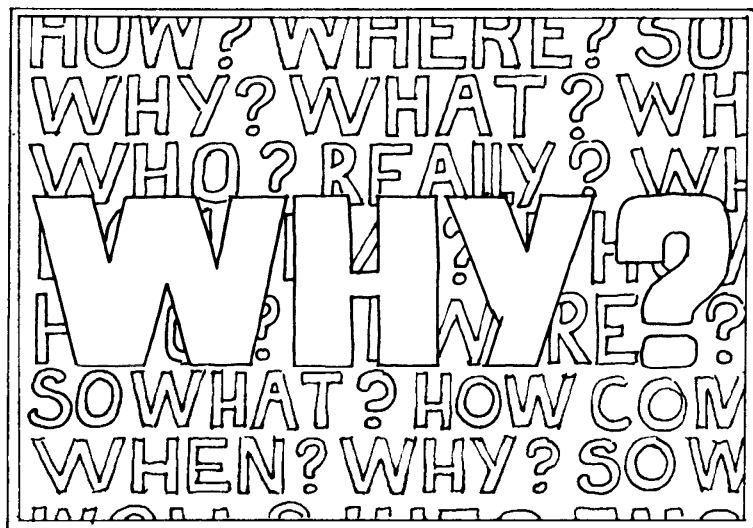


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EditorialPREACHING THE GOSPEL IN UNITY.

The challenge today is not in the truth or otherwise of theological niceties. The challenge today is "Is there a God"? and do you believe in Him"? In a very real sense we are back in the days of Isaiah, when he had to contend for the existence of the one God.

"Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.... To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One."

Our message today however must be answered in the idiom and background of the nineteen eighties just as Isaiah's message was for his days and generation. The Circle of the Earth is no longer a relevant description - today it is "The Expanding Universe" We can be sure that neither of these descriptions are absolute truths but both contain the essential truth - The existence of God and man's dependence on Him.

What then is our message? Through God's grace the answer has been given us. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. So we are in a much better position than Isaiah from the point of view of knowledge both spiritual and scientific. If only we had half his faith and courage! What then is the essence of Christ's Message - The Gospel? Mark records the Master's opening challenge:

"The Time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and have faith in the Gospel". (Mk 1:15).

cont'd p. 24.

JESUS

3.

SON OF MAN - SON OF GOD - 2.
The Creed Makers.

In a previous article in the 1985/2 issue (No 72) early explanations of how Jesus could be both Son of man and Son of God were considered. One of the two explanations Adoptionism, soon dropped out of the running and was branded as a heresy. The other went on to become part of the doctrine of the Trinity and was approved finally at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451.

What was Adoptionism, why did it disappear and why should it now still interest us? Adoptionism was the belief that Jesus was a man who was so open to God and so open to his Spirit that he became God's agent for salvation and was ultimately received up into the Godhead. It disappeared at an early stage chiefly because it did not fit in with Greek philosophy. It is still of interest today because there are several passages in the New Testament which seem to support it, and also because Christadelphians are sometimes accused, though we deny it, of being Adoptionists.

The rival explanation concentrated on those passages in the New Testament which seem to say that Jesus existed before he was born into the world. This fitted in well with Greek philosophy which taught that everything we see in this world is an inferior copy of something in an invisible, ideal world which is the true reality. Bridging the two worlds was the divine reason, of logos, which permeated our visible world and the mind of man. These ideas were not altogether foreign to Judaism because they had been adopted by the Jewish philosopher Philo, who lived at about the same time as Jesus. He found this the easier because somewhat similar ideas were found by him in the Old Testament. The tabernacle was a copy of what Moses had been shown on Mount Sinai. In the book of Proverbs wisdom is spoken of as though it was a person. The word of God was his agent which, once sent out, would not return to him without having fulfilled its purpose.

So, when the gospel went out extensively into the Greek

world, it was natural for gentile Christians to read the passages about the pre-existence of Christ in John, Paul and Hebrews as though they were literally true. He was the divine Logos which had become man. The great arguments which took place in the fourth and fifth centuries were about the way in which this divine Logos was combined with the human nature of Jesus. They have sometimes been pictured by those who reject the Trinity as being a battle between Trinitarians and anti-Trinitarian beliefs - as though the doctrine of the Trinity was being forced on to a faithful church by superior forces which ultimately triumphed.

Actually there was not "establishment" which wanted to impose its ideas on rebels. The nearest thing to it was the Christian emperors who called the conferences which formulated the creeds. But although they may have had their own personal ideas about the conflicting doctrines, their main interest was political. What they wanted most of all was agreement to put an end to arguments which constantly threatened to spill over into fighting as in the Lebanon today. Consequently they tended to favour the side which seemed most likely to win. Nor were the debates calm and academic discussions. They were like international conferences today where each side seeks to secure an advantage, fighting its own corner and trying to get its wording into the final communique.

The arguments which caused such high emotions - when the bishop of Alexandria returned home after agreeing to the formula of Chalcedon he was physically torn to pieces by his enraged flock - are exceedingly difficult to understand today. This is chiefly because they were expressed in terms of the contemporary understanding of human physiology and psychology. The difficulty that this creates can be illustrated by imagining how difficult it would be to describe modern inventions, such as television or aeroplanes, in the terms of the Greek understanding of what the world was made of. They thought it was made out of the four elements of earth, air, fire and water. The Greek understanding of human biology and neurology is just as foreign to us today as their conception of the chemical elements.

The great councils of Nicaea, Ephesus, Constantinople and Chalcedon revolved around four words:- ousia (substance of being); physis (nature); prosopon (person); hypostasis (subsistence - but usually not translated). Even in English today their translations are vague and overlapping words which do not convey precisely the meaning of the Greek - particularly prosopon. In Greek there was similar ambiguity and difficulties in translating them into Latin for the benefit of the delegates from the Western churches.

What the Council of Chalcedon decided about Jesus was that he was: ". .perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father in Godhead and the same consubstantial with us in manhood. ." He was ". .made known in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalesced in one person and one hypostasis - not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, only-begotten, divine Word; the Lord Jesus Christ."

Faced with this impenetrable committee - language one must sympathise with John Hick who, in his essay in "The Myth of God Incarnate", said "It remains a form of words without assignable meaning. For to say, without explanation that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was also God is as devoid of meaning as to say that this circle drawn with a pencil on paper is also a square."

Rather more irreverently, it has been described as being like a pantomime horse - two men inside a skin pretending to be one animal. How can Christ be perfect God and perfect man at the same time? Inside the one hypostasis there are two natures. Leaving on one side the question of what a nature is, we are told that these two natures are wholly different - neither

the human nature or the divine has suffered any alteration (the significance of "without change"). Nor are they mixed together ("without confusion"). Nor are they separated. Surely this is equivalent to saying "this square is a circle"?

It is not a jibe to speak of "committee language". When one reads the history of the disputes which led to it the reason for many of the terms, particularly the string of negatives, can easily be seen.

"Consubstantial with the Father" and "without change" are directed against Arius, who argued that Jesus could not have been divine in the way God is. His divinity was only partial and derived. (Christadelphians have also been accused of Arianism).

"Rational soul and body" is against Apollinarius who taught that the mind of Jesus ("rational soul") was the divine Logos - Jesus did not have a human mind.

"Without confusion" is against Eutyches who taught that the divine and human natures in Jesus were mixed together; "much as green paint comes from the blending of blue and yellow."

"Without division, without separation" is against Nestorius, who emphasised the human nature to the detriment of the divine. God was only present with him in the same manner as with the prophets, but completely."

It is not so much the framers of the creeds that I am uneasy about. One has always to ask oneself "What would I have thought and done if I had been living in their time, in their culture and in their circumstances?". The Greek words have been objected to, it being said that they hellenised Christianity. It has been shown however that though they did use Greek

philosophical terms they gave them a new Christian meaning. It has been said that the creed-makers should have contented themselves merely with reproducing the New Testament teaching. But what is the New Testament teaching? There are difficulties and seeming inconsistencies that demand explanation and interpretation. In favour of the Council it has to be remembered that they were making a serious attempt to settle raging controversies that had been going on for a century or more.

What is disturbing however is that, after initial quarrels and disturbances, the definition was accepted by nearly all Christians for a millennium and a half without amendment or revising. When the schism of the Eastern and Western churches took place in 1034 both continued to accept Chalcedon. So did Lutherans, the Reformed Churches and the Anglicans after the Reformation. Just occasionally voices were raised against the all-pervading belief, as with Socinus and some of the anabaptists, but for the most part although thousands of men and women went bravely to cruel deaths for what were adjudged to be heresies, few questioned the doctrine of the Trinity and its consequent belief as to the nature of Christ. With the passage of the years it became venerated almost as though it were part of Scripture.

It was not until the Enlightenment, the philosophical movement in the eighteenth century that exalted reason, that pressure from outside began to lead to a re-examination of the person of Christ. And it was not until our own century that any substantial number of questioning voices within mainstream Christianity began to be raised.

Ron Coleman
(to be continued)

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

1. The search for a basis of belief

I found two recent articles in Endeavour Magazine particularly helpful and they have prompted me to offer a few thoughts which have been formulated gradually and tentatively over the course of several years in an attempt to strengthen the foundations of my wavering faith. The first helpful article was entitled 'The Interventionist God' and in it D Lines appealed for honesty in our approach to religious belief and in our evaluation of traditionally-held dogma. The second was Wilfred Lambert's commentary on the 'Early Chapters of Genesis' which (for me) displayed that forthright honesty of approach advocated in the earlier article. There is fundamental importance for committed Christians in Wilfred's conclusion, "Faith in God should not be based on the shaky foundations of modern knowledge of science and history".

It seems that some of the causes of doubt and difficulty among Christians have arisen through unwillingness or inability to distinguish between different types of truth (e.g. mathematical, scientific, historical, theological) - a theme that I hope to develop in subsequent articles on Unanswered Questions. Further difficulties have arisen because believers who are seeking to follow Peter's exhortation to be always ready with their defence whenever they are called to account for the hope that is in Them, apparently have felt, quite wrongly, that this implies a need to be able to explain all problems, answer all queries and comprehend all aspects of God's revelation. The unwisdom of such an attitude is quickly obvious if we take as an example the Book of Revelation. Anyone who has read Alfred Norris's 'Apocalypse for Everyman' whether or not they agreed with his exposition and however "hard-going" they found it, will have noticed

how convincingly he refutes the "fitting of history to prophecy" approach taken by John Thomas and Robert Roberts. Yet that approach has been echoed publicly and privately on countless occasions in Christadelphian circles over the last century. A second notable feature of 'Apocalypse for Everyman' is the reiterated admission that before we can interpret or fully understand many aspects of Revelation we shall simply have to "wait and see". This gives just one illustration of a fact that no Christian can afford to ignore, namely that there are many questions about the Word of God which cannot be answered. It is not necessarily a sign of weakness or failure, where divine revelation is concerned, to admit "I don't know", or "I can't explain" or "I don't understand". Rather may it be a sign of that very honesty which D Lines finds some Christians reluctant to display. It is perhaps significant that Peter's exhortation about defending the Christian hope concluded with the words, "make that defence with modesty and respect" (1.Peter 3:15). "

It could be argued that a fair proportion of the thousands of books and millions of words which have been written on scriptural themes, constitute attempts to explain the inexplicable, define the undefinable or answer the unanswerable. Our words are, after all and at best, the vehicles of the thought of finite minds. How then can they describe, let alone define, the infinite? It may help to illustrate further the nature of the problem if we delve, for example into Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. After an introduction contrasting human and divine wisdom he wrote, "because we are interpreting spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit, we speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit. A man who is unspirited refuses what belongs to the Spirit of God; it is folly to him; he cannot grasp it, because it needs to be judged in the light of the Spirit". (1 Cor 2.13:14). Doubtless, most readers have an immediate, if general, impression of what Paul meant. It reminds us of his earlier statement that the cross of Christ is to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. But can we tell precisely what he meant? What, for instance, did he mean by "those who

have the Spirit" or by "needing to be judged in the light of the Spirit"? Is he speaking of the possession of gifts of the Holy Spirit described in more detail in Chapter 12 of the same letter? If so, do modern Christians have these gifts? If not, what does "having the Spirit" mean and how can those who possess it be recognised? It seems significant, if paradoxical, that in the same epistle Paul referred to seeing "only puzzling reflections in a mirror" when alluding to our present perception of divine things. He candidly admitted "My knowledge now is partial" (1 Cor 13-12) and yet he was the privileged recipient of special divine revelation and was endowed as an apostle with gifts of the Spirit which gave him extraordinary powers. Again, it is in the same letter that Paul quoted from Isaiah 64 in alluding to God's "hidden wisdom" and "secret purpose" - "Things beyond our seeing, things beyond our hearing, things beyond our imagining, all prepared by God for those who love him", these it is that God has revealed to us through the Spirit". (1 Cor.2-9). How much did Paul himself know and comprehend of the special visions he received?

There is scriptural evidence that even those who prophesied under divine inspiration might not fully understand the message they were impelled to deliver. For example, Peter when writing of the Christian hope of salvation declared, "This salvation was the theme which the prophets pondered and explored, those who prophesied about the grace of God awaiting you. They tried to find out what was the time, and what the circumstances, to which the Spirit of Christ is then pointed, foretelling the sufferings in store for Christ and the splendours to follow; and it was disclosed to them that the matter they treated of was not for their time but for yours..... These are things that angels long to see into" (1 Peter 10-12).

If, in the light of this situation we adopt a frank and honest approach to God's revelation, we shall undoubtedly conclude that our knowledge and understanding of it are very far from complete and that any claim to know the truth needs to be qualified by mentioning the limits of the revelation itself and of our

comprehension of it. Furthermore, the nature of God's revealed truth in relation to frail human minds needs to be recognised. Many who are strong in human wisdom have criticised and rejected God's word for being scientifically and historically inaccurate. But the Bible does not claim to be a scientific textbook nor a history book. Both scientific "truth" and historical "truth" are essentially relative and have depended on the extent of human knowledge and investigatory techniques. It is remarkable how soon scientific and historical works become outdated in the light of new theories and discoveries. Divine truth is eternal and has needed no updating over the last two millenia. It is equally relevant to Christians now as to their forerunners in the first century. God has conveyed the essence of the message to mankind in a number of ways and it is capable of being comprehended and believed at a number of levels. The simplest Christian faith may banish doubt by not asking questions, raising doubts or entertaining intellectual reservations about any aspects of the scriptural message. Such faith may indeed be fundamentalist and accept the literal verbal inspiration of the whole of scripture. At the other end of the spectrum are those Christians whose faith may be no less strong but whose understanding of science and history leads them to interpret scripture less literally and more symbolically than some of their fellow believers. It is a matter of great regret that the former should be intolerant of the latter or vice versa. There are many issues in theology that need to be a matter of frank and honest discussion rather than rigid dogmatism. It can be a great mistake to insist that unity must mean uniformity in matters of Christian faith. Individual Christians necessarily differ from one another in depths of perception or understanding. It is for those who believe that they have been blessed with a measure of spiritual enlightenment and insight, humbly to persuade their fellows rather than to pontificate or dictate.

At one level, to know and to hold the truth of the gospel is to accept, for example, the basic tenets

of the Apostles' Creed. Beyond that, there are progressively deeper levels of comprehension and belief until eventually every mortal, finite believer is out of his or her depth. To say, for example, "I believe that God created the world", is to make a statement from which important consequences may spring for the life of the believer. If I am asked "why did He create it?" I can answer "To reflect his glory" but if I am asked, "What precisely does that mean?", I have to reply "I'm not really sure". If the question is "How did he create it?" and the answer is "out of His Spirit" then again, further elucidation is difficult. Finally, if the question is, "When did God create the world?", the answer has to be, "I don't know?" because "In the beginning", is a response beyond real comprehension. Similarly, it is easy to make the statement that God is special without beginning and without end, but it is impossible for our minds really to comprehend it. We cannot properly visualise anything that has no beginning any more than we can picture the infinity or space. It is true that claims to this type of special understanding were made by the Gnostics about whom John Weaving has been writing in recent editions of Endeavour. One result of Gnostic mysticism was the sort of incomprehensible declaration attributed to the Alexandrian Gnostic Basilides (early 2nd century AD) that "the non-existent God made a non-existent cosmos out of the non-existent"!

Perhaps the greatest act of trust for any Christian is to believe that God has revealed enough of this purpose to engender a faith strong enough not only to influence but to determine our attitude to life, our behaviour towards others and our hope of salvation. God's word answers enough questions to make it clear in general terms what His purpose with the earth and His call to its inhabitants are. There are, however, other questions about divine revelation to which scripture does not give a full response and where students of the Bible can only suggest likely answers. Thirdly, there are many questions which remain unanswered either in the Bible or in reliable secular sources. Lastly, there are questions which are unanswerable, either because they do not make logical sense to the human mind e.g. 'How large is the universe?' or because it is beyond man's

ability to find the answers e.g. 'Has God created life on other planets?'.

It is perfectly true that much valuable time can be wasted in the unprofitable study of unedifying topics. Paul made this quite clear in his advice to Timothy and in fact, repeated his warning to the young leader of the church at Ephesus. He wrote, "Have nothing to do with foolish and ignorant speculations. You know they breed quarrels and the servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome but kindly towards all. (2 Tim. 2-23). This was virtually repeating what had been said in the first letter to Timothy who was told, "You were to command certain persons to give up teaching erroneous doctrines and studying those interminable myths and genealogies which issue in mere speculation and cannot make known God's plan for us which works through faith" (1 Tim.1-3). Later in this letter Paul identifies the type of person whom he calls a "pompous ignoramus" who is "morbidly keen on mere verbal questions and quibbles which give rise to jealousy, quarrelling, slander, base suspicious and endless wrangles: all typical of men who have let their reasoning powers become atrophied and have lost grip of the truth". (1 Tim.6.4-5).

The purpose here in considering some unanswered questions is certainly not to provoke quarrels or to promote idle speculation. The hope and intention is to try to clarify some topics about which the information is comparatively slender but in which Christians are inevitably interested because issues fundamental to their belief are involved. For example, I should like in subsequent articles to consider how much we know of the life of Jesus and of what he said; what happened to the disciples after the resurrection; how much is known about the first century church; how complete is our knowledge of the journeys and letters of Paul, how and when the New Testament canon emerged and what is implied by the inspiration of scripture; and finally what is known about the imminence of God's Kingdom.

An attempt will be made to reconsider the perspectives in which the foundations of Christian faith are viewed in the hope that doubts and difficulties may be reduced if not resolved. Above all, there should be an effort to examine with honesty what evidence exists and not to turn a blind eye to any of it. The truth of God is wrapped in what Paul called the "mystery of religion" and the best that Christians can do, this side of the kingdom, is to try prayerfully to progress in understanding. It may be a long and sometimes arduous journey and no one has yet arrived at the destination except the Master whom we seek to follow and to serve and in whom our fullest trust resides. He promised to those who continue in his Word, that they will know the truth and the truth will make them free - free ultimately from the shackles of sin and death and free to enjoy the incomprehensible splendours of eternity.

Gerald Dearden.

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Adversaries of the Apostle Paul

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" (Gal 3:1) RSV

It is clear that Paul had adversaries but who were they?

"...Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" (Gal 3:3).

This would suggest that these adversaries were Christian teachers who were insisting on keeping the Law of Moses. But was this all that they were preaching?

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel". (Gal 1:6).

Remembering that the time of this letter was about AD55* and that many Christians were still attending the synagogue - This is strong language. However let us leave Galatians at this point and turn to 1 Corinthians.

There were divisions in the Church at Corinth - Why? Paul says -

"For Christ did not send me to baptise but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power". (1 Cor 1:17).

Can we find a clue here? We might easily pass over the passage as a dictum of Paul - that the 'Cross of Christ' does not require 'wisdom' of speech, it stands in its own power.

But when we remember that Wisdom (Gk.Sophia) was one

* The precise date is different to ascertain.

of the important Gnostic 'Aeons', we may at least begin to wonder if Paul had them in mind.

We may increase our suspicion when Paul quotes from the Old Testament

"I will destroy the Wisdom of the wise"

(Is 29:14 LXX)

Still further verse 19:

Where is the wise man? Where is the Scholar?
...Has not God made the World's wisdom folly?

Barrett (1) expands verse 21 with the words underlined below - 'For since by God's wise plan (Sophia) the world, exercising its own wisdom, did not know God: God chose to save those who had not wisdom but faith, not by their own wisdom but by the folly of Christian preaching.

If more emphasis were needed verse 23!

'Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek Wisdom,
but we preach Christ crucified...'

'Wisdom' is personified in Proverbs 8. 22-31 as a woman, this personification was to hand to be used by Gnostics or Paul - The Gnostics made it a demi-goddess-Sophia who brought forth Yaldabaoth who created an evil world. Paul had no doubt!

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1 Cor 1:30 RSV).

At this point we could say that Paul is just contrasting God's wisdom with worldly wisdom but if, as is postulated, it was Gnostic apostles that were upsetting the church that Paul has recently founded then these words take on a much greater and pointed significance.

There is more to come:

For I determined not to know anything among you, save

Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Cor 2:2).

We note what is the epitomy of Paul's presentation of the Gospel - Not knowledge but faith in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice.

For the Wisdom (Sophia) of this world is foolishness with God. (1 Cor 3:19).

Then in connection with food sacrificed to idols:-

"We know that all of us possess knowledge (Gnosis) - Knowledge puffs up but love builds up. If any one imagines that he knows something he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one loves God, one is known by him".

This massive denegration of knowledge from one as knowledgeable as the Apostle Paul is surprising until we realise that was just what the Gnostics (the knowledgeable ones) were claiming as their peculiar possession.

That these rivals were impugning Paul personally is clear -(1 Cor 9:1.)

"Am I not an Apostle?...Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?"

From this we can confidentially infer that Paul's apostleship and authority were being questioned by those who claimed superior knowledge (Gnosis) and wisdom (Sophia).

From the passages we have reviewed above two thoughts stand out.

First that Paul, though replying to a letter from the Corinthian church, is in his answers combating opponents who are preaching 'another gospel'. Secondly however it seems unlikely that these opponents had the highly developed gnosticism that we have found in the Apocryphon of John. It seems therefore that they

were a kind of proto-gnostic group, perhaps Jewish mystics combining Judaism with Greek philosophical ideas.(2)

If we bear these two points in mind, we find that the Pauline epistles take on a renewed emphasis.

We can only deduce the substance of the 'other gospel' that the gnostics were using to subvert the Corinthian church, from the Apocryphon of John, the writings of Irenaeus and Paul's letters but it will be something like this.

- Corinthian brethren - "Don't take too much notice of what Paul has been telling you - He has only half the truth - He was not one of the Twelve you know - We come from Jerusalem and know (gnosis) all the Wisdom (Sophia) from the 12 and we have other revelations from the Monad - Barbelo, who is above all and has revealed this knowledge of the eternal to us through his eternal spirits (aeons) Christ did not come in the Flesh and the Flesh was created by Yahweh and it was evil. Yes,- he appeared to die but he came down from heaven and went back again.

There is no resurrection of the dead. Bodies are evil you are sparks of light come down from heaven and those of you who awake will be blessed and brought into the pure light.

What is Paul's reply in 1 and 2 Corinthians? We will try to summarise -

First and foremost it is 'Christocentric' apart from the one God Christ is the saviour and centre of the whole movement - "I determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Secondly his (Paul's) authority is equal to that of the original twelve he is by birth a true Israelite and has "seen" the Lord.

- The Kingdom of God is not yet fully come -
So do not be deluded - you are not reigning without us -
as far as us - we are suffering and doomed to death. (c.f. 1 Cor 4:8-9). Do away with all this nonsense and rubbish. It does not matter what meat you eat,

thank God, and yes you can marry. But in all actions of life - perform them in a spirit of love.

Once and for all let me put you right. There is a resurrection of body - albiet a spiritual body. Regarding Christ's death and resurrection I received this teaching at my very conversion, some 12 months after Christ's death and he was seen by Cephas, the twelve and then '500' last of all me!

And now, ye saints in Corinth:

Wherefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: the old things are passed away, behold, they are become new.

(2 Cor 5:17).

Finally, brethren farewell. Be perfected; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

(2 Cor 13:11)

J.H.Weaving

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ARE WE TOO RELIGIOUS ?

There has always been a great deal of discussion on the ideal Christian way of life - what people usually mean is what is the best religion to follow - but they are talking about a religious sect or community, not about a Christian Society. The difference seems to be very important and it is easy to shelter complacently in the former instead of extending to encompass society as a whole with these Christian ideals.

There are many different Christian communities or sects but I can not help thinking that if Christ were here with us today in the flesh, he would not particularly favour any of them but would be very concerned for society in general and would surely concentrate his efforts in that direction. If Christ were somehow brought up to date - not in the sense that some people imagine this would be with the coming of "The Kingdom" with angels and trumpets and mass wiping out of unbelievers - but as the person we have come to know through the gospels, a preacher and teacher, anxious to change us all for the better and make the world and our society a better place in which to live. Today, perhaps, he might be a prominent political figure - radical or subversive or maybe an MP. Whatever his modern day role might be, it is difficult to imagine that he would be content to confine his company to the "chosen few" (whoever they might be), spending his time breaking bread with them, singing hymns and praying for those less fortunate whilst he would be so painfully aware of the great inequalities and suffering everywhere caused by the inadequacies and corruptions of the society which has evolved and of which we are all members and should therefore take our share or responsibility within it.

Society has rebelled against religion to a large extent and we can, perhaps, see from our own experiences how easy it is to become disillusioned and criticise and knock down those things with which we cannot agree or in which we see no point. But, the great problem that Society is left with is what to replace it with. Religion has always been a great leveller. The priest, rabbi or holy

man can put similar points across to guide believers, as 21.
there is a shared moral framework and an agreement on
what is right and what is wrong. A recent article in a
Sunday newspaper suggested that Social Work (within
the established structure of the Welfare State - Social
Services) had to do the job that was once done by
religion and by the family. The article suggested that
society can not accept this as a replacement, the main
problem being....

"....that most people in their inadequacies and nastiness
and hopes are looking for something that the family and
religion could offer and that social work can't: which
is love. There is no way of bringing back the family
network, and if people haven't got religion they
haven't. But this is why social workers can never do
more than make the most of a bad job..."

Maybe society has gone past the point of no return as
far as true Christian living on a large scale is concerned
and, could this be, at least partially, due to the
attitude adopted over many years by so-called Christians -
I am sure the Christadelphians have not been alone in
letting fate take its course and putting their future
in God's hands - too much faith and too little positive
action to serve their fellow members of society? Let
the politicians get on with the governing and structuring
of this life and society - it isn't really important,
we're only interested in the next.....we will gladly
take whatever is going that is to our advantage and take
advantage of the system along with everybody else and
complain and worry along with everybody else when it
comes to paying taxes, petrol shortages, increased
mortgage rates, the country going to war.....but whatever
happens we won't get involved and actually try to
influence and improve the way in which society is run
because God wouldn't like it!

But surely Christ would get involved, in his time he
challenged the people who had influence on the way in
which his country was run. If he were here today with
his compassion, commitment and intelligence, would he
not apply himself to more than church services and the
election of popes or Arranging Brethren? He wanted
a society for us all, where the disgraceful scenes of
crime, poverty, greed and corruption which surround us

would not so easily breed and spread.

Perhaps it is too late, Christ is not here in person to help us - he pointed us in the right direction but somehow, through the ages, we have got hopelessly lost - concentrated on the wrong things, chosen the wrong priorities and failed to bring the true Christian principles to the fore front of the laws by which our lives are governed because the right people to do this took a back seat (too busy praying and looking forward to the next world to actively concern themselves with this one) whilst the wrong people took control. Now we are left with the ills and divisions within our society on all levels and religion or Christianity is left to the privileged (?) few, many with their heads still firmly in the sand, congratulating themselves on their choice of religion whilst the remainder of society reaps the consequences of these mixtures.

Martha

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Editor

I would like to make a few points on the letter from Walter Pearce published in 'Endeavour' Magazine' No.73.

I think many of us would share his concern over creeds and traditions. It is certainly a relationship with the invisible Creator that we seek. We would also, surely, agree that God has not provided (in the Bible) clear answers to all questions. God has, after all, given us brains to use in determining His will (God helps those who help themselves?). Scripture did, it is true, come through human beings (earthen vessels). They were, however, inspired and we must make allowance for that, when we reverently try to understand the Bible. Bibliolatry (putting the Bible in the place of God) is to be avoided, but the knowledge we acquire, apparently from other sources, must be consistent with a faithful understanding of Scripture.

It is certainly clear that we walk by faith and not by total understanding. We must, though, understand enough to carry out the will of God. It is more important to know what to 'do' than it is to have knowledge for its own sake. I do not think that we should underestimate how much one needs to 'know' in order to be sure of what to 'do'.

There is a statement earlier in the letter hinting at a key to understanding the apparent delay in the coming of the Kingdom of God and its violent portrayal in the prophetic writings. The key was not mentioned in the letter, because of the danger of side-tracking the main point. That would not prevent its mention, surely, in a further letter. So please will Walter Pearce tell us of his 'key' so that we can judge for ourselves its veracity and/or usefulness.

Finally, I would agree that as much help is needed in living the life of faith (more so than discovering how to live) as in unravelling the theology of scripture. The two should really go hand in hand. Since I am scheduled to have something to do with the production of "Endeavour" from next year, I shall encourage articles which support and enrich 'the way of life'.

John Maycock

Editorial cont'd.

This statement needs interpretation but even greater than the subsequent words of Jesus was his life. So Paul's interpretation:

"I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified". Need we say more? It is a new life. Paul again.
"Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature"

What about Unity then? Should we go it alone with our message of a new life? Where do we differ from our fellow Christians in other denominations? - The Trinity - Immortality of the Soul - Second Coming of Christ. These doctrines are all of great theological importance but the answers are by no means as simple and straight forward as fundamentalists would have us believe and we can be confident do not belong to matters of salvation. Having said this nevertheless a study of these theological matters can add to our faith and deepen our spiritual concepts. So Unity must not mean watering down. It does matter to each

one of us what we believe. However it is the effect of our beliefs on our actions and personality that counts in the end.

The proposition is then, to strenthen our proclamation of the gospel, indeed perhaps to survive, that we should break down the walls that separate us from other protestants denominations and be prepared to preach with them the essence of Christ's teaching - the Christian Life, whilst at the same time presenting our view of the concept of God and the life hereafter and allowing other views to be presented for the hearers themselves to judge.

This is not an impractical suggestion, in the Christadelphian 1960 Campaign an appeal to teachers and university students was made on four occasions. The meetings were adressed by a Christadelphian speaker and speakers from two other denominations on each occasion. These included the late Prof. Lampe - Ely Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University and speakers from the Methodist and Baptist Churches.

Let us help Christ's cause, for which he died by living and working together in unity.

J.H.W.

