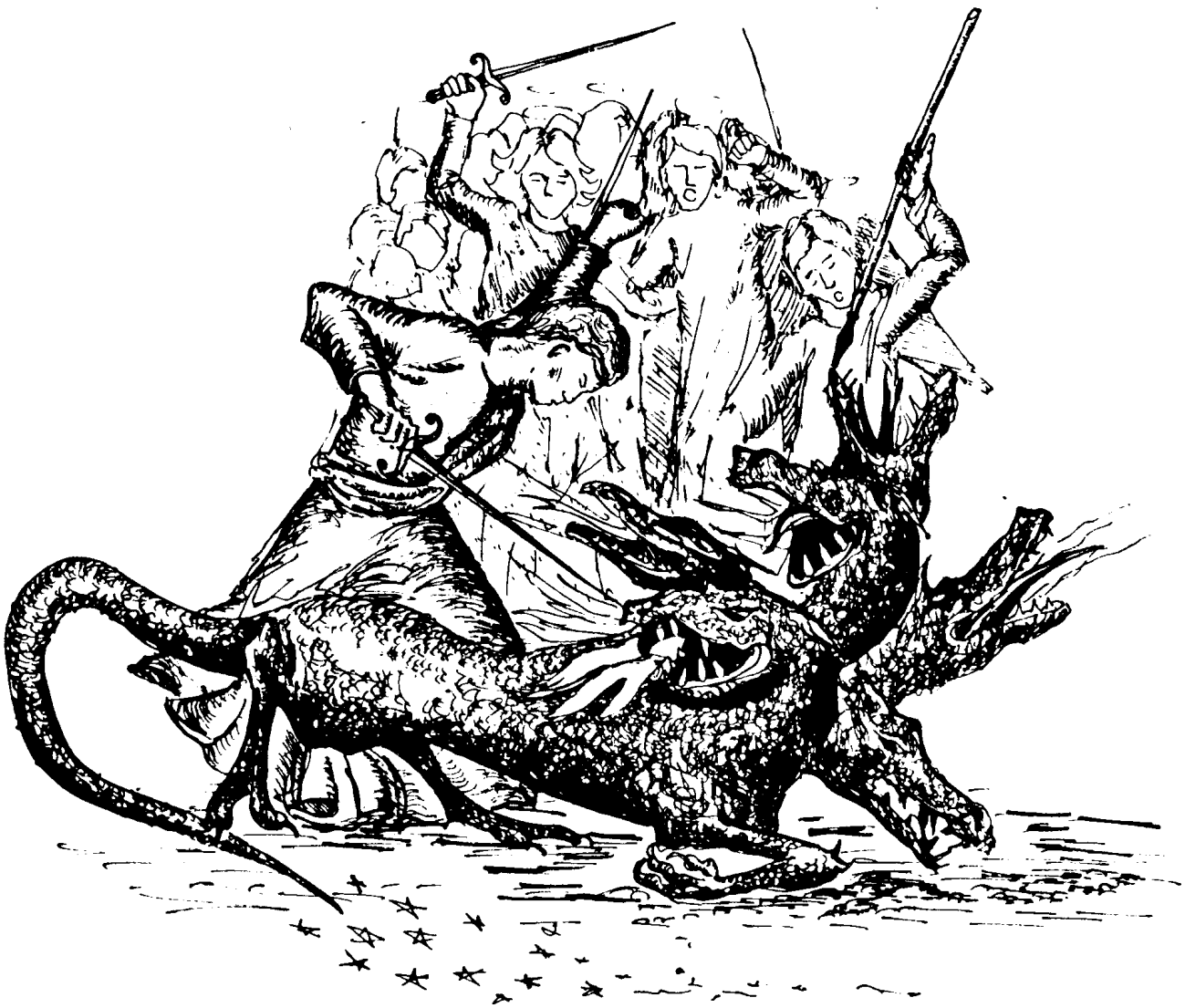
ENDEAVOUR

magazine



1983/2

50p

THE ENDEAVOUR MAGAZINE

No.68 1983/2

IN THIS ISSUE

	Page
EDITORIAL	2
SISTERS IN THE CHRISTADELPHIAN MEETING	4
UNITY IN DIVERSITY	8
THE KINGDOM OF GOD	12
REVIEW - THE MOST AMAZING MESSAGE EVER WRITTEN	18
LETTERS	22

* * * * * *

EDITORIAL

THE PSALMS - GOD'S WORDS TO MEN OR MEN'S WORDS TO GOD?

I have just been listening to Schumann's song cycle "Frauenliebe und Leben" (Woman's Life and Love) beautifully performed by Edith Mathis and Christoph Eschenbach but I turned it off after the fourth song, "Du Ring an meinem Finger", not because of the music, which will be in my mind for days, but because of the words. I had a translation in front of me and instead of the rather vague idea that my imperfect knowledge of German normally conveyed the meaning of the words was sharp and clear.

> "From the moment I saw him I felt blind to all else. I had eyes only for him ... The noblest of men, he is tender and kind. His eyes are crystal clear and his lips gentle. A frank and open mind are his too. As the brightest star in the sky, so he shines in my own heaven, bright and noble."

My revulsion was not just because the poet was a man, for he might have been allowed such extravagance on the grounds that he was impersonally and imaginatively entering into a woman's mind, but because Adalbert von Chamisso, who was 40, wrote the poems following his marriage to a girl of 18 and they were what he thought she felt about him. Even if they were true, which in the light of human frailty and vanity was unlikely, it didn't lie in his mouth to say so. They were not what she thought about him but what he thought about himself.

Something similar troubles many readers of the Psalms. The Psalmists are constantly praising God saying how great is his mercy, truth and faithfulness and what great deeds he has done. From time to time God is reported as saying that he desires such praise, as in Psalm 50 v 23, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me". If God told the Psalmists to write such words is he not in the same position, or even worse, than Adalbert von Chamisso? "Even worse" because praise by a wife of her husband is of value, but what value would we as adults place on the praise of, say, a two year old child? And the gap between God and us is even greater than between an adult and a two year old; it is more like the difference between us and our dogs or cats.

This difficulty arises out of a genuine desire to praise and glorify God which leads some to maintain that inspiration must mean that the Psalms are wholly the words of God and that to allow that there is any human element in them is to diminish them and demean them. Paradoxically however this belief does the opposite of what is intended; it reduces the greatness and the value of the Psalms instead of increasing them. If God put the precise ideas into the minds of the Psalmists, much more if he dictated the actual words, he is acting in the same way as von Chamisso. On the other hand if these songs are the spontaneous and unsolicited reaction of men to a vision they have been given of God, to a revelation by God of himself, then their value is increased enormously. If von Chamisso's bride had written the poems herself then we could be uplifted by Schumman's glorious music instead of feeling rather uncomfortable about it - even if the poetry had been poorer than her husband's. If men praise God simply because he tells them to they are like children saying thank you to auntie for her nice present because otherwise they will be sent supperless to bed.

This view of inspiration in the Psalms arises because men think they know better than God how scripture should be inspired. As C.S. Lewis puts it in his "Reflections on the Psalms": "There is one argument which we should beware of using ... God must have done what is best, this is best, therefore, God has done this. For we are mortals and do not know what is best for us, and it is dangerous to prescribe what God must have done - especially when we cannot, for the life of us, see that He has after all done it."

The wiser view is expressed by I Howard Marshall in his recent book "Biblical Inspiration". "Much of the Psalms is human response to God, human response that may have been providentially recorded as a pattern for us to imitate, but human response nevertheless."

SISTERS IN THE CHRISTADELPHIAN MEETING

HATS

Anyone visiting a Christadelphian meeting will be struck by the array of hats worn by the sisters. Brown, black, blue, yellow, pink, some with ribbons, feathers, bows, narrow rims, broad rims (often in high favour), artificial flowers and if we step back into the beginning of the century,clustersof artificial fruit. The appearance this gives is one of a prosperous group of people such as might be seen at an important orchestral occasion or a public function at the town hall. The visitor may not realise, however, that, for the majority, the array of hats is an essential element in the Christadelphian religion. Any formal meeting for remembrance, preaching or Bible study will be regarded as unacceptable if the array of hats is not in place. Absence of the hats, or individual nonconformity will be regarded as a flagrant breach of Biblical injunction.

The Biblical injunction in question is contained in only one text, 1 Cor. 11:4-16.

> "Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head...."

The reference to the inappropriateness of a male head-covering may seem a puzzle in so far that the Jewish religion requires that men cover their heads while praying. The traditional practice was to wear a prayer shawl, but in the West it is now more usual to wear a skullcap (the talith). Does this practice contradict Paul's teaching about a covering dishonouring "his head"? The solution to this problem lies in the meaning of covering as Paul is using it in this context. It is a woman's veil he is referring to and not a simple covering as such. He is referring to a covering for the whole head. It would be a shame for a man to wear a woman's veil "A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing..." (Deut.22:5). Jewish society of Paul's day would not, therefore, find his teaching unusual.

VEILS

The wearing of veils by women has a long history. When Rebekah saw Isaac, her prospective husband, coming "...she took her veil and covered herself." (Gen.24:65). This incident implies much more than a head covering and where veils are worn they are usually accompanied by a full body covering. Veils are still worn in accordance with the original custom in the east among the Jewish and Moslem women. The contemporary use of the veil may be seen on television as worn by the women of Iran. It is black and it covers all but the face. In some usages only the eyes are exposed. In addition to the head, hair and shoulders the standard dress continues in the form of a shapeless garment down to the feet. This would be in accordance with the garment referred to when Rebekah covered herself.

When asked why they were these garments the Iranian women are quite explicit. It is to prevent Iranian men from being enticed by the female bodily features and so to prevent the introduction of corruption into Iranian society. It can be seen that this is in keeping with Paul's use of head covering in the context of 1 Cor.11.

The veil was also a sign of the married state of the women. This point is brought out perceptively in the Good News Bible translation of 1 Cor.11:10.

> "...a woman should have a covering on her head to show that she is under her husband's authority."

"BECAUSE OF THE ANGELS"

There is another point of possible obscurity in the text which can be understood by reference to the background of the times. It was the belief of the Jews that, when they came together to worship, angels joined the congregation and were literally present. While this could be regarded as a welcome experience, to the Jews it held a possible danger. The danger arose out of their understanding of the incident in Gen.6:2. The text below is quoted from the Good News Bible.

> "...some of the supernatural beings saw that these girls were beautiful so they took the ones they liked."

This translation is fully in keeping with the Jewish understanding of the text. The fear was that if the women in the congregation did not have their attractiveness obscured by a veil and the other shapeless garments the angels might be tempted into a repeat of the ancient scandal. It would appear, therefore, that the husband

had their wives wear veils to shield their possessions from the wandering eyes of other men and"....because of the angels."

What then about the array of hats? The most revealing approach is probably to ask what a sister had in mind in choosing a hat. Is it not universally the case that the choice is made because it suits her and is thought to enhance her appearance? The same can be said of the attention given to the hair and the dress. The modern lady's hat does not cover the head. It is little more than a skullcap with embellishments. The clothes of sisters today are chosen to ensure good colour-tone from the hat to the shoes. The dress is far from shapeless. More than likely it will reflect the recent fashion even among those who are adament in their support for the tradition of wearing hats in the meeting. While the modern garments add colour to the meetings, they are in total contradiction to what Paul is writing about. Paul is enjoying the wearing of veils to obscure women's femininity: hats are worn to enhance it.

How then did we arrive at this current position? While in the east the traditional form of the veil can still be seen, in the west the Christian churches have made many changes over the years. The original position was best preserved by the nuns. Even here, however, the feminine desire for the attractive has won through. The majority of the orders of nuns have adopted colours for their "habits" instead of the original black. The head covering has been subject to trimmings. The face is surrounded by white material and the garment as a whole is no longer shapeless. On the whole, the end result is quite attractive. It used to be the case and possibly still is in some centres, that women tourists were not allowed to visit a cathedral without a covering for their hair and arms. This was, at least, paying some token regard for the modesty enjoined by Paul. Any pretty piece of material would do and it is not difficult to see how this degenerated into any fashionable attire. In the last century the fashionable became the acceptable and the wearing of hats became the established convention.

As Christadelphians we have professed to have discarded dusty traditions formed after centuries of compromise. Here is a tradition, however, where we are more likely to be the last bastions of a tradition which bears no relation to the original Bible meaning. As can be seen on television, the tradition is fast on its way out in both Catholic and Protestant congregations. In our society the hat is no longer a sign of the married women. A ring performs that function. Presumably also, as husbands are content to have their

wives dress as they do, they no longer go in fear of rival males.

We are now living in a different society from that of Paul. To a large extent, as we do in other matters, we should conform to the reasonable standards of the society in which we live. Otherwise we merely become freakish. There is an appropriate injunction. It is in 1 Tim.2;9(Good News Bible).

> "I also want the women to be modest and sensible about their clothes and to dress properly."

It is far from self evident that expensive hats, at an average cost running into double figures should be any requirement for attendance at ecclesial functions to meet the standards of dressing properly. The sisters should be freed from ritualistic ideas about hats and demands of rules originating in established church conventions. It is a matter for sisters themselves how they should dress.

G. G. McHaffie.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

In 1979 I started a series with the title "A Man/God perspective". This is a shortened form of the arguments I was trying to present.

My starting point was the concern generally felt over the bewildering variety of different religious faiths. Everyone needs to 'make sense' of the world. We each develop a mental picture or representation of how we understand the world to work. It may not be perfect but it enables us to get results in life. Is it, though, good enough to get us eternal life? The pictures people have, agree most where they can be tested in everyday experience. The experience of God is not of this common everyday character so perhaps it is understandable that people have different ideas about God. Some of the differences can be traced to the use of different symbols or religious languages but by no means all.

Of course, not everyone is interested in eternal life. We all have an instinct for preserving this life but only some are prepared to concern themselves with the meaning of life or anything that may lie beyond it. Indeed seeking eternal life can seem a selfish objective. The best statement of the aim of those I like to call the God seekers is 'to find and to do God's will'.

We who do seek God want to be sure that we are on the right course. The fact that beliefs and action programmes are so different is a puzzle and for some an embarassment. After all most people accept that there is only one world (one reality) and so there should only be one picture to represent it. If specialists describe small parts of the picture in great detail one has a right to expect that they should be consistent with one another. If the simple person's expression does not match that of the don, at least they should be compatible. If then churches disagree or religious knowledge conflicts with scientific knowledge, one or both must be wrong or there is an uncertainty not openly admitted. There are in fact, conflicts and disagreements and the reason, I believe, lies in uncertainties associated with our human nature.

We are finite beings so our knowledge will always be partial and incomplete. It is easy (for religious people) to recognise this in the case of secular knowledge but it is also true of religious knowledge. We are not on God's level.[1] A revelation came from God

(Hebrews I v I tells us) in various ways but notably through human beings. These 'men of God' though inspired, were limited by the language and world view (their mental picture) of their times. This, a self imposed limitation one might say, even applies to God's fullest revelation through the person and life of Jesus Christ.

The existence of the Bible, honoured by generations of Christians as the record of God's revelation does not alter this fact. In our day we have to work hard to discern what the writings would have meant to the original hearers and then we have to interpret the message for our own life and times. There is plenty of opportunity here for human error and variability to enter in. Perhaps the way forward is to pay more attention to areas of agreement between believers.

The most crucial question on which we would want assurance is 'of what actions will God approve?'. On the basis of reason (human reason is all we have) I conclude that God will honour us if we do our best. Since moral human beings would not condemn a person if he/she genuinely and sincerely did his/her best then God, being more moral than we are (or so I assume) is unlikely to be less merciful but may be more so. Doubtless we often do less than our best and often need forgiveness. Also clearly this criterion is a personal one, not one that can be used to judge other individuals or communites. If though, we as individuals are doing our best to discern God's will and to do it, there is nothing more we can humanly do. We must leave the rest to God. As Christians, of course, we believe he has already acted to 'save' in Christ Jesus.

You may think the Bible goes much farther than that. The basis of Christianity is faith or belief in Jesus Christ, as Saviour and Lord demonstrated by obedience to him. There is, though, no indication in scripture of a particular verbal or intellectual content of belief, below which it is ineffective for salvation. Rather we are presented with the highest ideal in the life of Jesus himself. Acceptance by God in Jesus has, I claim, more to do with motivation or attitude than with any intellectual criterion. This fits quite well with my 'reasonable' criterion in the previous paragraph.

We human beings seem to have an urge to understand and to define. It is a bit like climbing mountains I suppose. That mental picture (I am thinking now of the theological part) will naturally be constructed. Popular views are quite often cruder than those of the

leaders or scholars of a community. To derive a particular intellectual structure or statement of faith and then assume that it is the God given for inclusion or exclusion from the church or 'body' of Christ is, it seems to me, totally unreasonable. No one can be expected to do more than their best in whatever historic or geographical circumstances God has placed them. If this implies a wider saving net than some have thought possible before, then let is be.

The conclusion which I draw from the considerations summarised above is that there is no humanly definable authority, whether of church or scripture or science which should determine a man or woman's concept of the true nature of our world and man's place in it. No individual or community is absolved from the duty of studying the way God has revealed himself in nature, in history and in scripture. Our knowledge and understanding will always be limited by the nature of things. Our beliefs will always be, in an important sense, provisional. It is important, therefore, not to be too dogmatic. We must try to proportion belief to the evidence. Most important, though, we should always maintain an openness to God. Always we should be watching, willing to learn from whatever source God is using to try to teach us.

We can and should be able to learn from all serious investigators of the world. Certainly all God seekers have something to give as well as having something to learn. Clearly I am suggesting a co-operative attitude towards other communities. That does not mean I am advocating a unity of similarity. Nature shows us the most amazing diversity: different 'kinds' competing to maintain the balance which makes up the ecological whole. Is something similar true of religious diversity? Man was created creative. We have something to contribute. It is true that evil is a force with which we have to reckon. On the other hand Jesus battled with that very same sin and death dealing power and won. The good news is that we too can win in him. I see all God seekers as having a part in the campaign of creative love which God is expressing through the achievements and sufferings of this world in process.

On the one hand simple people need a simple faith. On the other hand, those with intellectual ability are ever extending our knowledge and appreciation of God's world. All can serve God and their community but in their own distinctive ways. Who is to say that giving glory to God demands one and only one form of worship?

It may be that different temperaments lead to very different forms of 'giving glory'. Perhaps it is inevitable that different 'theologies' are constructed to reflects different experiences of God. The unity of God's will is being achieved by the diversity of human efforts. The wind (spirit) of God blows where it pleases.[2]

The idea of a golden age of Christianity in the past where all were of one mind is, I believe, a myth. The idea of an ideal future, if that means a uniform perfection imposed at the expense of freedom, is also, I believe, mistaken. It is true that ours is a religion of hope but all of the Biblical prophets are concerned principally to teach their hearers how they should act in the present. What they said was rarely congratulatory. More often it was a call to repent or receive the judgements of God. What God has to say today has to be worked out by each individual, by each community and has to be repeatedly worked out for each age. Over all, however, uniting them all is the picture of God as love ,suffering love, clearly outlined in the life and death of Christ. It was certainly the resurrection of Jesus which was the victory that gave Christianity its characteristic gospel message. It was, though, the Spirit at Pentecost which brought the presence of God in Christ to the first Christian community. It is the same Spirit which can inspire us to witness to God in whatever work lies near at hand. Our brothers and sisters in the work will be all of those with whom we can work under Jesus Christ as Lord.

References

1. Wilfred Lambert, talk on inspiriation at Endeavour Summer School, 1983.

2. John 3 v 8.

J. Maycock.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Our four grandchildren were making a lot of noise playing in the garden when Rohan, the little boy next door who has a Jamaican mother and a Malaysian father, looked through a hole in the fence and asked if he could come and join in. He was rather shy at first but soon shed his inhibitions and in a few minutes was running around, shrieking and jumping with the rest. His shrieking was about average but his jumping outshone all the others, particularly when he sprang from a height, sailed immense distances and landed lightly and gracefully. "He's like a little monkey! " my wife said admiringly. I agreed, but with one eye on the fence over which his mother might have been listening, added "Don't let his parents hear. They mighn't understand.

Most of us have had the experience of paying a compliment that has been misunderstood and this quite often happens when the compliment is a comparison. The reason is that comprisons are nearly always selective; it is only part of the two things which are being compared that are alike. Misunderstanding arises when the hearer visualises different parts from what the speaker has in mind. My wife's comparison about the little boy's agility was entirely favourable, but a parent may sometimes say "little monkey" when a child has done something ingenious to its own advantage - a grudging admiration. The same comparison can be wholly uncomplimentary when white people are denigrating coloured people by suggesting they are subhuman.

Why do we use comparisons? Because they are frequently the most effective way of describing things. At the lowest level they stimulate the imagination and enable the reader to see things with the eye of the writer. If you are told that Oscar Wilde looked like the statue of a Roman Emperor - carved in suet - you can visualise the man more clearly than in a photograph. Dylan Thomas's comment that the ladies on an outing in South Wales in the thirties all had permanent waves like corrugated iron gives a marvellous picture of hairdressing styles common then. The more unusual and the more startling the illustrations, the more vivid is the impression. The Bible is full of comparisons - not only similes and metaphors but allegories and parables as well.

There is however a deeper reason why comparisons are used in scripture than for the sake of conveying impressions. The unknown can only be pictured in terms of the known. Dean Inge said "Almost all teaching consists in comparing the unknown with the known, the strange with the familiar." Professor George Caird in his book "The Language and Imagery of the Bible" says "Comparisons is one of our most valuable sources of

knowledge, the main road leading from the known to the unknown. It comprises a large part of our daily speech and almost all the language of theology. God speaks to man in simultudes (Hos.12:10), and man has no language but analogy for speaking about God, however inadequate it may be (Isa.4:18, 46:5). The faculty for perceiving significant, illuminating likeness is indispensable equipment for teacher, prophet and creative writer alike."

We have always to bear in mind however what my opening story showed. Comparisons may be close or they may be loose. To say that God is like a father is a close comparison. To say that he is like a dry wadi, as Jeremiah does (15:18), or like a festoring sore or a panther mauling its prey, as Hosea does (5:14, 5:12), are loose comparisons, fairly obviously because there is only one thing common to the two parts of the comparisons and a great deal that doesn't apply. The technical name for this is "correspondence" - high correspondence when it is a close comparison, low correspondence when it is a loose comparison. Both types have their dangers. With low correspondence you may miss the point altogether if you live in a different age or culture from the writer. Many of us have no doubt been repelled rather than attracted to be told that brotherly love is

> "Like precious ointment on the head,
> That down the beard did low,
> E'en Aaron's beard, and to the skirts
> Did of his garments go."

The picture is a messy one and whilst unaccountably the ancient Israelite may have liked it we do not share their feeling. This is a low correspondence comparison, however, of which we today can quite easily miss the point. The Psalmist is thinking about the great wave of fragrance that spread round the tabernacle or temple at this most solemn point in the dedication of the High Priest.

This example draws attention to another characteristic of comparisons that can mislead us; what is being compared, particularly in poetry, is often emotion or feeling, not physical characteristics. Family unity produced in the Psalmist the same feeling that he experienced at the anointing of the High Priest. The classic example in English - or I should say, Scottish - poetry is Robert Burn's famous lines :-

> O my Luve's like a red, red rose,
> That's newly sprung in June,
> O my Luve's like the melodie
> That's sweetly played in tune.

Burns didn't mean that Jean Armour, or whoever she was, looked like a rose, or that she had a melodious voice. What he is saying is that the feeling of delight that he got from contemplating his love was the same sort of feeling he got when he saw a fresh rose or heard appealing music.

There is less danger of missing the point with high correspondence comparisons, although it can be there if we are far removed from the culture in which they originated, but there is another danger, that of pressing the comparison too far. If the comparison is 60% or 70% there is a strong temptation to make it 100%.

The first thing in trying to understand what the Kingdom of God means is that it is a comparison, a metaphor. Very frequently the phrase is taken literally and it isn't recognised as a metaphor. That it <u>is</u> a metaphor can be seen quite clearly when it is put alongside other metaphors. David was using a metaphor when he said "The Lord is my shepherd." We can be certain about this because David quite obviously is not a sheep. But it is equally clear that God is not literally a king. Kings are human, and in Bible times they were very human indeed. To realise what they were like we should think not of our present kings but of our present dictators. There is a good indication of what kings were like in 1 Samuel 8 when Samuel, smarting under the Israelite desire for a king told them what kings were like. A king would conscript them into his army, or into forced labour in the fields, or into making weapons. Their daughters would become his domestic servants. He would take their best fields and give them to his friends. They would have to pay heavy taxes. None of these things apply to God, but kings did have power and they were surrounded by regal splendour and were treated with awe; these are the things in which a king was compared with God. And if the kingship of God is a metaphor so too is the Kingdom of God and we have to take account of the fact that correspondence is certainly not complete; indeed on Samuel's evidence it is probably quite low.

There is however another difficulty in trying to understand what "The Kingdom of God" means that is peculiar to the particular phrase. Both in Hebrew and Greek the word that is translated "kingdom" in the Authorised Version had a wider meaning than "kingdom" has today. In modern English a kingdom is a territory ruled over by a king, that is to say a realm or a state. The Hebrew and Greek words mean this but they also mean "rulership" or "Sovereignty", that is the act of ruling; the reign rather than the realm. Which of the two meanings is intended is determined by the context. Whilst this may seem confusing it is one of the facts of language. Our own language is full of it but we are so accustomed to it that we don't notice. The word "house" for example may mean a single dwelling, a block of flats, an office building, a company or a part of a school and which of the meanings applies is determined by the context.

To make it even more confusing however, when the AV was made, "kingdom" in English had the same spread of meaning as the Hebrew and Greek words. Have you ever noticed that the word is in the singular in the Hallelujah Chorus? "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." This is a correct translation of the Greek - the AV is wrong - for what the verse in Revelation means is that sovereignty over the world has passed from men to God.

When therefore we ask what "the Kingdom of God" means and start by looking at the Old Testament, we have to remember this double meaning of "kingdom". The experts tell us that the Hebrew word ("malkuth") usually means "sovereignty" or "rulership" even when it is used about a human king and when it is used of God it almost always means this. Psalm 145 vv 11,13 is an example. In the Authorised Version these verses read

> They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.
> Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

In the Good News Bible they are as follows:

> They will speak of the glory of your royal power and tell of your might. Your rule is eternal and you are king for ever.

From this comparison it can be seen that "kingdom" in the Authorised Version simply means "sovereignty" and no doubt was read that way by the people of King James's day. It is only because our language has changed since then that we imagine it refers to a literal kingdom. It does not. It is a metaphor.

Christadelphian teaching has traditionally been that you can substitute "Kingdom of Israel" whenever you find "Kingdom of God" mentioned in the Old Testament. The reality is however rather more complicated than is set out in our literature in which a typical statement is that "Jesus styles the kingdom of Israel the kingdom of God. This is only in harmony with the Scriptures; for in all the Scriptures the kingdom of Israel is called the kingdom of God." The author then goes on to cite three passages to prove this, but unfortunately for his argument all three use the word "kingdom" in the sense of "rule" rather than "realm". Just to take the first of these as an example which comes from 2 Chronicles 13:8 about an argument between Abijah, king of Judah and Jereboam II of the northern kingdom. Abijah ischallenging the legitimacy of Jereboam's position and he says (AV) "And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in

the hands of the sons of David." The GNB translation is "Now you propose to fight against the royal authority that Lord gave to David's descendants." The difference between "the kingdom of the Lord" and "the royal authority that the Lord gave to David's descendants" becomes significant when we realise that God is frequently spoken of not only as king of Israel but as king over all the earth. Psalm 47:2 is an example:- "For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth." There is another in Psalm 103:19 :- "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all."

Thus God is not only the metaphorical king of Israel but of the whole earth. It is true that he is king of Israel in a special way because his rule has been more fully realised in Israel than elsewhere. But nevertheless, as Old Testament history shows only too clearly, that rule in Israel was very imperfect and God would not rule the whole earth merely by extending Israel's dominion over other nations. At the very least Israel itself would have to be changed first. To say therefore, as it frequently is, that the Kingdom of God is the restored Kingdom of Israel, misses the most important point of all. How is it to be ensured that God's rule is fully realised in Israel? The historic exposition ignores this difficulty. "Jesus is only in harmony with the Old Testament in styling the kingdom of Israel the kingdom of God (it continues) and the position to which we shall find ourselves committed, will be that the kingdom is to be restored by Jesus, and that its mission will be to subdue all the kingdoms of the earth." My contention is that Israel needs to be changed before it is indeed truly the kingdom of God and the nature of that change would make it quite impossible for it to subdue all the kingdoms of the earth.

How is Israel to be changed? There are two themes which seem to be separate in the Old Testament but which we can see in the New Testament are two aspects of the same thing. The first arises out of the fact that "kingdom" is a dynamic word, not a static one. God's rule involves him in visiting his people to judge men and establish his rule amongst those who do not acknowledge it. This is a frequent theme in the Psalms, for example 98:18-19

> Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be
> joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge
> the earth; with righteousness shall he judge the world,
> and the people with equity.

When we see the word "judge" we immediately think only of criminal law but in Psalms judging is primarily to do with civil law. Judging people with equity doesn't mean punishing the really guilty, it means settling disputes between people justly, something that was earnestly desired when judges were tardy in hearing cases and open to bribery. This Psalm and others like it express one of the central characterisitics of the

Old Testament. The whole history of the nation from its birth at Mount Sinai to its final redemption can be viewed in the light of divine visitations. Zacharias was expressing this idea when giving thanks for the birth of John and said that God had visited and redeemed his people.

The other theme is the new covenant. Israel had sinned and repented and sinned again. How could it be guaranteed that future restoration would be permanent and not temporary like the earlier one? The key text is of course in Jeremiah - "Jeremiah double 31" and the following verses where God says he will put his law in their inward parts; and write it in their hearts. This idea is taken up and expanded by Ezekiel in chapter 36 of his prophecy (v 26) where God says he will put a new heart and a new spirit within the nation; he will take away the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh and put his spirit within them.

There are more references to the outpouring of God's spirit in Isaiah and Joel and there is the added suggestion, so extensively developed in the servant songs in Isaiah and put in acted parable form in Hosea with the story of his unfaithful wife, that this new birth will be brought about through suffering.

How or why this will cause Israel to change her nature and walk in the ways of the Lord is not spelled out, it is only hinted at, and so it is not surprising that the more numerous passage which foresee the future in terms of material prosperity and the conquest by Israel of her enemies are the ones that attract attention. But the significant fact, the great significant fact, is that it is the hints and suggestions that are taken up and realised in the New Testament.

However before we come to the New Testament it is necessary to deal first in more detail with prophecy in the Old Testament and this I propose to do in a subsequent article.

Ron Coleman.

REVIEW

THE MOST AMAZING MESSAGE EVER WRITTEN

by David Pitt Francis

During the Bible campaigns which took place after the Second World War many subjects came up for discussion but none more persistently than the interpretation of the book of Revelation. The weaknesses of the standard interpretation were easily enough seen. The continuous historic approach adopted in Eureka was a product of the studies of Protestant scholars active immediately after the French Revolution. It owed a lot to the Protestant obsession with the crimes of the Pope rather than strict adherance to the text of Scripture. While this discussion was all good in its way, it left an open question: what do you put in its place? Many of us at the time could think only along the lines on which we had been brought up. The few Eureka classes which still persist are in much the same intellectually circumscribed boat. There are many aspects of Eureka which make very dated reading now. For example, much of the fasination of Eureka centres round the vials from which it is attempted to show a fulfilment in the French Revolution leading on to the present date. In this we are expected to believe that the land and sea battles of the early 1800s are the final plagues on the earth. What no first and second world wars, no Hiroshima, no Vietnam or all the horrors which the world has subsequently seen?

These misgivings have not been lost on many of our able brethren and a number of intriguing suggestions have been published. These new interpretations have a common theme in that they take as the starting point, not an attempt to fit the revelation into history, but to attempt an understanding using the Bible itself as the base from which the interpretation must come. There is one further key that must be added, however, and that concerns the use of the symbols by John's contemporaries. This is an aspect of Bible exposition which as a community we have largely neglected. A much deeper understanding of such thorny topics as demons or a better grasp of the scientific implication of the text would be the outcome of a deeper appreciation of the use of words and figures in the time they were written. Instead we are often treated to lame attempts to stretch words and phrases into meanings they could not possibly have for

the original writer. In this latest exposition by David Pitt Francis a wealth of background information is given of all the possible contemporary references, Biblical and non Biblical which could be of value in making an interpretation of the book. This has clearly been an enormous task and the degree of study involved in finished work will be evident to any reader. It is, in short, a mine of information.

There is, of course, a defensive task to be undertaken in relation to the contemporary writers of apocalyptic prophecies. Many expositors have claimed that the Revelation is simply another of the same. David Pitt Francis is fully conscious of this problem and faces up to it.

The main preoccupation in the interpretation is with a religious rather than a historical exposition. There are some trenchant criticisms of the historical approach. "Most historical protestant expositions of the past centuries seem to agree in identifying antichrist with Papal Rome, but in recent years the great 'enemy' in the book seems to have changed his colour, like a chameleon, and is now identified with the godless regimes of Eastern Europe. Nations change in political role, in eminence and in attitude to the Christian message. Because they so change, any interpretation that seeks to identify the 'enemy' in the book with a political power, rests on the changing sands of time, and may, within a few years, be seen to be a very weak one."

A central question is why the book appears in the form it does. On this we are given the following :- "What was Revelation? Was it a Christian attempt to write just one more Jewish apocalypse with a Christian background? Or was it something quite different? Was it intended to be the very Christian answer to all the flood of spurious apocalypses with which the Jewish community had been plagued?" (page 20). This theme is expanded when we arrive at the detailed expositions. For example, in dealing with Chap.12, page (209) we read "The objective of the book of Revelation is to answer the spurious apocalypses which were in turn based on the world's pagan myths, with its own answer in their language." There is then a most valuable analysis of the background of the language from Babylon, Persia, Greece, Ancient and Hellinistic Egypt.

The explicit references to hell-fire torments in Revelation is handled in, to my knowledge, a unique way. In essence it is proposed that the reference is not hell-fire torments but to the voices of those who would use the hell-fire doctrine to attempt to revive the impact of the gospel. There is no doubting the hold that this doctrine has on the evangelical Christians.

At the beginning of this review I referred to the seven last plagues as one of the areas of Revelation which were now outdated. The exposition of the plagues now given correctly, in my view, sets them in the context of the final battle and not before, so we have : "Given that the time of the last plagues can be deduced (i.e. as that immediately preceding the Second Advent)...". This leaves the way open for a thorough examination of the Biblical background of the symbols. Only one reference will be made to the exposition here. One of the major examples in Eureka of bending the meaning of the text to fit history is seen in the exposition of the Fourth Vial. David Pitt Francis puts it as follows: "The fourth plague affects the sun - as did the fourth trumpet blast. In that case there has been an eclipse resulting in partial darkness. In this case, the darkness does not arrive until the fifth plague. Instead, the 'sun' is given power to intensify its activity, if only for a short while. (Revelation 16:8-9) (page 338). This contrasts strongly with the Eureka interpretation which looked to the vanquishing by Napolean of the Austrian Emperor, Francis Joseph, who was apparently regarded in those far-off-days as the "sun" of Europe. So the interpretation was the the "sun" was scorched. How anyone could arrive at such an interpretation or that it could survive for any length of time must remain one of the mysteries of the determination to fit the Revelation into history.

David Pitt Francis has been wrestling with difficult problems in Revelation and it is not to be expected in a time of individual thinking that all the points he makes will be acceptable to every reader. He, nevertheless, brings a wealth of knowledge to the task inclusing a thorough understanding of the original languages of the Bible. All this can but help to form our own appreciation of the book.

Geo. G. McHaffie.

Copies of the book can be obtained from :-

Castle Books,
1, Austin Close,
IRCHESTER,
Northants NN9 7AX.

For a book of its size the cost is very modest. It is £6.13 per copy, for over three copies £5.69, over six, £5.25 and over 12 £4.81 per copy.

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I would like to offer some observations on Rachel Richards interesting paper 'Carrots and Sticks'.

(i) Much research in the social sciences tends to ignore the effect of individual differences, such as temperament and intelligence.

(ii) An important factor in response to treatment or punishment is the personality of the individual. Three major dimensions of personality have been identified by the psychologist, Hans Eysenck: introversion-extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. Their relationship to criminality is discussed in his book 'Crime and Personality' (Paladin Books, 1977)*.

(iii) The notion of rewards and punishment has been related to personality by the psychologist, Jeffrey Gray (The Neuropsychology of anxiety, Oxford University Press, 1982). Anxious introverted individuals spend their time trying to avoid punishment; impulsive extraverted individuals leap for the rewards.

(iv) Individuals high on psychoticism: hostile, insensitive, solitary, stimulus-seeking types, are difficult to control with either reward or punishments (see 'Using personality to individualise instruction', James A. Wakefield Jr., Edits. San Diego).

Furthermore, the general research evidence so far indicates that individuals high on psychoticism hold a negative attitude towards religion.

(v) Eysenck maintains the importance of hereditary factors in personality and criminal behaviour. If the tendency to criminality is inherited, is the

tendency toward moral or religious behaviour also inherited? If it is, then we can look at the concept of predestination in a new light.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Pearson.

* See also A model for personality (1981), Ed. H.J.Eysenck, S.Pringer-Verlag,Berlin.

Personality, Genetics and Behaviours (1982), H.J.Eysenck, Praeger, New York.

Psychoticism as a dimension of personality (1976) H.J.Eysenck and S.B.G. Eysenck, Hodder & Stoughton, London.

THE ENDEAVOUR MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS

Great Britain £1 per annum, 30p postage (Students 50p) single copies.
Canada, USA & Australia $2.00 (air mail $3.50). South Africa R1.50.
Great Britain, Europe & South Africa (also articles and correspondence) The Endeavour Magazine, 150 Chessetts Wood Lane, Lapworth, Warwickshire, England.
Canada & USA, The Endeavour Magazine, 108 North Orchard Road, Linthicum Heights, Maryland 21090 USA, Australia & New Zealand, The Endeavour Magazine, 2 Kilorn Avenue, Victoria 3137, Australia.