
THE

Endeavour

MAGAZINE

November 1992

No 88

The Endeavour Magazine

For Christian Thought and Action

November 1992

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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: Pride & Humility

The Bible so frequently warns against pride that this must be a sin into which believers as well as unbelievers are inclined to fall. Indeed, we who seek to serve the Lord are perhaps more inclined to this failing, for the maintenance of high standards encourages comparison with lower ones, and can therefore easily lead us to make invidious comparisons between ourselves and other people.

The classic case is described by Jesus: the Pharisee and the tax collector who went up to pray at the Temple.

"I thank you, God, that I am not greedy, dishonest or an adulterer like everybody else. I thank you that I am not like that tax collector over there!" (Luke 18:11-12 *)

No doubt he was not like certain other people—in some of the vices he mentioned—but, according to Jesus, the Pharisee had no right to make these comparisons. Nor do we. Jesus told this parable, Luke says, "to people who were sure of their own goodness and despised everybody else." It is desperately easy for any of us to slip into this way of thinking. One Sunday, on the way to the meeting, we passed a very long queue at a theatre box office. People had queued for hours to obtain tickets for one performance by a pop group called "Genesis". The biblical name prompted comparisons between ourselves and the people in the queue. "They don't mind queuing for a pop concert, but they are not interested in worshipping God!" So, self-righteously, we continued to the meeting.

Our comment might have been correct, as in some respects was the Pharisee's, but were we entitled to think it? Such judgments when made by us cause us to despise other people; God alone can judge. One reason why we may not regard others in this manner is because in our own way we do the same as other people. We might or might not go to the theatre, but we all pursue with enthusiasm and financial commitment various interests whether music, gardening, photography, art exhibitions, fine-food, or home-decorating. Hopefully we put the interests of others and of service to God high on our priorities. But who are we to say that the same might not apply in other areas of life to many of those we saw in the queue? God knows the proper facts; we can only guess.

Each one should judge his own conduct. If it is good, then he can be proud of what he himself has done, without having to compare it with what someone else has done. For everyone has to carry his own load. (Galatians 6:4-5)

There is a place for pride in a job well done, but here we must proceed with caution. The stress in these two verses is on judging one's own conduct as distinct from making comparisons with that of others. It is a question of how far up the ladder we each progress compared to where we started, not compared to someone else. There is a need for the kind of pride which we call self-confidence, for without self-confidence it is impossible to use properly the talents we have been given. Someone with no self-confidence is virtually paralysed into inaction. We need to make a realistic assessment of ourselves, put that into action in God's service, but always remain humble in the recognition that all we have comes from God.

... because of God's gracious gift to me, I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you should. Instead, be modest in your thinking, and judge yourself

* Quotations are from the Good News Bible

according to the amount of faith that God has given you. We have many parts in the one body ... we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us. If our gift is to speak God's message, we should do it according to the faith that we have; if it is to serve, we should serve; if it is to teach, we should teach; if it is to encourage others, we should do so...

(Romans 12:3-8)

Here is the challenge to each one of us to use to the full in God's service the various abilities He has given us. But we must still guard against self-pride. If we are able to do any of the jobs of service listed, that does not mean we should be too proud to do ordinary jobs. "Do not be proud, but accept humble duties. Do not think of yourselves as wise." (Romans 12:16) Even doing humble duties, of course, has the risk that we take an inverted pride in being humble. "What a good servant of Christ I am! I don't mind cleaning the front doorstep of the meeting room!"

Because we seek high standards in ecclesial life, we also risk spiritual pride. It is not unusual to hear or read scornful remarks about the churches accompanied by adverse comment on their levels of commitment or understanding compared to our own. It is easy to slip into a similarly condemnatory frame of mind concerning different ecclesias, especially if they are far away and we have heard occasional adverse comments about them. And the Pharisee-tax collector approach is an ever present risk when brothers or sisters don't match the dedication or enthusiasm we feel appropriate.

"Then let each esteem his brother
Better than himself to be."

These words from hymn 268 might strike us as strange. In obvious respects some brethren and sisters are better than others, some not, so why should we esteem others to be better than ourselves even if they *appear* to us not to be? The hymn is thinking of how we appear in God's sight, and of that we can do no other than to be personally humble and, again, leave God as the judge.

Pride leads to destruction, and arrogance to downfall.

It is better to be humble and stay poor than to be one of the arrogant and get a share of their loot!

(Proverbs 16:18-19)

The context of this verse may not be quite our own, but the general comment drawn from it that "pride goes before a fall" is applicable to all the situations of which we have been thinking. Pride is inappropriate because it raises our own self-importance and downgrades that of others, and this arises not infrequently along with ignorance of the facts. Our fall comes when we suddenly find from things we hear or read or see that other people do indeed surpass us. The commitment shown by people in churches around us can often put ours to shame; the love and care shown in the brotherhood within all types of ecclesias is frequently of the highest order; and brethren and sisters whose apparent commitment or enthusiasm is not obvious or in the areas we think most appropriate are often working commendably in avenues of service to Christ of which we may only occasionally hear.

"Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble towards one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had.... of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant.... He was humble and walked the path of obedience"

(Philippians 2:3-11)

Old Testament Stones, New Testament Meanings

Les Boddy asks whether our traditional interpretation of "the stone cut out without hands" (Daniel 2:34) is justified by New Testament teaching.

The Old Testament contains many references to rocks and stones, some of which were so important to Jesus and his apostles that they speak of them in several passages in the New Testament. The rocks and stones in question are to be found in such passages as Exodus 17, Numbers 20, Psalm 118, Isaiah 8 & 28 and Daniel 2. Of these the best known in our community has been, without question, the reference in Daniel 2 to a stone taken out of the cliff without hands and which crushes the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. However, any reader of the New Testament who notices that both Jesus and his apostles make little or no use of Daniel 2 is entitled to ask why, then, should it be so important to our understanding of the purpose of God? We should be prepared to recognise that, since neither Jesus nor his apostles explain to us their understanding of Daniel 2, we are certainly in danger of making this passage mean what we want it to mean. Is Daniel 2 overworked in our community and by others? Would Jesus approve of our understanding of it and of the use we traditionally make of it? Does it matter to us whether or not our views bear that stamp of approval of our Lord Jesus Christ? If they are not so approved we need to know it. It is the purpose of this article to explore how Jesus and his apostles understood the above references to rocks and stones in the Old Testament and, in particular, to examine any evidence that there may be relating to their understanding of Daniel 2.

The stone which the builders rejected

First, let us consider Psalm 118 which is presented in the Good News Bible as a prayer of thanks for victory. Perhaps, initially, it was an individual's prayer of thanksgiving celebrating his deliverance from personal enemies. However, as the last of the Hallel (Praise) psalms (113 to 118), sung at all the feasts, and as the special psalm for the Feast of Tabernacles, it would be very well known to all Jews. The word Hosanna (save now), from verse 25 of the Psalm, became a kind of catchword in connection with the ritual of the Feast, the seventh day of the Feast being known as Hosanna day. (Oesterley, *The Psalms*, p 481). It should therefore come as no surprise to us that Jesus and his apostles refer to this Psalm frequently and it can be found quoted in all four gospels, Acts, Hebrews and 1 Peter. The quote from verse 6 in Hebrews 13:6: "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"* is encouragement to us all to be bold and to put our trust in the Lord because He is good and his love is eternal, as Psalm 118 says repeatedly. However it is the quotes from verses, 22, 23, 25 and 26 that are of more immediate interest to us in this article.

Towards the end of his ministry, Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem. The gospel records that his arrival on a donkey caused a great stir among the people who greeted him in the words of Psalm 118:25,26: "Praise to David's Son! God bless

* Quotations are from the Good News Bible

him who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise be to God" (Matthew 21:9). He went on to do and say things which scandalised and antagonised the Jewish leaders. They were eager to know by what authority he said and did these things. The people had already asked "Who is he?" (Matthew 21:10). This was the burning question of the day and was precisely the problem the leaders had to wrestle with for they could not allow him to go unchallenged. After all, this was Jerusalem, this was the Temple of God and they were probably members of the Sanhedrin. Who would dare to challenge their arrangements and their authority? The Jews of Jesus' day were very proud of Jerusalem and its Temple of stone (Matthew 24:1, Mark 13:1). Anyone seeing today's Jews chanting and bowing in front of what remains of that Temple might be forgiven for thinking that they worship the stones. It was precisely in the Temple in Jerusalem that Jesus gives some teaching concerning Old Testament stones and so, in the words of one author "himself starts the stone rolling" (J R Harris, quoted by R Longenecker).

Jesus is challenged by the chief priests and elders to declare the source of his authority (Matthew 21:23). In his typical, enigmatic, style Jesus instead of replying to their question, puts a question to them concerning John the Baptist. They refuse to answer and so he too refuses to answer but he does go on to challenge them with two parables, the parable of the two sons and the parable of the tenants in the vineyard. He is trying to warn them that they are in grave danger of making a tremendous mistake; unless they heed the warning in the Psalmist's words (Psalm 118:22,23; Matthew 21:42) they were about to miss what God was doing under their very noses. The kingdom of God was being opened up to them, the Saviour of the world was in their midst but, like the Psalmist's stone he was about to be rejected as worthless by those who should have recognised his qualities. Tax collectors and prostitutes were going into the Kingdom of God ahead of them (Matthew 21:31) but they were well on the way to rejecting and killing the son of the owner of the vineyard. They knew that Jesus was talking about them (21:45) but this only confirmed them in their obstinate refusal to recognise his authority. They tried to arrest him but were afraid of the crowds.

"Who is he?" was the burning question of the day; it had set the crowds buzzing. They thought much more of him than did the leaders. Jesus clearly presents himself as the stone which the builders rejected as worthless but which turned out to be the most important of all. Let it be noted that it is Jesus himself who first draws attention to the stone of Psalm 118 as a symbol of himself and of his treatment at the hand of the Jewish leaders and so starts Old Testament stones rolling through the New Testament with Christian meanings.

As in many other respects, Peter is soon found to be repeating the teaching of his Lord. In Acts 4:11, full of the Holy Spirit, Peter tells the leaders of Jewry that Jesus is the one of whom the scriptures speak in Psalm 118:22:

Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us. (Acts 4:12).

Here then we have confirmation that the first Christians saw Jesus as the stone of Psalm 118, pointed in that direction by their Master.

Three other stones

When Simon was first taken to Jesus by his brother Andrew, Jesus looked at Simon and said:

"Your name is Simon son of John, but you will be called Cephas." (This is the same as Peter and means "a rock.") (John 1:42)

There is nothing surprising then about Peter taking a special interest in rocks and stones and in his first Epistle he expands on this theme in some detail in chapter 2. Referring to the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 4 he says:

Come to the Lord the living stone rejected by men as worthless but chosen by God as valuable! Here he is putting together ideas from Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 28:16, both of which he goes on to quote, along with another stone quotation from Isaiah 8:14, 15.

The stone that the builders rejected (Psalm 118) is a valuable stone, the cornerstone of Zion, to those that believe (Isaiah 28) but a stone of stumbling for those who do not believe (Isaiah 8). It could not be made more clear that all three stone prophecies find their fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to him, as the living stone, that we are invited to come, as living stones ourselves to be used in building the spiritual temple where we will serve as holy priests, to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2:5).

Paul too makes use of these stone prophecies from Isaiah 8 and 28 in Romans 9 and 10 where, full of sadness, he acknowledges that his own people have stumbled over the stumbling stone because they did not depend on faith but on works (9:32). In Romans 10 he says

If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved. For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved.

The scripture says, "Whosoever believes in him will not be disappointed." (Romans 10:9-11) This is another quotation from Isaiah 28:16.

The rock in the wilderness

Paul also sees in Jesus the New Testament fulfilment of the smitten rock of Exodus 17:6, Numbers 20. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 he says:

I want you to remember my brothers what happened to our ancestors who followed Moses. They were all under the protection of the cloud and all passed safely through the Red Sea. In the cloud and in the sea they were all baptised as followers of Moses. All ate the same spiritual bread and drank the same spiritual drink. They drank from the spiritual rock that went with them; and that rock was Christ himself. But even then God was not pleased with most of them and so their dead bodies were scattered over the desert.

So far we have four Old Testament rocks or stones that are given New Testament meanings (Psalms 118:22; Isaiah 8:4 & 28:16; Exodus 17:6) and uniformly they are all seen to be given their Christian fulfilment in Jesus himself. For the unbeliever he is a worthless rock, rejected by the builders and become a stone of stumbling. For the believer however, he is the chosen stone, the foundation stone of Zion, the living stone, a source of spiritual nourishment. Jesus has been all of these things to believers for the past 2,000 years. Then what of Daniel 2? To see how this fits into the picture we need to return to the gospels.

In Matthew 21, Mark 12 and Luke 20 we find Jesus telling the parable of the wicked husbandmen, followed in each case by his quotation of Psalm 118:22, referring to the stone rejected by the builders. There are no further references to the

stone passages in Mark but Luke in 20:18 adds "Everyone who falls on that stone will be cut to pieces; and if that stone falls on someone, it will crush him to dust." (These words also appear in some MSS in Matthew 21:44 but the manuscript evidence against their presence is strong and they are frequently relegated to a footnote, e.g. in GNB, REB and RSV.) Whether these are words spoken by Jesus or comments by the evangelists may not be too clear but, whatever the case may be, we have here a conflation of the stone references to be found in Isaiah 8:14,15 and Daniel 2:35.

Isaiah 8:11-15 is a warning to Isaiah not to follow the people in their waywardness and not to be afraid of what they fear. In the gospels, the passage is used to reinforce the warning encapsulated in Psalm 118:22, a warning particularly directed to the leaders of Jewry not to miss what God was doing in their day and generation. But did they have eyes to see the marvellous works of the Lord? Of course, the same challenge and warning are directed at any reader of the gospel records.

The difficulties of Daniel 2:34 & 35

Daniel 2 is well known in our community and some readers may be wondering why there should be any difficulty with its interpretation since the chapter contains the record of both the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation by Daniel. However, the problem lies in *when* we understand the stone to hit the image, turning it into dust and then growing itself to be a mountain that covered the whole earth. Many are still waiting for the stone to strike the image and see this as a still-future event linked with the second coming of Christ. It must be emphatically stated that there is no evidence whatever in the New Testament that either Jesus or his disciples understood Daniel 2 in this way. In the many references to the second coming there is no suggestion that Jesus then comes in fulfilment of the stone prophecy of Daniel 2. If this understanding of Nebuchadnezzar's dream were as important to the Christian understanding of the developing purpose of God as seems to be implied by the repeated reference to it in our literature and public addresses, should we not have expected to find some clear indications of this in the New Testament? The absence of such evidence should at least make us question the correctness of a view that has no dominical or apostolic approval.

The *only* allusions we have in the New Testament to the stone of Daniel 2 are to be found in Matthew 21:44 and Luke 20:18. Now, just as we have already seen that Jesus is the rock of offence, the stone of stumbling, the rock rejected by the builders, the nourishing rock in the wilderness, and all this at his first coming, we do have here, in the same context, evidence that Jesus was seen to be the stone of Daniel 2 also, and again at his first coming. "And if that stone falls on someone, it will crush him to dust" would otherwise cease to be an urgent warning to the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day, or to anyone else since that time. But this is surely the point of the allusion in Matthew and Luke, to be just such a warning, and this must not be lost sight of. If it does not square with our previous understanding of Daniel 2, with its fulfilment at the second coming, perhaps that understanding needs to change to accommodate what little, but significant, evidence is contained in the New Testament. Otherwise our views have neither dominical nor apostolic authority and are just as likely to be wrong as the Jews were about the first coming. There is certainly no case for insisting that all true believers should share belief in a still

future fulfilment of Daniel 2:34.

Is it so difficult with the eye of faith, opened by the Lord and his apostles, to see that the first coming of Jesus did smash the image to pieces (as shown by the more detailed evidence in *The Christian Exposition of the Book of Daniel* by the late brother David Pitt Francis) and begin the process of the stone growing to a mountain that covered the whole earth? Much of Christ's teaching on the kingdom of God makes it clear that its new and everlasting form spoken of in Daniel 2:44 did in fact begin at his first coming. For example, in Matthew 21:31, after the parable of the two sons, Jesus chided the leaders with the words "...the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you". Later, at Matthew 21:43, he tells them that the kingdom of God will be taken from them and given to people who will produce the proper fruits.

There is no sense in referring these kingdom sayings, and many others, to the second coming. They concerned directly the people that Jesus was preaching to and have concerned anyone else prepared to listen since that time. Jesus challenges us all in the here and now to enter into it by faith as part of our present Christian experience. To the church of God in Colosse, Paul writes in the same vein:

May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from his glorious power, so that you may be able to endure everything with patience. And with joy give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to have your share of what God has reserved for his people in the kingdom of God. He rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us safe into the kingdom of his dear Son by whom we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven.

(Colossians 1:11-14)

It is only *our* insistence on what *we think* the fulfilment of Daniel 2:34 ought to involve that keeps us from seeing the possibility that Jesus at his first coming was the stone striking the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, just as he was the fulfilment of the other stone prophecies referred to in the New Testament. Perhaps the major reason why there is virtually no evidence that Daniel 2 featured in the preaching and teaching of Jesus and his apostles, in contrast to the position in our community, is that for them it had ceased to have any relevance for the future, having been fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus.

John Calvin, in his commentary on Daniel, explains how the Jews recognise Daniel 2 as a Messianic prophecy but seek to avoid the conclusion that Jesus was the Messiah by choosing to identify the iron stage of the image with the Turkish Empire instead of the Roman. However they do expect the kingdom to begin when their Christ appears as the prophecy seems to indicate. In believing the kingdom of Christ to be wholly future, revealed and inaugurated at what to us is the second coming of Christ, we join ranks with the Jews who still await the coming of their Messiah to fulfil Daniel 2. Is this wise? ... to join ranks with the Jews? The track record of the Jews in anticipating and recognising what God does is hardly encouraging. Have we not learned the lesson from the mistakes of Jewish interpretation in the past?

Brother Thomas in *Elpis Israel* (pages 302-304) maintains that the kingdom cannot possibly begin until David is resurrected and so not before the second coming of Christ. He bases this assumption on 2 Samuel 7:16 which in the AV reads: "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." However the LXX and modern versions such as the RSV, NEB, REB and GNB do not support this reading. LXX: "And his house shall be

made sure, and his kingdom for ever before me and his throne shall be set up for ever." GNB: "You will always have descendants and I will make your kingdom last for ever. Your dynasty will never end." 1 Samuel 7:12 says clearly, "When you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will make one of your sons king and I will keep his kingdom strong." In the light of this verse and of Peter's statement in Acts 2, is it not reasonable to maintain that the fulfilment, the kingdom, is to begin while David sleeps, i.e. at Christ's first coming when his Father made him both Lord and Christ (King)? (See my article in *Endeavour* No 86, November 1991.)

Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation were surely put on record to encourage the Jews not to lose heart in their extremity. They would see kingdom succeed kingdom, from Babylon to Persia to Greece and Rome, but could nevertheless know that none of them, with their hostility to God and Israel, were to be permanent and that God intended to set up his own kingdom before long. As Heaton says at page 133: "The writer expects the inauguration of this destructive and indestructible kingdom (cf 7:14) in the days of those kings (2:44), that is in his own age, as a blessing to Israel in the extremity of her suffering"—and not 2,000 years later.

This was truly what Jesus accomplished at his first coming. The dream suggests that the kingdom would begin in a small way represented by a stone "contemptible and abject before the world" (Calvin) and so it was. That this would be the way the kingdom would be introduced and grow is indicated in some of Jesus' kingdom parables, e.g. the mustard seed of Matthew 13:31. The irony is that many of Christ's disciples do not recognise it as the beginning, let alone the rest of the world. What the world cannot see and what the Jews cannot see, we should be able to see with the eye of faith. We should not be like the Jews waiting for God to start something that he started 2,000 years ago when his Son showed us the Father and inaugurated the kingdom that is not of this world and will endure for ever.

Readers of this article may wish to consult the following authors who deal with its main theme.

John Calvin, *Daniel*, Banner of Truth Trust, 1966 (pages 161-192)

C H Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, Fontana, 1965 (pages 35, 41, 60)

E E Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, Oliver & Boyd, 1957 (pages 86-90)

E W Heaton, *The Book of Daniel*, SCM, 1956 (page 133)

R Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, Eerdmans, 1975
(page 203)

C F D Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament*, Black, 1966 (page 71)

David Pitt Francis, *A Christian Interpretation of the Book of Daniel*

R V G Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, SCM, 1946 (page 29)

J Wilmot, *Inspired Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*, Reiner Publications,
USA, (pages 128, 129)

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"Within the Christian understanding of resurrection from the dead, God overcomes the nothingness of death with a new act of creation. In contrast to the Greek view of immortality, we have no guarantee in ourselves of defeating death, no built-in survival capsule of an immortal soul."

Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation* (1989), page 117

Workshop Reports

At the Christadelphian Summer School last July one evening consisted of a revolving workshop. Brethren and sisters with experience of helping in a number of different areas gave a short talk followed by discussion to a small group of workshop-participants. They did this four times within the two-hour session, thus enabling a choice of quick introductory workshops on a wide variety of issues. Topics covered were Alzheimer's Disease, Caring for Old People, Mental Handicap, M.E., Speech Therapy & Audiology, Oxfam, Caring for One Another. We print here contributions compiled from material supplied by some of the workshop leaders.

Caring for Old People

The Workshop took the form of four different groups and each one commenced with a short introduction, leaving the main emphasis on discussion and problem solving. It was agreed on many occasions that a lot of the "problems" of aging cannot be solved and will not go away. They have to be faced and accepted.

The keyword both for carer and the elderly is adaptability, but we have to remember that as one gets older the ability to adapt becomes increasingly eroded, as do a goodly number of other abilities, which leaves the carer to do most adapting.

Certain points were raised in all of the groups and appeared to be the cause of most general concern. Obviously no specific cases could be discussed in groups, although several situations were discussed privately afterwards.

Memory loss is one of the most difficult and it was suggested that for as long as possible, if the older person has to make at least one or two decisions each day, however simple, and has to recall accurately one or two facts from the previous few days, it will help to keep those centres in the brain active.

Mobility is important. Completing simple everyday tasks with the minimum of help, however long it takes, maintains a sense of independence. Doing everything for someone even if it's quicker and easier does no one any favours.

Poor circulation leads to difficulty in keeping warm and to problems with digestion. Cold can lead to apathy and the old person loses the will to move, eat or drink. These activities are very important to maintaining health and the carer should encourage light, warm clothing, preferably natural fibres, wool and cotton, and light, small but frequent meals with plenty of drinks. The fairly common attitude that "if I don't drink I won't have to get up so often" is both false and dangerous to health.

Loss of memory can lead to unreliable tablet taking and there are several quite cheap devices on the market which will enable a carer to put out the day's tablets in the correct order to avoid some being taken 3 times and others not at all. This is a very common cause of doctors thinking medication is not working and changing the tablets.

Finally, when a friend or relative is caring for a confused or dependent person it is very important for them to ask for help, to try to get all the help they can from Social and Community Services or other friends. Carers also need a good listener, to

whom they can express their feelings of frustration, anger, pain and sorrow. This is not an indication of failure, but a sensible and essential part of the "coping process". Only by doing this will the carer be able to continue for long periods. It is also helpful to persuade the patient to accept a period of respite-care to give those at home a break. This can be the only way to avoid the carer himself or herself finishing up in need of care also.

M.E. or Post-Viral Fatigue Syndrome

The two leaders of this workshop helped set up a Support Group and Telephone Help line in 1989 for sufferers with M.E. In this way they met approximately 100 sufferers and their families and from their experience were able to give some insight into their needs. The Help Line provides advice about possible state benefits, disabled stickers for cars and mobility allowances, but its first aim is to try to stop frightened and depressed people from attempting suicide, particularly when they first become ill.

M.E. is a controversial illness and for a long time was dismissed as 'psychosomatic'. Sufferers were frequently considered to be malingerers or neurotic. More recently it has become recognised as an illness affecting the brain and immune system, causing depression, anxiety, panic attacks, short-term memory loss and painful physical symptoms.

The initials M.E. stand for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis. It is also known as Post-Viral Fatigue Syndrome, and, in America, Chronic Fatigue Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is thought there may be at least 150,000 sufferers in the U.K., and several brethren and sisters are known to be affected by it.

The causes of M.E. are obscure. It appears to be a long-lasting consequence of a viral infection, though it is not infectious itself. Not resting after a viral illness may be a contributory factor, as may be pollutants in the atmosphere and genetic predisposition. Symptoms include flu-like debility, nausea, shivering, aching joints, muscle fatigue (which is made worse by exercise), exhaustion after any physical effort, and fatigue which is not made better by sleep, depression and digestive problems. Most people recover quickly from such symptoms after flu. Those who do not may be considered to have M.E.

It isn't *all* bad news. Although there is at present no cure, patients can learn to live with the disease and can make a gradual improvement. Diagnosis is difficult, however. There is no specific test for M.E. Children as well as adults can fall victim to it. One of the most famous sufferers is Clare Francis, whose experiences show that this can happen. She wrote a foreword to one of the useful books listed at the end of this report.

No treatment is *proved* to help. Some people seem to benefit from diets, acupuncture or 'alternative' medicines, but all such medicines should be approached with great care as they can be expensive, useless and sometimes harmful. One of the sufferers mentioned to the workshop was a nurse who has had M.E. for 22 years. Her original diagnosis was incorrect and the steroids and antibiotics she was given made her illness far worse. She used to be very active, with a family, a love of gardening, and all manner of energetic pursuits. All she can do now, on a "good" day, when she has the strength to hold the knitting and her hands are not too painful, is knit, or read. After half an hour her eyes hurt and her hands and arms ache too

much and she has to stop. Despite (and because of) her pain she wrote out a fact sheet for the workshop, some of which is incorporated in this report.

With either a positive attitude or a deep faith it is possible to cope with this illness. Those at the workshop were asked to protect their own health by being aware of the existence of M.E. and to show understanding and compassion for any sufferers they come across or hear about. The illness should never be dismissed as mere attention seeking.

Addresses given for help or further information are:

M.E. Association,
Stanhope House,
High Street,
Stanford-le-Hope,
Essex SS17 0HA (Phone 0375 642466)

M.E. Action Campaign,
P.O. Box 1126,
London.
W3 0RY

BOOK LIST

M.E. Post-Viral Fatigue Syndrome—How to Live With It, by Dr Anne Macintyre. Unwin Paperbacks ISBN 0-04-440318-6. [Very popular book, written by an M.E. sufferer.]

Living with M.E., by Dr Charles Shepherd. Cedar paperback (Wm Heinemann) ISBN 0-434-111-562. [Another practical book written by an M.E. victim].

The Disease of a Thousand Names, by David S. Bell MD FAAP. Distributed by Euroconcord Ltd. 34A Wood Street, Wallingford, Oxon. OX10 OAX.

[This recently published American book is highly recommended by M.E. patients. It is full of some of the latest medical information but also readable and strong on compassionate understanding.]

Speech Therapy and Audiology

This workshop gave an overview of the various areas of speech therapy. Each session was different, depending on the questions raised and the comments of the group involved.

A video was used which showed some of the disorders of communication, such as delayed language development, and how these are diagnosed and treated. Topics most mentioned by those at the workshops were stammering, and speech difficulties caused by strokes. Audio tapes were played to illustrate the problems of understanding children with specific impediments.

A comment frequently made was that people did not realise the wide range of areas covered by speech therapists, from feeding and swallowing to sign systems and alternatives to verbal communication.

The audiology part described causes of hearing-loss in children and stressed the importance of hearing-testing especially in relation to speech-development. Some of the equipment used was demonstrated.

Each of the four sessions went very quickly. It is hoped that they gave a useful insight into the various aspects of communication disorders and helped those at the workshops to be more understanding of the difficulties many people suffer.

Ourselves and Israel

*"And so all Israel shall be saved." To whom was the Apostle referring?
Bill Robinson investigates a difficult passage and comes to a controversial
conclusion, which however is fully supported by Scripture.*

1 Introduction

Our study concerns not just the modern Jewish state, but Jews *per se*, past, present and future. We wish to ascertain what position they have in the sight of God; it is frequently stated that they are God's people, and that the land of Israel is God's land. Here are a few examples of opinions held within the brotherhood:

(1) A booklet issued by the Christadelphian Office has the title *Israel: God's people, God's land*.

(2) In a letter to a Jewish women's magazine a sister has described all Christadelphians as being Zionists.

(3) "Jews are almost the same as Christadelphians" and "Aren't the Jews fortunate: they are assured of salvation". (Views expressed very recently.)

(4) A circular issued to ecclesias listed under the heading "False ideas being aired" "That Israel are no longer God's chosen people". It described belief that the Jews are God's people as a doctrine which affects our salvation.

In this study we wish to see if claims such as these are indeed correct and to investigate from Scripture what the stance of the brotherhood in Christ ought to be with respect to Jewry. This will include a brief look at pertinent prophecy, and will thus examine Israel's role, if any, in unfolding events.

Jews in general

Jews are viewed in two lights: they are disliked in many parts of the western world because of what is perceived as their remaining a separate community and being rather smart where money is concerned. Neither of these is the fault of the Jews. It is ironical that financial skills were forced upon them in the Middle Ages because the Catholic Church believed that the Mosaic prohibition of usury was still applicable. Jews in northern Europe were not then allowed to work in agriculture, handicrafts or trade. Economic circumstances however made lending money upon interest indispensable to the community as a whole and the Jews were forced, against their own religion, into this occupation. Happily, there are those who admire them, including the present writer, for the same two qualities viewed more positively: the Jews are a talented people who do most things well, including managing money. Most of them are in fact liberally minded and many have played prominent roles in public life. They have been persecuted abominably throughout the centuries and one can understand their being wary of others with the consequent desire to stick together.

2 An Important Principle of Interpretation

It is well known that the Jews are the people of the Old Testament so it behoves us right at the start to note how this substantial collection of writings should be interpreted by the Christian who also possesses a subsequent revelation, the New Testament. Consider Leviticus 17:7, referring to various ritual observances. We read: "This is to be a lasting ordinance for them [the people of Israel] and for the generations to come".* The ordinance was not always followed by any means; for example, Josiah, one of the better kings, was greatly upset when he realized the people had not been acting in accordance with the newly found book of the law (2 Chronicles 34:14-31); it is a measure of the great neglect of such matters that the book had actually been lost. It may be argued that this was the people's sin and not God's relaxation of a written code, and so it was, *so far as the Old Testament is concerned*. But Paul makes it plain that the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith. With the arrival of this principle, the application of a developed, mature, conscience rather than the slavish following of a written code, we are no longer under the supervision of the law (Galatians 3:24,25). So the ordinances regarding rituals were *not* lasting at all.

A further example to confirm the point: in two adjacent verses, Deuteronomy 10:19,20, the Israelites were commanded to love the alien and to take their oaths in the name of God. Now in the New Testament love for the alien is commanded in several places, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) being the best known example, so that the Old Testament injunction still obtains. The taking of oaths is expressly forbidden, however (Matthew 5:33-36): the Christian's word should be his bond at all times. He does not have to give special notice to people on those occasions when he is speaking the truth; he *always* speaks it. The age of Christ has brought with it a responsibility and an appeal to conscience previously lacking.

Again, we have only to consider the numerous times that Jesus performed so-called unlawful acts including healing on the Sabbath day; the orthodox Jews of his day were outraged but in a typical example, which also included citing an "approved" unlawful act by their revered king David when he ate the consecrated bread, Jesus told them "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice' (Hosea 6:6), you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:1-14).

The lesson of all of this is that the Old Testament must always be viewed through New Testament eyes.

Obviously we may accept certain sections of the Old Testament in their own right, such as history and the great moral teachings, all of which are confirmed in the New Testament in any event. For example, all of the Ten Commandments save the keeping of the Sabbath receive New Testament endorsement. But otherwise, especially when dealing with prophecy about the future, we should spice zeal with caution and consult the New Testament first.

3 The Old Testament assessment of the Jews

The basic history of the Jewish people is being taken as read in this study. Let us acknowledge at the start the Jews *were* chosen by God, but the choosing was

* Quotations are from the New International Version.

tempered with criticism, since it was not done for their own sakes (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). Somewhat later, setting a pattern for disobedience and rebellion against God which has persisted throughout their history, the Israelites made a golden calf to worship and God would have destroyed them but for Moses' pleadings (Deuteronomy 9:13,14).

There followed an overall dismal picture of virtually continuous disobedience and sinning, reported consistently by the Old Testament prophets; of the scores of God's criticisms of his people a significant one occurs in Jeremiah 21:13,14: "I am against you, Jerusalem, ...I will punish you as your deeds deserve". This represents the nadir of Israel's backsliding; it is delivered to the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, described as the "profane and wicked prince of Israel" shortly before he and the nation were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. An evil king was typical of an evil people and the kingdom would not be restored "until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs" (Ezekiel 21:25-27). This is indeed a prominent point in the outworking of God's purpose which we shall refer to later. Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Judah in 539 BC after seventy years captivity, although the majority preferred to remain in Babylon (just like most modern Jews prefer London or New York to Jerusalem!). Those who did return however had been taught a great lesson; they no longer worshipped idols but their overall rebellious nature remained unchanged. It may thus be said that Ezekiel 37:23 was only partially fulfilled: an abandonment of idolatry was not accompanied by a fuller cleansing.

The spiritual standing of the Jew at the end of the intertestamentary period is given by Jesus early on in the new dispensation: he describes their religious leaders as "...snakes...and a...brood of vipers" and tells them "look, your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:33,38). Jesus is telling the Jews, in a word, that they are to be cast out of the land yet again, forcefully confirmed by him in Luke 21 and elsewhere.

4 Jews today

Jews have not changed, and behave much as their Pharisee forebears did in the first century. In particular, they still refuse to accept Christ. Yet the Christadelphian community generally thinks of them with great warmth, as has been pointed out, at the same time showing scant regard for the Arabs. I limit myself to two contrasting personal experiences on a visit to Israel:

(1) At a centre for the settlement of the newly rescued black Jews from Ethiopia I asked one of the senior officers if the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8 was likely to have belonged to the same group. There was an icy response: the man utterly refused to discuss anything concerning what Christians call the New Testament.

(2) In stark contrast to the foregoing an encounter with some Arabs in Jericho was quite informative. Having bought some fruit from their shop a group of us went to refresh ourselves in the associated restaurant; we had as much fresh, deliciously cold orange juice as we wanted. On asking for the bill I was told there was nothing to pay: "You are our brother" they said. I ascertained that they were Christian Arabs; they had taken Matthew 10:42 to heart.

So we ask two important questions: Are the Jews still God's people? Is the territory of ancient Israel still God's land?

5 Are the Jews still God's people?

Without doubt, they *were* the chosen people; we have already seen this—though again we note they were chosen for the fathers' sakes, not their own. The question is: Are the Jews *still* God's people?

The Jews themselves, certainly those of the orthodox persuasion, will certainly say yes. Indeed these latter would affirm it with great vigour, spilling over into arrogance in many cases. (But such arrogance is not confined to Jews; it is typical of all who are intolerant, and there are non-Jews who are convinced that they alone possess ultimate truth. Such people do not realize that whilst not a few parts of the Bible are clear and unambiguous, about which one may be dogmatic, there are many parts which are not; it is wiser and humbler to recognize there may well be a different—and acceptable—interpretation to one's own.)

In section 3 we endeavoured to give the Old Testament's assessment of the Jews; it was not good. We noted Jesus' judgment on the position of Jewry: "Look, your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38). Proceeding through the New Testament the position remains the same in Acts and beyond. When Paul went on his great preaching missions he went first to the Jewish synagogue, a very natural thing since the Jewish order of things was that which led to Christ, as we have already noted. Thus, in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13), Paul shows this very fact: that Jesus is the ultimate fulfilment of what the Hebrew Scriptures speak about. He evidently convinced many (for that is how the first century church showed such extraordinary growth) but there was a significant stubborn element which *wouldn't* be convinced, evincing from Paul (and Barnabas) the telling comment: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles". And they did just this, citing Isaiah 49:6, "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth". The happy conclusion of this particular incident is recounted in verse 48: "When the Gentiles heard this [what Paul and Barnabas said], they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord, and all who were appointed for eternal life believed".

This clear indication of the end of the Jewish order of things is demonstrated again in Acts 18:6 when Paul was in Corinth. I suggest that the repetition of the procedure is significant. It indicates not that the Gentiles had replaced Jews, but that both could now be God's people; but if the Jew wished to remain chosen by God he had to come to him in the new, prescribed way, through Christ, himself the Jew par excellence. In the closing verses of Acts when Paul is under house arrest in Rome, he underlines these pronouncements regarding the end of the Jewish dispensation, quoting Isaiah 6:9,10 to show how the Jews were deaf, blind and hard-hearted, and that salvation has come to the Gentiles.

Coup de Grâce

The great theme of liberation which distinguishes the New Testament from the Old has already been referred to. It is the doctrine of Justification by Faith and was, in fact, anticipated in the Old Testament (the book of Job, for example), but is the true preserve of the New. Its essence is that the mature believer does not have to follow a written code which maps out every step he should take and the actions he should avoid; rather should his own conscience be his mentor, sharpened by having

within his inner being the Spirit of Christ (Ephesians 9:16,17). He will never wholly succeed in pursuing the desired ways of righteousness but at the last he may depend upon God's grace to make up his deficiencies. This doctrine finds its fullest expression in Paul's letter to the Romans, to which we shall presently turn, but is illustrated superbly by Paul in another letter, in Galatians 4:21-31. Here he likens the then current Jewish order of things to Hagar and her children who were slaves, in turn symbolizing Mount Sinai. Sinai, of course, is where the Law was given (though it is man's accretions to the Law which illustrate its ultimate failing to fulfil its original purpose and hence falling into disuse). In contrast, Paul likens the Christian way to Sarah the free woman, symbolic of the heavenly Jerusalem wherein is freedom; we as Christians, Paul argues, are children not of the slave woman but of the free. (We note that freedom, liberty in Christ, is the important and inevitable concomitant of the use of one's conscience, the operation of Justification by Faith.)

It is to Romans we turn, though, as has been stated, to find this subject being treated most fully, and in chapters 9 to 11 especially the position of the Jew with respect to the new dispensation in Christ is clarified beyond cavil. Here Paul, very much a Jew himself, regrets the intransigence of his own race, the people of Israel. They had all the advantages, he argues, and Christ's human ancestry is traced through them (3:1,2; 9:3-5), but now "...it is not the natural children who are God's children, but...the children of the promise..." (9:8) By this he means Jew and Gentile who come to God in the new way, through Christ. "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel (9:6); there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (10:12,13, citing Joel 2:32). This equality also receives powerful emphasis elsewhere, for example in Galatians 3:28 (all are one in Christ Jesus) and Ephesians 2:13 and 3:6 (the blood of Christ has brought all together).

Romans 11, the last of this set of three chapters, at first sight seems to present a different picture. It begins by asking if God has rejected his people: "By no means" Paul asserts. As we read on, however, we realize that Paul is talking only of a *remnant* (verse 5), that great theme of Isaiah's prophecy, a remnant chosen by grace—not by works. He develops the argument by comparing natural Israel to an olive tree, some of whose branches have been broken off; manifestly some remain, hence the remnant Paul has mentioned. A wild olive shoot, the Gentiles, has been grafted in to replace them, but can be broken off in the event of unbelief just as the original branches were. "And if they [these natural branches] *do not persist in unbelief* [in Christ, of course] they will be grafted in ... again" (11:23).

This final section ends by the statement that "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved" (11:25b, 26a). Here "all Israel" is defined as being the not-wholly hardened Jew and the repentant Gentile. Without this reference to the Gentiles the phrase could be construed as meaning that all natural Israel will be saved, counter to the whole run of the argument not merely here in Romans but in the New Testament in general; the reference is there, however. Confirmation that faithful believers in Christ of any race are intended comes from our earlier quotation: "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" (9:6) and also: "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, ...but [rather he] is a Jew if he is one inwardly... by the Spirit,

not by the written code" (2:29). So "all Israel" can hardly be literal Israel, the Jews, even though this race as such is referred to frequently; I feel that 9:6, just quoted, is conclusive: literal *and* spiritual Israel are both mentioned, and there is no doubt which is which, and which is the one that matters. "All Israel" then is the Israel of God, the new creation which boasts in nought save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:14,16).

In view of the Jews' persistent resistance to the teaching of the New Testament we cannot help but conclude that the grafting in will only take place after some momentous event yet to take place, an event we shall refer to shortly, the return of Christ to the earth. It will only be then that the now penitent Jewry will become God's people (Hosea 2:29), and only part of it at that, a measure of God's mercy in admitting Gentiles into his purpose (11:28-92). The kingdom of God has now been transferred from a barren nation to one that is more fecund (Matthew 21:43; 1 Peter 2:9).

We thus give our answer to our question: are the Jews (as a race) still God's people? We conclude that they are not; they are "Lo-Ammi" ("Not my people", Hosea 1:9). God's people are those who are in Christ.

We now come to our second question:

6 Is the territory of ancient Israel still God's land?

Most people of a Christian or Jewish persuasion would immediately answer yes, influenced, for example, by Moses' description of the land: "It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end" (Deuteronomy 11:12). Later in their history, when Solomon had completed the building of the temple and given his moving prayer of dedication, similar language is used. God says: "I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there for ever. My eyes and my heart will always be there" (1 Kings 9:3). But the temple no longer stands and his name is elsewhere; *God revoked his promise*. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel", he told them, adding that they will "be uprooted, torn down and destroyed" unless they repent. They didn't, and their doom was pronounced from the temple court itself: "Listen! I am going to bring on this city and the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words" (Jeremiah 18:6-8; 19:15). Christ now bears God's name and those that are in him have now replaced the Jews: Paul, addressing believers, says "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple" (1 Corinthians 3:16,17). Thus the new spiritual temple will not be destroyed as the earlier one made of stone was; using a parallel figure, the hearts of Christian believers, inscribed with the Spirit of God, have replaced not so much what God wrote on tablets of stone (2 Corinthians 3:3) but rather the Jews' stony hearts inscribed with sin (Jeremiah 17:1).

Again, we are so used to the expression "The Holy Land" that it is accepted as an unquestioned fact. Yet the phrase itself occurs only once in the whole Bible, in Zechariah 2:12; clearly, the expression "the Holy Land" never had any great contemporaneous significance in the Old Testament. Our question is being asked

now in the sense of the land's having a particular and special significance for the Christian today, of course. He can come to a reasoned conclusion, we suggest, if he ask himself a further question. Where should we today worship God: specifically in Israel or *wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ* (Matthew 18:20)?

Further, we must not overlook the fact that the non-historical references to Jerusalem in the New Testament are predominantly *metaphoric*, for example, Galatians 4:21-31 already referred to, Hebrews 12:22 and Revelation 3:12 and 21:2. Here the Jerusalem of the Jewish race is called Hagar and Sodom and Gomorrah in contradistinction to the Jerusalem that really matters, the heavenly one; and in Revelation 21:2 the heavenly Jerusalem symbolizes the redeemed in Christ.

There can be no doubt that neither Jerusalem nor the land of Israel in general has special significance for today's Christian worshipper, though it is interesting and fascinating, as the writer can testify from personal experience. As we have seen, calling this ancient land of promise the Holy Land was not even a correct description during the time of the Old Covenant; and the name owes much of its modern currency to its extensive use in the time of the Crusades, a most unholy series of excursions, where it seems hard in retrospect to decide which side most nearly deserves to be called the infidel. It is not an apt phrase for the Christian. Rather should he acknowledge that "The [whole] earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1).

7 The future: A most singular descendant

Earlier we referred to the singular aspect of Abraham's descendants, in other words to some specific individual. Paul asserts, in fact, that this descendant is Christ (Galatians 3:16), and not the Jewish people as a whole. It is he who will inherit the land, not the race from which he stems, though we should note that the plural aspect of this promise is still valid. However, it is valid only in the sense already discussed: Jews, along with Gentiles, may be fellow heirs *but only if they are in Christ*. We should note that this Pauline interpretation of Old Testament Scripture is wholly in line with what we have adduced thus far and leads us to a consideration of another passage in the Old Testament.

God's witnesses

Isaiah 43:10 reads: "You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen". Now we know for sure that the servant ultimately referred to here is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself; all Christians will be aware that this is so since the great act of suffering, death and redemption ascribed to this servant in Isaiah 53 is explained for us by Philip in Acts 8:30-35. Are we to deduce, therefore, that Christ and those in him are today's witnesses? It is a conclusion that is hard to avoid if we are to be consistent and is also in line with our previous findings.

The enduring Jew

But it is a remarkable fact that the Jews are still with us. An ancient king of England (John) was nicknamed Lackland, a nickname which could well have been given to the Jews, yet they have survived in spite of everything. This remarkable

fact is linked with the Christ (Messiah) whom they reject so that, in a particular sense connected with Christ, they may still be said to have a role in the unfolding of God's purpose. This assertion comes from a consideration of Jesus' words in his Olivet prophecy. Having foretold the Jews' eviction from the land (Luke 21:24, mentioned earlier) Jesus states that [later, evidently] his followers "...will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (21:27). He likens Israel, around which the whole chapter is built, to a fig-tree, and we are immediately reminded of an earlier incident (Mark 11:12-14, 20-24) where Jesus cursed a fig tree for only bearing leaves even though it wasn't the season for it to bear fruit. This apparently arbitrary act is seen to be an allegory pregnant with meaning: the time of Israel's discomfiture, their being cast out amongst other nations, was imminent. But when the fig tree sprouts leaves again, Jesus argues here in Luke 21:29-32, you know that summer, signifying the kingdom of God, is near; he confirms this by saying that the Jewish race will not pass away until his return (21:30-32). (Note that I have employed the primary meaning of the Greek *genea* here: race, or brood, as in Matthew 23:33 already quoted, and as in Luke 3:7 where John the Baptist is the speaker; I submit that its secondary meaning, generation, the passage of time between the generation—birth—of successive broods, is not appropriate to the context here.)

8 Summary and conclusion

(1) The Jews *were* God's people; they no longer are. God's people are those who are in Christ.

(2) The territory of Israel is not God's land over and above other lands. The whole earth is the Lord's.

(3) The promises to Abraham applied originally to Jews: they still do, but only in the sense that the true Jew is the one who is one inwardly, ie, they apply to the Jew Jesus and to those who are his, be they literal Jew or Gentile.

(4) Likewise the suffering servant (a singular, not plural, term) *was* the Jewish people and they *were* God's witnesses. But Christ became the true, singular, suffering servant and he and those in him of whatever provenance are now the true witnesses.

(5) However, the survival of the Jewish race and its re-establishment as a nation is significant *because Jesus said so*, though the Jews can hardly be called God's witnesses any longer. Rather, in their relegation they serve as a sign, evidence of the continued outworking of God's purpose.

(6) Should we be especially kind to the Jews? How should Christians look upon Jews today, metaphorically speaking? Should they be treated differently from non-Jews in view of their history?

We cannot help but admire them for their overall competence, their respect for the home and family and their attention to charitable works. And we must mourn and

grieve with them on account of the great suffering they have unjustly endured throughout the ages. We English should lament that our own forebears were party to some of this: I refer to the twelfth century holocausts in London and York. Such expiation is required from many.

So should we, who aspire to be Christ's, be *especially* kind and beneficent to them? I have in mind the sending of financial and other aid to the Jews in Israel yet ignoring the Arabs who also live there. Surely the answer has to be no, notwithstanding the foregoing. Certainly if there is a need for physical help it should be given, but so it should in all cases of need. For example, does the sending of succour to new Israeli immigrants have a higher priority than feeding Africa's starving millions? God does not require us to help him fulfil his prophecies and I submit he would prefer us to do the maximum good with our alms.

The desire to show particular kindness to the Jews derives from Old Testament passages showing God's love for the Jews. Perhaps the most notable is the divine declaration in Genesis 12:3: "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse". But the passage has to be looked at with New Testament eyes, and we know very well that this promise is to Abraham and his *spiritual* descendants (Galatians 3:29), ie, to Christ and those in him. So the appeal translates into being especially loving to fellow believers, and not to literal Jews. This is confirmed by Paul's words in Galatians 6:9,10: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

(7) Should we pray for them?

There are many Christians who do, but nonetheless I feel that the appropriate answer here is the same: Not especially.

God's commands in Jeremiah 7:16, 11:14 and 14:11 not to pray for this people appear still to have a current relevance, since nationally their rejection of God's way is complete. For example, the modern Jewish state of Israel, though possessing many of the desirable freedoms one associates with western democracies, does not grant the freedom of proselytizing; preaching Biblical Christianity in Israel is forbidden.

The notable difference between Bible Christianity and Judaism is that the former is concerned with the present *and* eternity, whereas the latter concentrates on the present. As a consequence modern Judaism seems to be not far removed from humanism, though the humanism does for the most part have a benign face.

It is a far cry from when the way of Salvation was once via this nation, the Jewish nation; now it is through one particular Jew, Christ Jesus, and it seems inappropriate to act counter to God's judgments: instead of praying specifically for the Jews we should pray rather for the salvation of all mankind. This, in fact, is the advice of Paul the Jew and Apostle in 1 Timothy 2:1-4:

"I urge, then... that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.... This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all [mankind] to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Correspondence

A brother from Australia writes:

Once again in England I have been handed a copy of your Magazine for general perusal. I am somewhat amazed by the article 'The Mediator of a Better Covenant' by Bro. Arthur Mallinder.

Briefly I get the impression that the author considers that the Letter to the Hebrews cancels out the Law of Moses. This would leave a large gap in human understanding of right and wrong.

Further Jesus himself, who must be considered the basic authority in this matter distinctly tells us:

Matt. 22:37 "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, this is the first and great commandment and the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets."

Matt 5:17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whosoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Much more can be said on this matter, but one thing is paramount, whatever is meant or implied by the exposition contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it cannot be deemed to eliminate the Law of Moses. Certainly we still need to be busily studying the Law, whilst by no means forgetting that the new covenant enables us to fulfil the old covenant through Jesus.

Reply by the Editor:

Thank you for your letter of 23rd July. I cannot agree however that Arthur Mallinder considers that the letter to the Hebrews "cancels out the Law of Moses". He considers that it shows that Christ has superseded it by something better. Consequently there is no "large gap in human understanding of right and wrong". On the contrary, Arthur shows that the teaching of Jesus gives a better understanding of right and wrong than does the Law.

You quote two texts in support of your view—Matthew 22:37-40 and 5:17-19. I will deal first with Matthew 5:17-19 which seems to provide stronger support for what you maintain. These verses certainly *seem* to be unequivocal. But a little further on in Matthew 5 we have another injunction which seems equally unequivocal: "And if thy right eye offend thee [causes thee to sin], pluck it out and cast it from thee" (5:29). Similarly in 5:30 "And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee."

When Tyndale's translation first appeared an attempt was made to restrict its circulation in case simple readers might take these verses literally. Latimer said however that even simple people were able to distinguish the literal from the figurative, and so it turned out.

The reason for maintaining that 5:29,30 is figurative is mere commonsense—

there are no specific texts indicating that it should be taken figuratively. But in the case of Matthew 5:18-19 there are numerous texts which show that the literal meaning is not the correct meaning. Some of these are in the same chapter as vv 17-19. In 5:33-37 Jesus abolishes the regulations about swearing (Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21). In 5:38-42 he abolishes the *lex talionis* (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21).

Then in Matthew 19:3-8 (also Mark 10:2-9) Jesus repeals the Mosaic permission for divorce. Most striking of all, in Mark 7 he not only criticises the Pharisaic purity ritual (vv 1-13) but goes on to abolish the whole ritual law completely—as Mark points out: “(In saying this Jesus declared that all foods are fit to be eaten)” (7:19b).^{*} How could Jesus say that literally no jot or tittle should ever pass from the law when he himself repealed several sections of it?

There is confirmation of the non-literality of Matthew 5:18-19 in the nearest to a parallel elsewhere in the gospels—Luke 16:17. Here Jesus says it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the law to become void (RSV). The word translated “dot” really means a serif or ornamental flourish added to a letter and to say that the whole Law, even down to ornamental flourishes on letters, remains valid for ever cannot be taken literally, not only because of its inherent improbability but because in the very next verse Jesus altered the Mosaic law of divorce! One explanation is that this was an ironical attack on the Pharisees who could not see the wood for the trees.

While I would agree with you that Jesus must be considered to be the basic authority, the witness of the remainder of the New Testament is important especially when the words of Jesus give rise to differing interpretations.

The abolition of the dietary laws is confirmed in the thrice repeated vision of Peter in Acts 10: “Do not consider anything unclean that God has declared clean” (10:15). The decision of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 that Gentiles need not observe the Law of Moses, with four exceptions, shows what the understanding of the early church was.

It is however when we turn to Paul that we find the clearest statements about the status of the Mosaic code. Paul’s general view is that the world is so sunk in wickedness that the Law is powerless to rescue it.

What then was the purpose of the Law? It was added in order to show what wrong-doing is, and it was meant to last until the coming of Abraham’s descendant, to whom the promise was made.

(Galatians 3:19).

But while performing this secondary task, Paul says it failed completely to remove evil inclinations. In fact (startlingly) the Law actually increases wrong-doing:

Shall we say, then, that the Law itself is sinful? Of course not! But it was the Law that made me know what sin is. If the Law had not said, “Do not desire what belongs to someone else,” I would not have known such a desire. But by means of that commandment sin found its chance to stir up all kinds of selfish desires in me. Apart from law sin is a dead thing.

(Romans 7:7,8)

Something more than Law is needed to deal with sin and that something more is found in Christ:

What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body which is taking me to death? Thanks be to God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ! (Romans 7:24,25)

^{*} This, and succeeding quotations, are from the Good News Bible.

This is no isolated passage. The curse which the Law brought on all those who do not obey it fully has been removed by Christ.

For Christ has brought the Law to an end, so that everyone who believes is put right with God.
(Romans 10:4)

But if a person is put right with God through the Law, it means that Christ died for nothing. Listen! I, Paul tell you that if you allow yourselves to become circumcised, it means that Christ is of no use to you at all. Those of you who try to be put right with God by obeying the Law have cut yourselves off from God. You are outside God's grace.

(Galatians 2:21; 5:2-4).

So for Paul the abolition of the Law emphatically does not "leave a large gap in human understanding of right and wrong". He does not hesitate to term it "the law of sin and death" in opposition to "the law of the Spirit".

For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death. What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did.

(Romans 8:2,3a)

But he has even stronger criticisms:

As far as keeping the Jewish Law is concerned, I was a Pharisee and was so zealous that I persecuted the church. As far as a person can be righteous by obeying the commands of the Law, I was without fault. ... I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord. For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere refuse, so that I may gain Christ and be completely united with him. I no longer have a righteousness of my own, the kind that is gained by obeying the Law. I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is based on faith.

In face of all this how can you continue to maintain that Matthew 5:17-19 must be read literally?

Turning now to your first quotation (Matthew 22:37-40), this in my opinion contradicts your interpretation of the second quotation. Jesus says that the two great commandments are the key commandments from which all else in the Law derives. These other commandments give specific ways in which love to God and love of neighbour may find proper expression. But this does not mean that they are the only ways, or even the best ways, of achieving these two ends.

The Mosaic code was suited to its times. But now not even orthodox Jews offer sacrifices. Do you consider that we should still apply the leprosy laws of Leviticus 13? Or even that these harsh laws have anything to teach us today about love of God or love of neighbour? Can we not learn more from people like Albert Schweitzer who, before a cure was known, set up and worked in the hospital at Lambarene? Do we not love our neighbour better by finding a cure for leprosy than excluding the unfortunate victim from the community?

Paul tells us how to understand the role of the Law when he says in Galatians 3:23-25 that it was a "schoolmaster" (AV), bearing in mind that the Greek *paidagogos* means a slave whose job it was only to take the children to school.

But before the time for faith came, the Law kept us all locked up as prisoners until this coming faith should be revealed. And so the Law was in charge of us until Christ came, in order that we might then be put right with God through faith. Now that the time for faith is here, the Law is no longer in charge of us.

Why do you believe that we should still be busily studying the law? Presumably not

in order to follow its ordinances (although if Jesus did not annul it, compliance with it would still seem to be mandatory). While it is of some historical value, what importance does it have for our lives today seeing that "The Law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the realities themselves." (NIV)? Should we not prefer the reality to the shadow?

How profoundly you are mistaken is shown by your concluding words "the new covenant enables us to fulfil the old covenant through Jesus". This makes Abraham more important than Christ who, in the words of Hebrews 1:2,3, "is the one through whom God created the universe, the one whom God has chosen to possess all things at the end. He reflects the brightness of God's glory, and is the exact likeness of God's own being ... [and] is worthy of much greater honour than Moses" (Hebrews 3:3).

Ron Coleman

Obituary: Jack Murrell

Jack Murrell who died earlier this year had been a frequent attendee at the Summer School in the 1970's. His enthusiasm and support were much appreciated, and he carried these into many areas of life where with Doris he worked with various helping organisations. Quiet and modest, Jack was ever willing to lend a helping hand to people with difficulties. For several years he produced a Newsletter for the Summer School, printing it himself on a Multilith he bought for the purpose. A printing engineer by trade, he once took us on an afternoon's visit to one of the new colour printing plants of a Coventry Newspaper. Charles Davis's book *A Question of Conscience* particularly interested him, perhaps because of his own personal experiences as a conscientious objector during the War. His reflections were given to the BBC and printed in *Endeavour* No. 76, August 1987 "A 'Conchie' Remembers". After Doris died he suffered a depressive illness for a number of years and was unable to keep up his former contacts. He will be remembered for his good-humour, willingness to help everyone he could, and above all his commitment as a servant of Christ

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A Brief History of Prophetical Interpretation

The background to interpretations of Bible Prophecy is frequently unknown, allowing inaccurate claims to be made. Ron Coleman traces the source and development of prophetical interpretations and assesses the part played in these by Dr Thomas.

"Ask yourself what kind of Christian was it who in 1848 preached the Saving Hope of Israel in those days. Or who proclaimed the return of the Jews to Palestine ... It could only have been one who believed in Bible Prophecy—believed it was relevant to proclaiming the gospel—and who was prepared to walk by faith and not by sight." The answer is, of course, "Dr Thomas".

What is remarkable about the question is that it was not put in 1925, 1935 or even 1955, but earlier this year in a leaflet advertising "an evening of prophecy studies" by three southern ecclesias. One would have thought that the days of quoting "I know not whether the men, who at present contrive the foreign policy of Britain entertain the idea of assuming the sovereignty of the Holy Land and of promoting its colonisation by the Jews" as an example of unique prevision were long since over. History shows that there was every reason for supposing that the British Government very definitely had such an idea.

In her book *Bible and Sword; How the British came to Palestine* Barbara Tuchman has written at length about the events leading to the Balfour Declaration and has shown that the idea of resettling the Jews in Palestine goes back at least to Puritan times, and that it was a specially live issue in the early 1840's. Some members of the British Government were much in favour of "promoting the colonisation of Palestine by the Jews" and this is related in detail in the chapters "Lord Shaftesbury's Vision" and "Palestine in the Path of Empire". It might seem unfair so to take up what was a rhetorical statement, but Dr Thomas did try to convey the impression that his was an original and lone voice, although in actual fact there had been a great interest in current fulfilment of prophecy for many years before he wrote. This understanding of prophecy was the only distinctive belief that Christadelphians took over from mainstream Christianity.

In the preface to Volume II of *Eureka* Dr Thomas speaks of "the enmity which had coiled round him" since the publication of Volume I. This enmity did not arise from his interpretation of prophecy but from other doctrines he was preaching. The scathing way in which he spoke of the work of other interpreters, and the authority he claimed for his own work, were doubtless contributing factors. In this same preface he says "There can be no correct exposition of the Apocalypse unless CHRIST THE TRUTH gives it". In the preface to Volume III he says "I may truly affirm that the power of the Deity has performed the work" and "The work is now finished by 'the power' aforesaid through my instrumentality—a work concerning which it may be said in the words of an old Roman exile 'Exegi monumentum aere perennius'." [I have reared a monument more lasting than brass.]

The preface to Volume III contains a survey of the history of the interpretation of prophecy listing 57 interpreters. All are condemned in the strongest terms with the

solitary exception of Joseph Mede. The others "bestowed upon their contemporaries bewildering speculations". They "set their hands to the work of making darkness visible". They failed to discern the signs of their own times and "made more manifest the impenetrable obscurity of those that preceded them". One would imagine that Dr Thomas had done an immense amount of research since the names range from Justin Martyr (100-165) to E B Elliott (1793-1875). Actually all the historical facts in the preface came, without acknowledgment, from the Elliott whom he disparages—"None of them from Justin Martyr to Elliott understood the prophecy."

They are to be found in Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae* ("Hours with the Apocalypse") originally published in 1840. In an appendix to Volume 4 of this immense commentary there is a 288 page survey of the history of the interpretation of Revelation. The list of names in *Eureka* is virtually the same as Elliott's, only a handful being omitted, and it is divided into almost identical subsections. A considerable number of Elliott's exact phrases have found their way into the text of the preface to *Eureka* III. No facts are put forward that are not in Elliott. On the other hand there are 23 acknowledged quotations in *Eureka* from *Horae Apocalypticae*: but only three times does Dr Thomas dissent from Elliott's view.

There is no doubt that Dr Thomas was a remarkable man. His industry, resilience and energy were prodigious, as for example that he wrote *Elpis Israel* in the space of six weeks. It is difficult to imagine how he was able to accomplish all that he did. But the truth is that he came towards the end of a period which had an intense interest in prophecy and in which there were many writers with views similar to his own.

There has been for some time no excuse for ignorance of these facts. More than forty years ago a comprehensive history of the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation was published by the Seventh Day Adventists. They have similar beliefs to Christadelphians on the interpretation of prophecy and, incidentally, on conditional immortality. The present writer encountered the four volumes of *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* by Leroy Edwin Froom in the early fifties and although the style is often reminiscent of *The Reader's Digest* they are based on extensive original research and were warmly and favourably reviewed in *The Baptist Quarterly* by H H Rowley who did not share the beliefs of the author. (They were also noticed in *Endeavour* in 1967 in an article reprinted in No. 80, January 1989.)

The history of the interpretation of prophecy is a long one and so repetitious that it would be tedious to traverse it in detail. Then, too, the early interpreters had the limitation that most of the history figuring in later interpretations had not happened. This is a criticism of all continuous historic interpretations, which tend to be retrospective. When they look ahead events invariably falsify them.

We can however separate the history into four major periods. The first was from Apostolic times to that of Augustine about 400 AD. Secondly, from Augustine to the 13th or 14th century. Thirdly, from the Reformation to the end of the 18th century. Lastly, from the French Revolution to, say, the 1860's. (There is of course a fifth period, our own, for in the last thirty years there has been an explosion of interest among American evangelical fundamentalists with which we have insufficient space to deal.)

Up to the time of Augustine interest centred on Daniel because Christians

recognised that they were living in, or were near to, the ten-toe period of the image of chapter 2, after which it was expected that Christ would return. The year-day principle was accepted for the 70 weeks prophecy but it had not yet been extended to the other time periods (the 1260, 1290, 1335 and 2300) because the church could not envisage history continuing for another thousand years or more, but towards the end of the period more attention was being paid to Revelation and some events were seen as fulfilments. For example the woman clothed with the sun in chapter 12 was interpreted as the church; her child was Constantine; the dragon was pagan Rome. Interest also grew in the millennium too but this was interpreted in a very materialistic way and so led to the idea that it could be brought about by human effort before the second coming and eventually to the millenarian sects described so extensively in Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. Long before this however the Roman church countered this tendency with the development of a belief in a spiritual millennium which, supported by Origen's view that Scripture should primarily be interpreted allegorically, led to post-millenarianism (that the second coming would be after the millennium) becoming the official doctrine of the Roman church.

As a result, interest in a material fulfilment of Revelation and Daniel almost disappeared except amongst dissident minorities such as the Waldenses, the Lollards and the revolutionary millenarian sects. These began to identify antichrist, up to then a shadowy figure, with the papacy. By this time many of the abuses in the church which led eventually to the Reformation had developed and even a few Catholics accepted this view. These included Joachim of Floris and Savonarola. Joachim prudently said that the prophecy had not yet been fulfilled but Savonarola was less cautious—and paid for it with his life. Joachim was the first Christian to apply the year-day principle to the long-term chronological prophecies (the Jews had done so three centuries earlier) but Dr Thomas attributed it to Mede, nearly three hundred years later, in spite of other early year-day interpreters being mentioned by Elliott.

A papal antichrist was meat and drink to the Reformers. Luther's rupture with Rome, plus another 300 years of history to provide material for fulfilments, together with the printing press, opened floodgates to the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. Froom says that the number of books published was phenomenal, and their influence so great, that it began to be felt that the fate of Europe rested upon the outcome of the battle of interpretations. Supporters of a papal antichrist included Luther, Melancthon, Funck, Selnecker, Zwingli, Calvin, Servetus; and in this country Tyndale, Ridley, Latimer, Coverdale, Foxe, John Knox, Napier, Mede, and even King James I, to name only a few. Gradually however the spate began to diminish and interest slackened although the eighteenth century closed with the papacy as antichrist and the year-day principle firmly held.

The fourth period was sparked off by the French Revolution. It coincided with the termination of the 1260 years in 1793, if the commencement was taken as the edict of the emperor Justinian which established the Bishop of Rome as the head of the Western church in 533 (one of four possible commencement dates). The French Revolution was seen as a cataclysmic event, unparalleled in previous history. Froom says "it was like the explosion of a volcano. The papal church and state were suddenly torn from their foundation and overwhelmed in the common ruin. The sudden and violent shock sent the Protestant church back to the prophecies."

Today we can see that the effects of the French Revolution were less than supposed (compared, for example, with that of Karl Marx). In particular, the papacy survived with its power little diminished. But the interest in prophecy, once rekindled, continued to grow and since the interpretation of the 1260 days seemed to have failed, interest shifted to the 2300 years of Daniel 8:14 when the sanctuary was to be cleansed which was calculated to be in 1843. Froom says "Nothing like it had ever been proclaimed at all. Simultaneously, in England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, France, Switzerland, Scandinavia, America, Northern Africa and the Near East, a growing chorus of voices were heard springing up independently, but proclaiming the same prophetic message and time period." His table of the interpretations of principal expositors has 72 names between 1793 and 1845. Amongst them was William Miller, an American Baptist (with whom Dr Thomas had correspondence) who so convinced his following that Christ would return in 1843 that many of them sold their homes in anticipation of the predicted day. When nothing happened it was discovered that it was a year too early because it had not been realised that there was no year zero—BC 1 to AD 1 was only one year, not two. The Millerites were also disappointed in 1844 and this was the beginning of a decline in prophetic preaching, more marked however in Europe than in America.

The return of the Jews to Palestine is a subsidiary subject for Froom because it depends on Ezekiel, not Daniel or Revelation, but mention of it was not altogether neglected in his book. It was much discussed at an interdenominational summer conference held in Albury House, Albury Park, near Guildford in the five years 1826-30. Edward Irving, the founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, was one of those attending and he records "Six full days from Thursday to the succeeding Friday were spent in close and laborious examination of the scriptures, on the times of the Gentiles, the Jews and the prophetic visions of Daniel and the Apocalypse." He stressed the united view of the conferences on "the time of the Gentiles, the restoration of the Jews, and the conclusion of the present dispensation in great judgments." A thousand people packed Irving's church in Regent Square, London, Sunday after Sunday to hear his extended expositions of prophecy.

Dr Thomas only gets a brief two pages in Volume 4 under the title "Founder of Christadelphians a Constant Expositor". This brevity was because Froom took 1850 as his cut-off point, but a footnote lists Dr Thomas's subsequent works and gives an outline of Christadelphian doctrines, without any adverse comment. The conclusion is that Dr Thomas was no pioneer in the field of prophetic interpretation; he only entered it when its popularity and excitement were beginning to wane.

* * * * *

At this point we need to distinguish carefully between what the Bible teaches and another view with which it is frequently confused. This non-biblical view is referred to as 'the immortality of the soul'. It teaches us that there is a part of us which is divine, a 'spark' of God within us. By contrast with this the Bible's conception of the future of the Christian is 'the resurrection of the body'.

What the Bible Teaches about the End of the World, Bruce Milne M.A. B.D. Ph.D., Tutor in Biblical and Historical Theology at Spurgeon's College, [Baptist] London (1979), page 98.

Book Review: "The Exiles Return"

The Exiles Return by Michael Ashton, *The Christadelphian*, 1992

Reviewed by *Wilfred Lambert*

This is a homiletic exposition of the books and times of Ezra and Nehemiah. Allusion is made to the contemporary prophets Haggai and Zechariah, but they are not fully exploited, no doubt because the same press has in print John Carter's *Prophets after the Exile*. The book of Esther is also merely alluded to, but in that case no doubt because it is entirely set in Persia. The main part of the work under review consists of 36 short chapters taking up 204 pages and treating the subject matter of the two books in the sequence of the Biblical text, offering such explanations as seem necessary along the way and similarly bringing in pertinent material from other sources. Six appendixes deal briefly with critical problems and special subjects. The author is to be commended for the lucidity of his exposition. He succeeds in bringing these ancient times to life.

If that were the only criterion of success, then this review could end here with a recommendation to all to read the book. However, account must be taken of the reliability of the material presented and of the soundness of the interpretations offered. The knowledge shown of the Persian empire is not reliable. Thanks to archaeological discovery and the work of scholars on ancient texts "knowledge" has indeed "been increased" very considerably over the last century, but this book too often reflects what was known at the end of the last century. Also it seems that in places insufficient care was taken in preparing the MS.

After the Table of contents there is a potentially useful list of kings of Assyria, Babylon and Persia, with dates, and facing it an "Approximate Chronology of Ezra and Nehemiah." It is explained on p. 205 that this list of kings offers "the order generally accepted by secular historians, but there are even different versions of this order." The latter part of this assertion is incorrect. There is now such an abundance of contemporary evidence that the sequence of the kings is no longer in doubt. The only failings in the list given are the occurrence of a king Pul before, and one Porus/Puulus (the latter a misprint for Poulus) after, Tiglath-pileser III, both without dates. On p. 8 Pul is identified with Sardanapalus. This will not help the ordinary Bible student, who will know of Pul, but not of Sardanapalus. In fact Sardanapalus is a corrupt form of the name of the Assyrian king Assur-bani-pal in some obscure Greek and Latin sources of doubtful value, and since Assur-bani-pal is correctly given in the author's list as reigning a century later than Tiglath-pileser III, Sardanapalus has no bearing on Pul. It has been known for over eighty years that Pul, mentioned in the Bible and cuneiform texts, was an alternative name of Tiglath-pileser III, while Porus/Pouulus are variant forms of the name Pul found in Greek sources. Indeed, I Chronicles 5:26 equates Tiglath-pileser and Pul by juxtaposition.

Further difficulties will be raised by the author's list of kings in respect of "Samsi-Rammānu" and the succeeding "Rammānu-nirari". Any student using in addition more reliable reference works will not find these names, because since 1902 it has been known that they should be read Shamshi-Adad and Adad-nirari. Then, the Shalmanesers given in the list are not, as printed, II, III and IV, but III, IV and V, and the Assur-nasir-pal is in fact II. The dates assigned to these kings are often right, and rarely more than a year or two out when wrong, but Merodach-baladan ruled over Babylon BC 722-710, not "731-" as given.

The "Approximate Chronology" will cause difficulties at several points. The first item has Sennacherib carrying 200,000 captives from Israel to Assyria in BC 713, though on the facing page he did not become king until 705, which is correct. (The number 200,000 is not from the reference quoted, II Kings 18:13—compare p. 9—, but from Sennacherib's own

royal inscriptions, which actually give the number as 200,150.) Next, Nebuchadnezzar ascends the throne in 606, while on the facing page he does that in 605. Lower down the page, 458 is equated with the 7th year of Artaxerxes I, but 444 with the 20th year of the same king. This is surely taking approximation too far. Another less than helpful aid to study is the map on p. 134. It purports to show "Journeys of the Exiles", i.e. the routes they took from Babylonia to Jerusalem. The Bible is entirely silent on these matters, and there seems to be no other reliable evidence. The captions on the map indicate that the exiles under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel went up the Euphrates to North Syria, then turned southwards from Aleppo through Tadmor (Palmyra) to Jerusalem, while those under Ezra and Nehemiah crossed the Syrian desert and passed through Damascus. The text on p. 133 suggests the opposite, that the latest group took the longer route through North Syria. In addition, the map is badly wrong in one detail. Tadmor is located south-southwest of Aleppo, when in fact it is southeast of that town, and to travel from Aleppo to Jerusalem via Tadmor would involve making a long, senseless detour into the desert. In contrast anyone making the journey across the Syrian desert, from the Middle Euphrates to Damascus, would naturally pass through Tadmor.

We have no space to list all the errors in this book, so a few more will have to suffice. Cyrus is called "the Persian" on p. 4, but the same king is called "the Median king Cyrus" on p. 22. (On pp. 22-23 the Medes and Persians are generally confused.) On p. 115 the Assyrian officer Rab-mag outside Jerusalem in the siege under Hezekiah is explained as "chief of the Magi; the wise men or magicians of the Assyrian court." But magus in this sense is an Old Persian word, while the Assyrian term (with the correct vowels rab-mugi) refers to a high military officer.

Appendix 3 discusses the identity of Ahasuerus. Throughout the book it is assumed that this king is Xerxes, but doubt on the point is expressed in this appendix. Using the conventional English forms of the names doubt may seem possible, but comparing the original Persian and Hebrew forms leaves no way of escape from the conclusion that Ahasuerus is Xerxes. Xerxes is Khshayarshan (Persian), Akhashwērōsh (Hebrew), while Artaxerxes is Artakhshasça (Persian), Artakhshasta (Hebrew), but the Hebrew vowels may of course be wrong, since they were not written until the Middle Ages. Thus discussion should begin from the fact that Ahasuerus is the Hebrew form of the Persian name Xerxes.

Appendix 4, on "The Calendar" summarises without acknowledgement the article on "Month" in William Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* II (1893) pp. 415-417, and repeats the suggestions that the Post-Exilic month names used by the Hebrews may have been of Persian or Syrian origin. It has been common knowledge since about 1910 that they were the standard *Babylonian* month names of the first millennium BC, which is not at all surprising seeing that the exiles had been in Babylonia.

More central Scriptural issues are not exempt from similar errors. Jeremiah's prophecy:

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation . . . (Jer. 25:11-12)

is taken by the author (p. 10) to have a double fulfilment. The first concerns the "service"; the second, captivity. It is argued that the service began in Nebuchadnezzar's first year, when he began campaigning against Judah, and ended "exactly" seventy years later, in the first year of Cyrus, when he decreed that the Jewish exiles could return. Cyrus conquered Babylon in October 539 BC, and his first full year as king of Babylon began in late March, 538. If Cyrus' first full year is meant in Ezra 1:1, seventy years previously is 608, the 18th year of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar. The author gets his 70 years by assigning 606 to Nebuchadnezzar's first year, and 536 as Cyrus' first year. However, his own list of kings correctly gives 605 for Nebuchadnezzar's accession, while his date for Cyrus' first year 536 is contradicted by the entry for the preceding king, Nabonidus. Nabonidus was the

last native king of Babylon, deposed by Cyrus when he (Cyrus) conquered Babylon in 539. Thus Nabonidus' dates are correctly given as 556-539, but that means that Cyrus replaced Nabonidus in 539, not 536. These dates are no longer open to dispute, being based on a large body of interlocking evidence from ancient king lists, the datings of thousands of administrative and other documents from various Babylonian cities, and astronomical evidence, especially the astronomical diaries from Babylon itself. Thus the interpretation offered only achieves its "exact" result by fudging the evidence for both ends of the period. But the whole interpretation is wrong. The service began when the people of Judah were carried away into captivity, which is the author's second interpretation of the seventy year period.

Another inaccurate interpretation of Biblical data occurs on p. 32. The repetition of the last few verses of Chronicles in the first few verses of Ezra is explained as required because "the original position of the book of Ezra" was after Daniel, not after Chronicles, as in our Bibles. In current Hebrew Bibles Ezra does indeed occur after Daniel, but when the books of the Old Testament existed as separate scrolls there was no fixed order as such. For the first two divisions of the Hebrew canon—the Law and the Prophets—the use of the books in a sequence in public reading during worship imposed an order, but the third division of the canon—the Writings, which includes Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, etc—was never so read. The current order in printed Hebrew Bibles goes back to MSS no earlier than about 1000 AD and the Babylonian Talmud gives a different order, placing Ezra after Esther, but the earliest MSS surviving in book form differ substantially among themselves in their order of the Writings.

In the field of homiletics the author strives to draw out of Ezra and Nehemiah lessons for present-day believers. He can both make the imperatives too categorical and at times pass over relevant matter without comment. Just as the exiles obeyed the Persian government, similarly should we do: "'Be subject unto the higher powers. For ... the powers that be are ordained of God' is true of every situation" (p. 19). Should then a believer under Nazi Germany of the late 30's have assisted, if so commanded, in the attempted extermination of God's people? There are situations where a conflict can arise between the commands of God and those of human rulers, and in such circumstances disobedience to human rulers might be the right and necessary course of action. In contrast the whole problem of mixed marriages under Nehemiah is dealt with in ch. 19 without the drawing of any lesson, nor any attention being directed to Paul's different ruling on this subject in I Cor. 7. The issues are less simple than presented.

The merit of the book is the way the author tells the story in his own words so that one feels that one is getting to know the times and the people involved. It is distressing, however, to find so much to disagree with in this nicely got-up volume. Though it is, as stated on the back of the title-page, "first published 1992", a "Second edition, revised and corrected" is already needed.

Book Review: "The Anchor Bible Dictionary"

The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Editor-in-Chief: David Noel Freedman,
Doubleday, 1992 Reviewed by *Wilfred Lambert*

Large-scale, original Bible dictionaries appear very rarely. They need to be based on the best experts available for each topic, unlike smaller commercial products which may merely condense a few existing works, without allowing the fact to become too obvious. The last large-scale English language Bible dictionary appeared in the United States in 1962: *The Interpreter's Bible Dictionary*, in four volumes with almost 4000 pages, then priced at \$45.

(A fifth supplementary volume was published in 1976.) The four volumes were reviewed in *The Endeavour Magazine* No. 7 (Spring 1963) pp. 29-31. Exactly thirty years later an even bigger work has appeared: *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, in six fat volumes with a total of 7284 pages with more than 6000 articles composed by 987 contributors. It is priced at \$360, though there is at least one United States bookseller offering it for \$260. The publisher is the New York firm, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, which, since 1964, has been issuing the various volumes of the *Anchor Bible*, still not quite complete. That series was launched with an advertising campaign proclaiming that this was something totally new in the field of biblical commentaries. The reality did not quite match the claims. Some excellent volumes have indeed appeared, but others, while very learned, have been seriously unbalanced. Also there have been signs of weak editorship. One commentator, for example, M.H. Pope, produced the *Anchor Bible Job* (409 pp.) in 1965, then the *Anchor Bible Song of Songs* (743 pp.) in 1977. Not merely is the number of pages entirely disproportionate to the length and significance of the books under comment, but many reviewers have found the latter peculiar if not eccentric.

The new *Bible Dictionary* shares the same characteristics of weak editorship and great learning combined with some idiosyncrasy. (The reviewer writes on the basis of extensive sampling: he has not read every one of the 7284 pages.) The majority of contributors are Americans, though plenty of 'foreigners' have also been drawn upon. The aim, like that of much American scholarship over the last half-century, has been much concerned to produce original results, not merely bringing up to date the sorts of thing found in previous such dictionaries.

The first task in the editorial process was to choose the list of titles on which articles would be commissioned, and in this matter the style and tone of the work becomes clear. It is a work by scholars and for scholars, and little is done to make the material accessible for a general intelligent readership. Also the subjects for treatment seem to have been whimsically chosen in many cases and there are not enough cross-references to help readers find the articles relevant to their interests. For example, a reader seeking light on the problems of the text of Scripture will naturally turn to "Text", where he will find some 42 pages devoted to "Textual criticism" with separate sections on Old and New Testaments, each with bibliography. There are other articles bearing on this subject, to which reference is made in this article. However, under C there is a three-page article "Conflate Readings in the Old Testament" to which the article "Textual Criticism" does not refer. It deals with cases where two alternative readings of a passage appear together side by side in MSS. It is a fault that the matter was not included in the general article "Textual criticism", further aggravated by lack of a cross-reference in that article. Similarly a reader interested in creation will find no article or cross-reference under the word, though under "Origin of the World" there is a reference to the article "World, on the Origin of", but that is a half-page article on a Gnostic work of that title in Coptic language. If there is any serious treatment of the topic anywhere, the reviewer has failed to find it. If the interest is in ancient near Eastern parallels to Biblical creation accounts, the reader must somehow know to look under "Enuma Elish" for a Babylonian text, and under "Memphite Theology" for an Egyptian text, though curiously in the article "Genesis, Book of" in section F ("Ancient Near Eastern Parallels") no reference is made to either of these two pertinent articles.

Not merely is there a lack of co-ordination of articles provided, but in one case noted by the reviewer there seems to be a total lack. There is no article under "Gems", "Stones", "Precious Stones" or "Geology", nor articles on individual stones such as "Sapphire". In contrast there is a general article on animals under "Zoology".

Another general matter in the subjects treated is the doubtful relevance of some given. The 11 pages on the prehistory of Egypt under "Egypt, History of (Prehistoric)", and the half page on "New Iranian Languages" under "Languages (Iran)" would appear to have at the most a very tenuous connection with the Bible. Also the amount of space given to

topics often seems unbalanced. "Samaritan Pentateuch" gets nine pages, but the more important and much more extensive "Septuagint" with 11 pages thus receives an altogether briefer treatment.

The *Dictionary* aims to be non-denominational, so contributors have been chosen from the various Christian churches, from Jewish scholars, and no doubt from agnostics and atheists. The scholarly expertise of the persons seems to have been the basis for their choice. Thus doctrinal issues in a sectarian sense have been avoided. There is no article on the Trinity, but under "God (NT)" there is a final section "D. Trinitarian Formulations", with which Christadelphians would have little quarrel. After alluding to the passages where God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are joined, such as the baptismal commission in Matthew 28:19, the writer, a Methodist, concludes, "Even these texts, however, do not formalize the relationship as that of one in three, but assert somewhat more simply that the work is the same work, whether it is perceived in terms of the creative and ruling power of the universe, the crucified and vindicated messiah, or the religious experience of the community." The *Dictionary* can also serve as a kind of thermometer to register current learned opinion. The reality of the deduced sources E, J and P in the Pentateuch, and of Q in Matthew and Luke is accepted, but generally the work is a little more conservative than it might have been had it been written twenty years earlier.

To sum up, this major work, despite its faults, is a vast storehouse of learning on most Biblical topics. The whole world was scoured to find the best scholars to write the articles, and it covers those topics which previous Bible dictionaries could not, such as "Ebla", "Kuntillet Ajrud" (an archaeological site in North Sinai where 8th century BC. buildings, with inscriptions mentioning Yahweh were found) and "Temple Scroll". It is of course not infallible (the writer on the kings named in Genesis 14 has got everything wrong!). The main difficulty in using it is to find the articles bearing on any topic, since the editors do not seem to have had much common sense in organizing it. It is not for beginners, but for those already well versed in Biblical matters it is very useful.

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If we were to ask an ordinary Christian today (whether well-read Protestant or Catholic, or not) what he conceived to be the New Testament teaching concerning the fate of man after death, with few exceptions we should get the answer: 'The immortality of the soul'. Yet this widely accepted idea is one of the greatest misunderstandings of Christianity. There is no point in attempting to hide this fact, or to veil it by reinterpreting the Christian faith. The concept of death and resurrection is anchored in the Christ-event, and hence is incompatible with the Greek belief in immortality.

Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? Oscar Cullmann, D.Th., D.D., Professor of the Theological Faculty of the University of Basel and of the Sorbonne. (1958), page 15