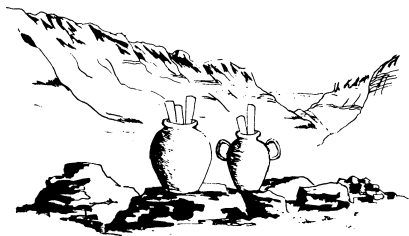


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WORSHIP

There has probably never been a time when an individual has found it so difficult to decide on a form of worship. Time was, before the Reformation when, for most people, the situation appeared to be black and white. The form of Christian worship was set - the Mass - and if you disbelieved it you were an infidel and destined for hell. The Reformation changed all this. Transubstantiation was discredited - the doctrine that said that the bread and wine were transformed into the body and blood of Jesus and that the Mass was therefore a sacrifice. With Luther the altar was replaced by the pulpit.

There can be no doubt that this was a great step forward, bringing the teaching of Jesus much more effectively to the

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THE BOOKS OF ENOCH THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

In the Winter 1973 issue of Endeavour (No. 41) the author discussed some of the passages contained in the Books of Enoch - the apocryphal work quoted by Jude. To give some idea of the content and style of the books some quite large quotations were made in this article and some tentative questions posed with regard to the identity of the Son of Man. The Son of Man, also called the Elect-one, figures prominently in that section of the Book of Enoch that used to be called the "Similitudes", but is now more usually known as the Book of Parables.

A final question posed in the article was:- "The title Christ chose for himself was 'The Son of Man'. Was he actually influenced by this book?" The discoveries in Cave 4 of Qumran answer the question decisively.

The question is an important one since if Jesus chose the title because it was well-known to the Jews of his day from the Book of Enoch, then he claimed clearly and overtly to be the Messiah, because the Messiah and the 'Son of Man' are synonymous in this book.

The discoveries at Qumran Cave 4 are described in detail, including a translation by the famous student of Qumran Jozef T. Milik in his book published in 1976 by the Oxford University Press and entitled "The Book of Enoch - Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4." Milik starts his first chapter:-

"The fragments of leather scrolls belonging to the Books of Enoch, which come from Cave 4 of Qumran represent eleven manuscripts ... No single manuscript fragment which might correspond in any way to the second section of the Ethiopic Enoch chapters 37-71 (Book of Parables) has been identified in the countless mass of fragments of 4Q or in the less extensive collection of manuscripts from ten other Qumran caves."

The indisputable inference from this negative discovery is that the "Book of Parables" or "Similitudes" is to be dated post-Qumran and could not, therefore, have been alluded to by Jesus.

Jesus' choice of the title must, therefore, have been a title of humility - "I am simply 'The Man'." Alternatively it may refer directly back to its only use in the O.T.* namely Daniel 7. This later reference, though usually thought of as being Messianic, is by no means clearly so. Daniel 7:9-14 describes a vision of a son of man receiving a kingdom from the 'Ancient of Days'. However, Daniel 7:27 declares that the kingdom is given to the 'saints of the Most High'. so that the symbol of 'a son of man' coming to the 'Ancient of Days' really states no more than a manlike personage being a 'symbol' of the 'saints' receiving the kingdom. As the setting is one of Judgment - God sitting on the throne - the vision could well be interpreted "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Jesus did not refer to himself as 'a son of man' but 'The Son of Man'. However, he seems to have left his hearers, both in his generation and ours, to exercise their minds and faith to determine whom exactly he was. May we venture a reason for this, namely, that he was concerned to challenge his hearers to a response to his new revelation of God, and thereby to ask each man to determine what he, Jesus, meant to them in this new relationship - the revelation of God as a 'Father'. This was a statement that undoubtedly shocked the Jews. They, due to a superstitious reverence, would not even pronounce the name of God, 'YHWH', but instead read 'LORD' when it occurred in the reading of the O.T. This 'man' Jesus-said in contrast, "Call God 'Abba'," which is equivalent to 'Dad'.

Who then did write this section of the Book of Enoch, and when? Milik suggests it is a Christian Greek composition of about A.D.270. His argument for this date starts with the observation that there is no reference to this section of Enoch in any of the writings of the early Christian fathers. He also calls

* The use in Ezekiel is not a title but a form of address - 'Man' or as we might say today 'Mr.'

attention to the similarity in places to a * Sybilline work of the 3rd Century A.D., books referring to the resurrection and an attack on Jerusalem in the latter days. However, these arguments are less convincing. Nevertheless, the absence of any fragment of the Book of Parables from the Qumran caves is more than adequate proof that this section of the Book of Enoch is Christian and not Jewish. Thus, some sections of the church, desiring to 'elevate' Jesus to 'pre-existent sonship' inserted this section into the 'Books of Enoch'.

J.H. Weaving.

* Jewish and Christian apocalyptic books written in the style of the heathen Sybilline oracles originating in Greece about 600 B.C.

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8. T.F. O'Dea, 'The Sociology of Religion', Prentice-Hall 1966, p.116.
9. K. Klostermaier, 'Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban', S.C.M. 1969.
10. Quoted by R. Lovelock, 'Testing God', Endeavour, Summer 1977, p.12.

REVIEW

The Truth of God Incarnate

This little book is the evangelical answer to the essays in "The Myth of God Incarnate". Like the latter, it also consists of a series of essays. These are edited by Michael Green, who is Rector of St. Aldate's, Oxford, and was until recently Principal of St. John's College, Nottingham.

The preface is entitled "Scepticism in the Church" and begins with the words "How much can you remove from a car, and still possess what is properly called a car?" The writer compares stripping a car of various parts with the stripping from Christianity of various originally held doctrines. He says that the first doctrine to be abandoned was God's inspiration of Scripture and its trustworthiness. The seeds of this were planted long ago and watered during the Darwinian controversy at the end of the nineteenth century. The fruits were the arguments against "fundamentalism" in the nineteen twenties and doubts on the virgin birth of Jesus. Next came the rejection of miracles - or at any rate the nature miracles. The healing miracles were explained in terms of psycho-somatic parallels. The next stage was the 'death of God' theology, put forward by men like Altizer in the U.S.A., and the appearance of the book 'Honest to God' in England. Next came an attack on the resurrection of Jesus, that supposed bulwark of the supernatural. With these assumptions, it was only a matter of time before the divinity of Jesus was questioned. If God, as a personal God who acts and intervenes in the affairs of men, is dead; if Jesus did not physically rise from the dead, was not born of a virgin and did not perform miracles, how could he possibly be the Son of God? How could there be a real incarnation? It is a manner of speaking, a lovely story - mythological language not to be taken as part of the real essence of things. This is the situation at the moment as represented in the book "The Myth of God Incarnate".

The authors of "The Truth of God Incarnate" have written it because they are "concerned at the impression this other book is likely to make in the minds of many who regard the word 'mythical' as synonymous with 'untrue'. They believe that the

authors of "The Myth of God Incarnate" are propagandists, and one way of dealing with propaganda is to take it on in discussion and see how well-based it is. They have chosen this way because they think it is time for those who do not accept a reductionist Christology to stand up and be counted, and they believe that the presuppositions behind the current scepticism are not compelling and that its implications are very far-reaching and corroding. They want it to be seen that a repudiation of the position taken up in "The Myth of God Incarnate" is not a mere conservative backlash, but is broadly based in the Church.

The first essay is by Michael Green himself and is entitled "Jesus in the New Testament". He starts by saying that we know very little about Jesus of Nazareth apart from the Gospels and Epistles.

"If, therefore, we are to make up our minds whether the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth is a fact or a myth, we must begin with the New Testament, not with any speculative theories spun out by theologians in the fourth century - or the twentieth."

He finds it astonishing that Michael Goulder should attribute belief in the deity of Christ to the supposed influence of Simon the sorcerer of Samaria on the Church and also to the psychological impact of Peter's experience of the (mythical!) resurrection and the subsequent "power of hysteria within a small community." He says that Frances Young gives a careful examination of the background, Jewish and pagan, for the idea of deity incarnate in a human being and admits that there is no complete analogy to the total Christian claim about Jesus in pre-Christian material.

The first section of his examination of the spread of the New Testament testimony deals with the claims of Paul. He quotes his first extant letter to the Thessalonians, written A.D. 50 or 51, and shows how Paul speaks of Jesus. He welcomes the Church as being in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and remembers how they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

The return of Jesus Christ on the Day of Judgment is identified with the Day of the Lord which Old Testament prophets expected. In this first epistle and also the second, "we find Paul struggling for words in which to describe the association of Jesus with God in grace, glory, salvation and judgment.

He then moves on to consider statements in the epistles to Corinth penned in the mid-fifties. "To us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." (1 Cor. 8-6) This is a passage where Paul is contrasting the Hellenistic concept of gods and lords many with the idea of one God. Michael Green claims that the concept of the Trinity is implicit in the grace at the end of 2 Corinthians and in other passages, notably 1 Cor. 12:4-6 concerning the diversities of gifts but the same Spirit. He says that Paul refers to the Trinity four times in the epistle to the Ephesians. One of the four examples is "In Christ you are built together for a place for God to dwell through the Spirit." (Eph. 2:22) He also points out, in passing, that Professor Hick supposes that the trinitarian concept arose from acceptance of the reports of the teaching of Jesus in John's gospel which was written nearly half a century after these writings of Paul.

In the epistle to the Colossians, Paul brings out the supremacy of Christ (Col. 1:15-19) and this runs counter to Professor Hick's idea that other world faiths at their best are ways of salvation. In Col. 2:9 Paul says that in Jesus "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily", and the same idea is expressed in Phil. 2:4-11, which is thought to be an early Christian hymn because it can be easily translated into Aramaic poetry. Verses 9 and 10 say, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him. and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." This is linked with Isaiah 45:22-23, "I am God and there is none else. I have sworn by myself ... that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." The writer says:

"Such a claim does not mean that God Almighty has abdicated in favour of his Son. It means that the Son shares the Father's nature, and that the

God to whom universal worship will be given is the one who has disclosed himself as Jesus. It would be ridiculous to imagine that Jesus is God, tout simple. The New Testament writers do not claim this for him; they know he is very much one of us. But they do insist that he is not just one of us. He is, so to speak, the window into God. That is no doubt why Paul insists that before the incarnation, Jesus Christ shared the very form of God."

Turning next to the claims of the evangelists, the writer considers first the opening of Mark's gospel. "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God", and states that he introduces a trinitarian motif in the story of the baptism of Jesus, where the voice of the Father and the coming of the Spirit combine to assure Jesus that "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He says Matthew is at pains to draw attention to the significance of Jesus' name, which means "Yahweh is Saviour" and to the fact that his coming means 'Emmanuel', 'God is with us'. Luke speaks of Jesus, "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Jesus was son of David, through his mother and Son of God on another plane. Discussing the use of "The Word" in the opening verses of John's gospel, he says that when John says "the Word was God", he "does not use the definite article 'ho theos' as if Jesus exhaustively defined the deity, but the simple 'theos' indicating that Jesus shared the very nature of God but did not exhaustively embody him. It leaves room, in other words, for the Father who sent him." John then went on to say that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us", which is a claim that "in the confines of a human life the Ultimate had become embodied, the Absolute had become contemporary." This is "the philosophical claim for the deity of Christ."

Another section deals briefly with other New Testament writers who make claims for the person of Jesus. Jude equates "perverting the grace of our God in licentiousness" with "denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." In the book of Revelation "the Lamb occupies one throne with God and

receives the worship of believers precisely as does his Father." Peter's speech on the Day of Pentecost, which describes Jesus as "a man attested to you by God," also maintains that the Father has exalted Jesus to his own right hand and that he is the fulfilment of Psalm 110, whilst in conclusion he says, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." The beginning of the epistle to the Hebrews tells the same story of the exaltation of Jesus, and says in effect that "Jesus is God's final and personal message to man: beyond him, God has nothing more to say."

Sheila Crawford.

To be continued.

TAKING A FRESH LOOK III

Preaching

If our message regarding the Kingdom of God is that it is exclusively an event of the future, concerning world events of a political and religious character, then we are clearly wrong and we do not comply with the New Testament. Since the N.T. scholar Gustaf Dalman explained the meaning of the expression "Kingdom of God" in the gospels, his view has not been seriously contested. He said that the Kingdom is not primarily land, people and king, but an expression of the sovereignty of God, an awareness of his rulership. Although the message of Jesus had a strong eschatological note, nevertheless we see in his parables and teaching that Jesus saw the Kingdom as having a present and immediate fulfilment as well. His very presence on the earth was the bursting into history of the Kingdom of God. The Gospel passages confirm this. His very power of healing was not to be ascribed to Beelzebub but to the finger of God: "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." (Matt. 12:28)

The teaching of Paul follows the same line. The early Church saw herself living as a new creation, whose life was hid with him. The Church was instructed that she was raised up to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. She was exhorted to see that she was not living by a written code but by the Spirit which gives life. The word of Christ was to be near them, on their lips, and in their hearts, and not written down as in, dare we say, a Bible; the Bible is our guide but not our God. This word must become flesh. It is our route to Christ. There is a grave danger of being worshippers of the book rather than its Lord. We should be clear in our own mind about the distinction. Being 'in Christ' is not simply belonging to a social group, it is the experiencing and becoming more aware of the presence within us of our living Lord. Intensive study without yielding to our Lord's message will not make us aware of him personally. (See John 5:39-40)

Consequently, the Kingdom has begun and will have at the parousia of Jesus its final glorious consummation. But what of the Kingdom as it exists today? Is this aspect heard in our Gospel message? The passages referred to are known to us, but they simply receive lip-service. Or worse still, they are watered down, being used and understood as mere generalised spiritual synonyms of 'belonging-to-the-church', thus taking all the power and challenge of the early Church's living

experience out of them.

The Church was to walk in the Spirit. What does this mean? A failure in our Gospel message is that we do not give personal spiritual experience recognition as the heart and centre of the Gospel. This is the very real, relevant message we should be preaching. This is a Gospel of faith and grace. We need much more work and study in these areas. What does the present Kingdom mean to us as an experience? How can we apply 'walking in the Spirit' to ecclesial activities and organisation? Above all, what does such a realisation mean in terms of our attitude to the sinner? We remember how Jesus, our Leader, accepted the sinners into his table fellowship and said that tax collectors and prostitutes enter the Kingdom before those who are pious. If, after an exhaustive study of Paul's letter to the Romans, we have not concluded that something has occurred which has brought the Christian to a closer relationship with his Father, and that something has happened with the coming of Christ which could not have occurred without him, and that this is a definition of salvation, which has occurred in space and time, then we have missed the point of Romans! Once seeing the point, we have to seek to understand what this means to us.

It is interesting to see how the young are concerned with Christianity and religion as an experience. They are interested to know what Christianity means to people personally. Though many of us fight shy of it, evangelical communities make great preaching use of personal testimony. What I find exciting is to see that right in the heart of the New Testament there is recorded much teaching in the form of personal encounters, in particular encounters with Jesus.

The utterances 'Jesus is Lord' and 'Abba' are not mere words, but deep spiritual expressions of a powerful conviction coming from an intimate relationship. Rarely do we hear this Gospel message. In its place we hear of a scheme of the Kingdom which amounts to little more than Jewish nationalism, an interpretation of the messiahship, I hasten to say, which put Jesus upon a cross. The vivid pictures of the Kingdom have great importance in the Old Testament, but surely the key to the Kingdom must come from the lips of Jesus. If this is acknowledged our source of information about the Kingdom must come from the parables of the Master.

The fate of Israel and of the Jew, and the Russian conquest of Palestine seem to occupy the vast majority of our time spent in witness today. But this was not the Gospel of Paul nor of Peter. None of the speeches of Acts appears to use such material. Is ours, then, the Gospel of the New Testament? This interest in prophecy, to the detriment of the preaching of Christ and him crucified and raised, has gained popularity for us because we seem to prefer to preach a Gospel of fact rather than a Gospel of faith.

In our times, we see the return of the Jew to Israel as a fact of prophecy fulfilment that no-one can deny. But we must learn the lesson of history - our interpretation may be wrong. Let us be aware of the great power which lies in our risen Lord. He converts men, we do not. Should we not then present in our witness, above everything else, as Paul did, the Person of Jesus and the saving atonement of his crucifixion and resurrection and his indwelling in the life of the believer? I am not suggesting a new Gospel, but a switch of emphasis to the Gospel of Jesus.

There should be a vital ingredient in our proclamation which words alone cannot express. A speaker should be delivering more than an address to his audience, he should be showing a way of life - a commitment. Where has the power gone from our preaching? Our lecturers use the same references with little breadth of understanding, preaching the same message, unaltered, it would seem, from one audience to another. People are becoming frustrated at having to listen to a message which holds little relevance for them today. What are the problems of the man in the street? What captures the imagination of the apathetic adolescent? What would we say to a prostitute, a street fighter or drug addict if such a person came along? Do we really know? Have we the first idea? Do we give them the promises to Abraham no matter what, convinced in our own spiritual arrogance that if we give them the Word it will sort them out, and if they do not respond, then they have not been called?

If only we could sit at the feet of Jesus more often and learn what he said in similar situations! Jesus accepted outcasts; he had compassion; he cared and he listened - listened sufficiently to understand a person's plight. He removed their burdens and gave them peace of mind.

But though we may stumble with the message, if the fire is there that will surely help. If members of an audience are kept riveted to their seats, knowing that a preacher really believes in what he is saying, then, even if a lot of them fail to understand the message, something will still be gained. This is a most powerful means of learning, but what can we say about a powerless preacher.... is he really, fully committed? Does his heart burn within him with love for those he is striving to bring to his Lord? Let us answer for ourselves, but remember, it shows in our preaching. We must preach from the love of sharing a most precious gift, not from a sense of duty.

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G.W.R.

laity. Rather than being forgiven through a magical rite they, through the sermon, were led to see their own lives through the perfection of Christ, and to do something for themselves. The singing of hymns gave the laity a greater participation in the service.

Protestantism however, in its own way, became almost as dogmatic, insisting on a special form of ritual. Even Quakers, for whom the Editor has great respect, are in fact (if not in theory) dogmatic in insisting on no ritual. For instance, someone getting up and singing a solo anthem in a Quaker meeting would certainly be out of place.

Worship is essentially a relationship between a man and his Creator, and we might say that for all the blessings in life we should say, "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." But logic says - Is God any the better for our having worshipped him in this way? The benefit can only be for the worshipper; so, in the end, he or she can only decide on what is a suitable form of worship. Some may feel spiritually uplifted by singing hymns, others may be quite incapable of singing in tune. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman that those who worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth, and Paul told the Roman Christians that the acceptable sacrifice is a living one - the giving of one's whole life to him in service.

These statements accentuate the importance of true worship, and at the same time give the Christian the widest possible field in which to exercise his worship. Freedom is an honour, but brings with it the great responsibility of exercising that freedom in a responsible manner.

(Turn to P.22)

TRUTH TO TELL?

by

J. Maycock

The religious world is more easily characterised by a diversity of beliefs than by things held in common. These beliefs are held to be true by their adherents for otherwise they would be merely 'opinions'. It has been argued that religion is declining. There has been talk for some time now of the secular society. Horrobin, in 'Science is God' writes:

"The majority of people in the developed areas of the world seem to think that science has destroyed the need for religion." (1)

He goes on to say however that

"the obituary notices (for the demise of God) are premature ... The intellectual basis for what the scientist says of man is no stronger than for what the theologian says."

An encyclopaedia published in 1977 reports:

"Some observers speak of a twentieth century 'spiritual renaissance in the West' Thousands of groups, small and large, throughout the Western world have formed around a teacher who has migrated from the East. At the same time there has been a revival of Fundamental Christianity that emphasizes emotional commitment to the person of Christ." (2)

How can we understand the varieties of religious belief, and what should be our attitude towards them?

It is clear, even without the work of social or psychological scientists, that we are each strongly influenced by our inheritance, parental training, education, friends and the circumstances of our lives. Superimpose the unique individual personality on the various environmental factors, and one clearly has a recipe for a rich diversity of opinion and

belief. Wilson, well known for his work on sects, is drawn, albeit by his non-theistic view of the evidence, to believe "that religious ideas and religious institutions are understandable only in social terms." Also that "men's conceptions of God are socially prescribed" and that "theological meanings are also socially evolved." (3) J.A.C. Brown writes * about people in societies or groups that "As they are related not only to each other but also to their natural environment, to the universe, this relationship also (i.e. in addition to inter-personal relationships) must be defined. (i.e. a body of religious belief or some similar ideology, whether mythology, philosophy, or scientific knowledge, tends to arise.)" (4) All known societies, he says, possess a number of institutions, one of which is religious belief and practices. He makes some telling points about myths and beliefs of work groups in industry. They are, he says, "based on the need both to justify the actions of the group and to understand what is going on in the world surrounding it." Such beliefs are often adopted on emotional grounds and "a dangerous aspect of any such mythology or emotionally-held system of beliefs is that, to the individual who holds it, it is capable of explaining everything. Since all experiences are seen in terms of that frame of reference, it never fails to satisfy." He even suggests that these beliefs are not changed by possession of correct knowledge or even extensive first hand experience. Many of us have perhaps experienced 'discussions' with the adherents of certain sects on our doorstep and can vouch for the validity of some of the points made above in the religious context. These points do not 'explain' religion but they show us characteristics of human beings which have to be borne in mind in seeking or communicating 'truth'.

One has to ask, to what extent and in what manner is objective truth to be found - in religion? It is well to be clear at this stage that there can be more than one reason for being religious. In part from what was said above, but also from experience, it is possible to seek from religious institutions a variety of satisfactions for psychological needs, comfort, companionship, love, identity, involvement etc. Even in these cases however the 'truth' of the particular religion is ultimately accepted. The modern dilemma is perhaps that, as illustrated by Brown, man

* His book is a standard introduction to industrial psychology.

NEEDS a religious belief to relate adequately to the universe about him, yet recent developments in science and philosophy have led to ever greater scepticism. Nevertheless we want to know and believe only the truth.

The truth about God cannot be proved as an axiom in mathematics or logic, that would be generally agreed today. Faith and knowledge are analysed in detail by Hick (5) (see Endeavour review, Summer 1977, p.8) and it is concluded that verification of the propositions of faith are not possible this side of the grave. It is nevertheless true in practice that faith, or the ability to believe, is characteristic of mankind. Religious faith can and does give peace of mind, security, even a sense of certainty in a hostile world. It is not just one particular religion which can do this, but many. The dogma and institutional practices vary enormously, but men are capable of believing them and of gaining something from them. It has been suggested (2) that it is in the idea of transformation (of human nature) that the common factor in all religions may be found. Is God working through all religions? Are all humble truth-seekers rewarded by a response, a perception of the truth through their own frame of reference? Various views are to be found, of course. The recent publication of two more of John Hick's books in paperback provoked a review in 'Third Way' by N. T. Wright. (6) After acknowledging solid contributions to the debate about the nature of religious language, "Evil and the God of Love" and "Death and Eternal Life" are major treatments of their subjects", he writes:

"Whereas in an earlier phase of his development Hick believed that members of 'other faiths' were saved by being 'anonymous Christians', in recent years he has moved to the belief that Christianity is simply one of many ways to the one God." Wright says of his own view, "Not that all other religions are totally wrong. Far from it. Belief in one God, the creator, commits us to the view that all 'religions' reflect the creator's handiwork in some way. But we have no warrant for arguing from that to the assertion that they are therefore ways of salvation."

Norman Anderson, (6/7) a conservative Christian, describes three views held by Christians of other religions, (1) that there is some truth in each, perhaps from an original revelation, (2) that they emanate from the devil, and (3) that they are human attempts to solve the mystery of life. He then suggests there may be some truth in each. Another writer suggests the idea of a common grace of God, visited on religions outside Christianity and a saving grace through Christ Jesus.

Yet why should we feel obliged to say whether saving grace is provided by God in this way or that? We do well to remind ourselves of the difficulty, nay impossibility, of knowing certain truth. We have our own personal limitations and prejudices and we have the uncertainty which is in the nature of things. The very words we use tell the same story. We hold as fact those things having a high certainty, verifiable in principle: opinion is high in uncertainty, and belief is something which cannot be demonstrated as fact, but which is usually associated with a high degree of personal and sometimes emotional commitment. No-one is exempt from either the need or the possession of a belief system. People naturally form groups and groups nearly always devise membership criteria. Within the community or fellowship many things are held to be true. This must follow inevitably because acceptance of 'first principles' is one of the criteria of membership. It must also follow that what O'Dea (8) calls an air of 'spurious self-evidentness' attaches to these beliefs held in common. Spurious because the group consensus of view is artificial, excluding those with other views to put. To view these others (i.e. other denominations, churches etc.) as biassed or deceived or worse is not only short-sighted but misses the point. Bias and prejudice are inherent in life.

What matters is that in our contact with others we allow for the fact that truth may seem different from where they stand. I would not wish to argue for a mere relativity for religious truth. All who believe in God's existence must believe that He is unchanging, eternally constant, and absolute, i.e. independent of his creation. Our view and understanding of God can, of course, be different, depending on our culture, background etc. without compromising the reality which is

God Himself. The sun appears differently to different observers and indeed to the same observer at different times.

In accepting that there is a relativity about beliefs, it is understood that one is a believer. What I am suggesting is that although the faith or belief system we espouse may satisfy our hearts and minds, we cannot or should not regard ourselves as wholly inerrant in this respect. Most individuals would not want to claim they were, yet a group can easily give this impression. Pears Cyclopaedia (1973-4) for example, says: Christadelphians "in common with many other sects, hold that they alone interpret the Scriptures truly. None but those who share their beliefs will rise from the dead and enjoy immortal life." Exclusive claims to the true revelation from God are not confined to Christians. Comment has been made on the 'competition' between Moslem and Christian missionaries in Africa from this point of view. Possession of a belief system is necessary and desirable for life. That we should regard our beliefs as true is also inevitable, as we saw earlier. What is not inevitable is that we should regard our own group as right and all others wrong, or that we should want to strive to persuade others that we are right.

Since we cannot prove the absolute truth of a belief, there must be uncertainty attaching to the statements of faith. Surely our approach to other sincere believers should, then, be as seekers for a common truth. As willing to learn, as well as willing to tell. To engage in dialogue rather than to dictate terms. That is not to say that we need to espouse ecumenism. One can believe that God is one and that it might be desirable for some purposes that the Christian witness should be united, and yet accept that for human reasons that is impracticable. It is possible that Christ himself, in the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:24) foresaw that this would be so. Neither should we see in syncretism (combining different faiths) the answer to our dilemma. Some religions (e.g. Hinduism) naturally absorb new faiths. Jew, Christian and Moslem are strongly anti-syncretic in nature.

Anderson (7) argues strongly for the uniqueness of Christ and Christianity, yet he can speak of the "essential difference between true dialogue and either straight evangelism or theological argument." He quotes Klostermaier as an

example: "I wanted to see a famous man in Benares, a sagacious philosopher, feared by many as a merciless critic of Christian theology ... He was polite, invited me for tea and then mounted the attack. I let him talk his fill, without saying a word myself. Then I started to talk about the things I had begun to understand within the dialogue - quite positively Christian. We got into a sincere good, deep discussion. He had intended to send me away after ten minutes. When I left after two hours, he had tears in his eyes." "Dialogue" he says "challenges both partners, takes them out of the security of their own prisons their philosophy and theology have built for them, confronts them with reality, with truth." (9)

It is illusory to think that we can sit detached Olympian-like above the religious world and judge or decide who is right and true. "It is" as Hick has said "a question for each individual exercising his cognitive powers in relation to the environment in which he finds himself, and responding to his own personal freedom and responsibility to its claims and calls." (10) Within that environment he will respond according to the law of love which we believe is characteristic of the eternal God. In communicating with other travellers upon life's way he will also respond in a spirit of love offering the succour of a personal faith. He will, however, be humble enough to acknowledge a personal limitation both of intellect and vision that in the mercy and grace of God His truth might prevail, and more clearly be perceived.

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Further references on page 4

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I would like, as a layman, to offer (for comment if necessary) some thought arising from two articles in Endeavour No. 52. As usual the magazine is refreshing and thought-provoking.

1. Exorcism or Psychiatry? While it is agreed that "The basic question is in fact a simple one: do evil spirits exist?" and, as pointed out, the answer may differ depending on the psychiatrist's "belief pattern", there is another series of questions which may affect the simple layman reading the New Testament.

For example - are the Gospel translations available to English speaking readers reliable in their use of the terms demons, devils and evil or unclean spirits? If so did the writers use these terms, including the narratives regarding Christ's own reported words (a) because they believed them to describe actual supernatural phenomena, or (b) because they were constrained to use the local idioms and concepts of the day?

If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, then those communities who do not accept the concept of demon possession are faced with the problem of perhaps Christ and certainly his reporters being in error on the subject.

If the answer is negative it could lead to an affirmative to alternative (b) and one possible result of this would be that a belief or disbelief in demon possession is of no importance as far as salvation is concerned, quite apart from the "contemporary debate about the nature of the Holy Spirit."

Whichever way I look at these alternatives, and there may well be others, it seems to me to put a community such as Christadelphia into an invidious position.

2. The Good News Bible - vis-a-vis the article "Which Translation?"

It is always useful to see differing ideas about a subject, especially when they come from informed sources which treasure the Bible. It is none-the-less confusing to the layman without Greek or Hebrew or access to theological libraries and without the background knowledge necessary for analysis and evaluation of texts.

It is realised that academic and theological accuracy are essential objectives in translation, but do many of us laymen understand the complex problems facing the translator in the evaluation of the array of manuscripts from which the "original" translation must be compiled? Judging by the differences in versions, is it fair comment to suggest that subjectivity based on a translator's "belief system" may exert influence on the outcome of his work?

To me as a layman the important thing is the Bible's message of salvation. Is it naive to ask whether God would allow the saving message to be hidden or destroyed by any of the versions?

Do any of the versions run counter to what has been suggested in this Magazine as an ancient baptismal confession, namely: "I believe in God the Father Almighty; and in Christ Jesus his only Son our Lord; who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary: who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried and the third day rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence he cometh to judge the quick and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Church, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, the live everlasting."

The above confession or creed is, after all, more elaborate than the recorded "confession" of the Ethiopian eunuch prior to his baptism.

This is at least the third time that this creed or a related one has appeared in Endeavour, and no acknowledgement has been offered to Herbert Adams (Endeavour Magazine No. 27 pp. 10-11) and Ralph Lovelock (Endeavour Magazine No. 44 pp. 7-11) who

used it previously and whom I thank for drawing it to our attention.

If the conclusions drawn are valid there are implications for various closed or segregated communities. It may call for some soul-searching as to the objectives of those communities, including the attitudes towards doctrinal minutiae, the content of the message to be preached, and activity in well-doing to Everyman, resulting in a better understanding and practice of the two great commandments - the love for our God and for our neighbour as for ourselves. Those commands are sufficiently rigorous and demanding to keep us extremely busy in the service of our Master.

Yours etc.

Beenleigh,
Australia.

S. Marriott.

Editorial continued from page 13

To some, then, worship will be the praising of God in a formal act of worship, frequently in the remembering of Jesus in the Bread and Wine. To others communion with God will be worked out in their service to others in the daily pace of life. There are an infinite number of variations between these two extremes, and most will gain their individual spiritual benefit by some mixture of both approaches. All, I am sure, would agree that whichever mode of worship we adopt we must not stray from the source of inspiration - our contact with God and Christ. Though some may feel they get this direct, others will find that study of the Bible, particularly the New Testament, helps them most.

Finally, we are gregarious people and need to help each other, and this is where Christian society can give us the greatest comfort. A private discussion with another person, small or larger group discussions, indeed anything that helps us to grow spiritually and in love must be acceptable worship to the God of Love.

Dear Editor,

THE GOOD NEWS BIBLE

I do not want to pursue statistics to the point where it might seem that my objections to this translation were primarily numerical, which they were not. I quoted the figures I did about relative lengths of the Testaments as a shorthand way of showing that the O.T. had been abbreviated in relation to the N.T. Since this is now called in question I would observe:

1. My choice of versions to sample was random in the sense that I did not buy the Bibles I possess in relation to the relative lengths of their Testaments, and that I did not take the ones I quoted from my shelves with a view to buttressing a case artificially. There is an air of impugning my veracity in the comment on this which I am bound to regret.
2. The mean value of the ratios I quoted (omitting GNB and LB, which were under criticism) was 3.48. That of those quoted by David Pitt Francis is 3.16 (omitting the Danish and Hebrew, since the philosophy behind the former is unknown, and the principles used in translating Greek into Hebrew are not open to my examination). If this is a representative selection it makes my case less strong, without destroying it.
3. Since translations into foreign languages have been brought into the discussion, however, and going back to older translations since the whole outlook of modern translators represents a profound change from that of their predecessors, I note that the figure for some such translations are:
Afrikaans: 3.01; Dutch: 3.32; Icelandic: 3.56;
German: 3.15; Russian: 3.17; Danish: 3.28 (an interesting variant from the figure of 2.78 quoted by DPF for the Modern Version); Contemporary Greek: 3.62;
French: 3.18; Nyorsk: 3.00; Swedish: 3.08; Cicewa: 3.16; Norwegian Bokmal: 3.16. Average: 3.27. This really was random, in my legitimate sense of the term, for I took down every modern-language version I could find and analysed it. It is better for me than DPF's

figures, though not as good as my own earlier ones, but since none of the values goes as low as GNB I think that it supports the case I made.

4. Whether or not GNB does engage in abbreviations is, in the last analysis, a matter of random comparison with existing older translations in widely-scattered portions of O.T. So I have imposed on myself the following blind-sampling procedure: to take the middle (pre-middle where even numbers are involved) verse of the middle chapter of every book with 20 chapters or more in both Testaments, and count the words, comparing GNB with AV. AV is given in parentheses in the list below:

Genesis 15.17: 12(31); Exodus 20.13 4(4); Leviticus 14.29: 26(34); Numbers 18.16: 25(34); Deuteronomy 17.20: 15(31); Joshua 12.12: 2(9); Judges 11.20: 21(25); 1 Samuel 16.12: 27(32); 2 Samuel 12.16: 31(20); 1 Kings 11.22: 47(33); 2 Kings 13.13: 20(23); 1 Chronicles 15.15: 16(28); 2 Chronicles 18.17: 19(23); Job 21.17: 24(24); Psalm 75.5: 7(14); Proverbs 16.17: 21(18); Isaiah 33.12: 14(21); Jeremiah 26.12: 22(33); Ezekiel 24.14: 40(46).

Total verses: 393(483). $\text{RATIO} = 0.81$.

Matthew 14.18: 21(28); Luke 12.30: 22(23); John 11.29: 13(13); Revelation 11.10: 33(32).

Total verses: 89(96). $\text{RATIO} = 0.93$.

Hence N.T./O.T. = $0.93/0.81=1.15$

In other words, the Old Testament is, indeed, abbreviated in relationship to the New, by around 15%.

5. But all this is unimportant as compared with the reliability of the translation under review. I concede, without ever having denied, that there are merits in the translation, while noting with interest that the doctrinal complaints which I lodged against it have not been rebutted. It is true, of course, that the accepted versions have inadequacies of which we, as a matter of established routine, complain, but the new translators are the legatees of everything which could put those errors right, and have little excuse for introducing brand new ones of their own. That translators who have forsaken the doctrine of plenary inspiration should be doctrinally careless is to be expected: it is alarming when their aberrations are treated as of little importance within a community which retains that

doctrine.

I am bound to conclude that the evidence I have produced on this point is accepted as valid. What worries me is that it should be dismissed so lightly. Perhaps I may conclude by citing one or two further cases:

The thief on the cross: "I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me" (Luke 23.43). ("Verily I say unto thee" might signify "I promise you", but this is paraphrase and not translation. The conjunctive 'that' is not there in the Greek: it would make all the difference in the world if it were.)

Depart and be with Christ: "I want very much to leave this life and be with Christ" (Philippians 1.23). (Whatever this difficult passage means, sound interpretation is not helped by the quite gratuitous "leave this life", which has no foundation in the Greek).

Being in the form of God: "He always had the nature of God ... of his own free will he gave up all he had" (Philippians 2.6,7). (The Greek says nothing about "he always had", and the other N.T. occurrences of huparkhon give no support to this tendentious rendering. "He emptied himself" is sound translation, but "He gave up all he had" is a mischievous incorporation of interpretation into the text.)

One could go on hunting and finding, but the case seems to be established. Whatever virtues the translation may possess, it is only the plain duty of reviewers to stress that this is an unreliable book, the uncritical use of which would undermine all the foundations of exact doctrinal exposition which we have hitherto rightly prized.

Yours etc.

North Cave,
Hull.

ALFRED NORRIS