
THE

Endeavour

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The Endeavour Magazine

For Christian Thought and Action

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Our object is to promote a faithful, Bible-based response to issues which confront us both in thought and in day-to-day living. *The Endeavour Magazine* is published so that the range of views which exist within our Christadelphian Brotherhood may be discussed and represented, and so that issues of wider concern may also be studied and analysed. We therefore encourage discussion and criticism of what appears in our pages, provided it is done in a Christ-like spirit and with a concern that truth should prevail. The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editorial Committee but are published because it is believed that they will make a useful contribution to discussion, and help us all to a deeper understanding of our faith.

Correspondence, articles and subscriptions (£2.50 for two issues, incl. postage) should be sent to the Editor:

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Editorial: The Old Testament and the New

In our November 1991 issue (No 86) we showed (in the article "Tarshish Revisited") that the long-held belief that the Tarshish of the Old Testament was Britain was not true. The belief was based on a legend invented in 1590 by a romantic Elizabethan headmaster, John Twyne, which came to be accepted as fact and copied and recopied by writers over the years. It has now been shown indisputably that the Phoenicians did not so much as even visit Britain before the 5th century BC (whereas the earliest Bible reference to Tarshish is about 990 BC). They never had a trading post in Britain where there might be "merchants". Thus the hundreds of articles and books interpreting Ezekiel 38-39 in terms of Britain defending Israel against the Gogian invasion were completely without foundation.

The article also pointed out that in Jeremiah 18 God declares that prophecies given by Him are conditional. A prophecy of doom, even though expressed unconditionally (as in the case of Nineveh), would be rescinded if the nation concerned repented. Equally a prophecy of prosperity would be cancelled if a nation fell into sin. This was of significance for the prophecies in the closing chapters of Ezekiel which have not yet been fulfilled. It was generally believed that they would be fulfilled at the time of the Second Coming. But how could the Temple that Ezekiel described be built when the New Testament clearly states that the death of Christ ended sacrifice? If however these were *conditional* prophecies it could be assumed that the conditions had not been met and thus that they would never be fulfilled.

The Testimony (October 1992), while not disputing that Tarshish was not in Britain, denied with considerable indignation that the Temple would not be built during the Millennium. While it accepted that other prophecies might be conditional, it maintained that this could not be the case for those in Ezekiel 38-48 since they involved God's ultimate purpose in setting up His Kingdom. It was seemingly unaware that this was the classical mistake of assuming the truth of what had still to be proved since the question at issue was whether these prophecies were about the end-time or not. The reason for the indignation was because

"Fundamental features of the gospel message are contained in Ezekiel 33-48. In the New Testament we read of the 'gospel of the Kingdom' but in general the details of that Kingdom are not given because they are already recorded in the Old Testament. The Angel Gabriel said to Mary about Jesus Christ: 'the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever and of his Kingdom there shall be no end.' (Luke 1:32,33). This is saying that it was the son to be born to Mary who would fulfil what Old Testament prophecies like Ezekiel 33-48 say will happen.... To say that Ezekiel 33-48 was a conditional prophecy which will never be fulfilled is therefore to deny an essential part of the gospel message."

But what did Mary understand when she was told that her child would be a "Son of David"? Messianic expectation was high at the beginning of the first century and the one expectation that overshadowed all others was that of a King Messiah, the son of David, who would use earthly power and military conquest to ensure the national supremacy of Israel. *But this was not the understanding of Jesus.* He rejected it when

he was tempted in the wilderness. He refused to use the title "Messiah" throughout his ministry. When Peter made his monumental confession Jesus interpreted his messianic role in terms of suffering and rejection, not royalty and conquest. Jesus saw himself as the true fulfilment of the Old Testament. "It is he who is the 'Yes' to all God's promises" (2 Corinthians 1:20 GNB). He came with a new and deeper revelation of what those promises meant: "Jesus would scarcely have devoted so many of his parables to explaining what he meant by the kingdom of God if he understood by it what everybody else did." (G B Caird) At some points the Old Testament underwent radical reinterpretation as a result of his work, his life and, above all, his death. "Then Jesus said to them, 'How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything that the prophets said! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?' And Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets." (Luke 24:25-27 GNB)

So it is not only legitimate, but necessary, to interpret the Old Testament through the eyes of the New. The New Testament does indeed confirm that the son of David will reign for ever but denies emphatically that his reign will involve building a temple and re-introducing the law of Moses and animal sacrifices. Nor does it confine that reign to the house of Israel; it extends it to include Gentiles who do not need to be circumcised, something which is denied by Ezekiel. But *The Testimony* insists that it is heresy to say that there is any modification of the Old Testament by the New.

The justification for this is that:

"We believe that the basis of the gospel message is to be found in the promises which God made in the Old Testament to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" [which is] "one of the fundamental issues which separate Christadelphians from the rest of Christendom."
(*The Testimony*, April 1993 p 127)

Actually that is no longer true; large numbers of Christians do accept it, referring to it as "The Covenant of Grace" which is now the main justification of infant baptism.¹ Millions of Dispensationalists such as Hal Lindsey do so too.² But a basis is only a starting point. When Jesus was asked "Art thou greater than our father Abraham?" he replied with an unqualified "Yes". It is a strange inversion that Galatians 3:7 ("know ye not they which are of faith are the children of Abraham") is quoted as though being of the seed of Abraham was superior to being in Christ.

A refusal to accept that the "Israel of God" is now the body of true Christian believers leads *The Testimony* into a curious position over the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34. When Jesus read from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue in Nazareth he said, "This passage of Scripture came true as you heard it read". But it is denied that he regarded the new covenant he inaugurated at the Last Supper as a fulfilment of the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:31-34 which, *The Testimony* says, "primarily applies to Israel in the Kingdom". The new covenant of Jesus is apparently seen as a separate new covenant:

"Gentiles come under this new covenant when they 'put on Christ' in baptism, for 'if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise'

¹ For example, *Believing in Baptism*, Gordon Kuhrt (1987); *Baptism, Its Purpose and Practice*, Michael Green (1987).

² *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsey (1970) p 176

(Galatians 3:27,29). The Apostle Paul makes it clear in Romans 11:17 that Gentiles have to become associated with Israel to be saved."

Indeed Paul does. But it is spiritual Israel, the "Israel of God", that he is speaking of. In verse 1 of the chapter Paul asks "Hath God cast away his people?" and answers "No" by quoting the "remnant" in Elijah's time. He continues in v 7 "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." From this it is clear that the wild olive of v 17 was "grafted" into spiritual Israel. The branches which were broken off were natural Israel. To quote v 17 in the manner that *The Testimony* does is seriously misleading.

Hebrews 8:3-13 is treated in the same misleading way. Here the writer to the Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34, having previously said: "But now Jesus has been given priestly work which is superior to theirs [the priests of the Sinai covenant], just as the covenant which he arranged between God and his people is a better one, because it is based on promises of better things." (GNB). The "he" who has arranged the covenant is clearly Jesus and "his people" the Christian community—"We have such an high priest" (v 1). There would be no point in quoting Jeremiah unless it were regarded as a prophecy which has been fulfilled by Jesus.

The weak response to this is:

"Nowhere in Hebrews 8 does the writer say that Jeremiah 31:31-34 does not apply to Israel to whom it was originally given but to believers in Christ for that would make nonsense of the passage in its original setting."

But it is the consistent witness of the New Testament, from John the Baptist onwards, that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (Romans 9:6,7). It is also the witness of the New Testament that what *The Testimony* described as "nonsense" is precisely what the work of Jesus did, although we would not use that word to describe the fact that God's fulfilment of prophecy may contain an element of surprise, going far beyond the original prediction. "By speaking of a new covenant, God has made the first one old; and anything that becomes old and worn out will soon disappear." (Hebrews 8:13) Sacrifice was part of the old covenant: it has disappeared. But for *The Testimony* the old has not disappeared, it has merely been put into cold storage as it were:

"Jeremiah 31:31-34 will of course only apply to the nation of Israel when they become believers in Christ after he has returned to save them from the armies of the nations that attack them."

So the position appears to be that the Christian new covenant inducts Christians, by baptism, into the new covenant of natural Israel, which is not yet operative.

When it does become operative both Jews and Gentiles of the mortal population will offer sacrifices:

"When the Kingdom is established, however, nations as a whole will be worshipping God.... Once more national worship at a temple, and the offering of sacrifices there becomes possible and appropriate. They will not however be offered in the mistaken belief that they are acceptable to God in their own right."

But under what belief will they be offered? The atoning death of Christ has robbed sacrifices of any meaning. It appears that sacrifices are going to be offered which have no significance to the offerers. These acrobatics of explanation are apparently being undertaken to avoid saying that the sacrifices "point back to the sacrifice of Christ".

(Concluded on page 15)

Cheating at the Olympics

The apostle Paul several times uses analogies from ancient athletic contests. Arthur Mallinder considers the modern Olympics and like the apostle finds some encouraging advice.

Barcelona 92 was noteworthy in many ways. A record 172 nations and more than 10,000 performers took part. The old Soviet Union was replaced by the Unified Team of 12 republics, and China made its mark as a rising star. There were surprises; some favourites turned in disappointing performances while unknowns emerged from the pack to win medals. We remember the triumph of Sally Gunnel, the pain of Derek Redmond.

And there was the national shame when three British athletes were sent home in disgrace. Their drug tests had come up positive. Testing has been stepped up since the Ben Johnson incident at Seoul 4 years ago, when he was stripped of his gold medal. It is obvious that steroids work in enhancing performance and the temptation is there to use them, (especially in running, weight lifting and shot putting) but even so, it is sad that drug-testing should be necessary. Everyone recognises that cheating is contrary to the Olympic oath and the whole spirit of sportsmanship.

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you...?" Paul asks the Galatians. He knew all about the Olympic Games of his day and refers to them frequently in his writings. He uses the training, discipline and dedication of the athlete as a means of exhorting us individually, as we run the race of life.

Pondering all this, I began to muse about cheating. What does the Bible say about it? Does it have any application to us today? First, two examples, then some generalisations before we look specifically at what Paul has to say about cheating.

Jacob and Esau

At the instigation of his mother, and with some invaluable help from her, Jacob cheated Esau out of his birthright and the Blessing. How he suffered for it! Forced to flee from a comfortable home, he endured a life of hardship. Cheated in his turn by Laban, who changed his wages ten times, always to Laban's advantage. Deceived over the bargain for his wife, when after 7 years of toil Leah was substituted for Rachel whom he loved, and another 7 years demanded. 14 years can only be described as a Marathon!

Was it worth it? God would have given him the Blessing anyway, without his trying to steal it. The lesson surely is one of patience. We must trust in the Lord and wait patiently for him. We must not try to obtain something by dubious means, however desirable and good that something may be.

Ananias and Sapphira

The early church was trying an experiment. Many sold their possessions and they had all things in common. Ananias and his wife sold their land but kept back part of the price, as a form of insurance. After all, the experiment might fail and this seemed

wise. But they lied to the Holy Spirit, they tried to cheat God (as well as the church). They wanted the benefits of communal life, the welfare support, without paying their full subscription: rather like people who sign on for the dole and have a job on the side. So they paid the price, and were carried out dead.

The lesson is plain. You can't cheat God. He reads the hearts of men. Lies are of no avail with Him. Consider the shock of being found out, it would kill you! It did in their case.

Now let us think about cheating in religious matter in the wider sense. The Pharisees provide the perfect example. In Matthew 6:1-5,16 and 23:14 they are denounced by Jesus as hypocrites (the Greek word means actor, as in play-actor). They made a big show of their religious duties, "sounding a trumpet" when giving alms, praying at street corners and "for a pretence making long prayers", and fasting with a sad countenance, all to be seen of men. "Verily they have their reward [now]", says Jesus. If they were trying to impress God, God was not taken in. If they were trying to impress their fellowmen, they were probably much more successful. This was cheating in a big way.

Again the lessons are plain. Charity must be without show. Give, out of the fullness of your heart, to share your blessings with others less fortunate, as an expression of Christian love, and not to prove how good you are. Prayer must be with sincerity, out of your need for God. Pray to Him (not to the audience) and therefore keep your prayers short, for He knows what you need before you ask Him. Don't waste His time. Fasting, or other self-denial, should be practised with a cheerful countenance. This means no religiosity, no sham, no humbug, and no long faces. A self-centred religion designed to impress the neighbours, makes us prone to criticise others because they don't take life as seriously as we do. We have all met people who are so "saintly" that the rest of us lesser mortals sometimes find them difficult to live with!

What Paul says about cheating

Writing to Timothy he says, "if a man ... strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned [with the laurel wreath], except he strive *lawfully*." The Good News Bible puts it nicely:

"An athlete who runs in a race cannot win the prize unless he obeys the rules." (2 Timothy 2:5) As far as we know, there were no drugs in those days to boost performance, but there might have been? Paul here seems to be appealing to the rules of fair play. It was not allowable to jostle or trip another competitor, "whereby thy brother stumbleth" (Romans 14:21). But it was always possible to bribe the judge. That is why, when writing on this same theme in the fourth chapter of this letter to Timothy, he particularly describes the Lord as the "righteous Judge".

"I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, and I have kept the faith. And now there is waiting for me the prize of victory ... which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day ..." Our Judge cannot be bribed, the adjudication of the race will always be fair, with justice and mercy. That is both reassuring and frightening; we can't get away with cheating.

At the Olympics there are various types of race. The 100m is short, sharp and fast, all over in 10 seconds. There are the middle distance races which demand stamina and staying power, and longest of all is the marathon. For it you must pace yourself; go

too fast too early and you will collapse. There are feeding stations where you can take on water, or grab a sponge. You must get past the pain barrier, when legs turn to jelly and there is a desperate temptation to sit down at the wayside. At last the end is in sight and spirits revive! Life in Christ is more like a marathon than a 100m dash. You can draw your own analogies.

Paul concentrates on winning, and exhorts us to do the same. He tells the Corinthians:

"... you know that many runners take part in a race, but only one of them wins the prize. Run, then, in such a way as to win the prize. Every athlete in training submits to strict discipline, in order to be crowned with a wreath that will not last; but we do it for one that will last for ever. That is why I run straight for the finishing-line; that is why I am like a boxer who does not waste his punches. I harden my body with blows and bring it under complete control, to keep myself from being disqualified after having called others to the contest."

(1 Cor. 9:24-27, GNB)

Imagine there is only one prize, and you mean to get it. Go for it! (In fact we believe that everyone who finishes the race will get a prize. He that endureth to the end shall be saved.) But Paul says, don't be content with the 'bronze'. Note the training and discipline involved. Nobody ever said life in Christ was going to be easy. Note also the possibility of disqualification, which links up with our main theme. Remember the Pharisees and their failure; there lies our greatest danger.

To spur us on, Hebrews chapter 12 depicts runners in the stadium: it is packed with a great crowd of witnesses, and we are enjoined to get rid of every surplus weight and besetting sin, and to run with patience the race before us, looking unto Jesus who is already victorious. The witnesses are the faithful worthies of chapter 11, who are for us both an inspiration and a compulsion. They obtained a good report, what about us today?

Isaiah gives us a final word of encouragement, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall run, and not be weary, walk and not faint". So, with this in mind, Brother (and Sister) 'Speed thee on thy way'—keep on running, the race is not over yet. See you at Atlanta, ...or Jerusalem?

THE MEANING OF WORDS

...the widespread popular view that the 'original' meaning of a word is its 'proper' meaning ... in Linguistics...is fully recognised for the nonsense it is.... Words take on new meanings in the life of the language, and original meanings are often lost sight of, and come to contribute nothing to the understanding of the word. And yet, as Barr observes, we are still commonly told that 'history' 'properly' means "investigation" (Gk. *historia*), 'person' 'basically' means "mask" (Lat. *persona*), that 'holy' originally (and so properly) means: "whole, healthy, sound" (which is not even *historically* true), and so forth. The recent history of a term may be significant for understanding its present range of uses, and occasionally the distant history is important. For example, a knowledge of how the Greek Fathers understood *prosōpon* and the Latin fathers *persona*, is significant for understanding modern theological discussion of "person" in relation to Christology and Trinity—but historical usage cannot play the role of policeman or judge in relation to modern usage.

Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation, by Peter Cotterell & Max Turner, SPCK, 1989

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.

Mental Handicap

In the past 30 years or so the facilities available for those with a mental handicap have enormously increased. My own interest has been especially in the young and their education. It is in this area of concern that so much progress has been achieved.

But to begin at the beginning. There was a time when, for the majority of the handicapped, no provision was made outside of their own family, and there could be no expectation of advance. At the time that facilities began to be developed in this country (in the form of Occupation Centres) some parents resisted the idea of their child being seen in public places—a resistance which took some time to break down.

When the handicapped child is the first of a family, there can, I believe, be special difficulty in coming to terms with the situation. Where there are older brothers or sisters, there will still be difficulty, but often, as in our own daughter's case, there is the possibility of learning by copying. Where too there is a community (in our case the ecclesias and other societies) in which the handicapped are accepted, there is help to the parents and also to the child.

The facilities provided by local authorities, starting from basic provision, soon developed, first under the Social Services, and then 20 years ago becoming a part of the Education system, at first for those up to the age of 16 years, and later to include those up to 19 years. The schools for those less able are referred to as Special Schools, and for others provision often exists in mainstream schools for those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). In the area in which I live there are the beginnings of links with Primary Schools, so that for perhaps half a day in the week, a few children can have the opportunity of being with more able children of their own age. This is of advantage to those who are handicapped, and also gives awareness to the other children of the difficulties that are being met by others in society.

For those above school age there is the possibility of training in the skills needed for daily living. For this, in my locality, a house has been provided in the community and training is given in cooking and in personal and household care. Not far away is a Project supported by voluntary funds at which training in gardening is given, and several people are, with help and supervision, able to gain experience in a degree of independence.

Those needing the most care are those who have multiple handicaps. Even here, with the advent of invalid chairs and mini-buses, many are able to be taken from their

homes to the schools and centres, providing not only help for the handicapped, but also assistance and relief for parents, who are often hard pressed.

For adults there are centres at which a wide variety of interests are catered for, according to ability of the individuals. Because so many simple processes are now performed by machines or computers there is less opportunity of paid employment for the handicapped, although for some "work experience" is available often on a voluntary basis—and consequently the centres concentrate on matters of interest, for example looking at and explaining current affairs, walking in the countryside, listening to and seeking to understand music. Each of these at a level appropriate to the individual.

Those engaged as teachers or assistants in any of these establishments deserve much admiration.

In this survey, we have outlined the advances made in a short time, in helping the handicapped and bringing help to those who care for them. The stress encountered can still be great, especially if the handicap is severe, and can have its effect on a family and in some cases upon marriage relationships. The assurance that progress *can* be achieved should encourage any who encounter the problem at whatever level—whether as parents, relations or friends.

Alzheimer's Disease

What is Alzheimer's disease? In 1906, it was Dr. Alois Alzheimer who first identified the disease which is named after him. Although there are several causes of dementia in the elderly and not so elderly which can be treated successfully, Alzheimer's disease is the most common, and affects 750,000 people in this country alone.

It is the symptoms that reveal changes in a sufferer. These include loss of memory, particularly in normal repetitive every day things, and failure to recognise close relatives etc. Distressing changes can deteriorate into a state of total dependency. In the brain changes can be seen such as general shrinkage, and abnormalities are present, referred to as "plaques and tangles". There is also a reduced amount of the chemical acetyl choline. Research is going ahead into ways of maintaining the level of this chemical in the brain, and actual replacement of cells. Drugs are being developed to treat in other ways as well. However the best treatment at the moment is being carried out in special clinics where training in verbal reasoning is encouraged, to help sufferers to retain their memory for as long as possible. Support groups for carers have been set up in several places, where help and advice can be given. The Alzheimer's Society can help with free fact sheets, and takes queries by telephone or letter. Last year they answered 1000. Anyone can join—carers, sufferers, professional people or anyone who is concerned about the disease.

BRACE (= Bristol Research into Alzheimer's and Care of the Elderly) is a charitable trust set up in 1987 to raise funds for research into Alzheimer's disease, and other problems relating to age. Professor Gordon Wilcock heads a research team at Bristol University, working with a special unit at Frenchay Hospital. He is the UK representative on an EEC Committee investigating treatment of all forms of dementia. His team helps to create a better quality of health, dignity and independence in old age.

To Join BRACE, contact Mary Sansbury, 30 Henleaze Gardens, Westbury on Trym, Bristol BS9 4HJ. To join the Alzheimer's Society contact your own GP or social worker.

Oxfam

The Oxfam Workshop was somewhat different from the other "Caring" workshops—not that it was not caring but that the caring was on a much broader, worldwide basis.

Information was given on the structure of the organisation and methods of fundraising etc. Questions were answered and some misconceptions were corrected on such matters as administration costs, thought by some to be high but in fact they are comparatively low. Another misconception is that Oxfam is merely the sale of old clothes. Oxfam was set up 50 years ago, in aid of European refugees, but it has since expanded to a world-wide role. Funds come from direct donations as well as from their successful chain of shops where volunteers sell donated goods including clothes, books, bric-à-brac, soft furnishings, and household goods in general. An important development has been the introduction of "Trading Goods" which not only gives employment to the poorer countries of the world but endeavours to pay fair prices.

There was a good display of literature on all aspects of Oxfam and on the varied ways in which we can help, not just financially but by donations of saleable goods and, if possible, our time and energy.

The slogan for Oxfam's 50th Anniversary Year, "Working for a Fairer World" highlights the widespread injustices of world economics which always seem to load the odds against the poorer communities. Oxfam's aim is having some success in ensuring that the poor of the world are not exploited but are given fairer prices for their produce. This is a matter that must frustrate all caring Christians for its solution is beyond individual action. Oxfam is a way in which we can make our own contribution.

The display of Oxfam Trading Goods attracted a lot of interest from the brothers and sisters and the College personnel, and we were gratified by their generosity when we totted up the sales—approximately £300.

We know that the Creator wills an end to hunger and oppression. The resurrection of Jesus is our guarantee that in spite of the evil that almost overwhelms us, victory will surely come. In the meantime we must do our best "to loose the chains of injustice—to set the oppressed free and break every yoke" (Isaiah 58).

CHRISTADELPHIAN SUMMER SCHOOL

Good Bible study, good discussion, good fellowship!

There are still a few places left. Write for booking details to:

Averil & Ian McHaffie, 176 Granton Road, Edinburgh EH5 1AH

Subjects under discussion and Scriptural study this Summer include:

Caring for one another, the Opponents of the Apostle Paul, Drama, the Christian and Israel, the Christian response to Islam, Judas, Colombian Street children, Getting the Message Over, the Canon of Scripture, the Kingdom of God, Inspiration and Revelation.

There will also be worship, singing new hymns and songs, and recreation (physical as well as spiritual).

30th July to 3rd August 1993 (DV) at

St Andrew's Hall, Selly Oak, Birmingham

The Handmaid of the Lord

Twice a year we read the narratives of the birth of Jesus in Matthew and Luke in which Mary has such a prominent place. We are also reminded of them at Christmas. Yet Mary rarely figures in our addresses. This may well be partly because, apart from the birth narratives, we are told very little about her in Scripture but probably even more because of a reaction against Roman Catholic doctrine. Ron Coleman explores the background and suggests we can indeed be exhorted by Mary and her example.

According to Catholic theology Mary was sinless—the doctrine of the immaculate conception. This has nothing to do with the virgin birth of Jesus nor yet the birth of Mary. It is the dogma that through the prevenient redemptive grace of Jesus Mary was preserved from original sin from the first moment of her existence, and so was predestined to salvation. In consequence she did not die but was taken up bodily into heaven and is to be worshipped and adored.

But to reject this utterly, as we do, does not mean that we cannot derive lessons from her life even though we have only a few disconnected facts about it apart from the early chapters of Matthew and Luke. If however we put those disconnected facts together and place them in the context of the times and places in which she lived we can sketch a picture of a living person. And the very familiarity of those opening chapters of the two gospels may lead us to overlook some remarkable things in them.

Marriage Customs

Our introduction to Mary comes abruptly after the account of the conception of John the Baptist. "God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth. He had a message for a girl promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. The girl's name was Mary." (Luke 1:26-27.¹) It would be wrong to think that "promised in marriage" was the equivalent of today's "being engaged". Betrothal, as it was known, was at least as important as is a Registry Office wedding today. It followed the drawing up of the marriage contract which settled the financial details of the marriage and signified the 'acquisition' of the woman by the man. Joachim Jeremias points out that this acquisition was exactly similar to that of a Gentile slave.² The ceremony had to take place before two witnesses. There was a formula of question and answer, followed by a benediction and the exchange of rings. The betrothed woman was called 'wife', could become a widow, be put away by divorce and punished with death for adultery.

If at all possible, marriage was between blood relations, particularly first cousins. The couple did not choose each other for the match was arranged by the parents. The wedding itself, which normally took place about a year later, was a tremendous social event—the couple would keep open house for a week afterwards for feasting and merriment. But it was not a religious service; it signified the passing of the girl from

¹ Quotations are from the Good News Bible except where otherwise indicated.

² *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, Joachim Jeremias, p 367

her father's power to that of her husband. The normal age of betrothal was between twelve and twelve and a half³ but sometimes as early as nine.⁴ So Mary's assent "I am the Lord's servant; may it happen to me as you have said" was an act of great trust and courage, particularly in one so young.

A question rarely asked is "Why was Mary living in Nazareth before her wedding?" She, like her husband, was of Davidic descent and so her "own town", as was his, might be expected to be Bethlehem. Moreover it seems that after the birth of Jesus they planned to go on living in Bethlehem for as Luke tells us (2:22) "The time came for Joseph and Mary to perform the ceremony of purification as the Law of Moses commanded." This law is in Leviticus 12 and says that a woman was unclean after a birth for 40 days in the case of a boy, or 80 days for a girl. Then, says Leviticus, "she shall bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tabernacle a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or a dove for a sin offering." If however she were poor she could bring just two birds instead of a lamb and a bird. It was the two birds that Mary and Joseph brought so we know that they were poor.

Since they were poor it seems strange for Joseph to have given up his work for the fifty or more days involved, taking the double journey into account. But this is not all, for we find them still in Bethlehem perhaps two years later, when the wise men came from the east. Matthew tells us (2:11) they were in a house, not the stable. Because the visits of the shepherds and the Magi are often considered to have happened at the same time we may imagine that Herod was just being over-cautious when he "gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood who were two years old and younger", but Matthew adds "This was done in accordance with what he had learned from the visitors about the time when the star appeared" (2:16). This strongly suggests that their journey had taken two years. And when Mary and Joseph returned from taking refuge in Egypt their first thought was to go to Judaea, obviously intending to settle there rather than go back to Nazareth. It was only when warned by God that Archelaus had succeeded Herod that they returned to Nazareth.

Why did Mary go to see Elisabeth?

Mary's reaction to Gabriel's message is another strange thing. "Soon afterwards Mary got ready and hurried off to a town in the hill-country of Judaea. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elisabeth." (Luke 1:39-40) The news of Elisabeth's pregnancy, happy though it was, does not seem a sufficient reason for a twelve-year old to make such a formidable journey. It would have been at least eighty miles travelling through Samaria, and perhaps a hundred and twenty by the usual route that Jews took through the Jordan valley. What would her family think of this? For she would still be living with them during her betrothal. Surely they would have refused permission? And why at the time of the census did she, betrothed and therefore still under her father's jurisdiction, travel with Joseph to Bethlehem?

All this suggests that Mary had no family in Nazareth and was staying with strangers until her wedding. If so it could only be because she was an orphan. The reason she hastened to tell Elisabeth her momentous news was because her older cousin

³ Jeremias p 365

⁴ Everyday Life in New Testament Times, A.C. Bouquet p 145

was her only possible confidant. Elisabeth had taken the place of her dead mother and had brought her up. Now of course this is speculation and it may not be true, but it does explain the puzzle in a convincing way. Anyone who doubts it might be challenged to produce an alternative explanation.

The explanation gains further support by producing a solution to another problem. If her mother and father were dead, what was to become of a young orphan without a marriage-portion? According to Jewish custom she would be married to her nearest male relation (Ruth 3:2 and 4:5). And he? He was an elderly widower with a family of sons and daughters, Joseph the carpenter, who had moved from his native Judaea to Nazareth in Galilee.

Once again we come up against Catholic theology—or rather the reaction to it—in the shape of the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Because of the assumed association of sexual union with concupiscence, Catholics believe that Mary could not have borne any children for Joseph. It is in opposition to this that Protestant and Reformed churches have insisted that the brothers and sisters of Jesus mentioned in the gospels were indeed Mary and Joseph's children. If however we leave theological assumptions aside and consider the gospel account without presuppositions, there are some telling reasons for thinking that the "brothers" and "sisters" could be Joseph's children by an earlier marriage. The principal argument against it is that the people of Nazareth said they were brothers and sisters of Jesus, not stepbrothers and stepsisters, and therefore Mary must have been their mother. But this is not conclusive since the villagers thought that Joseph was the father of Jesus and would therefore have thought he was the half-brother of children of Joseph by an earlier marriage. We cannot expect the people of Nazareth to have been so precise over such a relationship as to say "Isn't he the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the half-brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon?" Indeed it isn't always the case that stepbrothers and sisters are described as such. The present writer, who had four stepsisters, can testify that this is so.

But the principal reason for thinking that Jesus was Mary's only child is that when he was dying on the cross he found it necessary to make provision for her care. She would not then have been fifty years old and surely her other children would automatically have provided any care that was necessary? For Jesus to put their mother into the care of someone else would have been an insult to them in days when families were closer and more interdependent than today.

Tensions in the family

That this is so is confirmed by an earlier event during Jesus' ministry. On the occasion when he came back to Nazareth a large crowd gathered so that he and his disciples had no time even to eat. "When his family heard about it, they set out to take charge of him because people were saying, 'He's gone mad.'" (Mark 3:21) If Jesus had been the eldest son in the family, younger brothers could never have set out with the idea of "taking charge of him" according to the customs of the time. Later on in this chapter we are told of a second incident when the crowd was as dense as ever. "Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside the house and sent in a message, asking for him. A crowd was sitting round Jesus, and they said to him, 'Look, your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, and they want you.'" (Mark 3:31)

We know what Jesus said to the crowd. It seemed as though he disowned his family. Surely there were some hidden tensions here? Otherwise Jesus was being gratuitously rude to his closest relatives. If however these were the children of Joseph, all older than Jesus, things fall into place. He was the youngest and his arrival had been under a cloud. The family might well have resented Joseph's remarriage, especially as there would be great disparity of age between their father and his new wife.

Tradition says that Joseph died when Jesus was eighteen. If Jesus and his mother after the death of Joseph had never received any kindness at their hands, we can see why Jesus reacted as he did. Nor need we suppose that Mary was of one mind with the others and had lost faith in her son's mission; nothing could be more out of harmony with the rest of the narrative. Mary went with her stepsons to do what she may often have tried to do, to soften their hostility to Jesus and act as peacemaker between them.

There is a hint of family division in the ring of resentment in John's words when he comments on the brothers' advice to Jesus to leave Galilee and go to Judaea: "Not even his brothers believed in him" (John 7:5). For this was not disinterested advice. They wanted to be rid of him because he was an embarrassment. And when Jesus said "A man's worst enemies will be the members of his own family" (Matthew 10:36) was he not perhaps speaking from his own experience at this stage?

That the case for younger brothers and sisters of Jesus is insubstantial is shown by it being found necessary to put forward such a poor argument as the following. In Psalm 69:6-9 the Psalmist says to God: "It is for you I am putting up with insults ... that make me a stranger to my brothers, and alien to my mother's other sons; zeal for your house devours me." (Jerusalem Bible) This, it is said,⁵ is clearly prophetic of Jesus and is quoted in John 2:17, after Jesus had cleansed the Temple: "The disciples remembered the words of scripture: 'Zeal for your house will devour me.'" But the disciples could not have been citing this as evidence of fulfilled prophecy for, apart from their inability at this time to understand the meaning of the prophecies, they would also have believed that verse 5 of the Psalm was a prophecy about Jesus: "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee." (AV) The disciples were obviously remembering a verse which was applicable to a similar, but different, situation from that of the Psalmist, just as when they applied v 25 of this same Psalm to Judas Iscariot. (Acts 1:20)

When Jesus was taken to the Temple for the ceremony of purification Simeon, led by the Spirit, took the infant in his arms and thanked God for him. He blessed Mary, and Joseph too, but he had a special word for Mary. "And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart." (Luke 2:35) We usually associate this with the crucifixion, but was it exclusively so? For that sorrow, though unbearably intense, lasted only for a short period and its memory would have been assuaged just three days later. Was not Simeon prophesying a sorrow that lasted over a longer period?

The childhood of Jesus

If the sons and daughters of Joseph resented their father's second marriage, the fact that Mary had become pregnant during her betrothal would have given them an

⁵ *Studies in the Gospels*, Harry Whittaker p 25

Roman Catholic Teaching Compared with Biblical Teaching, Bernard Burt p 11

opportunity for spite. Life in that household must have been hard and bitter for her. But by way of compensation, if Mary was not burdened with repeated pregnancies and caring for a young family, she would have been able to devote more time and effort to teaching Jesus. Of course children were not educated just in the home—there was an elaborate system based on the synagogue, but particularly in the early years it is the mother who has the greatest influence on the formation of character. There are few things in life more delightful than to watch the blossoming of interest and intelligence in children. And we can imagine the joy of Mary, at once the teacher and the taught, as she watched Jesus as he “increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man”. (Luke 2:52, AV) So Mary, entrusted with the upbringing of His only son, was of supreme importance in the working out of God’s purpose.

We have two glimpses of that upbringing. The first is the visit to the Temple, when the twelve-year old Jesus is pictured “sitting with the Jewish teachers, listening to them and asking questions” so that “All who heard him were amazed at his intelligent answers.” (Luke 2:46,47). It is easy to misunderstand this incident, particularly in the light of the response of Jesus to Mary’s remonstrance “My son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you.” (Note incidentally the description of Joseph as “your father”. Does this not suggest that stepbrothers could have simply been called “brothers”?) According to the AV Jesus said “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” which sounds like a rebuke, but modern translations have, for example, “Didn’t you know that I had to be in my Father’s house?”

Mary is pained because while she and Joseph have been anxiously seeking him Jesus seems careless of their anxiety, absorbed in the teaching of the doctors. But Jesus is surprised that they should not have thought that that is the very place where they could find him. If two people miss each other in a crowded town and both go from place to place in search of the other they may never meet. The best plan for the one who is lost is to try and identify somewhere where the other is likely to look and stay there. And what place would be more likely, in view of Mary’s teaching, than the Temple where God’s presence was represented?

The second glimpse is in the story of the miracle at Cana (John 2:1:12), and this is retrospective. It is perhaps unnecessary to explain that the AV “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” does not have any tone of harshness in the Greek. The use of “Woman” in direct address was normal and polite. Even so, it might seem that Jesus was rebuking his mother.⁶ But why? After all, he did immediately remedy the situation. Have we not here a gentle affectionate reminder that now the public ministry was beginning things could no longer be as they were? “You must not tell me what I have to do” is the GNB translation. The days of instruction and guidance from his mother were over. But this must be a testimony as to how influential they had been in the past.

And finally, to return to the third word from the cross. “Woman, behold thy son!” And then to John: “Behold thy mother!” (AV) At first sight this seems to be nothing more than Jesus taking care of his mother by asking a friend to look after her. But

⁶ *The Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of John*, United Bible Societies, p 57

might it not be just as much the reverse, taking care of a friend by committing him to the care of his mother? John at this time was probably quite young. He was not yet the mystic, the apostle of love that we see in the gospel and the epistles, even though he was the disciple that Jesus loved. But he was still ambitious, desiring to occupy one of the chief seats in the kingdom. He was still the bigot who forbade a man to cast out devils in Christ's name because "he followeth not after us". He was still the zealot who wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume those who refused to welcome him and his Master. Was it perhaps the memory of his own adolescence and his mother's influence that stirred Jesus, even in those moments of suffering, to bring them together, more for John's sake than his mother's? We cannot know, but it does seem probable.

One thing finally. Mark records that on the resurrection morning Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. She was one of the little group who stood at the foot of the cross and it was fitting that one who stood close to him in death should be the first to witness his conquest of death. But also among that little group was another Mary, the mother of Jesus. Can we doubt that Jesus would come in private to her who had been closer to him than anyone else before he appeared to any other? And that we should not be told about it? There are some things too personal and too intimate for all to know. But surely she who was first to feel and see the beginning of his earthly life would also be the first witness of the beginning of his triumphant heavenly life?

Editorial: The Old Testament and the New

(Concluded from page 3)

In one respect I can agree with our critic when he says that "the idea of ... there being such a temple, with its sacrifices, in the Kingdom to come has been a problem to some in the Brotherhood for many years." On pages 16-22 we print a study of the problem, written 100 years ago (that has come to light since "Tarshish Revisited" was written), which shows how great the difficulties are unless one accepts the obvious solution that predictive prophecy is by nature conditional.

One of the casualties of the introduction of the 1964 hymn book was hymn 110 of the 1932 book (78 of the 1874 book). It may not be great poetry but its sentiments are those of the New Testament.

The True Messiah now appears,
The types are all withdrawn;
So fly the shadows and the stars
Before the rising dawn.

Now smoking sweets, and bleeding lambs,
And kids and bullocks slain;
Incense and spice of costly names
Would all be burnt in vain.

Aaron must lay his robes away,
His mitre and his vest,
When God's own Son is sworn to be
The Off ring and the Priest.

Ezekiel's Temple and Priesthood A Conditional or an Absolute Prophecy?

This article by John Henderson of Aberdeen Ecclesia was first published as a series of articles in 1892. How we apply prophecy is a subject which continues to require examination as the varying interpretations over the last century have indicated. A greater awareness of the conditional nature of prophecy might have prevented some of the now-discredited claims. This reprint is condensed, though nothing material to the argument on the conditional aspect has been removed. Sub-titles have been added and spelling and punctuation occasionally altered. Italics are as in the original.

.... Before we can fully understand Ezekiel it is first necessary that we possess a clear and comprehensive acquaintance with the Mosaic code. A slipshod slinging together of texts from all parts of the Old and New Testaments is of no real value in determining such intricate questions as are involved in Ezekiel's temple and service. Let me illustrate this for a little. The constitution of France and the constitution of Great Britain contain many points of similarity, and an adept at argument could demonstrate to those who did not know any better, that both were one and the same, by simply showing where the two constitutions were in agreement regarding law and administration, while at the same time altogether ignoring what is of the first importance, the fundamental principles of the respective governments To use a parliamentary law phrase, the proper method to approach the question is by *declaring the constitution* laid down by Ezekiel and by comparing it with the Mosaic code. If this method is carefully observed, the first important fact which will strike the enquirer is that Ezekiel's writings do not contain the elements of a new constitution for the nation, but an extension of the law of Moses modified and adapted to the altered conditions in the national life of the Hebrews. The commonwealth of Ezekiel stands somewhat in the same relationship to the Mosaic law as a new educational order stands in relation to the original code. If we carefully peruse such an order as issued by the Education Department, the fact will be at once apparent that the original code is not set aside but is only introduced so far as necessary in order to show the modifications and extensions, and the method of adapting the new order to the original code. The plan of the new temple is given, down to the minutest details, but the laws and the new ritual are only fragmentary and incomplete if separated from the existing laws. A great deal has been made of the assumption that the *great day of atonement* forms no part of the ritual of the temple, but the only evidence on the point—if evidence we can call it—is deduced from the fact of the national rite not being mentioned. We ought just as soon to conclude that when a new educational order does not expressly mention compulsory education the compulsory clauses are no more to be enforced. But why single out the *great day of atonement* and dispense with it; there are a number of other national rites which are not expressly mentioned and yet they are supposed to remain. We complain of the clergy twisting the word of God to suit their theories, yet we find among ourselves some who twist the literal meaning of the prophet's writings till the whole seems a gross caricature of the real and literal meaning. The prince or prince priest, we are told is Jesus Christ. It is really painful to imagine the idea of Jesus marrying and

having sons to whom he gives certain portions of land while he offers sacrifice for himself. Ah! but we are informed that the text does not mean that. No, according to the exponents of this theory, the prophet meant always something quite different from the plain literal statement. The offering of the prince, we are informed, will not really be an offering for himself, but an offering as a memorial of himself in consummating the very ritual he is again seeking to establish. The sons of Zadok are not the sons of Zadok but the glorified saints raised from the dead. This is rather hard on the good old faithful priest and his sons to turn them into types and disband them, giving the reward of their faithful services to others. If the temple service relates to the future, Zadok might at least be assigned a place. The careful reader will notice, however, that Ezekiel gives no place to the faithful priest himself, the reward is simply given to his sons. Why should he be thus overlooked? The answer is simple. Zadok was dead and buried and his descendants were to reap the reward of the good and faithful services rendered in keeping the charge of the sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray. Ezekiel's temple was not designed for the future when Zadok will be raised and glorified, but for the time when he was sleeping in the dust, and the only reward possible was to be given to the living representatives of his house, who were to serve the new temple according to the law of Moses which was still to be enforced. If we are to understand the meaning and aims of the prophet, the better way to succeed is to disregard all theories and take his writings literally where they can be so understood. If this course is adopted we shall find it stated in the plainest language that the altered law *the building of the temple and the new ritual were intended for the nation at the time the book was written, on condition that they would return and keep the law.*

In chapter xl.iii., verse vii, we read: "Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the children of Israel no more defile." Those who hold to the theory of the Temple being yet future have an awkward habit of singling out the above text, and declaring that the Lord's word must come true, therefore the Temple, the sacrifices, and ritual must be established. But why stop short at the vii. verse, we must take the whole instruction given to the prophet, and we read at verse ix. "*Now let them put away their whoredoms, and the carcasses of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever.*"

"Thou Son of Man show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern, and if they be ashamed of all that they have done show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them."

The command is in plain words and is easily understood. It applied to the time when the nation was dishonouring God with the carcasses of their kings, a sin that cannot be applied to Israel of the future, no more than it applies to the Jews of to-day. The whole scheme was conditional. If they were ashamed of what they had done, and would put away all their iniquities, God was willing to dwell among them for ever and forgive their past transgressions. Ezekiel was commanded to show them the house that they might be ashamed. Does it not seem a little strange to make such an offer to the nation

and entreat them so, if the scheme was not intended for them at all? It was honestly offered and the offer would have been as honestly fulfilled if the whole nation had responded to the call. The aim of the prophet was the resurrection of the whole nation, and the infusion of national life and unity under one Theocratic Commonwealth. One Temple and one service—Mount Ephraim and Mount Zion—would be no longer antagonistic for representatives of *all the tribes* were to serve the New City under the Sons of Zadok and the Prince Priest.

[Omitted here is the section dealing with the position of the Temple relative to the new division of the land.]

What was actually offered in Ezekiel's time?

The question which next presents itself is: what object had the Prophet in view in propounding such an arrangement to the exiled nation? If we are to understand him in the literal sense, he simply meant the tribes to rise up and possess the land and work out the Divine plan which he had shown them. Tribal jealousies, the expense of monarchy, and the rapacious greed of the priesthood had proved a curse to the nation, and were the direct means of bringing it to utter ruin. Now all was changed, the destroyer had virtually obliterated the many enemies of Israel, and Babylon itself was being weighed in the balance, and was nearing its downfall. A strong united people could of themselves, or under the sheltering arm of the Medes and Persians, have become masters of the situation. While Babylon was tottering in the balance, the strongholds of the country lay open to their hand and possession could have been obtained under much easier conditions than when they had to conquer and subdue the warlike Canaanites. A restored monarchy forms no part of the new scheme: such a form of government was from past experience no longer desirable; till He comes whose right it is to reign. The new form of government was to be the Theocratic Commonwealth restored and administered by the priesthood, while a perfect equality of possession and rights was to exist among the tribes from Dan in the north to Gad in the south. The chief ruler was to be both prince and priest; one of the tribe of Levi and of the sons of Zadok, who only could come near the Divine presence. It may be asked, how could such a settlement agree with the frequent overturning of the kingdom as foretold by the same Prophet? There is really no difficulty involved here. Had the Jews who returned from exile remained faithful under the government established by Nehemiah, there would not have been any more overturning of the nation. Punishment was only meted out to them when there was transgression, followed by a refusal to obey. Again it may be asked: how could a commonwealth exist a second time when the kingdom was covenanted to remain in the family of David? It is well to remember that many of these promises were in a measure conditional. The kingdom did not continue to be ruled by the house of David, for his son and grandson both made themselves unworthy of it, and the ten tribes, with the Divine approval, formed themselves into a separate kingdom, and the covenant was no longer absolute. Besides a return to the Theocratic Commonwealth involved no greater difficulties than the partial restoration under Nehemiah, where we have even the recognition of a foreign yoke. God in His goodness and mercy had ever an outstretched arm to succour His backsliding people, if they would only have purged themselves from their sins and returned to Him who was ever ready to

forgive; but they choose the evil and refused the good; only a faithful few from among the scattered tribes desired to return and seek the Lord their God. Instead of a united nation—a people inspired with a desire for freedom—there was only a meagre remnant willing to leave the land of their captivity—Ephraim was joined to his idols, and was finally buried among the nations. It has sometimes been contended that the ten tribes which constituted the nation of Israel had lost their identity before the restoration from Babylon took place. There is evidence sufficient to show that portions at least of the ten tribes continued distinct down to Apostolic times and we find them referred to as such by both Peter and Paul. Their identity was finally obliterated when Mahomet enforced his faith at the point of the sword upon the nations of Asia Minor, from which time all traces of them as a nation have been lost. There is no contemporary history to show that Ezekiel visited them but their place of captivity was within reach of Babylon, and means could easily have been found to reach them and commune with their elders regarding restoration to their own land. The Prophet's instruction was for the whole of the tribes, and when such was given him there must have been the means of carrying it out.

But why so much detail if the Temple was only conditional?

The main objection, however, to receiving Ezekiel's Temple and service as a conditional scheme for the nation of Israel in the past, arises out of a mistaken notion regarding God's purpose with them in the future. The question has been asked: why did God inspire the Prophet with such a grand scheme when He knew that the nation would not receive it? If we are to treat God's purposes and promises in this way, we might just as soon ask: why did He place the nation of Israel in the country when He knew they would not keep His laws, or why did He send prophets, and latterly His own Son to be slain, when He knew that the nation would not receive them? The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. The national restoration of the Jews will yet be accomplished, and they will return and seek the Lord their God; but they could have returned then if they had been as willing as their God was to receive them; but the law of Moses will not return nor will ritual worship be again established in Jerusalem.

New methods in a new constitution

The great purpose will be accomplished, but the methods will be adapted to the new constitution—"For even that which was made glorious hath no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, how much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech." The theory of the restoration of animal sacrifices and ritual worship resolves itself into the larger question which must decide the lesser one. Will the law of Moses be again restored, or is it laid aside for ever? Are we again to have justice meted out in the shape of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?" Are we to have the law of circumcision again enforced? The Prophet says, "No stranger uncircumcised in heart nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary of any stranger that is among the children of Israel."

Ezekiel's Temple and service was simply an extension of the Old Law, which was truly glorious when compared with the surrounding pagan darkness; but it became effete and old, and was ready to vanish away when Jesus appeared among the people of

Judah. The establishment of synagogues and the national education of the people, in time virtually eclipsed the rudimentary form of ritual worship observed in the Temple. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The ceremonial law of Moses was but a shadow—an administration of death—and therefore its glory waned before the glory of that which remaineth. "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings, and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second." There is not a single text in the New Testament which even hints at the restoration of animal sacrifices and offerings. Instead of Jesus offering for himself, we are informed in the above quotation that the first covenant was taken away, in order that the second might be established. Which required only the offering of one sacrifice for sins for ever.

Moral and Ceremonial Codes

In speaking of the law of Moses it is necessary to distinguish between the moral and the ceremonial codes. The great principles contained in the moral law can never be dissolved, because they teach the essential elements of righteousness, but the law may be changed in its methods of administration, and the punishments consequent on its infringement may be altered and made applicable to mankind under a changed condition of society. Idolatry, fornication, theft, and false swearing are opposed to righteousness and therefore offensive to the Most High. Laws may be changed when the older methods become effete and cumbersome; but He is ever the same. "They shall perish, but thou remainest, and they shall all wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed; but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail."

The ceremonial code was simply a provisional arrangement or rudimentary guide, which dealt with the sanitary and social education of a nation emerging from the surroundings of pagan superstition. Like the structure of the tabernacle it did not contain the elements of permanency but it fully accomplished the end for which it was instituted. No animal sacrifice could atone for moral transgressions; such were usually punished by fine, flogging, and death, according to the crime of the transgressor; but in certain minor offences the offender presented his offering after suffering the punishment which the law demanded, and an atonement was made for him. Sacrifices and offerings belong mostly to the ceremonial code, and were instituted for the object named by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews. "The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctified to the purifying of the flesh." When a mother gave birth to a child she was ceremonially unclean and had to bring a *sin offering* to the priest who made an atonement for her. So with the leper. The priest offered his *sin-offering* and made an atonement for him. These two instances are sufficient to show the meaning and application of the ceremonial code. There was no moral guilt involved in bearing a child or in contracting a disease; but it was essential for the nation that such should be reported to the priests who were the teachers, the doctors, and the sanitary inspectors during the Mosaic dispensation. These offerings were the primitive mode of giving the unclean person who was cleansed a clean bill of health. Modern sanitary Science is only now attaining to much that was taught in the ceremonial law,

only our methods are more advanced and less cumbersome in their application.

Why animal sacrifices are no longer applicable

The restoration of animal sacrifices has been justified on the plea that they never did take away sin, and were only types of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which actually removed or put away the sins for which the animals were offered under the law; and that the animal sacrifices of the future will have the same significance as those of the past, only that they will point backward instead of forward. Such a theory may show a little ingenuity in getting over a difficulty; but it simply amounts to a begging of the whole question; failing to find a Scriptural reason, one is invented to make the theory square with itself. "*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins,*" is frequently quoted to show that sins were never removed by sacrifices; but then this is only a half truth, for the same writer tells us in the previous chapter that such "*sanctified to the purifying of the flesh.*" The blood of animals was sufficient for ceremonial sins; but it could not remove moral sins. The person of the offerer was clean when the sacrifice was offered, but it needed another and a better offering to purge the conscience. The Mosaic law with its ordinances contained the shadow of good things to come; but when we recognise the ritual and sacrifices merely as types we fail to understand their real meaning, and the service which they were the means of rendering in improving the social condition of the people. Agnostics have spoken of the animal sacrifices as a waste of means to shape an end, and if we advocate the old orthodox notion, which named them types which needed antitype before the sin was removed, it will be difficult to altogether gainsay the accusation (a waste of means). No one who has carefully studied the ceremonial code will seriously contend that ceremonial sins of *sickness, disease, uncleanness, and child-birth* needed any other sacrifice than that which was offered, or that they required any other atonement beyond what was made by the priest, who was compensated for his services and advice, by receiving part of the flesh of the offering which was his legitimate fee for instructing the unclean or diseased persons. The idea of Jesus being the antitype of such offering is altogether foreign to the New Testament, nor can we imagine that He suffered for ceremonial sins to purify the flesh, which would imply substitution in its grossest sense. The old dispensation was indeed glorious in its own sphere, and its results are seen today in the superior moral and physical qualities of the Jewish race; but the Jews have now for many centuries ceased to offer sacrifices, the essential elements of the law having been taught them by other means when offerings were no longer possible.

The Literal Reading has first claim

Ezekiel did not seek to inaugurate a new constitution for the nations; the existing laws were merely to be remodelled somewhat in detail. The burnt offerings, the sin offerings, the meat offerings, and the peace offerings have no new meaning or application attached to them, for the ceremonial law is recognised as still being in force, and to teach the people to discern between the clean and the unclean. The Mosaic law of divorce which allowed a man to put away his wife is still a legal proceeding, only a priest must not marry a woman who has been put away. The law of circumcision is to be rigidly enforced. "*No stranger uncircumcised in flesh shall enter into my sanctuary.*" The priesthood is the Levitical priesthood without any change, beyond giving the

charge of the inner court to the sons of Zadok; but the other Levites are assigned a place in the service of the sanctuary where they perform the more menial duties in connection with the offering of the sacrifices. The literal reading and meaning ought surely to have the first claim, and if we so understand the prophet it is evident that the New Temple and service were simply an extension of the Mosaic law. The Jewish law of divorce was denounced by our Lord in the strongest terms as being only allowed on account of the hardness of the people's hearts, for it was simply the remnant of an imperfect civilization, and we cannot imagine such a law being in operation in the Kingdom of the future.

Paul says: "*Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything but a new creature.*" If such is to be again enforced in the Kingdom of God how could Paul speak of it as availing nothing, when no one without the mark in his flesh will be allowed to enter the sanctuary?

The Priesthood of Jesus

With regard to the priesthood, the writer to the Hebrews says, in speaking of Jesus Christ,—"*If he were on earth he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.*" And again we read "*For the priesthood being changed there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*" The writer's meaning is plain. If our Lord were on earth He could not legally offer sacrifices, not being of the tribe of Levi. But both the priesthood and the law have been changed. "*Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better promises ... In that he saith a new covenant he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*"

Let us suppose for a little that Jesus Christ is really the prince-priest, and that Ezekiel's Temple and service are yet future. How absurd would be his position for we find that it would be his part to *give burnt offerings and meat offerings, and also prepare the sin offerings*. Here we have Jesus serving the altar, which was a shadow of Himself. Shadow and substance meet together; but the substance is made to serve the shadow. The prince-priest offers a sin offering for himself. Are we to believe that the glorified Son of God will be so compassed with human infirmity that He needs to purify Himself from *sickness, disease and uncleanness of the flesh*; for such is the only Scriptural meaning attached to sin offerings. Besides we find that He is restricted by law from oppressing the people. He can *marry and have sons* to whom he can assign a *small portion of land* in either of his own possessions. How could such refer to our Lord? The clergy in their many expositions of the book of Ezekiel never dreamt anything more absurd.

(To be continued)

Reprinted from *The Fraternal Visitor*, July-September 1892

Ourselves and Israel—Correspondence

The article by Bill Robinson in the last issue sparked off a lively correspondence. Some of the comments made to Bill, with some remarks in reply are printed below.

The conclusions you reach in your article are not what our community believes or teaches. It is not the scriptures you quote—for no one will disagree with “they are not all Israel who are of Israel” and all will consent that those “in Christ” are heirs according to the promise. But the general arguments are seriously flawed, and convey a desire to overturn the Brotherhood’s long-held views.

* * * * *

Thanks for “Ourselves and Israel”, which I liked a lot since it expresses beautifully what I have long believed.

* * * * *

I have read with interest the article by Bill Robinson in the Endeavour magazine no. 88, November 1992, on “Ourselves and Israel”. The views expressed are not new to me, as I was brought up with similar ideas. It raises an interesting paradox, expressed in these words:

“The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in” Rom 11:19

“God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew” Rom 11:1

Perhaps in view of my own personal search for the answers to this question, I could make the following points:

Hosea 1:9 “Ye are not my people”, is addressed to the Northern kingdom, who were taken away by the Assyrians in Hosea’s time, and not to the Jews in general. This is shown by verses 5 and 6: “I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them...” When Hosea is quoted in the New Testament, it is always quoted in the context of redemption, never of casting away.

God calls the Jews “my people” about 150 times in the Old Testament. More than 50 of these are after the time of Hosea. An example is: “Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit” (Jer 2:11). If the Jews were no longer God’s people after Hosea, shouldn’t we expect Him to address them differently?

The paradox comes out in verses about the kingdom: “Behold I will save my people from the East country, and from the West country. And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Zech 8:7,8). Therefore there are two meanings to the phrase “my people”.

Have Christians really taken over the place of the Jews? Haven’t there always been two groups of people whom God is interested in, God’s people by covenant of the law, and God’s people by faith in the Promises? The list of the faithful in Hebrews 11 describes God’s people by faith before and during the law and shows them to be in the same category as Christians.

So although I agree that there is a shift of God’s attention from the Jews to the Gentiles, this does not nullify God’s purpose with the Jews. “As concerning the

gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom 11:28,29).

As far as the land goes, in the article it says that God revoked His promise about his name being for ever in the temple. While it is true that God took His temple away, He still has a special purpose with the land. A good example of this is Daniel, who prayed three times a day facing Jerusalem (Dan 6:10). This was after the temple had been destroyed. In his great prayer of chapter 9, he refers to "thy city Jerusalem" (v16 "thy sanctuary that is desolate" (v17), "the city which is called by thy name" (v18), "thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (v19), "the holy mountain of God" (v20).

In the article it was suggested that Christ and those in him have replaced the Jews as God's witnesses (Isaiah 43:10). However, the context of the chapter leaves no doubt of the identity of the witnesses. "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by my name; thou art mine... For your sake I have sent to Babylon... But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob... Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins... I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins". (Isa 43:1,14,22,24,25). It is the Jews who are God's witnesses specifically in the context of being brought back to the land, as in the last 100 years. It is difficult to see how this can describe Christ. Furthermore, in the Hebrew, the servant of Isa 43:10 is described in the plural, and the one in Isa 53:11 in the singular.

From the above I have difficulty accepting the conclusions of the article. However, it is an interesting question, and thank you for raising it. It is very much a question which should be discussed within our community.

Ron Coleman replies:

Thank you for your interesting and fair-minded letter of the 4th which I am passing on to Bill Robinson. It is a subject in which I too have been interested for many years and so I would like to add a few preliminary remarks.

It is of course quite correct that "Ye are not my people" in Hosea 1:9 is addressed to the Northern Kingdom but surely this does not imply that Judah and Israel will be treated differently for ever? Verse 10 says, specifically about Israel, "... in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall it be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." Verse 11 also brackets Israel and Judah together. So we can't regard Judah as chosen and Israel rejected as a solution of the problem.

You continue "When Hosea is quoted in the New Testament, it is always quoted in the context of redemption, never of casting away." True, but the question that has to be answered is "redemption of whom?" The NT quotations of Hosea are: Hosea 2:23 > Romans 9:25; Hosea 2:1 > Romans 9:26; Hosea 1:10a (+Isaiah 10:22,23) > Romans 9:27,28; Hosea 13:14 > 1 Corinthians 15:55; Hosea 1:6,9 and 2:1,23 > 1 Peter 2:10; Hosea 10:8 > Revelation 6:16. 1 Corinthians and Revelation don't seem to be relevant so they needn't detain us.

What is characteristic of chapter 2 of 1 Peter is the way that he unhesitatingly applies to the Christian church words which, in the Old Testament, were addressed to Israel. We have firstly (v 4) the foundation stone laid in Zion, (Isaiah 28:16), clearly a reference to Christ. Then we have the stone of Psalm 118:22 (vv 6-8), rejected by the

Jews but become the head of the corner for the Christians, echoed by the quotation from Isaiah 8:14 with the additional message that those who stumbled (the Jews) did so because they were disobedient. Christians however (adverting to v 5) are to be built up into a spiritual house for the use of a holy priesthood, reflecting Exodus 19:6 "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation", but these priests are to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In other words our priestly offering consists of ourselves, as in Romans 12:1 where Paul urges the Christians in Rome to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service [= spiritual worship, RSV]".

This theme is continued in v 9 with more phrases from Scripture referring to Israel which are then applied to Christians. They are "a chosen generation [= race], a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people [= a people for God's own possession]". These come from Exodus 23:22 and Isaiah 43:20, the second being the description of the exiles miraculously brought back to Jerusalem.

It is at this point that Peter caps the catena with the positive side of the Hosea quotation. But since the burden of the previous quotations has been the difference between unfaithful Israel and the new Israel, has not the negative side (rejection) to be assumed as still operative?

The Romans citation is not so clear as this but I think it does convey the same message.

Bill Robinson replies:

In tackling this subject, which has been at the back of my mind for years, I strove to answer the question of how there can be two different chosen people, bearing in mind that we are given the condition that there is now only ONE way to God, and that is through Christ. The common sense answer to this is that the Jews were the chosen people but, having failed to live up to the standard required by God, there is now a new people. My study revealed, to me at any rate, that this common sense answer was the Scriptural one also as I mentioned in my article, "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)".

I did not say the Jews' very existence had no relevance, though I prefer the expression sign to witness. It seems to me that the principal Biblical use of the latter term refers to those who are actively doing God's will; I look upon the Jews as being in the passive category since there can be no doubt that they reject Christ to this day; indeed had they accepted him in the first century they would not now be existing but would have been part of a great body of Christian believers from many races!

Thus I cannot accept your contention that "there always (have) been two groups of people whom God is interested in", that is if you mean "chosen" by "being interested in". Since the veil of the temple was rent there is a new way, the only one, to come to God, and that is through his son.

I find your reference to Isaiah 43:10 interesting, in that you state that servant is in the plural. I look upon this much in the light that the word people in English, technically singular, is treated most often as a plural word. The nation constituted a people (singular) but this people was composed of many individuals (plural). Today the body of Christ is singular, or ought to be—united—but is composed of many

members, just like a human body (Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12). In my article I submitted that Christ and those who are his are the witness(es) today, and I believe this is supported by our Lord's declaration to his apostles in Acts 1:8 : "...you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth."

* * * * *

Thank you for your article. It is important to look at the principles of salvation that are the same for Jew and Gentile who are alike both under sin, and who both are only saved by faith. And to be sure some of our attitudes to the Jews may be unthinking and unscriptural, but that does not mean that our overall understanding of the position of the Jews in God's purpose is at all incorrect or in error.

You say, "Here 'all Israel' is defined as being the not wholly hardened Jew and the repentant Gentile". Yet Romans 11:25-31, from where you are quoting, is surely all about Israel, still explaining their relationship to the Gentiles in God's purpose. This passage includes the quotation "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn away godlessness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26). This has not yet happened. It is future even to us, despite the very welcome rise of the Messianic Jew, Christian Jews treasuring their Jewish heritage. The language is not that of the call of a not wholly-hardened remnant of the Jewish people and the repentant Gentile, but of the recall of the Jewish nation into God's purpose through grace. It is certainly not at all about the call of the Gentiles. Yes, as you point out, the true Jew is one inwardly, and this passage is about the successful call of God's ancient people, the Jews, to fulfil their call and become truly God's children by the same faith in Jesus that Abraham showed.

We are waiting for the fulness of Israel that contrasts with the loss they have suffered in God's purpose. You assert that God has revoked his promise. But God's gifts and His call are irrevocable as Paul says in Romans 11:29. The Jews are still God's people, hardened until they see the one they have pierced and mourn as a nation and accept Him as a nation. I believe the clear evidence of Scripture is that they are still God's people and that God has not revoked his promise. Salvation is still from this nation. They brought us the Lord Jesus, and their regathering into the fullness of God's purpose will bring the fulfilment of God's purpose and life from the dead (Rom. 11:15).

I believe this is correct, as many other Christians, other than Christadelphians, have held and are now discovering, and that this interpretation of yours is against the clear meaning of scripture.

Bill Robinson replies:

Many thanks for your kind but critical letter; it is a model for how all critical letters should be.

I had thought about this subject for a long time before I finally got round to writing about it; personal experiences, two of which are recounted in the article, but more particularly a protracted, considered study of Scripture have all contributed to my coming to the view that I hold.

Since my baptism 40 years ago I have been schooled in the standard view which you express in your letter, that "the Jews are still God's people". But I couldn't help reflecting that the Old Testament is very critical of this race which God originally chose; many hard things were said about them. And in the New Testament many more hard things are said about them. In the New Testament, in addition, we read that the

kingdom of God has now been transferred from a barren nation to one that is more fecund. This is what I wrote in the article on page 17 (lines 12-14). To me this sounds very definite. It prompts the question: Since those in Christ are God's chosen people now, how can the Jews still be, bearing in mind the outline I have just presented? I decided that they can't be; hence my point (1), section 8, page 19: "The Jews were God's people; they no longer are. God's people are those who are in Christ."

I am, of course, aware of the verses you cite, and I dealt with them in the article. When Romans 11:26 says "And so all Israel will be saved" I had to ask myself what constitutes "all Israel". From what I have already written you will appreciate I couldn't accept that it is literal Israel; it has to be the Israel that is made up of the faithful remnant, whoever they are, and the Gentiles, now defined in this very context of Romans as being part of the total elect. In those days the faithful Jewish remnant was obvious; the gospel sprang from Jewry and it was part of Jewry which came into Christ; nowadays very few Jews are in Christ and we have a completely different scenario. But I cannot accept that it means all the Jews living in the last days, or at any other time. Salvation has always been conditional and the Jews as a race never fulfilled the conditions; therein lies a big exhortation for us. And the Jews' hearts will not be softened, it seems to me, until the deliverer does indeed come from Zion; indeed that's precisely what Romans 11:26b,27 is saying.

The Reformation—A Mixed Blessing

The Text of the sixth Tyndale Lecture, delivered in the Christadelphian Hall, Oxford, in October 1991 by Alan Hayward, to commemorate the anniversary of the martyrdom of William Tyndale. Published by Oxford Ecclesia, £1. Reviewed by *Ruth McHaffie*

In his lecture, now helpfully produced in pamphlet form, Alan Hayward courageously embarked on a vast and intriguing subject. It is only in recent decades that our community has searched in any depth among the records of the Radical Reformers, finding among them unorthodox beliefs some of which are similar or identical to our own. Although Dr Thomas himself referred to earlier believers who held some of "the truth", the Waldenses in particular, there long persisted a reluctance among many of our members to acknowledge that we owe a substantial debt to pioneers who preceded our Brethren of the 19th century. However, Alan Eyre's series in *The Christadelphian*, later produced in book form as *The Protesters* (first edition published 1975), followed by his *Brethren in Christ* in 1983, encouraged a changed outlook.

Alan Hayward in a short lecture, could give little detail either of the mainstream Reformation, or of the radical Reformers who determined to seek Bible truth for themselves. But he gave a well-presented survey of the general position.

From the multitudinous strands of reformation beliefs he drew a number of main points which lend themselves to discussion. His longest section is devoted to the Socinians (the Polish Brethren), and appropriately so, for among the 16th/17th century Reformers they were nearer to ourselves in belief than were other Radicals, especially in

relation to unitarianism. While Anabaptists conducted various forms of believers' baptism, including sprinkling and pouring, the Polish Brethren practised adult immersion. But like most others they stressed the importance of baptism into the Holy Spirit, believing that the Christian then received the "gift of the Holy Spirit". This "gift" was "perpetual" and "a divine inspiration" whereby their minds were "filled with a more enlarged knowledge of divine things, or with a more certain hope of eternal life;..." (as explained in their statement of faith, the *Racovian Catechism*).

Perhaps it could be added that although Faustus Socinus exercised a tremendous influence over their beliefs, he had been refused membership because he resolutely refused anabaptism and indeed any kind of baptism for those born into Christian families. He taught that baptism was required only for converts from paganism, Judaism and Mohammedanism. And, extraordinarily, despite the continued practice of immersion among the Socinians, it was his view which was reflected in their main statement of faith during their most active period.

The lecture made special reference to "Psychopannychists", explaining that they believed death to be a "soul-sleep", and also to the "Thnetopsychites", who believed in the death of the soul.

George Hunston Williams, quotes in his encyclopaedic book *The Radical Reformation* (page 584) from Calvin's *Psychopannychia* printed in *Calvin Tracts III* (Edinburgh, 1851),

Our controversy, then, relates to the human soul. Some, while admitting it to have a real existence, imagine that it sleeps in a state of insensibility from death to the judgment day, when it will awake from its sleep; while others will sooner admit anything than its real existence, maintaining that it is merely a vital power which is derived from arterial spirit on the action of the lungs (*ex spiritu arteriae aut pulmonum agitatione*), and being unable to exist without the body, perishes along with the body, and vanishes away and becomes evanescent till the period when the whole man shall be raised again.

The Polish Brethren were mostly of the former opinion, and their eminent Joachim Stegmann Snr, while insisting on unconsciousness in death quoted from the Apocrypha (Wisdom 3:1) in the Vulgate Latin Bible, "the spirits of the godly that they are in the hand of God" and he went on to explain that "at the Resurrection they shall be joined with the bodies"*.

Brother Hayward described "soul sleep" as one of those beliefs which "will be recognised by most Christadelphians as comprising the essence of their own faith". Undoubtedly we refer to our Brethren and Sisters who have died as being "asleep in Jesus". Some, however, might consider that we use that phrase only as a euphemism, and that Calvin's second definition is nearer our traditional belief, however stark, and however difficult it is to reconcile with Paul's words that "neither death, nor life,...shall be able to separate us from the love of God...."

Another point the lecture rightly highlighted was the "arrogant intolerance" of the Reformers, which aimed to suppress individual enquiry into Bible truth by any except oneself or one's own group. But the Polish Brethren were remarkable exceptions.

Though at the beginning of the last quarter of the 16th century they formed a strict, essentially unworldly group, living in self-imposed poverty in their "ark", distanced

* *The Polish Brethren*, G.H.Williams, Scholars Press, Harvard College, U.S.A., 1980.

from the world and awaiting an imminent millennium, by the end of that century (influenced by the non-member Socinus) they were accommodating themselves to living in the world though still not of it. They gradually became leaders of free thought and liberalism, holding within their fellowship a variety of interpretations on those doctrines which we see as first principles. And they repeatedly sought union with other Reformers, even with the Calvinists. They rejected only those who perversely opposed God, those who were morally reprobate, and those who refused to adore Jesus Christ as King during the present era (refusal being seen as blasphemy).

Alan Hayward, in "finding founders", very properly resisted the temptation of exaggeration, and of including as "Christadelphian" those who, while holding some of our doctrines, were, in fact, further astray from "the truth" than some present-day believers who are depicted by our community as merely "so-called Christians". As he pointed out, "every one of the various Christadelphian fellowships has a highly detailed statement of faith which is much too tightly drawn to encompass any of the original Anabaptist communities..." And he shows a hint of surprise that "thanks to the writings of Alan Eyre, Christadelphians generally regard the Socinians and some others as having held the same faith as themselves!" When, however, a realistic look is taken at the doctrinal diversity of the Anabaptist communities and at the liberalism of the Socinians/Polish Brethren then any surprise he might feel is more than justified.

A criticism of this lecture which seems apt is that on an occasion which was intended to commemorate the anniversary of the martyrdom of William Tyndale, he, in fact, received no mention. As our community, following the publication of *The Protesters*, has counted Tyndale as suffering martyrdom because he "believed and understood" the truth of the Bible (*The Protesters*, second edition, page 88), Alan Hayward might have considered that no more comment was required. However, the picture presented to the brotherhood in *The Protesters* requires considerable qualification.

The lecture was concluded by Alan Hayward on a note of gratitude for the "Central" Christadelphian brotherhood and for its practice of outstanding brotherly love. And I think we must recognise that it was largely due to the outstanding bravery of the Radical Reformers, and of the Socinians, in particular, who carried the essence of sweet tolerance to our shores, that we, in Britain today, have the freedom to worship so openly, as we do, as well as the freedom for the lecturer to speak so ably, as he did.

Moreover, how grateful we must be that unlike the valiant Tyndale, no cruel stake awaits us and none dares to make us afraid!

Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15

By Gordon J. Wenham, Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1987

Reviewed by *John Stephenson*

Those of us who have wrestled with the many problems of exegesis in the Book of Genesis will be grateful for this book in a new series of commentaries on both the Old and the New Testament. In his preface, Gordon Wenham states that he has tried to cater to the needs of three diverse groups of readers: laymen, theological students, and biblical scholars. To satisfy such a wide spectrum is a difficult task, but I believe that Dr Wenham has succeeded.

Most Christadelphians would fall into the first of these categories, few having had the opportunity of learning the original biblical languages. Thus Kidner's *Genesis* (1967) in the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series has probably been of greatest benefit to us, while Skinnners (1930) commentary in the International Critical Commentary series has been found too technical. Von Rad's *Genesis* (1963, Old Testament Library), the result of German scholarship, falls in type between these two but has probably not appealed. Thus, it is pleasing to see the publication of a new work which not only takes note of recent scholarship but also is less radical in theology than many of the recent commentaries and introductions to the Old Testament.

The eighteen pages, of the 53 page introductory section, dealing with source criticism are probably of little interest to most Christadelphians. However, they point the reader to books and articles which show how scholarship has developed since Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis had its impact in the nineteenth century.

Perhaps of more interest is the very brief section on Genesis 1-11 and Modern Thought. In the Christadelphian body as well as in the wider religious community there has been considerable discussion on the relationship between Science and the early chapters of Genesis. It is interesting to note that Alan Hayward's *Creation and Evolution* is one of the only four books mentioned in the bibliography. Without attempting to cover this subject in depth, Wenham urges "that Genesis be read on its own terms, and not on ours". This is the approach that is taken in the 335 pages of commentary which follow.

It is not only this emphasis which appeals but also the structure of the commentary itself. In the jargon of the computer age, I found it to be very user friendly. The basic format for each of the sections discussed is: an extensive bibliography, Wenham's translation, notes to the Hebrew text, form/structure/setting and comment.

The commentary itself is probably all that most of us would use, but for those who wish to investigate the literature on particular passages, access to a good theological library would be needed. (In New Zealand the inter-loan service provides such a facility; such is probably the case in the United Kingdom.)

The notes to the translation are extensive, but a knowledge of Hebrew grammar and syntax are needed if full benefit is to be gained from them. While form/structure/setting analysis is particularly useful in the poetical sections of the Old Testament, the application of this technique to other parts of Scripture is of benefit in helping the reader link the parts to the whole. In the section on Genesis 1:1-2:3 there is a very useful discussion on the independence/dependence of the Biblical record of/on other cosmologies.

The comments form the bulk of Wenham's analysis, and these are made in a verse by verse manner. The exegesis is written in a very readable way, although the frequent use of unpointed, untransliterated Hebrew words could be a problem for some readers. However, it is not difficult to 'get the gist' of the commentator's reasoning. For example, in the comments on Genesis 6:1-8, there is a two page discussion of the 'problem' verse concerning the marriage between the sons of God (gods) and the daughters of men (man). Pros and cons are given for three interpretations: the angelic, the royal, and the Sethite. Similarly, in the section relating to Genesis 1:1-2:3 three pages are given over to five possible interpretations of "image and likeness".

The index of 115 Key Hebrew words is where the reader can find reference to such words as *elohim*. "God" does not appear in the "Index of Principal Subjects" of which

there are 60 listed. Hence, if one wishes to study a word, reference often has to be made to the verse where it first occurs. This, of course, would be no handicap to those who use either a concordance or a lexicon. That this book is the result of careful research is evident by the wide variety of 'authorities' (of varying theological bias) cited in the "Index of Authors". The "Index of Principal Subjects" is not large, but this seeming handicap is well made up for by the "Index of Biblical Texts" which includes Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.

At NZ\$65.00 this well-bound hard-covered commentary (also available in paperback) provides excellent value for money. I have found it to be a very useful tool in studying Genesis, remembering at all times that it must remain secondary to that Book which it seeks to explain.

The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered

By R.H. Eisenman and M. Wise, Element, Shaftsbury, Dorset, 1992

Reviewed by *Wilfred Lambert*

The Dead Sea scrolls no longer have the hold on public attention they once had. Over the last few years there has been some publicity about the alleged withholding of important scrolls by the team currently charged with their publication, but this was a short-lived journalistic coup. Developments have, however, taken place. While the official publications have been slow to appear and expensive in price, the Huntington Library in California, which had a set of photographs deposited with it years ago, decided unilaterally to permit their publication, which occurred in 1991: R.H. Eisenman and J M Robinson, *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2 vols., Washington D.C.). About the same time an institute in the University of Oxford announced that it had a set of photographs which it was willing to make accessible to suitably qualified scholars. The book under review is the first to give full editions of many of the adequately preserved and so far unpublished texts, with photographs, printed Hebrew transcripts, introductions and notes. At the price of £14.95 it is a bargain.

The book is divided into eight chapters, each dealing with one type of text: Messianic and Visionary Recitals; Prophets and Pseudo-Prophets; Biblical Interpretation; Calendrical Texts and Priestly Courses; Testaments and Admonitions; Works Reckoned as Righteousness-Legal Texts; Hymns and Mysteries; Divination, Magic and Miscellaneous. Not one of the fifty texts given is completely preserved, and many are quite fragmentary, but some sense can always be made, and the comments are generally fair and helpful, as well as being well informed.

There is, however, a certain animus in the book, which the subtitle betrays: *The First Complete Translation and Interpretation of 50 Key Documents Withheld for Over 35 Years*. The argument is that Christian scholars have deliberately withheld certain documents because their publication would undermine the bases of Christianity. What are the facts? The official team has defended its tardiness from their need to work on thousands of small fragments as well as on bigger pieces, and that this work depends on painstaking study of the texture of the fabric, the various scribal hands and the content of the pieces, without which there is little hope of rejoining them to bigger wholes.

The bias of this book is revealed in the lack of any mention of the problem of the thousands of small fragments. Since the photographs used for this book are already some decades old, it is possible that in the Scrollery in Jerusalem some of the MSS have since grown in size. Incomplete lines can easily be misunderstood, as will be made clear when the missing parts are recovered. The dangers of using incomplete texts of uncertain meaning is illustrated in no. 2 (pp. 27-29). Seven fragments apparently of the same MS are grouped together, though pathetically small, one of only three part-lines. The authors' interest lay in the Messianic content, and the last piece as presented (the order is one of convenience only, their true sequence is unknown) alludes to the killing of or by "the Leader of the Community". If it is the killing of this Messianic figure, then of course this could lead on to the question whether Jesus' crucifixion was a real historical event or a fiction deriving from earlier Jewish accounts of Messiahs being killed. One might reply that even if this one possible rendering is correct and the work refers to an historical event, there is nothing historically implausible in two Messiahs being put to death. A more sensible policy would be to await further finds of pieces of this work so that it becomes clear whether the killing mentioned was of or by the particular Leader of the Community.

In a short review it is impossible to comment on every text of the fifty, so we shall look at no. 40, since the biggest claims are made for this in the matter of relevance for Christian origins. It is plausibly argued that the text in question is the final previously missing column of the so-called Damascus Document. This work documents the setting up of a new Jewish community "in the land of Damascus", and lays down its rules of life. This presumed last column describes how any member of this community who departs from the rules laid down can be formally excommunicated in an assembly, after which he must be driven out and may no longer participate. The beginning of the paragraph is missing still, but what toward the end of the column reads like a summary mentions the third month:

The sons of Levi and [the inhabitants] of the camps are to gather together in the third month (every year) to curse those who depart to the right or [to the left from the] *Torah*.

From this mention of the "third month" Eisenman and Wise assume that the Feast of Weeks is meant. Certainly it took place in the third month, on one particular day, but nothing prescribed for that event in the Law makes it a suitable occasion to administer discipline to disobedient members. Deuteronomy 16:11 indeed lays down that the day should be one of rejoicing. Since the community in the Damascus Document is depicted as living together in a commune it could have assembled on many other days in the third month for this purpose. However, from this assumption the two authors then make a jump to the Christian Pentecost. Acts 2 is of course about that new community's sudden growth in membership, not about expulsions. The only other mention of Pentecost in Acts occurs in 20:16, which refers to Paul's desire to be back in Jerusalem in time to participate in the festival. While Acts does not give any explanation for Paul's wish, in the context of his life it seems obvious that he wished to observe the Jewish feast to placate Jewish Christians who were alarmed at his promoting a church which did not observe the Law of Moses. Eisenman and Wise do not explicitly state that their community's third-month expulsion ceremony was the antecedent of the Christian Pentecost, but that is the plain implication of their whole exposition, and of numerous hints that the New Testament records have been

manipulated by later theological bias which has concealed the original, more Jewish background. However, their sundry hints and implications cannot conceal the difference between the community's day for expulsions and the conversions to Christianity on the one Day of Pentecost. Accordingly they try to explain the difference in this way: "Acts' picture of Pentecost can be seen as the mirror reversal of the 'Pentecost' being pictured here" (i.e. in the scroll fragment). In short, if Acts gives no hint of expulsions, the very opposite can be pressed as evidence of a connection. This is not even up to the standard of special pleading. Also it must be stressed that there is no evidence whatsoever in support of the idea that there was a Christian observation of Pentecost during the first century A.D.

It is unfortunate that the mantle of the late J.M. Allegro should have fallen on Eisenman and Wise. When the scrolls were 'new' Allegro was telling people of the sensational discoveries about to be made, with a similar technique of hinting of things that would topple established Christian beliefs. When people grew tired of these premonitions, he went on to even wilder things with his sacred mushroom, and ceased to be a serious scholar. The new book under review is a serious presentation of many of the previously unpublished Dead Sea scrolls and thinking people will not be influenced by this certain tendentiousness. Obviously small improvements in their translations can be expected in time, and the interpretation of incomplete passages may need modification, especially if small fragments are joined on. The idea that Christianity falls if it can be shown that in places it is based on antecedent Jewish practices and beliefs is a curious misunderstanding. The Gospel of Matthew records Jesus as saying, "Therefore every scribe educated to the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his storeroom things new and old" (13:52). It has long been known that Jewish 'baptism', and especially proselyte baptism, was an antecedent to Christian baptism, and that the Last Supper was a modification of a Jewish rite. Much more convincing parallels to the New Testament than those alleged by Eisenman and Wise have been known for centuries, so we end with a paragraph from the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 31a, about two famous rabbis, Shammai and Hillel, leaders respectively of a stricter and a more liberal tendency in Pharisaism, senior contemporaries of Jesus:

Once a gentile came to Shammai and said to him, "Receive me as a proselyte on the condition that you teach me the whole Law while I am standing on one leg." He drove him out with a stick which he had in his hand. He (the gentile) went to Hillel, who accepted him as a proselyte. He said to him, "What is unpleasant to yourself do to no one else. This is the whole Law, the rest is commentary. Go and learn."
