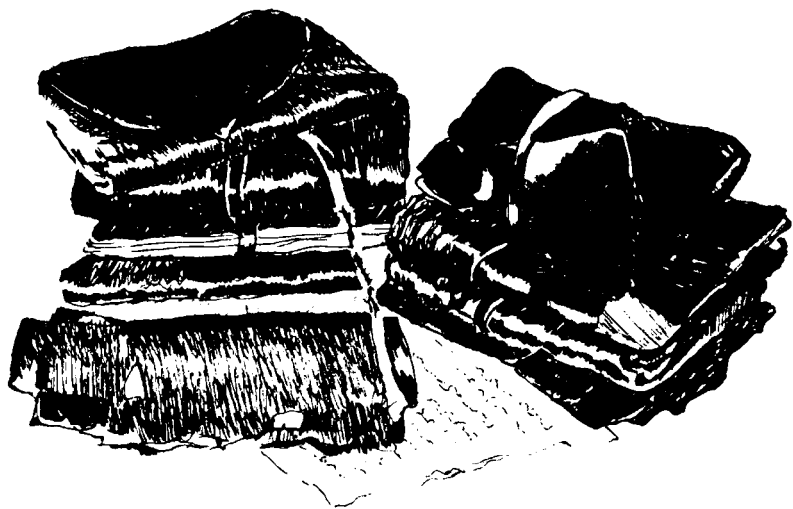


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Editorial

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Paul established the Corinthian Church at about AD 50 with the help of Silas and Timothy who joined him and later by Appollos. Unfortunately, it appears clear that certain false teachers entered the church and turned things upside down. These we believe were Gnostics or a proto-gnostic faction.* Though unfortunate for the church it was fortunate for us as it has provided us with much information of the early church both in belief and practice. 1 Cor. 13 and 15 stand out as towering monuments.

In Chapter 11 Paul severely reprimands the Corinthian Church about their conduct at the Christian Assembly, the ecclesia, the word is frequently used in the Septuagint translation of the O.T. for any kind of assembly. It is used in Acts as the regular assembly of the town council at Ephesus. For the early christians it became the assembly on the first day of the week when they 'gathered together to break bread'. But all things were not well at Corinth! Everyone seems to have been popping up with a 'tongue' - 'prophesying' - 'praying'. Paul tries to get things on a proper footing "Christ is the head" - (Cor.11:2), he then speaks as to the decorum in which brethren and sisters should conduct themselves when praying and prophesying (See article in this Issue). Then to the Lord's Supper itself. This is clearly a general fellowship meal probably continuing Jesus' practice in his ministry but now centred on the Last Supper and all that that meant. There was clearly class distinction at Corinth. The well-off feed well and drank well happily seeing their poor brethren going hungry. If you behave like this, Paul says you had better eat at home. They had forgotten it was the Lord's Supper.

J.H. Weaving.

* See previous Issues

JESUS

SON OF GOD - SON OF MAN

The great majority of Christians have believed that Jesus was both God and man since the year 381 when the Council of Constantinople formulated the Nicene Creed. But how can one person be both God and man? The Church attempted to answer this question seventy years later at the Council of Chalcedon, in words similar to the Athanasian Creed. However, as Klaas Runia has said, it "has always been aware that this too was an inadequate formulation." (The present-day Christological debate, page 12 IVP, 1984).

Christadelphians have always thought that their belief meant that they did not have to face this problem. Jesus was both son of man and son of God because Mary was his mother and God was his father. We often describe our belief by saying that Jesus was the son of God, not God the Son; our most recent pamphlet on the Trinity, issued in 1985, has precisely this title - "Jesus - God the Son or Son of God?".

However if someone were to ask us "What is the difference between God the Son and the Son of God?" we might find it rather a difficult question to answer. If the questioner were to prompt us by saying "Do you think Jesus is divine, then?" we would probably reply "Yes". But the next question might well be:- "If Jesus is divine, don't you believe in two Gods - God the Father and Jesus?". "No", we would say, "Jesus is not divine in the same way that God is. He said his father was greater than he. So he cannot be co-equal and co-eternal with God, as the doctrine of the Trinity maintains." "What, then" our questioner might persist, "is Jesus a demi-Cod, half man

and half God?". I imagine that most of us would find it difficult to answer that question.

So what at first seems to be a very satisfactory belief leads us quickly to something we would have considerable doubt about. If a lion is mated with a tiger the offspring is a creature which has some features of a lion and some features of a tiger, but is neither a lion nor a tiger. Christians have always refused to believe that Jesus was a hybrid of this kind and I imagine that we would be of their number. Our belief amounts in effect to a refusal to pronounce on how Jesus can be both son of man and Son of God at the same time.

It is not necessarily to be condemned for that. If one feels that a question is unanswerable it is only sensible not to attempt to answer it. But the passion with which we deny the doctrine of the Trinity is as great as that of those who accept it as a cardinal belief. Is it appropriate to feel so strongly as this about an answer which seems to amount to a "don't know"? In our standard work, such as "God's Way" and "The Virgin Birth of the Son of God", one can find many passages refuting the wrong ideas but none expounding the meaning of what we assert to be the true belief.

My own position is that I think that the Christology which is the foundation, and which constitutes the greater part of the doctrine of the Trinity, is confusing and sometimes self-contradictory, and that, so far as it goes, our belief is right. However, we need to do more than just deny the almost universal belief of Christians about the nature of God and in this series of articles I hope to do that.

We need first of all to find out more about the doctrine of the incarnation and why it is that most Christians believe that Jesus was and is God. We need also to realise that to them this is something as central to their faith and is as clearly demonstrable from the New Testament as is the

resurrection of Jesus. To understand what this feeling is like we have to picture our own feeling about writers such as Don Cupitt who say that the resurrection was only something that happened in the mind of the disciples. Certainly my own reaction to this is not just an intellectual one - I have a reluctance even to contemplate the arguments. Whatever were the circumstances in which the creeds of the fourth and fifth centuries were framed, most Christians today think that to believe that Jesus was not God is a betrayal of their faith in exactly the same way as we - and they also - would feel about a repudiation of the resurrection.

We cannot dismiss the creeds as though they were unnecessary, or even wicked things built on to scriptures. In the earliest days, so long as Jesus was simply thought of as the Messiah, the only creed necessary was "Jesus is Lord." At that stage it was just possible that Christianity and Judaism could have existed side by side. But when it was claimed that Jesus was literally the Son of God, the two faiths entered into bitter conflict because Judaism is monotheistic religion and to Jews Christians seemed to believe in two Gods.

Judaism had long had a certain attraction for the Graeco-Roman world because of its high moral tone and its monotheism. Christianity appealed to it in the same way and the belief that Jesus was the Son of God gave it an added impact which led to its rapid spread. But this belief was a liability as well as an asset because Christianity seemed to have lost the monotheism of Judaism. Christian preachers faced a dilemma. How could the divinity of Christ be explained while it was still maintained that there was only one God? It was this difficulty which led to creed-making.

One solution was that Jesus was merely a manifestation of the one God. He seemed to be a man but, really, he was not. His body was not a human body, he didn't

really suffer and he didn't really die. This belief is called "docetism" from the Greek word meaning "to seem". John attacks it in his epistles when he says that any spirit that does not confess that Jesus came in the flesh is antichrist. It contradicted the gospels and devalued both the cross and the resurrection. An alternative was so to stress the manhood of Christ as to lose sight of his divinity. But this was clearly contradicted by the epistles of Paul and the gospel of John.

Since neither of these explanations would do, two others were worked out which did not go so far as either. Both said that Jesus was divine, but both avoided saying there were two Gods. The first was what eventually became Trinitarianism while the second is known as "Adoptionism". Both of them could cite many New Testament texts in support although neither is fully taught there.

This is a difficulty we overlook if we regard the New Testament as an all-sufficient and a complete treatise on the Christian faith. There are many things in it which seem to conflict and which need explanation and prolonged consideration. There is a great temptation to overlook this and feel, when looking back at the turmoil and the struggles of the second to the fourth centuries, that if we had lived in the days of our fathers we would not have persecuted the prophets.

Trinitarianism is founded on those texts which speak of the pre-existence of Christ. They were interpreted as meaning that he lived in heaven as part of the Godhead before he appeared on earth. When he was born here he added human nature to his already existing divine nature. The majority of these texts are in the gospel of John but others are to be found in Paul's letters and in Hebrews.

In John we read of the word which was with God and was God, which was made flesh and dwelt among us (1:1.14). Jesus says that he came down from heaven, not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him (6:38). He asks God to glorify him with the glory we had with

him before the world was (17:5). He declares that before Abraham was, "I am", using the first person singular of the verb in a special way associated only with God (8:58). In Colossians Paul says that Christ is the firstborn of every creature for by him were all things created (1:16). Hebrews tells us similarly that it was through his Son that God made the worlds. (1:2).

All these texts were interpreted literally and it was argued that though Jesus was divine he was not a separate God but part of the Godhead. Precisely in what way was the subject of lengthy debate as time went by. This explanation was associated with Ephesus and Alexandria and it was the one that eventually triumphed and was incorporated into the creeds.

Adoptionism, the alternative explanation, is not so familiar to us today because it was defeated at an early stage in the argument and thereafter was regarded as heretical, causing cries of horror whenever it was suggested. But there are as many New Testament texts seeming to support it as there are seeming to support pre-existence. Since the idea is less familiar we must spend a little more time on it than on pre-existence.

The first and most important text comes from Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost when he introduces Jesus as "a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs". (Acts 2:22. In modern English "approved of God" means "proved to be of God"). Peter then goes on to describe the life and death of Jesus, showing that it is a fulfilment of prophecy, and concludes "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," (Acts 2:36). This indicates that Jesus was not originally Lord and Christ, but became so after his resurrection and ascension.

This thought is echoed in several of the other speeches in Acts. Jesus was chosen to be Messiah (3:20 - Good News Bible). Paul, on Mars Hill, says God will judge

the world by the man he has ordained (ie chosen) (17:31). Preaching in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, he says that God has raised unto Israel a Saviour from David's seeds. (13:23). Similar ideas occur in Paul's letters: "Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh: And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:3.4). In the famous hymn in Philippians 2:6-11 he tells us that because Jesus was humble and obedient, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every other name." Jesus is called Lord, not because of what he is, but for what he has done.

It is in Hebrews however that there is the greatest number of adoptionist passages (alongside pre-existence passages!). The epistle opens with a most stupendous affirmation of Christ as Son, contrasting him with all the previous partial revelations of God. "He reflects the brightness of God's glory, and is the exact likeness of God's own being, sustaining the universe with his powerful word" (1:3 - GNB). But in the preceding verse we have been told that this mighty figure has been chosen (AV appointed heir) and the whole point of this and the next chapter is that it is not angelic being which is so honoured but a man. In chapter 3:2. Jesus "was faithful to God, who chose him to do this work, just as Moses was faithful in his work in God's house (GNB). The epistle stresses the fact that Jesus grew. He was made perfect through sufferings(2:10)

He learned obedience by the things he suffered and being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation (5:8.9). The quotation from Psalm 2:7 (Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee (1:5), which seems at first sight to go against the grain, is actually the clearest expression of the idea since the "begetting" in the Psalms is clearly adoption.

The problem of the interpretation of these passages, as also of the pre-existence passages, is whether we should read them literally or whether they are metaphors. At first sight, and this no doubt influenced the creed-makers strongly, it would seem that the adoptionist passages must be metaphors in the light of the story of the virgin birth in Luke. If God was literally the father of Jesus then no question of adoption can arise. But did the authors of the New Testament believe that God was literally the father of Jesus? It would seem to us today that there can be no doubt as to the literality (unless we reject the virgin birth as a myth) but we have to remember that to a Jew it would seem simply blasphemous. On the other hand it was extremely common for the word "son" to be used metaphorically meaning "like". Luke himself, immediately after the nativity story, gives a genealogy of Jesus in which Adam is described as "the son of God". This is because Adam was created in the image of God. The demons greet Jesus fearfully as "Son of God" (Matthew 8:29); we cannot think that they had a deeper insight than the disciples had at this time as to the true nature of Jesus. Jesus tells the Pharisees, who were priding themselves on being better than their ancestors, that not only were they literally their descendants, but spiritually too (Matthew 23:31). John describes those who had accepted Jesus as Christ as not being born of blood, or the will of the flesh, or of man, but of God. (John 1:13). In spite of this most specific language it is clear that these believers were not literal sons of God.

We find it very difficult to read these first century accounts except in the light of twentieth century embryology. That God was literally the father of Jesus means that part of his genetic make-up came from God (just as the other part came from Mary). In technical terms this means that in every cell in the body of Jesus the chromosomes were made up of genes contributed partly by Mary and partly by God. My own belief is that this is indeed the case but that its implications have not been thought through heretofore.

When they are they can shed a most revealing light on the problems of Christology. This I hope to do in a subsequent article. But at this point we have to confine ourselves to trying to read the New Testament in the light of what was believed in New Testament times about the respective contribution made by the mother and father of a child.

The Jews then (and the Greeks as well) generally believed that the mother supplied all the "matter" of the baby or, as we would say, all the genetic information.

The father's function was to provide the impetus that started the generative process. (Is the modern Jewish rule that it is the mother not the father that determines the nationality of a child an echo of this old belief?). Consequently the role of the father was ill-defined. If we look at Luke's story we can see there the reason for what otherwise would be a strange and embarrassing parallel between the birth of John and the birth of Jesus. When Mary questions the tidings of Gabriel on the grounds that she does not "know" a man, Gabriel's reply is that the power of the Holy Spirit will overshadow her. For confirmation he refers to the case of Elisabeth, leading to the conclusion "for with God nothing shall be impossible".

To us there is no parallel between the two cases since Elisabeth's miracle lay in her producing an ovum when she had not only been barren previously but had now passed the menopause. In Mary's case the miracle lay in God taking the place of a human father, something entirely different. To the actors in the drama however we can now see that the two cases were indeed similar. In the one the power of God had enabled the generative process to start, using the seed of Elisabeth's husband, reinforcing the normal male impetus. In the other the divine impetus was so great that a woman of child-bearing age could have a baby without a father at all. Else why all the stress on the virginity of Mary? If her baby did have a father it would not be appropriate to describe her

as a virgin unless this is defined strictly and solely in the physical terms relating to human intercourse which presumably, then as now, would have been rejected as disgustingly anthropomorphic.

We today would think it impossible for a baby not to have a father at all. But to the ancients such a birth would be seen as an intensification and focussing of the power of God that made all births possible. ("The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve" - Psalm 29:9). Jesus could well be God-like, and therefore a son of God, without being genetically linked to God in any way different from Adam. Indeed, even to us today there is difficulty in thinking of an absolutely literal fatherhood of God since this would entail God having genes and chromosomes which seems no less anthropomorphic than his having arms and legs. It seems to have escaped the attention of modern theologians that the credal distinction "begotten not made" has been obliterated by modern genetics. I must emphasise that the sole purpose of putting this forward at the present stage is merely to ensure that we do not regard the adoptionist explanation as being necessarily ruled out by scripture itself.

Before we move on we must note that Christadelphians have been accused of being adoptionists. In "Some Modern Faiths" (M C Burrell and J S Wright, IVP 1973 , page 69) it is stated that "Christadelphians are a modern version of adoptionism, they hold that Jesus is not God in the full sense but has been raised by God to some kind of divine status." We have firmly denied this (for example in "Jesus - God the Son or Son of God? page 2) but there is an extensive passage in "Christendom Astray" (page 107, 1927 edition, Lecture VI) which seems to provide some justification for Burrell and Wright's charge. Robert Roberts argues that, before his baptism, Jesus was "simply the 'body prepared' for divine manifestation that was to take place through him....After the Spirit's descent upon him, he was the full manifestation of God in the flesh....When raised from the dead...his human nature was swallowed up in the divine. Hence as he now exists (my emphasis) 'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'"

It is hard to say whether that represents our belief today but one does find from time to time adoptionist sentiments. In a companion booklet "The Cross of Christ" to the above-mentioned one we read:- "The Son of God is now immortal (he partook of "the divine nature" after his resurrection), but in the first phase of his existence he shared our human nature." (Page 11). This is understandable since any reaction against reading the pre-existence passages literally tends to drive an interpreter towards reading the adoptionist passages literally. It is however an indication of the vagueness of saying that Jesus is the Son of God, not God the Son, that we should insist so strongly that we are not adoptionists while at the same time expressing adoptionist sentiments. What is needed is some deeper understanding which will accommodate both the pre-existence and the adoptionist texts. I believe such a synthesis is possible but before putting it forward it is first necessary to consider the work of the ancient creed-makers and what some modern Christians say about it.

Ron Coleman.

Wearing a Hat in Religious Services or not ?

Why is there any need to write an article on this subject? There are two reasons. Firstly, those who prefer not to wear hats are often misunderstood and it is assumed that they are acting from motives of fashion or modern social views rather than from religious conviction. Secondly, there is the need to encourage tolerance of different points of view. For many years those who would prefer to remain hatless have worn a hat for fear of upsetting those who hold the opposite view. There is a danger in doing this, however, for it encourages the assumption that there is only one, correct view. It is important to be aware that different opinions are held for genuine and carefully examined reasons. By writing an article discussing the different ideas I hope to encourage the situation where sisters may follow their own, informed conscience.

Some people say that the wearing or not wearing of hats is not important enough to spend time and energy discussing. If the general attitude was tolerance then there would be little reason to 'make an issue' of it. I have reluctantly worn a hat for over fifteen years. Not because I do not like wearing hats. As an article of fashion I do enjoy wearing a hat but my reluctance lies in the fact that wearing one for religious reasons portrays a misunderstanding about the right attitude to worship. In the last fifteen years there has been some change but not much understanding of the issues involved. Any attempt to make change has received in some places a considerable amount of intolerant pressure to conform.

The passage on which the wearing of hats is based is I Corinthians 11:2-16. Please read this in several

versions before continuing to read this article.

In writing this chapter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul was concerned to uphold good order within the church. Later he deals with selfish, disorderly behaviour at the Lord's Supper. Why was Paul anxious that when sisters prayed or prophesied they should wear a veil? His words are: "...any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonours her head - it is the same as if her head were shaven." (I Corinthians 11:5). In the context, "head" refers to the woman's husband (verse 3). But why does praying without a veil dishonour him? Why does Paul say: "...it is the same as if her head were shaven" (head this time being in the literal sense)? Two reasons have been suggested: (a) In the ancient world only 'loose' women would go around without a veil. Paul does not therefore wish Christian women who take a leading part in church worship to appear to be in this category and thereby bring dishonour on their husbands. (b) A veil was used to cover the women's hair and so prevent their beauty from attracting other men in the congregation - to the dishonour of their husbands and the spiritual disadvantage of the church.

If these two explanations for veils have any validity, we cannot feel that they apply to the wearing of hats or berets today. A hat is an article of fashion intended to enhance the beauty of the wearer, not to cover it up. A hat, beret or headscarf can be a distraction in worship for both brothers and sisters. But further questions need to be asked. Why were sisters wanting to go without veils? What does verse 15 mean. "For her hair is given to her for a covering."?

Some scholars point out that apart from verse 15 the Greek words usually translated "veiled" or "covered" with a veil" are more literally translated, "covered" or "having upon the head". The word translated, "unveiled" literally means "uncovered". In verse 15 the word translated, "veil" means "a thing which is wrapped or thrown around". The argument of these scholars continues something like this. Looking at the background we find that married woman did not wear veils but wore long hair

dressed in a style on their heads. Their hair dressed in this way was a sign of their dignity and honour in their married state. This would very well fit in with verse 15 which should be translated. "For her hair is given to her for a veil." Some would say that it could be more accurately translated, "For her hair is given to her instead of a veil" (ie to take the place of a veil). According to this view a sister's hair (dressed in a style upon her head as befitting the married women in those days) was the "covering" that is mentioned in this previous verse.

As these ideas are rather new to us I think it worthwhile to go into the arguments presented in more detail. Looking at both Greek and Roman society in Paul's day we find that in general women did not wear veils. Adult women tended to have long hair put up on their heads in an elaborately dressed style. Dishevelled hair was a sign of despair or mourning in Greek and Roman culture. Earlier in Roman times, simple strips of rough wool held the hair and were an emblem of chastity and a symbol of honour due to a married woman. These were later replaced by linen or silk ribbons of bright colours. The rich women elaborately dressed their hair and decorated it with jewels, gold pins or buckles. They may sometimes have worn veils but the veil did not have any significance; it was the long hair dressed with ribbons in a style on their head which signified their married status.

Veiling was not practiced as a requirement of Old Testament Israel and it is doubtful that it was required by Jews at the time of Christ. In Numbers 5:18 a woman suspected of adultery had her hair publicly loosed to mark her as one suspected of being unclean. The sign of her shame was letting her hair down not removing her veil, although this would also have to be done if she was wearing one. If she was innocent her hair was once again put up. A woman found guilty of adultery in Old Testament times was executed but as this was not allowed in

New Testament times the punishment was shearing her hair. Note I Corinthians 11:5-6 "but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonours her head - it is the same as if her head were shaven...but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil." Letting her hair go loose was used as a sign of setting the woman apart from the community; it could be because of mourning, leprosy, a Nazarite vow, suspicion of adultery and also repentance. The Mishnah (a digest of rules for Jewish life brought together towards the end of the second century AD but with some regulations originating from before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70) talks about the difference between a virgin and a widow going to her marriage, being that the virgin went with her hair unbound. We conclude that a widow would have her hair bound. It is possible therefore that bound hair was a sign of her previous married status and that the virgin would bind her hair once she was married. The Mishnah also talks about divorce without any financial settlement for the offence of going out with unbound hair, though whether this is about veiling or hairstyle is not clear. This Mishnah reflects serious concern about the issue.

"Covering", whatever that might mean, whether by veil or a feminine hair style, was the sign of the relationship between a man and his wife. As in Numbers 5:18 a woman committing adultery repudiated her relationship with her husband by giving herself to another man. Her hair was let down to set her aside publicly. For the Roman and Greek women, their hair dressed on their head was a sign of their married position. For the women to remove this sign constituted the repudiation of her husband and her marriage. The vast majority of women would have been wives from their early teens but there would have been unmarried women and widows in the Corinthian church. Paul expects them to have a covering because it showed their status as women. Paul was concerned that the women should not be seen to rebel against the position, as women, they had in the society of that day.

Whether Paul was talking about a veil or a style of dressing hair, neither has any significance in the 1980's. The importance of what Paul was writing about was not the veil or the hairstyle in itself but what it meant to the sisters in the church and to the non-Christians outside. It was the symbol of the relationship between a wife and her husband and the sign that denoted the woman's status in society. Our society does not go in for such signs and symbols. The nearest thing we have to show that a woman is married, is her wedding ring. If a wedding ring were removed it could be seen as a woman repudiating her marriage but this is not necessarily so. It could be for some simple reason that the ring is too tight. Certainly the removal of a hat or head covering would not be recognised to have any significance at all today.

As Paul gives in this passage an instruction, the question now is whether we should try to reinstitute the symbol or head covering representing the relationship of a husband and wife. To help us answer this, it is important to realise that God does not want us to act out signs and symbols for His benefit, or because He needs us to do them. They were given for the benefit of mankind and are only useful if they are meaningful to us. (Note what Jesus says about the Sabbath; Mark 2:27-28 "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath.") Today, for some people, wearing a hat may have some assumed meaning but for the majority of people it is an article of fashion and not a symbol of relationships. If the wearing of a hat, beret or scarf shows anything today, it is more likely to show how much time, money and care has been expended over an exclusive hat, and at the other extreme how little concern has been taken over an old and tired scarf. We are anxious not to modernise baptism, why should we try to modernise covering, especially as the importance is in what it meant to the early church, which it does not mean to us today.

It was because ancient Israel were tied to ritual without the meaning behind it helping them in their

worship that the prophets tried to get them back to what true worship meant. It was because the Pharisees and religious people of Jesus' day were tied to their traditions and rites that Jesus was critical of them. Jesus challenged them to see what was and is the core of true worship. True worship is from the heart and is not a matter of signs, symbols, ritual or tradition, especially when no longer meaningful.

It is interesting to note that in John 13:13-14 it is recorded that Jesus instructs his disciples to wash each others' feet, as he had done. We do not seem particularly unhappy that we no longer do that, as it is not fitting in this country today and yet we find some people unhappy that we do not want to keep something equally dated by its time and place. Paul was anxious about the impression that the Christian women gave to the non-Christians. What impression do we give to non-Christadelphians? An affluent group who have great concern for their appearance, or a rather peculiar people tied to ritual and tradition? On campaigns sisters are seen wearing incompatible clothes like a jogging suit and a fashionable hat!

Some say, "But for all that, we must wear a hat because of the angels." They are referring to I Corinthians 11:10 where it says, "That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head because of the angels." What does this mean? There are at least four explanations. The first two explanations refer back to Genesis 6:2 which from Jewish tradition was talking about evil angels. The first explanation given is that women ought to wear veils so that they do not sexually arouse the evil angels as was supposed to have happened in the incident in Genesis. An alternative version of this argument is that if the woman wore a symbol of her married status on her head it would deter the evil angels. An expansion of this explanation is that when a woman prays she enters into a different spiritual plane which laid her open to danger from these evil angels. Wearing a veil would give her authority against them. Another view is that

because angels, not evil ones this time, are concerned for divine order, then it is out of respect for them and not to offend them that she wears the sign that she is a wife. A third view is that we in the future are to judge angels and so the woman wears a sign that she is a woman and therefore superior to evil angels. The fourth explanation is that the word which means angels (spelled "aggelous") could have been "agelaious" in the earlier texts. This is only conjecture as it is not found in any of the known manuscripts. However the word "agelaious" would make sense as it means "the common people". The passage would read "a woman ought to have a veil on her head because of the common people". This would be understandable because of Paul's concern for the Christian women to be seen to be behaving correctly. However all of these explanations of verse 10 seem to have some problem. They do not seem sound ground on which to base an action when the text has such a variety of explanations.

Another reason that is given why sisters should wear hats is that by not doing so others are offended. As it is wrong to 'offend' then wearing of hats should continue. It is true that it is wrong to offend but it is also true that it is wrong to take offence. The wearing or non-wearing of hats should be more a matter for discussion and tolerance, agreeing to differ than giving or taking offence. 'Offend' as we use the word today has lost its strength of meaning. Today it means to make annoyed or upset or to shock. This is not the meaning Paul uses in I Corinthians 8, where it means to cause to fall away from Christianity. A sister not wearing a hat may shock or cause someone to be annoyed but it is hardly likely that it will turn a brother or sister away from being a follower of Christ. Annoyance, anger, shock are often results of uncertainty. Much better, and much more Christ-like in attitude is to try to understand the behaviour of another person. Some say, "Do not offend the weak" but it does appear that those who are offended are the weak. They often seem to be strong and anxious to put others right. Again tolerance must prevail and an understanding and acceptance that

there are different interpretations about what our actions should be in this issue. We should therefore be allowed to follow our own informed conscience. Jesus criticised the Pharisees for blind allegiance to the rules and not understanding the reasons why they did things. We need to be careful that we too do not have a blind allegiance to tradition and make sure that, as thoroughly as we can, we understand the reasons why we do things.

Jesus annoyed the Pharisees and the religious leaders of his day because he challenged their traditions and made them think. In many aspects of our Christian life we are challenged to think about our actions. This is what the Bread and Wine do, this is what reading the Bible should do, too. Our reaction to things that surprise us is often very human, that of anger and annoyance, but an attempt to prevent this reaction in other people should not be a reason for not following our own conscience on the issue.

The Bible is a very relevant book for today but its relevance is diminished if we insist on following (or half-following) detailed instructions which had their meaning 1900 years ago, but are no longer, in their detail, relevant today. We must try to understand the Bible in the context in which it was written and by doing so it will help us to work out the relevance of what was said then to our lives today. Where we disagree on our interpretations it is good to have tolerance for another's point of view.

Averil McHaffie.

HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT-3

Up to now, in the series, we have not looked at one of the most valuable sources, the writings of the apostle Paul. If we asked Paul "was the Holy Spirit for every Christian" we get a very clear 'yes' - Ephesians 1:13, 'you were marked in him (Jesus) with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.' The order Paul preserves here is significant. Trust in Christ is achieved by (verse 13) hearing the word and after believing, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit - almost as if that was the necessary order. There is no mention of water baptism, though that is not necessarily significant.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19 we have a reference to the believer as the 'temple of the Holy Spirit' no distinction, all Christians are included. Then in 1 Cor. 12:13 "we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body". It is not clear whether this is a reference to water or to spirit baptism. Since, though, it was the norm for believers to receive the Holy Spirit, it could be a reference to baptism in the Holy Spirit which was regarded as a fulfilment of John Baptist's prophecy.

This close link of the Spirit with believers is just as true of the later letters as of the earlier ones. Look at 2 Timothy 1:14, "guard the good deposit...with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you". Titus in ch 3 v 5 writes of "the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit". There we have presumably a reference to baptism, the washing and renewal, (not you notice, baptism) in the Holy Spirit. So whilst baptism is the church's sign or act of initiation into Christ, the Holy Spirit, given, poured, in, is God's mark of a Christian. So what was it like and how did it show itself in Paul's language.

It certainly does not result in perfection. The picture in 1 Cor.5 is appalling. How could men 'filled' (Luke's phrase) with the Holy Spirit, be capable of sexual immortality of a kind that does not occur even among pagans (v 1). Paul counsels (v 11) not to "associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler". The Spirit in the first century certainly did not make people perfect. On the other hand, in the same letter (ch 1 v 7) "you do not lack any spiritual gift". This is the same community of which he has to speak so harshly later on.

This word gift here is the Greek word charisma and provides a link with the 'famous' spirit gifts. Charism is almost a Pauline word. It means a favour or a kindness, a gift of grace. It is not in its etymology a gift of the spirit but of charis - grace. It seems clear from the way Paul writes that this experience of God's grace, which is an empowering as well as a favouring is basic to all New Testament Christianity.

What was it like in the experience and words of Paul? Well the Thessalonians were a good example (1 Thes. 1:7) "And so you became a model to all the believers..." - how? Verse 6 "You welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit." In Romans (5 v 5) Paul specifically mentions the Holy Spirit giving rise to love "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." In ch. 15 we are told that hope is given by the Holy Spirit. Now you notice that none of these are the dramatic miraculous powers that some would associate with the Holy Spirit.

There is a different emphasis in Paul from that we found in Luke. For Luke it was the 'tongues' that were the key sign of the Holy Spirit. For Paul, they have a rather low priority. The gifts of God's favour are wide ranging as we can see if we look at 1 Cor. 12:7-9. Here we see mentioned "through the

Spirit" the message of wisdom, knowledge, faith. These are not overtly miraculous. Now what degree of wisdom knowledge, faith, was recognised by the community as indicative of a 'gift' of God's grace is very difficult for us to tell. Paul's list goes on to mention healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, ability to distinguish between spirits and speaking in tongues but there is no mention of the supernatural/natural distinction which we commonly make today.

When we look at Paul's writings we see that the whole of the Christian's life is controlled by the Holy Spirit. The birth of the Spirit, Jesus' phrase (John ch.3) accords very well the statement in Romans 8:9, "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you." Paul goes on to say that one must have the Spirit of Christ to belong to Christ. What is the Spirit of Christ? The context suggests that it is the same as the Holy Spirit.

How do you try the Spirits? There was a gift there of distinguishing between Spirits. Paul recognises the problem of the false prophecy or tongue. If someone prophesies, or heals, how do you know it is of God? The pagans could, apparently simulate this kind of thing. Remember that the charismatic gifts were a threat to the fellowship in at least three of the churches Paul was writing to:- in Corinth, Rome and Thessalonica. So we find that one of the tests of God's 'grace gift' is whether it builds up the community. A very non-miraculous test you might say, but how otherwise do you test the tester? How do you judge whether one who claims to have a gift of "testing the Spirits" is genuine or not? The effect on the community is something which everyone can see and make judgements upon.

It seems clear by inference that in addition to the test of 'building up' there was also comparison made with 'the tradition'. What, though, was the essence of the tradition? Above and behind all that was conveyed by the 'Holy Spirit' was the ultimate test:-

conformity with Christ. Remember the history of the church! The whole movement was motivated by the resurrection of Jesus. After he had ascended to heaven, his presence was replaced by the promised comforter, counsellor, Holy Spirit who is the revealer of Jesus Christ.

All of Paul's phrases about the Holy Spirit are really linked and one with his phrases about that is "of Christ". In 2 Cor.3 Paul suggests an identity between 'the Lord (Jesus) and the Spirit:- in verse 17, "Now the Lord is the Spirit" and verse 18, "from the Lord who is the Spirit." The only Spirit which reproduces the image of Jesus Christ is true, that seems to be Paul's criterion. Furthermore whenever we see the phrase "in Christ" or "in the Lord" we are not to think of a rational decision process but a particular religious experience, a consciousness of Christ. This was, in the way Paul looked at it, the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's model also allowed for weakness. We see a reference to it in this same letter (2 Cor 4:7) "But we have this treasure in jars of clay" or verse 16, "Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." Presumably Paul had to have a theology of failure because he saw so much of it.

If we turn to John, on the other hand, we see what is almost a perfectionism. You will be well familiar with language like that of 1 John 3:9 "No-one who is born of God will continue to sin". We today would see that as overstatement. Perhaps John did not have the experience of failures that Paul had. He does seem to see the issues in very black and white terms. On the subject of the Spirit, though, he agrees with Paul:- (1 John 4:13) "We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

However we want to interpret it the New Testament writers are trying to describe the experience of the earliest Christians. Whilst they have various viewpoints, the one thing they are all certain about in describing that experience is that the Holy Spirit was working in their lives. Was it permanent? Well it was not uniform. The Spirit filling or the charisma gave different 'gifts' to different people. Also it seems reasonable to deduce that the result was evident in the particular action, or the particular word of prophecy. A spiritual man was, therefore, one whose words and actions could be seen as witnessing to Jesus Christ.

I do not think it is reasonable to conclude that the Spirit was some automatic and permanent endowment. It was God present in the particular action. The outward manifestation showed that it was "of Christ". Failure and apostasy were too clearly evident and even expected. A general withdrawal was never, it seems to me, expected, nor is it evident in the New Testament. What was expected was the return of Christ. The vanishing away that Paul talks of in 1 Cor. 13:8 seems clearly the anticipation of the perfection of the second coming.

Christians stand at the overlap of the ages. The Kingdom has come, in its earnest, in the Spirit, but it has yet to come in its fullness in the future. The age of the Spirit has dawned, but the full outworking is still to come. Change and development there must be. God is working his purpose out. There is evidence of change, in the New Testament itself as is clear from the offices established by the time Paul wrote to Timothy. Finally, the question God puts to us through these first century writers is concerned with our witness to Christ. Is it faithful or abysmal? However we ourselves feel that we are doing, they assure us that God is in fact at work by his Spirit.

I can conclude this brief study in no better way than commending to you for your devotions today, the words of Paul to the Ephesians (2 v 18) "For through him

(Jesus) we both have access to the Father by one spirit." And especially verse 22, "in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

Concluded.

J. Maycock.

Quotations are from NIV.

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PROBABILITY

Most people would say they know what probability is, and indeed most of them would have a good understanding of the idea that a penny has probability one half of coming down "heads" when it is tossed. However when philosophers set about analysing the meaning of probability it begins to look obscure.

Usually when a speaker or writer makes an assertion we ask ourselves first "What does it mean?" and when we are sure of the meaning we ask "Is it true?" But the assertion that a penny has probability a half of falling "heads" is different, we all know it is true but we can't agree on what it means. Now let us consider some of the ways that people have tried to define probability. The "frequency definition" - suppose that we start tossing a penny and keeping count of the total heads and the number of tosses, the ratio will get as close as we like to a half if we go on long enough. The difficulty in this frequency definition are illustrated by asking "How many tosses do we need before the proportion of heads comes to something between 45 per cent and 55 per cent?" Of course there is no answer. You might have alternate heads and tails so that the ratio settles down quickly to a value near a half, but on the other hand you might get six hundred heads in the first thousand. You might get anything. And after a few thousand million throws the penny will be so worn as to be useless. So our attempted definition has just landed us into more difficulties.

Another possibility is the "gambling definition" We think of the penny being tossed only once, and

suppose that someone is offering for sale a ticket which will pay one unit of money if the penny falls "heads". What would a wise person pay for the ticket? Of course the answer is any price less than a half would make the ticket worth buying, and it would be foolish to pay more than half a unit. An interesting attempt to define probability, but not really of any practical use unless we can find someone always capable of wise decisions on questions of gambling.

A third possibility is the "degree of belief". The argument goes that people believe all sorts of things - that the next Test Match will end in a draw, that Alexander the Great had blue eyes, that taxes will be increased in the next budget, that copper bracelets prevent rheumatism, that the water in the tap is safe to drink, and so on. Some beliefs are stronger than others, and so there must be a measure of strength of belief, that measure can be transformed by certain rules to a number between 0 and 1. And that number is called probability.

It is not our purpose in this article to go into the details of these theories, or to make any judgements on their merits, but just to introduce some ideas. The third definition reminds us that probability is often subjective, it varies from person to person. In fact one person's estimate of a probability will normally change when more information becomes available.

Now changing the subject slightly, modern physics teaches us that the laws governing the behaviour of atoms and sub-atom particles are not deterministic, they deal only with probabilities, not certainties. The theory of mechanics that applies to atoms (it is known as quantum mechanics) emerged in the early part of this century, but was not properly clarified until Dirac and von Neumann explained it in the nineteen thirties; the theory is difficult and I shall not attempt to explain it here.

Quantum mechanics sets out quite precisely three principles with which we are all vaguely familiar in everyday life - (a) There are limits to what we can hope to know. (b) All our knowledge is of probabilities, not certainties. And (c) All knowledge is subjective, that is to say you must not forget the observer when you think about any observation.

These new developments in physics caused a lot of distress in the first half of this century. People wanted to get back to the certainties and objective facts of classical physics. One proposal for easing this difficulty was that of the "hidden parameter" suggested by von Neumann; this theory has been controversial, and theoretical physicists generally doubt whether belief in the hidden parameter theory would be any help in quantum mechanics. The theory (over-simplified of course) is that all the observables in an atomic system actually have precise values at every instant of time, and our inability to measure them is just because scientific instrument makers do not, and never will, make suitable instruments. Take a simple example. Suppose that I have a single atom of radium, there is a one per cent probability that it will decay (into radon) in the next 23 years, but how does it know when to decay? The hidden parameter theory suggests that the date is already fixed and that we should think of the atom as containing an invisible alarm clock set to go off at the fixed date. The alternative is even harder to imagine, that the atom contains some source of randomness, like a penny to toss or a well-shuffled pack of cards, and that the atom continually consults this device in order to know when to decay. Whichever way you look at it, nuclear physics is a difficult subject. Now, are there any theological implications in these ideas about probability and physics?

The hidden parameter theory of von Neumann becomes very simple when we transfer it from quantum mechanics to everyday life. The unpredictability

of the fall of a penny is simply a consequence of the fact that we do not measure the spin of the coin and calculate its trajectory. Two cricket captains tossing the first innings both regard the fall of the penny as being random because they have not got together the scientists and laser beams and computers and other apparatus that would predict whether the penny was coming down "heads" of "tails"; it is another illustrations of the subjectivity of probability.

Now consider the popular idea of evolution, that it is a matter of random coming together of amino acids followed by random genetic mutations. This explanation dodges the question of what "random" means. The fact that some event (like the toss before a game of cricket) is random as far as we are concerned should not be taken to imply that it is random for everybody else. In particular the common picture of evolution should not be regarded as inconsistent with what the Book of Genesis tells us, that God made Heaven and Earth and saw that it was good.

The attitude of academic theologians towards God has always been arrogant. They have been like a scientist who puts a tiny weed under the microscope and then claims to have discovered all that is worth knowing about it. In the Bible are many correctives to this foolish attitude of some people to their Creator. The Book of Job is entirely devoted to the message that we should have a proper sense of our own weakness and ignorance, and that we should not theorise about what attitude God has or should have towards the Universe. In John 1:18 we read that "no man has seen God" and in Matt, 11:27 Jesus says "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him". The moral is surely that we must be careful to keep a proper humility towards our Maker. We all know that God made "all things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small"

and that we are allowed the pleasure of knowing them. But don't forget that God made everything else too, including the mysteries of atomic physics. And don't imagine that we humans will ever find it possible to understand the Universe. Since early in the twentieth century the message has begun to come through, both from theoretical physics and from pure mathematics, that we are going to find some questions to be unanswerable, not merely difficult but quite impossible in the sense that there is no answer. Don't think of this as bad news, it is just the belated scientific confirmation of what the Book of Job says.

B. C. Rennie.

NEW BOOK

The Probability of God by Hugh Montefiore.

Dear Editor,

DANCING OR SINGING? WHAT THE ELDER SON HEARD.

Recall the story of the Prodigal Son. The elder son came in towards the house from the fields and "he heard music and dancing" (A.V.) What does that mean? Did he hear the stamp of feet on the floor? Not likely, for if you ask some of your friends to dance on an earthen floor, and then you walk towards them from the other side of a brick wall you won't hear much.

The Greek text is well worth examining. The passage is in Luke 15:25. Remember that Luke was not one of those New Testament authors who had learnt Koine Greek as a second language; he had been brought up and educated as a Greek. The Greeks were good scientists, and very good and careful philosophers of science. This fact is brought out by their use of the verb ακουω (I hear). They drew a clear distinction between hearing a song and hearing a singer; quite rightly, because the song and the singer are very different. They did this by writing "I hear a song" with "song" in the accusative, and "I hear a singer" with "singer" in the genitive. This rule is seen in dozens of cases in the New Testament, and the rule can be seen to be natural and logical by thinking of the assertion "I hear a singer" as being short for "I hear the voice of a singer".

Now let us look at the text συμφωνίας καὶ χορῶν. The word χορῶν does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament; what can we say about its meaning? All the modern English versions translate it as "dancing". In classical Greek χοροὶς is a well-known word, originally meaning a dance in a ring, the ancient choral dance performed at the Athenian Dionysia; the word later coming to mean any chorus or choir or band of dancers and singers. Luke uses χορῶν which is genitive plural, and therefore we would expect it to signify several sources of sound (sources of sound, not sounds themselves, because of the genitive case).

The word $\epsilon\upsilon\phi\omega\nu\iota$ presents other difficulties. It is either the genitive singular or the accusative plural of a word meaning either music or a musical instrument. This gives us two choices; if genitive singular it means a single source of sound, therefore a single musical instrument, and if accusative plural it means several sounds - he heard tunes. Of these alternatives the former is more plausible.

What was going on in that farmhouse? It appears likely that one musical instrument was being played and several people were singing, but were they dancing too? Did singing and dancing go together for the ancient Israelites as they did for the Greeks? Did King David sing when he danced before the Lord (II Sam. chap.6)?

Barbara Rennie.
New South Wales -
Australia (March 1985)

