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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial	Page 1
Many Shall Rejoice at His Birth.	2
The Creator.	6
Book Review - Planet Earth's Last Hope by Alan Hayward.	11
A Command to Love.	13
The Son of Man or God?	15

It is unfortunate that an editor who wishes to sow seeds of peace should conclude his last editorial with a provocative statement, namely: "All those who believe that Christ is their God and Master and want to lead a life of love and harmony should have much in common". It was this view that caused such strife in the Christian Church in the early centuries. It was intended to state that, "All those who believe that Christ is their Lord and Master should have much in common". So much for bad writing!

What, however, was said in error, might well be a starting point for examining differences. Stated simply, among followers of Christ today, are many who are Trinitarians, some who believe that Christ was the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary, some two thousand years ago and begotten by the Holy Spirit, whilst a few believe that he was the son of Joseph and Mary and the spiritual Son of God.

An editorial is not the place for a detailed discussion of this complex issue and we wish only to plead for a tolerant attitude between those that hold apparently different views, realizing that they hold them sincerely. It is easily argued that this is so fundamental an issue that no compromise is possible. Can there be a more important issue than the question of a definition of the God that a religious body worships? The argument might be strong if we could define the Christian god, but we cannot. It is when man tries to define his God by creeds and dogma that he loses him. He is looking in the wrong direction. "God is love" is the most fundamental definition revealed from the depths of John's soul. To explain this John tells us we have to live in love and then he says we live in God; so God, according to John, cannot be seen or touched by mortal man; still less

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MANY SHALL REJOICE AT HIS BIRTH

by Jeremy Craddock.

A SUMMARY

There are people who feel that one should not celebrate Christmas because December 25 was, in pre-Christian days, a pagan feast. In this article it will be argued (a) that it is not possible to find any day which has no pagan associations; (b) that it is in keeping with biblical practice to transform pagan ideas, thus overcoming them by making them Christian; (c) that it is proper formally to thank God for the birth of His Son; and (d) that we should be happy to do so.

TWO FACTS AND TWO ATTITUDES

Our Christmas festival of December 25 was unknown to the Christians of the first three centuries. Indeed, in the pagan Roman empire, that date was dedicated to the worship of the sun. These circumstances give rise typically to two attitudes.

TESTING THE FIRST ATTITUDE

One attitude is that it does not matter. The NT regards the pagan gods as nothing¹ and sets no distinction between days². If we are to keep Christmas, then December 25 is as good a date as any, for the evangelists do not tell us the date of our Lord's birth and we have no other information at our disposal. Let us put the matter in a slightly different way. If the Bible (in particular, the NT) is to be our norm - as we might well think it appropriate to say, for the word derives from the Latin for a carpenter's square - then if we keep Christmas, we may indeed keep it on any suitable day. Now it becomes obvious that we have begged the question twice. Whether or not we are to keep Christmas is precisely the point at issue. And it is at issue, at least in part, because Paul's general observations might be subject to some special consideration - a consideration which Paul cannot have had in mind because Christmas was not celebrated in his day. The quotation of a couple of proof texts, then, is a little too facile.

TESTING THE SECOND ATTITUDE

We ought, then, for the sake of an honest argument, to consider critically the second typical attitude: days of pagan worship may be ignored; they ought not to be hallowed. Even with the limitation suggested above, at least some of the wind is taken out of the sails of that contention by the Corinthian¹ and Romans² passages. In any event, the total avoidance of pagan days is just not possible. If

we should object to our weekly worship being held on the Sun's day, then we should have to make do with that belonging to the Moon, or perhaps the day dedicated to Mars (dressed in, I suppose, Norse clothing), or the one dedicated to Mercury (in the guise of Odin); and we have not even got as far as Thursday, which belongs to Thor while Friday is, so to speak, the wife of Wednesday - and all that is left of the week is the property of Saturn. One cannot avoid pagan days because there are no others.

If we could get ourselves into a first century mind, it might occur to us that the first day of the week, used by the pagans as the sun's day, has a certain appropriateness as the day on which the Sun of Righteousness³ arose. If we could get ourselves into a fourth century Christian mind, it might occur to us that to celebrate the nativity of Jesus on the birthday of Mithras is not wholly inapposite, for the coming of Jesus conquered the unconquerable sun⁴, and the dayspring from on high visited us to shine upon them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death⁵. And if the first or fourth century Christian could adopt our more oblique way of putting things, it might occur to him that he was not using a pagan liturgy to worship Yahweh, but was rather transforming the pagan day (which may have been base) into what could be sublime. The question we must now ask therefore is whether our first or fourth century Christian would be right to undertake such a transformation.

A BIBLICAL TRANSFORMATION

Isaiah did. He provides us with a clear and uncontentious example of biblical transformation of pagan worship in his use of a hymn to Baal. The hymn occurs in the Ras Shamra texts (discovered and translated in about 1930) which represent the Canaanitish religious literature of the civilisation of Ugarit in northern Palestine. The material in the Ugaritic texts is thought to be roughly contemporary with Jacob. The hymn contains the following lines:

'Though thou didst slay Lotan the Primeval Serpent,
Didst make an end of the Crooked Serpent,
The Foul-fanged with Seven Heads'⁶.

With that we may compare Is 27¹:

'In that day the Lord shall punish
Leviathan the Primeval Serpent,
Even Leviathan the Crooked Serpent,
And he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea'.

Here the prophet manifestly uses the Ugaritic material and transforms it, making it apply to Yahweh - for it was He, not Baal, who had in fact subdued the deeps.

Now it may be commented that Isaiah was justified in his use of the pagan hymn: he had a legitimate theological interest in finding language to show that it was Yahweh, not Baal, who was King. And,

it may be urged upon us, the early Church remembered the death of Jesus every Passover because it had a theological interest in our Lord's death; but it had no feast of the Nativity and must therefore have had no theological interest in our Lord's birth.

To that we may reply that the early Church did have a theological interest in the birth of Jesus. We can reasonably suppose the gospels of Matthew and Luke to have been written not later than the end of the first century; and both display an enormous interest in the Nativity. What is more, their interest is not that of mere chroniclers of events; it is theological. Matthew does not record three sets of fourteen generations⁷ in the genealogy of Jesus because there were three sets of fourteen. In fact there were not. He records them because (by a Jewish convention) fourteen represents the name of David. Matthew and Luke give us their different genealogies not because they wished to stimulate the faithful to devise fanciful harmonies of the two, but because (to put the matter at its lowest) each was concerned to show that Jesus was not to be excluded from the kingship on mere human grounds.

It is objected that the early Church did not consider the birth of Jesus to be of high soteriological^{*} significance by any means as soon in their history as they considered His death in such terms. Well of course not: one cannot consider all deep theological issues at the same time. If we are considering the Crucifixion at this moment, our meditation on the Virgin Birth will have to be made tomorrow.

It is objected that, at the outset, the Church attached the death of Jesus to a particular festival but did not do so with His birth. Well of course: history attached His death to a particular feast; He died at Passover. What else could the Church have remembered in ensuing years' Passovers but the blood of His Cross? They did not associate His birth with a particular feast because they did not know when He was born. When they came to make their meditation, the information had been lost.

THE CHOICE OF A DAY

When, therefore, the post-Jewish Church came to seek a date, they considered¹ January 6 because it was an Epiphany feast and December 25 because it had to do with the rising sun. Being a Christian, and not a Jewish, Church, it did not seek to attach the Birth to a Jewish feast (although it might perhaps have considered Hanukkah or Tabernacles - both of which in their way are appropriate and one of which is used in the NT in Nativity contexts⁸). What the Church did was to discover a language, provided by the pagan

* (Theological term for doctrine of salvation Ed.)

festival, to show that Jesus - not a pagan god - had come into the world; that the Word of God - not Mithras - had been made flesh. In short, they did exactly what Isaiah had done - and what John did. Ugarit's 'Foul-fanged with seven heads' rears out of the water in Revelation 13. It resembles that old Serpent, called the Devil and Satan, because it is the seed of the Serpent. It is wounded in the head because the Serpent had essayed to make war upon the seed of the Woman. If John was not embarrassed to tell us that it is sin, not Leviathan, that is vanquished; and that it is Jesus, not Baal, who vanquished it; then neither should we be embarrassed to tell each other so. Once the birth of Jesus (like the death) is seen to be inseparable from His life; once the Nativity is perceived to be soteriologically important in itself; then faith must become active - and it may well express its activity in formal acts of worship¹⁰.

MANY SHALL REJOICE AT HIS BIRTH¹¹.

If we have managed to satisfy ourselves that we may give God thanks for the birth of His Son in some formal act of worship, then the question of whether it is better to do so, or not to do so, ought to be superfluous. And that we should be happy in our thanksgiving surely should be beyond question.

Angels sang at His birth¹² as one of them had wished joy to Mary¹³ when he announced it. Wise men from the East rejoiced¹⁴ - as well they might, for the bringing of joy was part of His work¹⁵. The disciples, the sick and the sinners¹⁶ rejoiced at His ministry. His resurrection took away the sorrow of His death, and the joy of His birth and ministry and resurrection was not blotted out by His absence; at His ascension and after, they rejoiced¹⁷.

If the disciples could rejoice after Christ's ascension, then surely later Christians can demonstrate their feelings in like manner.

REFERENCES

1. Is 41^{21ff}; 1 Cor 8⁴⁻⁶.
2. Rom 14⁵⁻⁶.
3. Mal 4².
4. There is an account of the origin of Christmas in: Oscar Cullmann: The Early Church, SCM 1956.
5. Luke 1⁷⁸⁻⁷⁹.
6. D. Winton Thomas (Ed): Documents from Old Testament Times, Thomas Nelson 1958.
7. Matt 1¹⁷.

sequences of 'cause and effect', which we designate as 'natural law'. We have only to look analytically (scientifically) at all which is going on around us to see the manner in which God works when 'creating'.

The aspect of God as Creator which has the greatest practical importance to us in the Christian era, is that which is called, on the basis of 1.Cor.5;17, the 'new creation'. The first chapter of Genesis is obviously a 'prologue' to the Word of God, which presents Him as the Creator, of whom Paul could say "for in Him we live and move: in Him we exist". Jesus said that his Father had never yet ceased his work, and in Rom.8;18-25, Paul speaks of creation of this universe as still in active progress, only to be finalised when "the liberty and splendour of the children of God" is attained and finalised. Throughout the O.T. the finalised purpose of God, seen by the prophet as still future, is spoken of in the perfect tense of the verb. S.R. Driver speaks thus of this use by the O.T. "The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependent upon such an unalterable determination of the will, that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place the most special and remarkable use of this tense is as the prophetic perfect : its abrupt appearance in this capacity imparts to descriptions of the future a forcible and expressive touch of reality, and reproduces vividly the certainty with which the occurrence of a yet future event is contemplated by the speaker." (Hebrew Tenses. Oxford. pp.17-18). The first chapter of Genesis is written in this same tense, and there is no linguistic reason why the creation there described is not still progressing, as implied by Jesus when he spoke of his Father as having never yet ceased from his work.

This is indeed implied directly in the fourth chapter of Hebrews. The first four verses of the second chapter of Genesis are obviously the completion of the account in the first, and the 'rest' of God after completion of the sixth day's work is quoted in Hebrews as the "finish" of God's work, and of God ceasing from work and entering into his rest. Yet Hebrews continues immediately in the same context to speak of this final 'rest' as still future to us, into which we must now strive to enter. The only sense in which it is possible to read this passage is that in which Jesus corrected his contemporaries when they assumed that the rest of God was now in operation; God is still working (creating), and in which Paul spoke of the whole creation as actively groaning in the pains of birth as it brings forth the final element of that creation, the child of God; men who are as truly in 'His image' as was the begotten Son who came to initiate this final stage of creation. "The Lord's word made the heavens, all the host of heaven was made at his command" (Ps.33;6) and so John speaks of

the final stage of creation when he says, "so the Word became flesh; he came to dwell among us, and we saw his glory" and "all that came to be was alive with his life, and that life was the light of men ... to those who have yielded him their allegiance, he gave the right to become children of God".

When dealing with the hope of man in 1.Cor.15 Paul speaks of this same process of creating man in the image of God when he says "The first man, Adam, became as animate being, whereas the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit. Observe, the spiritual does not come first; the animal body comes first, and then the spiritual. The first man was made of the dust of the earth: the second man is from heaven. The man made of dust is the pattern of all men of dust, and the heavenly man is the pattern of all the heavenly. As we have worn the likeness of the man made of dust, so we shall wear the likeness of the heavenly man." This is the process which he has summarised earlier in the chapter as "as in Adam all men die, so in Christ all will be brought to life". In his later letter to Ephesus Paul speaks again of this completion of creation when he says (2;10) "for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to devote ourselves to the good deeds for which God has designed us", indicating that the 'design' of man in the mind of God was that which we may become in Christ. Later in the same letter (4;23-24) he says, "you must be made new in mind and spirit, and put on the new nature of God's creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth".

God is independent of time, so that there is no difference to him between one day and a thousand years (2.Pet.3;8) and the restrictions of mortality which cause us to place such emphasis upon efficiency and speed do not affect him. Consequently, we see his present creation proceeding at an incomparably (to us) slow pace; the surface of our earth is slowly, so slowly, weathering and altering, as is also our climate; when we consider all forms of life we see, without exception, a similar process of slow advance which we term 'growth', the development from a single, or from two dissimilar cells, into the complex organism which we call an animal, or a plant, or a virus, or some other form of life. Growth is the general pattern of development in the physical structure of living things, and even the begotten Son of God commenced life on this earth as a small mass of cells which slowly emerged through the common forms of babe and youth and man to an 'image of God' so that he could eventually say "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father". An analogous process operates in mental development, so that Jesus could say "on the third day I reach my goal" (Lk.13;32) in which the word translated 'reach my goal', ('perfected' in the A.V.) means fully grown. So of our progress towards the image of God, Paul can say that it is his prayer that "you be strong to grasp with all God's people, what is

the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge. So may you attain to fullness of being, the fullness of God himself". (Eph.3;18-21).

The opening account in Genesis - "So God created man in His own image God blessed them and said to them 'be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth" - finds its fulfilment in the closing words of the Bible - "Every accursed thing shall disappear. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants shall worship him and they shall reign for evermore." Between these two accounts, stretches the long process of creation, in which we are situated in "this the final age" when "He has spoken to us in the Son whom He has made heir to the whole universe, and through whom he created all orders of existence". (Heb.1;2) Paul, viewing the commencement of this final age, gives us a graphic sketch of the Creator at work in our time - "He rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us away into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom our release is secured and our sins forgiven. He is the image of the invisible God; his is the primacy over all created things. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, not only things visible but also the invisible orders of thrones, sovereignties, authorities and powers: the whole universe has been created through him and for him. And he exists before everything, and all things are held together in him. He is, moreover, the head of the body, the Church. He is its origin, the first to return from the dead, to be in all things alone supreme. For in him the complete being of God, by God's own choice, came to dwell. Through him God chose to reconcile the whole universe to Himself, making peace through the shedding of his blood upon the cross - to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven, through him alone". Although Paul wrote in Greek, surely he has used the idiom of 'the prophetic perfect' of the prophets, just as he had found it used also in the first chapter of Genesis. (Col.1;13-20). Our present attitude and place in this process is outlined by Peter in his first epistle "So even those who suffer, if it be according to God's will, should commit their souls to him - by doing good; their Maker (creator) will not fail them".

REVIEW

Planet Earth's last hope. by Alan Hayward,
Published - Marshall, Morgan & Scott,
London. Price £1.75.

The book begins with a dramatic analogy; with the earth as a spaceship speeding through space out of control, polluted within and battered without. The author then endeavours to validate the analogy by describing the pollution that man has caused and is causing, to water and atmosphere and goes on to point out his prodigality with the material resources of this earth. It is unfortunate however, that little discrimination is made in assessing the pollution problem. The disastrous London smogs which killed hundreds of old people were due to smoke and sulphur dioxide from coal sources, but the author scarcely discriminates between this and the motor car, which is described as the "chief offender" and under a paragraph heading "Poison everywhere", leaves the reader with the impression that we are all being poisoned by motor car exhausts. In fact, the pollutants in the exhaust of motor cars are different from those that caused the London smogs and are carbon monoxide, unburnt hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen and lead. There is no medical evidence yet that shows that the exhaust of motor cars has seriously harmed anybody. These are indeed poisons in high concentration, but they are, fortunately, so diluted in the atmosphere that they have no permanent affect on health. The carbon monoxide, for instance, is very much less concentrated than that breathed by a smoker. Clearly, those under the greatest risks would be "smoking London taxicab drivers" and they seem healthy enough!

Having said this, there are places in the world that really need cleaning up, including Los Angeles, where topographical conditions prevent the dispersion of pollutants by wind and the intense sun causes photochemical smog, which is an irritant to throat and eyes. Tokyo, Chicago, and New York, so called canyon cities, where the skyscraper buildings again prevent proper ventilation of the roads, also have pollution problems, but to a lesser extent. It seems, therefore, to the reviewer, that the author draws generality from the exception rather than the norm.

Dr. Hayward then very rightly points out that man is wasting the world's mineral resources. It is unfortunate that he illustrates this by saying that Cornish tin has been exhausted. This is not so. Tin has not been mined in Cornwall, because it has been cheaper to produce it in Malaya. However, today with rising world mineral prices three Cornish tin mines are now being worked again.

The crux of the argument of the book is that man is unable to cope with the situation largely because of his greed and Dr. Hayward, for his solution, turns to the Bible and finds the answer is "ridiculously simple". This turns out to be the return of Jesus Christ to rule the world.

In distinction to the author, the reviewer feels that the return of Christ is more needful to deal with sin rather than the environmental crisis, and feels that man should be quite capable of dealing with the latter, himself. Already, millions are being spent on devising methods of purifying the exhaust from motor cars and a reduction of approximately 90% can be obtained, if medical evidence is forthcoming to prove this necessary. Smokeless zones and industrial controls are already making a considerable improvement. There is a gradual cleaning up of rivers and most drinking water today is quite harmless, whilst this of course was not so some 50 years ago. But Dr. Hayward states to the contrary, "So we choose to have an affluent, effluent society".

We feel that the author has not made a good case for the inability of man to control pollution.

Turning to a much more difficult point, Dr. Hayward raises the "Population Explosion" problem. But the morality of his arguments appears questionable. He states that, nature was in balance because "God arranged that sorrow - a word that embraces all forms of pain and death - and conception would keep in step". He then appears to blame man for upsetting this "balance" by preventing the death of "7 children out of 10 in infancy".

Dr. Hayward discusses birth control. He says that man could not restore the balance of "Sorrow and Conception" as God had in Eden. He then states (p39) "They lacked the facilities . Even if they had been able to dispense family planning appliances they would not have known how to persuade people to use them. In any case they were blissfully unaware of the need to keep a balance between death and conception". It is difficult to see the author's argument here. Who are the "they" who were blissfully unaware of the need to keep a balance? If "they" were unaware then they are certainly aware now. He blames the religious leaders - "If they would only be guided by the Bible they would not oppose Birth Control". He states that "Jewish women used to use primitive contraception at the time of the New Testament". We would be interested to know the source of his information here. We feel the author should have made it clear that the only religious leaders "who deprecate birth control" are Roman Catholics. We would agree with him, however, that the problem is a severe one.

Returning to Dr. Hayward's main thesis, that the return of Christ is Man's only hope in solving the environmental crisis, we can see that this would be a nice solution, but we feel that God will do this in his own time and not "ours". The return of Christ at the first world war would have prevented the second, but it was not God's plan. If God decides to leave Christ's return for another 50 years, then this solution will be no answer until then.

It seems to the reviewer that there is a grave danger of leaving all to Christ, as it is a contracting out of responsibility. Surely it is better to identify the troubles and to try to overcome them. To some extent the author sees this point and states (p112) "Obviously we are not intended to live with our heads in the clouds, so obsessed by Christ's coming, that we are oblivious to the World around us. But, he immediately assures us that we must not think for a moment that we can succeed. Only Jesus Christ is capable of doing it, even though we might help in a "corner", by respecting nature and avoiding litter, insecticides, smoking, gluttony and drunkenness etc.

Finally, there is the Epilogue. We are returned to the spaceship Earth, with everything spic and span. The Captain is on board once more and all is well. Some will feel the analogy to be a good one, but others may think that to suggest that the captain left the ship to its own devices is indeed a contradiction of the basis of Christ's love.

J. Weaving.

A COMMAND TO LOVE.

According to John's gospel the Lord Jesus has commanded that we should love one another (John 13:34). If we look up the word command in the Oxford Dictionary this is that we shall find :-
COMMAND - order (person to do) issue orders; to demand; exercise authority over; order given; pursuance of it; dominate; coerce.

What a pity this word has been used to present the greatest principle that Jesus taught. The words love and command, if you think about them, are incompatible. How can one command another to love? We would be poor observers of life if we did not realise that love does not work in this way.

A command is an O.T. religious precept but religion should not be something that is separate from life! It is life; so let us look around at life and see how love does work.

A baby will sense its mother's love; there is absolutely no doubt about this. It is just as marked in the animal world as with human beings and from that understanding a response will come about. A

loved baby is happy and contented and has every opportunity for thriving or developing naturally. In contrast an unloved child will become fretful and possibly withdrawn. A loving mother does not ask her children to return her love nor they if she will love them. If they feel it they will respond. This is a natural response which occurs spontaneously. So it is with real friends, who will love us in spite of our failings. But love is a two way thing; if we have no friends then sadly it is we who have never loved.

Jesus did not come to command anything of us surely! Did he not come to give us something? Was not that something reassurance that God loves us? We may feel that we know that God cares about us as individuals but do we really believe it especially when things go wrong? We must have an unshakeable inner conviction before we will be able to respond, so that we will be able to say with the psalmist:

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no ill for thou art with me." (Do we fear death?)

Though the earth be removed; though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea I will not fear."
(Are we fearless?)

Have we that peace that passes all understanding, because we reside in the knowledge of the love of God, or do we lack reassurance?

Jesus more than anything wanted to convey this reassurance to us and not until we have it will we be able to respond. Of God's concern for us he says:-

"Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? If God so clothes the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you? Are not sparrows two a penny, yet not one shall fall to the ground without your Father's leave. You are much more precious than they."

If we lack conviction of God's love our spiritual growth will without doubt be retarded. Be assured, even the very hairs of our head are numbered. If we feel that there is little evidence in the world around us of God's love then it may be we are looking but not seeing; listening but not hearing. We may feel we have been passed by in regard to the luxuries that the modern world enjoys. There is an old proverb that originated from the East which says:-

"If you look at the man who has no feet, you will not feel so unhappy about having no shoes."

It may be that we are looking in the wrong direction; to the material world. Can we turn ourselves around and look the other way? If we can then we may see quite a different scene. When we have reached that stage our prayers will be full of thankfulness and joy and we shall be opening ourselves and when we do this we shall be filled.

To love and be loved is the greatest joy. Recently on the radio someone said that the word 'joy' was not a part of our vocabulary and someone else replied that perhaps this was because love played a very small part in our lives. This is something we may all give some thought to. Is not joy something one should expect to find in a Christian?

In conclusion, let us make a spiritual resolution. Let us resolve not to have a discontented mind because the real riches are spiritual. If we feel signs of irritation creeping into our mind let us dismiss them. Let us determine to be master of our own minds, remembering that there is no greater barrier to spiritual growth than discontentment.

R. B.

THE SON OF MAN OR GOD?

by J. H. Weaving.

Hamlet in his depression describes the place and roll of man
"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of the animals".

If man is the paragon of the animals, what is Jesus? In the first letter to Timothy we read of him "He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory". (1 Tim.3:16) This almost says that Jesus was "God manifested in the flesh" and that many came to think so is clear from the fact that several ancient manuscripts have been altered and "he who" rendered "God". From John we have "The word (logos) was made flesh and dwelt among us". (John 1:14). But 1 Timothy 2:5 says that there is one God and one mediator between God and man - the man Christ Jesus. There are two concepts of Jesus here; the former says that he is "God" manifest as a man; the latter, that he is a 'man'. Superficially, at least, this would seem to be two fundamentally different views. The one might well support the Roman Catholic view that God came down to earth in the form of a man, and the other the Unitarians' concept, that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary.

Both these views go somewhat beyond the words in the passages we have looked at so far and we may feel that neither of these two extreme positions appeals to us and that a concept lying between them is nearer to the truth: namely, that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary but had no pre-existence. Nevertheless, both the extreme views have evidence to support them. For instance, the Unitarian position has some support in the fact that neither Mark, nor John, seemed to know of the Virgin Birth. Nor does Paul refer to it. At the other end of the scale, John defines a "logos" that existed from the beginning and clearly refers to Jesus as the "logos made flesh".

There is clearly a problem which we may investigate under the term "The Person of Jesus". Indeed this problem has recommended itself to the foremost modern expositors and many have written books solely on this subject. These we shall refer to from time to time, but as Eduard Schweizer says "Jesus is the man who fits no formula". The object of this article, which is only an introduction, is a small attempt at getting to know Jesus better. It is a project we must approach with the greatest humility, remembering how small we are in stature, compared with Jesus; yet we feel sure that He would want us to know Him better and we hope He will bless our attempts however simple and inadequate. Let us say, to start with, that in the author's opinion the best picture we can get of Jesus comes from reading of His short life, which tells us of His contact with the many, very different men and women of his day - simple folk; priests; lawyers; scribes; Pharisees; Sadducees; Caiaphas; Herod; Pilate, etc. The impression we get will largely be a subjective one and your Jesus and my Jesus may seem different but the closer bond that ties us to the living, every-present Jesus in our lives will overshadow inaccuracies in our deductions. In other words, our lack of reason and articulation does not diminish the greatness of Jesus, or the love He has for His stammering children. An important factor is to realise that what we are trying to do is precisely the same as that which faced the Apostles after the death and resurrection of Jesus and subsequently the writers of the various books of the N.T. When Jesus had gone from the visual presence of the disciples they had to ask themselves "Who was this man?" Though these inspired writers were in a much better position than we to know Jesus, careful study will show that the Jesus each presents, differs markedly the one from the other.

When we leave the apostolic age and go into the 2nd and 3rd centuries, the struggle to depict Jesus goes on but, unfortunately, dogma intervenes and, although no doubt the reason behind the Church's wish to define God and Jesus were good, the resulting formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity against the opposition of Arius and his disciples sparked off a terrible persecution that has blackened the reputation of the Church and stifled free thought. It is only

comparatively recently that the best theologians have escaped from these bonds that the Church forged, but already a more wonderful picture of Jesus is emerging as a result of their work.

Expositors seem to take one or two approaches, either to study the titles of Jesus as presented through the various records trying to assess what these titles encompass, or, alternatively, to extract the picture that each N.T. author presents of Jesus.

Both of these methods yield important information, but yet a third approach must be added; that which asks, "What did Jesus say of himself?" We have, therefore, the difficult problem of synthesising these three strands into a real person. This we may not be able to do in words. Indeed, we certainly shall not in any depth but in our hearts some synthesis will come united with his direct revelation of his presence to us.

Before we start a detailed analysis, it will be profitable to try to get a broad outline. What stands out about this man? The first impression we get is that He had some of the characteristics of an Old Testament prophet, an Elijah or Isaiah. He clearly was a man with a message. He went about teaching and preaching, but here the parallel, which was in fact the role of John the Baptist, ends. He also healed "all manner of disease". So he was also a healer. Like the prophets he called for repentance but he went much further than they.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemies, but I say unto you, love your enemies". Matt.5:43-44.

His creed of love went beyond anything that had been revealed in the Old Testament. He went beyond the action to the motives that lay behind the action.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart". Matt.5:27-28.

He called for an unreserved commitment to himself and God.

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". Matt.12-28.

There was such a totality in his call that his 'good-news' could only be encompassed in the term which familiarity has made commonplace - 'The Kingdom of God!'. Nothing less than a realm of which the Almighty is king. None of the prophets had spoken like this. They had proclaimed "Thus said the Lord". They had prophesied a future Kingdom in the last days, but Jesus preached "The Kingdom of God is at hand". Mark.1:15. He did not confine himself to

expounding the Old Testament, but spoke with authority; an authority which supercedes even the sacred Torah:

"Ye have heard what hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth but I say unto you that ye resist not evil" Matt.5:38.

Such authority was implicitly divine.*

We will now begin to look more at the detail. What did Jesus say of himself? The title he assumed was "Son of Man". This was the only title Jesus used himself; all the others - Christ (Messiah), Son of God, Lord, Son of David - are used by the evangelists to describe him. "The Son of Man" appellation presents the most difficulty to our understanding. In itself it need mean no more than "Man" and this is the sense of the phrase used by God in addressing the prophet Ezekiel. But in Daniel (7:13) it is used to designate an apocalyptic* man, who ascends to the "Ancient of Days". In seeking the identity of the Son of Man here, one is tempted to identify this figure with the Messiah, but we virtually have an interpretation given to us in V.27 of the same chapter. Here, it is explained that this one like a "man" symbolizes the saints of the most high that receive the Kingdom.

Reference to the previous issue of Endeavour (No.41) shows that Enoch builds on this Daniel reference to make the Son of Man a pre-existent Messiah.

Would Jesus ascribe to Himself the picture that Enoch paints of the "Son of Man"? This is possible, if He believed it to be true, but we do not think it probable. For instance, Jesus without hesitation uses the term "Kingdom of God", but puts his own interpretation upon it - a much wider concept than can be found in the O.T. However, the answer must come from Jesus' own concept of the 'Son of Man'. We have 68 references in the synoptic gospels which may be analysed into three groups:

- 1) Where Son of Man is a synonym of 'I' e.g. Matt.8:19-20.
- 2) In His teaching concerning His suffering. Mk.8:31.
- 3) A Future Son of Man (Eschatological*) Mk.8:38.

In the first group, we learn that the 'Son of Man' has nowhere to lay his head;(Matt.8:20) that he has the power to forgive sins;(Mk.2:10) that he is Lord of the Sabbath; that he came eating and drinking;(Matt.11:14) that a word spoken against the Son of Man may be forgiven. (Matt.12:32)

* But see Correspondence.

* A symbolic figure.

* Relating to the "last things".

In the second group, we begin with the discourse at Caesarea Phillippi, when Jesus asks his disciples, "Whom do men say I am?" To the confession of Peter that he is the Christ, he does not answer directly but tells them to tell "no man of him" and goes on to say that "the Son of Man must suffer many things ... be rejected ... and be killed and after three days rise again". This is repeated again in Mk.9:32. In Mk.14:41 we read "The hour is come behold the 'Son of Man' is betrayed into the hands of sinners". Then follows his betrayal by Judas.

In the third group referring to future references to the 'Son of Man', Jesus says "For whomsoever shall be ashamed of me or my words in this adulterous and sinful generation the Son of Man also shall be ashamed of him, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. (Mk.8.38) This has echoes of Daniel 7, but the most striking part of the statement is that Jesus appears to distinguish himself from the "Son of Man". In John 12.34 we read that the people say, "We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

It seems that Jesus, on the occasions when he spoke of His death and of future judgement, spoke of the Son of Man in a rather detached way.

We wish to put forward for discussion a tentative suggestion here. Jesus knew of the prophecies of the O.T., the Messianic prophecies and the Servant prophecies of Isaiah. If He were the O.T. Messiah these future things had got to happen to him. They had not yet happened and perhaps he was not quite certain just how they would happen. Did he prefer to state the future concerning himself by reference to a symbolic figure, implying that His identity would become known by the evidence of events?

CORRESPONDENCE.

Dear Editor,

"For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes".

In your Editorial you comment on Matt. 7:29 above, as follows:-
"This most certainly implies that He (Jesus) spake with direct divine power". This most certainly is not true. Anthony Deane in "The World Christ Knew" quotes (page 97) A.T. Robinson's Greek Grammar that 'K & L' often meant "and yet" to drive home the point that Jesus taught as though he were a 'scribe', that is "with authority" and yet his message was different, not the same as that of a scribe.

Yours etc.
Ralph Lovelock.

described in words, but He is met in life, if the quality of that life is love. If we have not experienced that life we can see it as we read of Jesus's encounters with the men and women of his day - simple folk, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, the High Priest, Pilate - and this will help us to seek God and Jesus in our encounters with the men and women of our day.

If we really believe this then every encounter in our lives is important and should be so treated.

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