoughts to Jesus. He was totally eaten up by the holy spirit, the perfect model of possession of the holy spirit – perhaps endowed at birth, certainly confirmed at his baptism, and shown to the full in his life. 'Without the Father, I can do nothing', BUT with the Father's power look what he achieved. What of the apostles, and of other disciples? They had surges of the holy spirit and 'drier' times. What about us? Do we just have drier times, or do we admit the holy spirit gift into our lives and rejoice in God the Father's grace and mercy to us in giving this priceless gift. Do we want to believe that the holy spirit has been withdrawn until Jesus returns against what seems to be clear Bible teaching and with all the serious implications of being without the holy spirit's gifts? It is really quite puzzling why any Christian should want to believe and promote the withdrawal of the holy spirit!

So finally, what about the power, conviction and joy from the holy spirit?

1 Thess 1:1-10: 'From Paul, Silas and Timothy – to the people of the church in Thessalonica, who belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: may grace and peace be yours. We always thank God for you all, and always mention you in our prayers. For we remember before our God and Father how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, and how your hope in the Lord Jesus Christ is firm. Our brothers, we know that God loves you and has chosen you to be his own. For we brought the Good News to you, not with words only but also with power and the holy spirit, and with complete conviction of its truth. You know how we lived when we were with you; it was for your own good. You imitated us and the Lord; and even though you suffered much, you received the message with the joy which comes from the holy spirit. So you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia. For not only did the message from the Lord go out from you throughout Macedonia and Achaia, but the news about your faith in God has gone everywhere. There is nothing, then, that we need to say. All those people speak about how you received us when we visited you, and how you turned away from idols to God, to serve the true and living God and to wait for his son to come from heaven – his son Jesus, whom he raised from death and who rescues us from God's anger that is coming.'

Let us really acknowledge and be moved by God's spirit gift within us, really reach out to God the Father, to Jesus, and to each other, and allow the holy spirit to work within us.

Let us not be resistant to, afraid of or surprised by the holy spirit. Rather, in humility and with joy, acknowledge this priceless gift from God, let us accept with awe the Bible's teaching on the holy spirit, and resolve to allow God to work through us to strengthen the church – to his honour and glory.

And finally, 2 Cor 13:13: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all' – a wonderful message for us to accept.

Nigel Warwick

Ever Learning

A brief enquiry into another of the (infinite?) variety of pearls of wisdom contained in the Word of Truth.

2. The arm of coincidence isn't THAT long!

Jacob left Beersheba for Padan-aram under sentence of death. There; that puts a somewhat different slant on things, doesn't it? Yes, of course we all know he went to Syria to find a wife from among the daughters of Laban, but he did go with Esau's words echoing in his mind – 'Just you wait until father's dead and buried, then you've got just days to live, heel-catcher!' But as he went, there was something else in his mind; the word of his half-blind father as he gave him a second blessing.

It was the blessing that Isaac must surely have known he ought to have given the previous day, when 'Esau' (Jacob in disguise) came in to him with what looked and smelled – and for a few precious minutes even tasted – like venison fresh from the hunt. What a superb cook Rebekah was! 'My word; you didn't waste much time out there, son!' the old man had said; 'I didn't expect to see you for another couple of hours!' Jacob's reply tumbled from his lips before he could prevent the error – 'Yahweh your God put the deer in my path!'

It was too late; the old man's mood had suddenly changed. 'Hey! You come here and let me touch and smell you, see if you're **really** Esau!' Half-blind he may have been – deaf he was not! And what was Jacob kicking himself for by now? Why, that reference to 'Yahweh your Elohim!' How often did Esau ever call Isaac's God by His covenant name? It was never part of his vocabulary! However, deceived by the feel and the smell, and in the darkness of the virtually sightless, he gave Jacob the blessing he was going to give Esau.

Or rather, he didn't.

Not **the** Blessing, but merely **a** blessing. Read Genesis 27:28 & 29. Where is the blessing that God gave Abraham as Lot disappeared from his sight toward the plain below, and which Abraham had given Isaac? Where is the Land, and the Kingdom, and the king to come? They are all conspicuous by their absence, and for a very good reason, I believe. Maybe Isaac wasn't the fool he'd been taken for – not quite, anyway. I reckon the old man was determined from the outset to wait and see what would happen if an 'Esau' turned up who **hadn't** suddenly acquired either a most obliging buck or a spirituality totally foreign to his lifelong atheistic character. And the rest, as they say, is history, including the second blessing – the real one this time! – in Genesis 28:3&4; Ail Shaddai's blessing of Abraham, the all-important land – everything.

So off goes Jacob, taking his father's word and hoping that some day Ail Shaddai will endorse it. He doesn't have to wait long, only until he reaches what my Jerusalem Bible calls 'a certain place'; maybe a well that Grandfather had dug on his great trek from Ur. That would be an eminently sensible spot to sleep over.

Was it a dream? If it was, Jacob's God took hold of his subconscious mind and used it to great effect, for there and then the Blessing of Promise was confirmed in all its wonder. And all those angels of God, on that staircase to heaven – what were they for? Look again, and note with joy that they were **first ascending** and **THEN DESCENDING**. They started with Jacob and they finished with him, just as Elijah did not ascend from earth in a chariot of fire; those chariots came down from God to Elijah **and they stayed with him** until Sennacherib's hordes were destroyed, while Elijah had already gone from the earth in a 'twister' – a tornado. God was going to be with Jacob 'in all places whithersoever thou goest' by means of His Ministers! That, too, is how He is with us. Remember – whenever you are alone there are three of you there. And there are always two interested friends at **every** lecture, **every** special effort, on **every** doorstep and in **every** precinct.

But have you spotted Jacob's mistake No. 2 here? (No. 1 he shared with Rebekah, thinking they had to step in and force God to give him the blessing – or even barge in and do the job for Him.) Having seen (a representative of) God atop the staircase, the young man said 'The LORD is in this place and I didn't realize it!' Hadn't he, a few seconds earlier, heard that LORD say 'I'm with you, lad!' and 'I'll bring you back here!?' (He did, too.) So, years later in Syria, why on earth did he go through all that rigmarole with the striped branches, as if the LORD had never spoken to him on that staircase? D'you know, he even had to have **another** dream before realizing that it had all been a monumental waste of time and effort, because the LORD had been working on those mating animals a few yards from him all the time – 'That wasn't you, Jacob, with your little whittling knife,' said the angel (who had never left him – remember?), 'that was ME!'

And how's this for a third mistake, the naming of the stone he put his head on when he saw the staircase? The Strength of the House of Ail, he called it, yet the

House of God isn't stones at all. It's a houseHOLD. It's people. **It's you and me.**

Finally, where's the coincidence?

When Jacob and his mother deceived Isaac over the 'venison' pot-roast, they did so in the dark. I know it was broad daylight outside, but in that huge, thickly-covered tent it was pretty dim and Isaac's eyes weren't much use to him. He was deceived by mother and son. He was fooled by the identity of one of the deceivers.

How magnificently appropriate was Jacob's own deception at the hands of Laban and Leah (father and daughter) over the identity of one of them, in the darkness. It's poetic justice to perfection, and certainly no coincidence!

And maybe – just maybe – if he had seen the hand of God at work, and realized that here was the sin of the father matched perfectly by the sin of the son, he might – just might – have said about his wedding-night tent, 'The LORD was in THIS place, too – and again I didn't realize it!' He could have settled down with the adoring wife he had been given (with the LORD's hand behind the giving, God knowing which wife would be in the line of Messiah) and thereby saved himself such a load of grief and heartache, with the glamorous but bitchy Rachel treating everything and everyone as if she owned them, even, I reckon, to the extent of threatening suicide if Jacob didn't give her a child, when she knew right well that the absence of offspring lay at her door, not his! The bitterness in that 'household of the LORD' had to be seen and heard to be believed!

And after all that, with crippling pain in his leg to remind him of Who was **really** in control of his destiny, he finally gave in and let God get on with being with him in ALL places wherever he went.

Just as **we** should, who have been given no less wonderful promises by the very same God!

Brian Morgan

Look well to this day.

Look to this day! For it is life, the very life of life.

In its busy course lie all the virtues and realities of your existence: the bliss of growth, the glory of action, the splendour of achievement.

For yesterday is but a dream, tomorrow is only a vision.

But today well lived makes yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a dream of hope.

Look well therefore to this day.

Such is the salutation to the dawn.

(3rd century Indian)

The Lord's Prayer (Young's Literal Translation)

5 And when thou mayest pray, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites, because they love in the synagogues, and in the corners of the broad places – standing – to pray, that they may be seen of men; verily I say to you, that they have their reward.

6 'But thou, when thou mayest pray, go into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who is seeing in secret, shall reward thee manifestly.

7 And – praying – ye may not use vain repetitions like the nations, for they think that in their much speaking they shall be heard,

8 be ye not therefore like to them, for your Father doth know those things that ye have need of before your asking him;

9 thus therefore pray ye:

'Our Father who art in the heavens! hallowed be Thy name.

10 'Thy reign come: Thy will come to pass, as in heaven also on the earth.

11 'Our appointed bread give us to-day.

12 'And forgive us our debts, as also we forgive our debtors.

13 'And mayest Thou not lead us to temptation, but deliver us from the evil, because Thine is the reign,

and the power,

and the glory –

to the ages. **Amen.**

14 'For, if ye may forgive men their trespasses He also will forgive you – your Father who is in the heavens;

15 but if ye may not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

We are all very familiar with phrases like 'Thy kingdom come' and 'Thine is the kingdom', for these words have become hallowed in our language since they appeared in the KJV of the Bible and the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. In the latter, the version of the Lord's Prayer recited at Morning Prayer contains the last section that includes the phrase 'Thine is the kingdom' whereas the version used at Evening Prayer leaves it out. It is of course well-known that the doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer does not appear in all of the early manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel, in fact some scholars accept that it is not original. However, it has become generally accepted in this country because of its regular use at Morning Prayers. Most English people have learnt to repeat the words at a school of some sort. . All of this has had some influence on the way the Greek word basileia is translated in most English versions of the Bible. .Almost invariably it is translated by the word 'kingdom', which in modern English is

The Lord's Prayer (The Message)

5 And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All, these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?

6 Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

7 The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God.

8 Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need.

9 With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

Our Father in heaven, Reveal who you are.

10 Set the world right; Do what's best – as above, so below.

11 Keep us alive with three square meals.

12 Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.

13 Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.

You're in charge!

You can do anything you want!

You're ablaze in beauty!

Yes. Yes. Yes.

14 In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others.

15 If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part.

primarily taken to be a concrete noun and in our community is taken to be a concrete noun referring to the state of affairs on earth after the return of Jesus. However, the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words translated 'kingdom' in our Bible were all primarily abstract nouns and only secondarily concrete nouns. The generally accepted meaning is reign, rule, sovereignty, kingship. Read with this in mind, many of the references to kingdom in our NT can be readily understood not to refer primarily or only to the future kingdom but to God's dealings with us now through Jesus. The above two versions of Matthew 6, supplied by Tim Smart, offer some evidence of this. Any readers who have not already done so might care to try reading 'kingdom' passages replacing 'kingdom' by something like reign, rule, sovereignty or kingship, without assuming necessarily a reference to the future, and to ask themselves if this puts a different light on the meaning.

God was in Christ Part 2

Was Jesus of Nazareth 'mad, bad or God' as posed in my first essay? The Scriptures under scrutiny are the two in which Jesus made strong claims for himself, John 8:58 and 10:30

The first passage is: 'Before Abraham was (*ginomai* – came into being) I am' Question: Is 'I am' simply the verb 'to be' or does it mean something more? The expression in Greek is *ego eimi* which is usually translated 'I am' or 'I am he', the 'he' being added to complete the sense, and which is shown in italics in some versions.

There is an interesting occurrence in Matthew 14:27 The disciples are scared stiff at what seemed an apparition walking on water. To reassure them and give them courage Jesus called out: 'Take courage! It is I (*ego eimi*).' In his personal encounter with the Samaritan lady (John 4:25), she confidently asserted: 'When Messiah comes he will tell us all things.' In response Jesus replied in v. 27: 'I (*ego*) who speak to you am he (*eimi*). In John 8, in the build-up to the verse we are exploring, Jesus said: 'If you believe not that I am he (*ego eimi*) you will die in your sins' (v.24), followed later by 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he (*ego eimi*)' (v.28).

Going forward to the passage under review, we need to examine the immediate context: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: he saw it and was glad' (v.56). In Genesis we find faithful Abraham rejoicing that God promised him a son, an heir through whom Messiah would come to bless all nations. The listening Jews would have grasped that that was what Jesus was saying but they were being deliberately obtuse: 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?' (v.57). Was Jesus prematurely aged? No, fifty was an upper age limit, the age a Levitical priest retired from service (Numbers 4:3). Jesus replied to the comment that he lacked maturity: 'Before Abraham was I am', that is, the promised Messiah. That declaration so enraged them that they 'picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds (v.59).'

What was the motive behind their murderous intentions? To them he was a man born of fornication, demon-possessed, and an apostate to boot, a Samaritan – so he could not possibly be Messiah! Even worse, their vested interests were at stake. If his claim to Messiahship were to be authenticated, they would lose their authority, status and privilege, in other words their jobs, and that must not be allowed at any price!

But Jesus was the unique 'I am' – the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the True Vine, the Way, the Truth and the Life. No ordinary man would have dared to make such claims, but, as Messiah and Son of God, he could do so.

The second passage under scrutiny is: 'I and my Father are one' (John 10:30). Was he 'one' in nature with God, of the same 'substance' as his Father as the Athanasian Creed asserts? Or, was he 'one' in the sense of union of mind and spirit with the Father? Whatever the case may be, the statement created terrible tension between Jesus and the Jews, since they 'picked up stones to stone him' (v.31). Their motive? 'We are not stoning you (for the miracles you do) but for blasphemy; because you being a man, make yourself God' (v.33).

The word 'one' is the crux of the matter. The Jews appeared to think that Jesus was lifting the word straight out of the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4. That may help us to understand their hate. Look at the words in a Hebrew New Testament and compare them with the Shema:

Ani V'avi echad anachnu.

Shema, Yisrael: Yahveh elohenu, Yahveh echad.

They believed that Jesus was not only claiming to be Messiah, but was actually making himself equal with God!

Jesus answers their accusation by an appeal to Psalm 82:

"Is it not written in your law, I said you are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came" Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy, because I said, I am the Son of God?' (vv. 34-36).

Psalm 82 reads:

'God (*elohim*) stands in the great assembly, he gives judgement among the gods (*elohim* – the same word translated God). How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked?'

After the Hebrew name *Yahveh*, *Elohim* is the next great name of the One God of Israel. It is a plural noun, used invariably with a singular verb, pointing to the manifold aspects of the Lord's character – compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. *Elohim* is used of false gods. On the odd occasion it is used of angels, and here it is used of the Judges of Israel. They were invested with the Divine name and the Divine prerogative to administer justice to the people, in which task they lamentably failed. Jesus was saying to the Jews, as the Judges of Israel bore the Divine name so did he. The Psalm continues: 'I said, You are gods (*elohim*), and you are sons of the Most High (*elohim atem v'beni elyon*)'. Thus, if the Judges of Israel were sons of God, so he too could be a son of God: in his case, the Son of God.

In what sense then did Jesus have 'oneness' with the Father? He was 'one' in will and purpose, in the scheme of human redemption, reconciling the world unto God. This union is the same as that shared with believers: 'That they all may be one as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me. And the glory which you gave me I have given them: that they may be one, as we are one' (John 17:21-22). Earlier in the chapter Jesus had declared: 'And now O Father, glorify you me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was' (v.5). This was the

glory of his life given on the Cross, and the glory of his Resurrection, Ascension and Exaltation to sit on the right hand of God, which glory was in prospect before the world began.

A personal note.

When I accepted the Christadelphian faith, full of exuberance I used to correspond with all kinds of theologians, querying bits of Greek etc.: Adam Fox author of *Meet the Greek Testament*; Canon Rutter, Dean of St. Paul's who led me through Swete's *The Holy Spirit In The Ancient Church*; Professor C S Lewis writer of *The Screwtape Letters*. He was a modest man and happy to correspond with lesser mortals. On the question of 'God was in Christ' he viewed it in this way: 'Bees beget bees; birds beget birds; men beget men; and God begets God!' That seemed a fairly potent argument, but it does seem to collapse in that male and female bees, male and female birds, male and female humans are of the same kind, but the parents of Jesus were of a different kind. His Father was Divine and his mother Mary human. By his begetting by the Holy Spirit, the power of God, he was the Son of God; and by his birth of Mary he inherited her human nature.

Let us move on to the vantage point of the apostle Paul and his epistles, where there is a new vision. He had encountered the Risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. Jesus Christ is Lord. His Divine Sonship is revealed in power. And since Paul was writing and preaching to Greeks, he spoke in terms meaningful to them: he speaks of Jesus as being in the 'image' of God:

'The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image (*eikon*) of God' (2 Cor 4:4).

'He is the image (*eikon*) of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation' (Col 1:15).

What is an image? A representation. Jesus picked up a Roman coin and asked asked his listeners: 'Whose is this image (*eikon*) and inscription?' (Mat:22:20) To which they replied 'Caesar's.' It was a likeness of Caesar. It corresponded to the original. Jesus corresponds to the 'Original'; not in physical form, but in spirituality; he portrayed his Father's goodness, mercy and truth. He was the impress of God's character.

The apostle Paul also speaks of the Lord Jesus being in the 'form' of God: 'Who being in the form (*morphe*) of God thought it not robbery (a thing to be grasped) to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation (*kenosis* - 'to empty' i.e. he emptied himself) and took upon him the form (*morphe*) of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in the fashion of a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:6-8).'

Morphe means form, shape appearance, semblance. 'Form' does not mean 'very nature' (as the NIV translates it). It is not an identity of nature, but rather an identity of relationship. He is not God, but the Son of God. His status was divine.

In what sense did Jesus take on the 'form' of a servant or slave? It was in his service to mankind. We see his servitude in the episode in John chapter 13, when in humility he washed the disciples' feet. So in what way did Jesus 'empty' himself? The great Anglican scholar Bishop Lightfoot remarked that Philippians 2:5-11 was the most worked over passage in the New Testament. In his words: 'it has been obscured by excessively minute scrutiny.' The 'Kenosis' theory of the orthodox Church is that Jesus emptied himself of his pre-existent Godship to become man. But what was the self-emptying? It was the surrendering of his own will and desires, the glory of Kingship, to which he was entitled, to take on the role of a servant. He abnegated self to become a slave, to the extent of suffering the death of the Cross to save humankind.

Paul adds something more to the stature of Christ. He adds 'Fullness': 'For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness (*pleroma*) dwell' (Col 1:19). *Pleroma* means 'that of which a thing is full', and Jesus was full of God's grace and truth.

We have then three words 'image', 'form' and 'fullness' which express the close relationship Jesus had with his Father. The words 'image' and 'fullness' cannot be pressed to make them mean the 'very nature' of God, since identical expressions are used of believers: 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image (*eikon*) of his Son' (Rom 8:9). We are in the likeness of Christ which has nothing to do with physical form. 'And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness (*pleroma*) of God' (Eph. 3:19). We are filled with the love of God which is topped up each day.

Paul too speaks of Jesus as the 'man from heaven': 'The first man (Adam) is the earth earthy: the second man (Christ) is the Lord from heaven' (1 Cor.15:47). This speaks of Christ's perfect manhood in contrast to Adam's lost manhood. Adam too was made in the 'image' of God, but he lost the plot! He sinned and fell from grace. The 'man from heaven' does not refer to a literal descent for John in his gospel writes: 'There was a man sent from (*para*) God' (1:6), literally 'from alongside' God; not that John the Baptist pre-existed, but that he was a man on a mission. So too was the Lord Jesus. When Nicodemus said of Jesus: 'We know that you are a teacher come from God' (John 3:2), he was not saying that Jesus literally descended from heaven, but that he came speaking God's words and performing His will.

How then can we sum up the perfect harmony between God and His Son Jesus? It is divulged by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews:

'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets ... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the worlds (*aionas* - ages) (1:1-2)'.

Aionas means ages, eternity, 'the immeasurable content of immeasurable time.' The salvation which the prophets preached was fragmentary, piecemeal, but is

now complete in God's Son. On account of Jesus, His Father constituted the ages of human history. The verses continue: 'The Son is the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of his being' (v.3). The effulgence of God's glory is seen in Christ being lifted up on Calvary's hill. It is there we are reconciled to God.

Our subject title is 'God was in Christ' but the full quotation is:

'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing (counting) men's sins against them' (2 Cor. 5:19). Reconciliation is *katallage*, the root meaning being 'change' or 'to exchange'. It implies relationship, a two-way relationship, the bringing together of those who have been estranged, the restoration of a broken friendship, the turning of enmity into friendship.

'And that he might reconcile (*apokatallasso*) both Jews and Greeks unto God, in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby' (Eph. 2:16). The hostility between Jew and Greek, the disparity between the two cultures could only be bridged by the Cross.

'For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled (*katallasso*) to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled (*katallasso*) we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation (*katallasso*).' (Rom 5:10,11) The AV reads 'atonement' in verse 11, a mischievous translation. The explanation of this old English word 'atonement' as denoting Christ pacifying an angry God is entirely fictitious. These verses do not speak of God being reconciled to man, but of man being reconciled to God. They proclaim God's love. He changes a lost relationship to a restored relationship. It is two-way insofar that we have to exchange rebellion for surrender. But surrendering self to God and Christ is the difficult bit.

The touchstone of discipleship seems to be this:

'That I may know (*ginosko*) him and the power of his resurrection' (Phil 3:10). 'Know here is to know by experience, to know in reality, not just to know (*oida*) as a fact, as a bald statement on the pages of Scripture. We have to come to know Jesus as Friend, Saviour and Lord.

But there seems to be, even in Christadelphians, a reluctance to come to know Jesus: because we are conscious of failure. If this is our state of mind, then we need to seek strength to overcome our weaknesses and sins. In our efforts to dispose of the doctrine of the Trinity, we should not forget the threefold activity in our lives of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; although, of course, the Holy Spirit is a power not a person.

'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ...
And surely I am with, you always, to the very end of the age.'

(Mat 28:19).

To be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, does not affirm

three co-equal, co-eternal persons, but the three aspects of the salvation offered to believers:

The wondrous love of the Father

The amazing sacrifice of the Son

The guidance, indwelling and sanctification of the Holy Spirit

This combined influence and activity can be said to operate 'in the name' of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We cannot attain unto the Kingdom in our own strength, but we are not left to our own devices: God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Saviour and the Holy Spirit are active in our lives imparting courage and helping us to overcome our sins.

So may the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Bill Davison

True Religion.

Secular society can only be organised satisfactorily within a framework of legalism. Laws upheld by authority and kept by citizens provide the benefits or reward of security and peaceful living. If the laws are not kept by individuals, then deserved punishment is imposed as expiation or penalty to regain acceptance and as a deterrent. Unlawful acts threaten the cohesion of society and cannot be ignored or overlooked without 'payment of debt to society', apart from rare, special acts of amnesty. Punishment must be arranged and executed only by the authorities after just condemnation. Anything else is 'lynch' or 'mob' law rejected by civilised societies.

True religion, however, is fundamentally different, being based on the spiritual, on mercy, grace and love, not on law. Although for practical and fellowship reasons spiritual groups and sects are formed, invariably, as they grow, they become overorganised, intolerant, authoritarian and lose commitment to Christ's principles. They 'lose their first love', often even in spite of guidance from the Holy Spirit.

The legalistic system needed to maintain life in society in general, is wrongly transferred to religion, giving rise to false religions, whether pagan or Christian. Instead of being based on the individual's relationship with God and His purpose of Redemption, the sect and its rules become paramount, as in secular society, and the authority of leaders and their personal interpretations become of more concern than individuals, or than the authority of Christ or the Scriptures.

It becomes 'expedient', that any, even the Son of God, who 'rock the boat' should be 'put out' of the community or put to death by those who think that in so doing they 'do God a service'. False witness, injustice and cruelty are made use of for the good of the people or central power. Saul, the persecutor, was changed to Paul by the divine revelation that treatment of members is treatment of Christ –

'whatsoever ye do to these, ye do to me.'

It is significant that the driving force of Pharisaism was fuelled by Lawyers. 'Origen helped to trail into the church ... ancient (heathen) notions with reference to expiation and redemption ... finding biblical passages to connect them.' (Harnack). Anselm, steeped in Roman Law, was the theologian who had by far the greatest influence on Church teaching on the sacrifice of Christ as divine punishment on sin. A pseudo-religious, penal, criminal system which inspired Penance and misrepresented the Crucifixion as punishment for offending a Divine Lawgiver demanding legalistic 'Satisfaction', Expiation or Propitiation. All these are legal concepts. Reformaton theology was affected by Grotius, a prominent jurist, and the more modern German theology of the work of Christ involved a legalistic satisfaction of God's offended Honour rather than penalty for criminal offence.

None of this 'legalism' forms any part of the Christian religion, based on the spiritual, on mercy, grace and love, and not on law. There is no forgiveness in a legal system. Throughout religious history, a few individuals, at times unknown to each other, only to God, have 'not bowed to the Moloch of expediency' (Bro.A. Eyre), nor to legalism, the leaven of the Pharisees, but have walked in faith. The true religion – becoming at one with the Divine – revealed in the Word of God contains no element of any concept of meritorious reward for achievement of righteousness nor of punishment for failure. There is no satisfaction, or retribution, deserved penalty, appeasement or expiation or propitiation to forestall divine disapproval.

The Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, did promise eternal life for achieved perfect righteousness. It was never intended as an effective way of redemption since the 'weakness of the flesh' prevented any, except Christ, from keeping it. It was temporary, simply to demonstrate that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'. It had no need for punishment, as death, the result of failure, was inevitable. It had no means of escape. It was taken away after fulfilment by Christ, 'nailed to his cross', leading to full and free forgiveness under the New Covenant of Grace.

Since the foundation of the world, the New Covenant in Christ has been the only effective way to life, for it is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which makes us free from the bondage of the law of sin and death, (Rom 8:2), inevitable in Adam and under the Mosaic, Old Covenant. The New Covenant has always been the true religion. It is based solely on genuine repentance, demonstrated in symbols of sacrifice or baptism and on free forgiveness, Mercy and Grace through faith, which is our trust that God will keep His New Covenant in us just as He fulfilled His Old Covenant in Christ, 'in that He raised him from the dead.' 'So let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy'. This is the true religion, nothing to do with sin and deserved punishment for failure, nor with reward for merit or achievement. Though of course no

follower of Jesus would 'continue in sin that grace may abound'.

'Mercy' is simply NOT receiving what we do deserve.

'Grace' is simply receiving what we do NOT deserve.

This is not justice, as we reckon justice to be, for 'if thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? but there is forgiveness with Thee'.

All of this precludes any concept of legalistic, meritorious, deserved reward or punishment. There cannot be forgiveness where punishment or retribution is required. There cannot be punishment where forgiveness is bestowed. Redemption is a free gift of God, an 'inheritance, incorruptible reserved in heaven', for children, not servants.

Hints of the gulf between false and true religion are to be found regularly in the Bible. Cain depended on bringing his own achievements for divine approval or reward. (do we?) whereas Abel, in faith, sought forgiveness (in type) through Christ. Job and his friends worshipped in expectation of deserved reward or punishment, which brought only 'confusion'(Job 10:15). But Elihu set out the New Covenant in Christ, the true religion, in chapter 35. Sin, transgressions or righteousness may harm or help other men but do not affect the Great Creator, (vv.6-8), nor the prospect of Redemption. Therefore 'trust thou in the Almighty'(v.14). Abraham's faith, not his righteous acts nor failings, was counted for righteousness. David, (Ps.51), prayed for sins to be blotted out, not punished. Ps 130 asks: 'If God should mark iniquity, who shall stand? ... and declares 'but there is forgiveness with Him.' It was not the Pharisee's righteousness ('as filthy rags'), but the publican's awareness and repentance which brought justification. Our own imputed 'righteousness' is declared through God's 'forbearance', (Rom.3.25), not through punishment, retribution, expiation or legalistic satisfaction, neither ours nor Christ's. Let us rejoice that the Old Covenant, the ministration of death, has been nailed to the Cross.

Sadly, no organised religion remains free from the tendency to put great emphasis on deserved punishment to satisfy divine disapproval. It is even twisted to explain the murder of the 'holy, harmless, undefiled' Son of God on Calvary.

But the way back to God, the true religion, lies not through Pharisaism which was condemned by Christ, its leaven poisoning all Christian sects, nor the Judaizing which was constantly rejected by Paul, nor through the fear of punishment, of penance, of excommunication by the sect which 'puts men out thinking they do God a service', nor of rejection by God. 'God hath not given us the spirit of fear... but of power.' It lies through the faithful, confident acceptance of the New Covenant in Christ, mercy and grace received through a 'High Priest touched with all our infirmities.'

'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?
nothing shall separate us from the love of God,
which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

John James

A Tale of Two Cities

Throughout the long dark ages of the Diaspora, the Jews concluded their Pass-over celebration with a prayer: 'Next year in Jerusalem!' For the Jew there was and is only one Jerusalem. For the Christian there are two – earthly Jerusalem and heavenly Jerusalem. To which one do we belong?

'Elpis Israel', the hope of Israel, has from the outset been the cornerstone of Christadelphian faith. We view earthly Jerusalem as the barometer of prophecy: from what happens to the city and the people we attempt to gauge whereabouts we are on the divine time scale and how near the coming of the Messiah may be.

Paul compares the two Jerusalems. 'Jerusalem which now is, is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.' (Galatians 4:25) The 'all' is surely the same 'all' as in 3:28: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.'

Abraham, father of the faithful, 'looked for a city' (Hebrews 11:10); not a conglomeration of buildings and streets for he had left that kind of city behind. The patriarchs were looking for a city in the sense of a community – a community of likeminded souls – people who, like them, believed in God, in God's promises, and were prepared to die in faith, not having received the promises as yet.

'He looked for a city which hath foundations.' Not those of packed down stone and rubble, to which earthly Jerusalem has been reduced during the course of its chequered history. Citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem are 'built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets', are building their lives **now** upon Abraham's seed which is Christ', the sure foundation laid by God and not man.

'A city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' John describes this divine community-to-be as 'The holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' (Revelation 21:2) This is the Jerusalem to which we belong even now, where reside our hopes and aspirations. 'Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' (Philippians 3:20) 'For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.' (Hebrews 13:14)

Scripture often compares and contrasts the natural with the spiritual, the temporal with the eternal, the earthly with the heavenly – the paradox being that the **latter** is the reality! For example, the tabernacle, exquisitely made, furnished for the service of God, was nevertheless 'a shadow of good things to come.' The reality is found in Jesus Christ.

God's prophets proclaim the future for earthly Jerusalem. How much more then 'the glory that excellet' of the heavenly Jerusalem – for she, not the earthly, is the mother of all who are in Christ Jesus.

Michael Craddock

*A large portrait of Myra Hindley, the child murderer,
was executed by a conceptual artist, using the handprints of small children.
It was the stimulus for the following poem.*

HANDS

Greasy, money-grubbing hands
Thieving hands
Hands through bars
Hands cut off
Out of reach?

Fingers tattooed with LOVE and HATE
Myra's face in small handprints
Prowling lustful hands
Murdering assassin's hands
Out of reach?

A baby's starfish hands
Adolescent hands
Carpenter's work-worn hands
Hands rejected, crucified
Reaching out...

Praying hands upturned
Albrecht Durer's praying hands
Hands for healing
Hands outstretched to bless
Reaching out...

Rosalind Lomas

01/06/03

Studies in Ecclesiastes

Part 18

Folly again: Chapter 10:12-15

The contrast of wisdom and folly we have met before in Qoheleth, but here, after the first sentence, only the fool is dealt with. In v.12 the R.E.B. adds something: 'Wise words win favour.' The more literal A.V. 'The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious' states only the quality of the speech, not, its benefit. The R.E.B. evidently wanted a more exact parallel with the following assertion that the speech of a fool results in his destruction, and, so added what could be the implication of the Hebrew words about wise speech.

The following v.13 stresses ends: a fool's utterances are, when spoken, simply folly, but the ultimate result is his destruction. In v.14 the mention of 'end' is taken up in more detail. The fool professes to know the future, even the future of the human species, whereas Qoheleth has specifically stressed his ignorance of what comes after death (9:4-10). Then the section concludes by stressing that all the lucubrations of the fool fail to benefit him. He does not even know the way to the nearby city! The last phrase is a unique thought for the O.T., but perfectly clear.

More on kingship: Chapter 10:16-20

As we have noted more than once previously, Qoheleth writes critically about kingship, implying that he is an outside observer, not himself a king. Verse 16 stresses the harm in a kind of king who feasts with the princes in the morning. The clear implication here is that the main meal of the day was in the evening, so that feasting in the morning implies gluttony. However, the status of the king is not clear. The Hebrew word *na'ar* is rendered 'child' in the A.V., but 'slave' in the R.E.B. Both are possible, and the English word 'boy' in not so distant times had a similar ambiguity: a young male or a servant. However, as with 'boy' indicating a young male, the actual age is flexible. Grown men can be called *na'ar*, up to, perhaps, 30 years, as in English older people talk of those younger than themselves. And that is probably the correct way to understand Qoheleth here. The state suffers under a relatively young king, who is corrupted by early holding of power and indulges in gluttony with his contemporaries. A slave who became a king would not, probably, feel so close a bond with 'the princes'. The next verse might seem to contradict this interpretation with a contrasting king who is 'the son of nobles' (A.V.) or 'nobly born' (R.E.B.). However, 'son of' in Hebrew need not 'be taken literally. 'Sons of Belial' are reprobates with no concern for their ancestry, and 'son of a year' (never in fact literally translated in English) means simply 'one year old.' Thus 'son of nobles' can refer to character, not ancestry. In the context it is the person's behaviour that is praised. Under him the

princes only feast at the right time of day, and he acts with the utmost circumspection. The following verse:

If the owner is negligent the rafters collapse, and if his hands are idle the house leaks. (R.E.B.)

could be taken at face value merely: a stitch in time saves nine, but since the next verse, 20, is still about kingship, it is surely better to take the previous verse as a metaphor: a negligent king can ruin his kingdom.

Verse 20 enjoins restraint in speaking about the king or a rich man even when in private, since what is said may somehow reach the one concerned. A Babylonian text of wisdom offers the same advice:

Beware of careless talk, guard your lips,
Do not utter solemn oaths while alone,
For what you say in a moment will follow you afterwards.
But exert yourself to restrain your speech.

In both cases the injunction seems to be practical rather than ethical, but Hebrew wisdom is not infrequently a mixture of the practical and the ethical. But by 'practical' we do not mean 'unethical'. Rather it is sound, practical advice to assist in living a trouble-free life while not thereby neglecting sound moral standards.

Wilfred Lambert

Shallowness and Depth

Depth is used in the Bible, as elsewhere, as a spiritual quality (I Cor.2:10. Ps. 130:1). It can mean the opposite of shallow and it can mean the opposite of height. Truth is deep and not shallow, suffering is depth and not height.

Now if there is one great threat to spiritual life today it is lack of depth... Stephen Neill in one of his books rightly says, 'Religion can only flourish when the element of depth in human life is recognised and honoured; and modern life doesn't yield many impressions of infinite meaning, infinite seriousness, infinite richness. It rather suggests meaninglessness, triviality and poverty.'

Perhaps the worst aspect of this superficiality is to be seen in the self-deception of large numbers of professing Christians. We all deceive ourselves at times and many people get through life deceiving themselves all the time. This may be the result of an upbringing which demands conventional responses to certain situations, it being the 'done thing' to cry or to laugh at appropriate times. Whatever the reason, few people take the trouble to find out what sort of people they really are. And when Christianity is used as a cloak of self-deception the darkness is great indeed, because it is an unrecognised self-deception... This is so different from the attitude of Jesus towards the outcasts of society. He was free from the sanctimonious air of doing good to others by which many Christians have so often made their efforts distasteful to the very people they are trying to help.

From article in **E10**, Winter 1963, by **David Preston**. (More on p44.)

Can The Existence Of God Be Proved?

God, says the Apostle, has 'left not himself without witness', and for many centuries, philosophers and men of faith have tried to identify those 'witnesses' to God, in order either to confirm faith or to arouse it. Clearly, if we worship God, then we must be convinced that the object of our worship is a reality, and that we have an answer for those who doubt it. Especially is this so in our own day when materialism and science have led so many to doubt the reality of God.

However, the subject raises several questions which I want to explore. Firstly, are such proofs for God's existence valid? Secondly, the same question in a different form; are they convincing when presented to those who are not disposed to believe? And thirdly, is this what the Scriptures mean by faith in God, when belief is the end result of a piece of clever reasoning, or a deduction drawn from the study of science?

What then are the proofs for God? One of the first attempts to deduce His existence by logic was made by Aristotle. Everything that exists, he noted, is in a state of flux, growing, changing, moving. Everything that exists must have been brought into existence by something greater than itself, everything that moves and changes has been moved or changed by something else. Every effect has a cause, which in turn is the effect of another cause further back. If we trace back the long chain of causes and effects we must eventually come to the first cause of all other causes, an Unmoved First Mover, which is God. This is called the Cosmological Argument, and was given considerable weight in the Middle Ages under the influence of Thomas Aquinas.

More convincing perhaps, is the so-called 'Argument from Design'. All around us in nature we see interlocking harmony and order, and these are all factors which we can interpret as evidence for the hand of God, in the same way that a well-tended garden is evidence for a gardener, a well-constructed building is evidence for an architect, or, to use a favourite analogy from the 19th century, a watch is evidence for a watchmaker. It is far more reasonable to conclude from such evidence that a supreme intelligence has created the universe, than that it simply brought itself into existence by blind chance.

There is a variation on the Design Argument which points to signs of purpose in nature. There are, for example, things or processes which clearly exist for the sake of something else, as the eye is designed for seeing. The whole environment of the earth shows signs of having been designed to sustain life. Something or someone must have anticipated a need and arranged things in advance to fulfil that need. This is called the 'Teleological Argument'. A sceptic might claim of course, that it is always possible to see signs of benevolent purpose when we look for it: coal seams were placed under the ground to provide fuel for mankind, horses were specially designed for men to ride on, and so on.

Then there is the moral argument: the existence of moral values, the obligation that most people feel to do what is right, the universal recognition that the virtues of compassion, courage, love are more noble and more desirable than their opposites suggests a God who has instilled in His creatures a capacity for morality.

These are just some of the arguments that have been put forward to support a belief in the existence of God. Yet we must admit that there are limitations to this method of finding God by philosophical speculation, in which His existence is somehow deduced from the facts of nature or from human experience.

An atheist would respond to the Design Argument with the claim that we are simply bringing in God because no other explanation is available. Philosophers have coined the phrase 'The God of the Gaps' to describe this outlook. As long as there is a gap in human knowledge then it is easy to look to divine agency as an explanation. Long ago there were numerous gaps in human knowledge; consequently the hand of God could be seen everywhere. But as advances in scientific discovery gradually filled in these gaps, so the need for God as an explanation was by degrees eliminated, until eventually He could be left right out of the picture. Belief in God can then be seen as coextensive with human ignorance; a hang-over from a pre-scientific age, to be invoked only until a more rational explanation can be found. It must be said, however, that this is something of a caricature of the Christian position. True faith sees the hand of God in the things we can understand as well as the things we cannot.

A major limitation to all theistic proofs is that it is impossible to make out a case that is so convincing that all doubts are removed and all objections are answered. There is simply no overwhelming evidence one way or the other, but certain aspects of the world can be seen as signs and clues which point with varying degrees of force to the reality of God. And, whatever arguments we use to support a belief in God, an atheist can take exactly the same arguments and turn them the other way round to support the opposite point of view. Thus he would point to disorder, apparent lack of purpose and wastefulness in nature, or to cruelty, suffering and evil in human life and claim this as evidence that God does not exist. The entire argument is therefore based upon a question of probability: if the positive aspects of the world, order and purpose, goodness and virtue, outweigh its negative aspects, chaos, disorder, evil and suffering, then the probability that God exists is greater than the probability that He does not exist. And that is not a firm foundation upon which to build a religious faith.

Another limitation to the attempt to deduce that God exists is this – if we rely on the design argument, then what does that tell us about God, beyond the probability that He exists? There is nothing that scientists can tell us about His character, His will or His attitude towards us. If the hand of God can be recognized in the structure of the atom, the petal of a flower, or the wing of a butterfly, then this much on its own does not tell us whether He is the slightest bit concerned about the eternal destiny of individual men and women. It does not convince us that

there is a God whom we can love and trust, and before whose throne we can bow the knee.

On its own none of this is even a religious attitude, only a branch of philosophy. A purely intellectual acceptance that there was probably a Creator makes no difference to the conduct of our lives or our dealings with our fellow men. If this then were the only way to find God, by a process of argument and counter-argument, of weighing evidence and balancing proofs for and against, then it would, for most of us, simply raise the question – Why bother to believe in God, what difference does it make? We could spend our whole lives exploring the endless ramifications of the subject and still not have a solution that answers every objection. All we would have is an abstraction, an interesting philosophical problem.

This is the main point of contrast between what we might call the God of the philosophers and the God of the Bible. No attempt is made by the writers of the Bible to prove that God exists using the arguments I have just described. They were simply not interested in speculation about God. There are a few passages which, on the face of it, sound like the design argument: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork', proclaims the Psalmist (19:1), but he was not presenting proof of God's existence to those who doubted it, but seeing in the splendours of the heavens evidence of the greatness of a God who had already made Himself known to His people.

The Biblical writers seem to have taken His existence for granted, as though it never occurred to them that anyone could doubt it. It is most unlikely that there were any atheists in the ancient world, at least not in the modern sense of the term. The complaint of the prophets against the pagans was that they worshipped too many gods, the opposite heresy to the modern secular world. It is true that Psalm 14 refers to the 'fool' who said in his heart 'there is no God', but we can safely assume that the fool in question was not denying that God exists; he was saying in effect that God does not see, He has turned His face, He will not punish. He was what we would nowadays call a practical atheist, one who had left God out of his reckoning.

When the Old Testament speaks of the 'knowledge of God' or when the New Testament speaks of 'faith' they mean a response of worship and obedience. They mean trust in a Being whom we acknowledge to be far above us in worth and in power. Our other beliefs all stem from that central belief; our lives are conducted in the light of our knowledge of God and of His purpose for us. For the object of such knowledge and of such faith is not only the Creator, He is also the One whom Jesus addressed as 'Our Father in heaven', who has involved Himself in the history of the world, and who offers salvation to those who thus turn to Him in love and trust.

To the psalmists and prophets God was not the end result of a piece of deduction; He was an ever present reality, the constant object of their obedience, praise

and worship. They had a clear conception of His character, His will and His purpose, as Psalm 145 makes clear: 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness' (3-5).

Thus the Psalmist declares the greatness of God. All through the Old Testament God is spoken of in terms of power, wisdom and justice. He is Creator, King and Saviour. In this Psalm we read such expressions as 'Thy mighty acts', 'Thy wondrous works', 'Thy terrible acts'. These refer to God's actions in the history of His people: bringing them out of Egypt, leading them to the promised land, giving them the Law of Moses and saving them from their enemies. It was to these historic events in the history of His people that the psalmists and prophets pointed as a revelation of the character of the God of Israel. There is nothing abstract about the God of the Old Testament. In fact they seem to have placed no confidence in any other source of knowledge in God except in His self-revelation. In the book which bears his name, Job was asked (11:7), 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find the Almighty unto perfection?' – the implication being that the answer was 'No'. What God had not revealed about Himself was unknowable.

Like the prophets before him, the Lord Jesus appealed to the harmony and order of nature, not to demonstrate that there is a Creator, but as an illustration of His providence and fatherly love: 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these' (Matthew 6:28,29). Those whom he called 'Ye of little faith' were men who already believed in God with their heads, but lived as though they did not place their complete trust in Him.

What Jesus taught in the Gospels is echoed in the Epistles. In Romans chapter 1, the Apostle invokes the created order as evidence of the hand of God: 'The invisible things of (God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse' (v.20). This passage is not setting forth the design argument for the existence of God, it is one stage ahead of that. The Apostle is saying that certain aspects of God's character, His eternal power and godhead, so manifestly clear in the natural order, should have confirmed even to the Gentiles what He had already revealed of His moral order. The implication is that they should already have known these things. Repeatedly in this chapter he uses such expressions as 'for God hath shewed it unto them', 'therefore they are without excuse'. Acts 14:16 also invokes the natural order as a 'witness' to its Creator: 'Which in time past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left himself not without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.'

The Apostle's words are consistent with the other writers of Scripture in seeing nature as a confirmation of God's revelation. His handiwork was an expression of His providential care. The Mediaeval philosophers who devised ingenious proofs for God did so with similar presuppositions; that is, they accepted all that the Christian faith claimed about God. But now we have the situation where scientists reject Biblical revelation, yet continue to speak of God. Science is a double-edged sword. It is used to demolish belief in a Creator, but it also provides the means to confirm it by uncovering the marvellous complexity and wonder of the natural order. Many scientists have been moved by these things to conclude that behind them there must be an intelligence. Something must have started everything in the beginning, and that something they are willing to call God. Many scientists use the term 'God' in their writings, or in the titles of their books, yet it is clear that they do not mean a personal God, certainly not a Being who makes any moral demands upon them. They mean no more than a vague and impersonal creative force within the universe. Paul Davies is a physicist who has written a number of books both on physics and God, and he concludes one of them with this thought:

... science offers a surer path than religion in the search of God. It is my deep conviction that only by understanding the world in all its many aspects – reductionist and holist, mathematical and poetical, through forces, fields and particles as well as through good and evil – that we will come to understand ourselves and the meaning behind this universe, our home.
(Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics*).

I doubt whether the men who wrote the Bible would have agreed with much of that – 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' Significantly, there is no mention of divine revelation in his list of paths to God. In fact he specifically rejects religion as a less sure path to God than science. The problem with trying to find God in 'forces, fields and particles', is that He can be conceived only as a Supreme Mathematician, a Grand Designer. Such statements also give the unfortunate impression that the people best qualified to tell us whether there is a God are scientists. Writers such as this adopt a position which is almost a mirror image of the biblical writers, who would certainly not have regarded a merely intellectual assent to God's existence to be of any great value. That is not 'faith' in the scriptural use of the term. James expresses this most starkly: 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou not know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?' (2:19).

Although the emphasis of James is upon the unity rather than the existence of God, what he says surely holds true for His existence. James treats an intellectual recognition of God's reality as something so basic that it can be taken for granted in all men, even in devils. There is more than a touch of irony in the words 'Thou doest well'. But, 'Faith without works is dead'. A truly living faith must mean more than a merely intellectual acceptance of His existence. It acknowledges God

both as Supreme Being and as Redeemer, both as Grand Designer and as heavenly Father. The clearest statement of this truth is found in the great chapter on faith in Hebrews 11: 'Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him' (Hebrews 11:6).

The question must often have been asked, why, if God wants us to 'diligently seek Him', is He hidden from us in the first place? No doubt God could have declared his will by writing it in huge letters of fire across the sky, and at a stroke all atheism would vanish. But if He is to be consistent with His own purpose, then He has to be at least partially hidden, so that we can turn to Him of our own accord. And if we are left free to believe, then we are equally free to disbelieve. Enough evidence exists for those who want to believe, but not enough to overwhelm those who do not. Paradoxically, the more evidence we have of God's existence, the less need there is of faith. If we want to see the hand of God in the world around us then we will doubtless do so. It is a matter of interpretation. Believers must make a leap of faith and believe on trust, as surely as an atheist must make a leap of faith in the opposite direction.

It could be said that those who already have faith do not need proofs, they already have something far more valuable. Those who do not have faith will not find them convincing. There may be people who are wavering between belief and doubt, and the design arguments might well give them a nudge in the right direction, and put them in a frame of mind congenial to faith. I suspect however, that few people have ever become believers because of any theistic argument that they have heard. They have, rather, first of all wanted to believe and then sought an argument to justify that belief.

This is why there is so much ambivalence about the evidence. John Hick has used an analogy which very neatly summarizes the position, and in which reality, the world of our experience, is compared to a black and white chequerboard, consisting of an equal number of black squares and white squares. From the viewpoint of an atheist, the basic colour of this board consists of the black squares; that is, the world came into being by blind chance, it contains disorder, evil and suffering, the overall picture is tragic and pessimistic. But interspersed among his black squares are incongruous pockets of white: harmony and beauty, moral goodness, none of which are easy to account for in a world which has evolved purely by chance.

A believer, on the other hand, sees exactly the same thing, but his perspective is the other way round. To him the basic colour of the board is white: his view is optimistic. All around him he sees order, beauty, harmony, signs of purpose, all of which speaks to him of the wisdom and benevolence of God. But interspersed among his white squares he also sees black elements: incongruous pockets of evil and disorder, suffering and cruelty, which do not easily fit into a world which has been created by a wise and loving God. Each sees the same thing but puts an op-

posite interpretation upon it, depending on the presuppositions with which he approaches it. Each argues his case by drawing attention to one area of colour and trying to explain or explain away the other.

There are no definite proofs for God, there are only arguments which are more or less convincing depending upon whether we want to believe them. There are things we can deduce about God simply by looking around us at nature – His power and wisdom – but God is hidden behind nature, so that what reveals Him also conceals Him. When we claim to know God it is not because specially trained experts have been successful in investigating this Being, or because we have first engrossed ourselves in the intricacies of science or the subtleties of philosophy, but because He who was hidden has chosen to make Himself known through prophets and apostles, and above all, because we recognize the authenticity, the truth of the Gospel of His Son, in the words he spoke and the life he lived: 'Who hath seen me hath seen the Father, how sayest thou then, shew us the Father.'

Mark Robertson

Almighty, Invisible

The following address on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has been given to an Anglican audience and a Christadelphian one and was well received by most hearers on both occasions.

It is impossible to do justice to an understanding of God, or the doctrine of the Trinity, in a twenty minute address. There were enormous debates in the third to fifth centuries about the nature of God and the relationship of Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the Father. People held demonstrations in the streets in favour of those who said Jesus was of one substance with the Father against those who said he was simply of similar substance. A Greek letter (iota) made all the difference!

At the level of Church leadership, there were complex philosophic debates in which words were used which have since changed their meaning. For example, the word 'person' hadn't got the personal ring the word has today and they also said 'substance' where we would say 'being'. They were anxious to get everything tied up, where we are more content to leave loose ends,

So this theology was serious stuff. For example there was what is called sometimes the Athanasian Creed. It is not much used in the Church of England nowadays. Here is just a sample:

For as we are compelled by Christian verity to acknowledge each person by himself to be God and Lord, we are also forbidden by the catholic religion to say that there are three gods or lords.... This is the catholic faith which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved, but will perish everlastingly.

I get over some of the difficulties of the Trinity, by using the phrase 'in some sense'. In one sense Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one, a unity; they share what we might call 'Godness'. Yet we are not to confound (mix up) the persons, which

are said to be separate in one sense but one in another sense. They are not one identity. (This takes us into the philosophy of personality and identity – who am I? who are you? – ideas profound and incomprehensible to us humans.) How much more is the unseeable Father incomprehensible to us – Creator – God, who knows everything that goes on in every human mind (Ps.139) (of whom we have sung in the hymn ‘Almighty Invisible’.)

My daughter's simplification

My younger daughter has simplified the Trinity in this way:

The Creator God – Almighty, invisible, God only wise – understanding him is beyond her she says.

Jesus of Nazareth – shows her what GOD is like – she can visualize Jesus Holy Spirit – God at work right inside her. By the Holy Spirit she meets God and experiences him every day (imperfectly and midst the stresses of life).

It may not be accurate or precise, but it works for her.

Jesus of Nazareth

A few minutes on Jesus of Nazareth. He was 100% a human being (though there was something unique about his conception). Although beyond precise definition, ‘in some sense’ his origin was in God. He said: ‘Before Abraham was I am’ (John 8:4), in other words, ‘God is the source of my being’.

He was the Word made flesh; not the Father made flesh, but he pre-existed, not as Jesus of Nazareth, but as God’s real intention, in the mind of God (and what is God’s mind?) To exist in God’s mind is ‘in some sense’ to exist. 42 times he is said to have been sent by God. ‘I have come down from heaven to do the will of him who sent me.’ Here is union, but also separateness. The Father sends the Son. And Jesus of Nazareth is a manifestation of God, a portrait of God; we look at him and can say ‘that is what God is like’.

But Jesus of Nazareth is truly human. In fact he is man (humanity) as man was designed to be; the only one. Unless we think of him as Man, though uniquely related to God, our own relationship with God will suffer. Think of Jesus of Nazareth, not first and foremost as God – in fact we probably shouldn’t say Jesus is God – but see him, first and foremost, as a humble human being, subject to all the limitations of being human. He was everything that makes a human being a human being in all the everydayness and ordinariness. (Finding God in *that* Jesus might help us to find God in our daily lives.)

He did not have unlimited power; he did not know everything; he wasn’t God in disguise pretending to be a man. (That is an old heresy called Docetism). He wasn’t God’s ventriloquist’s dummy or a puppet on a string, where God does all the thinking and talking. He made choices and could be tempted (and therefore understands us, as the epistle to the Hebrews makes clear) and is an example to us. He was the only truly authentic human being, because he never was dehumanised by sin.

He said ‘My Father is greater than I’ and also ‘I and my Father are one.’ He was Emmanuel – God with us. Yet he prayed to God – he wasn’t praying to him-

self. He stood before God in utter creatureliness – one of us. He even felt forsaken by God and prayed to be relieved of the burden of drinking the cup of unimaginable suffering, of mind as well as of body. He grew and developed in favour with God and men. He learned by experience – learned obedience by the things that he suffered. Jesus of Nazareth was the creaturely man of Nazareth, subject to weakness and who died, whereas God is unlimited, eternal and immortal and cannot die.

But Jesus was the Word made flesh. As a son he was the self-expression of a father. He was the image of the unseen God (Colossians 1,15). He expressed the eternal Word of God as fully and completely as was possible in a human life. He is the enfleshment (incarnation) of that Word. He was God's divine self-portrait in human nature. So as we look at his human life we see something of how God experiences his own life, what it is like to be God!

Now this leads to an incredible perception – the most important thing we can learn from the incarnation part of the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus of Nazareth was expressing God. We think of God as Lord, Sovereign, beyond suffering, (beyond passion), all powerful, all seeing, everywhere present.

God's self-portrait

But if we are seeing a portrait of God in the human Jesus then this is what God is like. He has empathy with the weak, the downtrodden – the vulnerable; he wept over Jerusalem; he mixed with the wrong kind of people. And this is what God the Father is like. And this enables us to approach God and get close to him and be intimate in our prayers to him – not distant. We can share some of Jesus' closeness to his Father and be changed by it.

From a Roman Catholic author I got this analogy of Jesus as a self-portrait of God. Artists put a lot of themselves into a self-portrait (think of Rembrandt). The self-portrait is an extension of the artist. So it is with God as he paints himself in human form in Jesus of Nazareth. So in the pain of Jesus we see God suffering in this extension of the Divine self; in this divine self-portrait, Jesus, we see God himself weeping in the tears of his self-portrait. In the death of Jesus, so close was the Father to the human Jesus of Nazareth, that he who cannot die, experienced the mortality of this created extension of Himself; and in the resurrection, God shared the experience of Victory over human mortality.

Jesus of Nazareth has been changed into the fullness of the divine nature (at the right hand of the Father), in closest unity with God, where all power in heaven and earth has been given to him. He still remembers and understands what it is to be human. And he ever lives to send us the help of the Holy Spirit, the other member of the Trinity, to strengthen, sustain and transform us, day by day.

And we are being developed as we struggle and pray to be part of that great Unity, John 17. 20-24, ourselves extensions of the Trinity – which will then become a 'multiplicity'.

Men And Women, Should We Make A Difference? (1 Cor 7 to 11)

The car park of a supermarket is hardly the place for spiritual thoughts. But let me explain that this is really about a little boy inside an old man. He is left in the car whilst others do the shopping. He doesn't mind but insists that we park in a place that is interesting – a view (some hopes) but where people can be seen. People are so interesting: Mums, Dads and the kids, everyone different. Without hearing them, you can guess what they are saying by their gesticulations. Sometimes, I have my sketch pad with me but not a camera.

Now what prompted me to write this down was a matter of dress. Of the hundred or so women I saw, only five wore a dress or skirt, all the others wore trousers. It would have shocked Grandma. No, I wasn't shocked. Perhaps if I had walked out of the 1920s or 30s I would have been but I have grown old with it. Only now I am left wondering. Does God look at clothes? He saw through the fig leaf apron or breeches they had made in Eden. Before I go any further let me say that, should this be published, I am only hoping for a friendly discussion in 'the spirit of Christ'.

Someone once said: 'Clothes maketh man.' I suppose they do. If a field marshal walked down the promenade, we might turn our head to admire his bearing – 'Oh what a man! Look at the medals!' If the same man went by me in a bathing costume, we may not be so impressed. We might comment on his skinny legs or hairy chest. No, we wouldn't even look, would we!?

Can I resort to being a little boy again? The family are Christadelphians; Dad is an artisan, Mum keeps the home. Dad was a different man outwardly on work-days than he was on Sundays. Monday, he wore a cloth cap, flannelette shirt, blue overalls and boots. He only shaved on Bible Class night and Sunday mornings. Mum had blouse and skirt with either a clean apron or a coarse one according to her task. Little boy had his school clothes: knickerbockers and Norfolk jacket with awful deep collar and clip-on tie – what torture! A best suit on Sunday but the same torture, or worse.

Mum looked different on Sunday: neat costume and coat. Hair, though really long, was done up in a bun. On top of this mass was a lovely hat held on by pins. I never understood why she never winced when she stuck the long pin through her head. Oh, and black stockings, if you could see them.

The biggest transformation was Dad. Shaved, moustache trimmed, clean shirt, cotton I believe, although some just wore a dicky over the working shirt. Dark suit, butterfly collar, always a black tie. Then overcoat and bowler hat which he used to raise to ladies. An attaché case carrying his Bible and hymn book and umbrella. That was the Sunday uniform! Oh, I forgot – polished boots. You know who had to do that!

A brother once said that if he was going to meet the King he would look his

best in the best attire he could get. So to meet the Lord he was so attired.

Now for my problems. Can brethren go to the Breaking of Bread casually dressed? In hot weather even in shorts, bare feet in sandals? Should we show the world that we are not going to be conformed to this world? Our sisters, should they be scantily dressed? What about those pesky hats? Did Paul know about hats? If he is talking about hair then is it alright to admit sisters with bobbed hair? And what about the little boys? Are they to sit quietly, not even pencil and paper lest they drop the pencil and disturb the peace? Hyperactive children were not invented then!

Should there be such a thing as ecclesial decorum? What does nature teach us – that it is a shame for a man to have long hair? (1 Cor 11)

The little boy in this old man is confused. Exteriors at one time told him which was male and which female. Not now.

Oh here comes the shopping trolley.

End of ruminations!

Arthur W East

Shallowness and Depth

Together with this lack of depth in spiritual life there goes the method of keeping people on the 'right path' which is little short of evil. This is the method of 'moral pressure' whereby our inner guilt feelings are inflated so that we are made to grovel abjectly before God. And the only way held out to us to suppress these feelings of guilt is by practising some virtue. Such life and behaviour based on guilt exclude the possibility of love.

To take one example, no marriage can be a true one if it is only kept together by fear of the feeling of guilt which would be produced if one, say, committed adultery. True marriage is absolute freedom where one does not sin for the reason that one loves one's partner. The same should be true of the church, the bride of Christ.

My own experience of numbers of mentally sick Christadelphians weighed down by obsessive feelings of guilt is borne out by modern psychiatry. 'Many difficulties of our patients are the results of demands based upon a standardised system such as a narrow religious sect. The narrower and more rigid the system, the less it is based on a true understanding of human nature and the individualness of each person.' (*Davidson Clinic Bulletin*.)

It is impossible to be totally free from feelings of guilt but to inflame them deliberately, and that in the name of Christianity, is a gross perversion of everything truly Christian. Such corruption is a result of shallow thought and superficial living, doubly pernicious because it destroys souls and discredits true Christianity in the eyes of non-Christians.

From article in E10, Winter 1963, by David Preston

Evidence for Design

by David Pearce, 2003

The Christadelphian Magazine & Publishing Association Ltd,

ISBN 0 85189 156 X, 31 pages. £2.95, inc. p&p.

This booklet is an attractively produced soft back publication. There are 12 black and white photographs or drawings. These are used to add interest rather than as illustrations. The Bible quotations are from AV, RSV or NKJV¹ but this is not stated.

The theme of the booklet is given on the back cover as 'God reveals Himself through the things He has made'. The arguments are clearly written and presented. Six instances of design are described in detail: the human tear duct, blood clotting mechanism, bone fracture repair, the spider's web and tree seed dispersal by birds and on the ocean surface. Several of these examples the present writer has not seen described in this context elsewhere. They will be helpful to those interested in assembling evidence for Special Creation illustrating, as they do, the glory and wonder of God's handiwork. The publisher acknowledges that many more (and, one might add, diverse) examples could have been given, but this was not possible in a small publication.

Unfortunately, the usefulness of the booklet is undermined by two serious deficiencies. First, the author appears not to understand the arguments that he sets out to refute. Secondly, he excludes the possibility that the earth is much older than a few thousand years.

In the first place, for example, the observation that some species, such as the bee and the nautilus, remained little changed for many millions of years (p.4) while other forms of life underwent much more rapid change is not a problem for the evolutionist, who views them simply as facts that illustrate the unpredictable nature of the evolutionary process.

Similarly, the mechanism by which 'the butterfly managed to obtain nectar from flowers before its tongue was long enough to reach deep into the bloom' (p 4) is explained by evolutionists as an example of 'co-evolution'. (The structure of the flower and of the insect developed in parallel.)

For the author, long time periods are inadmissible. 'No, the choice is clear. Either the Bible is right, and God spoke and it was done, or God is a fiction...' (p 6) 'God spoke and it was done' is from Psalms 33:9 (NKJV), which, however, can be understood in more than one way. 'For he spoke, and it was' (NEB, REB) may indicate the instantaneous bringing into being of the thing spoken of, as in NJB's 'for, the moment he spoke, it was so'. However, the words can also mean that once spoken of, the outcome was certain: 'for he spoke, and it came to be' (RSV NRSV ESV NIV). 'I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it. (Eze 17:24c, ESV). 'My word ... will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it' (Isa 55:11, NIV) relates to the salvation and restoration of God's people – scarcely an instantaneous process.

'If God was powerful enough to fill the earth with living creatures over millions of years He could do it just as well in days' (p 6) is true – but is that what he actually did? There is no doubting the power and ability of God to create the whole universe in an instant of time if he so chose, but did he do that? God was the Creator of Israel. How long did that take? (Isa 43:1,7,15)

Obviously, if it can be proved that the earth is less than 10,000 years old, then the evolutionists are in serious trouble, but the author offers no direct evidence of this. He assumes that, since evidence of Design proves that there is a God, evolution cannot have occurred and the earth must be very young. Many ordinary people today accept that the earth is many millions of years old. To suggest that the Bible teaches otherwise is to discredit the Bible in their eyes. We need to be very sure of our ground if this is what we must preach.

If the earth is very old there are a number of possibilities consistent with divine Creation. John Thomas considered that geology proved the earth to be of immense age. The earth was *re-created* in six literal days. Others have suggested that the Days of Creation were geological ages, intermittent Days of Creation, Days of Revelation, of Divine Fiat, or of dramatic presentation^{2,3}. If there has been life on earth for a very long time only two possibilities are generally thought likely nowadays. They are first, successive acts of Creation, the stepwise introduction of more advanced forms of life over millennia of time – 'punctuated equilibria' – and second, theistic evolution – 'the concept that evolution took place but God guided it'. David Pearce makes no reference to the first and dismisses the second in a single paragraph (p 6).

Theistic evolution is also rejected by both Hayward² and Fowler³ who, however, both accept a vast age for the earth. All three authors base their rejection of evolution on references to the special creation of Adam and Eve in other parts of the Bible.

There is much here that deserves detailed discussion. Volumes have been written on the subject. It is not being suggested that the author of this booklet should have attempted such a task, which would have been impossible in the compass of a small work. What is suggested is that a recognition of these wider issues would have greatly enhanced the value of the production.

This writer heartily concurs with the author that the words of Paul – 'Ever since the world began his invisible attributes, that is to say, his everlasting power and deity, have been visible to the eye of reason, in the things he has made' (Rom 1:20, REB) – represent a cardinal principle of our approach to a consideration of the natural world. The ways and thoughts of the Creator are marvellous and utterly beyond us (Isa 55:8-9; Rom 11:33-36).

Bob Burr

References

1 Bible versions:- AV: Authorised Version, NKJV: New King James Version, RSV: Revised Standard Version, NRSV: New Revised Standard Version, NEB: New English Bible, REB: Revised English Bible, NJB: New Jerusalem Bible, ESV: English Standard Version, NIV: New International Version.

2. Alan Hayward: *Creation and Evolution*, Triangle, SPCK 1985
3. Alan Fowler: *A Drama of Creation*, Ortho Books, 1996

Further comments from the editor

The publishers' (and/or author's) comment on the back cover chooses to describe the contents of this booklet without any reference to evolution. The author would have done well, this writer believes, to have done likewise in the booklet itself. The examples he chooses to set before his readers all make the same simple point: how could such intricate, specialized, interrelated forms of life have come about without the involvement of a Designer? This is perhaps what the author should have restricted himself to, trying to present evidence to persuade atheists to consider more seriously the possibility that God exists, based on the evidence of design in nature. Not content with that however, he chooses from the very beginning to get involved in advocating a process of creation that could not possibly involve evolution. In doing so, he rolls into one what many would see as two separate issues – Is there a creator God? and How did he do it? His solution is to say that the evidence of design points to a creator who, by the way, did it by creation (understood by fiat it seems) and not by evolution. It soon becomes clear that the author's purpose is not so much to encourage atheists to believe in God but to mount an attack on evolution. He chooses to see evolution as the great enemy of truth when atheism is surely the more dangerous error. His evidence is by far more suited to challenging atheism than with challenging evolution. But then again, he chooses to see evolution and atheism as partners in crime.

Whether any atheists will be persuaded to trust in God faced with the evidence presented in this booklet remains to be seen. However, it is certainly true that many believers have already left our community because of the insistence of some that evolution could not possibly be part of God's way of dealing with his creation. This booklet is likely to persuade others to depart, particularly those younger ones, who, having a great respect for Jesus and truth, nevertheless have also a great respect for what God has allowed humanity to come to know of the works of his hands through Science.

The author ends his booklet with these words, at the beginning of his last paragraph: 'So please, do not listen unquestioningly to the voice of the 'experts'. The Bible is not a collection of fables. It is the only record God has given us of His great work 'in the beginning',...' This merits a few comments.

A) Of course, this is the age of questioning **all** 'experts' including, it must be said, those who present themselves as experts in religion.

B) I know of nobody who believes in theistic evolution who would maintain that 'the Bible is a collection of fables'.

C) Is the Bible really the **only** record God has given us of his great work, whether 'in the beginning' or otherwise? Isn't creation/nature itself a record of God's continuing handiwork? Hasn't this got something to do with the beginnings of modern science?

Les Boddy

A Test of Time. Volume Two
Legend. The Genesis of Civilization

by David M. Rohl

(Century, Random House, London, 1998)

Though this is now five years old a review here is appropriate since this author's books and ideas have recently had some promotion in the Christadelphian body. Its author is an Egyptologist by training but has spread himself into a large variety of other disciplines in this book, written as if with authority and quoting sources with aplomb. The book is meant for the general reader, and every technical term and unfamiliar name is glossed in the adjacent wide margins. There is a profusion of helpful photographs and panels setting out lucidly the matter being presented. The author writes in a simple, appealing style and in matters of presentation the book merits all praise. The content, however, does not match.

The overall aim is to bring light on the early chapters of Genesis from archaeological finds and topographical research, though the later chapters proceed to argue for the Mesopotamian origins of Pharaonic Egypt, which will not concern us here. On Genesis, a great amount of material has been assembled, some of it well known, but the initial thrust is devoted to locating the Garden of Eden, for which the author can claim some originality. It was, he argues, an area in the modern Armenia near the modern town of Tabriz, east of Lake Urmia. The location of Eden is of course dependent on the four rivers named in Gen. 2:10-14. Of the four, the Tigris/Hiddekel and Euphrates are of course clear, and both rise in the Armenian highlands, but the other two, Pishon and Gihon, cannot be found on our maps. The author identifies Pishon and Gihon with, respectively, a minor Armenian river and a tributary of the Araxes, both flowing into the Caspian sea.

This solution does not of course agree with Genesis, according to which only one river flowed out of the Garden and then divided into four streams, something which ordinarily only happens at deltas. Rohl has four separate rivers flowing out of his garden. Further support for this location is sought from Genesis' mention of the land of Havilah and its gold. Rohl cites recent gold-mining near the Caspian and one Sassanian mine (c. 250-600 A.D.), but this is not clear evidence that gold was obtained there B.C.

The author next devotes himself to proving that the town Aratta in Sumerian legends, known to us in copies c. 2000-1600 B.C., is the same as the Biblical land of Ararat. In the Bible Ararat is not a mountain, but a country, roughly ancient Armenia, as the present writer showed in *Endeavour* no. 86. Rohl's lack of expertise in the languages of the ancient Near East explains his surprise that hitherto no-one has tried to connect Ararat and Aratta. The Hebrew form (vowels of course not guaranteed), like the Assyrian Urartu and Babylonian Urashtu, all have as final consonant not ordinary t but ṭ, a peculiarly Semitic consonant not found in either Sumerian or Urartian. (They called their country *Bianili*.) The two distinct

consonants do not interchange in the Semitic languages, nor will rt become either tt or tt. So it is no surprise that up to the present only our author has thought of equating Ararat and Aratta. He tries to locate Aratta from the Sumerian epic called *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*. In the story Enmerkar, ruler of the Sumerian city Uruk, sends a messenger to Aratta. He goes first to Susa, then to Anshan, and then after crossing seven mountains he arrives at Aratta. So Rohl himself went on a trip taking in Susa, the location of which is well known, then with diversions he passed over seven mountain ranges to reach the region south of Lake Urmia, close to his preferred site of the Garden of Eden.

There is one serious omission in this argument: Anshan. On p.82, the line of the epic naming Susa and Anshan in succession is quoted, but thereafter Anshan is ignored. It has been located from inscriptions excavated at the site, and is Tall-i Malyan, 46 kilometres north of the modern Shiraz, some 475 kilometres as the crow flies south-east of Susa. Rohl's Aratta is some 575 kilometres as the crow flies north-west of Susa, and, in the epic, Aratta is reached by crossing the seven mountains after passing through Anshan.

This extraordinary oversight in so major a matter for the book is paralleled in many smaller matters. On p.27 Kish is said to have been a Sumerian town. In fact it was a centre of Semitic culture, part of Akkad, not of Sumer. On p.29 a symbol on the relief shown on p.28 is explained as that of the sun-god Shamash. In fact it is the star of Ishtar/Venus, not the solar disc. P.94 informs us that Elamite script employs 96 syllabic signs. The only available list, *Syllabaire Elamite* by M.-J. Steve (Neuchâtel - Paris 1992) gives 201 different signs. P.74 states that the Sumerian scholar S N. Kramer in 1946 discovered an Akkadian (= Babylonian) copy of the epic *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* in the Istanbul Museum, while the Sumerian original was still missing. What Kramer himself wrote is that he copied a big Sumerian tablet of the epic in the Istanbul Museum in 1946. No Akkadian form of this epic has so far come to light even in 2003. This is in no sense an exhaustive list of the failings, only a selection. The conclusion is that this book is positively misleading for the intended audience. General readers wanting to be informed will too often be misinformed.

In Rohl's defense it has been argued that while his handling of Mesopotamian material may be defective, he is by training an Egyptologist, so what he says in other books from that perspective will be reliable. Since this reviewer is not an Egyptologist he is not competent to take sides in that matter, but he has to say that most Egyptologists find Rohl's opinions unacceptable, including Egyptologists who are evangelical Christians.

Wilfred Lambert

*Talking to men for God is a great thing,
but talking to God for men is greater still.
(E.M Bounds)*

Let Every Thing That Hath Breath Praise The Lord!

Brian Morgan reviews a recording of a recent performance of choral works almost a century apart in praise of the Lord of Music. (Psa 150)

Early in 2003, at the Guy Nelson Hall, Warwick School, an act of musical worship, comprising three works by Christadelphian composers, was performed by the Birmingham Christadelphian Choral Society, with Christadelphian pianist, organist, narrator, conductor and audience. This, if not unique, must have been one of precious few such events and worthy of preserving for a wider audience, which it has been, by yet another Christadelphian, Peter Miles of Birmingham (Hall Green) ecclesia.

The recital comprised three works: *The Oracle of Daniel*, composed by the late Islip Collyer early last century, *Christ's Blessings*, composed earlier this century by Michael Perryman, and *My Peace*, a short anthem also composed by Michael and based largely on a verse from John 14. The recording is available from Peter Miles (details in ALSD) as a CD, Compact Cassette or Minidisc.

The fact that this was an act of worship meant that everyone taking part (even perhaps the child occasionally joining in at the back of the hall?) was praising God as well as performing music, lifting the whole into a new world of emotional beauty. It also, for some reason, precluded all display by the audience of any appreciation of that beauty. I cannot deny that respect and reverence are essential to Divine worship, but when that worship comprises an obvious joy and enthusiasm, plus a high quality of musical creation deserving acknowledgement at the very least, its total absence in a sepulchral silence feels unreal.

The Oracle of Daniel is above all things a drama, as are the parts of the book it mainly features. Truly has Islip Collyer 'given the sense' of the message, and the occasionally tearful eyes of this reviewer were evidence of more than my nostalgia, my having sung it – with a new tenor voice – nearly 60 years ago in Coventry (Upper Well Street), under the baton of the highly competent and well-beloved Frank Sheppard; both that performance and this brought extreme pleasure. Musically, it is a series of choruses, arias, Bible readings and narrative scripts, covering (one must say, partially) the major prophecies of the book. From the largo maestoso of 'Thou O king art this head of gold' to the bright presto of 'And in the days of these kings' and the fugue-like counterpoint of 'It shall stand for ever', the breadth of musical and emotional appeal is vast indeed, even if the transition from item to item is written a trifle indistinctly. There's not much that choir or conductor can do about that.

Older readers (like me!) may well compare this cantata with the grand old standby of Sunday school and Singing Class recitals, 'Under The Palms', not a Christadelphian composition. However, for want of a better 'soundbite' to sum up the attraction of this offering, performed extremely well by amateur untrained voices, this reviewer concludes that it adds awe and drama to the existing prophetic wisdom of a powerful oracle of God.

One question remains: 'How do you convey a totally joyful ambience in a minor key?' The answer must be 'with considerable musical ability'. This cantata has it almost to perfection and the choir bring it out with skill and enthusiasm, followed by a sheer transport of delight into the mind of the Master in the exquisite harmonies of 'My Peace'. The glorious crescendo of the phrase 'I have overcome the world!' slowly fades into the dreamlike wonder of the short coda; a lovely tribute to the love of God which inspired the work and the love that responded with skill, beauty and yes, with a perceivable humility which adds immensely to its appeal. All in all, as an impressive, dramatic approach to prophecy, an inspiring, uplifting half-hour of blessings and a final expression of the self-expressed love of Jesus, I found this recording – made perforce under newsreel conditions but with the problems this can create expertly dealt with and largely overcome – a delight to listen to. I still do!

Brian Morgan

References

WORKS: *The Oracle of Daniel*, composed by Islip Collyer.
Christ's Blessings & My Peace, composed by Michael Perryman
CHOIR: The Birmingham Christadelphian Choral Society
CONDUCTOR: Edward Dorricott
SOLOISTS: Helen Garner, David King, Suzie Purkis & Anthony Watkins
PIANIST: Michael Perryman
ORGANIST: Derek Wroughton
NARRATOR: Geoffrey Purkis
READER: Ian de Grey
SUPPLIER: Peter J Miles, 56 Boden Road, Hall Green, Birmingham,
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Two Jamaicas

In March this year I had the opportunity to visit Jamaica with a group of Christian Aid supporters. We visited projects funded by C.A. and met local people who run community programmes.

Jamaica is a country of extremes. On the one hand, it is a beautiful fertile land with lively friendly people, a paradise for holidaymakers. On the other hand, a quarter of the population live on less than £1.20 a day. Jamaica has the third highest rate of debt in the world.

Two of the projects we visited were in the downtown communities (ghettos) of Kingston where there are huge problems of unemployment, housing, sanitation, health and education leading to crime, violence and drug taking. There is a high murder rate. We would not have been able to visit these projects without their protection.

I was struck by the dedication of the project workers in their aims to provide schooling, health-clinics, better water supply, youth programmes, food for the housebound etc. Specific efforts were being made around building self-esteem and resolving conflicts in the 'yards', enclosed areas where people live in houses made of scrapboard and zinc.

HIV/AIDS is on the increase with minimal funding to tackle the problem. Jamaica has the 2nd highest incidence in the world. JAS (Jamaica Aids Support), another programme we visited, offers care, support and education to high-risk groups. My visit to Jamaica was a very memorable experience as one member of the group put it; 'like pieces of a mosaic not yet put together'.

As in many poor countries, one of the roots of the problem is the pressure rich countries put on the poor countries to open up their markets. Local farmers cannot compete with cheaper imports from richer countries. Dairy farmers have to pour milk down the drain.

You may be asking what can be done other than by God's intervention?

I believe with prayerful consideration we can do a little to alleviate the situation by influencing those in powerful positions to think about debt cancellation and addressing trade inequalities that ruin farmers' livelihoods. Poor countries should be helped to manage their own economies.

Isaiah 58:3, 6

Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen,
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke?

Forgive Us

Forgive us
For keeping silent in the face of injustice
And for burying our dreams.
Don't let us fall into temptation
Of taking up the same arms as the enemy
But deliver us from evil which disunites us.
And we shall have believed in humanity and in life
And we shall have known your kingdom
Which is being built for ever and ever.

(Songs and reflections from the Caribbean. Author and source unknown.)

Janet Draper

Trade Justice Movement

The TJM is a fast growing group of organisations including aid agencies, environment and human rights campaigns, fairtrade organisations, faith and consumer groups. These include Christian Aid, Oxfam, The Fairtrade Foundation, Tools For Self Reliance, Tearfund, Traidcraft and War On Want to name but a few of over 60 organisations and churches. Essentially they are campaigning for trade justice – not free trade – with the rules weighted to benefit poor people and the environment. They are calling on world leaders to:

- stop forcing poor countries to open their markets and champion their right to manage their own economies
- regulate big business and their investments to ensure people and the environment come before profits
- stop rich countries promoting the interests of big business through trade interventions that harm the poor and the environment
- ensure trade policy is made in a fair, transparent and democratic way.

The Jubilee 2000 movement showed the world that acting together can bring about change. By working together on trade, the organisations supporting the TJM hope to have a much bigger impact than they could ever have if they worked in isolation. Formed at the end of 2000, the goal of the TJM is fundamental change of the unjust rules and institutions governing international trade, so that trade is made to work for all.

Further information can be obtained at: www.tjm.org.uk and via the supporting organisations.

Les Boddy

Editorial from E 10, forty years ago. Levites or Samaritans?

Whatever may be the date of Christ's birth there can be little doubt about the impact He made upon our world. Even in the adverse days in which we live, with all the smothering of real values by the commercialisation of Christmas, there still leaks through something of the spirit He brought into the world. As destined heir of all things He, Who was rich, for our sakes became poor. He, Who was born to be king, was nevertheless born in a stable. If this were not surprise enough, the manner of His life brought further astonishment. The Holy One did not associate with the religious élite of His day. He did not walk in the ultra correct circles of puritanical Jewry, but, of all things, was seen eating and drinking with publicans, harlots and sinners. This scandal was not understood by the religious traditionalists in the first century. From the lavish pomp and imperial splendour which has grown up in circles claiming allegiance to Christ we can but conclude that the true nature of His life has escaped multitudes ever since.

Broadly, we can trace three stages in the growth of moral character. First, we have an uncouth stage which must be tamed by the discipline of law. Later law is accepted as a proper aspect of life. Beyond this, however, is a stage of moral maturity, exemplified by Christ, with the law accepted in the heart. The second of these stages produces the Pharisees and Puritans of the religious world and the 'correct' of the civilised world. These people approve a rigorous, even a fanatical, morality but can only see their standards preserved by keeping themselves exclusively separated from the 'bad.' There is a recurring failure of this group to understand the efforts of such as Jesus to reach down among the 'uncouth,' to teach them, by love, a higher way. They can only interpret such actions in one way: it is a seeking to enjoy the immoral atmosphere of the people to whom this love is brought.

It is one of the contentions of *The Endeavour Magazine* that the true nature of Jesus' approach to the sinners of this world and the implications for His brethren, has escaped many Christadelphians. Confirmation of this came to our notice recently in an article published by the *Logos* magazine of Australia under the title 'A Frank Criticism of an 'Endeavour' Article.' We would consider this, rather, a frank revelation of an inability to understand the true nature of Christ's approach to men.

The criticism concerns an article on 'Collecting for Oxfam' (Spring 1963). We published this article because it demonstrated, in a small way, an example of approaching people who would normally be outside the range of contact, who were not recognising their obligations to the poor and who could be given a small conscience reminder that there was more in life than just sitting enjoying oneself. At the same time it achieved something for the succouring of the needy.

The writer of the *Logos* article shows little knowledge of what Oxfam is (this carries its own significance) and it should be pointed out that one does not 'join'

Oxfam. This body is simply a fund-raising organisation which sees to it that funds reach the needy in the most appropriate form. Such an arrangement is called for in our modern world. One cannot deliver a loaf of bread in person to the starving in distant lands.

In keeping with the tone of shocked respectability which is found in so much of the criticism, the short period actually spent in collecting (five hours over two nights, with a similar session suggested for 12 months later) is exaggerated in bold headlines as 'Frequenting "The Pubs".' 'Frequenting' in this connection has an ulterior meaning in common usage. This is closely paralleled by the tones of shocked respectability found on the lips of the Pharisees and Scribes, 'Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!' (Luke 7:34). In similar vein, one encounter with a person who had drunk too much and which issued in a rebuke is boldly headlined 'Contending with the tipsy.' We suggest nevertheless that wisdom will be 'justified of all her children' (Luke 7:35).

We are advised that this form of collecting is putting temptation in the way of those others who might undertake it, and could lead to disastrous results. We are, of course, aware that some people have weaknesses and the last thing we would suggest is that they should take up any form of service that would prove a moral hazard to them. It should be pointed out, however, that this will apply to any form of preaching whatever: one never knows whom one might meet. But are we to rate all brethren and sisters so low in moral fibre that we think they cannot accomplish what a Salvation Army girl can do in collecting for relief and in spreading their *War Cry* where it is most needed?

The root idea behind the Logos article is that Christadelphians, as such, have no obligation whatever to succour those outside their exclusive separateness who may be suffering famine or any other form of distress. 'If' any out of the 'goodness of their hearts' in a private capacity wish to give to relief 'by all means let them give' but do not let them give as Christadelphians, least of all as a community. '... Soliciting funds for it (Oxfam), as a recognised function of the ecclesias' labour, is wrong to the principles of the Truth to which we have been brought up.' What then of the Central Samaritan Fund?

The position of the Logos magazine is therefore clear. The body of Christ, His true representatives on earth, must function like a group of Levites rather than Samaritans. They, like the Levites, must adopt 'an attitude of exclusive separateness' and for religious reasons must (through the principles on which they have been brought up) pass by, as a body, the appeals of the starving, the naked and those suffering from the oppressor. In the meantime, no doubt, they may enjoy the standards of living, such as good businesses in our prosperous white civilisation afford. It is curious, however, that a people being prepared for the coming of One who will 'judge the poor of the people and save the children of the needy' and which prays that when He comes He will find in them 'some reflection of Himself' should imagine that He will recognise His image in such an unchristlike

attitude to suffering.

If we analyse carefully why anyone who habitually reads the gospels should, nevertheless, arrive at a conclusion which is sub-christian and pharisaic we shall find that the reason lies in his intellectualisation of the gospel. Throughout the 'criticism' we are constantly invited to give our allegiance to, and be under the influence of an impersonal abstraction called 'Truth' (with a capital T). New Testament Christianity is primarily an allegiance to the person of the risen and exalted Lord Jesus Christ. The true Christian has Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, and is moved by the spirit of Christ. Christ transformed not only the head or intellectual capacities but the emotions and the will also. It is the whole man which must be redeemed and become new in Him. In reading through the Logos magazine one finds the use of the impersonal 'Truth' where there ought to appear the 'Lord Jesus Christ.' We feel that this is a significant indication that the promoters of the magazine hold an unbalanced view of the Christian life and are attracted to a religious presentation which is all 'head' and lacks 'heart.' This is borne out in several ways. Christian activity is regarded as being intense in a 'class' gathered for an intellectual discussion. The aim is the 'fruits of knowledge' achieved by 'much patient research, much poring over such works as *Elpis Israel* and *Eureka*.' Preaching issues in a 'lecture' by one 'properly equipped by long hours of study.' We support the need for a full studious preparation to meet the intellectual challenge of our age, but when this is exalted to being the main principle of the Christian life, then we are in the presence of an aberration and not the gospel. We have only to think of the preaching of Jesus to realise that He was not a wandering intellectual converting publicans, harlots and sinners by the brilliance of His learning, but One who brought the warmth of His love and compassion to their fallen state and directed them to the forgiving love of God. We are not convinced, either, that the recommended 'much patient research and much poring over' is an intellectual activity in the best sense. We suspect that it could more properly be described as absorbing with inadequate critical attention an authoritative line.

If we fail to preserve the proper balance between the 'head' and the 'heart' certain consequences inevitably follow. Our concentration on exposition leads to contention. The imbalance set up in this way by some of our early brethren has given us a divisive history through claims to follow the ideal of exact knowledge of truth. Fears have been established that one may not have exactly the right knowledge to obtain salvation. There has followed immoderate intolerance, heresy hunting and discord among brethren. It also follows that our gospel is restricted to the already half-converted: those to whom someone else has given a love of the Bible. We have no gospel approach to the brokenhearted, the distressed, those caught in vice and sin. We will not, in any case, meet such people: our 'exclusive separateness' will take care of that. But Christ met them. As the knowledge of true Christian love is lost we will have little regard for the suffering, we shall simply look forward to the time when, in our judgment, they will all be slain.

Levites or Samaritans?

The remedy then is to relearn the truth about love. But even here the dead hand of the impersonal creeps in. Paul's hymn of love in 1 Corinthians 13 would, on any normal exposition, be taken as a hymn praising the unselfseeking love which should be exercised towards other people. If we are fine preachers and do charitable works, but have no real love for our hearers or for the recipients of our charity, we are as nothing. Characteristically, however, the Logos relates this love to an abstraction. 'The love, or charity, to which he (Paul) makes reference, is a love of the Truth which will see the need for separation.' As an antidote to this impersonal and erroneous approach we commend the exposition of 1 Corinthians 13 found on page 59 of *The Christadelphian* for February 1877.

Bible-charity is of a Samaritan character; it is not limited in its application to the household of faith; but its mottoes are 'Love thy neighbour as thyself;' 'Do good unto all men;' and, 'it is more blessed to give than to receive;' 'do good to them that hate you.' Let your rain water alike the evil and the good, and your sun cheer equally the just and the unjust.

The solution to the problems of our day presented by the Logos magazine and movement is that of a retreat into the past. This will doubtless meet with a nostalgic response from many. In so doing, however, it merely resuscitates the unbalanced approach which characterised some of our pioneering work. The good sense of many brethren and sisters has been sensitive to this imbalance but not always clear as to what should be done about it. A truly living community will not merely seek the comfort of relying on the authority of pioneers but will press on to lay hold more and more on the personal fellowship with Christ which marked the simplicity of the first century ecclesias. The need of our day is not the sensational lecture or prophetic pyrotechnics but a faithful witnessing to the gospel of the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified, dead, buried, raised again, exalted to heaven, Who comes again to judge men according to their deeds.

The Endeavour Magazine is dedicated to the task of making these issues clear.

Editorial to E10, Winter 1963

God's Likeness

Not in mine own, but in my neighbour's face

Must I Thine image trace:

Nor he in his, but in the light of mine,

Behold Thy face divine.

(John Banister Tabb)

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

Correspondence and articles for the next issue should be sent to the Editor by **Friday, April 16, 2004**, at the latest, please.

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

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