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For Christian Thought and Action

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Our object is to promote a faithful, Bible-based, response to issues which confront us both in thought and in day-to-day living. *The Endeavour Magazine* is published so that the range of views which exist within our Christadelphian Brotherhood may be discussed and represented, and so that issues of wider concern may also be studied and analysed. We therefore encourage discussion and criticism of what appears in our pages, provided it is done in a Christ-like spirit and with a concern that truth should prevail. 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, and help us all to a deeper understanding of our faith.

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Editorial: Blunt Words

The words of J J Blunt, the author of *Undesigned Coincidences* (1847) were not blunt in any way. But those of his near-contemporary and near-namesake, J H Blunt, certainly were. He was the compiler of *A Dictionary of Sects, Heresies and Ecclesial Parties* (1886) in which he described Christadelphians as "A small but arrogant sect of recent origins which claim to be 'the sect everywhere spoken against' ". He quotes in support words from a "notice-board outside one of their meeting-houses".

Christadelphian Synagogue

The Christadelphians meet within on Sunday mornings at eleven o'clock for worship and breaking of bread. On Sunday evenings at six o'clock for proclaiming the Truth as it is set forth in the writings of Moses and the prophets, Christ and His Apostles, in contradistinction to the writings and teachings of the clergy of the Church of Rome and her Harlot daughters the Church of England and Protestant Dissenters . . . To the Law and to the Testimony. If they (the Clergy) speak not according to this Word it is because they have no light in them.' (Isaiah VIII.20)

What Blunt did not appreciate, or if he did he ignored, was that this was not gratuitous rudeness but a reaction to violent criticism which Christadelphians had received. This criticism was because many of their beliefs were remembered as those that had been held a century and a half earlier by the Socinians who had suffered persecution from both Catholics and Protestants. It has been said about them that "even in an age when pens were often dipped in gall...Socinianism was attended by unusual acrimony and hatred".¹

Happily today such exchanges are rare. The churches are more tolerant of what, to them, is heresy, so that we no longer are subjected to the stridency of critics like A J Pollock.² Instead we have detailed, factual and non-condemnatory accounts such as that in *Some Modern Faiths*.³ On our part we have largely come round to the view that we are more likely to convince others if we seek to persuade rather than hurl opprobrious epithets at them.

But there is a minority who think it right to preserve the old polemics. They argue that since we are convinced that our beliefs are correct, then it must be God's opinion that those who do not accept them are indeed "the mother of harlots" and "the abominations of the earth". It is crucial therefore that they should be made aware of this, the more so since it is alleged that the teachings of Christendom are now even more astray from the Bible than they were a hundred years ago. "The teachings of Christendom" is a vague term which could include hundreds of different shades of belief that pass under this name. Presumably however it applies particularly to what are described above as "The Church of England and Protestant Dissenters." Are they nearer to or farther from our beliefs than they were a hundred years ago?

The anti-trinitarianism of the Socinians was what particularly provoked opposition and this is probably the most distinctive feature of our own belief. Does the Church believe as firmly in the Trinity, or even more so, than it did a hundred years ago? The answer can only be "No" on both counts. The doctrine of the

Incarnation, on which it is founded, has been the most questioned of the classical beliefs, except perhaps for belief in the reality of hell-fire. We have not the space to cite the views of individual scholars who question it, but what its supporters say about them is a good guide. Brian Hebblethwaite,⁴ for example, admits that "This extraordinary doctrine has, nevertheless, been widely questioned since the Enlightenment and the rise of modern science, not only from without but from within the Christian Church. Recently, in England, there has been a spate of books and articles criticising traditional Christology as unintelligible."

Hebblethwaite was referring principally to *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977). Commenting on this, John Bowden⁵ (Managing Director of SCM Press) said later that the Church of England had accepted most of the *Myth* arguments and, "extremist wings apart, its position had virtually become accepted belief."

Colin Gunton,⁶ another supporter of Trinitarianism has said more recently that "Widespread reaction to the doctrine of the Trinity [in the Church] is one of hostility, dismissal or indifference. It is, in the recent words of a colleague, a 'distortion' and that is all there is to be said."

What has caused most of the trouble is the problem of how Jesus could be both "perfect God" and "perfect man" at the same time. Would not the divinity inevitably make it impossible for him to live as an ordinary man? Would not the former life of God the Son in heaven be bound to influence what he thought and did as a man on earth? John Knox,⁷ an American theologian, put it baldly when he said "We can have the humanity without the pre-existence and we can have the pre-existence without the humanity. There is absolutely no way of having both."

It is significant that this was the Socinian position—reading the New Testament in the light of reason rather than tradition. Klaus Scholder⁸ has shown that the principles of interpretation in the Racow Catechism made it necessary for reason to play a part in interpretation. Beliefs which contradicted sound reason were not allowable. Scholder continues: "That explains why the main attack of the Socinians was directed against the dogma of the Trinity. For here was a case where a theological statement not only contradicted the laws of logic but also was not explicitly formulated in scripture."

In recent years the immortality of the soul has also been the subject of increased questioning. The reference in *Towards the Conversion of England* to it being a Greek, not a Hebrew, belief is still being quoted as though it was remarkable. It is in fact commonplace. The present Archbishop of Canterbury has said it at greater length. (There is an extract on page 29 of our Issue No 85.) More frequently the importance of resurrection as the gateway to eternal life is being stressed.

There is of course a considerable difference between what the "writers and teachers" say and the beliefs of ordinary congregations or even some of their ministers. But the general direction is clear and it cannot be maintained that the teachings are *more* astray now than they were. Why then should it be so claimed? Perhaps because magnifying the error of others serves to emphasise our own correctness—one of the negative aspects of belonging to a group, as mentioned in the article on page 8. How much better to follow Paul's advice: "The Lord's servant must not quarrel. He must be kind towards all, a good and patient teacher, who is gentle as he corrects his opponents." (2 Timothy 2:23-24. GNB)

(Footnotes are on the inside back cover.)

The Mediator of a Better Covenant

"For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The familiar translation "grace and truth" tends to conceal that John is quoting from Exodus 34:6 and that the Greek of John 1:14 is a precise rendering of the Hebrew of God's self-declaration of "abounding love and faithfulness" (RSV). On that occasion Moses boldly requested that he might see God's glory but God allowed him to see only his back. John is saying that God's essential nature was revealed in only a temporary and limited way at Sinai. Arthur Mallinder, in an article reprinted from issue No. 12 (Summer 1964) shows how this is developed by the writer to the Hebrews.

When the Epistle to the Hebrews was first published it arrived upon the religious scene as something new and revolutionary. To the orthodox Jew it was, of course, heresy, but even the average Jewish Christian with his Jewish upbringing, his Jewish background and his Jewish way of thinking (and to him in all his Jewishness the Epistle was probably addressed), would find it disturbing. Moreover I have a feeling that many of us today may find it equally disturbing, if we allow ourselves to think about it.

As an example of what I mean let us take a close look at chapter 8. This is a key chapter in the epistle. The writer concludes chapter 7 with a heart-felt groan, "For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity" (moral infirmity, not physical). As he uttered these words he would probably think of men like Eli, the moral weakling, or Caiaphas, the political schemer. These men, in spite of their infirmities, were fully qualified by the law to officiate in this sacred office. In contrast, he then thinks of the ideal high priest, Jesus, and of His qualifications. Because He has an unchangeable priesthood (there is not a good man and then a bad man as in human succession) and because He ever liveth to make intercession He is able to save to the uttermost the suppliants who approach through Him. He is holy, harmless, undefiled and, in addition, He understands. Having been tempted, he can sympathise with our failures. To crown all, He is now the minister of the true tabernacle, where He appears in the real presence of God for us.

At this juncture the writer points out with indignation (verse 4) that in spite of all His wonderful qualifications, the perfect high priest would not be recognised as a priest at all under the law of Moses! "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." Therein the law stood condemned. If it would debar God's perfect priest and prefer men of infirmity — then obviously its day was done: let it go.

Yes, let it go, because now there is some- thing much better. From verse 6 onwards the writer approaches the climax of his argument as he discourses in glowing terms about the new covenant. He tells how the new covenant is better than the old inasmuch as grace (kindness) is better than law. As John also says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17).

So Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry, and is the mediator of a better covenant established on better promises: everything is better.

The Old Was Faulty

The writer now makes a startling suggestion. He says the old covenant was faulty. We might have been bold enough to have said that it was obsolete, but he is much bolder. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith (and here he begins a long quotation from Jeremiah, chapter 31), Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Here was something which was given by God: and yet it was faulty.

Let us consider some of the ways in which it might be called faulty. First, it was too difficult and the people were not able to keep it. Peter describes it as a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. This is a point which emerges from verse 9. The new covenant is to be different from the old, "because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." In other words, because the people could not keep the law the purpose of reconciliation was aborted.

The old covenant was also faulty because under it, the approach to God was extremely difficult. The law hedged God in, shut Him up behind curtains in the Holy of Holies, and one man went to meet Him once a year. For the average man, God was holy and remote and unknowable, and men were afraid. The reaction of Manoah when he witnessed the angel ascending in the smoke of the sacrifice, "We shall surely die because we have seen God," was typical.

But Christ has broken down the barriers and ordinary men and women are now invited to enter with boldness into the Holiest (to meet God).

Jeremiah prophesied that this would be the result of the coming of the new covenant (as our writer quotes in verses 10 and 11)—"they shall not teach ... saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." By the new covenant, he says, men will come to know God. This was a wonderful revelation! Only Christ could reveal such a God—it needed the Son to make known the Father.

No More Sacrifices

The next thing we notice is that the new covenant has the promise of forgiveness (verse 12), and there is no mention of sacrifices. The sacrifices themselves were part of the faultiness of the old covenant. As Hebrews points out at great length, they could not take away sin, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

The sacrificial system had been eminently suited to its day a thousand years earlier, but now it remained as a relic of a pre-Christian past, and in addition had

unpleasant overtones. (The Law had many good points, but we are now looking for the faults.)

(1) The sacrifices tended to be regarded by the people as an indication that God was an angry God who needed to be appeased by the death of an animal. Blood had to flow before there could be forgiveness.

(2) They also could lead to the assumption that forgiveness was something which could be bought. In effect, you brought your sacrifice, you paid your price, you got your forgiveness (and it was quite expensive).

(3) It was a system which was easy for the rich and hard for the poor. The rich man had his large flocks and herds and never missed his sin-offering. There was plenty more where that came from. For the poor man it was quite different. If he had only two or three animals, the sacrifice leave a large gap in his meagre flock. In fairness, we must admit that the Law did cater for this situation. There were offerings for the poor and ideally, there would be no very rich or very poor, for when the year of jubilee came round, when everyone received his land back as originally parcelled out, there should have been a fresh start for the nation, all being equal. In this way the children of an improvident father would not be saddled with his debts, nor would the children of a prosperous father benefit unduly from his accumulated wealth. It was a wonderful scheme but as far as we can tell it was never observed. So we find Isaiah (chapter 5) lamenting, "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place" and the rich became richer, and the poor became poorer. He "looked for judgment, but behold oppression."

When we come to the New Testament we find that Jesus is apparently not interested in land reform. He does not say, "You ought to keep the year of jubilee," but He accepts the situation as He finds it, saying, "The poor always ye have with you." His solution is charity. "Sell what ye have and give to the poor." In that way there would be a sharing of resources and a measure of equality.

The Price of Forgiveness

Probably one of the most important things about the new covenant is the promise of forgiveness contained in verse 12. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Forgiveness—is it free, or is there a price? Obviously, for us, the price is the sacrifice of Christ. But how?

Someone who was very wise, once said, "To understand is to forgive." In order to forgive truly we must enter into the feelings of the transgressor, understand his temptation, share his situation. We cannot really forgive something we know nothing about. Understanding is the price of forgiveness, a price which even God in heaven was willing to pay through His Son. God entered into human life so that He could truly forgive us, for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

The death of Christ marked the end of the old covenant with its ritual and

sacrifices and priesthood, and the beginning of the new covenant of grace. His sacrifice meant the end of the other sacrifices, as being totally unnecessary both now and for all time, for "there is no more offering for sin" (10: 18). The words of Jesus at the Last Supper are appropriate here. "For this is my blood of the new testament (covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Conclusions, Several and Various

There are several points. which we need to note in conclusion. First, in the field of pure exhortation there are three things.

(1) We have the ideal high priest who understands, and is able to save to the uttermost. Let us use His services thankfully. How often we forget about Him and neglect to pray!

(2) The approach to God has been made easy and simple. God has drawn near to us and waits for us to draw near to Him. Let us give our grateful response.

(3) There is the promise of an abundant forgiveness if we desire it. While not approving of the Roman Catholic system, statistics show that of all religious people Roman Catholics are least troubled by remorse and guilt complexes. They go to their confession and feel that they have been relieved of their burden of sin. But we need not be troubled by guilt feelings. Forgiveness is there if we ask aright. Let us thankfully seek that forgiveness with contrite hearts. And let us show the same forgiving spirit to other people.

There are, however, other lessons which emerge from our rather brief and sketchy study. The new covenant is very different from the old. The accent of the Law is on discipline and punishment, but the word of grace is of teaching and forgiveness. They speak in different tones of voice, and the latter is much better than the former.

It becomes obvious, also, that times change, and as times change so God's methods change and God's approach to man changes. The Law was suitable to its day when it had not become obsolete, but the lesson of Hebrews is that now it is wrong, even sinful, to continue to walk in the old paths and men are exhorted to follow Jesus on the new road of the new covenant. In the light of this lesson, let us beware lest we, as a community, should be too resistant to change, lest we should cling to the old ways when Jesus is beckoning us onward to new visions and new experience in His service.

Christians were filled with joy. They had been freed from the curse of the Law. What about us? Are we busily studying the Law of Moses and yet forgetting that there is a new covenant? Let us get our perspective right and let us truly value our wonderful privileges and benefits in Christ.

Paying Fair Wages

James wrote:

"You have piled up riches in these last days. You have not paid any wages to the men who work in your fields. Listen to their complaints! The cries of those who gather in your crops have reached the ears of God, the Lord Almighty. Your life here on earth has been full of luxury and pleasure. You have made yourselves fat for the day of slaughter. You have condemned innocent people, and they do not resist you." (James 5:3-6)

Uncomfortable words! What wicked people they must have been in the first century. Was he referring to members of the ecclesias or to those outside? It's a good thing that such comments couldn't be made about us. Or could they?

It has been frequently pointed out in the media and by people of good will that our prosperity has a direct connection with much of the poverty in the third world. More, it has recently been asserted, comes back to the UK in debt repayments than is given in aid to poverty-stricken countries. Of course, we are not consciously and directly responsible, but we certainly benefit from this situation.

It is difficult to know what to do, and anything we try to do can only be very small scale. But small is better than nothing, and some methods of paying fairer wages are available to us in a number of schemes. For example Oxfam Trading operates the 'Bridge' scheme. Handcrafts and some foods are imported direct from producers and at a fixed price.

"When you buy these goods", says the Oxfam catalogue, "you can be sure that the producers receive the maximum benefit in terms of fair prices, practical help and a share in any profits." A similar scheme makes available goods manufactured by our brethren and sisters abroad and likewise deserves our support. These goods can be used for presents, but products we regularly use ourselves are tea and coffee. This year tea and coffee have been at their lowest price ever on the world market, which results in debt and poverty for the ordinary workers no matter how much effort they make. A further result is the strong temptation to grow plants for the narcotics trade because peasants can make a living wage from these but no longer from tea or coffee.

Available from your local Oxfam shop are Traidfair Tea Bags (80 x 2-cup bags cost £1.50), or Cafédirect filter coffee (£1.70), or instant coffee (£1.50). "By buying these products you can make a small but tangible difference to the standard of living of the people who have grown and picked it for you." We will also be showing on a small scale the ethical, biblical concern to pay proper wages "to the men who work in your fields". The address of Oxfam Trading is 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.

Ian McHaffie

An Exhortation

For a People Who Wish to Produce the Proper Fruits

Group behaviour has positive and negative aspects. In this exhortation Ian Henderson asks us to examine ourselves and to ensure that by positive action we follow the example of Jesus and bear good fruits.

In Matthew chapter 21 Jesus tells a parable about tenants of a vineyard. He concludes by saying to the chief priests and Pharisees: "And so I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce the proper fruits." (Matthew 21:43)* Those fruits are summarised by the apostle Paul: "...the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self control." (Galatians 5:22-23)

This year was election year in the UK. The rival parties all lined up to score political points off one another. Every news bulletin seemed full of the latest arguments about the economy or the health service or youth training or defence or whatever else our worthy political leaders saw fit to draw to our collective attention. Personally speaking, I found the issues interesting but the arguments terminally boring. No issue could be discussed, it seemed, without one party trying to denigrate the others. We are right. They are wrong. We have the answers. They are a bunch of incompetent and dishonourable ne'er-do-wells.

Whatever your reaction to the political discussions leading up to the elections, it is worth noticing the way they point to an important aspect of human nature: We love parties. Well of course most of us do, but the parties I have in mind are groups, or tribes, or clubs. We start to get clubby in our teens. Teenagers need to find a separate identity from their parents. To help them get this they form groups of their own peers. Groups continue to dominate most of our social lives.

Groups usually have noticeable characteristics. They will have initiation ceremonies. A group will have special rituals in which members will join together and practise. Think of the football terraces and scarf waving. Certain behaviour patterns will be considered normal within the group and encouraged. Tribes often reinforce their separateness by wearing special clothes or badges. Clubs preserve their identity by emphasising their separateness from other groups who are often considered wrong, inferior or simply the opposition.

Groups are strong. They support members of the group. They resist change. They help individuals in the club because within the group people feel less threatened. They know the rules. There are fewer surprises. Life feels more predictable. Groups can be very cruel to people who do not fit. They often reject them.

Now all this about groups or tribes is well known. We can see clearly how the political parties fit with the way groups work, almost comically so. But why talk

* Quotations are from the Good News Bible

about it in an exhortation at a breaking of bread service when we want to remember Jesus Christ? Well, it is just this. Some aspects of group behaviour fit well with our endeavours to follow Jesus. Other aspects do not. And whether we like it or not we are a group, and we exhibit all the usual characteristics.

We have our initiation ceremonies. We are given the right hand of fellowship and welcomed into the congregation. We have a service in which only group members are invited to participate, that is the taking of the bread and wine. We have rules of acceptable behaviour within the group which are not the same as the rules outside it. Just try greeting all your female colleagues at work with a brotherly kiss! Yet this is perfectly acceptable within our community. Notice the dress which is normally expected. Our history as a community is full of criticism of other Christian groups. And we have often been cruel as a community to people who do not fit in with what the group decides is normal.

Now we need to be a group. One of the big benefits of groupiness is the strength of support the tribe gives to individuals within it. We need this. Not only that, it is recommended to us from the highest authority. One example will be enough: "We who are strong in the faith ought to help the weak to carry their burdens. We should not please ourselves. Instead, we should all please our brothers for their own good, in order to build them up in the faith." (Romans 15:1-2)

The support we get from our group is essential to the Christian way of life for most of us. Few are strong enough to maintain a Christian discipline in the face of the overwhelming onslaught of the un-Christian life which goes on around us. Even Jesus felt the need of the companionship his disciples gave him and missed it when they failed him (e.g. Matthew 26:36-41). We all need encouragement and practical help from time to time. So, groups are good. Can't we conclude that? Surely they must be all right because even Jesus needed one?

Well, it seems to me that the support a group gives to the individuals in it is one of the few good things we can say about the way groups behave.

Some of the ways in which a tribe behaves can be fairly neutral. They can be OK. Belonging can be a good thing if it is not used to exclude people unnecessarily. "This group accepts me; we accept this new member." These can be good feelings. The down side is that people who do not belong can feel excluded and second class. This can be true for our young people who have not been baptised. A problem can be that a young person may want to be baptised not because he or she feels committed to Christ, but to be a part of the group. These two things are related, of course. But commitment to Christ is far more profound a thing than membership of a group. We will probably need the help of the group to fulfil our commitment to him. But our baptism into Christ is a separate thing from our being welcomed into fellowship with a congregation. The one relationship is with God and Christ and there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39). The other is a relationship with a group which has a Godly purpose but is sometimes only too human in its failings. Mixing up these two relationships is a common thing in our community. They are related, but different.

What about the rites our group practises? It is clearly an excellent thing to remember Christ in the way he asked us to. All of us have felt the sense of rededication and renewal that remembering Christ in this way can bring. But

sometimes in the past our community's attitude to members who do not regularly attend the breaking of bread service has been less than kind. Often our emphasis has been on judgmental discipline rather than patient and humble kindness.

Historically, and in some places to this present day, our community has been merciless in its criticism of other Christian groups. Taking a standpoint of correct scriptural belief we have scored points off most Christian groups in a way reminiscent of the bickering we see between the political parties. But whatever standpoint you take, it is terribly easy to fall into a "them and us" way of looking at things. "I am a liberal Christian. They are narrow." The "enlightened" versus the "unenlightened". We love to have another group to hate or to feel superior to. It makes us feel so righteous, doesn't it? And of course, since we make the club rules, it is easier for us to follow them. And, yes, just like the Pharisees we'll claim divine credit too (Mark 7:1-13, especially verse 7).

Jesus said: "If you were blind, then you would not be guilty; but since you claim that you can see, this means that you are still guilty." (John 9:41) He was speaking to the Pharisees who had asked him: "Surely you don't mean that we are blind, too?" (John 9:40) And this is the nub of the matter. We are all spiritually blind somewhere along the line and at some time in our life. Paul reminded the Corinthians: "One says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'.... Was it Paul who died on the cross for you?" (I Corinthians 1:12-13)

Now there are significant differences between our beliefs and those of other churches, but "Who are you to judge the servant of someone else? It is his own Master who will decide whether he succeeds or fails." (Romans 14:4) So, where we differ from others we should, I believe, tread gently since we too are sinners in need of salvation.

One of the more unfortunate aspects of groups is demonstrated in problems of divorce and remarriage. Some people feel that even where someone has been divorced against their will and despite their best endeavours to keep the marriage together, nevertheless if the forsaken one re-marries he or she is committing adultery and must be disfellowshipped. Views differ and this question can cause people to become vexed and heated. Ecclesias have split over it and our community has had problems handling this issue that go on and on. All acknowledge that marriage should be faithful and for life. Many are the disagreements over what to do when we, as humans will, fall short of the ideal. When these problems come up however, an ecclesia may display some of the bad characteristics of groups. You see, when a marriage fails, or when someone wants to re-marry, they immediately become "different". We can label them in our minds as abnormal. Now of course they are not really different from the rest of us. We are all sinners in need of salvation. There but for the grace of God go you or I: "...everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence." (Romans 3:23) But we can perceive them as different. If we behave groupily, we tend to reject the one who does not fit. So we have to be doubly careful when we deal with such situations. Remember Jesus said "since you claim that that you can see, this means that you are still guilty." (John 9:41) Whatever our views on this subject, we will tend, because of group pressure, to conform and reject the person who is different.

This rejection of different people, people who are misfits, appears in many situations. People who do not conform to normal behaviour, that is behaviour the

group feels is normal, tend to be rejected. Dress, appearance, body odour, age, even just unfamiliarity can all be reasons for rejection. Now think of someone who is new to an ecclesia such as ours, say a visitor, or a newly converted sister, or a student at university recently arrived and attending our meeting. —they are all new faces; we are not familiar with them, their behaviour may be different. In some way they will not quite fit. If we follow normal group behaviour we will tend to reject them. This is the normal human reaction. But this is *not* a club. It is an ecclesia. And we have to accept and welcome strangers. As Jesus tells us: "I was a stranger and you received me in your homes." (Matthew 25:35) Or as Paul wrote: "Welcome the person who is weak in faith." (Romans 14:1) We need to work positively to do this because our normal groupy human reaction has to be fought and overcome. We must not reject the stranger.

Now I confess that I find it difficult to accept strangers. My reaction tends to be the normal groupy reaction and I find it difficult to warm to someone who does not fit. But this command to welcome strangers goes right back to the roots of man's relationship with God. In Exodus the Israelites are commanded not to ill-treat or oppress a foreigner. In Deuteronomy the people are commanded not to deprive the foreigners and orphans of their rights. Job in his self justification claimed that he always welcomed strangers. (Exodus 22:21, Deuteronomy 24:17, Job 31:31)

When we break bread and drink wine we focus our attention on Jesus. How did he stand in relation to group behaviour? Well, Jesus seems to me to demonstrate all the positive aspects of the importance of groups without the negative ones.

Remember that he worked from a group: the twelve apostles, the disciples and the women who accompanied him—to pick out three references in the gospels. (Luke 9:1; 10:1; 8:1-3) He supported them and they supported him in practical ways and with love and affection. I cannot read of the last supper and Gethsemane without being struck by his humanity and his need for his brothers and sisters.

And yet Jesus displays throughout none of the unwelcoming attitudes to people who are different. In fact the misfits in his society were the very people he welcomed: the demoniacs, the lepers, women, adulterers, crippled people, beggars, tax gatherers, children, Romans—all are welcomed, none are rejected. Even members of other groups are welcomed: zealots, Pharisees, teachers of the law. When he criticises other groups it is precisely because of their exclusivity that he does so: "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You lock the door to the Kingdom of heaven in people's faces, and you yourselves don't go in, nor do you allow in those who are trying to enter!" (Matthew 23:13)

Jesus' example is hard to follow, yet that is precisely what he calls us to do. We need to be transformed inwardly by a complete change of our minds and not to conform to the standards of this world. (Romans 12:2) When we see the electioneering around us we are reminded of the bad aspects of groups. But here as we remember Christ in the bread and wine we can resolve as a group to follow his example and build each other up in a determination to welcome the stranger, to accept the weak and to be gentle with those who are different from us. And in this way we can become a people who will produce the proper fruits.

I Corinthians 11:2-16

I Corinthians 11 is not a straightforward passage. Numerous explanations and interpretations have been offered, all of which have problems. There is no clear-cut way to understand it. Ian & Averil McHaffie examine some of the issues and various solutions.

We have argued in previous articles that there are two practices which Jesus specifically gave to his Church: baptism to mark entry into his body, and remembrance of him in bread and wine. We have considered that other commandments given by Jesus, such as footwashing and fasting, were applicable in their literal detail only to the days in which they were given, though the principles behind them hold good for all time. The clash between Jesus and the Pharisees, and the conflict between the apostle Paul and those who wished to follow ritual practices, both demonstrate that true Christianity is not a matter of outward practices but of moral behaviour from the heart. This is the normal Christadelphian approach but it is frequently rejected with respect to I Corinthians 11:2-16. Is this section therefore an exception?

In this passage instructions are given to the ecclesia at Corinth concerning headcovering. Does the apostle Paul specify for all time how brethren and sisters are to be dressed at meetings? Is the headcovering/non-headcovering a principle in itself, or is it the result of a principle, the literal detail of which was only to be carried out in the first century?

Husbands and Wives

This section begins as follows:

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. (I Corinthians 11:3, KJV)

In Greek the same word is used for man as for husband (*aner*); likewise the Greek word *gynē* means either woman or wife according to context. It is sometimes argued that Paul teaches here that sisters in general in the ecclesia are subordinate to brethren in general: that every brother is the head of every sister. Although Paul refers in I Corinthians 11:12 to man and woman rather than husband and wife, it does not seem likely that this whole passage is to be taken as referring to men and women in general.¹ Nowhere else does the New Testament teach that brethren are the head of the sisters, only the husband the head of his wife as in Ephesians 5:23. This seems good reason to think, as the RSV translators have done, that Paul is talking about the relationship between man and wife in I Corinthians 11.

I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. (I Corinthians 11:3, RSV)

Why did Paul need to remind the ecclesia of this? Here, as elsewhere, we need to deduce the circumstances from the reply Paul wrote. Evidently some brethren were covering their heads when praying and prophesying, and were wearing their hair

¹ I Corinthians 11 is singular throughout. If reference is made to Genesis 3:16, of which several interpretations are possible, the passage nevertheless is in a husband-wife situation and does not say that men in general should rule over women in general.

long. Some sisters, by contrast, when praying and prophesying were not covering their heads, and were possibly wearing their hair short (verse 15). By doing this, the brethren concerned appeared not to be accepting Christ as their head, and the sisters not to be accepting their husbands as their heads. The question which arises is this. Were they breaking some custom of the times, or is the headcovering/non-headcovering an essential part of ecclesial activity for all time?

If it were in itself a basic principle, we would expect to find it taught elsewhere in the Bible. In fact, the reverse is generally the case. Headcovering for men in the form of bonnets/caps was prescribed for the priests. Jewish practice, perhaps in the first century and certainly later, approved the wearing of headcoverings for men when at prayer. How could it be, therefore, that the situation at Corinth was so disturbing? An answer can be pursued in two directions: some argue that there is a deep symbolism in the headcovering; others argue that Paul is using well-known language about veils, and the issue is one of social custom.

A Deep Symbolism?

This passage is often explained as follows: The brothers in the ecclesia symbolise Christ and represent the glory of God. The sisters represent human glory, symbolised by their hair. At worship only divine glory should be on display. Therefore the brethren should not cover their heads but the sisters should.

This explanation, apparently simple, reads considerable assumptions into the text of I Corinthians 11 and ignores what can be discovered about the biblical, social and historical background.

Problems in the case argued for the symbolism approach are as follows:

- (1) Reference is made to Psalm 8:

...what is man that thou art mindful of him...?

Yet thou hast made him little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honour.

Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet. (Psalm 8:4-6)

From this passage it is claimed that man needs no covering on his head because God has crowned him with glory and honour; by contrast a woman is not so crowned; she does not have God's glory and honour on her head, and if she does not cover her hair (which symbolises human glory) her head is competing with the glory of God which is being reflected from the man. This claim arises from a misunderstanding of the word "man" in Psalm 8. It does not mean "man" (masculine) but "mankind", "men and women". Both men and women are crowned with glory and honour, and both have dominion (Genesis 1:26).

(2) In I Corinthians 11:7 the phrase "the woman is the glory of man" is misunderstood. This phrase does not mean that she represents *human* glory (and which therefore should be concealed, according to the symbolic interpretation). "Man" here (*aner*) is "husband" or "male", not "mankind". She is her husband's glory, and should therefore act so as to bring glory to him, just as the husband has to act so as to bring glory to Christ.

(3) Similar misunderstandings are applied to Romans 6, where it has been argued that in the new creation, though still blighted by sin, man is no longer a slave to sin; this new status makes it inappropriate for him to cover his head, for

headcovering is a token of servitude to sin and the Law. This interpretation assumes that Romans 6:5-7 does not apply to sisters, despite Paul's clear statement in verse 3 and the fact that we frequently read this passage at baptisms.

(4) It is argued that in the Law the hair and head reflect the flesh, and therefore the priests had to cover their heads to indicate in symbol that the natural way of life was being subjected to God. Or, again, it is asserted that the priests had to wear a covering as they were not covered by the atonement of Christ; brothers now are so covered, and should therefore not wear a covering. Or again, it is claimed that in Scripture head covering is identified with humiliation, servitude and wretchedness of spirit, and this is how sisters should feel because of the sin of Eve. These ideas are not stated in Scripture but are inventions of later times. The Bible does indeed contain symbolism, but unless the symbolism is specified by Scripture itself, symbolic interpretations serve too easily as a way of inserting human ideas into the text.

(5) The symbolical interpretation relies on considerable assumptions not only about the immediate text but about the ecclesia in Corinth. Although later readers, not aware of the context of Paul's letters found some things difficult to understand, it is sensible to think that the original recipients would have found them clear. But if it is necessary to be aware of many Old Testament passages to understand a complex symbolism, one is entitled to wonder whether this meaning was either understood by the original readers or intended by Paul himself. Paul, in I Corinthians, was not writing a theological treatise over which he expected the ecclesia at Corinth to ponder. He was giving direct answers to issues that had been raised. We can reasonably expect that his answers would be clear and simple for his recipients to follow, especially as most of the ecclesia would hear the answers read out to them rather than being able to read for themselves. They would be surprised at the complicated explanations produced in later ages.

If a deep symbolism had been involved, and if this had been clearly explained previously by Paul, is it probable that sisters would have refused to do something which had been clearly taught to them as affecting their relationship with Christ and with God? It is far more likely that a first-century custom was the issue. When we discover how some people felt about veils, this seems to confirm that the problem was basically with contemporary attitudes and in particular in the practices then current in pagan religion and society.

First Century Background

Although Corinth was in Greece, it appears to have been a strongly Roman city. It had been re-established as a Roman colony, through which there was a deliberate attempt to encourage Roman language, laws and religious practices. Roman priests regarded it as essential to cover their heads when offering sacrifice. In this context we can understand why Paul wrote: "Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head [i.e. Christ]." In other words, any brother who followed Roman practice gave the impression of honouring not Christ but the Roman gods. There may be a background here too of the heresy later known as gnosticism, where worship of angels rather than God was described by Paul as "not holding fast to the Head" (Colossians 2:18-19).

By contrast, headcovering for women had a different significance. In Paul's

native city of Tarsus it was the custom for women to be totally veiled. Dio Chrysostom (first century AD) wrote:

...many of the customs still in force [in Tarsus] reveal in one way or another the sobriety and severity of deportment of those earlier days [i.e. first century BC]. Among these is the convention regarding feminine attire, a convention which prescribes that women should be so arrayed and should so deport themselves when in the street that nobody could see any part of them, neither of the face nor of the rest of the body, and that they themselves might not see anything off the road.

(*Thirty-Third Discourse*, 48)

It does not follow that the practice in Corinth was precisely the same, but this shows how the veiling of women was perceived. According to various ancient sources, respectable wives always wore veils in public. Any wife who did not wear a veil would be thought to be renouncing her marriage vows and her action would be grounds for divorce. The Jewish Talmud said:

The following married women are to be divorced without the marriage portion: Such as go out with their heads uncovered. ...It is a godless man who sees his wife go out with her head uncovered. He is duty bound to divorce her.²

Feelings in the Roman world were similar. The intention of being veiled was to hide the woman from the gaze of other men, and thus indicate that she was to be seen by her husband alone.³ This explanation of the veil is given by Valerius Maximus writing in the first century AD about Gaius Sulpicius Gallus, Roman consul in 166 BC:

He divorced his wife because he had caught her outdoors with her head uncovered: a stiff penalty, but not without a certain logic. "The law," he said, "prescribes for you my eyes alone to which you may prove your beauty. For these eyes you should provide the ornaments of beauty, for these be lovely: entrust yourself to their more certain knowledge. If you with needless provocation, invite the look of anyone else, you must be suspected of wrongdoing."

(*Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, 6. 9.)

With this attitude in society, it is understandable that married women in the ecclesia who were taking a prominent part by praying and prophesying would be seen as denying their marriage relationship if they did not wear the customary veil. This was probably not their intention, but is how many people would perceive what they were doing. If we consider how this problem may have arisen, it could be because meetings took place in houses. The brethren and sisters were, in Christ, a family and when at home with the family women would not feel the need to be veiled. However, in a sense also the meeting was in public, and Paul spoke in I Corinthians 14:23 of "outsiders or unbelievers" entering. The sisters may not have been deliberately flouting conventions, but Paul saw the risk that this is how their lack of a veil would be seen.

An alternative view which has been advanced in recent years argues that uncovered (*akatakalyptos*) does not mean "without a veil" but "without a married woman's hairstyle". According to this view married women wore their hair in a

² Quoted from R.C. Prohl *Woman in The Church*, quoting in turn from H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* (Munich, 1954) III, 429.

³ The Latin term for "I marry a man" is *nubo viro*, literally "I am veiled for a man". Our word "nubile" (marriageable) comes from this. A similar background is possibly shown in English. Some dictionaries consider that "wife" originally meant "veiled one".

particular arrangement on top of their heads.⁴ The woman who wiped Jesus' feet with her hair was obviously not a respectable married woman as is shown by this fact quite apart from the comment that she was "a sinner" (Luke 8:37-38). Either way, the reference in I Corinthians 11 is to an acknowledged customary practice concerning how married women should behave in public.

In addition, the sexually promiscuous atmosphere of Corinth was a problem for the ecclesia. Hence Paul wrote:

...neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. ... Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ... Shun immorality. (I Corinthians 6:9-18)

The comments about length of hair are understandable in this context. Some homosexual men wear their hair long, while some lesbian women cut their hair short. This may also explain the otherwise strange question in verse 14: "Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him?" When left uncut, men's hair by nature grows long, and this receives approval in other parts of the Bible. It is therefore a judgment based on first century circumstances to describe long hair for men as degrading. If the men at Corinth were wearing their hair long as an open display of their homosexuality, this could be described by Paul as contrary to nature, as he commented in Romans:

...their men likewise gave up *natural* relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another... (Romans 1:27)

In this context, Paul's objection to what the men were wearing is easy to understand. They were acting in such a manner as to show that Christ was not really their head. A modern parallel can be drawn from the practice in Britain of men wearing earrings. It has been a custom amongst women for many years, and is generally accepted. But when men first began to do it, that too (at least in parts of Britain) was done with a sexual connotation. In such a context, it would be wrong for a brother in Christ to wear an earring, either when speaking at a meeting, or in general every-day life. There is nothing in itself wrong with earrings; it all depends on how society and the wearer perceive them. On men, by the 1990s, earrings are probably nothing more than articles of fashion, as with women.

Women in the Ancient World

Women in the ancient world were always very much second class citizens. The extent to which they could act independently from their husbands or male guardians varied, but women had nothing like the freedom and independence—social, financial, or educational—of women today. The opportunity therefore provided within the ecclesia was a radical change, and it is not surprising that difficulties arose. It may be that, because in Christ they could pray and prophesy like the brethren, they considered (probably rightly) that in itself traditional manners of dress

⁴ James B. Hurley in *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (1981), and *Did Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women? A Consideration of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 and 1 Cor. 14:33b-36* in *Westminster Theological Journal*, Winter 1973. By contrast, see Richard Oster, *When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11.4*, in *New Testament Studies*, vol. 34, 1988, pages 481-505; Cynthia L. Thompson, *Commentary on Women's Hairstyles and Head-coverings*, in *Biblical Archaeologist*, June 1988.

were no longer appropriate. What they failed to realise was the need to take account of the extent to which they could endanger the spreading of the Gospel by rejecting accepted concepts of propriety or by appearing to reject their marriage vows. For the Christian Gospel was not being preached in a vacuum but in a world of many conflicting religious claims, one of the strongest of which was the cult of Isis.

Worship of the goddess Isis had spread from Egypt and by the first century had become widely followed among the Greeks and Romans. It not only offered emancipation to women, but went further and approved of wives ruling husbands. Temples to Isis had a reputation for immorality, which provided all the more reason why the early believers, in elevating the position of women to a new level in Christ, nevertheless had to take care not to appear associated with the cult of Isis or something similar. If some sisters in Corinth were rejecting, or appearing to reject their marriage relationship, as in the cult of Isis, it is understandable why Paul needed to write: "...and the head of every woman is her husband."

A Custom of the First Century?

In a background such as described above, it seems reasonable to think that veiling was a custom of the times, like foot-washing or anointing with oil. The comments, however, which Paul makes in verses 7-8 suggest to some that headcovering for women and non-headcovering for men is in itself an important divine principle.

For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. (For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.) (I Corinthians 11:7-9)

Because of this comment Paul has often been criticised as being anti-women. He has also been accused of 'misusing Genesis by confusing, it is argued, Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Genesis chapter 1 says that both men and women are *in* the image of God, but in I Corinthians 11 Paul says that man (masculine) *is* the image and glory of God, while woman is the glory of man. It is easy to get the impression that Paul considers that woman is not in the image of God,⁵ but to do this is to misunderstand the use Paul is making of Genesis. Paul is not using or referring to Genesis 1 at all. His argument is based entirely on chapter 2, as is appropriate for the situation he is addressing at Corinth.

The word "image" does not occur in Genesis 2, but it lies behind the thought of the text when it says in verse 7: "...then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground" (that is, He made an image). If we are correct in thinking that Paul is using Genesis 2 alone, not the more general statement in Genesis 1, it is significant. For this section of Genesis is dealing with the relationship of husband to wife, and this suggests in turn that the problem in Corinth arose from the attitudes some wives were displaying towards their husbands. So, what is Paul saying, based on the account of the creation of Adam and then Eve in Genesis 2?

The key seems to lie in the word "glory". "Glory" has several possible meanings. In some circumstances it means "brightness or splendour" but this literal meaning does not make sense here. From the metaphorical meaning grows the idea of "fame, the reputation which public acknowledgement brings". The glory of God,

⁵ Augustine (354-430 AD) argued that women stand in the image of God only through their husbands (*De Trinitate*, 12:7), despite Genesis 1:27.

in this context the estimate people hold of God, is compromised when men act as pagans by covering their heads for religious activities. By contrast, the woman who undertakes the same religious activities without her head covered brings ill-repute on her husband when she ought by divine intention to be his glory ⁶ (that is, arouse public respect towards him). If this interpretation is correct, it still means that Paul was writing with the background of what was appropriate according to the customs of the times. Paul stresses by his further comments that a wife was not created to be independent of her husband. In case anyone decides to conclude the opposite, that a husband can be independent of his wife, Paul next adds a corrective, pointing out that men and women are entirely interdependent and that this is the true Christian position ("in the Lord"):

Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man [Eve from Adam], so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.
(I Corinthians 11:11)

It is important to recognise that in this corrective there lies a clearly stated divine principle: "in the Lord", within the ecclesia of Christ, there is no place for independence of either sex from the other.

In working from Genesis 2 Paul was being relevant to the situation in Corinth and his words would be equally relevant to any strong feminist, anti-marriage approach if adopted today. Marriage is intended by God. In Paul's day, headcovering and veils were recognised as having particular significance in the culture of the times. It is not so today, other than in Islamic countries and in certain Roman Catholic areas of Europe and South America.

There is no direct equivalent in our society to express the marriage relationship, except perhaps a wedding ring. When a couple marry, the wife indicates her relationship to her husband in three ways: she takes his name, she wears a wedding ring, she sets up house with him. The first two are conventions in twentieth century British society, and conventions slowly change. Currently if a wife reverts to her maiden name or declines to wear her ring, this is generally considered a sign that her marriage is over. Such signs are important so long as convention gives them meaning, but the real importance from a Christian point of view lies in the relationship itself. This approach is fundamental to the teaching of Jesus. It is not the outward form which is important but the inner attitude of mind.

When the apostle wrote to Corinth, he was dealing with particular problems, and the full background is not easy to grasp. I Corinthians 11 has attracted much attention, but if we are to follow the full biblical approach for the relationship between brethren and sisters, we must also use Genesis chapter 1 and Galatians 3:28 and many other passages where sisters and brethren are addressed equally.

AN EXPANDED VERSION OF I CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

The following is based on the RSV translation, assuming that the passage contains what Paul originally wrote rather than any quotations from the Talmud or from people at Corinth. We have expanded as we think the Apostle Paul would have

⁶ This in itself is an indication of the exalted position in which Paul held women. It was a common pagan view that a woman was an improperly formed male.

done had he been asked. The suggested explanatory comments are in italics. After the text is an explanation of some of the problems involved in any attempt to explain I Corinthians 11, and we point to possible alternative ways of reading and translating this section.

I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. [*If any of you Corinthian wives think that, because you can pray and prophesy just as your husbands do, you are thereby independent from your husbands, note that this is not the way things are. Your husbands are not independent in themselves, for they have Christ as their head, nor is Christ independent for he has God as his head. Similarly each one of you has your husband as your head and it is necessary when you are addressing the brethren and sisters in praying or prophesying that you dress in the recognised manner as married women.*] Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head, [*because this is how Romans worship their gods and you brethren must not give the impression of worshipping pagan gods. Your head is Christ.*] but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonours her head [*i.e. her husband*]*—it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil. [For otherwise you give the impression that you are like Corinthian prostitutes, who do not show allegiance to husbands and some of whom cut their hair short to look like men.] For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; [As it says in Genesis 2, God made a man, moulding dust into an image and breathing into it, and a man should therefore act so as to give God glory, showing his proper relationship to God his creator. He must therefore not follow the pagan Roman practice of wearing a veil when he prays or prophesies, for this gives the impression that he acknowledges not his creator but the Roman gods.] but woman is the glory of man. [By wearing a veil she honours him in public and shows that she respects him and her marriage vows to him.] For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. [Eve from Adam.] Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. [Eve was created because it was "not good that the man should be alone" and husband and wife should be "one flesh". It is therefore not appropriate for wives to reject or act in a manner which appears to reject their married state.] That is why a woman ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels. [The angels are God's agents and are concerned to see proper order in society. By wearing her veil a wife has the authority of a married woman, authority in this instance to stand respectfully in the meeting and speak in praying or prophesying.] Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. [So far I have been talking about husbands and wives. However, although Eve was created from Adam, men are now born from women, which illustrates the interdependence of men and women—we are all created by God—and in the ecclesia sisters are not independent of the brethren nor vice-versa. Both pray and prophesy, but what is important is that when doing so, no*

impression is given that wives do not support the God-given institution of marriage. For speaking in public is not normally considered acceptable for wives. When there is so much immorality in society it is important that we believers set a high standard. While, therefore, you have new freedom in Christ, it is important not to act in such a way that believers appear to be making light of marriage. As I said above, "Whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the ecclesia of God." (I Corinthians 10:31-32)) Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? [You are sensible people; make your own judgment. You know what is considered proper in respectable society.] Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, [By nature man is masculine. I consider that homosexual conduct is contrary to nature and men should not grow their hair long and look like women as some of the homosexual men at Corinth are doing.] but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? [Naturally long hair is a sign in our society that the woman is respectable; only immoral women cut their hair short.] For her [long] hair is given to her for a covering. [Nature thus agrees with what is considered respectable: a wife should keep her hair long and cover her head with it as is considered respectable.] If anyone is disposed to be contentious, we recognise no other practice, nor do the churches of God. [Normal practice amongst all the ecclesias is for the brethren who pray and prophesy to do so without the Roman-style covering, for the women who pray and prophesy to do so wearing their veils to indicate their married state; brethren keep their hair short, sisters their hair long. If anyone disagrees, that is the way it is normally done.]

Comments

I Corinthians 11:2-16 is not an easy passage to understand. Many Bible students have examined it with interesting results but often with widely differing conclusions.

The above expansion attempts to explain I Corinthians 11:2-16 as a whole. It is done, however, with an awareness that there are number of difficulties which make any exposition of this passage uncertain. Some of these difficulties are listed below.

(a) The manner in which "head" is used in this passage appears to be different from usage elsewhere. In Ephesians, Christ is the head of the church. He is head of both brethren and sisters, not just of men (or husbands). By expounding the passage as we have done, we have avoided implying that Christ is *not* the head of the wife.

(b) We have used the term "veil", but the word "veil" never appears. There is therefore some difficulty of translation. The New International Version acknowledges this difficulty by giving the following alternative:

Every man who prays or prophesies with long hair dishonours his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with no covering [of hair] on her head dishonours her head—she is just like one of the "shorn women". If a woman has no covering, let her be for now with short hair, but since it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair shorn or shaved, she should grow it again. A man ought not to have long hair. (I Corinthians 11:4-7 NIV)

(c) Headcovering for men seems to have been Jewish practice. It is strange, therefore, if Paul here without further explanation says something radically

opposite, especially as a few verses previously he has instructed the Corinthians to be as accommodating as possible towards both Jews and Greeks.

Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God (I Corinthians 10:32)

Paul was careful to fit in with the Jews over circumcision for Timothy (Acts 16:3) and in Acts 18 he grew his hair long according to the Nazirite vow. If, therefore, he is now condemning Jewish practice as disgraceful (I Corinthians 11:4, 7), this seems more than strange. While it is not impossible for a new doctrine to be introduced in just one passage, it is odd that there is no mention of it elsewhere. What is mentioned elsewhere is a criticism of ritual practices and a stress on spiritual worship. If therefore this passage is enunciating a new ritual practice for all time, it appears to run counter to the usual New Testament approach.

(d) According to verse 7, only man (masculine) is the image of God; yet Genesis 1:26-27 states that man (i.e. male and female) is created in the image of God. We have chosen to take it that this is an indication that Paul is dealing only with Genesis 2. If, however, it is argued as commentators often assume, that Paul is drawing the term from Genesis 1, there is a very real problem.

(e) "Authority" in verse 10 is conventionally and oddly translated as "husband's authority". Elsewhere in the New Testament the word always means the authority of the person who possesses it, the authority to do something. In verse 10 the normal translation would mean that the woman has authority to pray and prophesy. (See the use of "authority" in I Corinthians 7:37 and 8:9.)

(f) No one seems to know what is meant by "because of the angels" (verse 10). Suggestions include: (i) "Sons of God" as in Genesis 6:2, who therefore could be tempted by attractive, unveiled, sisters; (ii) Angels in charge of order in the world (I Corinthians 4:9); (iii) Inter-ecclesial messengers, like the messengers (*angelloi*—the same word exactly) who were sent to Jesus by John the Baptist (Luke 7:24, cf. James 2:25).

(g) It seems strange to say that nature (verse 14) teaches that long hair is degrading to a man. When left uncut men's hair by nature grows long, and this receives approval in other parts of the Bible.

(h) What does verse 15 mean when it says that long hair is a woman's pride and is given to her for/instead of a covering? The words "to her" do not appear in many of the Greek manuscripts. The word "for" (*anti*) would normally be translated as "instead of", but because translators have felt that Paul could not have meant this, they have said "as" or "for" a covering.

(i) It is possible to translate verses 13-15 as follows:

Judge for yourselves. It is proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered, and nature itself does not teach you that if a man has long hair it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair it is her glory, for hair is given [to men and women] instead of a covering. If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no such practice [as headcovering]—nor do the churches of God. (I Corinthians 11:13-15)

Since this would obviously be saying the reverse of what has appeared previously, it is translated as a question. This could be taken as a straightforward statement if some of what has appeared previously consists of the arguments of those opposed to Paul and which he is quoting or paraphrasing in order to rebut. The sudden switch in the argument in verse 11 (or perhaps in the last part of verse 7) might indicate such a position, and the comments in I Timothy 2:9 and I Peter 3:3 about fancy hair

decoration imply that the hair of sisters could normally be seen in public. It is not easy to fit this in with their wearing veils; hence the alternative explanation that this passage is talking about a kind of hair style which symbolised the wife's married status.

(j) Verse 16 does not say "We recognise no other practice." It literally says: "We do not recognise such a practice." Such a practice as what? Headcovering other than by long hair? Again, this might be an indication that the earlier part of chapter 11 is from Paul's correspondent in Corinth.

It would certainly resolve the above difficulties if verses 3-10 contained the arguments of Paul's Judaising opponents perhaps referring to the Talmud.⁷ It would then be understood as follows: In verses 11-12 Paul refutes their points; in verse 13 he tells them to make their own judgment; in verses 14-15 (as translated above) he says that nature does not teach what is claimed, and in verse 16 he dismisses the whole argument by saying "...we do not recognise such a practice [as headcovering]"—we are not concerned with such externals. In several places in this letter Paul refers to things which have been reported to him or appears to echo the words of people in Corinth: I Corinthians 1:12; 4:8-10; 6:12-13; 8:1; 10:23. It would seem strange to quote from a Corinthian correspondent at such length, but a later hand with access to the original letter to Paul could have inserted it beside his reply, and it could subsequently have been incorporated in the text. Though this explanation would provide a neat solution, since there is no conclusive evidence we have sought in our expanded version to explain the passage as a unified whole.

In view of the large number of difficulties in this passage it is unwise to be dogmatic about its meaning. There have been many suggestions as to how to unravel the various problems of translation and interpretation, but the variety of answers produced indicates that no one knows with any certainty. This should not give us undue cause for concern for there are a number of other obscure sections in Paul's letters. Examples in I Corinthians are his reference to virgins in I Corinthians 7:25-28, or to baptism for the dead in I Corinthians 15:29. Presumably all these references were understood by those for whom they were intended. It is not surprising that readers in a different context cannot always understand what was originally meant. The Bible itself recognises the difficulty in some of Paul's writings:

...our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.

(II Peter 3:15-16)

What then do we do? The answer is to rely on basic, clearly established principles. Dr Thomas in *Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come* printed a number of recommendations (sent in by a brother) on how to understand the Bible. Amongst these were the following:

The truth in relation to any doctrine must be established by those passages which speak of

⁷ After writing the above we discovered this position argued by Alan Padgett in "Paul on Women in the Church—The Contradictions of Coiffure in I Corinthians 11.2-16", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 20 (1984).

it in positive and unequivocal language, and those texts belonging to the same subject but which only admit of inferential testimony, no inference should be drawn from them at variance with the truths already established by positive texts.

No doctrine should be predicated upon *mere* inference, neither upon one isolated text of Scripture. Any true doctrine will be found interspersed throughout the whole Bible.

(*Herakl* 1859, page 179)

I Corinthians 11 is "one isolated text of Scripture" and every explanation of it inevitably relies on inference. If we had we been intended by God to have clear directives on how we should dress, we could reasonably expect these to be explained for us in other parts of the Bible. Instead, we are guided away from ritualistic observances so beloved of the Pharisees and we are given principles. In this case they are that care must be taken not to give impressions of immorality or disrespect for marriage, and that sensitivity must be exercised regarding social custom where disregarding such may damage the preaching of the Gospel. These points are clear in themselves—and it is these which we need to know and practise.

IS A HAT A COVERING IN ACCORDANCE WITH I CORINTHIANS 11?

As far as can be observed, headcovering in I Corinthians 11 was either a veil which concealed the sister's head and thereby her beauty from masculine gaze, or a special type of hair-style which indicated her married state.

It may be that hats or bonnets at one time indicated married status and were sufficiently all-covering that they obscured the woman's beauty from the gaze of other men. That however has long ceased to be the position. A glance at the hats of many sisters indicates a careful choice of attractively designed hats. They do not cover and therefore conceal feminine beauty but are selected to make the sister look attractive. Fashion pages in magazines and newspapers demonstrate this clearly. For example a feature on hats in *The Daily Mail*, May 29th, 1989, was headed: "Brimming with style" and "The hat is back with a new elegance that is designed to turn heads for summer". The kinds of hats shown in the photographs are the same as can be seen at most ecclesial meetings and fraternal gatherings.

The change from the concealment of feminine beauty to its display and enhancement has been charted in books dealing with fashion.

Between the fall of the Roman Empire and the mid-14th century there is hardly anything that could be called 'fashion' at all. And then in a single generation, in the luxurious courts of France and Burgundy, and in England too, the scene was transformed. Instead of being clothed in shapeless garments which made it impossible to divine the body underneath, and with the head concealed by a veil, women began to exploit their natural charms. The three weapons of fashion were invented in a single generation and these were: tight-lacing, décolletage and elaborate head-dresses.

(James Laver, *Man, Myth & Magic*, page 1242)

Modern hats represent the opposite of veils, and the wearing of hats cannot be considered a fulfilment of I Corinthians 11.

Four responses are made to this conclusion:

(1) Although hats may not be ideal, it is important that a sister does wear

something on her head because there is a deep symbolism involved.

This response is unconvincing because of what is known about the meaning of veils in the ancient world. In view of the complete change in the meaning of hats in the modern world, the similarity between wearing a decorative hat and the first-century veils is no closer than infant sprinkling is to believer's baptism.

(2) Hats should not be worn. Instead sisters should wear a plain, simple piece of cloth.

This would acceptably avoid the appearance, as is sometimes commented, that some of our meetings look like fashion shows. But it would give an odd impression. Paul was asking that sisters wear *normal* clothing, not that they should do something odd and different. Surprisingly, when sisters have worn simple berets or a plain piece of cloth, it is reported that they have been told to wear a "proper hat" or "a hat with a brim"!

(3) "I just like seeing sisters wearing hats to the meeting and therefore they should do so."

This is a feeling from social custom rather than from a biblical analysis.

(4) The principle behind I Corinthians 11 is that brethren and sisters should not act in a way which brings marriage into disrepute, or gives the impression that Christians are immoral. The wearing of hats in our society is not relevant to this principle, and whether hats are worn or not is a matter for individual preference.

Clothing should be modest, and the obvious application for today is that normal, every-day clothing should be worn, not something elaborate or expensive. The idea that both sexes can wear attractive clothing is now acceptable and normal; we should not, however, confuse this with the practice of which Paul was speaking in I Corinthians.

Offence

Discussion over many years indicates a range of reasons which sisters give for wearing hats. Some believe that by so doing they are fulfilling I Corinthians 11. Others consider that hats are merely decorative, and wear them because they like dressing up when they come to the meeting. Others would prefer not to, but are pressurised into doing so because of the trouble some brethren and sisters are known to make when they see a sister without a hat. Others do so because those who favour wearing hats claim they are "offended" by any sister who does not. Often a degree of 'spiritual blackmail' is exerted, implying that sisters who do not wear hats are deliberately dishonouring Christ and jeopardising their place in the Kingdom.

"Offence" in the biblical sense means "driving someone away from Christ". It does not mean "being upset because someone has a slightly different understanding of Bible teaching". If some feel upset at a sister not wearing a hat, it is worth observing that it would be better to be upset at the manner in which modern hats are a reversal of the teaching in I Corinthians 11. Strangely, little concern seems to be shown about this reversal and almost no attempt can be seen to avoid wearing fashionable hats. The pressure exerted by some ecclesias who specify that sisters should wear "head coverings" reinforces the misapplication as hats are always considered acceptably to fit this description. This pressure also fails to take account of the genuine feeling by many that this method of interpreting I Corinthians 11 is

inconsistent with our normal Christadelphian approach to first-century customs and looks more like the man-made rules for which Jesus criticised the Pharisees.

The change from ancient customs to modern—from covering with a veil to obscure feminine beauty to the wearing of a hat to display it!



1st Century



1900s



1990s

Offence in the biblical sense of driving people away has several times been caused by those who insist on hats. We are not aware of anyone being driven away by those who believe that the wearing of hats is unbiblical. Since, however, strong feelings can be aroused on this subject, the only appropriate response is to ask sisters to act on conscience. Those who consider it right to wear a hat, should not be pressurised to refrain; those who think a plain scarf is more appropriate should not be told to wear a proper hat; those who think the correct application is nothing to do with modern head decoration should have their consciences respected and should not be pressurised.

Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. (James 4:17)

One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. (Romans 14:5)

No practice on this subject will please everybody. Tolerance, mutual respect and restraint are required from all of us.

Not a New Problem

In 1895 the question was discussed by Robert Roberts in *The Christadelphian*. It is interesting to note that he treated the matter entirely as a social issue:

That the question should be raised as a question of propriety in the East in Paul's day is not to be wondered at considering the extreme seclusion of the female sex in the social customs of those countries.

Brother Roberts was writing at a time when hats were worn almost universally in Britain. As can be seen from old photographs, hats were worn by young and old, in

[illegible]

⁸ "A well-dressed female who appeared out of doors without her hat, or indoors without a cap (if she was old enough to wear one), was assumed to be emotionally distracted, mentally disturbed or of loose morals." Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, page 177, commenting on 19th century Britain.

Hazael

The story of the dramatic encounter between Elisha and Hazael is told in 2 Kings 7:8-15. Hazael had come to Elisha with a magnificent present to enquire on behalf of his master, Ben Hadad, the king of Syria, whether he would recover from an illness. After Elisha had given his answer he stared at him, transfixed in horror, and then burst into tears. Hazael asked the reason and Elisha replied that he had just seen the terrible violence Hazael would inflict on Israel. "How could I ever be that powerful?" Hazael asked, "I'm just a nobody." Wilfred Lambert describes recent discoveries which shed light on how the nobody came into a position to fulfil the prophecy.

Hazael was the most effective and powerful of the kings of Damascus that the kings of Israel had to contend with in the 9th century B.C. Not surprisingly archaeology has turned up more inscriptions about him than for any other king of that town and century. Some of these inscriptions are either newly found or only recently understood, so it is proposed to give them here as no English presentation of them is so far available.

The political and economic situation of the times was that the kings of Damascus were representatives of the Aramaeans of Syria who had moved into the area about the time of the founding of the Hebrew monarchy. Damascus was a key city for two reasons. First, it lay at a vital point on major trade routes, both north-south and east-west, being situated in the valley leading through the mountains. Secondly, the kings of Damascus were vigorous and furthered their interests by making alliances as practicable with other Aramaean city states of Syria and with other kingdoms such as the Phoenicians and northern Israelites. Thus they could field an army with contingents from up to twenty states, but led by a Damascene commander. Hazael was first an officer of such a king.

The purpose of this allied army was two-fold. On the one hand it served to police the whole area so that trade could flourish. On the other hand it aimed to preserve and increase Damascus's area of influence by repelling hostile neighbours and by taking over enemy land and cities. There was of course plenty of trouble in Syria itself with making and breaking alliances, but the major problems were one north and one south. To the north the Assyrians were expanding westwards during the 9th century, first across the north-Mesopotamian plain, then across the Euphrates into Syria. First they were in north Syria, at which point Damascus was not involved, since it lay to the south of Syria, but by the time of Hazael the almost invincible Assyrian army even reached Damascus. To the south of Damascus lay the northern Israelite kingdom. Relations between it and Damascus were mostly hostile, with the northernmost parts of Israelite territory, especially Ramoth Gilead, being fought over frequently, but rarely Israel allied itself with Damascus, for a time under Ahab, as is known from Assyrian records and from I Kings 20.

The sources we have for this history and for the characters who played the major

roles in it come from three countries. First, the southern Hebrew kingdom was the cradle in which the Old Testament was compiled, though in part from northern kingdom documents, and where it was preserved. The books of Kings are the major source since Chronicles deals with the northern kingdom only in so far as it was involved with the southern. Secondly, the Assyrian records are important in that the kings of this period had records composed of their achievements, and these were written down during their reigns, some on clay tablets, others on stone. Though written to glorify the kings, the factual content is normally reliable. Failures are glossed over, but successes are not invented. It is fortunate for us that the king contemporary with Hazael, Shalmaneser III (not the king named in II Kings 17-18, who was Shalmaneser V), is known from many detailed royal inscriptions often dating events by the years of his reign. In addition there is such an abundance of Assyrian chronological material that, with the help of a mention of a solar eclipse, which modern astronomy can date to June 15, 763 B.C., it is possible to date the 35-year reign of Shalmaneser III to B.C. 859-824, with a possible maximum error of two years. This is considerably simpler than the Biblical material, since the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah abounds with thorny problems, while there is no eclipse given which could be dated by modern astronomy. Thirdly, the kings of Damascus also supply a few inscriptions.

Kings of this time ruling over Damascus, both in the Bible and in Syrian inscriptions, were usually called 'Ben-Hadad' ('son of (the storm god) Hadad', Bar-Hadad in Aramaic). It is a title rather than a name, like Pharaoh for kings of Egypt. Thus Hazael, a real name, already marks its bearer as a usurper. The story of his coming to power through the anointing by a Hebrew prophet is told in I Kings 19:15-18 and II Kings 8:7-15. Elijah received the commission to do this, though his successor Elisha in fact did it. The Hebrew narrative is detailed and dramatic, while the Assyrian account, on a stone statue, is briefer:

Adad-idri passed away; Hazael, son of a nobody, took the throne.

The statue inscription, which alone offers this detail, is undated, but other inscriptions of Shalmaneser III record his fighting against Adad-idri (the Biblical Ben-Hadad) in his 6th, 10th, 11th, and 14th years, but against Hazael in his 18th and 21st years. Thus Hazael came to the throne of Damascus at some point between the 18th and 21st years, that is between B.C. 845 and 841. The record for the 18th year states:

In my 18th year, for the 16th time I crossed the Euphrates. Hazael of Damascus trusted in the might of his troops and called up his troops in full number. He made Saniru, a mountain peak facing Lebanon, his stronghold. I felled 16020 of his battle troops with the sword and captured 1121 chariots and 470 cavalry together with his camp. To save his life he fled. I pursued him and shut him up in his royal city Damascus. I cut down his orchards and burnt his standing grain with fire.

Clearly Hazael was no match for the Assyrian army, since he suffered the indignity of having his enemy right on his doorstep, but Shalmaneser did not attempt a long

siege of Damascus, and after destroying crops left the district. During the same campaign Shalmaneser records:

I received the tribute of Ba'li-manzer of the Tyrians and of Jehu, son of Omri.

('Son of Omri' is abbreviated for 'son of the House of Omri'.) The Bible does not record this paying of tribute by Jehu, though it is also recorded pictorially on the so-called Black Obelisk in the British Museum, where the prostrating figure need not be Jehu himself, but is no doubt his envoy. A reason for Jehu's act can be surmised. When he seized the throne of Samaria he was a military officer, fighting the Aramaeans over Ramoth Gilead. Thus he and Shalmaneser had a common enemy: Damascus. The Assyrian king had failed to take Damascus and was thus unlikely to have any immediate plan of moving against Israel, so to a worldly man like Jehu it would seem expedient to send the great king tribute to cement an alliance aimed at Damascus, an act which Shalmaneser interpreted as submission.

It was only in his 21st year that Shalmaneser next gave his attention to Hazeal, and the only completely preserved account (on the Black Obelisk in fact) briefly reports:

In my 21st year I crossed the Euphrates for the 21st time. I advanced against the cities of Hazeal of Damascus. I captured four of his cities. I received the tribute of the people of Tyre, Sidon and Byblos.

Another statue contains a longer version, but it is badly preserved and poorly published. The only certain extra item is that a king Ba'il of a town apparently called Danabu was defeated. Thus the second campaign of Shalmaneser against Hazeal seems to have been less successful than the first. This time there is no mention of Damascus being under threat. And that was the last time in Shalmaneser's 35 years that his army made incursions into southern Syria. It is also noteworthy that Jehu failed on this occasion to pay more tribute. A study of the chronology of the period suggests that the tribute of Jehu was paid at the very beginning of his reign, when his position at home was potentially insecure. Three years later he was firmly established as king, and Hazeal had during those years become more powerful and posed a greater threat to Israel (II Kings 10: 32-33), so when Jehu observed that Hazeal was standing up well to further Assyrian attacks, he presumably reasoned that Shalmaneser could do nothing to help him, and so he refrained from sending further tribute.

There is surviving one relic of Shalmaneser's victories over Hazeal. A bead was excavated at the Assyrian capital Ashur, with the following inscription:

Booty from the temple of (the god) Sheru of (the city) Malakha, a royal city of Hazeal of Damascus, which Shalmaneser, son of Ashur-nasir-pal, king of Assyria, brought within the walls of Ashur.

Nothing is known of the deity Sheru or of his city Malakha.

In Aramaic there are two identical inscriptions on bronze horse-gear: a blinker excavated in the last century in the Greek Eretria but only recently understood, and a frontlet excavated at a Greek shrine on the Aegean island of Samos. Near-Eastern bronzes were valued in Classical Greece. They read:

This was given by Hadad to our lord Hazael, from Umq, in the year that our lord crossed the river.

Hadad is of course the storm god, Umq a place, and 'the river' the Euphrates. Hazael, like Shalmaneser, boasts of crossing the river Euphrates, meaning of course in the opposite direction, and since the Assyrians at this time regarded this area as their territory, it was an open challenge to Shalmaneser. A piece of ivory bed-decoration excavated at Arslan Tash in northern Syria is inscribed in Aramaic, which has been read with some difficulty:

[This was off]ered by Amma to our lord Hazael in the year that H[...] was [cap]tured.

Amma was presumably a ruler and H[...] no doubt a city. Another fragment of carved ivory, excavated in the Assyrian city of Calah (Nimrud), offers the end only of another Aramaic inscription:

....]... our [10]rd Hazael.

Finally, a stele of "Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu'ash" refers to an attacking coalition of 16 kings, headed by "Bar-Hadad, son of Hazael, king of Aram", showing that even the enemies of Damascus recognised that Hazael and son were kings not just of the city Damascus, but of the greater part of Syria.

Thus the finds of archaeology open up vistas of fuller understanding of the Biblical text, which, carefully used, will have their proper place in our faith and preaching.



In the New Testament there is no talk of anyone but God being 'naturally immortal'; if man is to survive death it must be because God in his grace gives him a resurrection body analogous to Christ's resurrection body. This resurrection body will be given not at death but at the parousia. ...it has now become a commonplace among scholars and popular writers that resurrection rather than immortality is the proper Christian description of the nature of the after-life. And it has obvious advantages: it is more akin to biblical language, it stresses that life after death is a gift of God rather than a natural 'possession' of man, it asserts that our personality and individuality will be maintained in the after-life.

Christian Hope and the Future of Man, Stephen Travis (1980)

The Book of Job.

"Hast thou considered my servant, Job?"

By Cyril Tennant, *The Christadelphian*, 1991

Reviewed by Wilfred Lambert

With a new book of this kind, which is tastefully designed and printed, three questions have to be asked. Does it express itself simply and clearly, is it reliable in matters of fact, and what stand does it take on matters of opinion? With regard to the first all praise is due to the author for his lucid style. No attentive reader will be in doubt as to the author's meaning. On the second point regret has to be expressed that the book is not infrequently wrong in factual matters, some affecting the main content so that it can only mislead those who may rely on it for information. On the third point, the work labours under limitations from the second, so that although the author reveals himself as perceptive and intelligent, his conclusions cannot always be followed.

The plan of the book is well conceived. After two short introductory chapters about the text and the man Job (pp. 1-7), six chapters follow discussing the general thought of the work and particular points, including Job's belief (or otherwise) in resurrection and 'Satan' in the book (pp. 8-61). This is preferable to attempting to discuss these matters in the form of notes on the text, since the evidence for many of the issues discussed is spread over a number of passages. The remainder, pp. 64-106, is devoted to brief notes elucidating particular words and phrases.

Unfortunately, the opening sentence of the book contains a major error of fact: "authorities agree that the Book of Job is written in the earliest form of the Hebrew language, in a style which also denotes a very early period and is possibly the oldest of the books of Scripture." Nothing could be further from the truth. Authorities find the language of the book an insoluble problem and there is no agreement at all. The opinions of four English-language writers on the subject are now given, selected for their expertise in Hebrew and related ancient languages. S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (1921), p. lxx state: "the language of the book is late, though not so late as that of some other books of the Old Testament." C.J. Ball, *The Book of Job* (1922), while devoting most of his 479-page commentary to study of the language assigns the book to the period of the Persian Empire entirely from its thought content. M. H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible, Job* (1965), discusses the date on pp. xxxii-xl without using the evidence of language as a factor. He devotes pp. xlvii-l to the problems of the language, summarising others' very varied ideas including the suggestions that Job is translated from Arabic or Aramaic, but in the end reaches no conclusion and offers no opinion of his own. F. I. Andersen's *Job* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 1976) comes closest to the book under review in general approach (its author is a conservative Protestant) and deals fully and authoritatively with its language on pp. 55-61. He comments "The language in which Job is written presents many

peculiarities. These have baffled scholars, who have attempted to account for them in several quite different ways." Like Pope, Andersen does not reach any conclusion about the language, but taking all factors into account he concludes that the book could have been written at any time between Moses and Ezra, and prefers a Solomonic date for the original form of the book with an editing under Josiah (p. 63).

The author's misplaced confidence in his Hebrew extends beyond the first sentence. On p. 5 he rejects the idea that "Job" in Genesis 46 :13 is the sufferer because the person meant appears in Numbers 26:23, 24 and I Chronicles 7:1 as "Jashub". The author in this case is correct, because the vowelless, consonantal Hebrew in Genesis has omitted the one Hebrew letter for *sh* by simple scribal error, but he is evidently unaware that in Hebrew the name Job is in fact *Ijjob*, not Job, so the actual 'Job' of Genesis is a different name. In the notes on the text of the book (pp. 64-106) one Hebrew word on average is quoted on every page, but often with most unfortunate 19th century linguistic misconceptions. Thus on 1:21 the Hebrew root *brk* "bless" is said to be derived from a "primary root" 'kneel'. This 19th century concept of primary roots is no longer accepted, and in any case this one cannot be defended because the noun 'knee' is *brk* in all Semitic languages, while the verb 'bless' varies between *brk* and *krb*. On 3:8 the root of 'curse' is given as *naqab*, while in fact it is *qbb*, which does not mean "strike through," "puncture". The connection of the roots *nqb* "puncture" and *qbb* "curse" is pure speculation. On 5:3 the same root is wrongly given this time as *nabob*, with the same wrong meaning "puncture". On 9:9 the Hebrew *chesil* (the constellation Orion) is said to have been identified by the Assyrians with Nimrod. Since neither *chesil* nor Nimrod ever occur in the Assyrian language this is plainly false. On 38:31-33 Mazzaroth is explained as "the signs of the Zodiac", but if this is correct then the author's dating of the book to the Patriarchal period is wrong because the Zodiac originated in the Hellenistic period. More examples could be given, but the note on 22:16 will be our last. It is said that "an asterisk marks this verse in the Hebrew Bible" as the middle of the book, by verse count. But 'asterisk' is a Greek word meaning "little star" and had a use in Greek MSS. In Hebrew MSS of Job there is a marginal note at this point: "half of the book", and no asterisk.

The author is not better informed on ancient institutions than on ancient languages. Job's "fields", we are told on p. 8, were "stocked" with so many domestic animals. This makes Job into an English gentleman farmer, but ancient Near Eastern pastoralists had of course no "fields". Throughout the book the factual information is a century or more out of date, as is unintentionally explained in the "Acknowledgements" on p. vii. The books principally used for understanding the text were commentaries by C. P. Carey of 1858 and A. B. Davidson (various editions in the 1870's and 1880's). For ideas the author owes much to G. C. Morgan, a popular Congregational preacher, but not an original scholar, presumably to his book *The Answers of Jesus to Job* (1964).

In discussing the book generally the author is less frequently to be faulted. His explanation of the suffering is that God planned it so that Job would be forced to

submit to God's will and acknowledge that his righteousness was not on a level with God's. Part of this is plainly stated in the book and cannot be disputed, but part is not. Our author draws on the New Testament, not Job, for statements that all men are sinners, while the book of Job consistently implies that Job had done nothing to merit his downfall. The passages from Romans and James (quoted on p. 21) do not fit Job as described. Job's only fault in the book was his attempt to justify himself before God, when he should simply have acknowledged God's greatness. The problem of why God chose to afflict a "blameless and upright" man the author answers in these words, "man must not question the ways of God" (p. 21). Of course from a New Testament perspective fuller answers can be given.

The author concludes in Ch. 7 that Satan in this book is an angel, a defensible position so far as Job is concerned, but one which is much harder to sustain if Michaiah's vision (1 Kings 22) is considered relevant. The latter has a similar divine council and *agent provocateur*, though the name Satan is not used. In Ch. 6 it is argued that Job did believe in resurrection, but the treatment of the relevant passages is superficial and too much dependent on the A.V. (Note that Carey's book includes "translated on the basis of the Authorised Version" in its title.) The A.V. rendering of 19:23-27 follows the Latin Vulgate much more than the Hebrew and is heavily weighted for the Christological interpretation, but it should be noted that the passage is never used as referring to Jesus and resurrection in the New Testament.

At a time when members of the public interested in the Bible can buy or borrow books, or attend evening classes or day schools, which, however doctrinally astray, will often be well informed on new knowledge acquired, often by archaeological finds in Bible lands, over the last century, it is a matter for deep regret that this book cannot hold its own in such company. Informed readers will be put off by the false information. The publisher, who "commends" it on p. vi, also has not fulfilled his responsibility.

FOOTNOTES TO EDITORIAL

1. *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England*, H J MacLachlan. p. 1 (1950)
2. *Christadelphianism Astray from the Bible*, A J Pollock (No date)
3. *Some Modern Faiths*, M C Burrell and J S Wright. IVP. (1973)
4. *The Incarnation*, Brian Hebblethwaite p. 2 (1987)
5. *Jesus: The Unanswered Questions*, John Bowden p. 89 (1988)
6. *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, Colin Gunton p. 2 (1991)
7. *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ*, John Knox p. 106 (1968)
8. *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology*, Klaus Scholder pp. 40,41 (1966), ET (1990)