
THE

Endeavour

MAGAZINE

AUGUST 1987

No 76

THE ENDEAVOUR MAGAZINE

For Christian Thought and Action

August 1987

No 76

CONTENTS

		Page
The Editor's Page	John Maycock	2
Baptism for the Dead	J B Norris	3
Voluntary Work with the Elderly	Sheila Harris	4
A 'Conchie' Remembers	Jack Murrell	7
Heretics or Brothers?	Syd Greenall	9
Christadelphian Summer School, 1987	Ian McHaffie	10
Lost Sheep	John Maycock	11
Jesus, Son of Man, Son of God	Ron Coleman	13
Letters to the Editor		17

REVIEWS

The Way of Peace. J C Wenger	David Pitt Francis	19
In the Beginning. Henri Blocher	John Maycock	20

Our object is to promote discussion of the difficulties that Christians face today in both thought and day-to-day living, in the hope that difficulties shared will be difficulties eased. The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editorial Committee but are published because it is believed that they will make a useful contribution to discussion.

Produced for the Endeavour Service Council by John Maycock assisted by Ron Coleman.

Subscription: £2 for three issues. Correspondence, articles and subscriptions should be sent to The Endeavour Magazine, 13 Cheslefield, Portishead, Avon, BS20 8JA

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The objective of 'Endeavour' printed on the inside front cover commits us to discussion of "the difficulties that Christians face today in both thought and day-to-day living". One such difficulty, the status of Christians who do not share our doctrinal beliefs, has been raised in two ways. The first was a paper from Syd Greenall, a resume of which is included under the title of 'Heretics or Brothers?' (the original made the points in stronger language). The second was in the form of two questions put by a reader who wishes to remain anonymous. They are:

Can the idea be justified, Biblically or otherwise, that there can be no salvation outside the Christadelphian community?

How do we know that disbelief of one or more of the statements in the statement of faith may put anyone outside the pale of salvation?

Syd Greenall takes the line that conduct and not doctrinal belief is the important thing. But conduct and belief cannot be easily separated. A religion which emphasises doctrine to the exclusion of practical effects is deficient, but one that views salvation only in terms of what we do can so easily deteriorate into 'salvation by works'.

We can sympathise with Syd's recollection of schismatic tendencies from his childhood, but let us give credit to those who have done so much to heal rifts (and still work for unity) in our community. Possibly some readers will not recognise the names mentioned in the article. The Central and Suffolk Street fellowships were re-united in 1957/8. John Bright Street was the name of an ecclesia and Vyner Hall the name of a brother. But why do these differences arise? At the risk of appearing too simplistic, I would say it is an inevitable product of our human nature. One causal element is laudable, namely the desire to be true to the revelation we have been given in the Bible. The trouble is that each man tends to believe that his interpretation of the Bible is the correct one. If, as does happen, different views are held with dogmatic certainty, disputes are bound to arise. When the leading exponents of these views have strong personalities, the condition for a 'division' is fulfilled.

The first of the two questions mentioned above would be answered by most Christadelphians in the negative, but that answer would be heavily qualified by a requirement to accept the whole teaching of scripture, or words to that effect. Many would relate this to our statement of faith which represents the common or shared basis of agreement in our community. We do not regard it as 'inspired': if someone contests it we reason it out from scripture.

I have heard it said that if we withdraw from someone, it does not necessarily exclude them from fellowship with the Father and Son. Is it not possible that someone brought up to honour God and faithfully to follow Jesus Christ in some other community would be accepted by God and saved in the name of Jesus?

I have also heard it said that the 'truth' we embrace cannot be defined in verbal propositions: it requires a living faith. It is this which shows whether or not we have accepted the grace of God and been accepted by Him. To this extent we can accept the point made in 'Heretics or Brothers?' that action is important; but understanding there must be as well. It is when we claim to know exactly how much understanding that we run into difficulty and perhaps begin to take on the task of the great Judge Himself.

Like other communities we need some way of deciding who is able to share fellowship, but it would be presumptuous for us to anticipate the decision of Jesus

in the matter of individual salvation. I do not think we can know (question 2 above) whether rejection of one or more of the statements in the statement of faith will put anyone outside the pale of salvation. These decisions we must leave to God.

God has given us His word: it is the Word of God expressed in human language. We must do our best to learn of Him and to put into practice all He tells us to do. Perhaps we should concentrate more on the things on which we agree with those who, like us, accept scripture as the inspired word of God than on the things on which we differ. However, while we cannot deny what we see is plainly taught in the Bible, there is benefit to be gained from listening to (or reading) others' views on the meaning of the text of scripture. It is, in the end, the word of God which alone is authoritative, and our interpretation - or that of anyone else - which is provisional until the time when we shall know even as we are known.

We would welcome contributions on this topic but please make them helpful.

John Maycock

We should like to thank all those who have wished "Endeavour" well in its new format.

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

Mormons regard it as a duty to be baptised as proxies for their dead ancestors. This practice is not founded on Paul's reference to it in 1 Corinthians 15:29 but on a revelation claimed to have been received by Joseph Smith in 1842. Nevertheless it draws attention to this rather obscure passage. J B Norris explains the background.

First of all it should be borne in mind that in the Corinthian ecclesia wrong ideas and practices abounded. The ecclesia was racked with contention. There was gross immorality and condonation of it. Going to law with brethren was taking place. Marital matters needed apostolic counsel. Eating things sacrificed to idols was not unknown. There was disputing about living on the gospel. There was disorderly conduct at the Lord's supper. There was confusion in the exercise of the gift of tongues. There was denial of the Resurrection of the dead, a fundamental heresy calling for strong affirmation of the truth and manner of the Resurrection.

The enthusiasms of some, and their concern about relatives and friends who had died before the gospel reached Corinth was such that they felt something had to be done about it. Their attitude could be expressed thus:- "We are sure that Grandfather Diogenes and Aunt Eugenia would have embraced the Truth if only they had known about it. But they died before the gospel had come to Corinth. What can we do about this? They can't be baptised because they are dead. Let's be baptised for them." And they were.

Paul neither condones nor condemns the practice. Why? Doubtless he disapproved of it, but if he had embarked upon a denunciation of it attention would have been detracted from the fundamental truth of the Resurrection, which was his main concern. He may have judged it wise to let the practice die down, which it did.

The strong emphasis placed upon the need for baptism by the members in question was wholesome and probably pleased the apostle. But they had taken their loyalty to the doctrine too far; Paul did not wish to discourage them publicly, but may well have written or spoken to them privately to ease down, which actually happened as the years went by.

Sheila Harris has had a great deal of experience in introducing young people to caring for the elderly. In this article she deals with some things which may not always be apparent to those undertaking this work for the first time.

1. Who Are the Elderly?

Before we can attempt to discuss ways of helping or supporting the elderly, it is necessary to examine what we mean by the elderly. We might take for a start the official definition, that is all who are entitled to the Retirement Pension. This broad definition would consequently include all from age 60 to 65 to the nineties. And now that many people retire earlier, the period could be extended further. Clearly this thirty year period of a whole generation contains within it an innumerable variety of differences and distinctions of status and condition, social, economic, physical and mental. There are as many differences within that generation as in any other group. We are faced with individuals, rich, poor, sick, healthy, active, housebound, independent or reliant upon others. Is it possible to generalise over such a broad spectrum of society? Are there any common factors which could help as a guideline in assessing their needs and our usefulness in supplying them? There is surely just one factor which is common to the whole group - the factor of age. There are experiences which inevitably were shared by those of the same age group and these experiences may well have vitally coloured their attitudes, ideals and expectations.

The Eighty to Ninety Age Group

This is the generation whose roots lie deep in the period before the First World War. Their lives were generally simpler, with fewer luxuries and with healthier, less artificial diet. The motor car was virtually unknown, so they were used to physical exercise and hard work. A hardy race, they were brought up on the moral principles and Christian virtues of the Victorian Age. And different as their backgrounds may have been, one experience affected them all - the First World War. Many lost sweethearts, brothers, fathers, friends and husbands. They learned to suffer and survive for there was born in them an ideal of sacrifice and selflessness that brought them through that fiery trial ennobled and enriched. There are still many of that generation whom one would count it as a privilege to know. One old lady whose husband was killed in the War a few weeks after their marriage but to whom she remained faithful in respect and affection, tended her garden well into her eighties and then was deeply appreciative and grateful to those who helped her with it. An old gentleman, now aged ninety, living alone after the death of his much-loved wife, whom he had cared for devotedly through a distressing illness, speaks with warm gratitude of any who help him in any way. Courteous, gracious people, however reduced their circumstances may be, they possess a quality of life, deepened by faith and trust, which is fast disappearing in our materialistic world.

The Seventy to Eighty Group

The next age presents a different picture. The remembrance of the First World War and the Depression is a faded memory and the deprivations and sufferings of the Second War have been more than compensated for by the period of prosperity and material success which coloured much of their working lives. Hard work and effort were rewarded by higher wages and increased luxuries. They could afford bigger houses, more comfortable furnishings and more exciting holidays. As their whole standard of living was raised so were their hopes and expectations. Many of them have been used to greater comforts and expect still to be able to enjoy the same.

benefits as they have had before. But with increasing age is an awareness of increasing inability to maintain the same standards in lifestyle and activity. To grow old graciously is a great virtue. But to many, loss of physical strength, awareness of failing powers of body and mind, inevitable neglect of former cherished gardens and homes, leads often to frustration, dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

The Sixty to Seventy Age Group

This the youngest of our categories of the elderly, is faced primarily with the major adjustment to retirement. This is probably the most difficult challenge that many people have to face. From a life which has often been full of varied activities and demands, there is a sudden change to the quietness of home and garden. The fellowship and contacts of work can be sorely missed and lack of responsibility can lead to boredom and a feeling of uselessness. But they still have strength and energy and competence which can be usefully channelled into valuable service if sensibly directed and advised.

People as Individuals

But however much we may generalise about these categories, people are above all individuals and this is what we have to consider. There are difficult 90 year olds as well as contented and well-adjusted 70 year olds. And of course much of this depends upon individual character and temperament, upon personal faith as well as physical health, mental alertness and social and economic circumstances. But something does also depend upon other people and their understanding, awareness and sympathetic grasp of the problems, the pains and the pressures of age and infirmity. People do matter and in every circumstance of life we depend upon others and their reactions and responses to our needs and situations. So however much we may be aware of the problems of the elderly and can recognise their needs, there are still required at every stage, people who can see and feel and supply what is desirable, with sensitive compassion and understanding. So this may be where we can all contribute something to ease, to relieve, to lighten the burdens of age and perhaps also share the joys.

2. Making Life Meaningful

Before considering the types of voluntary work available, it is essential to assess one's own suitability and motivation. Voluntary means willing, and no volunteer should work under pressure from feelings of duty, necessity or boredom. The essence of voluntary work is enjoyment, doing something which brings pleasure and satisfaction to both giver and recipient. So no one should tackle work with the elderly unless they derive pleasure from the company of old people, any more than one should enter the teaching profession unless one enjoys children. The second question to decide is whether one has the time, opportunity and desire to commit oneself to a regular task. Regularity and reliability are as essential in voluntary work as in paid employment. It is a commitment and a responsibility to be undertaken conscientiously and punctually.

Home Visits

Many helpers prefer to visit people in their home surroundings where they can establish real and caring relationships and often valuable friendships. This service is especially needed for the housebound and the very elderly; but besides them there are countless elderly people who live alone and are desperately lonely, even those who live in housing complexes or warden-aided flats. In fact the needs here are often greater as an empty corridor between locked doors often provides less company and friendliness than the traditional terrace house with its backyard, affording opportunities for chats over the wall or fence when the washing is being hung out or the pets are being exercised.

Home Visiting Groups

In most districts there are local groups who organise visiting schemes and contact can be made with these through Age Concern or the Social Services. Sometimes also they may be advertised in Health Centres or Libraries. The organisers of these groups are keen to welcome volunteers whom they will seek to match to the elderly people who are reported to them as in need of a visit. Health Visitors, Social Workers, Home Helps, or even neighbours or Wardens of flats report such cases of need where the local visiting group is sufficiently well-known. The volunteers usually are asked to commit themselves to a weekly visit, arranged to suit both sides, to ensure that it is fulfilled regularly and to report on the success or otherwise, as it is always the desire of all the people involved that these arrangements should be mutually enjoyable. The usual arrangement is purely a weekly, hour's friendly visit which gives the elderly friend something to look forward to and an incentive often to prepare a cup of tea and to tidy up. But inevitably every case varies and it is essential for the visitor to recognise that some people need more help, such as transport to hospital, library books, shopping etc. Often these relationships develop into warm friendships. In any work with the elderly one must be flexible, adaptable and able to respond to need as it arises.

Another service for the housebound is delivery of library books, often organised by the W R V S.

Day Centres

In many places there are Day Centres, run by the Social Services or by other voluntary or charity organisations as well as some hospitals. Sometimes these are attached to residential homes. There are often waiting lists to gain admittance to these. Social workers assess the needs and suitability of prospective clients. Often elderly people are admitted to these to give some freedom or relief to a caring relative, or else they are unable to look after themselves through some physical disability or are simply in need of company and care. These Centres can provide interest, variety, company and the stimulus of activity with warmth and food and daily transport. Volunteers are often needed here as the regular staff may be fully occupied with care of the less able members. So there is plenty of scope for initiative and talent in organising games, handicrafts, music, etc or just chatting and making the always welcome cup of tea. Many voluntary organisations, such as the Red Cross run Lunch Clubs for such people and often welcome volunteers to help with serving.

Classes, Holidays and Interests

For those who are able to look after themselves and get out by themselves, there are a wide range of Clubs, Societies and Classes specially provided for the elderly. Age Concern, in particular, runs Clubs which are organised by members and thereby involve them in responsibility and scope for initiative and activity. Sometimes they organise their own holidays and this enables them to preserve something of their sense of dignity and worth. All these organisations and many other groups offer opportunities for help to volunteers. A local Council for Voluntary Service will always provide advice and suggestions.

Fellowship Lunches

Lunch Clubs have become a feature of many churches and in ecclesias where there are suitable facilities, these provide a truly excellent means of fostering friendship and understanding, especially where there can be included some lighter activities as well as the Daily Readings. It is gratifying to see how, gradually, the members wish to be involved in helping with preparation, washing up or games and how quickly barriers break down over a good meal and a cup of tea. In a community where so often members live at a distance from one another and it is difficult to meet socially, it is indeed heartwarming to welcome the appreciative response of those who live alone, and to see how much they enjoy each other's company and seem reluctant to go home.

Learning and Listening

But the real essence of work with the elderly is an attitude of respect. Whatever their qualities of character, ability or social standing, they have lived longer than those who wish to help them; they have experienced more, and even the most ordinary of them has his or her story to tell. We can all listen and learn even if it means hearing the same story every time. We can all learn from those who have gone before and, in that learning, find pleasure and enjoyment and maybe bring new life and interest to at least one old person.

A 'CONCHIE' REMEMBERS

In this second extract from Jack Murrell's response to the BBC's request for accounts of the experiences of Conscientious Objectors he answers the question "How did other people react to your opposition, for instance, family, friends, colleagues at work?"

My brothers and sisters came in two groups, the firstborn, James, and two sisters; then a gap of ten years to my twin sister and myself; then the youngest, Fred. James volunteered in 1914 and served almost to the Armistice. He was awarded the Military Medal in October 1918 and lost an eye before the end. My older sisters made munitions and served in the women's corps. I remember James, on leave, shedding his khaki for civvies and taking me fishing. Very different memories of leaves before 'big pushes'. At his departure my mother would be prostrated, suffering severe gastritis. James was a victim of Parkinson's disease and died aged 57.

What the Family Thought

I am aware of some inscrutables. One such is the circumstance which made James a volunteer in 1914 and myself a C O in the 1939/45 war. I can only say that circumstances at this time led him to volunteer, and mine 30 years later to object to military service. I felt bound to tell him of my intention when we met in the home village. He accepted the news with the comment about having believed he was fighting a war to end war; he did not imagine, then, that another world war would follow in a little over 20 years and that he would advise his son to be a C O. My parents and the rest of the family were tolerant of views they did not hold themselves. My twin had married a Grenadier Guardsman who had finished his term and was on reserve in 1939. He was called up and sent to France from where he wrote to me. We had a good relationship. He was killed during the B E F retreat. I was told the news on the same day I registered as a C O. I remember meeting my bereaved twin on that day.

The Reaction at Work

I had joined my firm, R Hoe & Co, Borough Road, Southwark, as a draughtsman in 1935. The business was the manufacture of newspaper machinery. As war loomed it became clear that our engineering plants would go over to armaments, and I would be elsewhere - on the land perhaps. At an early stage my chief, Dave, came with a drawing from a sub-contractor and began asking me to do some work on it. I saw that the drawing was from Vickers and observed to Dave that this job was concerned with armaments and I could not work on it. I was a C O to military service and to the making of weapons also. Dave was embarrassed but talked about his own First World War service and his hatred of killing 'anything'. He would take the job to someone else, but could not promise to do the same indefinitely. I replied that I was willing to leave straight away rather than put him or myself in a false position. Soon the Chief Engineer did a round of the office. I repeated to him what I had told Dave. "Oh, let me know when you are going" was all he said. He must have spoken to Dave who was quickly on the scene again to say I must not assume a sudden turning over to armaments; we had orders to complete and I would be needed.

From that time the change gradually took place - machine gun parts, breech blocks, tank tracks etc. I was retained to arrange changes to presses required to reduce page sizes and essential spares to keep presses running. I recollect travelling to the Daily Express, Glasgow, to arrange for pasting equipment so that a six page paper could be issued without the middle 'fly sheet' falling out. It was at the height of the Battle of Britain. I took the midnight train back to London. There were sleeping airmen on board with their kit, the odd revolver protruding; the man sitting next to me was a rear gunner.

It soon became known in the office that I was a C O, but there was no antagonism. A solitary remark about which regiment I would join was the extent of it. In the works one foreman instructed me in the rights and wrong of war, but my main critic was an erecting shop superintendent. George was the sort of character left over from Dickens - after all we were working in the midst of Dickens' London. George was tall and broad. His stature included a paunch. His features and head had the likeness of Franklin D Roosevelt, with similar spectacles and a wide-brimmed hat. His height and the tummy combined to produce a John Wayne type gait. He had a certain 'Presence'. I had reason to spend time in George's shop in Verney Road. When I arrived he confronted me on the shop floor with the well-worn "What would you do if a German attacked your wife?" Soon I was instructed in the way George would go about reducing the enemy's interest in women. Within earshot was a fitter of mature years, and considered an eccentric. He was skilled and well received in pressrooms round the country. I remember his letters describing the job in progress; they were gems in a quaint way. David Stray came over to me with the remark that George had got his protest off his chest and I would not be bothered further. This was how it was. Dave told me that he was a member of the Peace Pledge Union. So I learned that my impression of being out on my own was false.

The encounter with George had a sequel on the same afternoon at the tea-break. I was expected to take mine in the office and I sat with George and his North Country foreman. There was no mention of conscientious objection, but there was of religion. Turning to me George said fiercely (after discounting himself as a reprobate) "My wife! She prays!" There followed a discussion between the three of us, the details of which I cannot recall, but it dawned upon me that I was the cause of the disturbance. I held a view contrary to the generally accepted one which in war-time welded the nation's political majorities and minorities into a unity for the sake of a common effort. So my view represented a minority so fractional as to be discounted for practical purposes, but not ignored completely, it seemed. Perhaps it raised a doubt about individual decisions in a time when conscription was needed to obtain uniformity. Do people generally make individual decisions to go to war?

After the war and with the factory back to normal business, I spent hours in the company of George. He was a good mechanic and had an inventive turn of mind; a touch of genius I thought. We worked closely on some new mechanisms and our names were linked on patent applications. The relationship grew to mutual respect and even affection. For the last period of his time George trained apprentices. He was well fitted for this, adding to his skill in the trade a fatherly concern and a natural willingness to swap repartee with the lads. They responded by not taking advantage; they knew they had a rather special master. George died a few weeks before retirement and left a considerable void.

I have had reason to reflect, in answer to my own earlier question, how wars break out and engulf very many people who are not, by the circumstances of their lives, given to question their part in them. This is to note again how there are the inscrutable aspects of our existence.



HERETICS OR BROTHERS?

This article is a brief report of views expressed by Syd Greenall in a manuscript submitted to us. He is critical of our attitude to other fellowships and other Christians and suggests that we should work with rather than against them.

Syd Greenall gained an impression of rival factions within the community from an early age. He remembers being confused by the names bandied about by his parents and their friends; Suffolk Street, Temperance Hall, Vyner Hall, John Bright Street etc. Eventually the significance dawned that they were different 'fellowships', each appearing to believe that they were the only ones that would be saved. It was difficult to accept that they were the people of God when there were so many splits on what seemed to him to be trivial matters. It was hard to believe, for example, that the question of whether the resurrection body would rise mortal or immortal should be considered a fundamental issue. There were also differences between opposing groups on matters of conduct, some being much more strict in their avoidance of worldly pursuits such as picture going than others. All this was a real problem and he feels that to some extent it still is; one can still see today the tendency for particular groups, believing they are right, to want to exclude all other groups if they think differently.

Shortly after being baptised, Syd registering as a conscientious objector was sent to do his National Service. He worked on the land and met other C O's who were also Christians. There were many whose lives were true examples of service to Christ and their fellow men. That these people were unacceptable to God because they spoke of 'the Devil' and future life 'in heaven' he found increasingly difficult to accept. There had to be room in the Kingdom for them, he thought.

The passage of the years showed more of the variety and character of the divergent beliefs which all claimed to be based on God's word in the Bible. It made more sense to see the teachings of other denominations and sects as their way of interpreting and expressing quite difficult religious concepts. Topics like the problem of evil and the future life were things that scholars had been discussing for two thousand years. There was still little unanimity on many doctrinal areas and he began to think that God never intended there to be complete uniformity. Indeed in the light of history could it still be said that salvation depended on the correct interpretation of the Bible?

Syd points out that in every parable or description of the last judgement in scripture the question is always "What did you do?" and not "What did you believe?" Jesus said "You will know them by their fruits". (Matthew 7:20).^{*} Surely this can only mean that we are to distinguish who are Christ's by how they behave; whether they, in fact, show mercy and love to their fellow men and women. Maybe the theological doctrines are less important than we tend to think.

It certainly seemed to him, judging from practical experience, that every genuine Christian from any sect or denomination had the same idea of behaviour patterned on the life of Christ. Their aim was to honour God and show love to every fellow man or woman, irrespective of the details of his or her doctrinal beliefs. Did not Jesus say "This is my commandment, that you love one another"? (John 15:12) Paul also tells us that "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way . . . it does not rejoice at wrong." (1 Corinthians 13:4-6) We should not then gloat over our 'superior' theology, nor call one another 'heretic' and speak and act as if others were excluded from the grace and mercy of God.

^{*} Quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

It follows, Syd suggests, that we should be trying to work with, rather than against, these 'other sheep', as we might call them, helping one another in an unbelieving world. Amalgamation is not in mind here but the maintenance of a co-operative spirit. Surely in a country like Britain today where only five per cent make any regular church attendance, we should rather think "at least he goes somewhere". Also, of those who demonstrate an unselfish loving attitude, that at least they do not subscribe to the worldly motto of 'looking after number one'. It seems a tragedy, at a time when the world is rushing headlong towards self-destruction that we should continue to regard other believers in the Bible and Jesus Christ as opponents, while falling out (or threatening to fall out) amongst ourselves on matters of minor academic import. Many thousands who are not Christadelphians read their Bibles and try to follow Christ against formidable opposition, defying vicious dictatorships, suffering harassment, ill-treatment and even imprisonment for their faith. Can we still say that they have no chance of being 'in the Kingdom'?

CHRISTADELPHIAN SUMMER SCHOOL, 1987

The 22nd Summer School took place in St Andrew's Hall, Selly Oak, Birmingham, in the middle of July. The weather was dull and wet, not the warm, sunny weather we have come to expect at the School, but the atmosphere inside was, as usual, cheerful and lively.

The Summer School encourages discussion of issues in a Christlike spirit in which we seek to understand better both one another and some of the problems of being followers of Jesus in today's world. The School, however, is much more than listening to talks and discussing them. It gives the opportunity to make new friends, meet old ones, and enjoy the friendliness of being together in a happy Christian atmosphere.

Main sessions were led by Fred Barling, Ron Coleman and Wilfred Lambert. Fred used the book of Acts to trace the path from Jerusalem to Rome, from Judaism to world-wide faith. Ron Coleman discussed the Atonement, commenting on the meanings of Sacrifice and looking at the four main theories of Atonement, Ransom, Satisfaction, Penal and Moral. Wilfred, using slides, showed the archaeological background to Mesopotamia and Palestine, and some of the light this can give on parts of the Old Testament.

Other sessions covered a wide variety of topics. Penny Williams demonstrated various techniques for communicating effectively with an audience by using visual aids, questions, discussions and careful selection of material. Janet Rushton exhorted us to humility, taking a warning from the mother of the sons of Zebedee who sought a special favour for her own sons. John Maycock examined the problem of violence in the Old Testament vis-à-vis Jesus' commands in the New. Bill Robinson reviewed the New Testament evidence for the involvement of sisters in ecclesial services and activities, and Derek and Margaret Monk took us on a slide-illustrated tour in the steps of the Apostle Paul. Very memorable was the visit by Arthur East to describe, again with slides, the work of the Christadelphian Children's Home at Moinabad in India. Paul Pearson looked at the problems of understanding the nature of the end of the world in relation to the coming of the Kingdom of God. Activities were also arranged for the children and young people. They concluded the School with a very effective, dramatised Epilogue based on 1 Corinthians 13. Some of the material used will, we hope, emerge as articles in future issues of The Endeavour Magazine.*

Time, as always, seemed too short, and next year we hope to extend the School for a day longer, as well as meeting a week later. Dates planned are Friday 22nd to Tuesday 26th July 1988 (DV). Further details will be given in the next issue, or write to: Ian McHaffie, 176 Granton Road, Edinburgh EH5 1AH.

*We will try to comply with any requests we receive for such articles.

This section is offered to individuals or groups
for use as an act of worship.

Our Father in heaven, we give thanks for the revelation of yourself in the life of Jesus. We thank you for your love shown in giving your son to die for us and your care in seeking to save those who are lost.

I am the good shepherd; I know my own, and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. John 10:14 & 15

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulder, rejoicing. Luke 15: 4 & 5

In the setting of both the above quotations from the words of Jesus, the religious leaders were unable to see, let alone sympathise with, the drift of Jesus' ministry. It is not that you are blind, says Jesus, but that you say you see. They saw Jesus as a disturber of their time-hallowed scheme of salvation. It behoves us not to fall into the same sin of believing that we alone possess the key to eternal life. We must present the face of Jesus to our world. We, as servants of the Lord, must convey his love; his compassion to all the sheep for whom he died.

In the setting of the words from Luke, Jesus was explaining why he received sinners and ate with them (eating together shows a fellowship or kinship). What shepherd worth his salt would not leave the 'safe' majority and search for the one which was lost. Note also he carries it back. Maybe it could not of itself return to the fold.

There is, though, a sting in the tail for the ninety-nine left in the wilderness. There is more joy in heaven over one who repents than over the safe and secure members who, they may think, need no repentance.

If we feel ourselves lost from the mainstream of God's action, we may rest assured that Jesus will search for us until he finds us.

If we are 'safe' in fellowship let us seek, in God's name, to help those who are lost. In Jesus' day that meant those regarded as beyond the pale of respectable religion. We must show God's love to all without exception.

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lacked anything.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
 I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.
 Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
 And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
 My dear, then I will serve.
 You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert (1593-1633)



Rachel Blackmoor

after Millet

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

JESUS, SON OF MAN, SON OF GOD

4. True Sonship

Christadelphians have defended themselves against the charge of Arianism by saying that they believe that Jesus "is literally the Son of God". But this seems to presuppose an anthropomorphic God. In this final article in the series Ron Coleman argues that the new knowledge about heredity provides a way out of the dilemma.

After our survey of the history of the theology of the incarnation and the challenges which are now, for the first time in almost 1,500 years, being levelled at it, it is time to return to our starting point. That starting point is our belief that Jesus is the Son of God, not God the Son. It is not however the easy solution to the problem that it might seem. In essence that problem is how the divine and the human can exist side by side in one individual. It is acute in the classic doctrine of the incarnation which holds that Jesus was the pre-existent God the Son who added human nature to his divine nature. Ever since the doctrine was formulated at Chalcedon in 451 the divinity has tended to overshadow the humanity so that it has been difficult to regard Jesus as really sharing our humanity. If, for example, he had divine omniscience and so knew the future infallibly, how could he have suffered anxiety, how could he have been tempted, how indeed could he have had freedom to choose?

The problem is less acute if we believe that Jesus was not God but merely the Son of God although it does not disappear altogether. We still need to ask, in Mark Antony's words, how the elements were "So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up And say to all the world, 'This was a man'". The belief carries penalties with it too - it is usually equated with the heresy of Arius. The Arians held that the Son was a mediator between God and the world - he was created by God the Father specifically to mediate. Though divine he was in many ways inferior to the Father. Christadelphians, as a result, are frequently said not to be Christians at all.* It is my belief however that recent discoveries which show us more clearly how heredity works can contribute to our understanding of the problem, and though they do not smooth away all the difficulties they do make them more bearable.

How Heredity Works

There does however seem to be a considerable distaste for such a study. More than one of those who have read the earlier articles have said to me, "Surely all we need to say is that God's power produced Jesus 'made of a woman' without the intervention of a human father?" My reply to this is that this is precisely the kind of retort that is made to those who question the doctrine of the incarnation - it must not be doubted, or examined, but received in faith. John Austin Baker, in his theodicy "The Foolishness of God", has expressed this with great feeling and intensity:

'Whose love has laid hold on us in Jesus.' . . . It is inconceivable that love could ever say: 'I must save these children of mine and that will mean the most terrible suffering. I will find someone else to do the job.' Love does not send others to suffer in its place. Love comes itself. At this point I am struck dumb. I dare not frame the thought that faces me, and yet there is no other thought to which I can turn and escape. This is no clever theory, no remote possibility, no wild imagination. It is something I know. It is absurd, it cannot possibly be true, but deep inside me there is no question about it. The Cross is not a picture of God. This was God himself.

It seems inconsistent, to say the least, to deny on intellectual and metaphysical

*For example, John Stott in "Issues for Christians Today" and John Wenham in "The Goodness of God".

grounds a belief held as dearly as this, and then frown on a similar examination of the proffered alternative.

Although it is only twenty-four years since the secret of the genetic code was first unravelled, few discoveries of such complexity have had so quick a practical application. It is not an airy, untested theory. Practical developments are in daily use. Announcements like this are now commonplace:- "Evidence has been found that there is a defective gene on chromosome 21 that causes familial Alzheimer's disease. Interest has been heightened by the fact that Down's syndrome is caused by the existence of an extra copy of chromosome 21 in sufferers." (On the day I write this a similar report has been published about the discovery of a genetic defect that predisposes to the development of bowel cancer.) "Genetic fingerprinting" is in regular use by the Immigration Service to show, without any shadow of doubt, whether a person is the mother or father of a particular child.

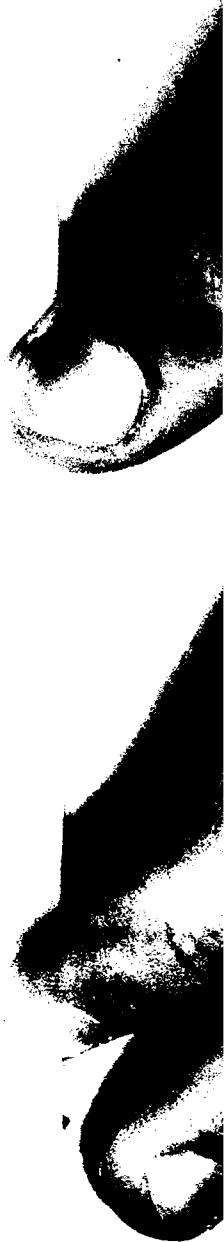
The Genetic Code.

Although genetic fingerprinting is familiar, the unimaginable complexity of the genetic code on which it depends is not so generally known. Our bodies are made of cells which are very small indeed; there are about 1,000 billion (a million million) of them in the human body. In every one of those cells (with just two exceptions) there is a blueprint for the production of a unique human individual, different from every other one of the five billion people in the world (unless he or she has an identical twin). The two exceptions are the sperm cell and the egg cell which are incomplete and, in effect, have only half of the genetic code. This blueprint is contained in the chromosomes. The code is not merely a specification for the making of that individual but also a set of instructions as to how the work is to be carried out, from the earliest hours in the womb to maturity. The instructions are more complicated than the specification, in fact about nine times as long. To show how complex specification and instructions are, if the DNA of which they are made could be extracted and stretched out, that from each cell would be about 6½ feet long. If all the DNA in the body was joined together and stretched out it would extend right across the solar system. If the code were translated into words it would fill about 500 large books.

This information is there in every cell in our body because all have grown from that one single cell, the zygote, that was formed at the moment of conception. There are 23 pairs of chromosomes in the zygote, half of each pair from the mother and half from the father. But that does not mean that we are simply and solely a mixture of our mother and father. In forming the sperm and the egg there is a general shake up of the genetic material. Some is retained and some is lost in assembling the single chromosomes from the pairs in each parent. And when the single chromosomes are paired off in the new individual there is a choice as to whether that from the father or the mother will be developed. That which is not used may nevertheless be passed on to the next generation and used then. That is why, as in a case I know, a girl may look exactly like her great-grandmother although no-one in the intervening generations has shown precisely that likeness. As Bronowski has said, "The child inherits gifts from both parents, and chance has now combined these gifts in a new and original arrangement. The child is not a prisoner of its inheritance; it holds its inheritance as a new creation which its future actions will unfold."

The Brain

But even this gives an insufficient idea of the complexity of the genetic code. To understand it better we need to look at its most complicated task, to produce the brain. Even though it is believed that only about one per cent of the way our brains work is yet understood, even that one per cent is staggering. As you are reading and thinking about this, somewhere between 100,000 and 1 million chemical reactions are



taking place in your brain every minute. In the average human brain there are about 10 billion cells, or neurons, and it is in the communications between these cells that the chemical reactions are employed. There are hundreds of these neuro-transmitters, each of which would need a laboratory to produce it in the ordinary way. The neurons are not just connected one-to-one, each is connected to many others. It has been estimated recently that the number of these connections is a figure of 10 followed by 800 noughts. This is an immense number, how immense can be gauged by comparison with the estimated number of atoms in the whole universe, which is a figure of 10 followed by only 100 noughts. Now the instructions for the design and building of this brain, with its abilities, its aptitudes, its memory are all there in the genetic code. It is already beginning to be known where in the brain the centres are which control language, logic, numeracy, imagination, analysis, music, and so on. These, the basis of personality, are also a product of the genetic code, contained in the single cell from which every human being starts its life. The genius that makes a Mozart, a Leonardo da Vinci, a Shakespeare, a Newton, is there in the genetic code.

The Virgin Birth

What are the implications of this for our understanding of the Virgin Birth? Firstly, if Jesus was indeed the Son of God, the parts of his chromosomes that did not come from his mother must have been created by God. These, together with those from his mother, formed his genetic code. Furthermore, while in an ordinary human birth what is inherited, and the sex of the offspring, seem to be purely a matter of chance, this could not have been so in this special miracle.

It is unlikely that this explanation of how the divine side of his nature came about will satisfy incarnationists because of the insistence of the Nicene creed that the Son was "begotten not made". But today we can legitimately ask what is the difference between the two when God is the author of the new life. When conception and birth were a mystery, and the way inherited characteristics were conveyed was not known, it was reasonable to suppose that there was some indefinable difference between God making a man and begetting him. To those who believe that the soul can exist independently of the body it could still be reasonable to maintain that there was some divine quality in the soul of Jesus which came from God (although Chalcedon does not claim this). But to those who believe, in Wheeler Robinson's words, that man 'is an animated body, and not an incarnated soul', the genetic code is the only medium through which the divine Sonship could be conveyed. In view however of the mind staggering capacity of that code it is surely not incredible to believe that it could convey divine qualities as well as human ones.

The second implication of the genetic code for the Virgin Birth is that it provided a way in which the human and the divine could dwell side by side in Jesus without one displacing, or even dominating, the other. We see individuals every day who combine parts of the personality of both father and mother. Given that the divinity must be expressed within the humanity, we can see how they both could be there, side by side. Christologies have foundered on this point throughout the ages. There has been either a docetic Christ, seeming from the outside to be a man, but really God, or, on the other hand, a man with divine qualities merely added on. The formula of Chalcedon strove unsuccessfully to describe how Christ could have had two natures, its failure being concealed to some extent by the fuzziness surrounding the word "nature" - an abstraction not corresponding to anything in the real world.

Adoptionism

Thirdly, the understanding of the truth about heredity provides a way in which the seemingly adoptionist texts in the New Testament can be understood without committing us to adoptionism itself, with its requirement that Jesus was only human. If the divine qualities, just like the human ones, were there at conception only potentially, growth and learning are not merely possible but essential. We may be understandably reluctant to think of the divinity being present only in something as impersonal as a specification. But the intense personality of all human beings comes from such an impersonal beginning. Within an astonishingly short time those fascinating

individualities begin to develop with such variety and speed that parents are constantly amazed that this unique person did not exist a short time ago.

What Did Jesus Inherit From His Father?

Throughout the centuries there has been speculation as to what Jesus looked like. Aquinas thought that he was a perfect specimen of humanity, "of becoming and middle stature." Lutheran theologians ascribed to Jesus "excellency of body and soul, perfect health and supreme beauty of form." One German maintained that Jesus showed his perfection in never having laughed. Others denied that Jesus had anything so human as a digestive system. These speculations were based of course on the premise that Jesus was God. There is however a similar temptation even when we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. We should obviously not travel down this subjective road.

But there is one quality, a key quality, that we can mention without being speculative because there is scriptural support for it. The importance of this quality is that it can explain how Jesus could do what those descended from Adam were unable to do, without making him into an automaton. Jesus inherited from his Father the capacity to know Him, to be open to Him, to have a genius for Him. This can be seen in the synoptic gospels from the indirect assumptions and the passing remarks of Jesus, the complete naturalness to him of prayer. But when we turn to John we find it stated explicitly, for example in chapter 5, vv 19,20:

The Son can do nothing on his own; he only does what he sees the Father doing. What the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. (GNB)

It has been suggested by C H Dodd that there is a hidden parable here. In the world of Jesus there was no secular education. Sons learned their trade, as apprentices, from their fathers. How successfully they did so would depend upon the aptitude and disposition of the son to learn, and also upon the readiness of the father to teach. With this father and son both conditions were perfectly fulfilled. We find this idea in many other passages in John,* adjacent (in a style similar to Hebrews) to passages which seemingly speak of pre-existence.

But alongside this capacity, and that from any other divine characteristics that he inherited from his Father, there were the purely human ones which came from his mother - our human nature with its imperfections, its rebelliousness, its self-centredness, its predisposition to respond to temptation rather than resist it. Because of this human inheritance Jesus could have thwarted or suppressed his divine genius, or allowed it to wither (like Gray's "mute inglorious Milton"). Supremely gifted men often carry, together with the precious gift of genius, failings which blemish that gift. This was possible for Jesus. But he took this human nature and hardened and tempered it in the fires of temptation until it became a new nature, complete, sinless, filled with the spirit and utterly surrendered in loving obedience to God.

The Final Difficulty

There is one final difficulty in believing that Jesus is the Son of God, not God the Son, we have yet to face. It is that which John Austin Baker described so forcefully when he wrote "Love does not send others to suffer. Love comes itself." How did God suffer in Jesus if he was a completely separate individual? It is possible for one individual to suffer in another when they are bound up emotionally together. The commonest example is that of a parent, particularly a mother, for a child. Part, but only part of that sharing comes from the genetic connection. More comes from closeness, from seeing the child grow and learn and develop. We know from the gospels how close Jesus was to God through his habitual use of "Abba", the family name for "father". John's gospel records the special love of God for Jesus. How did this special love come about?

We can imagine that as Jesus grew in knowledge and understanding the relationship

* John 7:16; 8:26, 28, 40; 12:49; 14:10; 17:8

would become something like that between an eminent and distinguished father whose son had followed him in his profession. The son would gain from the father's knowledge and experience, but the father would gain too, from the sharing of something which hitherto had been a solitary experience, and from learning to see familiar things in different ways through another's eyes. All human analogies of God fall short and can be misleading but we are encouraged to use them by scripture itself. So we can imagine that as Jesus learned more and understood more it made it possible for God to open the door to him further and further. As Henry Thoreau said so wisely "It takes two to speak the truth; one to speak and another to hear." So we have a unique individual who, through his ability to hear and understand grew so close to God that he could offer Him something that nothing else in creation had been able to offer. There was a love between them which was far deeper than the condescending love God has for us, and our inadequate response to that love. If that is so, would not God be able to enter into both the joys and sorrows of Jesus in a way not open even to Him as regards the rest of His creation?

Strangely enough, the defenders of Chalcedon are feeling their way to the same conclusion. Klaas Runia, whose "The Present-Day Christological Debate" I quoted in a previous article, describes the ideas of Jean Galot, a Jesuit, in this way:

It is true that the Son's human life cannot add any perfection to his perfect being as God. At the same time we should realise that the human existence provided the Son with an irreplaceable experience.

Then Runia quotes Galot directly:

Divine knowledge of human realities cannot be identified with man's personal experience of them. It was precisely this experience that enabled the Son of God to know the human universe in a different way than before.

Coming from a Catholic these are significant words indeed. What Galot is saying is that God the Son learned something through living as a man that even his omniscience could not have told him. It seems only a small step further to saying that he is the Son of God, not God the Son.

Over the years I have felt a real regret that I could not accept the doctrine of the incarnation with the intense devotion that it produces in so many. The ideas developed here have provided some compensation. I hope they will do the same for any others who may have been troubled in the same way.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Basil Rennie, Burnside, South Australia

As you have taken over editing "Endeavour" I must write to wish you the necessary strength, courage and good luck - you will need them all!

While I have pen to paper I feel I must comment on the bottom paragraph of page 20 in Endeavour 75, part of an article by Ron Coleman. I quote: "He concludes that (with the sole exception of John 1:14) there is no statement of the doctrine of the incarnation in the New Testament." This is a terminological inexactitude, to say the least. The "scholarship and penetration" of modern theologians evidently does not extend to reading the Bible. For the doctrine of incarnation see John 8:58, Gal. 3:17, Philipians 2:5-11, Colossians 1:13-20, Hebrews Chapters 1, 2 and 9 and Revelation 2:16 (E & O E). People may disbelieve the Bible (this is a free world) but they should not lie about what the Bible says.

Ron Coleman replies:

I can only think that Basil Rennie has not actually seen J D G Dunn's "Christology in the Making". The index lists about 1,800 passages which are quoted in the text. As an example there are about 40 references to quotations from Philippians 2:5-11, the main treatment of which occupies seven pages. In a review in the April, 1981 "Expository Times" the editor referred to it as "this immensely thorough study." Dunn is not ignorant of the passages mentioned; he interprets them differently.

From Mike and Anne Clarke, Kilsyth, Victoria, Australia

Thank you for sending us the new Endeavour Magazine. We are glad it is still providing a forum for open discussion for Christadelphians. We hope the Summer School is good this year and wish we could be present. We'd love to hear Fred Barling again after all these years. We think John Weaving did a good job keeping the magazine going all these years. We were so sorry about the death of George McHaffie.

We were pleased to read "A Conchie Remembers" and hope you will be able to print more articles about Conscientious Objection to war and Biblical non-resistance, as we think this is a very vital issue today. There are stirrings in the issue in the "mainstream" churches today and it would be good if we could speak humbly but persistently about Christ's way of peace. It has been our privilege to meet many Mennonites over the last six years and we have felt immediately at home with them and have learnt much from them. I don't know if their books are widely known in Britain but I think readers of "The Endeavour Magazine" would enjoy them very much. In particular I would recommend any of the writings of John Howard Yoder, especially "The Politics of Jesus", "He Came Preaching Peace" and "Nevertheless". The latter book identifies many varieties of religious pacifism, including several strands of Christian pacifism, highlighting the arguments people bring against it but concluding convincingly that "there is no serious critique one can address to the pacifist which does not . . . turn back with greater force upon the advocate of war."

The Mennonites, of course, are the biological descendants of the Anabaptists of the Reformation. It is interesting that although they are Trinitarian they are not keen on defining Jesus. They are more keen on obeying, or attempting to obey him. I think they would comment on Ron Coleman's article that one of the reasons "mainstream" Christianity defends the Formula of Chalcedon so ardently is that it is very tied up with Constantinianism or Christian sacralism. The Constantinian mode of the church looks as though it might be breaking up at last - that is the unquestioned marriage of church and state. It can be said that that sort of Christianity is more at home with a Cosmic Christ than with a Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount. A recent Mennonite writer has asked the question, "Is it possible for us to be so mistaken about Jesus what we would miss him at his second coming? Do we understand that when he comes again he will be even more humble, more compassionate, more a servant than before? Have the great church councils and theologians been asking the wrong questions after all? Surely it is those who are obedient - or who desire to be obedient - who know what Jesus is?"

[Mennonite publications do not seem to be readily available in the U K. However, David Pitt Francis reviews one on the following page]

From Helen Booker, Springvale, Victoria, Australia

Even though we in Australia are a bit behind the English in receiving Endeavour and therefore this is out of date for them, I simply can't let the article "Are We Too

Religious?" written by someone signing herself simply, Martha, go without comment because it seems to me to be just so unscriptural. I ask you, a mortal Jesus brought forward to our own day might have been a prominent political figure or an M P?! What unmitigated rubbish! I'm rather surprised you published this article without editorial comment.

Martha seems to forget that during his earthly ministry Jesus was offered such a position, or one even superior to it - by the devil. "Bow down and worship me and I will give you all these kingdoms". He also resisted being forcibly made king on the spot by the people. Certainly he reprimanded the powers that be in his own day but he did not seek to replace them. "My kingdom is not of this world". But even in this case there was a difference to the political powers of our own day. They were supposed to be the spiritual leaders. Our own political figures are not. They are even more "of this world" than were those whom Jesus reprimanded. No, Martha, Jesus was not, and is not, in the business of putting band-aids on Satan's kingdom, nor of trying to redeem the unredeemable. His business is to save those who will respond to the call to come out and be separate. To be in the kingdom of God one must have Jesus as their king and be concerned with what he is doing. To do this one must know what he is doing. Too many Christadelphians push the kingdom off into the future, seeing it as some political organisation during the millennium and totally gloss over the fact that Jesus said: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither will they say, Lo here! or Lo, there! For behold the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20,21).

[We hope to publish a reply from Martha in our next issue]

PACIFISM AND CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

The Way of Peace. By J C Wenger
Herald Press, Pennsylvania, USA, 1977
Reviewed by David Pitt Francis

This book has been in print for some time, but I have only come across it recently. It was sent to us by in-laws in Australia who read Mennonite literature. It is appropriate to review it now because (a) it is one of very few books that provides a balanced, concise history of the correct Christian attitude to military service, and (b) the brotherhood has recently become quite interested in the early anabaptists, following Alan Eyre's "The Protesters", and other writings. The Mennonites (like ourselves, via the Campbellites) have roots in the early anabaptist movements.

J C Wenger is a Mennonite historian. The purpose of his book is to state the case for conscientious objection to military service, and to trace its history through the past two millennia.

The first of these objectives is carried out in a masterly way. Works on Christian pacifism often suffer from one or two extreme viewpoints:

- (a) Those that state that we cannot fight, because "everyone should accept non-violence as an 'ideal'." These are often 'disobedient', non-submissive and 'political' in character - not only accepting non-violence as a personal commitment but trying to urge it forcibly on others, including the Governments of this world; and
- (b) Those that state that we cannot fight because 'we are different and are not citizens of this world'. Most of our own books fall into this second category. The danger of this approach is that non-violence is often not regarded as good in itself, but as a present-time personal commitment. Passages such as Revelation 19 are quoted to show that when Christ returns things may be different, at least for a while.

Wenger attempts both approaches. He shows that non-violence is not only a function

of Christian separation, but that it also influences non-Christian society, so that the sacrifice that it entails for followers of Christ is well worth its long-term results, e.g. in the abolition of slavery, and its influence by personal example, in the conversion of non-Christian neighbours - including some in face of terrorism in Africa.

The second objective is also well-fulfilled. The history of the Church is sketched, with quotations from the early Church leaders, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tertullian and Origen, showing their unanimous opposition to war (pp 13 ff), and then the book traces the way in which this noble doctrine was sacrificed for the concept of a 'just war' after the conversion of Constantine, and particularly in the writings of Augustine.

So, from both these standpoints this book deserves to be read. What, if any, are its shortcomings? There are not many. The only major failing is that the author seems to have a 'blind spot' in respect of the Christadelphians, and one can only assume that his absence of detail may be coloured (a) either by reading the writings of anti-Christadelphian Biblical fundamentalists; or (b) simply by a desire not to enter into controversy with his fellow Mennonites about us.

To give two examples:

(1) "... only the small bodies such as the Mennonites, the Church of the Brethren, and the Friends cling to their biblical non-resistance - and not all members even of these groups are altogether convinced." (P 51)

... so why not mention a group whose members are all convinced - if not because of the stigma of 'heresy' with which we are branded - even though we are nearer his own views of Christian fundamentalism than, for example are the Friends (Quakers)?

(2) In recounting World War I, he seems unfamiliar with F G Jannaway's book "Without the Camp", and the part played by Christadelphians in securing exemption from military service for other religious conscientious objectors by their own example (e.g. by refusing to wear military uniform in prison) during World War I

The second criticism is matter of small detail. He states (p 59) that Great Britain in World War II "was so gracious as to give total exemption to ... non-resistants". This, of course, is incorrect. Most conscientious objectors had conditional exemption during World War II and some were refused, and others drafted into non-combatant service, though Britain's attitude was, in the circumstances, exemplary.

Despite these two criticisms, the book is a valuable summary, particularly for those of us who may be faced, at some future time, with the prospect of defending our position at military service tribunals.

A SYMPHONY OF WORDS?

In the Beginning. By Henri Blocher. IVP. 1987

Reviewed by John Maycock

Shortly after writing the review of "Windows on Science and Faith" for Endeavour 75, I heard a talk by Gordon Wenham in which he recommended the above book. Wenham is a well known Biblical conservative who has written commentaries on Leviticus and Numbers and is working on Genesis. He said that two recent books helped considerably in the problem of interpreting the early chapters of Genesis. One was "Creation and Evolution" by Alan Hayward, which he commended for its view of science, and the other was Blocher's (pronounced "bloshay") book which he commended for its interpretation of the text. You will understand my curiosity to find out what kind of interpretation this Frenchman would provide.

Blocher is Professor of Systematic Theology at a French Evangelical institution (Faculté Libre de Théologie Évangélique, Vaux-sur-Seine). He is most concerned to separate scientific considerations from discovering what the author is trying to say. Apart from the opening chapters science is relegated to a 19 page appendix. This includes a consideration of the antiquity of man but ends on an inconclusive note, suggesting that with faith in the Word of God, we can "wait patiently for the clouds (of scientific uncertainty) to clear".

Most importantly he considers that one should begin by approaching Genesis "as the beginning of a symphony" in which God spoke through men but without the need to turn them into robots. The word is in human language and thus calls for a study of language, ancient and modern, to help aid interpretation. Nevertheless he recognises the importance of not veering too far towards excessive literalism nor to taking as symbolic what is not. Two rules are suggested: a) when there are clear signs of literary form or b) when images or characters used are common in the historical setting, it is reasonable to expect poetic or symbolic expression. This is a scholarly book, not one for light reading. Nevertheless I found it rewarding because it gives new insights into the meaning of the text.

The general method is to consider a topic against the background of the rest of scripture, summarise the principal published interpretations (some going back to Augustine) and indicate why a particular one is preferred. One is not overwhelmed by quotation from the French literature; about two thirds of the 'select bibliography' is in English.

The bulk of the book covers the two accounts of creation, i.e. Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 covering the first, and 2:4 to 3:24 the second. The two are complementary and no good reason is found for dissenting from the traditional view that Moses was the author. But what kind of writing is involved? The first is hymn-like: "written in exalted semi-poetical language". The second, whilst closer in language to the myths of the nations, is nevertheless "a religious and literary achievement of the highest order". The fact that Moses was "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22) makes it seem likely that "the mode of revelation is that of Wisdom writing".

The evidence of literary structure is different in the two accounts. In the first there are patterns of symbolic numbers: 10, 3 and 7. Ten times we find "God said", three concerning mankind and seven for the world below. The phrase "and it was so" appears seven times as also does "and God saw that it was good". The seven days are part of the pattern and one begins to see a literary structure. There is a symmetry between each of the first three days and the last three. Light and the lights link days 1 and 4, the waters and heaven link days 2 and 5, and finally dry land links days 3 and 6. The crucial creation of lights and the separation of light from darkness is central (day 4 of seven) in the construction of the piece.

Literal interpretation of the 'days' is rejected and a literary view maintained in which "The author's intention is not to supply us with a chronology of origins . . . He wishes to bring out certain themes and provide a theology of the sabbath." This structural idea is not new; it has origins at least as long ago as the Middle Ages. Some of the themes are considered in detail, notably the idea of 'order' in creation and man as 'the image of God'.

The second account also has a structure: seven symmetrical paragraphs, with some symbolic form. In the case of the tree of life, for example, "Scripture comes to his [the interpreter's] aid". There is an obvious reference in Proverbs: "She [wisdom] is a tree of life" and in the book of Revelation. There is nothing there (it is argued) to indicate that John translated a literal tree of Eden into a symbol for the new Jerusalem; he "appears rather to take the tree of life as he finds it, 'in the paradise of God', and to attribute to it in all respects, including its existence, 'a spiritual meaning'. In other words we are not meant to take it literally. It represents communion with God, the inexhaustible source of life. Neither is the tree taken away, it is protected by the cherubim which, again looking for the meaning throughout scripture, are a symbol of divine power.

The use of symbolic language does not mean that there is no history behind the representation. Blocher strongly rejects the view that the story is a myth, by which is meant "presenting in dramatised form creatures that symbolically portray aspects of the human condition". It is considered that the rivers in Eden may well be literal but Adam and Eve and the fall, or as he prefers to call it, "the breaking of the covenant" are certainly factual: "nothing less than the gospel is at stake". The covenant here is a reference to the relation of God to man presented in Genesis 2 in the form of a treaty between a vassal and his suzerain. Readers may find the idea of symbol and history combined unusual. That is because we are used to the 'modern' way of writing history: "Scripture . . . abounds in examples of mixed genre. It frequently recounts the passage of history in the categories of parable or allegory, and expresses the facts it recalls in images and symbols".

It may still be possible to interpret the text literally and say the items have their symbolic meaning in addition. I think a good case is made here for a 'literary', and thus non-literal, interpretation. With the respect accorded here for scripture (431 Bible references are indexed at the end of the book) any alternative should at least take account of the arguments presented.

As one might expect the "we" of chapter 1:26 is seen as the first glimmerings of a trinity. Angelic presence, as an explanation, is rejected since the Bible nowhere else suggests they share in creation. It is more likely, it is argued, that God is addressing himself because he has a Spirit "who is both one with him and distinct from him at the same time".

By reference to Revelation 20:2 and 2 Corinthians 11:3 & 14, the snake in Genesis is identified with the Devil and is regarded as a figurative creature, linked with common terminology in the ancient world. There it was the emblem of fertility rites, divination and was "the magical animal par excellence", as is still recalled by the symbol of the medical profession today! The serpent, then, "Stands for the attraction of pagan religion and its magic spells . . . Through its cunning and suppleness it provided the image of the way that religious influences work." Unfortunately a 'spirit' Satan is also asserted, who "was the first to rebel and he became the tempter of mankind".

Another point of disagreement is on the nature of man. It seems quite extraordinary to find the following statement in a book generally sensitive to the message of scripture: "Duality stands out unambiguously in the New Testament . . . it is presupposed by the doctrine of the intermediate state, of the survival of the soul/spirit without the body in the period between death and the final resurrection". On the other hand the chapter on 'The Wages of Sin' is helpful. Sin is an inversion of the order God intended. God's blessings turn into caricatures of themselves: "If man obeyed God, he would be the means of blessing to the earth; but in his insatiable greed, in his scorn for the balances built into the created order and in his short-sighted selfishness he pollutes and destroys it".

There is no ending recorded for the seventh day of creation. It is possible then to understand God's rest as enveloping the whole of history. If one further remembers that in the author's imagery the 'tree of life' continues in existence protected by

the kerubim and the flaming sword, the 'gospel in Eden' can be stated in a very dramatic way. Beginning with the death of Christ: "The victory was won and its complete and utter effect will be made manifest to all in an instant at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20). Such is the paradox of the gospel; it uncovers the hidden meaning of Genesis 3:15 . . . The one single son who had not sinned . . . allowed himself to be struck on behalf of his vast throng of brothers by the ever-turning sword of divine justice. Thus he thwarted for ever the snake's manoeuvres. The kerubim rushed to open the gates to him. To us who follow him, who are conquerors by his power, he grants to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God."