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**Religion and Science**

Next year, soon to be on the scene, will be the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and also the 150th anniversary of *On the Origin of Species*. Watch out for a new wave of attempts in the media to support the old myth that science and religion are at loggerheads. Such an approach may suit those extremists who wish to maintain that science has done away with God and that atheism is the only reasonable stance to take, as well as those who wish to maintain that the Bible, and particularly Genesis 1, can only be understood as teaching that God created everything 6000 years ago by fiat. Thankfully there are many scientists and religious believers

who take a different view of the matter.

In the Credo section of *The Times* on Saturday, August 30, **Jonathan Sacks**, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, insisted that Darwin did not deal a death blow to religious belief but rather to what was one very poor argument for the existence of God, namely the argument from design. He went on to say that such an argument figures nowhere in the Hebrew Bible and does not even belong to its world of thought. Darwin, he says, helped us to understand the 'how' of God's 'Let there be', how the many emerged from the one. The Creator created not just life, he said, but life that is in itself creative and the more we know about the intricacy and improbability of life, the more reason we have to wonder and give thanks.

In the same section of *The Times*, on September 20, **John Polkinghorne**, both a well-known particle physicist and a theologian who works tirelessly for harmony in the science and religion debate, confesses to being a Christian believer and a creationist in the proper sense of the word but not a creationist in that curious North American sense which implies interpreting Genesis 1 in a flat-footed literal way. He goes on to say that we miss the point of the chapter if we do not see it is a deep theological writing whose purpose, through the eight-times reiterated phrase 'And God said, "Let there be" . . .', is to assert that everything exists because of the will of the Creator.

Later, he reminds us that 150 years ago some religious people did welcome Darwin's insight. Notable among them was Charles Kingsley, the novelist and clergyman, who coined a phrase which is still helpful in understanding an evolutionary world. He said that although God could have created a ready-made world, he had done something cleverer and more valuable by creating a world so well endowed with potentiality that creatures 'could make themselves'. The God who is the Creator of nature can as properly be seen to be at work through natural processes as in any other way.

Polkinghorne has written a Guest Editorial in the latest issue of *Science and Christian Belief* in which he says:

An important component of the future science and religion debate will be the demonstration that theology is as much concerned with the search for truth attainable through motivated belief as is the case in science. In fact, if we can only seize the opportunity, the high public profile of our critics offers the prospect of a wide audience for a coolly reasonable analysis of how religion and science complement each other, rather than being in mutual conflict.

It may also be of interest to readers to know that the **Pontifical Academy of Sciences** in Rome recently (31 October – 4 November 2008) held a Plenary Session on *Scientific Insights into the Evolution of the Universe and of Life*. This was attended by many eminent scientists and theologians, no doubt mainly Roman Catholic, including the Christian geneticist Francis Collins, author of the recent book *The Language of God* (see below), and Stephen Hawking. For those interested, details of speakers and abstracts of their contributions can be found on the Vatican website:

[www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_academies/acdscien/2008/booklet-pas.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdscien/2008/booklet-pas.pdf)

It is clear from reports of this conference that the Catholic Church does not accept the myth of conflict between science and religion but rather supports the view that sees the search for truth in both fields as complementary.

I for one am only too well aware that God did not make a ready-made Les Boddy but has used the processes of nature to bring me about and also has allowed me to have a hand in my own creation. We have a creative God who wants us to share such creativity with Him. Thinking of all the processes involved in getting me to where I am, and of what still remains to be done for God to get me to where he wants me to be, to my mind makes it very likely that He has used such a procedure in bringing the world and the universe to its current state, including all forms of life. I do not wish to fall out with those who can't see it that way but it does seem to me that the evidence for an evolutionary history of the world has become compelling and in no way diminishes the glory of God. At least what we can all try to do is to attempt to understand why some of us have different views by reading accounts written by those who disagree with us and

learning to appreciate them and not to be disagreeable in disagreeing. Just for the record, I do have on my bookshelves books by 'creationists' and Intelligent Design (ID) enthusiasts with whom I disagree.

With the prospects then of another high profile public debate next year about Darwin, Science and Religion, why not prepare yourself by doing some background reading on the issues. The following publications are highly recommended:

***The Faraday Papers*** are published by The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion based at St Edmund's College, Cambridge, CB3 0BN. 13 papers, each consisting of four A4 sides of print, have been published and a full set can be obtained from the Institute for only £2. They provide a good popular introduction to The Science and Religion Debate. [www.faraday-institute.org](http://www.faraday-institute.org)

***Creation or Evolution, Do we have to choose?***

**Denis Alexander**, Monarch Books, 2008, ISBN 978 1 85424 746 9, Ppb £10.99, 382 pages. [www.lionhudson.com](http://www.lionhudson.com). Denis Alexander is Editor of *Science and Christian Belief* and Director of The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion based at St Edmund's College, Cambridge. This book can be obtained for £6 plus p&p from the Faraday Institute, a saving of about £4. [www.faraday-institute.org](http://www.faraday-institute.org)

***The Language of God, A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief***

**Francis Collins**, Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2007, Popular Books, Popular Science, Ppb £8.99, 294 pages. [www.simonsays.co.uk](http://www.simonsays.co.uk) Francis Collins is an evangelical Christian who was, until very recently, Head of the Human Genome Project.

***Science and Christian Belief***

A biannual journal concerned with the interactions of science and religion, with particular reference to Christianity. [www.scienceandchristianbelief.org](http://www.scienceandchristianbelief.org)

There is already information on the net about conferences on evolution that have been organised for next year to celebrate Darwin's anniversary. No doubt many of these will be purely focussing on Science. Rome, Melbourne, Christchurch NZ and Gibraltar are all hosting such conferences.

**Les Boddy**

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## **The Codex Sinaiticus**

This ancient MS, dating from the 4th century in the time of Constantine, is the earliest complete hand-written text of the New Testament and parts of the Old. It is at present in the British Library on display, where its clear lettering on parchment, can be easily deciphered by those who can read Greek uncials. Although the New Testament is complete with the addition of the Epistle of Barnabas and part of the Shepherd of Hermas, considerable parts of the Old Testament are held in Germany, Russia and Egypt. It has now been decided by agreement with the other countries, that the complete text should be digitised to produce a free-to-view website, including both the original and enhanced digitised images of the whole manuscript together with scholarly essays and different language options. It is scheduled for presentation in 2010.

It was Tischendorf, the German theologian and palaeographer, who in 1844, as he claimed, recognised some sheets of manuscript as parts of an important ancient text. They were lying in a waste-paper basket in the monastery of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai, ready to be used as fuel! He was allowed to take 43 folios which he printed and published. In 1859 he returned to the monastery and acquired the remaining 86 folios of the Old Testament and the complete codex, consisting of the whole of the New Testament, the epistle of Barnabas and a part of the Shepherd of Hermas. He took the MS to Russia as a loan to the Tsar and published a magnificent facsimile

in four volumes. After many complicated transactions, in 1933 the Codex was purchased through a national campaign in England for £100,000 and transferred to the British Museum and more recently the British Library. The monastery on Sinai, Germany and Russia still hold parts of the Old Testament which the present venture plans to collate.

Although the Codex Sinaiticus is the earliest manuscript consisting of the whole of the New Testament and the earliest in codex, that is book form, there is a number of papyrus fragments, mainly preserved in the dry sands of Egypt, which predate it. Where these texts present on occasions variant readings, scholars, employing the techniques of Textual Criticism, attempt to assess the original readings. The traditional method of evaluation – the more difficult is the more likely (*lectio difficilior est potior*) – is usually applied, assuming that a scribe would alter or substitute a word to explain, clarify or simplify it. This can apply to verses such as Mark 3:5, ‘anger or compassion’ and John 1:18 ‘god or son.’ But in fact these variants generally make little difference to the meaning of the text. Actually they endorse the Bible as a living book to be interpreted in the lives and experiences of its readers – which inevitably happens when it is translated into different languages or more modern speech.

**Sheila Harris**

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### **A Tribute to Sister Sheila Crawford**

Sister Sheila Crawford, who fell asleep peacefully in the Lord at the Nursing Home on May 4th, was a faithful supporter of the Endeavour Movement from its foundation and a regular attender at the Summer School, where her scholarly mind and astute judgment appreciated the stimulus of fresh ideas and open discussion. Although she was quiet and reticent, her academic ability, resulting from her education in Physics at Cambridge, equipped her to evaluate and assess concepts and opinions.

As my lifelong friend of over 60 years, she greatly enriched my life with her company on numerous occasions – campaigns, holidays, trips, visits, conferences, etc. in addition to frequent exchange of ideas. I am deeply grateful to God for her friendship.

**Sheila Harris**

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In artistic creation,  
as in human relationships,  
the authenticity of love is denied by the assurance of control.  
Love aspires for each that which,  
being truly an ‘other’,  
cannot be controlled.

**W H Vanstone**

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### **The Rabbinic Background of the New Testament**

(Second and final part)

The relevance and use of the Rabbinic works surveyed in the first article (E119, p 3-5) can be of three main kinds: first, particular NT passages can be illuminated and explained. For example, Jesus’ questioning by the Sadducees in Mat 22:25-52: the Sadducean questioner tried

to make the doctrine of resurrection seem ridiculous by the case of seven brothers who all married (in turn) the same woman. Jewish law and custom required a childless widow to be married by her deceased husband's brother to bring into being a family to continue his dead brother's line. Jesus rebutted this objection by pointing out that resurrected humans would be different from their former selves, not involved in marriage. Then he affirmed the doctrine of resurrection by quoting Ex 5:6: 'I am the God of Abraham:' etc. It might appear that Jesus could have quoted better passages to prove the fact of future resurrection, for example Isa 26:19 or Daniel 12:2, instead of the one in Exodus, which offers only an indirect implication. An immediate answer is that the Sadducees accepted only the Law (Pentateuch) as canonical, so evidence had to be sought there. However more light comes from the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 10:

All Israel have a share in the world to come, as it is written: 'All your people are righteous, they will possess the land for ever, a shoot of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.'

This quotes Isa 60:21 as proof that 'all Israel' will be saved, but the text continues by listing some categories which would be excluded from the general 'all Israel':

But there are those who have no share in the world to come: he who says, 'The resurrection of the dead is not taught in the Law,' and Epicureans. Patti Aquiba said, 'Also one who reads heretical books, and recites spells over a wound and says, "I will not impose on you all the diseases I imposed on the Egyptians, because I am the LORD who heals you."' (Ex 15:26)

The text continues at length with further exclusions: three named kings, four private persons, the generation of the flood, etc., etc., etc., with reasons for the exclusions given and varying opinions sometimes stated. For the New Testament the important thing is that here orthodox Pharisees were so adamant that resurrection was taught in the Law, and obviously had some persons in mind, who were certainly the Sadducees. Thus Jesus in his response was taking a stand on a well understood issue of the time.

A rather different Pauline example occurs in II Cor 11:24: 'Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes minus one' (NIV). Why the minus one? Deuteronomy lays down, in 25:5:

If the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall make him lie down and have him flogged in his presence with the number of lashes his crime deserves, but he must not give him more than forty lashes. If he is flogged more than that your brother will be degraded in your eyes.

So forty was the maximum, which is why Paul cites his own experiences. But why thirty-nine? The Mishnah tractate Makkoth ('Stripes') explains:

How many times do they beat him? 'Forty save one', as it is written: 'by number of forty', i.e. a number that is close to forty. Rabbi Judah says, 'He must bear the full forty,' and where does he suffer the final one? Between the shoulders.

Thus the scriptural phrase, literally 'by number of forty', was interpreted to mean 'not exactly forty', so justifying 39, but the actual motive for this devious exegesis is not revealed. However, the Mishnaic text proceeds with copious further elaborations. Two of them are that if a person dies under the strain of being whipped, the one wielding the whip is innocent. But 'if he gave him one stripe too many and he died, he [the whipper] must go into exile because of the matter.' Thus it is clear that the Biblical limitation of forty as the maximum permissible persuaded them to administer 39 so that in the event of an erroneous extra stripe there would be no breaking of the Scriptural injunction.

A second way in which Rabbinic and other Jewish writings help the understanding of the New Testament occurs in certain phrases which are unknown in the Old Testament. 'Flesh and blood' is one. Paul uses it when asserting that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God' (I Cor 15: 50). It means of course the human physical frame, but the phrase itself does not refer to bones which are essential. The phrase occurs in apocryphal writing and in Rabbinic sources.

Another more significant phrase is 'son of man.' In the Old Testament it is well known as a Hebrew idiom meaning no more than 'member of the human race,' as when God addresses

Ezekiel with this phrase. But in the New Testament it is a title of the Messiah. This usage arose between the two Testaments and is known from apocryphal writings and in Rabbinic texts, so that by Jesus' time there was no need to explain it.

A third way in which Rabbinic texts can help is in supplying necessary background information relevant to New Testament matter. For example, the Last Supper: was it a regular Passover meal which Jesus reinterpreted, or, as some hold, a special occasion not based on a regular Passover meal? Here there is much Rabbinic material supplying the evidence on which this question must be answered, but one short article like the present one cannot of course go into the many details.

Another case is found in the Letter to the Hebrews. It is often assumed that whoever wrote it was addressing Jews, because the title so implies, and the content presumes this. But Rabbinic evidence raises problems. The Letter bases itself on the Greek Old Testament, while the actual ritual performances in the temple in New Testament times were often very different. Thus it can be argued that the writer was addressing Christians whose knowledge of temple worship was in fact rather that of the tabernacle in the Greek Old Testament. Again, this is not the place to get involved in what is a large subject. We are only drawing attention to the problems involved.

**W.G. Lambert**

(Apologies to Wilfred and readers for a rather large number of minor misprints in the previous article due to the vagaries of my scanner and my lack of proof-reading skills. In particular, A.1) should of course have been AD, 'or' should have been 'of', fern should have been from and Sabcath should have been Sabbath. **Editor**)

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Goodness is stronger than evil;  
love is stronger than hatred;  
light is stronger than darkness;  
life is stronger than death;  
victory is ours through him who loved us.

**Desmond Tutu**

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**A Dynamic Tension  
Leading to Improvement & Truth**

In his thought provoking '*The horse and his rider . . .*' (E 119) Alfred Ward raised a number of 'moral difficulties' arising from this Old Testament story. These problems are similar in nature to those raised by Stan Baylis in '*Can we construct a theodicy?*' (E 116). When commenting in the next issue on Stan's article, I made the point that these questions have implications for how we are to regard inspiration. I have no wish to treat this in any negative way, but am simply trying to consider and to understand the matter *as it is*, rather than how I would *like* it to be. I was brought up with the idea that the 'Foundation' clause of our faith, which states that, because of inspiration, the scriptures were *without error in all parts*, was an inviolable statement. This foundation has been of great comfort to many of us, seeming as it did, to confirm that we could know exactly where we stood.

In his article, Alfred questions whether God's character as presented in the Old Testament

accords with that shown in the New Testament. He mentions that some OT passages ‘contain much that is unchristian’. Here again, then, we have the problem about our understanding of inspiration of scripture. Alfred’s comment that we ‘edit’ these problems, also his idea of ‘The Old Testament Library of Anticipation’, does not resolve my difficulty in how to understand inspiration, though I do think that his thoughts take a few steps in that direction.

Questions such as those raised by Stan, and problems like those mentioned by Alfred, serve I think to remind us that inspiration is not such a clear cut or simple matter as it has been imagined. I do not believe that we would ever be able to pin down inspiration and to claim that we know just how it works – we have to accept that God has spoken ‘*in divers manners*’. However, I think that the subject deserves a more overt attention than we have hitherto been prepared to give it. In doing so, I believe that our human capabilities will only allow us to reach the point of understanding what inspiration *isn’t*, as opposed to what it *is*.

For discussion purposes:-

Take the ‘Foundation’ clause as absolutely correct, i.e. all scripture is fully inspired and without error in any part.

Next take some of the points raised by Alfred and apply them in the context of 1) above.

Alfred talks of the moral problems which prompt us to question whether the character of God depicted in the OT is in harmony with that of the ‘God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’. He mentions how, when the disciples wanted to exhibit some of the bloodthirsty attitudes of the OT, Jesus told them that they didn’t understand the spirit they were of. Alfred speaks of the need for our ‘editing’ of the OT as people who know the end of the story; also of the need for re-evaluation of the unchristian aspects of the OT.

Now, I fully agree with Alfred’s comments. But, if we are fully convinced of the validity of our discussion point 1) above (that all scripture is inspired in every detail), I would suggest that we are *not entitled to question* any of the points raised by Alfred. How can we even *dare* to suggest that God has shown a completely different picture of himself in the two Testaments, or that any re-evaluation of them is needed by us? However, it seems to me that the very *existence* of the problems must suggest to us that inspiration did not control the writing of scripture in every conceivable detail. If we take the very narrow and dogmatic approach to point 1), we are still left with all our problems!

I suggest that if we face up to the existence of these problems, we must conclude that inspiration is not such a simple and tightly controlled thing that we might have imagined. One thing that comes out of Alfred’s article for me, is the picture that religion, and mankind’s understanding of, and progress towards the ideals and values that we regard as Christian, is by no means a static process. In other words, it is a progressive process leading to a gradual increase in spiritual understanding.

This seems to have been very much the case in the Jewish nation of old, with the interplay between their priests, kings and prophets. This development of the Jewish people is described by John Stuart Mill in his book *On Liberty*. Mill gives his estimation of the great attainments of the Jews, achieved through the *liberty* and *individuality* of their prophets in their dealings with the nation’s kings and priests – in what I have called above ‘*A Dynamic Tension*’. Mill has been discussing the kinds of governments needed for the improvement of backward peoples; he has given two examples of ancient peoples who developed so far, and then came to a halt. He contrasts this with the Hebrew nation, and I share the passage with you below:

*In contrast, ... consider the example of an opposite character afforded by another ... Oriental people – the Jews. They too had an absolute monarchy and a hierarchy, and their organised institutions were as obviously of sacerdotal origin as those of the Hindoos. These [institutions] ... gave them a national life. But neither their kings nor their priests ever obtained, as in those other countries, the exclusive moulding of their character. Their religion, which enabled persons of genius and a high religious tone to be regarded and to regard themselves as inspired from heaven, gave existence to an inestimably precious unorganised institution – the Order (if it may*

*be so termed) of Prophets.*

*Under the protection ... of their sacred character, the Prophets were a power in the nation, often more than a match for kings and priests, and kept up, in that little corner of the earth, the antagonism of influences which is the only real security for continued progress. Religion consequently was not there, what it had been in so many other places – a consecration of all that was once established, and a barrier against further improvement. The remark of a distinguished Hebrew, M. Salvador, that the Prophets were, in Church and State, the equivalent of the modern liberty of the press, gives a just but not an adequate conception of the part fulfilled in national and universal history by this great element of Jewish life; by means of which, the canon of inspiration never being complete, the persons most eminent in genius and moral feeling could not only denounce and reprobate, with the direct authority of the Almighty, whatever appeared to them deserving of such treatment, but could give forth better and higher interpretations of the national religion, which thenceforth became part of the religion.*

*Accordingly, whoever can divest himself of the habit of reading the Bible as if it is one book, ... sees with admiration the vast interval between the morality and religion of the Pentateuch, or even of the historical books (the unmistakable work of Hebrew Conservatives of the sacerdotal order), and the morality and religion of the Prophecies: a distance as wide as between these last and the Gospels. Conditions more favourable to Progress could not easily exist: accordingly, the Jews, instead of being stationary like other Asiatics, were, next to the Greeks, the most progressive people of antiquity, and, jointly with them, have been the starting-point and main propelling agency of modern cultivation.”*

Further comments from Alfred on inspiration of scripture, and on what I saw in his article as a picture of a progressive religion, would be most welcome.

**Cyril Marsters**

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### **Being inspired by inspired and inspiring scripture. A response to Cyril Masters**

Our faith is built upon three main sources:

- **The Bible.** Our foundation sense of God and His ways comes from the Bible as we read and think about what we find in it.
- **The Church.** Our sense of a historical basis to the life and doings of Jesus Christ comes from the existence of the Christian church. In spite of all the sins and errors of the various branches of the church claiming to be Christian, there is a continuing flow of history bearing witness to the founder. This is especially visible in the breaking of bread, Holy Communion, Mass, Eucharist or Lord's Supper, where for nearly 2000 years people have met to 'do this in remembrance of him'.
- **Experience.** Our life's happenings, reflected upon in the light of the other two sources provides the other source of faith. Under providential guidance, fuelled by prayer and dialogue with Scripture, the fruit of the Spirit can grow within us, individually and collectively. It is composed of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. When these attributes begin to take control of our lives, then there grows within, a certainty that the presence of God is moulding our lives and giving them a shape which would never come only by reading a book, or going to church or meeting. This end product is 'Christ in you - the Hope of glory', as it reaches on into the future.

#### **Jesus – the focus of our faith**

The foundation of foundations is Jesus Christ himself. Jesus Christ – came from God – ministered to Israel – died, unresistingly, a barbarous death – rose again – ascended to what is called 'the right hand of God', from whence he sent forth the Holy Spirit to establish his church and from whence he will come again to renew the earth and humankind upon it.

Jesus Christ himself is the focus of our faith – the greatest of books can but point to him. As a former editor of the Christadelphian once said, ‘The Bible didn’t die for us’. And even as we approach the most holy of books, we must do so in the light of his presence. We cannot stress too strongly the words in 2 Tim 3:15 that the only way that the scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation is ‘**through faith in Christ Jesus**’. He is the arbiter of their meaning. In this passage the writer is speaking, of course, of the Old Testament, which means that when we read the first part of the Bible we must let Jesus interpret, and, very often, re-interpret, the ancient writings for us. He is, obviously, the direct subject of the later testament.

So, any study of the meaning of calling the Bible ‘inspired’, must start with Jesus Christ. He must have the pre-eminence over prophet, psalmist, or wise men who were the human authors of the earlier books, in what after all is a library of many books, written in many ways and conditions (Heb 1:1). He must say what they mean and how we are to interpret them.

### **Interpretation and ambiguity**

Now that word ‘interpretation’ opens up a serious issue. No one ever reads anything without interpreting it. We bring to our reading our own pre-conceptions, often inherited from our parents or other childhood influences, or gained from later experiences and relationships of life.

It is no good saying: ‘It means what it says.’ In the first place, we often cannot be sure what it says. As a collection of ancient human documents it has gone through a chequered history, so that we are left with documents containing many alternative possibilities of detail. Added to that, they have had to be translated from ancient tongues, and anyone who has learned even a modern language will know the difficulty of conveying the exact thought behind a foreign phrase into our own tongue. We must not be like people who used to declare that the Authorised Version was good enough for the apostle Paul and so it was good enough for them. The Christadelphian Statements of Faith recognise that the text as we read it, may contain errors of translation and transmission. So when an error-free inspiration of scripture is discussed we are talking about something we have never seen or read, though we normally feel confidence in the main thrust of what we are able to read.

But even beyond this matter of transmission and translation, when we read (and it is true of all reading) we cannot avoid bringing our own selves into the reading act, and no two of us receive identical impressions of what we read. We are pre-conditioned to see the narrative differently, to respond to Songs and Psalms differently, and perceive the logic of an apostle with varying force.

We can’t help this and it is one of the glories of Scripture that it was so written, and has come down to us in a form that does not bestow upon us complete certainty in relation to every thing written down, but demands reverent thought and anxious pondering and loving discussion that we may gain an idea of what is being said and live humbly in the light of what up to that point we have learned.

If there were no ambiguity there would be nothing to do but look up the appropriate rule, commandment or proof-text and that would be the end of the matter. And who could live the life of the Spirit by daily consultation of a law book? It would certainly kill the ‘Spirit that maketh alive’ which operates in the very variety of its presentation in Scripture. When the Psalmist said; ‘Oh how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day’, he did not mean reading just the ritual prescriptions, say, in the book of Leviticus, but going beyond them and beneath them to learn to love his neighbour as himself (Lev 19:17).

### **The role of interpretation in what we believe**

Now this matter of interpretation goes into everything we come to believe and defend and therefore raises the question of why the inspiration of scripture does not leave everything beyond doubt?

For example, take our belief that the term ‘devil’ is, in some sense, personifying sin,

especially collective sin. It cannot be denied that a straight uncritical reading of most Biblical references to the Devil do give the impression of a real being who is opposed to God and tempts people away from the will of God, who came face to face with Jesus, and then left him for a season! From deep consideration of the whole thrust of scripture I, like all Christadelphians, do not read these passages at their face value and interpret them in a deeper philosophic sense, demythologising the personal superhuman devil, traditionally accepted by the mainstream churches (though less so today).

So it is with other 'doctrines'. There are passages which taken at their face value do speak of an interim continuity of existence between death and resurrection. Believing the resurrection to be the real heart of eternal hope we re-interpret these passages and often use the proof-text method, citing Ecclesiastes 9:5, most inappropriately, to 'prove' that the dead are unconscious. Inappropriately, because the whole book of Ecclesiastes is a largely pre-Christian survey of the emptiness of human life without hope, beyond living simply and unambitiously, fearing God in this present poor old life and making the best of a bad job. And the 'proof-text' quoted goes on to deny any future hope – the dead have no more reward; the memory of them is lost and they have no part in anything that is done under the sun. But we don't usually quote the second part.

Whole books have been written by devout brethren on the subject of wrested scriptures, as the traditional interpretations are categorised. But if we are honest we could at least understand that those whose interpretation we oppose would accuse us of being the ones who are doing the wresting. Like Dr Thomas in *Eureka*, I believe that there is an interim state – it is in the memory of God – his book of remembrance, a very safe form of survival, and much more satisfying than a vague ethereal bliss, while awaiting the resurrection.

There is not space in an article to consider the role of interpretation in depth. I just mention passages which, at face value, speak of the pre-existence of Christ and his role in creation. Then there are passages which need very careful interpretation to arrive at a harmonious view of the death of the Lord Jesus and, even then, you feel you are on the edge of understanding, which was my reaction to the very thoughtful book by Brother Graham Jackman on the *Language of the Cross*.

### **The cross and interpretation**

One outstanding feature of the work of Christ in his death and resurrection was the complete denial of violence and coercion involved in his sacrifice, and the presentation of a way of 'strength' through 'weakness' which provides the platform for a new way of life in the here and now, and in the age to come.

What does this viewpoint do for our interpretation of the Old Testament – 'through faith that is in Christ Jesus'? War, killing, coercive conversion are not in harmony with that offering of himself. They are not part of the will of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, unless we interpret the cross as a temporary measure, different from God's earlier ways and different from what he will do in setting up the consummation of his Kingdom. Such an interpretation would see the cross as an expression of an interim ethic of love and non-violence, between two epochs characterised by great violence and coercive activity.

The Old Testament is full of pointers to the victory of the love of God and to the conversion of the whole world – to a day when all shall offer their hearts and minds willingly to God. But side by side with such beautiful thoughts there is much approval of violence and coercion attributed to the will of God.

So we have to ask the question of whether it could really have been the will of God that millions should die in a universal flood, irrespective of their personal responsibility? If we have a picture in our minds of the screams of mothers and children as they are about to be engulfed in the waves may it lead us to a new interpretation? Was it a story which the ancient servants of God told to illustrate the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Was it part of their heritage to have such holy legends, built upon some historical event of a more local kind? And did Jesus pick out the

lesson without being any more concerned about the historical details than he was when he told parables. Did he do the same when he spoke of the story of Jonah as if it all literally happened? Was he doing what we might do by quoting from a speech in a novel as if it really had been uttered? Except that, if the book of Jonah was a religious novel (based on a historical character), it was the most amazing spiritual treatise of its day, centuries ahead of its time.

Of other episodes which we might find it hard to attribute to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus may we not include the attribution to God of the decision to kill all the Canaanites, man, woman and child, with no regard to the screams of people who knew not God and had had no chance to know him? And what about the de-humanisation of the Israelite killers? What happens to our own growth into Christ and our appreciation of the cross if we believe this genocide to be the will of God, along with crucifying of the sinful leaders of Israel referred to in Numbers 25, along with the young David's murderous expeditions and the old David's vengeful commissions to his son Solomon, Elijah's calling down fire from heaven, on which Jesus had a comment, and Elisha's cursing of the unruly youths and their death at the hand of two she bears? There are dozens of similar examples.

### **How can we be inspired by the Old Testament**

I understand that many faithful brothers and sisters will be dismayed that such questions should be asked? They may legitimately ask how then can we benefit from the scriptures of the Old Testament, which are able to make us wise unto salvation; (but don't forget to finish the verse that they are to be read 'through faith in Christ Jesus')?

That could be the topic of another article. But I must say that since I began to ask these questions about the meaning of the Old Testament it has been ever richer to me as I enter into dialogue with men and women of God as they wrestled in the search to understand God and his ways. Many aspects of the Old Testament which are there on record do lead us to what the life, death and resurrection of Jesus really means. Many New Testament themes are covered indirectly and sometimes directly. The theme of God as a God who suffers with his people is ever present and richly expressed. And overarching it all is the story of a covenant that God made initially with Abraham.

The psalms may help us to understand inspiration. They express personal relationships with God very powerfully. But to speak of them as dictated by God, so that the psalmists were just an early version of shorthand-typists misses the point. They were crying out in anguish or shouting for joy in God, because that is how they felt, not because God told them what to write. And if the background is of war and violence and even of desire for vengeance, they still have something to teach us about the worship and zeal for God and a sense of his presence as a living and hourly reality.

When we read the scriptures we are reading the insights into God's life and ways that they had so far learned. There was plenty of dross to be removed before the gold of a perfect faith could be revealed in Jesus. We enter into dialogue with them and just as we are entitled to argue with Job and his friends, so we may, in the case of other providers of the scriptures, sift through for what is good and permanent and at the same time see how some other elements speak to us of Christ by contrast.

I have travelled many times with Jeremiah, knowing him as a person and as a friend, sometimes disagreeing with him and saying 'Yes, Jeremiah, I know how hurt you feel about your enemies; but you shouldn't really be crying out for vengeance on them.' But I also praise God for giving him the vision of the New Covenant, where God's law will be written on all hearts and he will forgive their sins and iniquities and, in the words of Micah, cast them into the depths of the sea.

**Alfred Ward**

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In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.

**William Blake**

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**BBC Thought for the Day, 9 July 2008**

In the wake of the Church of England's decision to proceed with the consecration of women as bishops, there has been both pain and rejoicing. The jubilant have predictably commented that this shows how the Church is catching up with society. That may be the case, but I don't think it has yet caught up with Jesus.

Let me explain.., or rather let me allude to a conference I was recently working at in Canada. I divided participants into two groups. The first was asked to name Jesus' 12 male disciples and state three things we knew about each. The other was asked to identify 12 women who followed Jesus and state three things we knew about them, all from memory.

I'd never done this before so I was as surprised at the outcome, as anyone else.

None of those looking at the male disciples could remember any more than eight. Names like Nathaniel, Thaddeus, Simon Zealotes were not quoted. Of those identified, most people could only remember three things about Peter, John, Andrew and Judas. Yet, with the exception of Judas, the other eleven are men after whom churches throughout the world are named.

The group looking at the female disciples had no difficulty in identifying twelve women and were able to remember three things about the majority of them, and that not because they were 'fallen.'

Most surprising of all, we discovered that the woman whom Jesus met at a well, is the only person in the four Gospels to whom a whole chapter is devoted: she's the first evangelist. Andrew brings his brother, a young boy and some Greeks to Jesus, for which he is made patron saint of Scotland. The woman at the well brings a whole village to Jesus, but no nation has so honoured her.

If you look further you see that it's women who give Jesus his declared models of faith, love and generosity. It's women who regularly provide food and lodgings for him and his male companions. It's the women, who followed him, who accompany his body to the grave, and a woman who first sees him after the resurrection.

Is there another male figure in world history who has so clearly engaged with, depended on, and encouraged women without the familiar accompaniments of seduction or exploitation?

Has there been a major Western politician who has been so explicitly trusting? A captain of British industry who has been so reliant? A top ranking male academic who has been so collegial with women?

I suggest that the consecrating of female bishops is not the major issue. For both liberals and traditionalists the bigger issue is the feminisation of communities of faith until they are as representative and nurturing of the giftedness of women as Jesus was.

Now if churches became like that they wouldn't be catching up with society, they would be leading it.

**Rev John Bell**

Thanks to Rosalind Lomas for sending this article

and to the BBC for granting permission to reprint it.

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## O Lord, Seek Us

O Lord, seek us, O Lord, find us  
In thy patient care;  
By thy love before, behind us,  
Round us everywhere:  
Lest the god of this world blind us,  
Lest he speak us fair,  
Lest he forge a chain to bind us,  
Lest he bait a snare.  
Turn not from us, call to mind us,  
find, embrace us, bear;  
Be thy love before, behind us,  
Round us, everywhere.

## Christina Rossetti

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### From Flesh to Spirit

The fact that there is a progressive and incremental revealing and disclosing of the purposes of God in the scriptures is quite obvious to most Bible students. God knows the end from the beginning but the educating of his people has been gradual. This is to be expected. Kindergarten children are not taught Further Maths when they start their schooling because learning such a subject is a gradual process. So how much more does this apply when we come to spiritual learning, especially when we have to combat a mind that is carnal and displays ‘... *enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be*’ (Rom 8:7).

How difficult it is to combat that enmity and submit ourselves to the counsel of the Lord. This is where humility is needed and a willingness to be corrected. We must be souls that desire to gain greater enlightenment, and not think that our own ignorance makes further knowledge unattainable. I think we can say that God’s plan and purpose is simply to fill the earth with His glory. This process is not so simple to understand, but from the very beginning God has been educating mankind in this process. For some it is given to know the mysteries of God’s purpose but for others the flesh and the carnal mind rules.

The process began when ‘. . . *God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth”*’ Gen 1:27-28. We can only talk about things occurring **after** the sin of Adam and Eve with any degree of certainty. Before that time, any detailed discussion is merely conjecture, except to say that they had a unique fellowship with God and were obviously taught by him in all that was necessary for their life in the garden. Whatever we

might think of the temptation, their failure to overcome it is as much a sorrow to us as it was to them. God's instruction to them was to multiply and to fill the earth for it was created to be inhabited, not by sinners but by a 'seed of God'. *'...and wherefore one? He sought a Godly seed'* Mal 2:15 (RV). God emphasized this purpose when he said, 'as truly as I live all the earth SHALL be filled with MY Glory' through a multitudinous seed bearing God's image and likeness.

### **The process continues**

When Cain (whom Eve thought was the 'seed to conquer sin') and Abel brought their sacrifices to the Lord, what education had been given to them beyond that which we are told they had? It was faith, *the substance of things hoped for*, that Abel understood and acted upon, which allowed him to see the unseen things which are eternal. Perhaps their parents might well have discussed with them the circumstances of their transgression and God's remedy, but be that as it may, Abel's offering was *'a more excellent sacrifice than Cain's through which he had witness born to him that he was righteous'* (Heb 11:4). We may forgive Cain for bringing his vegetables to God, but that he didn't respond faithfully to the knowledge they all shared meant he was rejected by God. Already we see that by faith we are saved not by works. So the process of learning God's way was there right from Eden. The development of the way would increase as God's purposes unfolded.

### **The faith of Abraham**

This developing process of God's took a big leap forward when he chose Abraham that through him would be developed a 'seed of God'. *'For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth'* (Deut 6:7). Ezra had an understanding of the status of Israel: *'For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands'* (Ezra 9:2).

Abraham, like Abel and many others, could see the future development of God's purpose again through faith. They could see that there was a higher aspect to God's purpose. They were pilgrims and strangers on earth because they sought *'a better even an heavenly country and city whose builder and maker was God'*. Because of this Abraham could offer his only begotten son – a product of the spirit. For both Abraham and Sarah were promised a seed, a **spiritual** seed of God. This understanding enabled him to offer Isaac with the certainty that he would come again from the dead *'from whence also he received him in a figure'*, **a spirit seed**. So God has used people, events, objects, as figures, types of greater things in which true believers would have seen the implication. So God speaks of better things, better hope, better covenant, better promises, better sacrifices, better resurrection, better possessions etc. everything heading away from flesh towards the spirit.

### **The Law and the Spirit**

There must have been many that saw in the principles of the Law that it foretold a better way. The Law failed to produce the Seed of God having the glory of God by which He would fill the whole earth. And even though they possessed the Law from Sinai yet Israel after the flesh was not the true seed of Abraham: *'For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham, but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called"'* (Rom 9:6-7). Indeed in John chapter 8 the Lord said that their father was the devil: *'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.'* (Jn 8:39).

So it was the special seed of Abraham to whom the Lord Jesus alluded – the spiritual seed with **His** faith and outlook, taken from Jews and Gentiles, those in Christ. As Paul tells us, *'If you are Christ's then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise'* – something yet future but to which the true seed have always been looking; *'for our light affliction which is but for a moment works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ...while we look not at of the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal.'*

But with the eye of faith, the true seed of God could see the eternal promises even though they were *'far off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Those that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country that is an heavenly for God has prepared for them a city whose builder and maker is God.'* This is the holy city of revelation, as we shall see.

### **The witness of the Lord Jesus**

We are privileged to live in an age when this eternal purpose and progression of God has taken a mighty leap forward, in the teachings of the Lord Jesus, and those of his apostles and prophets. Do we fail to appreciate the simple and yet powerful words of the Lord – *'The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached.'* Did not the Lord himself say he would utter things which had been kept *secret since the foundation of the world?* Let us be directed by God, who on the mount of transfiguration said *'This is my beloved son, hear him.'* With him were Moses and Elijah (corresponding to the 'law' and the 'prophets') who had been talking to the Lord concerning his exodus to be accomplished at Jerusalem. But then they had departed and Jesus was found **alone**. So now it is to the Lord Jesus that we give heed, he is the 'yes' pronounced upon God's promises, every one of them. That is why when we give Glory to God it is through Jesus Christ that we say 'amen'. (See 2 Cor 1:20)

And so we are to listen to **His** words, for we read, *'God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.'* Jesus declared to those anticipating the appearance of a political kingdom: *'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, "See here!" or "See there!" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.'* (Luke 17:20-21). Our challenge is not to deny the visible return of Jesus in kingly power but to acknowledge the increasing weight of scriptural evidence that shifts the emphasis away from the flesh and towards the Spirit. The kingdom has this dual aspect, as bro. L.G. Sergeant says, *'to the oriental mind 'kingdom' is a highly personal conception, the sovereignty of a particular monarch, and only in a secondary sense is it the land over which that sovereignty extends'* (Teaching of the Master, p 26).

### **The witness of the apostles**

All that Jesus' apostles and prophets spoke was as he directed because it was his teaching. For example, the Apostle Paul speaks of the grace of God which had been given to him for us *'how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery ... which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.'* (Eph 3:3-6). The New Testament abounds in this spiritual emphasis. For example:

*'But you do not live as your human nature tells you to, instead you live as the Spirit tells you to – if in fact God's Spirit lives in you'* (Rom 8:9 GNB).

*'This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?'* (Gal 3:2-3).

*'...we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh'* (Phil 3:3).

We are his workmanship; it is God that has begun a good work in us. We live after the Spirit not after the flesh and so, if we renew our minds by the Spirit, be it by the word or otherwise, it will be in preparation for the time when we shall have this vile body changed and fashioned like unto his glorious body according to the working whereby he is able to subject all things unto himself. The mind is something we have to change now, or at least try to, with God's help, as Paul says: *'let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God, what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect'* (Rom 12:2). *For as many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God'* (Rom 8:14), God's holy seed. This is the new man that the Lord Jesus is creating. He tore down the barrier formed by the dividing wall which separated Jew from Gentile, wiping out in his own mortal nature that which wrought hostility – the law with its commandments, consisting as they did in precise enactments

– so that he might recreate in himself the two as one new man, making ‘man in God’s image and likeness’. For through him we all, both Jews and Gentiles alike have access to the father **by one Spirit** (Eph 2:18). *‘You likewise are being built in with the rest the better to become, **under the spirit’s guidance**, a place where God has his dwelling.’* (Eph 2:22).

In God’s new covenant ‘there is no longer Jew and Greek but from both Jews (God hath not cast away his people!) and Gentiles, we have one man in Christ. And if we are Christ’s then we are the seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise! This oneness of God’s people and purpose is emphasised in the New Testament and the Lord Himself stressed it in his prayers: *‘Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given me that they may be one, even as we are one’* (John 17:11 ESV). Thus Father, Son, saints and angels all in a perfect oneness. The Bible assures the believers that this inheritance is reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith.

Those who stood with the Lamb on Mount Zion had His name and His Father’s name written on their foreheads. Those who are part of this oneness of God will eat of the hidden manna (spirit food, for it was always fresh and satisfying and it never grew old!) and be given a white stone and on the stone a new name written which no man knows save he that receives it.

By the time we read Christ’s revelation to the churches there has been a complete newness of God’s purpose, a new creation, all things having been made new. New wine in new wine-skins, a new man and a new lamp, a new testament, new covenant, new way. *‘Behold I make all things new!’* Truly that which was old will vanish away, for we are moving towards an eternal state of spirit which can never grow old, ultimately to fill the earth with God’s Glory, through His seed. We are already familiar with spiritual priesthood, spiritual sacrifices, spiritual sanctuary, and spiritual worship, not in temples made with hands, for we are God’s workmanship, and a product of the spirit.

### **Pictures of God’s kingdom**

So when the Lord returns to rule in his kingdom, what sort of a Kingdom will it be? One wonders if our answer today is biased by lots of old testament pictures of the kingdom which could very well have been written to encourage God’s people Israel then, particularly when spoken by prophets in captivity. Would it be a sort of glorified improvement of the present age, which might seem natural to suppose, or will it be another great leap forward to the finality of God’s purpose? We have seen this progressive development up to the present, so it would seem logical that it is going to continue, in which case it might very well be a condition of which we only get glimpses. I believe this rules out a return to rituals and animal sacrifices for example: *‘that which was old is ready to vanish away.’* *‘Behold I make all things new.’*

Notice the emphasis on the New Testament in our quotations. I stress **New** because of its superiority over the Old Testament. For sure, the Old Testament is a wonderful source of education in the things of God, and we should be grateful for that, but like the law it has been replaced and should be developed into something much greater which contains features and phenomena consistent with spirit progression. Some of the New Testament glimpses of God’s Kingdom raise questions.

The Apostle Paul was called up into a *third heaven*, the one we are looking for! There he heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful (or ‘possible’) for a man to utter. Words *‘...that human lips may not speak’* (2 Cor 12:4 GNB). As we have anticipated, the flesh gives way to spirit even in the expression of deep spiritual realities. Observe how similar the language of Romans chapter 8 is: *‘The spirit himself intercedes for us with groans **too deep for words**’* What are these words, and what did Paul actually see?

We also enjoy Christ’s intercession for *‘Christ ... is now at the right hand of God and also makes intercession for us!’* What form of communication or unspeakable words do spirit creatures use? And this to be experienced by the holy seed of God!

The Lord Jesus appeared in human form, as did angels, but was that for the benefit of man? When they appeared and disappeared was it stepping out of one dimension and into another? As Brother Paul Launchbury muses in his book *Beyond Our Time*, how did they ascend into the flame of the altar, command gates to open of their own accord, transfer the apostles from a well-guarded prison to the temple to preach, etc? It was the experience of the '*enlightened to taste of the heavenly gift and to be made partakers of the Holy Spirit and to have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come*' (Heb 6:4-5). What will these powers be **then**, when given to the redeemed to become Kings and Priests to reign on earth, as the angels are **now** ministering spirits, yet unseen!

### **The Reign of Christ**

So where has God's progression from flesh to spirit led us? Surely to the Lord Jesus, who reigns now and has been for nearly 2000 years! All power is given to Him in heaven and on earth (Mat 28:18), '*for the Father judges no man but has committed all judgment to the Son so that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father*' (John 5:22,23). He is now the ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev 1:5), set at God's right hand in the '*heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come*' (Eph 1:20,21).

So has the spirit led us to a picture of Christ sitting on a throne in a small city in a small country and would that give him any greater honour or glory than He already has? Or do we see the holy city, the bride of Christ with the Lamb as its temple and its light? What is the culmination of the progressive purpose of God? God's developing purpose will continue to the great climax when all things will have been made subject to the Lord Jesus and when he himself subjects himself to the Father so that God may be all in all. (1 Cor 15:28).

As truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with my Glory.

Amen and amen!

**Basil Allsopp**

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It is because God has first of all made us in his own image  
that we find implanted in us  
the desire to worship him and grow in likeness to him.  
It is God's Spirit working in us  
that first brings us to worship  
the mystery of Holy Being  
and to seek God's peace.

**John Macquarrie**

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### **Harmony Through the Golden Rule**

(Some specific comments on the article *Harmony Through Headship*  
by Alan Fowler (*Endeavour* No 118, December 2007))

We are in positive agreement with much of Brother Alan Fowler's article on *Harmony Through Headship*. He says that husbands *must* love their wives 'as their own bodies' (quoting Eph 5:28). He says, 'This quality of love will guarantee that husbands will be driven by a spirit of 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' (Gal 5:22). No one can disagree, for these are truly Christian qualities (fruit of the Spirit) applicable to us all, whether male or female, married or unmarried. But herein also we find a problem with Brother

Fowler's basic analysis: his solution to marital disharmony is male headship. He says:

In many instances ... disagreements can be resolved by compromise. But in some instances, such as conflict over the choice of school for a child, compromise is not possible and headship is required. It is abundantly clear from Scripture that headship belongs to the husband.'

Appointing the husband to have the casting vote, so to speak, on any issue where there is disagreement, is certainly one way of reaching a solution. Whether this is a good way or a biblical way, or reaches satisfactory solutions, is worth considering.

### **Is a male casting vote a good way?**

Some couples may find this solution to be successful for them, and if they are happy to resolve differences this way, that may be fine for them. Personally we don't find it so. We have never been in a position where decisions cannot be reached by discussing together and coming to an agreement. In some areas one of us has more expertise than the other, and that is what usually decides the outcome. Averil is better at colour schemes, so in choice of colours when we are decorating, Ian is happy to defer to Averil's choice. He comments on her suggestions, and she adapts these according to how he and others in the family feel. In making decisions about the car – 'Do we need new tyres on the front?' – Averil leaves it to Ian to decide, since he keeps an eye on what needs done to the car. We work by discussion, compromise, agreement. In many respects colour schemes or car maintenance could be considered unimportant areas. We have never been in a situation where we have been in disagreement over bigger issues – in that we have been in a happy position – but if we were, we would list the pros and cons, and come to a mutually agreed outcome. We would not decide on any basis of having a male casting vote.

### **Two Practical Scenarios**

#### ***(1) Choice of School***

There are numerous criteria for making a judgment: the location of the schools, the catchment area, private or state schools, special needs or inclusive within the mainstream, known reputation and exam results of a particular school, school size, needs of a particular child, character even of individual teachers in a specific school. How do the couple decide? Let's suppose that the mother was trained as a teacher and taught for several years before having the children. She knows well how to cope with children, and understands the strengths and weakness of the varying possibilities. The husband works in business, is often away from home, and has less day-to-day contact with the children. He wishes to pay for a private education for his children, since his boss did well in a private school. The wife would prefer a state school and so would the children from their own experience. The husband is adamant: he insists on a private school, not because of the interests of the children but because he thinks his children will do well like his boss, and this will reflect favourably on himself at work.

The issue could be resolved in several ways. Is there any reason to think, however, that if the father overrules the others on the grounds that he is head of the family, this is either good practice or biblical?

#### ***(2) Gardening***

A husband and wife are working in the garden, some distance apart. The wife does most of the planning and most of the regular, detailed work like weeding, but the husband is good at 'heavy' work like chopping trees or uprooting and replanting heavy bushes.

The husband knows that his wife wants a bush moved, so he digs it up, and puts it where he thinks it looks good. The wife comes along (after a hard afternoon removing weeds from the path) and sees his relocated bush. She is disappointed, as she planned for it to go somewhere else, in a more suitable position (better ground, the right amount of shade/sun) where it would fit in well with the surrounding plants. The husband by this time is tired, and doesn't feel like doing any more hard work. 'That's where it is, and that's where it's staying,' he comments to his wife. The bush is too heavy for the wife to move even if she wishes to. Is he expressing an appropriate headship, making the final decision as the husband? Or is he expressing male

selfishness and not loving his wife as his own body, i.e. he is not submitting to her as he ought?

### **Should the husband have the casting vote on issues under dispute?**

Does the Bible grant a casting vote to the husband on issues where a couple disagree? There are several passages which suggest the opposite.

#### **Jesus – The Golden Rule**

... in *everything*, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matt 7:12, NIV)

#### **Paul – on marriage**

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer....  
(1 Cor 7:3-5)

The key here seems to be agreement. If it is suggested that ‘agreement’ means that the husband decides and the wife in humble submission accepts his decision, could this really be described as ‘agreement’ in the ordinary understanding of the word, or on the way Paul uses it here? Or could it be described as the teaching of Jesus ‘... in *everything*, do to others what you would have them do to you’?

#### **Scriptural teaching**

Brother Fowler regularly mentions the terms ‘headship’ and ‘the headship principle’. Neither term appears in the Bible, though several passages are given which are considered to justify this terminology.

The first is in **Genesis 3:16**, ‘... your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you.’ God’s plan for marriage is described earlier, in Genesis 2:24. ‘... a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.’

If Genesis 3:16 were describing God’s pre-fall ideal, when God saw His creation and described it as ‘very good’ (Genesis 1:31), would it not say ‘... your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall care for you and cherish you?’ But Genesis 3:16 is in the context of things having gone wrong. There is now enmity, conflict and pain. The ground is cursed, and there is death. We suggest, therefore, that ‘he shall rule over you’ is an undesirable consequence of the entrance of sin into male and female relationship. It should not be held up as the pattern for how we should conduct our marriages, and it does not seem like what Paul means when he describes the husband as ‘head’, as discussed below.

#### ***The Law of Vows***

A second passage which, it is suggested, teaches the husband’s headship is **Numbers 30** where a husband can overrule a wife’s vow, or a father a daughter’s vow. Brother Fowler says: ‘the husband’s headship is embedded in the Mosaic law.’

But the social context in which the Law of Moses was given involved the husband or father actually owning the woman. Fathers could sell daughters (Ex 21:7); wives were listed along with a man’s property (Ex 20:17); they could be divorced at the will of the man – the wife had no say in the matter (Deut 24:1). This could certainly be an example of ‘he shall rule over you’, but hardly seems in accord with the original intention of God in Genesis 1 and 2, nor with the teaching about ‘head’ in the New Testament; nor does it match Paul’s teaching about doing things ‘by agreement’ (1 Cor 7:3-5). Numbers 30 appears to put the husband in control over the woman’s relationship between her and her God. Does the New Testament suggest that the husband should be in charge of his wife in this manner?

**What of the New Testament? Does this teach a ‘headship principle’?** Two passages mention ‘head’ (1 Cor 11:3, Eph 5:23) and several enjoin wives to be subject to husbands. The word ‘headship’ is never used.

None of these passages, when read in their specific contexts, suggests that the husband should make the decisions, or the final decision, when married couples disagree, even if 'head' means boss, chief, or ruler. Help towards explaining the meaning of 'head' is available from Paul in Eph 5.

'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.' It is a notable mistake to separate verse 21 from the rest, as some translations (e.g. NIV) unhelpfully do by inserting a subheading 'Wives and Husbands' between verse 21 and verse 22. Likewise it is a mistake to read this passage at weddings if the reader starts at verse 22! The reason it is a mistake to separate the two verses is that the verb 'be subject' occurs only in verse 21, and it is carried over into verse 22. Paul's teaching is that we have to be subject to one another. It is not a matter of wives, alone, being subject to their husbands, but – as Paul goes on to explain – husbands have to be subject to their wives.

Paul describes the kind of 'head' Jesus is as 'head' of the church. Surprisingly, Jesus, the head, is an example of what being subject means. We should not be surprised. Jesus had said so himself at the Last Supper. 'I am among you as one who serves' (Luke 22:27).

Nothing here in Paul's description of Jesus as head (Eph 5) suggests 'authority' or 'ruler'. Being head, according to this passage (as it seems to us) is a matter of *loving, giving oneself up for, nourishing* and *cherishing*. None of these words suggests ruling over, giving commands, or having a casting vote. This is the kind of head, a *submissive* but very active head, that the husband should be. As Paul concludes: '... let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.' (Eph 5:33)

#### **'Love does not insist on its own way'**

Being subject to one another does not mean doing nothing! It means acting to put the interests and needs of the other beyond one's own. Husbands are to love their wives, and in 1 Cor 13 Paul lists what love entails. Amongst his list of the qualities of that Christian love is: 'Love does not insist on its own way' (1 Cor 13:5). And this love applies to us all. If we combine being subject to one another, acting with love, and applying the Golden Rule to treat others as we would like to be treated, we have the biblical answer for resolving conflicts, marital or any other.

Brother Fowler wrote in his introduction to *Harmony Through Headship* as follows: 'What happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object? Explosion and disintegration.'

If our marriages are based on the teaching of submission to one another, not insisting on our own way, treating each other as we would like to be treated, there is no question of any irresistible force, nor any immovable object, and of course no explosion and no disintegration. When Jesus intervened in the dispute amongst his disciples, he did not suggest resolving it by one of them having the final say, and all the others accepting it. He said that their attitude was wrong. '... not so with you' (Luke 22:26).

#### **Does it work in practice?**

We can only speak for ourselves, but when we get into an argument, we usually say: 'Let's stop. Let's go back and analyse what each of us said and why we got into conflict.' We then start where we had been before we began arguing. We discuss why we became annoyed with each other, apologise, and calmly work out a solution. It works because we are committed to each other, seek to apply the Golden Rule, and each is willing to be subject to the other, neither of us insisting on his or her 'own way'

We are sure from Brother Fowler's article that what he is saying is in accord with this most of the time. But we feel the introduction of the unbiblical term 'husband headship', and the explanation that this means a husband has the final say, is incorrect.

Marriage was ordained for a remedy  
and to increase the world  
and for the man to help the woman  
and the woman to help the man,  
with all love and kindness.

**William Tyndale**

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### **ROMANS Chapter 5**

The fifth chapter of Romans is a central part of our understanding of the work of God through Jesus Christ. It has been the focus of much exposition and discussion over hundreds of years and therefore one would hope that what Paul wrote is clear to all. Unfortunately this is not so: much of what is written and said about these verses actually obscures Paul's meaning.

How has this come about, how can exposition undermine meaning instead of enlightening? The whole book, indeed all the writings of Paul, are about the grace of God, His gift, which makes us free from all other forms of law even including the one given by God, the Law of Moses. There is only one law for those in Christ: the law of love: loving God and loving our neighbour (and much of the New Testament is written to guide us how to live using the law of love in everyday life).

One way that misunderstanding occurs is because Paul's writing is treated as a cool, calculated exposition of God's truth. But the book is not written as an exercise in the logic of the philosopher nor the analysis of the scientist. The logic and analysis of spiritual truth are certainly the basis of the letter, but Paul was a passionate man. To appreciate the degree of the emotion which was part of Paul's being, consider the Letter to the Galatians. Reading it as it would have been read to each of the assembled ecclesias in Galatia, that is aloud, and all the way through from beginning to end, brings out the strength of Paul's feeling. That letter is supercharged with raw passion combined with spiritual truth.

The Letter to the Romans was not written with the same intensity since 'Romans' is Paul's manifesto of the gospel in preparation for his planned visit to Rome. It is different in style and purpose from his other letters, but the depth of Paul's commitment is still there. He uses strong language and repeats himself time and again to make sure that the underlying truth of God is not mistaken. But expositors, instead of seeing that underlying truth, seize upon individual words and figures of speech and inflate them out of proportion to their actual meaning in the context.

And the most grievous way this is done is to portray Paul as a lawyer, using words in a legalistic way. Such words as redemption, justification, even atonement give an emphasis which is not there in Paul's background of grace and freedom. (It is of interest that the word 'atonement' does not occur in the New Testament even though Christadelphia has tended to adopt it: the KJV uses it once, in Romans 5:11, but the Greek is *katallage*, reconciliation, not atonement.)

Where did this legalistic bias come from? It is from the Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, which for many years the Roman Catholic Church insisted was the only permissible version of the Bible to be used. Moreover, none of the general population was allowed to see even that Latin version since only priests were permitted access to the Vulgate. And they, of course, expounded it in terms of the teaching of their church. It is no wonder, therefore, that such thinking pervaded all Christianity and that when the Renaissance took place, the move to the true meaning of Paul's writing was only partial. The influence of Latin is still with us in modern translations.

Whereas the original Greek language shows lightness, flexibility and vitality, and conveys subtleties of thought, idea and expression, Latin is different. It is heavy, consonantal and disciplined with a legalistic phraseology. And modern translations still reflect old ways of thinking.

An extreme example of the legal way of thinking relates to the word 'ransom'. This word is not found in the Letter to the Romans but is used by both Jesus Christ and Paul, in another letter:

*Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28).*

*Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2:6).*

The theologians built upon the word 'ransom' an incredible fantasy. What was given? The life or the blood of Christ. Who gave it? God. To whom was it given? To the devil. As a result of this trade between God and the devil, the church was purchased and has hope of eternal life in heaven.

This bizarre thinking is not found in the Letter to the Romans. But that type of marketplace approach is still found in most translations. Some of the words used are:

To try and avoid legalistic thinking and to catch the nuances, here is a translation of some

parts of chapter 5 of Romans. It is mainly literal although in some places the translation has been expanded to convey the meaning of the Greek:

Starting at **verse 1**: Having been put right (with God and ourselves) as a result of faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have also gained access into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice with confidence in hope of sharing in the glory of God. Not only so but we rejoice confidently in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces patience, and patience produces a tested character, and a tested character brings out hope; but we do not need to be ashamed of hope (i.e. waiting eagerly for the future) because the love of God is being poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit which has been given to us, if Christ, while we were still helpless, died on behalf of the ungodly at the appointed time. (God waited for that time and so can we.) For scarcely will anyone die on behalf of a righteous man; perhaps someone even dares to die on behalf of a good man. But God confirms His love to us because while we were still sinners, Christ died on our behalf. Therefore much rather having been put right in his blood, we shall be saved through him from wrath (punishment). For if being enemies we have been brought into a friendly relationship with God, we shall be saved in his life. And that is not all, we also rejoice with confidence in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have received friendship with God .....

**Verse 15**: But there is no comparison between God's gift of love and the transgression (false step); for if all men died by the transgression of the one, so much more the generosity of God and the gift given freely in (abundant) generosity of the one man Jesus Christ overflowed for all. And the gift cannot be compared with the result of one man's sin; for the verdict from one led to condemnation, whereas the expression of divine grace even after many transgressions led to acquittal. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the overflowing of grace and the gift of righteousness in life shall reign through the one Jesus Christ. Surely then as one transgression led to condemnation for all, so also the righteousness of one led to all men being put right in life with God. For as through the disobedience of one man the many were branded sinners, in the same way through the obedience of one shall many be accepted as righteous.

So the death and resurrection of Jesus opened the door for all to be accepted graciously and joyously into God's presence if they come in faith:

'being put right as a free gift by his grace through liberation in Christ Jesus whom God presented as a means of finding mercy through faith.'

(Romans 3:24).

**Sheila Harris and Roy Boyd**

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### **A Tribute to Jean Tanner**

The strength of every community rests on individuals within that community. These people enrich and enhance the lives of others and every community benefits enormously from such members. Jean was such a person. She liked people and enjoyed their company. She offered love, support and care, and her influence was felt at the most intimate and deepest level – a love understood and appreciated by every one of the large crowd who, on a sunny afternoon in July, gathered to lay her to rest.

Her church, her family and her friends were very important to Jean. She had enjoyed a close relationship with her parents, David and Rowley and had experienced a happy, loving marriage with Nigel, later shared with their daughter, Coren, and always with two cats. Some years after the birth of Coren, Jean decided to return to work. Her mother was able to help care for Coren and Jean later described this arrangement as 'the best possible child-care'.

Later, when Coren married Matt Miles and had two children, Jean was grateful for the opportunity to pass on the benefits she had received and to support her daughter and family as

she and Matt juggled church, work and family life. Her grandchildren were dear to her and she spent much time with them until prevented by increasing sickness and hospitalisation.

Jean offered her support and care on a professional level. She was a skilled optometrist and much in demand. She had a flexible and accommodating attitude and took great pains and much care so that her clients were totally satisfied. Equally generous with her time and her home, she and Nigel were always able to offer a bed to those spending time in London – sometimes for unexpectedly long periods.

Jean was a loyal and faithful member of Finsbury Park ecclesia, a regular attender of the Christadelphian Summer School and an enthusiastic supporter of *The Endeavour Magazine*. She drew her strength from her Lord Jesus and her life was directed to following him all the way to His Kingdom. We miss her presence, mourn her absence and grieve for our loss.

But, for Jean, the Kingdom has come.

**Maureen Marshall**

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## **ROMANS Chapter 8**

The central and overriding theme of the Epistle to the Romans for us, can be summarised by the asking and answering of two questions, questions and answers which affect our eternal security in Christ Jesus our Lord. They are: **1)** How can the guilty be forgiven? and **2)** How can the sinner be made holy?

The answer to the first question is given in the first seven chapters of the Epistle: the answer to the second question is stated in chapter eight. The answers are: **1)** By Christ's death, to conquer sin, and **2)** By Christ's Spirit, in the believer.

To put these questions and answers in another way: Christ **died** to save us from the **penalty** of sin, that of eternal death; and He **lives** to deliver us from the **power** of sin, that is, he enables us to share in his victory.

The human situation in which the apostle Paul found himself is illustrative of our own personal experience:

*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do; it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* (Romans 7:18-24).

In answer to the agonising question of verse 24, *Who shall deliver me?*, the reply comes back in verse 25, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

Since our conversion to Christ and by our baptism into His Saving Name, we should now be in a similar victorious position of having the mastery over the propensity to sin, but if we have not yet gained the victory, the way of liberation is described in chapter eight, which we will attempt to consider in some detail. The theme and substance of the chapter is that **indwelling sin** (the evil inclination) can only be defeated by an **indwelling Christ**. We need the Spirit of Christ in us, but if we go awarring against sin in our own strength, we shall fight a losing battle. If, however, we avail ourselves of the Spirit, of the resources and life and power that are in Christ Jesus our Lord, we become more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

**Verse 1** *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* Thus, there is no reason why we should go on serving penal servitude, as though we had never been pardoned, and never been liberated from the prison-house of sin, that is, the tendency to succumb to temptation. By our baptism into Christ we are reckoned to have died with Him, been buried with Him, and been raised with Him. It is no longer we who live, but the glorified Lord Jesus Christ who lives in us.

**Verse 2** The warfare of the two natures goes on, but where the Spirit enters the argument, there is no talk of defeat. Where the Spirit is in control, the old nature is compelled to give way; we are now 'free' from the power of sin. For Paul, the leading of the Spirit was a constant opening of heart and mind to his living Lord. This is the very principle of the freedom of the life in Christ. In Galatians he writes; *But if you are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law* (5:18), that is the Law of Moses.

**Verse 3** The law could not condemn sin; it condemned the sinner. Under its operation sin sprang to life, was stirred into activity. Not that the law was 'bad'. It was 'holy, just and good', but the flesh was weak, and the law could not acquit, and man being a sinner was condemned by it.

**So how could God acquit?** One answer is, **by condemning sin in a representative of the human race.** By sending His Son in the likeness of 'sinful flesh' – the predisposition to sin. The words are carefully chosen. In the likeness of flesh, without the adjective 'sinful', would be **docetic**, since docetism denied the human nature of Christ and asserted that His body only **seemed** to be real. The apostolic message is that Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, that is, human nature prone to sinful tendencies. 'Likeness', *homoioma*, is a **representation**, which is more than a resemblance. Some would assert that the nature of Jesus Christ only resembled sinful flesh, and was not actually such, but the Scripture is clear that the likeness was **identity** (see Phil 2:7; Heb 2:14).

And 'for sin' condemned sin in the flesh. The KJV margin reads 'as an offering for sin' condemned sin in the flesh. The Greek *peri hamartias* is found in the Septuagint as an equivalent for the 'sin offering'. But note 2 Cor 5:21, where Christ is said to have been '*made sin for us*'. The Greek is the simple noun *hamartia*. Thus, the expression 'condemned sin in the flesh', seems to mean that, in His human nature, sentence was passed and executed on sin. At Calvary, God provided His Son, made of our nature, and because sin had been condemned, Christ had to die for the sin of the world. But, thankfully, the Lord Jesus Christ conquered sin, rose from the dead, and is alive for ever more.

**Verse 4** Holiness in Christ is not a matter of painstaking conformity to the individual precepts of an external law-code, but rather a call to 'walk after the Spirit' by allowing the Spirit of God to produce fruit in our individual lives, to reproduce the graces which were seen in perfection in the life of Jesus.

The word 'Spirit' occurs twenty times in this chapter, nineteen times with a capital 'S' and once with a small 's'. The use of the upper case was challenged by our late Brother John Carter in his commentary on the Letter to the Romans. But note the original Greek text is all capitals. Nonetheless, Brother John contended that the words **flesh** and **spirit** are used antithetically, the **flesh** meaning '**the old man**' and the **spirit** the '**the new man**'. Therefore he proposed that to walk after the spirit is to walk after **spiritual values**, spiritual things. This is true as far as it goes. When **spirit** is used in contrast to **flesh**, it is natural to suppose that the **human spirit is meant**. It is logical to take it as such, except where the context rules this sense out.

The human spirit is not excluded, even where the Divine Spirit is understood, since for Paul, the human spirit needs to be aroused by the Spirit of God. Hence to walk after the Spirit implies the action of the human spirit, **in response to the prompting of the Spirit of God.**

**Verse 6.** Carnally minded – *phronema tes sarkos* – literally means 'the mind of the flesh', and

*phronema tou pneumatos*, literally means ‘the mind of the Spirit’.

**Verse 9.** Believers are not ‘in the flesh’, that is, the impulses of human nature **no longer** dominate the will, *If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*

**What is meant by being in the ‘Spirit’?** The answer is given in the second half of the verse. If the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ (synonymous terms) **dwells** in the believer, that is what being ‘in the Spirit’ means.

Brother John supposed these terms to mean the **mind or disposition** of God or of Christ. He argued that because of the absence of the definite article in the Greek text, in both these expressions, so that one reads ‘Spirit of God’ not ‘the Spirit of God’, and ‘Spirit of Christ’ not ‘the Spirit of Christ’, that they are **genitives of character**, and as such can be translated as adjectives. But no doctrinal significance should be attached to the presence or absence of the article. New Testament usage is inconsistent.

However, the Spirit spoken of here is the same Spirit spoken of in **verse 11**, that is, the Spirit of God (or Holy Spirit) which was instrumental in raising Jesus from the dead. A God-like or Christ-like disposition can only come about by **the action** of God’s Spirit or Christ’s Spirit operating on the mind of the believer. The verse concludes: *‘If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.’* This is the crux of the matter.

We should note carefully the word ‘**dwell**’. The verb *oikeo* is derived from *oikos*, a **house**. It means to inhabit as one’s abode. It is used again in verse eleven; and in Romans 7:18,20 of the indwelling of sin: sin, must be **evacuated** by the Spirit **taking over the tenancy** (see 1 Cor 3:16).

**Verse 10** Christ **in** you, is the same thing as the Spirit of Christ in you, and if He is indeed in us, our bodies are dead to sin, for the simple reason that **sin cannot live where Christ dwells**. But the indwelling depends upon the receptivity of the recipient. We must have faith that Jesus will dwell in us by the Spirit. The second half of the verse is well nigh incomprehensible in the KJV and the RSV. Weymouth translates the reference to the Spirit as being the believer’s spirit, viz: ‘Your spirit is alive (has life) because of righteousness.’

**Verse 11** The latter half of this verse confirms that the quickening or making alive of the believer at the Resurrection, is by God’s Spirit. It cannot really mean a God-like spirit or disposition, which Brother John supposed it to be.

**Verse 14** To be led by the Spirit of God, said brother John, is the same as **allowing** the ‘new man’ to direct one’s life; but the plain sense of the verse is, that God leads the true believer **by His Spirit: a power which can operate independently of Holy Scripture**. The Spirit of God, The Spirit of Christ and The Holy Spirit are interchangeable terms: they are one and the same Spirit. If we allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit, we become sons of God. Son is *huios*, a mature child of God, as opposed to a little child in the minority, which is *nepios* (see Gal 4:3).

**Verse 15** The Spirit of adoption is so called, because an adopted son was one deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate. He was not one whit inferior to a natural son. The spiritual correspondence is obvious; our eternal destiny is to inherit the kingdom of our Heavenly Father.

**Abba, Father.** Abba is still used today among Hebrew-speaking families, the homely and familiar term of ‘Daddy’ by which children address their father. In Gethsemane Jesus addresses His Father in heaven by the same term. The significance of this lies in the fact that Abba was not, and is not, the term used by Jews when addressing God as their Father. But the fact that the Aramaic word found its way into the worshipping vocabulary of Gentile believers, the pattern being set by Jesus, strongly suggests that as sons of God we can use the familiar term in our prayers to the Father.

Dr. John Robinson in his book *Honest to God* poured scorn on the idea that the Lord God Almighty is the believer's 'Daddy in the sky'. But that is precisely what He is! But do we take real advantage of it by conversing with Him, and putting our problems and difficulties to Him, as our children do with us?

**Verse 16** What is the **witness** of the Spirit? Brother John Carter seemed to think that it referred to the works that were performed by the exercise of the miraculous Spirit-gifts of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, a witness that the brethren's message was 'of God'. This is true, but we must witness by the transformed lives that we live, that we too are 'of God'.

**Verse 23** The firstfruits of the Spirit are the first instalment, or the down payment, of the eternal heritage which the believer will receive. We must have this pledge here and now, otherwise we shall not receive the redemption of the body.

**Verse 26** Likewise the Spirit **helpeth**. The word 'helpeth', *sunantilambano*, is the action of a person coming to the aid of someone who is carrying a load which is really too heavy for him. The person coming to the rescue does not carry the **whole weight** but helps the other in his **endeavour**. It is stated in Philippians: '**work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure**' (2:12,13). Whilst relying upon the Holy Spirit to operate in our personal lives, we still have our own part to play, since salvation is a partnership between God and the believer.

Our infirmities, infirmity or weakness, as the RV and RSV put it, refers to want of strength. The weakness is our inability to know precisely what to pray for. Broadly speaking I suppose we do know what we should pray for, the perfecting of our faith, but we do not always know in the moment of crisis. This is where the Spirit is said to intercede. That the Spirit is said to plead on our behalf need not present any difficulty, since the Spirit in this context is the risen Lord Jesus Christ coming to our rescue, as verse 27 clearly shows: '*because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*' As it is stated in Hebrews: *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for the saints according to the will of God*' (7:25).

As some translations put it, the 'unuttered groanings' or 'sighs that baffle words' are the inarticulate groanings of the believer, when we cannot express our prayers in words. We may be burdened with a serious family problem, or groaning from the sin that does so easily beset us, so all that we can do is cry out to our Father in an inarticulate way. We should emphasise that the groanings indeed are those of the believer, not the Spirit's, but as the Spirit is in us, the Spirit itself is said to groan. This is how close our life should be to our Father and Christ our Lord.

**Verse 34** Confirmation that Christ is our intercessor the One '*who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*'.

**Verse 39** If the Spirit of Christ is in us, if we are led by the Holy Spirit of God, we are in the exalted position of being enveloped by the love of Christ, from which love we cannot possibly be separated.

We must be prepared to allow the risen and exalted Lord Jesus, operating through His Spirit, to work in us, to lead us out of the trials and perplexities of life, out of temptation, out of the ways of sin, to a holy and joyful life in Christ; a peaceful, a happy and a contented life. May it be the lot of each one of us to come 'to know' the living presence of Jesus in this way.

**Bill Davison**

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**The Simplicity of Early Apostolic Doctrine  
and the Religious Philosophy of Sir Isaac Newton.**

Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727), arguably the world's greatest scientist, has traditionally been seen as a firm friend of Christadelphianism. In lectures, he has been called upon as a shining example of antitrinitarianism, and has even been actually described as 'a kind of Christadelphian.' In a review of a scholarly paper on Newton's views on the role of the Jews in Biblical prophecy, that appeared in a Christadelphian magazine some time ago, the reviewer stated that 'it seems to this reviewer that Newton's views are very close to those of the Christadelphian Brotherhood from Brother Thomas down to our own day.'

Now, it is true that Newton shared many of the prophetic views of the Christadelphians, such as the return of the Jews to their homeland shortly before the Advent of Christ, as well as doctrines such as unitarian monotheism, the mortality of Man and the non-literal personality of the devil. However, he did differ significantly from Christadelphians as regards the identification and evaluation of early Apostolic doctrines, and overall religious philosophy.

Most of us, whatever our denominational affiliation, tend to automatically and subconsciously, read the text of Scripture through the 'lens' of our own preconceived and (often) fixed theological belief systems. However, if it were possible to imagine ourselves reading the Bible for the very first time (free from any denominational influence), with hopefully something resembling a historian's position of 'total objectivity', what would we surmise of the doctrinal belief system of the early church?<sup>1</sup> In particular, what would we make of the Gospel presentation passages of Acts 2:14 ff, 8:26 ff, 10:36 ff, 13:14 ff, 17:22 ff, 22:1 ff, and 26:4 ff?

As 'Brethren of Christ' we may be surprised that Peter, in the first ever (incredibly successful!) evangelistic sermon (Acts 2:14 ff), makes no mention of anything that could meaningfully be described as 'a theory of the atonement'. There is no elucidation of any mechanism, device or detailed 'raison d'être' for the atonement, never mind any simple statement that Jesus needed to die as a sacrifice for Himself, so as to provide the means for the salvation of others.<sup>2</sup>

The basic Apostolic message, expressly declared in Acts and 1 Cor 15:3ff (probably the first ever Christian creed of any length), is comprised of the following elements:

1. Jesus was a man approved of God and anointed with the holy Spirit, who went around doing good, especially in healing those who had been 'oppressed by the devil.'
2. He was unjustly put to death, by ignorant and wicked men, in accordance with the foreknowledge and fixed purpose of God.
3. God however, raised Him from death, and thus endorsed Him as Israel's sinless Lord and Messiah, prophesied about in the Scriptures.
4. Jesus is exalted to God's right-hand. It is from heaven that Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit, and from where He will return at the restitution of all things.
5. The covenants of the Hebrew scriptures; Mosaic, Davidic, Abrahamic, are fulfilled in Jesus.
6. Repentance and the forgiveness of sins (unto eternal life in the Kingdom) leading to baptism, are to be preached in His name.

After baptism, procured on the above doctrinal platform, believers devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles, (including instructions concerning the communion meal) and to a communal life-style. This 'teaching of the Apostles' probably consisted of reminiscences of Christ's life, as well as His ethical admonitions. There is no evidence that any more complex doctrines were divulged to potential converts. Indeed, several years after the Pentecost sermon of Acts 2, Peter, in Acts 10:36, is still seen as preaching essentially the same 'core Gospel.'

What did Sir Isaac Newton conclude from his own extensive historical and Biblical studies?

Newton's theology was derived from intense historical research that was concerned with restoring the true text of the New Testament and recovering the pure truth of primitive

Christianity. One of his biographers has no hesitation in stating that he must, on the basis of his works, be considered as the world's foremost authority of his Age on the subject of Patristics (the study of the life, literature and thought of the theologians of the early church from the first to the eighth century). His research led Newton to make an important distinction between essential and non-essential doctrines. Based on terminology from Hebrews chapter 5, Newton distinguished between 'milk for babes' and 'meats for elder men'. (Keynes MS 3)

The 'milk for babes' consisted of only a few simple fundamental beliefs such as the love of God, the abhorrence of lust, the love of one's neighbour and that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, who rose again on the third day and who will return someday to judge the quick and the dead. Several drafts of his paper *'Irenicum or Ecclesiastical Policy Tending to Peace'* contain doctrinal statements concerning the reconstruction of true historical Christianity. Newton writes:

The fundamentals of the Christian religion are those and only those things which the primitive Christians were taught in catechising and instructing them in order to baptism. And those were to forsake the Devil, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life and to believe in one God, and one Lord and in the Holy Ghost. To forsake the Devil is to forsake the worship of Demons or Ghosts and all false Gods whatsoever collectively called the Devil. (Keynes MS 3)

His research on the early church led him to a statement of the true creed:

And we are to believe in one God, the Father almighty in dominion, the maker of heaven and earth, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God, who was born of a Virgin and sacrificed for us on the Cross, and the third day rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, being next to him in honour and power, and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead, raised again to life, and who sent the Holy Ghost to comfort his disciples. This repentance and this faith was taught in catechising from the beginning in the eastern churches, and was sufficient for baptism, communion and salvation. (Keynes MS 3)

Regarding these tenets, Newton wrote:

Now this creed is short and free from repetitions as a symbol of religion ought to be. It is easy to be understood and remembered by the common people and so may be compared to milk for babes. Its articles are in the scriptures in express words and so liable to no disputes. ... I may add that it contains not mere theories like some of those Articles which we have omitted, but all its Articles are practical truths on which the whole practice of religion depends. (Yahuda MS 15.5)

In the same manuscript Newton states:

This religion was easily understood by the meanest of the people and was handed down amongst them by tradition in simplicity, until men skilled in the learning of the heathens, Cabbalists and Schoolmen corrupted it with metaphysics, straining the scriptures from a moral to a metaphysical sense and thereby making it unintelligible.

The explication of the creed, also from the Yahuda MS 15, included the following quotes:

One God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. We are forbidden to worship two Gods but we are not forbidden to worship one God and one Lord: One God for creating all things and one Lord for redeeming us with his blood.

We must not pray to two Gods but we may pray to one God in the name of one Lord... We must believe that he was crucified being slain at Passover as a propitiatory sacrifice for us, that in gratitude we may give him honour and glory and blessing as the Lamb of God which was slain and hath redeemed us and washed us from our sins in his own blood ... he is exalted to the right hand of God (Acts 2) or is next in dignity to God ... and we must give him suitable worship ... given to him as our Lord and King and tends to the glory of God the Father ... we may with understanding pray for the coming of his kingdom and fit ourselves to stand before him in that day, and to deserve an early resurrection ...

All of this concerned the 'milk' of simple saving Gospel truth, but converts were, if they could, to try and progress. Newton writes:

For if after we have been fed with milk, which belongs to babes, we do not go on unto perfection, using strong meats which belong to them of full age but by disuse and negligence grow weak and faint in our duty, and fall away so as to need to be fed with milk anew, our case grows desperate. (Keynes MS 3)

Regarding the 'meats for elder men' Newton declares:

And since strong meats are not fit for babes, but are to be given only to men of riper years, they are not to be imposed on all men but only to be learnt by such as after admission into communion were able to learn them. And by consequence men were not to damn or excommunicate<sup>3</sup> one another or treat one another as heretics or quarrel or reproach one another, or hate or despise or censure one another for not knowing them. Every man after admission into communion was to study the scriptures and especially the Prophecies, and to learn as much as he could out of them, and might endeavour to instruct his neighbour in a friendly manner, but not fall out with him for differing in opinion about anything which was not imposed before baptism and admission into communion. For enmity and discord in things not necessary to communion tends to schism and is contrary to the rule of charity ... but all men who agree in the fundamental principles of religion, by the Apostle called milk for babes, must be tender towards one another and continue to love one another notwithstanding any differences in opinions concerning the higher points of religion, by him called strong meats ... Hast thou faith in these higher matters, have it to thyself and do not give offence to thy weak brother for whom Christ died by imposing more upon him than he can bear or than Christ hath imposed, and thereby prejudicing him against the Christian religion.' (Keynes MS 3)

Concerning the 'strong', Newton continues in Manuscript Keynes 3, to state:

For if the strong impose their opinions as conditions of communion, they preach another gospel and become schismatics, and if the weak set up contrary opinions as conditions of communion, they become guilty of like offences. To fall out about these matters is to become carnal and relapse into the state of Babes, and to be catechized anew in the fundamental doctrine of loving our neighbour as ourselves.

Earlier, in the same manuscript, Newton had declared:

The Apostle Paul opposed the preaching of the Law of Moses to the Gentiles, and called it another Gospel .. because it was not necessary to salvation and therefore not to be imposed as a fundamental Article of communion. And for the same reason the imposing of any Proposition (true or false) as an Article of Communion which was not an Article of Communion from the first preaching of the Gospel, may be preaching another Gospel, and the persecuting of any true Christians for not receiving that Gospel may be persecuting Christ in his mystical members, and the Persecutor in making war upon Christ breaks the second and third great commandments and may deserve the name of an Antichristian in a literal sense. A Church guilty of this crime is in a state of Apostasy from Christ.

For Newton:

The first Principles of the Christian religion are founded, not on disputable conclusions, opinions or conjectures, or on human sanctions, but on the express words of Christ and his Apostles, and we are to hold fast the form of sound words, 2 Tim 1:13. And further, it is not enough that a Proposition be true or in the express words of Scripture: it must also appear to have been taught in the days of the Apostles in order to baptism and communion.

Newton's studies therefore, led him to believe that the primitive true church adhered to a basic simple Gospel core, which had mass appeal expressly because it was not intellectually burdensome. More advanced doctrines did exist, as 'meat for men of full age', but they existed within a church which was characterised by latitudinarianism and a spirit of charity. Indeed, Edward Gibbons, in his monumental historical work *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, states that freedom from major schism within the first hundred years of the early church was probably due its latitudinarian nature.<sup>4</sup> It was exactly this kind of original latitudinarianism that

Newton wanted a new reformed church to return to.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that Newton would have seen any religious community that added more advanced doctrines to the simple Apostolic Gospel core as necessary adjuncts (in its attempt to present an overall multi-doctrinal package, labelled by its compilers as 'THE TRUTH'), as propogators of 'Another Gospel' and as schismatics. As a living example of his own philosophy, Newton, although he disagreed with the Socinians<sup>6</sup> over the issues of the pre-existence of Christ and the devil, nevertheless refused to believe that they were heretics ( Bodmer MS 5A).

For Newton, the issue of the devil was not a Gospel-core essential. The 'milk' of the Gospel was capable of being understood by practically anybody, as evidenced by its mass appeal (3000 converts for example, on the first Pentecost sermon) and its particular attraction to 'the intellectually limited' and 'the theologically unsophisticated!' (Acts 4:13 , Luke 10:17 ff, and 1 Cor 1:26 ff). Newton's salutary historical and theological studies may prompt a vital question for us all: Are we presenting the true original primitive Gospel, or are we offering 'a theological obstacle course' which essentially constitutes 'Another Gospel'?

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Historically a heretic is one who .... does not adhere to the apostolic teaching preserved in the New Testament. But I ought to distinguish carefully between one who rejects the apostolic teaching itself and one who rejects my interpretation of the apostolic teaching.  
(F.F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions* p.212)

**Tony Cox**

#### Notes

**1** Newton himself pursued the same 'methodology'. His historical researches were largely independent of the interpretations of others, and were designed to appear as such in his writings. Indeed, he told his friend, the philosopher John Locke, that he was interpreting Biblical texts and questions in the spirit of an independent lay person, who had a duty as a Christian – as he put it – 'to take up with what I can best understand.'

**2** Newton's 'theory' of the atonement could be read directly from Scripture: Christ was raised purely because of his obedience, and atonement is effected by Christ providing us with an example to follow. (Keynes MS 3)

**3** Newton did mention in MS 3, that the only cause for excommunication was 'for breaking the conditions upon which they were admitted into communion, but not for any thing else.'

**4** Edward Gibbons, *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in the one volume abridged version ed. by Dero A. Saunders, p 269.

**5** Frank E. Manuel's book *A Portrait of Isaac Newton*. (Mulun Press), p 374.

**6** The Socinians (or at least some/many of them) appear, from the evidence of the 'Racovian Catechism', to have believed in a personal devil and demons. The Catechism on pages 321 and 368, mentions 'demons' and 'bad angels' in passing, as personal beings. A translators footnote to p.7 in the 1818 English translation states that the Polish Unitarians held the devil to be: 'originally of angelic rank, but now degenerated.'

Other works used include: *Never at Rest: A Biography of Isaac Newton*, Cambridge University Press, by Richard S. Westfall.

An article in the *British Journal for the History of Science* 32, pp 381-419 *Isaac Newton, heretic: the strategies of a Nicodemite* by Stephen D. Snobelen.

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When we contemplate the physical creation,  
we see an unimaginable complex,  
organised on many planes one above the other,

atomic, molecular, cellular, vegetable, animal, social.  
And the marvel of it is that at every level  
the constituent elements run themselves,  
and, by their mutual interaction, run the world.  
God not only makes the world, he makes it run itself;  
or rather, he causes its innumerable constituents to make it.

**Austin Farrer**

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**For Your Library**  
***The Language of the Cross***  
***Reflections on the Atonement***  
**by Graham Jackman, 2008. 131pp.**

Brother Jackman is to be commended for producing a book on a theme which has so often been contentious in our community. His tone is gentle and fair, while facing up to the very real problems of bringing into a harmonious whole the wide range of scriptural perspectives. There is no one perspective on the cross in the New Testament. At an Oxford Conference more than quarter of a century ago, Brother Tom Barling used the parable of the cross at the centre of a building, viewed down a number of avenues, through a series of windows at the head of each. And even then we only glimpsed the whole picture.

The history of the brotherhood would have been less fraught if this perspective had been followed. Many of the major divisions arose from trying to tie the atonement down to one angle of approach. 'Free life' substitution theory in the 1870s; no resurrection for those held in 'Adamic Condemnation' in the 1890s; Clean Flesh 'heresies' of the 1920s and minor divisions on whether Jesus earned eternal life by keeping the law. All came about by failure to take a comprehensive view of all the perspectives in scripture.

The official position expressed in a number of clauses in the statement of faith is nowadays little talked of and little understood by many brethren and sisters. Perhaps it never was. For many years prayers at the breaking of bread have seemed to concentrate on Jesus as our example, rather than the official theory which sees the cross as an exhibition of the sinfulness of human nature, requiring that he, the only righteous one, should have to die to be freed from the entail of human sinful nature.

Graham looks at four main groups of explanations of the cross and notes how some of them are assertions rather than explanations. With even handedness he faces up to the weaknesses in all of them as well as the value of what they are seeking to say. The four are: victory, justification, sacrifice, and moral change. The first three are in the main objective, with some subjective consequences, while the fourth is mainly subjective, effecting a change in the believer's heart.

A highly significant point that emerges at several stages of his exposition is that the death of Christ should not be taken on its own. It is to be seen as part of a whole which embraces his divine origin; his ministry; his death as its inevitable consequence, freely accepted; his resurrection crowning his victory and beginning the process of victory over death; his ascension to the Father, whence he sends the spirit to his body that it may participate in the transforming process; completed when he comes again. The whole biography of Jesus is the saving event. When this is grasped, one no longer focuses on part of the whole divine drama, but rejoices in 'Christ in you, the hope of glory', expressed in all that he was and did, does and will do.

Throughout the book Graham highlights the danger of looking at the cross as in some way enabling God to forgive, which was only possible if one was provided who stood in our place as a substitute or representative. The more extreme examples of this view are known as penal substitution, where Jesus dies instead of us, thus being punished for our sins – and this is called justice!!

Another such view, held in some parts of the brotherhood, suggests that God could only forgive when his hatred of sinful human nature had been maintained in the death of a sharer in that nature, who was nevertheless sinless, but who had to die because he was of that nature, and he had to be raised because of his sinlessness. Brother Graham very gently puts a question mark against any view that makes God the victim of his own laws, requiring the devising of a legalistic strategy to overcome the problem. It can so easily sit close to the views of Anselm, where God required satisfaction for his affronted majesty, fitting in with the feudal culture of his time.

Of penal substitution Graham says that it is inadequate, but goes on to demolish it without any uncharitable attack. Similarly of our community's position that Jesus was a beneficiary of his own work – that Jesus had to die because he had sin nature or sin-in-the-flesh, which the author calls a metaphysical abstraction, – is treated as too mechanistic and in danger of losing the full power of a loving God seeking to establish a relationship with his erring creation, but it is not frontally attacked. We are left to reflect and in our own thinking make any adjustments that are helpful.

The same is true of the centrality of Romans 3.25,26 in our community's exposition of the cross. The declaring of God's righteousness is taken as meaning simply that God was right in condemning sinful human nature to death and that, this having been placarded on the cross and acknowledged by sinners, they could then be forgiven by God without any diminution of his majesty. Graham shows that righteousness is an altogether more all-embracing word than this and includes the whole range of the divine attributes, especially his mercy and lovingkindness or steadfast love (*chesed*). Interestingly Graham contrasts the 'not clearing the guilty' phrase in the declaration of the divine name in Exodus 34, with the New Testament message in which God does just that 'clearing the guilty' – 'when we were yet sinners Christ died for us.'

Graham expresses reservations about any view which 'constrains the total freedom of action of God', especially a view which says that after the cross 'forgiveness became possible', as some Christadelphian writers are quoted as saying or implying. One quotation is especially notable: 'God wants to put us in the right, but he can't do that by putting himself in the wrong'. Equally Graham does not for one moment minimise the 'exceeding sinfulness of sin'.

I have concentrated on the areas of this book which are of especial relevance in a Christadelphian context. In doing so, because of the limitations of space, this review does scant justice to the wide range of considerations that are brought before us. His treatment of sacrifice against the background of the law lifts it out of the substitution debate into the realm of self-giving on the part of the Lamb of God with a number of little sidelights which we may not have previously noticed. Jesus as the mercy seat, the meeting place of God and man is well handled as an act of supreme communication. The sacrificial motif has a moral implication in that, as Hebrews indicates, it does purify our 'consciences from dead works to serve the living God.'

I am still seeking to understand fully his treatment of expiation which he finds an acceptable word, rather than propitiation, to describe an aspect of the cross. Propitiation is too near the idea of appeasing the wrath of an angry deity to be a clear word to use. Expiation he sees as involving the idea of doing something to make up for – to counterbalance and thereby annul – the sin or crime. The sacrifice of Christ leads us to an acknowledgement of and repentance of our sin and thus acknowledges the divine standards; it leads to an inner transformation.

The book does emphasise throughout, the subjective, transforming effect of the cross on the lives of believers, though in a short chapter on this he expresses the view that it can be out of balance if it gives too little place to the divine judgement on sin involved in the cross.

Perhaps if we see that aspect of the cross wherein the non-coercive relationship of God with humanity was stressed, balance might be preserved. In weakness, Jesus displayed the strength of God, as he did not meet violence with violence, and when he was abused did not retaliate. This exposed the evil of sin which in one way or another is violent in attitude, word or deed. Jesus provided a platform on which a new and living way could be exhibited as the ultimate purpose of God. He turned upside down the ways in which human history has proceeded and pointed to the ultimate triumph of the love of God. This is my personal 'take' on one aspect of the cross, but it is one of many which became a little clearer to me, as I shared Graham's reflections and dialogued with his thoughtful and spiritual analysis of the supreme sacrifice of Jesus.

Throughout this book there is humble recognition that we are on holy ground. That, no doubt, is why he avoids hostility toward people holding views on which he has reservations or plain disagreement. One is aware, throughout, of the spirit of Paul's words 'O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor? For from him, and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen'

**Crescens**

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Copies of this book can be ordered from Graham direct at £5.50 inc p&p.  
Graham Jackman, 14 Orwell Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7PU,  
0118 947 2545 graham.jackman@tiscali.co.uk

Otherwise, the book can be ordered direct from Lulu, the internet publishers, at [www.lulu.com/content/1912039](http://www.lulu.com/content/1912039), which takes you direct to the book. The price is £3.95. The snag is that the postage for single copies is high - it is nearly as much as the price of the book.

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Character is better than ancestry,  
and personal conduct is of more importance than the highest parentage.  
**Thomas John Barnado**

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***A.D. 381.***  
**and**  
***The Closing of the Western Mind.***  
**Both by Charles Freeman, Pimlico Press.**

These two books, the work of a freelance enthusiast rather than a disciplined academic, trace the history of the early Church through its various councils and leading personalities. Amply documented from the original sources and modern commentaries and fully supported by historical detail, they reveal the impossibility of restricting the mind of God, the Creator, to the limits of human reasoning and of attempting to define the relationship of Jesus to God by doctrinal creeds. This was the attempt made by both Emperors Constantine and Theodosius in seeking to incorporate Christianity into the imperial system by fitting it into a political mould to use it as a means of unifying the Empire and consequently demanding a system of dogma as a code of law – the Nicene Creed – to endorse its authenticity and thereby destroying the freedom of the Greek spirit of enquiry.

But the workings of the Almighty cannot be contained within the limits of human logic and credal formulae.

Surely the Spirit of God, His power and character, breathed out into Jesus without limit and through Him into the believer who admits it, is the true reality?

‘The Spirit bloweth where it listeth and ye cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’

Is not this the freedom of the Greek spirit finally at rest?

**Sheila Harris**

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There is only one cause of unhappiness:  
the false beliefs you have in your head,  
beliefs so widespread, so commonly held,  
that it never occurs to you to question them.

**Anthony de Mello**

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*Jesus of Nazareth*  
**Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI**  
**Bloomsbury pbks £8.99**

This book is a brilliant reaffirmation of the authenticity of the Gospel records, as a true account of the actual, historical life, work and sayings of Jesus himself, by penetrating to the basic and fundamental significance of his words, actions and claims, above all his true identity with God his Father. The author approaches the narrative from the perspective of historical research into the reasons underlying the words and actions of Jesus. He does not elaborate the framework but proceeds directly to the essential purpose of Jesus’ actions. By his baptism, Jesus identifies himself with the whole of humanity by sharing in the sins of the world. In the temptations, he overcame the basic impulses of humanity, thereby becoming for us the saviour. The Beatitudes Ratzinger sees as a picture of Jesus himself and in the Sermon on the Mount he sees the true expression of the Torah. In fact the whole Gospel story is truly a presentation of Jesus himself, as he claims the reality of God in himself. The parables show how God reveals Himself through everyday events. The Gospels show how Jesus himself is the living expression of all he taught, a true human being, but also the fulfilment of all God’s dealings in the past and the full manifestation of the will and character of God his Father. But he is more than fulfilment. He is the initiator of the Messianic Age – God’s reality in the midst of history.

The whole Gospel record is a powerful portrayal of Jesus as a real man among men, yet expressing in himself the very essence of God’s character.

This book is the first instalment of the story of Jesus of Nazareth concluding with the Transfiguration — the rest is to follow.

**Sheila Harris**

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If you wish to be fully alive  
you must develop a sense of perspective.  
Life is infinitely greater than this trifle your heart is attached to  
and which you have given the power to so upset you.

Anthony de Mello

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### To a Snowflake

What heart could have thought you?—  
Past our devisal  
(O filigree petal!)  
Fashioned so purely,  
Fragilely surely,  
From what Paradisal  
Imagineless metal,  
Too costly for cost?  
Who hammered you, wrought you,  
From argentine vapour?—  
'God was my shaper.  
Passing surmised  
He hammered, He wrought me,  
From curled silver vapour,  
To lust of his mind:-  
Thou could'st not have thought me!  
So purely, so palely,  
Tinily, surely,  
Mightily, frailly,  
Insculped and embossed,  
With his hammer of wind,  
And his graver of frost.'

Francis Thompson

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<b>Word</b>	<b>False meaning</b>	<b>True meaning</b>
Redemption (Greek: <i>apolytroisis</i> )	Buying back Bargaining, debt, contract (typified by links with pawnbrokers)	Loosing or releasing, such as the exodus from Egypt when the Passover lamb was the path to freedom (not a sacrifice for sin). Freedom and liberation is the background thought.
Justification, justify (Greek: <i>dikaiosyne</i> and related words)	Being declared right in a dispute, the other person or party is wrong.	Making whole, setting right, allowing us to become what God meant us to be.

Reconciliation (Greek: <i>katallage</i> )	A grudging acceptance after a dispute. (Reconciliation can mean a neutral coming together on equal terms – this is a true meaning.)	A coming together again. It is linked with a meaning of equal exchange of money in a bank. Mutual love and friendship.
Propitiation (Greek: <i>hilasterion</i> )	Appeasement, perhaps making an offering to satisfy someone, to make a gift even a bribe.	A place to find mercy. Tyndale used ‘mercy seat’ to translate the covering of the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place where God and the High Priest met for the gracious forgiveness of sins. Jesus is now our meeting place.
Sin (Greek: <i>hamartia</i> )	An inherited part of our nature.	Missing the mark, a falling short of the standard that God has set