

The Endeavour Magazine
For Christian Thought and Action
ISSN 1474-404X
www.endeavourmagazine.org

June 2010

No. 123

CONTENTS

1. Prayer to Christ at Thessalonica?	-	Les Boddy
3. Obituaries	-	Peggy Coleman, Ian McHaffie, Derrik Ayrton, Ken Drage, Pam Weaving, Joan White, Phillip Kirkman, Sheila Harris
7. Visions of the Kingdom	-	Mark Robertson
11. Response to <i>Being a Christadelphian</i>	-	Cyril Marsters
12. 1900-2000 The Secular Century	-	John Stephenson (NZ)
15. Further Greek Gems	-	Sheila Harris
17. The God of the Old Testament	-	Jean Field
19. Comment on the above	-	Alfred Ward
21. Urim and Thummim	-	John Stephenson (NZ)
23. Dispensationalism	-	Alan Fowler
29. Attitudes to Early Genesis	-	Jean Field
30. Literary context for Genesis 1-11	-	Keith Lowe
35. Attitudes to Early Genesis 2	-	Jean Field
37. Be obedient and 'work out your own salvation.' (Phil 2:12)	-	Basil Allsopp
42. The inestimable value of the Old Testament	-	Alfred Ward
44. What is Truth?	-	Sheila Harris
45. Reviews <i>The First Paul</i> and <i>Meeting Jesus again for the first time</i>	-	Sheila Harris
48. Letter Darwin or the Gospel	-	Bob Burr
49. Letter to the CMPA	-	Cyril Marsters
51. Reply from CMPA	-	John Hellawell
52. The funny side of life	-	
53. New Booklet <i>Climate Change</i>	-	Laurence Kimpton

Prayer to Christ at Thessalonica?

How do you begin and end letters to fellow-disciples? Do you ever write anything like: 'May God bless you!?' If so, surely the words are accompanied by a prayer asking God to bless whoever you are writing to.

When Paul wrote, in 2 Thess 1:2, 'Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (GNB 'May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.'), would not this be accompanied by prayer to both the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, just as the GNB suggests? Paul is here clearly recognising that our fellowship is with the Father and the Son and that both have an interest in our well-being, and so he would surely have petitioned them both to minister grace and peace to the Thessalonians.

In the same way, can you imagine Paul finishing his letter, in the way he does in 2 Thess 3:18, with: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.' and doing so without asking his Lord Jesus to deepen the experience of grace in the lives of the Thessalonians? The Amen in the AV certainly suggests that he was praying, although the word does not appear to be in the Greek. The same could of course be said about all the salutations and the valedictions in other epistles.

Now let us look more closely at the Thessalonian letters, probably and significantly, the earliest of all the epistles, for further evidence of Paul's prayer practices. Whatever prayer and worship habits Paul engaged in must have been acceptable in all the churches he was associated with.

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

- 11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.
- 12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:
- 13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

2 Thessalonians 2:16 - 3:5

- 16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,
- 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.
- 1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:
- 2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.
- 3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.
- 4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.
- 5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Once again, there is clear evidence here that Paul addressed prayer to both the Father and the Son. In 1 Thessalonians he mentions the Father first, and in 2 Thessalonians the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, first. Would Paul have written these things without praying to both the Father and the Lord Jesus to grant the Thessalonians what he so deeply wished for them? A careful reading of both letters, to observe how Paul uses the word 'Lord', establishes that he uses it almost entirely, if not exclusively, with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is almost certainly the case in 1 Thess 3:12, 2 Thess 3:3 (cf 1 John 5:18), 3:5 and 3:16. After a consideration of these two letters alone, can we escape the conclusion that here, significantly in the earliest of the epistles, is firm evidence that Paul regularly addressed prayers to the Son as well as to the Father, although certainly not instead of the Father. Equally these two letters provide no evidence to suggest that Paul expected his readers to do anything different.

True, there is no 'command' to pray to Jesus in the NT, surely because those who loved him did not need such a command, but there is here in Thessalonians, the earliest of Paul's letters, sufficient evidence to suggest that Jesus was prayed to as a matter of course. There is certainly no command not to pray to Jesus. Neither is there any 'command' that prayer should be addressed exclusively to the Father. There is no competition between the Father and the Son and I am not suggesting that prayer to Jesus should replace prayer to the Father. We can still follow the lead of the NT, where most prayers are addressed to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but without banning unnecessarily prayer or praise to our Lord who seeks such fellowship with us personally and in ecclesial worship (See, for example, Rev 3:20).

When we meet to eat the Lord's supper, according to the tradition Paul received from the Lord, and no doubt shared with all his churches, we show the Lord's death till he come. We take the cup of blessing that Paul calls the **cup of the Lord**, the communion (fellowship) of the blood of Christ, and we take the bread, the communion (fellowship) of the body of Christ, that Paul probably alludes to when he speaks of being partakers of the **Lord's table** (See 1 Cor 10 & 11). Knowing that the Lord we remember on such occasions is alive and effectively presides over the proceedings – it is his table, his supper, his body and blood that in fellowship we share, his fellowship – how can we not acknowledge, directly to him, his presence, his person, his love for us, in both the praise and prayer that we engage in? If we refused to speak directly to a guest in our own homes, this would be seen as an insult.

Les Boddy

(The above contains extracts from a booklet on *Prayer to Christ* shortly to be published.)

Increase in Subscriptions

Members of the Committee have decided to increase the subscription to £5 per annum for two issues in the UK, and to £7 for overseas. The cost of the magazine has not increased since 2003, although production costs have increased year on year. Those who have paid in advance will not be affected but renewal slips to be sent out with this issue will specify this increase.

Ruth Marsters

**Peggy Coleman
(1915-2010)**

It is difficult in a few words to give an adequate tribute to Peggy (Jessie Margaret Hall). She was baptised in Leeds, and was a long-serving, reliable, supportive member of Croydon, Morden and Walton ecclesias. She married Ron Coleman in 1939 and they were able to celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary last December. She and Ron were very fit, and would put many of the younger generation today to shame by their long cycle rides and mountain walks. Her great, grandfather, Robert Cundall, was the printer of *The Golden Harp* (1865), the first Christadelphian Hymnbook, and her involvement with Christadelphian publications continued with Ron as editor of Endeavour from 1989 to 1997. She and Ron created a stable, loving home for their children, Andrew and Alison, and rejoiced in their progress and that of their grandchildren. They passed on their religious interests, and Alison recently delighted them in gaining a 1st class honours degree in theology. Peggy will be remembered above all for her practical good sense, her warm hospitality, her deep interest and concern for other people, and the calm, devoted, spiritual approach as she endured her final illness over the last few weeks of her long life. She set a commendable example of commitment and caring, and will be much missed by all who benefited from their contact with her. Our sympathy is with Ron and all the family; our sadness is relieved by admiration of her long, fulfilled life, and by our hope in God's grace of meeting again in the Kingdom.

Ian McHaffie

A Tribute to Derrik Ayrton, the Potter.

Derrik Ayrton, died peacefully in the Bethesda Care Home, Torquay, on Saturday the 10th April. He was 87 years old – his death was not unexpected.

Derrik was a big man in every respect – his Christadelphian origins were Bradford, though his parents moved to Blackpool in the 1930s. He was big in stature, a deep rich voice with a powerful presence, but at

heart gentle and humble not seeking the limelight. I have yet to find anyone who did not like him. Melva Purkis – they had much in common – paid him the greatest compliment when he said it was his sincerity and spirituality that moved you and remained.

He is remembered by older readers of Endeavour for his, and his wife Margaret's, successful work in the Tutnall Home for deprived children. It was a project launched by the late John Weaving and implemented in the early 1970s. Derrick had been attracted to the magazine's openness and support for 'good works' and he and his wife offered their services as house-parents. Derrick and Margaret were 'arts and craft' people, Derrick by vocation a potter. What impressed visitors was not just their love for the children but their energy and originality in applying their skills to bring comfort and enrichment to their lives.

Wherever Derrick was, and he moved frequently, (to Spain in the '80s and '90s), he took his pottery with him and preached through his work, liking to be called 'the Potter'. One of his products was the plaque of a fish which, within the outline had the initials of the Greek words for 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour', the secret sign of the persecuted early church. Some criticised him for producing an apostate article. He ignored the criticism and continued to distribute the plaque, for its message was central to the faith he wished to share. The plaque came with a leaflet and the words are a fitting tribute to his life. He wrote, 'may we urge you to take into yourself the sign of the fish and commit your life to all that it signifies and to serve the Lord'. Lord, remember Derrick the Potter at your coming for he did good to many.

Ken Drage

Pamela Marian Weaving
15.8.33 — 15.1.2010

Pam was born in Birmingham, the much loved 'little sister' of a very happy family, a family 'rooted' in the Birmingham Central 'ecclesia' – another warm and loving family. Her meeting eventually with John Weaving and their marriage saw the beginning of another wonderful family of two boys and another 'little sister'. It is a great joy and comfort to see them now grown into adulthood and parenthood and showing so much of the loving caring support for each other and the needs of others that they learned in their early home.

Pam had a gentle but strong personality. Her quiet support and boundless compassion for any in need was wonderfully healing for many who knew her, as was her sense of humour and fun. Her love of children has always been immense, and after the death of John ten years ago, the love of her many grandchildren and the joy of watching them develop, helped her to cope with their overwhelming loss. Her love of children had earlier led her to involvement, with her friend, in the setting-up of a support group for handicapped children locally. And she enthusiastically supported John in the setting-up of Whitegates – the Childrens Home started in the early days of Endeavour.

She had a lively questioning mind and, as in all else, supported John in keeping Open Home for many lonely and heart-broken people over the years. Not only distressed people – many were deeply grateful for the opportunity to discuss totally freely their spiritual questions and doubts.

On a personal level, Pam was my dear friend, and I shall treasure the memory of spending this last Boxing Day with her and with her nearly-new rescue dog. We shared a love of dogs as well as much else. So in her memory I have sponsored a guide-dog for the Blind: I think she would approve

Joan White

Tribute to Philip Kirkman
who fell asleep on Sunday 4.4.10

My acquaintance with Philip goes back to the late 40's when we were both members of a group of young people from the East Midlands, Nottingham, Leicester, Derby and Coventry, for whom Brother Ron Storer organised activities and holidays. He not only inspired us with Bible study but also introduced us into the wider world of Christian witness. This led to an involvement in the World Refugee Year of 1960. Philip played an active part in this by collecting clothes etc. for the displaced peoples of East Germany. He took these regularly to Sister Miriam Dean of Barnet, who had befriended some German prisoners of war during the war, and maintained contact with them after the war by sending them supplies to help them in their impoverished and deprived condition. She also set up a charity to help them.

This was one of the factors from which the Endeavour Movement emerged in 1960 with collaboration from others such as George McHaffie. Philip and I were both members of the original Committee.

When he and Rita married in 1964 they lived in Leicester, Philip's home town; but they moved soon after to Nottingham and were members of Jarvis Avenue Ecclesia. They were blessed with two daughters, Rachel and Helen and a son, John. Philip worked for a time in the Probation Service and later for the Borough Council, being responsible for Sheltered Housing and resettling the homeless.

Philip was a quiet, thoughtful man with a love of poetry, and devotional literature. He was most at home in the countryside, in the peace of woodlands, streams and birds. Sadly, for over 20 years, he suffered a succession of illnesses, which left him disabled and impaired in sight and mobility. I had the pleasure of visiting him whenever he was residing in a Home and Rita was called away for family or other reasons. And I look back on these visits with pleasure as I saw him right up to six months before his death, relating with animation memories of the past and especially of people whom we had known years ago and for whom he retained an active and affectionate memory.

Sheila Harris

Visions of the Kingdom

How inaccurate predictions of the future always turn out to be when that future finally comes. Science fiction films made in the 1950s and which purport to show what the world will be like in the twenty-first century look to us like distorted views of the 1950s, chiefly because the film makers took certain social and technological trends in their own period, magnified them and projected them into the future.

Our conceptions of the future Kingdom of God can be a bit like that. Commentators and Sunday evening speakers often speculate upon the images and symbols found in the writings of the prophets to draw imaginative pictures of the coming new order and of the social and political arrangements that will govern it. In many cases, however, the predictions they put forward give the impression that they are simply reading into these prophecies their own conceptions of what a perfect society ought to look like.

We are all children of our time and our conception of a perfect social order changes from one generation to another, often reflecting the changing values and priorities of our own age. This will also influence which passages of Scripture we choose on which to base our views of the Kingdom. We have only to compare the writings of our pioneers in the 19th century with modern writers to see how much the emphasis has subtly changed with the times. The pioneers of our community placed great emphasis upon the earthly, political and visible aspects of the Kingdom and did so in deliberate reaction to the hope of a heavenly reward held by the churches around them. In books such as *Elpis Israel*, *Destiny of the British Empire* and *The Book Unsealed* John Thomas devoted much space to the means by which the Kingdom will be established, with graphic images of Christ leading armies of immortalized saints and converted Jews in the subjugation of the world by fire and sword, like Joshua leading the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan. He was inspired by such passages as Psalm 149:6-9:

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishment upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints.

John Thomas took this as a very literal prediction of the treatment the immortal saints will mete out to the ruling classes of the world, secular and ecclesiastical, when Christ returns:

When the saints have made captives of the royal family of Britain, and their nobles and dependants, they will ask no favours of them, but take all they possess as spoils of the victors. It will become theirs by sanction of the God of the whole earth. (*Destiny of the British Empire foretold in the Scriptures*, 1866; p.40. 1933 ed.)

The prospect of a general overthrow of the established order must have appealed to the poor and to those at the lower end of the social order in Victorian Britain. Dr. Thomas lived at a time when it was accepted that strong nations conquered weak nations and subjugated the natives. The victory and the spoils of war went to the side with the most military might. We see something of the gunboat diplomacy of the British Empire in his descriptions of the coming Kingdom and the means by which it will be established and maintained.

The world has changed since then. Ours is an age that has rejected imperialism and promotes democracy, human rights and the welfare state. Our conception of the Kingdom has altered accordingly. It is a gentler picture. We are often assured therefore that the Kingdom will be administered as a Paradise of peace and plenty for its inhabitants, in which material blessings will be showered upon the nations as a reward for their obedience. There will be no war, no unemployment, no famine, no poverty and no sickness. All this can be seen as the highest aspirations of our own society projected into the future, or as the worst things removed:

Use your imagination for a moment! Think of a world at peace, its inhabitants healthy and well-fed and doing rewarding work. Imagine a world in which there is full employment, where people are not exploited and where a man can live a long and prosperous life; a world in which famine and pestilence no longer kill one quarter of the population and where the full resources of the land and the seas are harvested. Already you are getting a picture of the Kingdom of God (*The Kingdom of God on Earth*. Stanley Owen. p.2).

Such a hope doubtless appeals to those who are disillusioned with modern society with its dehumanizing technology, its ugliness and commotion. The same booklet informs us that there will be less concentration of population in large cities; their inhabitants will move out into pastures and woodland areas made available by worldwide conservation schemes (p.14).

Many of the more speculative statements made about the Kingdom raise more questions than they answer. We are sometimes told, for example, that the mortal population will be rewarded for obedience and punished if they rebel. It is hard to escape the conclusion that their obedience will be based on self-interest. Where is the law 'written on the heart' that Jeremiah predicted (Jer 31:33)? Scripture makes clear that God is pleased only with obedience which comes spontaneously and willingly from the heart.

We are sometimes told that the government in Jerusalem will eradicate any dissent or rebellion before it even happens. Such a social order would have the same deficiencies that are found in all totalitarian states; in which the government has such a tight grip over the lives of its citizens and regulates even their thoughts that there will be little room for individual responsibility. If the Kingdom is really to be an environment in which there are no rough edges, struggles or challenges then how will its citizens develop qualities of patience, compassion and inner strength?

We can all deplore the wickedness and deceit that afflicts the world and long for the day when it is replaced by righteousness and truth, but to concentrate, as we often do, on the material benefits that will come to the mortal population has the effect, in my view, of debasing the whole concept, divesting it of its spiritual dimension. The picture that emerges from many Sunday evening lectures is one of human welfare as the main feature of the Kingdom and the power of God as the means to achieve it.

How literally then should we interpret the visions of the prophets? Are we to believe that the clock will go back two thousand years so that the world returns to the social, political and religious structures of the Old Testament? What of the scientific discoveries, the technology and the medical advances of the last few centuries: will these things be discarded and replaced by a return to a simple rustic life? Can we really expect a return to Old Testament forms of worship centred upon the rituals of animal sacrifice?

The prophets were children of their age, and all that they envisaged was the best of their age projected into the future, or the removal of all that was wrong in their age. They were describing the future in terms that were familiar to their contemporaries. Ezekiel lived under the old Covenant and therefore expressed his vision of future worship in terms drawn from that Covenant. The New Testament reveals what that system of worship pointed towards; the one true sacrifice of Jesus and the sacrifice of the heart that alone is pleasing to God (Rom 12:1). A restoration to animal sacrifice would be like lighting a candle after the sun has risen. When the future age is established the elect will enjoy a fellowship with God that far transcends the visions of Ezekiel.

Isaiah pictures a 'new heaven and a new earth', in which former things shall not be remembered nor come into mind (Chapter 65). What he then describes reads like an idealized picture of ancient Israel, perhaps as it might have been after the Exile. Many of the prophetic visions were offers of hope to the exiles in Babylon, describing the blessings that would be theirs if they turned their hearts to God. Isaiah and Ezekiel expressed their visions in terms familiar to their contemporaries and relevant to their situation.

It is easy to draw up a list of all the bad things in the present world and confidently predict that these will no longer be. A full picture is beyond our comprehension. How can mortals know what immortality will be like? Can we begin to imagine what it will be like to meet the Risen Lord face to face? We simply cannot envisage what it will be like to have a 'spirit body', to dwell in the presence of God and share eternity with Him. To picture all this in our minds is like a caterpillar trying to imagine what it will be like to become a butterfly.

The prophets had to express their visions in imagery familiar to their first readers. I do not think that we must expect the Kingdom to be exactly as they describe it. The content of their visions appear vague and imprecise simply because the vocabulary did not exist then, nor does it exist now, to describe the Kingdom in its fullness. When these visions are finally fulfilled we will find that the reality to which they point is more glorious and more splendid than anything we can now conceive: 'For now we see as through a glass, darkly; but then face to face' (1 Cor 13:12).

Mark Robertson

Be thou my vision

High King of heaven, when battle is done,
Grant heaven's joy to me O bright heaven's sun,
Christ of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

(8th century Gaelic)

Response to 'Being a Christadelphian'

The above special article in *The Christadelphian Magazine* and the follow-up article, both in 2009, induced the feeling that a personal response was needed. However, procrastination prevented a reply in time for E. 122. Now – belatedly – I quote a poem with words that well express my feelings:

Back to Simplicity

Oh, clergyman all dressed in black,
What a mighty church is at your back.
We are taught that by your hand
We must be led to our promised land.
Jesus is locked in your institutions
Of ancient laws and resolutions,
Buried so deep and out of sight
That sometimes we cannot see the light,
Behind huge walls that cost so much
Where simple things are out of touch.
But could it be he is not within
These walls so thick, with love so thin?
Does he walk on distant hills
Where long ago he cured all ills?
Is he gone out to open places
To simple people, all creeds, all races.
Is Jesus gone from off the altar
Catching fish down by the water?
Is he with the birds and trees,
Gathering honey from the bees?
Could it be in this simple way
That God meant man to kneel and pray?

Alice Taylor

(from her book *To School Through the Fields.*)

Comment: ' . . . locked in your institutions
of ancient laws and resolutions . . . '

Could there not be a message here for us?

Cyril Marsters

1900-2000 The Secular Century

This is the title of a lecture given by Emeritus Professor Lloyd Geering.¹ In his series of lectures, Dr Geering traces the changing face of New Zealand religion. His survey, covering three centuries, no doubt parallels changes that took place in the United Kingdom.

The Nineteenth Century

Dr Geering terms the years 1800-1900 'the Christianising Century'. In 1800 there was no Christian presence in New Zealand, yet a hundred years later 95% of the population regarded themselves as Christian; a Christianity transplanted from Europe. The earliest Christadelphians, like the Anglicans of Christchurch and the Presbyterians of Dunedin, were immigrants. There is no State Church in New Zealand, the Government adopting a theoretically neutral attitude to religion, even though the denominations engaged in sectarian rivalry, including the Christadelphians who preached the mortality of man and the return of Jesus to establish God's kingdom on earth.

The First Half of The Twentieth Century

By the middle of the twentieth century, the denominations engaged in a programme of building churches in the suburbs to cope with the increasing numbers of suburban congregations. 'Of great significance was the allegiance of young people.'² The Roman Catholics had their church schools and the Presbyterians had a thriving Sunday school system and Bible Class movement. This was also the time when the Christadelphians developed their CYC movement.

The Second Half of The Twentieth Century

However, by the 1960's there were signs of decline in church attendance. Of concern to the denominations was the decreasing attendance by young people in particular. Churches also became increasingly concerned about their finances and in some cases about the diminishing number of candidates for ordination to the ministry. Notable in the New Zealand Protestant denominations are the increasing numbers of female ministers.

'English studies of church membership and attendance over the past twenty years have made it plain that the churches in England are losing progressively more and more contact with the adult population.'³ Also the comment is made that 'the drift accelerates progressively during the years of primary and secondary school, a drift which has accelerated since the early 1970s into the 1990s.'⁴ 'The challenge facing the churches today is that of making the gospel message heard among young people in a radically alien social environment.'⁵

As one New Zealand Church historian wrote, 'major Churches have an aged and aging constituency and do not seem to be uniformly successful in shaping the attitudes of their members.'⁶ Does this apply to the Christadelphians with respect to their younger adherents?

In New Zealand, from 1926-1976 the mainline denominations (Anglicans, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Methodist, Baptist and Congregationalist) decreased from 88.2% to 62.9% of the population who identified themselves with a particular church or denomination. It has been calculated that 8/9 of these people now belong to the unchurched, an increase from 1926 -1976 of 6.2% to 22.5% of the total New Zealand population.

A New Zealand study in 1982 estimated that 'at most only a fifth of the adult Protestant population goes to church regularly . . . The danger signal for Christianity consists not only in the erosion of traditional Christian beliefs but also in the lack of loyalty of Protestants to their churches.'⁷

Dr Geering concludes that 'the more liberal mainline denominations have been rapidly declining, in each case leaving a rump which is more conservative. It is a worldwide phenomenon in western Christendom.'⁸ However, 'there is still a widespread acceptance of what is referred to as "Christian values" by which is meant a common ethic. But more specific Christian beliefs have become personal rather than common beliefs. Christianity has become increasingly privatised.'⁹

Definition

What is meant by the term 'secular society'? 'A secular society or education has a common basis, but no agreement about ultimate ends.' A secular society is one which has a monastic view concerned with a physical, temporal world, rather than having a dualistic view which includes a spiritual, eternal and invisible world. In the words of one of my students 'Western society today has tended to rule out religion and instead taken on a more materialistic view of life.'

We know that for an increasing number of people, their concern is with this world or this age rather than the other world of the age to come, with fellowship found in sports clubs and cultural societies, rather than within the Church. These people no longer are willing to submit to an external religious authority.

The Twenty First Century

Many Churches no longer hold an evening service. Sunday sports and shopping occupy the leisure time of many people today. Hence, the New Zealand census shows that those who profess no religion has increased from 25.5% in 1996 to 29.6% in 2001 to 32.2% in 2006.

Birth, marriage and death are often termed the three rites of passage. The attitude of many people towards Christianity may be seen in the type of funerals now held in New Zealand. Except for the Roman Catholics, the majority are now held in a funeral director's chapel with a 'funeral celebrant' officiating with the emphasis on the life of the deceased, with hardly a mention of the words associated with the Christian belief.

The Future

What does the future hold? For many the hope is for a secular utopia because of our expanding technology and economic growth. Dr Geering wrote in 1995 'Even now there are far-seeing economists and scientist who, like the prophets of old, are telling us that our emphasis on economic growth, consumerism and technology have alienated us from our own spiritual nature and from our own best interests in life.' What is the Christadelphian response to the challenges of the twenty first century?

John Stephenson (NZ)

Notes

1 *2100 A Faith Odyssey*, St Andrews Trust, Wellington 1995.

2 *ibid.*, p 17.

3 *Drift from the Churches*, William K Kay and Leslie J Francis, Dinefwr Press, Ilandybie, 1996, p 145.

4 *ibid.*, p 141.

5 *ibid.*, p 144.

6 *Secular Christianity*, Ronald Gregor Smith, Collins 1966

7 *The Faced and the Fickle*, Hans Mol, Pilgrim South Press, Dunedin 1982 p 85.

8 Geering, p 20.

9 *ibid.*, p 21.

10 *Godless Schools*, Ian Breward, Presbyterian Bookroom, Christchurch, 1967, p 126.

Further Greek Gems

7. Truth

The Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, is derived from the verb *lanthano* which means 'to lie hidden' and is related to the Latin verb *lateo* from which we get 'latent'. The initial 'a' is a negative. So the word means 'unhidden', 'revealed'. It expresses the underlying reality that lies beneath the outward appearance, the inner meaning. A physical shape has no significance until we apply to it an idea, a concept, a word. A flat piece of wood, supported by wooden sticks is meaningless until we recognise a table – something to put things on. So the meaning of Scripture has no fundamental reality until we recognise the golden thread of God's purpose, consummated in Jesus

This word *aletheia* has no verbal connection with our usual conception of truth as correct, accurate, verifiable by evidence. 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen' and this truth is Jesus..

8. Luke 17:21. 'The Kingdom of God is within you.'

The Greek word *entos* does literally mean 'within'. Some commentators have had problems with this, as it is addressed to the Pharisees, but the 'you' may be a general reference to anyone and it is in any case contrasted with the expectation of the Kingdom at a certain place and time. But it has been argued that the Kingdom, as taught in the Gospels, is exclusively an eschatological, future event and so the translation 'among' has been suggested.

But the whole emphasis of Jesus' teaching is upon the inner qualities rather than the external event which is regarded as the finale. Matthew 13 is a clear proof of this. The parables of the Kingdom in this chapter are wholly concerned with inner growth, present treasure, a pearl of great price and wheat and tares growing together. Also Luke's parables, the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Great Supper, are all concerned with qualities of mercy and kindness – the very qualities of the Kingdom of God. So the Kingdom is truly within us if we show these attitudes.

9. Philippians 3:8. 'Whatever things are true, honest just pure, lovely and of good report, think on these things.'

Paul's advice here seems to be a recommendation to meditate on wholesome thoughts. But in fact the Greek words actually contain a much stronger emphasis. The verb translated 'think on', *logizomai*, means to take account of, to reckon with, to assess, and each of the adjectives contains a considerable poignancy:

true - *alethe* implies underlying essence, meaningful, significant not superficial.

honest - *sema* means serious, worthy of respect, decent, not trivial or flippant.

just - *dikaia* means right, honest not false

pure - *hagna* wholesome clean, connected with holy.

lovely - *prospbile* means friendly, affable, amiable.

of good report - *euphema* well spoken of, attractive to others.

This is in fact a serious challenge for the Philippians and ourselves to assess our values and attitudes in thought, behaviour, action, speech and approach to others. Was this a timely warning to the recipients? Were there problems, perhaps hinted at in chapter 2 verses 1-4?

10. Compassion Mark 6:34

The verb translated by 'moved with compassion' is the verb *splagchnizomai* which is the verb from *splagchna* which means entrails and metaphorically 'the seat of the emotions'. It is a very physically expressive word, showing deep feeling and reveals deep and emotional sensitivity to the needs of the people on the part of Jesus.

11. Groaning John 11:33

The verb translated by 'groaning' is *embrimaomai* which basically is applied to a horse champing at the bit and expresses anger. Surely here Jesus is not showing sympathy for the women in their distress at the death of Lazarus whom he is about to raise to life. Is he not expressing deep distress at their lack of faith in him? Should they not have been rejoicing at his arrival?

In both 10 and 11 we see Jesus deeply moved and troubled.

Sheila Harris

Compassion
is what makes a person feel pain
when somebody else hurts.

People
will not care what you know
until they know that you care.
(Anon)

The God of the Old Testament

Many people are inclined to reject the Old Testament because they think that the God described there is hard and warlike, punishing people mercilessly. Did he not order the army of Israel to destroy the inhabitants of the Promised Land, even women and children? Did he not punish the Israelites so severely that only a few were left? It is hard to see how such a primitive idea of that kind of warlike god can fit in with the loving Father of the New Testament.

This problem troubles a lot of people and often drives them away from Christianity altogether. To solve this difficulty some people tend to think that God didn't actually order the killing of kings or peoples; it was just that the Israelites thought that was what God wanted. It is even suggested that God didn't really tell Abraham to sacrifice Isaac but that Abraham only thought he did.

Let us consider this idea. Take your Old Testament and tear out (mentally) all those parts where God clearly ordered the destruction of the wicked inhabitants of the Land. You will also need to take out Gen 22:2 and 1Sam.15:3 and probably v.10-26 where God criticised Saul for not destroying the Amalekites. Don't forget those battles during the time of the kings in which the Lord advised the nation how to conduct the battle, and helped them to win, eg. Gideon and Jehoshaphat. Many of the Psalms and prophecies also mention those things, so they should be removed . . . Well, how many holes do you now have in your Old Testament?

Maybe you don't like the miraculous punishments such as the flood and the destruction of Sodom, so more must be thrown out. Is what remains believable? Obviously not. In fact if you reject so much of the Old Testament you undermine the New, because it depends on the Old. Jesus and the Apostles obviously believed those Scriptures and often quoted them. No, we have to accept the whole Bible or reject it all; we cannot choose only parts, because it stands complete.

So how can we understand the apparent contradiction between those early times when enemies had to be destroyed, and the command of Christ to love our enemies? We know that God himself does not change: 'I the Lord do not change.' (Mal.3:6) so it must be that people change. I think that to solve this problem we need to understand that God, in his compassion, deals with people in a way that they can understand. He knows that people often misunderstand so he starts from where they are and leads them forward and upwards, from the physical, natural level towards the spiritual level, nearer to himself.

So the people in the times of the patriarchs and the Israelite kingdom thought that any god showed his approval by giving his people success in battle, and material blessings – riches, a large family, many animals etc. When God called Abram he promised him riches for his faith, and in the same way he tried to teach the Israelites that if they would obey, they would receive help and blessings. That is why Paul called that era 'the age of ignorance' (Acts 17:30) and explained that ' . . . the law (of Moses) . . . was added [as] an interim measure . . . put in charge of us until Christ should come . . . (Gal.3:19-29).

When Jesus came everything changed; a new age began under a new covenant in which the blessings are spiritual, not material, and the enemy is sin. Jesus tried to get his disciples to understand this because they thought (as everyone did at that time) that if a person was rich, he must be good. They expected Jesus to rescue them from Roman domination, and it was hard for them to grasp that the Christian battle is against the natural human tendency to do what we want instead of what God wants. Later Paul explained that ' . . . our struggle is not against human foes, but against . . . the authorities and potentates of this dark age . . . forces of evil . . . (Eph.6:12). When the disciples were disputing about which of them should be greatest, Jesus turned their whole way of thinking upside down, showing that the greatest is the one who serves (Lk.22:24-27). So we must not judge the ways of the Old Testament by the standards of the New.

But there are indications in the Old Testament that God is not really like the popular ideas of the time. When the Lord showed his glory to Moses he proclaimed himself as ' . . . compassionate and gracious . . . slow to anger, abounding in love . . . (Ex.34:6-7). To Ezekiel he said: 'Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? . . . Repent and live!' (Ez.18:23-32). Could there be more touching words than those in Hosea 11 where God expressed his feelings about the nation he loved: 'When Israel was a child I loved him . . . I led them with cords of human kindness . . . How can I give you up . . . all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger . . . He tried to soften Jonah's nationalistic heart, seemingly without success, when the Ninevites repented. Through Isaiah he said he would not accept the hypocritical sacrifices of the Israelites (Is.1:11-20); always he tried to teach them that the important thing is the heart, a spiritual way of thinking. David showed a more profound understanding: 'You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings . . . a broken and contrite heart . . . you will not despise.' (Ps.51:16-17)

So the Lord treated the people of those times like children, by simple rewards and punishments, but now we Christians should be more mature. The words and example of Jesus show us what God is really like. His enemies will be destroyed, but not by military might; our sword is the Word of God (Eph.6:10-18) so we try to save people by that word, the gospel. Those who refuse will finally be destroyed by the 'sword' which comes from the mouth of Jesus. (Rev.19:15)

And the spiritual blessings? God offers us ' . . . the richness of his grace . . . which is forgiveness (Eph.1:7), a share in the inheritance (v.18), 'inward strength . . . Christ in your hearts . . . (Eph.3:16-17) and 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col.1:27). In a word, this gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Rom.6:23) Is this not worth more than any other riches? Solomon's gold, Abraham's flocks and all the other riches have gone, but the treasure of the believer is 'in heaven, where neither moth nor rust will destroy, nor thieves break in . . . (Mt.6:19-21) The true riches of peace with God, which we have by faith through Jesus, lasts for ever. (Rom.5:1)

Jean Field

Comments on Jean Field's article

In the first three paragraphs of her article, Jean asks us to believe that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus commanded genocide – indiscriminate massacre – of the Canaanite and Amalekites. But, beginning with the fourth paragraph, she herself answers the dilemma and considers that God met Israel where they were and, as Paul said on Mars Hill, overlooked their ignorance. She expresses well what several of us have been trying to say in this Magazine. I quote her:

' . . . we need to understand that God, in his compassion, deals with people in a way that they can understand. He knows that people often misunderstand, so he starts from where they are and leads them forward and upwards, from the physical, natural level towards the spiritual level, nearer to himself.'

Israel's understanding, that it was in order to kill their enemies, indiscriminately destroying them, man, woman and child, was the opposite of what God did in Christ, who died to save and show love to his enemies. As Jean says, 'When Jesus came everything changed . . . which is why we read in 2 Tim.3:15 that the scriptures (i.e. the Old Testament) were to be read in the light of Christ, as he and the apostles re-interpreted them. As she continues: ' . . . we must not judge the ways of the Old Testament by the standards of the New.' Furthermore she shows how what God is really like is expressed in the Old Testament, as in the declaration of the name of Yahweh in Exod 34. This was lost sight of in the nationalistic interpretation of Israel, which Jesus had to correct, and a careful study of the quotations from the Old Testament in the New, shows how they were re-evaluated in the light of Christ, and were appropriated with a deeper meaning than they originally had.

The Old Testament has no parts to be deleted, but it all is given by inspiration of God, and is of use 'for teaching the truth and refuting error, or for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man of God may be capable and equipped for good work of every kind' (2 Tim 3:16 REB). This means learning to avoid the misunderstandings of Israel, and the evil results thereof, as well as being renewed by the sense of the presence of God throughout all our life, which is also featured everywhere in the Old Testament.

Alfred Ward

I hope Alfred will forgive me if I misunderstand him, but I am not sure how he can reconcile his belief that 'the Old Testament has no parts to be deleted' with his apparent rejection of the idea that God commanded slaughter. If God did not tell Saul to kill the Amalekites, for example, is that not deleting something, since it clearly says he did?

Jan Field

Both Jean and Alfred agree that there are things in the OT that are difficult for Christians to accept. For my part, I would want to say that we must not forget that all the scriptures were written by men with all their weaknesses and failings, one of which is undoubtedly the misrepresentation of others, including God Himself. I find it hard to believe that such misrepresentation is not to be found in the Bible. How do we know when it might be happening? I believe that Jesus is now the criterion of truth and that he tried to encourage his hearers to abandon some of their misconceptions of God, one of which could well have been that He commanded genocide.

What do other readers think?

Editor

Urim and Thummim (Literally the Lights & the Perfections)

Reference to the 1967 edition of Cruden's concordance – based on the KJV – shows the first of these two Hebrew words appearing in seven verses: Ex 28:30, Lev 8:8, Num 27:21, Deut 33:8, 1 Sam 28:6, Ezra 2:63 and Neh 7:65; while the second of these two Hebrew words appears in five verses: Ex 28:30, Lev 8:8, Deut 33:8, Ezra 2:63 and Neh 7:65.

A number of questions spring to mind.

What is the meaning of the phrase urim and thummim?

'The words urim and thummim have received no satisfactory etymology and the technique whereby guidance was made plain has not been recorded' (*Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, IVP, 1994, p 614).

One suggestion is that the word urim comes from a Hebrew root meaning 'to curse' rather than from the root meaning 'light' as the Greek translators understood it, while the word thummim may be related to a root meaning completeness or integrity.

Is it significant that these words begin with the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet (*aleph* and *tau*)? The New Testament was written in Greek, the first and last letters of this alphabet being *alpha* and *omega*. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.' (Rev 1:8)

What is certain is that both these masculine Hebrew nouns have the normal plural ending *im*. Interestingly the Hebrew word for face (*panim*) has a plural ending. Note that it is very unlikely that one stone was called *urim* and the other *thummim* since in that case plural nouns would not be expected.

What did they look like?

No one knows. What was inscribed on them? On the ephod were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. If the Urim and Thummim were small objects, is it possible that the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet were marked on them?

Professor H. H. Rowley, (*The Faith of Israel*, SCM, 1956 p 29) takes the view that they were 'two flat stones, one side of which was the auspicious side and the other was the inauspicious, so that if they both fell with the same side upward the answer was given, while if they revealed different sides there was no answer.' Further, 'the possibility of no answer meant that it was recognised that man could not compel God to answer.'

Where were they located?

'They were deposited in the breastpiece; a small square pocket made of multicoloured stuff and twisted linen, which the chief priest carried on his 'heart' above the ephod (Ex 28:1-6, 29:5 & Lev 8:8). The 'breastpiece' was attached to the ephod, and hence the latter term (ephod) was in some cases used as a synonym for the Urim and Thummim.' (*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol 4, Abingdon, 1962 p 740.)

(4) In both books of Samuel the traditional text of the Hebrew Bible (the Massoretic Text = MT) is defective, troubled by copying errors involving loss of text when two identical groups of letters or words are copied only once. (The technical term is 'haplography'.)

When we turn to 1 Sam 28:6 and 1 Sam 14:37-41 and read from the RSV, rather than from the NIV, which makes the correction only in a footnote, we can see the correct reading – supplied from the Greek version – 'If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O LORD, God of Israel, give Urim; but if this guilt is in thy people Israel, give Thummim.' The cause of the omission in the Hebrew Bible lies in the occurrence of the same word Israel before *give Urim* and before *give Thummim*.

John Stephenson

It was fine for the Jew, the Greek and the Roman to use slaughter not only to uphold the independence of his own nation, but even to subordinate other nations. He, after all, believed that his was the only true, good and fine people beloved of God, and that all others were philistines and barbarians. Such beliefs were still possible in the Middle Ages, even at the end of the last century and the very beginning of the present century. But we, however much we are provoked, are unable to believe such things, and the contradiction has become so terrible that it is impossible for the people of our time to live without a resolution of it.

Tolstoy

Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism is of fundamental importance in God's dealings with mankind. The word comes from 'dispense' or 'giving out'. Just as a doctor dispenses medicine suited to the needs of his patient, so God dispenses laws suited to circumstances. This means that when circumstances change, God's laws may change. This principle underlies the ancient maxim of justice which states that 'circumstances alter cases', a good example being the distinction between murder, manslaughter and accident in cases of homicide.

We meet dispensationalism in the first of all God's commandments to mankind, in Gen. 1:26, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it . . .'. Now, in the 21st century, the world is so overpopulated that man is causing the destruction of the animal kingdom over which he was given dominion. So it is evident that God's command in Gen. 1:26 no longer operates, and this in turn profoundly affects our attitude to contraception.

A major dispensational change occurred with the abolition of animal sacrifices which featured throughout Old Testament history covering the antediluvian, patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. Since all these sacrifices were fulfilled when Christ 'offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins' (Heb. 10:12), then, as we sing in our hymn, the types are all withdrawn. But in spite of the clear teaching of Heb. 10, some believe that animal sacrifices will be resumed in the millennial age. This belief is based on the vision of a new temple described at the end of Ezekiel. This temple is assumed to be millennial because Ezekiel described it after his prophecy of a battle against Gog which is thought to be an end-time event. But since this was fought with horses, bows and arrows, javelins, swords and bucklers, it can hardly be a modern battle and there are many hints that it was a prophecy of the epic battle against Haman's attempted genocide described in Esther.

Will there be a future temple?

For the chronology of Ezekiel's Temple vision we need to look at its historical context. Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon in BC 598 while Solomon's temple was still standing. For the next 12 years Ezekiel was warning his people of the impending destruction that occurred in BC 586 when the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and Solomon's temple destroyed (Ezek. 33:21). From now onwards Ezekiel was exhorting and encouraging the Babylonian captives with the promise that God would bring them back to their land, revitalize the 'dry bones' of their nationhood (37:1-14) and bring the divided nation together (v.15-23) under one leader called 'My servant David' who would be a prince for ever over them (v.24-25) and rebuild the temple (v.26).

These promises were fulfilled in BC 536 when the captives returned under Zerubbabel who was a true prince, being the grandson of Jeconiah, the last legitimate king of Israel. Zerubbabel supervised the building of the temple which was completed 20 years later in BC 516. It is significant that the prince had a special seat in the porch of the East gate to the court of this restored temple.

We see therefore that Ezekiel's restoration prophecies were designed to encourage the captives among whom he dwelt. Is it likely that he would give them a detailed description of a temple to be built more than 2500 years later and fail to reassure the captives that they would re-build their temple within 60 years?

Although Ezekiel's temple differs in detail from Solomon's, it had the same basic design.³ Its ministers and congregation had to be circumcised and Passover sacrifices, sin offerings, burnt offerings and peace offerings were among the rituals conducted by priests of the order of Zadok. This temple clearly belonged to the Mosaic dispensation.

The end of the Mosaic dispensation

The coming of Messiah and the triumph of the cross brought about the greatest dispensational changes in the history of the world. The early Christians who were mainly Jews had difficulties with these changes. Some, such as the abrogation of laws relating to eating blood and unclean animals were resolved by the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 5). But because of the great importance of circumcision under the Mosaic dispensation, the Jews needed Paul's most powerful arguments to dissuade them from insisting that circumcision was essential for salvation (Rom. 2:28-29, 4:9-11, and Gal. 5:1-4).

Perhaps the greatest dispensational change is the transfer of authority from the Lord God to the Lord Jesus (Matt. 28:18), in particular the authority to forgive sins:

The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the father who sent him. (John 5:22-23)

Have we fully accepted this change? Do we honour the Lord Jesus in the same way that we honour God? Since Jesus is now the sole judge, do we pray to Jesus for forgiveness?⁴

Controversy persists to this day over the question whether Christians should observe the weekly Sabbath. Was the weekly day of rest a dispensational ordinance, or is it a principle for all time? The latter seems likely because it was instituted in the beginning when God rested on the seventh day and it was in operation (Ex. 16:29) before being enshrined as the fourth of the ten commandments (Ex. 20:8-11). Moreover, since all the other nine commandments are fundamental and unchanging principles of human behaviour why should the fourth commandment be different?

A powerful argument in favour of an ongoing weekly Sabbath is found in God's commendation of the fourth commandment as a means of protecting the most vulnerable, namely slaves and beasts of burden (Ex. 20:10). Is it conceivable that a merciful God would cancel the only one of the ten commandments that He declares to be given for the benefit of man and beast? In response to this question, it has been suggested that, just as Jesus intensified the commandments forbidding adultery and murder, by spiritualising them (Matt. 5:21-28) so we can make every day a spiritual Sabbath. But this is illogical because work must be done and we cannot rest from work on every day! Jesus intensified the Sabbath by deliberately choosing to perform miracles of healing on Sabbath days. What better way to show the true spirit of the fourth commandment?⁵

It is commonly asserted that Paul endorsed the abolition of the weekly Sabbath when he wrote that the dispensation of death carved in letters of stone was 'fading' (2 Cor. 3:7-8, RSV). But a careful reading of this passage shows that Paul is writing about the abolition of the death penalty, not the abolition of all the ten commandments, seven of which were capital offences. Paul's words in Col. 2:16 have also been misunderstood, in this case because of a bias in the KJV which reads: 'let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of an holy day or of the new moon or of the sabbath days . . .'. But the Greek text has the indefinite article, a sabbath, which suggests that, as in Rom. 14:5, Paul is referring to the seven ceremonial sabbaths that were attached to the Jewish feasts of Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles.⁶

The unchanging principle of the weekly day of rest has always been a feature of our Christadelphian community in that we have always emphasised the vital importance of our weekly meetings for worship and preaching. It would be tragic if we were to follow the example of those who view the Sabbath as dispensational and an opportunity to please themselves.

Laws for undeveloped societies

Consideration of the Sabbath rest for slaves prompts us to look at slavery and the closely related subject of polygamy. Both these customs were common in Bible times but have no justification in modern civilized

societies. Early in human history we are introduced to Lamech, a great great grandson of Cain. Lamech had two wives and boasted that he had slain a young man who had attacked him (Gen. 4:23-24). This scenario illustrates the connection between warfare and polygamy. Men fight and kill. More men are killed than women, leading to an excess of dependent women. Wars give rise also to prisoners and dependent widows. What is to save these destitute people from starvation? In the absence of social security, polygamy and humane slavery are good answers and may be the only answer.

Slaves and polygamous wives receive food, clothing and shelter in return for labour. If slavery and polygamy are properly controlled, they can contribute to social stability. So discussing the ethics of slavery it is essential to distinguish between potentially beneficial forms of slavery as distinct from 'menstealing' or abduction which was a capital offence under both Mosaic (Ex. 21:16) and Roman law and condemned by Paul in 1 Tim.1:10. The gross abuse of abducted African slaves in no way negates the potential benefits of humane slavery.

Another example of a dispensational benefit in an undeveloped society was the provision of Cities of Refuge for the protection of those who caused accidental death. In the absence of a well regulated police force and system of justice, those who cause accidental death are liable to summary vengeance from relatives. The cities of refuge provided essential protection for such people.

The status of wives

In the seventh chapter of Paul's first letter to Corinth he commends the unmarried state but this is clearly not a general endorsement of celibacy. It is dispensational advice related to the 'impending distress' caused by persecution of the early Christians (v.26).

Paul is also accused of degrading women by teaching that wives should yield to the wishes of their husbands (1 Tim.2:11-12, 1 Cor.11:2-8 and 1 Cor.14:34-35). But the modern concept of marriage as an equal partnership has been a disaster and has shown that headship of husbands is the right principle. The reason for this is simple. In a partnership there will always be disagreements and if neither side is prepared to give way there will be an explosion, as when an irresistible force meets an immovable object. The three main interlocking causes of marital breakdown are, lack of commitment, conflicts and infidelity. By preventing conflicts, headship of husbands is an important preserver of marriages and we should not regard Paul's advice as belonging to another dispensation.

You shall not kill

Warfare is perhaps the most obvious example of dispensationalism in Scripture. In Old Testament times many battles were ordered by God and in Deuteronomy 20, rules of war were given governing Israel's conquest of the land. This means that there is no moral objection to war itself and that the commandment 'You shall not kill' relates only to personal enemies. In sending His Son, God inaugurated a new dispensation, summed up by Christ in his words to Pilate: 'My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight that I might not be handed over to the Jews' (John 18:36). Jesus was not condemning war, he was saying that it was not appropriate at that time. But in the Olivet prophecy Jesus gave notice that within a generation things would change (Matt. 24:34) and, as in the parable of the nobleman, his enemies would be slain before him (Luke 19:27) – a prophecy fulfilled by the army of Titus that destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.

The dispensational nature of war has caused misunderstandings. Christ's command to love our enemies is an extension of the command, 'you shall not kill' and relates to personal enemies. This accords with the fact that, in their encounters with centurions, neither John the Baptist nor Jesus nor Paul advised them to give up their commissions.

When Peter used a sword in Gethsemane, Jesus said, 'Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish with the sword' (Matt.26:52). This cannot mean that all soldiers will die in battle. Once again it relates to individual behaviour and probably means that individuals like Peter, who 'take the sword' against lawful authority will be executed. Although the trial of Jesus was a travesty of justice, his arrest by the temple soldiers was lawful and if Jesus had not healed Malchus, Peter would probably have been arrested.

We see therefore that our conscientious objection to taking part in war is not based on a 'Pacifist' objection to war as such, but it rests on the fact that our kingdom is not of this dispensation and so we do not fight for it. But this will change in the millennial dispensation when those who reign with Christ will rule 'with a rod of iron' (Rev. 2:27).

Conclusion

God is unchanging. Principles such as the ten commandments, monogamy, the headship of husband over wife and salvation through grace, have not changed. But when circumstances change, the laws that God dispenses, such as regulations regarding animal sacrifices, slavery, polygamy and the legitimacy of warfare, change accordingly.

Alan W Fowler

Notes

1. For a full exposition see *Christadelphian Tidings*: March 2005, p119-205
2. David, meaning 'beloved', is a dynastic title for a righteous ruler. 'For ever' in Scripture means 'for ages', the duration depending on the context (cf 1 Sam.1:22 and 28)
3. *Companion Bible* Appendix 88 and *New Bible Commentary* 3rd edn. p.683
4. On prayer to Jesus, see *Christadelphian Tidings*: Feb. 2006 p69-73
5. For a fuller exposition see *Testimony* March 1999 p.79-83.

The prospect of having to kill in a millennial dispensation, if such be what the future holds, fills me with horror. Unless I have misunderstood Alan, he seems to be suggesting that our stance on violence may have to change when Christ returns. Can we also expect to have animal sacrifice reintroduced, which also fills me with horror? If not then why the one and not the other? Such difficulties need some careful thought. How do we decide what will change and what will remain unchanged? What do other readers think?

Editor

With God
the only difference between the future and the past
is that certain truths which are as eternal as God himself
have not yet become part of human history.

W I Thomas

Attitudes to Early Genesis

I am sure Keith Lowe is right in saying, in the last issue, that the different approaches to the Genesis accounts of the flood and creation are not essential to salvation, and we should certainly be tolerant of each other's beliefs. He puts his finger on the root of the problem when he says that most people do not have a scientific background. This means that they tend to accept what they are told in the media. For example, Keith says '... the genesis (global) flood did not happen. Science is emphatic about this and the evidence is impressive.' This is not quite true. Mainstream scientific dogma is certainly emphatic – you risk losing your research funding and/or your employment if you speak out against it – but it rests not on facts but on the interpretation of those facts.

It is important to understand that there is as yet no direct method of dating rocks; all methods depend on some assumptions. One such assumption is that the rate of radioactive decay has always been the same as it is now, or that there were no decay isotopes in the sample to start with. Also nineteenth Century geological thinking was based on the principle of Uniformitarianism – that everything was always as it is now. More recently, geologists have come to realise that the earth shows signs of many violent catastrophes having happened in the past, so while this does not prove it, the idea of a universal flood cannot be ruled out. The eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980 has given an amazing insight into the speed at which geological events can happen. This event is very well documented and is an embarrassment to mainstream science. In a matter of days or even hours, an entirely new landscape was formed, including many-layered ash deposits and canyons which closely resemble features such as the Grand Canyon, and which would previously have been interpreted as having taken thousands of years to form. If Darwin (or Robert Roberts) had observed that they might have come to different conclusions.

To me there are some very big problems with the idea that the flood was merely local. Leaving aside the very emphatic language, which goes out of its way to describe the total destruction of everything (the Himalayas could have been raised to their present height during tectonic activity after the flood), if the flood was only local we have to question whether God has really kept his promise never to do it again. There have been many terrible floods since then: remember the Boxing Day tsunami? A more troubling difficulty though is that if the flood was only local, why did God make Noah go through all the effort to build the ark and get the animals when it would only have been necessary to send him out of reach of the water? This appears to be some sort of deception and play-acting quite out of keeping with the integrity of God, and seems to me an insuperable moral problem with the local flood idea.

There are similar problems with the idea of evolution as the means by which God created living things. While evolution certainly happens within species so that they can adapt to changing environments, there is still no evidence of one species evolving into another. The Bible makes no claim to tell us how God created everything, so we can't prove that he didn't do it in the way evolutionists postulate, but I do question why he would use such a slow, cruel and wasteful method. Did the principle of death coming into the world on account of sin not apply to animals? Did animals die in Eden? And how did those plants which depend on animals to spread their seeds manage to survive in the (supposed) millions of years before animals appeared?

One difficulty to which I have never been given a satisfactory answer from theistic evolutionists is: where, in Genesis, do you draw the line? At what point does it stop being allegory and become history? It reads as a continuous narrative from Adam onwards and does not even seem to be written as poetry like Job, say, or the prophets. If Adam was not the first man the references to him in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles lose credibility.

Altogether it seems to me premature to claim that 'the scientific evidence is overwhelmingly strong.' There are too many unknowns for that claim to be valid. As the Lord said to Job, 'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?'

Jean Field

Literary context for Genesis 1-11

Sister Jean is clearly reluctant to accept the new science, and equally reluctant to concede that much of early Genesis cannot be literally true. I'll endeavour to give possible answers to some of her concerns but we may then both have to agree to differ.

A number of Mesopotamian *protohistory* documents have surfaced in modern times such as the Atrahasis epic and the Sumerian King List. Early Genesis shares a number of features with these earlier documents. These include: creation of man out of the earth, the institution of cities, longevity, men alienating the gods or God, and a flood with a surviving Noah figure. They further share the phenomenon of twin genealogies i.e. a *main* and a *skill* (or technocrat) line (Genesis 4:21-22). The tradition of a golden era of universal peace brought to a conclusion by language division also finds expression in these earlier documents. The early chapters in Genesis then, we may conclude, do not attempt to narrate original historical events (or even try to anticipate the findings of modern science) but rewrite the ancient Mesopotamian traditions with a new theology to tackle contemporary issues. It is then the theology we need to focus on rather than the historicity.

The inspired writer of the Gospel of Mark described Legion as a 'demon-possessed man.' Considering the symptoms of this man with the benefit of modern science, Professor Rendle Short wrote (1953): 'The symptoms would nowadays be recognized as sufficient to establish a diagnosis of chronic mania, with periodic outbursts of violence. Here again is the unusual fact that the demons spoke in their own person. The episode of their entering into the swine is highly peculiar, and does not correspond with anything likely to be observed in or outside of a modern mental hospital.' Alan Fowler describes the demoniac as 'a severely disturbed mental patient.' Significantly, I think we're more likely to accept the modern diagnosis rather than the one suggested by the inspired writer. Brother Fowler suggests that Jesus used 'current Greek medical terminology. Neither Jesus nor the apostles were engaged on a mission to introduce scientific medicine.' This conclusion has serious and obvious implications for our understanding of Genesis. If the incident in Mark was written with a contemporary understanding of science then so was Genesis.

Unlike today, in ancient times the scriptures were read as a developing body of writings packed with ideas for making sense of the contemporary world. So *drawing the line between allegory and history* may not be that difficult. The solution to the problem may be like finding a grain of nutritious wheat within a disposable husk. The grain of wheat is the wholesome truth while the husk is the story (non-historical) element.

Genesis 1 appears to be a pop-up version, the husk, of what really happened i.e. over millions of years. What then is the kernel of truth? Here are 3 suggestions:

There is one Creator; Judaism is monotheistic.

He created the sun, moon and stars for signs and tokens of His provident care (the pagans worshipped the host of heaven as gods).

He is presented anthropomorphically working a six day shift with a day of rest thus justifying the sabbatical law.

This method opens up a fascinating task of analysing the text and identifying these kernels of truth. The method allows scientists the credit they deserve for their staggering achievements and the authority of the scriptures is maintained. Everyone (apart from the literalists) wins.

Dating the past

In dating the recent past (up to 6000 years) tree rings are counted. The irregularities in the patterns of the rings yield information about past climatic conditions. No one would really doubt that each ring represented a year's growth. Layers of ice form annually in the Antarctic. Each year's precipitation of snow and rain solidify to form a visibly distinct layer. Ice cores, extracted from the Antarctic, date back 700,000 years. The eruption of Krakatoa (for example) has left a sulphuric acid trace in the layer dating back to 1883. A similar sized eruption (probably from the same area) has been identified from the year 535. No global flood has registered in these cores.

For older rocks there are now more than 40 different radiometric decay systems. These, scientists apparently agree, give coherent and consistent calculations of the age of ancient rocks and the planet itself. There are cross-checks between the different systems and by different labs which suggest reliability.

Scientists have impressively identified several mass-extinction events such as the one which brought an end to the dinosaurs. In truth, a (geologically recent) catastrophe on the scale described in Genesis, would be relatively easy to prove. However, there is no evidence of a mass-extinction event which could equate with the Genesis Flood.

The Atacama Desert in Chile is officially the driest place on the planet. Dr. Laura Evenstar (University of Aberdeen) has been studying the geomorphology of arid landscapes. She uses an ingenious (but too complicated to describe here) method of determining exactly how long parts of the desert have been arid. Soaking up cosmic and solar radiation, certain minerals in the rocks scattered on the surface, produce microscopic amounts of helium 3. Analysis of the helium, back in the lab, reveals, according to her researches, that these rocks have not been moved by heavy rainfall or flash flooding for more than 25 million years. This isn't good news for global flood enthusiasts.

The Great Lakes of N. America were formed as recently as 12,000 years ago. Their basins were carved out of the rocks by massive glacial sheets and filled with *freshwater* from melting ice. There is absolutely no evidence there of a global flood.

The case has been heard, the forensic evidence examined at great length, and the jury has made its unanimous verdict. End of story! The flood account, we must conclude, cannot be read *literally*. Tectonic plates move incredibly slowly. The suggestion that the Himalayas have been uplifted since Noah is not credible.

Evolution

Theistic evolution finds a lot of favour amongst Christian biologists and sees evolution as the way in which God providentially exercises His creative processes. The idea links well with those passages in Genesis 1 which mention the earth bringing forth life, which seems to imply there's some kind of ongoing natural process. Today evolution is viewed more in terms of fact than theory, and it gives us (if we can accept it) an enhanced vision of *how* God works. Some make evolution atheistic but it doesn't have to be. Evolution only works once you have life to start with. As Bob White (Professor of Geophysics at Cambridge University) put it; 'The theory of evolution has been around for a long time. We keep getting more tests on it and the theory gets stronger each time... We have retroviral inserts in our genomic structure that can be tracked back through our ancestral species – a sort of living historical record of our evolutionary past. But I believe passionately that humans are more than just animals. We are animals plus we're made in the image of God.'

The evidence suggests that God, in His wisdom, chose to create the universe and all that therein is, using processes that involve exceedingly long periods of time. It takes millions of years for stars to form. Consider the caterpillar pace of tectonic plates moving the continents thus causing mountain uplift. God also, it appears, chose to use a mechanism that requires DNA to change overtime, and without each of these incredibly slow processes there would be no life on our planet.

After Darwin presented his theory, the Christian author Charles Kingsley said that it was wonderful that God allowed his creation to do its own thing. Evolution itself has no spiritual dimension and therein we find the point of Genesis. It gives spiritual truths which we are free to accept if we so wish. These cannot be at odds with the verifiable truths of science which we should accept due to the weight of evidence.

For sure we would all prefer the Genesis account to be literally true but it isn't. I appreciate the point that questions why God used 'such a slow, cruel and wasteful method.' However, if we ponder the reality of a global flood, as an academic exercise, involving the wholesale destruction of life, one might ask why, in bringing about His judgements, God would use such a *quick, cruel and wasteful method?*

Missing links

'Missing links' or more correctly, 'transitional forms' are actually turning up quite frequently. In the last 12 months a link in human evolution may have been filled by a remarkable fossil, which could be the common ancestor of all apes and monkeys, including our species. 'Darwinius masillae, a small monkey-like creature that lived 47 million years ago, illuminates a critical chapter in the human story when the primate family tree split into two branches, one of which ultimately led to us' (reported in the Times).

Tiktaalik, another example (out of many), is a 375 million year old fossil which became headline news when its discovery was announced in April of 2006. Unearthed in Arctic Canada by a team of researchers, *Tiktaalik* is technically a fish, complete with scales and gills — but it has the flattened head of a crocodile and unusual fins. Its fins have thin ray bones for padding like most fishes, but they also have sturdy interior bones that would have allowed *Tiktaalik* to prop itself up in shallow water and use its limbs for support as most four-legged animals do. Those fins and a suite of other characteristics set *Tiktaalik* apart as something special; it has a combination of features that show the evolutionary transition between swimming fish and their descendants, the four-legged vertebrates.'

Transitional forms are seen as providing a lot of evidence for 'one species evolving into another.'

The structure of imagination

Finally, the late Brother Ralph Lovelock, who was hounded out of the community because of his (enlightened) views on early Genesis, once wrote; 'With the passing of centuries much which was at first clearly recognised as only a possible explanation of the Genesis record has come to be identified in the popular mind with the Inspired Word. When the new discoveries show that the structure of imagination was false, there are many who mistakenly think that the authority of the Bible is called in question.'

Who today would question the findings of Copernicus or Galileo? The Bible had to be reinterpreted in the light of the new discoveries. The amazing discoveries of Charles Darwin have proved true beyond any reasonable doubt. Though a serious challenge, it's time to move on, to restructure the imagination and read the Bible in a new and exciting way.

Keith Lowe

(The editor apologises to Keith for referring to him as Ken in the last issue.)

Attitudes to Early Genesis 2

Keith still seems to be confusing facts with interpretations and assumptions. For example the Mesopotamian documents describing creation etc. are facts, but he assumes that they pre-date the Genesis account, which is not necessarily the case; it is his interpretation. In fact most cultures have such accounts in their histories, which would suggest that they are all based on one original account, and Genesis being the most straightforward, it would be reasonable to assume that to be the original, since the tendency is always to embellish rather than to keep to the simple account.

His solution to the difficulty of knowing where to draw the line between allegory and history does not seem to be in keeping with the way the Lord Jesus used the Scriptures; it merely allows him to pick and choose which bits he decides are 'grains' and which are 'husks'. What else is a 'husk' — the virgin birth? The resurrection? Who decides?

All the dating methods which he mentions depend on the assumption that what is happening now has always been happening. Tectonic plates move very slowly now, but during a cataclysmic upheaval such as the flood things could have been very different. Many radiometric dating methods assume that all of the decay isotope came from the radioactive isotope, and that there was none present originally; this may or may not be the case. Counting tree rings covering a few thousands of years cannot necessarily be extrapolated to interpret ice cores covering hundreds of thousands of years, (if they do). It is not correct to assert that the verdict on the flood is 'unanimous'; there are many scientists who think that the very geological formations which we have now could have been caused by just such a catastrophe. 'The Genesis Flood' by Whitcomb and Morris was one of the earliest books to be published about this and there have been many others since. Keith, in common with the scientific 'establishment', ignores the evidence of Mount St Helens, but one geologist, Steve Austin, Ph.D. has made a DVD of his investigations there, which shows how closely the eruption's effects resemble other formations which are interpreted as having taken millions of years to form.

The popular media gets excited about the discovery of the occasional fossil which is assumed to be 'transitional', but if Darwin's theory were correct there should be millions of transitional forms. Some scientists are at last beginning to question this. To give one quotation out of several recent articles in New Scientist: "... what actually triggers the formation of new species ... still remains one of the biggest mysteries in evolutionary biology." (13th March 2010)

It is not quite true that Ralph Lovelock was 'hounded out...' I knew him, and being a very gentle person he decided to leave rather than cause trouble. Were he alive today he might well be re-thinking his ideas in the light of more recent evidence. I do not expect to change what Keith prefers to believe; I would just like to remind him that the scientific ideas of today tend to become the discredited theories of the past, and that so far no fact has contradicted the Bible.

Jean Field

Our two authors, Jean and Keith, have both agreed that having different approaches to what Genesis says about creation and the flood should not be deemed to put one's salvation at risk. Believing that God will have to forgive not only my moral shortcomings but also my misconceptions, I welcome such tolerance. Their differences seem to be about whether such and such is a fact or an assumption/interpretation. It is of course well understood that Science is constantly on the move and so we need to be prepared for it to abandon from time to time what was once thought to be true. We should also be prepared to show the same flexibility in our religious thought and practice. Contributions to this discussion from other readers would be welcomed.

NB As far as Ralph Lovelock is concerned, I think that most of those who know what led him to resign from the community would say that the threats made to him and his ecclesia amounted to 'hounding'.
Editor

Be obedient and 'work out your own salvation.' (Phil 2:12)

It is said that 'there is no such thing as a free lunch', a maxim that also applies in the spiritual realm. Salvation requires our response and brings responsibility and it is profitable to remind ourselves of that fact occasionally.

In Genesis 2:6 God commanded the man saying: 'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, *but* of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' Everything they needed had been prepared and supplied by God, for he created the earth 'to be inhabited.' Hence his instruction to them to multiply and fill the earth was a blessing. God wanted the earth peopled with those who would be 'in his own image, after his likeness'. So he created them male and female that he might seek a godly seed. For the earth is to be filled by this seed, reflecting his glory, something that *will* be realized. All the earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord.

After the disobedience of Adam and Eve, '... the Lord said: behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil (Gen 3:22).' But before they could take of the tree of life, God sent them from the garden but made sure that the way to life would be protected by placing cherubim to keep, guard and preserve the way to the tree of life. They had acquired the knowledge of good and evil through *disobedience* but it would be through *obedience* that, ultimately, they *could* partake of that tree. "To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the tree of life' and 'blessed are they that *do* his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life.' (Rev 2:7, 22:14)

In Deut 30:15-16 we read that God made a similar promise of life to the nation of Israel – shades of Eden in many respects:

See, I have set before thee this day life and good and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgements that thou mayest live and multiply...
It is evident that God wanted them to choose *life*, for that is His nature.

Ezekiel, in 18:23, informs us that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, rather 'he should return from his ways and live', for life is the gift of God. Is he not the *living* God? The reaction and the attitude of God are to some degree determined by the reaction and attitude of those who come within the orbit of his influence by whatever means. For example, Jeremiah, in 18:7,8, presents God as saying: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them." We also read in Isaiah 55:7: 'Let the wicked forsake *his* way and the unrighteous man *his* thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord; and he *will* have mercy upon him; and to our God for he *will* abundantly pardon.'

Such teaching is equally prolific and emphatic in the New Testament. Jesus speaks of 'The Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is *life everlasting*' (John 12:49-50). And Peter, (2 Pet 3:9), says that the Lord "... is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." Paul, (1 Cor 15:1), in his turn, says: 'Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel ... by which also ye are saved if ye *keep in memory* what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed *in vain*.'

God's appeal is universal. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that *whosoever* believes in him should *not perish* but have everlasting life' (John 3:16). He did not send his Son into the world to condemn it but that *through him* it should be saved. This necessity to believe, to keep in mind, is not a one-off thing, it has to continue with an understanding of what is required and it has to be motivated by that understanding. This has been taught right from the beginning of God's dealings with man.

The consequence of the sin of the first man, Adam, was *sin* as the Apostle taught. 'By one *man* sin entered into the world and death by sin and so death passed upon all men (and women) for that *all* have sinned.' But, in order that the whole purpose of God was not to be frustrated and made meaningless, a way was given by God to prevent that happening.

It is reasonable, surely, to suppose that the events in Eden had been related to Adam and Eve's family and that the initial covering that God had provided, to hide their nakedness and shame, and to enable them to regain and retain fellowship with God, must have formed an important part of the family's tuition. Apart from that, God himself must have added to his instruction as to how they could again enjoy his fellowship and favour. So, as we read in Gen 4:3-7, in process of time, their firstborn, Cain, and his brother Abel, brought offerings to the presence of God at the cherubim. Surely they both must have received instruction about this. Now, God had respect unto Abel *and* to his offering, but unto Cain and his offering, He had no respect. Why? Surely Cain knew what was required, but the significance of Abel's offering presupposed a true knowledge of what God wanted. So, by faith (that hoped for), the substance of the (unseen) Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, *by which* he obtained witness that *he was righteous*, God testifying of his gifts (plural), (Heb 11:1-4) Did he bring more than one gift to comply with different offerings – burnt, sin, peace etc. – a process later made clear to Israel? Bringing more than one of the *firstfruits* of his flock might indicate the nature of Abel, being 'a righteous man'. He understood what it was that God wanted; indeed, as Hebrews 11 says, 'God testifying of his gifts and by it he being dead yet speaketh.'

But the whole episode revealed a distinct enmity between the brothers, culminating in Cain slaying Abel. So fierce was this hatred that the Apostle John (1 John 3:12) says Cain 'slew' (to butcher, slaughter, maim violently) his brother. This is the nature of man, as a consequence of sin (an offence, a violation of the divine law in thought or in act) and it manifests itself, little or much, depending on the extent to which the individual acknowledges and restrains it. As the NIV says of Cain: 'if you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you but you must master it' (Gen 4:6).

Sin is what we have in a sense inherited from our first parents. The Apostle Paul, a devout apostle, afterwards wrote of how the Lord Jesus had made him: 'a chosen vessel unto me (the Lord Jesus) to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.' He was to be a true witness to the Israel of God. He related his experience in combating sin in these words:

'I find 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.' (Rom 7:21)

His despair was alleviated when he realized how he could combat this influence through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. One can almost sense the relief and enormity of his gratitude when he could say, with such absolute assurance: 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So with the mind (the faculty of perceiving divine things, of recognizing goodness and of hating evil) I myself – the real Paul – serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.' This is a prime example of the war between flesh versus spirit, as is the incident between Cain and Abel.

Cain did not really recognize the need to overcome this evil; it had free rein in him, with disastrous consequences. 'Every way of a man is right in his own eyes but the Lord pondereth the hearts.' (Prov 21:2) Yet, almost unbelievably, man will attempt to disguise such evil with a show of godliness, farcical though it may seem. It was for this hypocrisy that God chastised Israel, God's people, governed by God's laws, blessed with the benefits of such wonderful features (Romans 9:4-5). But they were not really committed and, as a consequence, this was odious to God. They assumed an appearance of being godly but it was just outward show, their heart and mind not really being given to God; indeed they were far from him. They behaved as though salvation and God's favour were unconditional, theirs simply because they were 'the people of God'. They were not really aware that 'God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (Gal 6:7), be it to the flesh or the spirit.

It seems incredible that God should chastise his people for their attitude to him. The prophet Isaiah (50:1) was told to 'cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as a nation that had righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God'. Indeed they were angry with God for taking no notice of their 'pious' ways. Truly the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? (Jer 17:9)

We have to be humble enough to know that God searches the heart (Jer 17:10) to give to everyone 'according to the fruit of his or her doing.' To misquote perhaps, we need to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. The spirit needs to be willing although the flesh is weak. Or again, if there be first a *willing mind* (2 Cor 8:12), it is accepted according to what a man hath, not what he hath not. We should be *doing* good works, not as a ritual to pacify the flesh, but willingly, to show the spirit's willingness in our response to the goodness of God.

Solomon, in his dedication prayer for the newly-built Temple, knew this defect of man and so pleads with God that, if his people were to sin, – and there is no man that sinneth not – and as a consequence suffer at the hand of their enemies, even to be taken to a far country, yet, even there, if they *repent* with all their heart and with all their mind, God would bring them back again. It is not the onus on the sinner to show both a 'knowing' and a 'doing'?

Asa, king of Judah, after his victory over the Ethiopians, was told by the prophet Azariah: 'the Lord is with you, while ye are with him. If ye seek him he will be found of you but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.' (2 Chron 15:2). The consequences of forsaking God can be disastrous. Israel refused, in the main, to be 're-gathered' by the Lord Jesus (Isaiah 49:5); indeed they crucified him instead. This resulted in the destruction of their beloved city and Temple and banishment to the four corners of the earth, rejection and the loss of their kingdom status – 'the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' (Matt 21:43)

Many are called but few are chosen. But nevertheless both grow together, wheat among tares, good and bad fish caught in the Gospel net, good seed wasted on poor soil, thistles and weeds. 'But in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth and some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man therefore *purge himself* from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work' (2 Tim 2:20,21).

'The Lord knows who are his.' 'I know thy works: you have abandoned the love you had at first; you hold the teaching of Balaam; you tolerate that woman Jezebel ... to teach and seduce my servants ... to eat food sacrificed to idols; you have a reputation of being alive but you are dead; you are lukewarm ... I will spit you out of my mouth, not realising that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.' But the Lord's commendation and reward was assured to some, those striving in God's way to overcome. This brings foreboding but it need not unless there is a hardening of the heart to spiritual things, easily done if we are concerned more with ritual, legalism and not freedom of the spirit. For then the reward, God's *gift*, is entirely out of proportion to the greatest of effort, but an effort prompted, energised and impelled by the assurance that they can do all things *through Christ*, who strengthens them. They will be granted to eat of the tree of life; not hurt of the second death; given to eat of the hidden manna; a new name known only to those who receive it; give the morning star, clothed in white; names not blotted out of the book of life; promised to have the name of the City of God, new Jerusalem, and the Lord's name, a new name also; to sit with the Lord in his throne. These are the true living stones 'built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit ... whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.'

It is these that *are with him*: Called, Chosen and Faithful.

Basil Allsopp

The inestimable value of the Old Testament

David is described as a man after God's own heart, yet, in his years as an outlaw fleeing from Saul, his behaviour is often inexcusable, by Christian standards. He was saved from murdering Nabal and his household only by the pleas of Abigail who becomes David's second wife. David has the grace to recognise that she had kept him from blood guilt. But later, when he is granted asylum with the Philistine king in Ziklag, he deceives his host into thinking that he has been busy each day killing Israelites and their allies, when actually he has been busy killing Amalekites, Geshurites and Gizzrites. And, when David raided any territory, he left no one alive, man or woman for fear they should get back to Gath and denounce him (1 Sam 27). Lies, deception, murder, genocide – a terrorist, no better than the Taliban. He would be brought before the court at the Hague even in our not particularly enlightened days.

Yet the record portrays an even-handed picture of the good and the bad in David. At times soft hearted to a fault – and at others utterly ruthless, as on his deathbed he counsels Solomon to get rid of Shimei to whom David had given safe conduct in spite of the evil he had done. But now (1 Kings 2) David says 'True ... I swore by the Lord not to put him to death. But you do not need to let him go unpunished nor you, 'bring down his grey hairs in blood to the grave.' You are not bound by my oath!! Contrast with 'pray for them that despitefully use you', though David in one of the Psalms speaks of returning that which he took not away.

What God overlooks

How can the record of David's life benefit me spiritually, when so much is in opposition to the Lord Jesus? How could David be a man after God's own heart who can generate a transforming influence in my life? What follows is only a possible interpretation. It boils down to recognition that all communities who ever claimed to acknowledge God as the Lord of their life are very mixed multitudes. It has always been thus in various ways. The Old Testament communities operated in a context where violence and war were pretty continuous and taken for granted. It was the backcloth of everyday life and hence features continually, for example, in the psalms.

Could it be that God, without approving of these ways, recognises that he can't secure all the changes in one go, without robbing people of some freedom to choose the good and refuse the evil? So what does he look for in the members of his community? Not that they will become pacifists and go against the grain of their violent cultures, nor that they will act in the way later manifested in Jesus. He looks for faith, for trust in him and his faithfulness. And in the psalms, Davidic in background, if not all in actual authorship, we find song after song reflecting the faith of men and women who showed that trust in all the vicissitudes of their mixed lives. What they can give without becoming miraculously counter-cultural, he looks for and is pleased by. And it is thus we can derive benefit and hear the authentic voice of faith in circumstances where the voice of Jesus had not yet been heard in the earth.

If in the problems of my 21st century life I can say with David 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want (lack); he makes me to lie down in green pastures', then this is faith which springs out of various contexts, but in its essence is independent of cultures and traditions and goes to the heart of a relationship with God as a heavenly Father. We find Scripture then authoritative in practice as it feeds the mind of the spirit and brings forth the fruit of the Spirit – in our case, with God himself having, in Jesus, entered our ambiguous lives and suffered with us, thereby redeeming us from the evils and weaknesses and mixed nature of our human and even of our spiritual and religious experiences.

We share the mood of Psalm 51: 'Wash away all my iniquity ... teach me wisdom in my heart ... create a pure heart for me, and give me a new and steadfast spirit'. 'The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad' (Psalm 126:2). 'Lord, my heart is not proud, nor are my eyes haughty; I do not busy myself with great affairs or things too marvellous for me. But I am calm and quiet like a weaned child clinging to its mother.' (Psalm 131). That was David – the David God loved, in spite of the natural David who did awful things following the culture of his times, and included some of them in his Psalms, such as the so called imprecation psalms, seeking vengeance on enemies.

Is there a hint in the New Testament of God's capacity to overlook the unavoidable evils in human behaviour until the day should come when the fullness of his will could be exhibited in Jesus? Paul on Mars Hill declares that God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now commands all men and women everywhere to repent. (See also Jean Field's article on the God of the Old Testament). And again, in Romans 3:21-26, the declaring of God's redeeming righteousness is set in the context of his forbearance in overlooking the sins of the past. Share God's forbearance when reading the Old Testament and then its riches can freely flow, while we still renounce that which does not conform to the mind of Christ.

Alfred Ward

What is Truth?

Genesis chapter 1 is the glorious panoramic vision of God's whole purpose in creation, from the darkness of chaos to the final consummation of God's glory, manifested in a people who reflect His image, male and female, Christ and his bride. It is a psalm of praise to the Creator, structured after the pattern of a week of worship, culminating in the sabbath when God may finally rest from His labours – His work accomplished.

In style, substance and language chapter 1 is clearly quite different from the following chapters, which are in narrative form with the name of God changed to Lord God, Yahweh Elohim. After that, the whole process of learning, developing and preparing for the ultimate revelation, is begun, with Adam and Eve's training in moral responsibility, by hard work but also by eventual hope. This is followed by glimpses of divine radiance, however hard the lessons were that were learned through rejection, suffering and conflict.

Abraham's obedient response to God's voice, Jacob's encounters with the Lord, Joseph's spontaneous acceptance of his brothers, all shine, with the light of God's glory through the gloom of conflict and rejection. The experience of Egypt and the Exodus were essential lessons in showing the very path to God through sacrifice, cleansing, illumination and provision, right to the promised land. Through Joshua and the Judges they faced the challenge of preserving their unique identity as God's chosen people through the complexities of battle, defeat and ultimate victory when David emerged triumphant. Then they were able to present to the world the richness of their heritage. From then on the scene changes into a call to manifest God's glory in the wider world, through prophets who sought to teach the nation the lessons of mercy, compassion 'to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.' In Babylon they were cast into a world environment and yet again with the call to reveal God to them, as light to the Gentiles.

It was however through individuals that the light of God's glory shone most brightly, as we encounter them especially in the Psalms. We meet David himself and many others for whom God was a constant presence – the Shepherd leading His flock to living waters and green pastures, the assurance by night and the strength by day – the inward peace of knowing 'Thou O Lord only maketh me to dwell in safety'. These glimpses of divine radiance through the misty of human failure, outward defeat and rejection, shine like stars, pointing the way to the revelation of the One who revealed God fully – the ultimate jewel at the end of the golden thread of God's revelation. And surely this is truth, Jesus Himself – the hidden reality of God's presence beneath the framework of human life and history.

Footnote

The first chapter of Genesis has been considered by some scholars as a prelude to the Torah which they believe was collated from earlier oral traditions, and probably from records which are now lost, by the priests during the Babylonian captivity. Scholars, such as Prof W G Lambert, affirm that there are no surviving literary documents until shortly before the Babylonian captivity.

Sheila Harris

Reviews

The First Paul

Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan (SPCK)

This book is a dynamic attempt to discover the real and original message of the Apostle Paul. The writers seek to approach this by distinguishing the genuine Pauline letters from what they regard as later writings, attributed to Paul, such as Ephesians, Colossians and the Pastoral Epistles, Timothy and Titus, by using Paul's attitude to slavery as the catalyst.

As his letters predate the actual written Gospels and the writings of Luke, we can deduce his knowledge of Jesus only from his own writings. Paul's acclaiming of Jesus as Lord, they interpret, as the supreme rival to the Roman Emperor who had brought peace to the world. This claim of lordship identifies Jesus with the righteousness, the justice of God, who brings peace and unites the whole family of peoples under His sway. But essentially Paul's knowledge of Jesus came from his own experience, as he unequivocally declares, that Jesus was revealed to him. Paul states that he had seen Jesus and had received from him the commission to preach to the Gentiles. From then on Paul pursued his mission in the cities where there were already God-fearing Gentiles. The authors proceed to trace this missionary journey where he asserts Jesus' claims as the supreme challenge to the power and wisdom of the world.

It is clear, both from context and content, that the epistle to the Romans is, as it professes, an unequivocal statement of Paul's basic gospel message. It is here that we find, in Paul's understanding of the crucifixion, his original and distinctive message of the meaning of Jesus' death. And the essential fact is that the cross and the resurrection are inseparable. The writers regard the doctrine, commonly held since the Middle Ages, of Jesus' death as a substitution for us, that he died instead of us, taking upon himself, though innocent, the guilt of humanity, as wholly foreign to the gospel of Paul. It was the Roman power that crucified him that was totally defeated by his resurrection and the sinfulness that put him there was destroyed. The wisdom of this world was conquered, He had triumphed over the world as he himself declared.

And this is not for the future. It is present now in what the authors call 'participatory atonement'. Jesus, as we know from the Gospels, gave his life willingly. He yielded to his captors. He strode before his disciples up to Jerusalem, knowing what awaited him from those who had rejected him for his love, compassion and mercy to the weak, the rejected, the outsider. He rose to new life a spirit being. His life imbued with the love of the Father, a sacred offering, became a spiritual power for us now. Sacrifice means made holy. His earthly life, wholly expressive of God's character, the very image of God, was made available to those who would come humbly to receive it. Paul shows how by dying figuratively to our own self, offering our hearts openly in humility to the Lord, receptive of the spirit, we rise to new life in Christ – the very life of Christ a complete transformation. As Paul says 'we are changed.' Jesus himself said that he would dwell in us through the spirit. And this is God's supreme gift, charis grace, which we can only receive – reconciliation, friendship with God. As Paul shows, in his letter to the Philippians chapter 2, this is the humility which Jesus manifested in his whole life and death.

This is the new age, entered by faith now which unites all who believe – Jews, Greeks, Gentiles, rich, poor – into a fellowship, a communion in Christ and expressive in themselves of the very character of God in Jesus, of love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, through the indwelling spirit 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.'

Comments

The writers are not consistent with their own advice about evaluating the letters by consideration of the recipients and the context, in their treating Paul's attitude to slavery as the catalyst for dating the letters. To Philemon it is the special plea for an individual whereas the other epistles include advice to church leaders to control possibilities of flaunting new-found freedom in slaves and women.

In attributing lordship to Jesus, Paul is, no doubt, especially in predominantly Roman society, portraying him as a rival to Caesar, but as a Jew, he would regard the word *Kurios* as essentially the title of God, the Lord and Creator of the universe.

In New Testament Greek there is no translation for 'atonement'. The only place where the word appears in the Authorised Version, is Romans 5:11, where it is a translation of the Greek word *katalage*, elsewhere translated reconciliation or, in Modern Greek, friendship with God.

Meeting Jesus again for the first time

Marcus J Borg (Harper Collins)

From his own personal transformation through realising that Christian faith is not a matter of factual knowledge, proof, historical evidence and acceptance of dogma, but rather a personal relationship with the Lord, Borg proceeds to show that the Gospels also are not historical documents, verified by factual evidence, chronological, geographical and documentary proof, but rather inspired interpretations of the life and ministry of Jesus, revealing the basic truths of his whole life's work. These, he shows, are the qualities of compassion, justice, wisdom and supremely Jesus as the manifestation of God.

He exhorts us to look beneath the surface to the true reality of Jesus' identity with His Father and the basic stories of the Bible – the Exodus, the Exile, and the Priestly Code – to show the theme of bondage, liberation and reconciliation, leading to loving relationship with God – of life as a journey to God with the living presence of Jesus in and with us.

Sheila Harris

**The following letter was published in
The Christadelphian Magazine Dec 2009.**

Dear Brother Michael

Darwin or the Gospel?

Brother Morris has given us a most interesting and informative statement of our belief in God as Creator (November 2009 p 423). His article, however, contained some unexpected features.

I was particularly surprised that "Darwin" and "the Gospel" were presented as being in conflict. The blow to Darwin's Christian faith came from the death of his daughter, not from his studies of the natural world. His references to "creation" and "the Creator" in *The Origin* are mentioned and we are told that "People in Darwin's generation were left with the comfortable feeling that one could embrace evolution and still believe in God". That was true and it is still true (though one would perhaps prefer "assurance" to "comfortable feeling"). Without denying that God, if he had so chosen, could have created the whole universe, from distant galaxies to amoebae, in an instant of time why cannot we accept that the evidence may indicate that his method of creation may in fact have been very different?

The real issue is not creation *versus* evolution, but creation *versus* atheism. We do ourselves as a community no favour if we insist that to accept evolution is to deny the existence of God. It is not biblical authority but some cherished interpretations that may need to be revised.

If some are disturbed by this I appeal to them to consider that others may hold different views while believing equally fervently in God as Creator and the Bible as his inspired revelation.

Are we indeed, as Brother Morris states, a "community who believe in a God who made all things by specific acts of creation"? The Statement of Faith simply states "He hath, out of His own undervived energy, created heaven and earth, and all that in them is" (BASF item I). I sincerely hope that our community can continue to accommodate a range of views about how this actually took place.

What we can be certain of is that our frail finite minds are quite incapable of comprehending the glory and wonder of God's ways.

I fully endorse the final paragraph in Brother Morris' article. God has given us two books, that of his word and that of his works: "Ever since the world began his invisible attributes, that is to say his everlasting power and deity, have been visible to the eye of reason, in the things he has made" (Romans 1:20, Revised English Bible) – but only the Gospel can give us the meaning of life. Amen.

With love in the Lord Jesus,

Bob Burr

Letter to The Committee of The Christadelphian

Sent 15 March 2010.

Dear Committee,

Definitions

In your 'second follow-up article' to the original 'Special Article', in the November 2009 Christadelphian Magazine No.1745, you discuss aspects of the BASF which you describe as 'a faithful description of the One Faith.' On page 403, you mention the doctrinal dispute of the 1870s (which arose from the different views of Robert Roberts and Edward Turney, and during which Roberts labelled Turney's views 'Clean Flesh'). The 'Clean Flesh' label you allude to in your note 5 at the bottom of the page. **'This', you state, 'refers to the false teaching that Jesus did not fully share the mortal, sin-prone nature of all mankind.'**

In the interests of truth I must point out that the above statement is completely untrue; it was a **misrepresentation** on Roberts' part of Turney's views. Unfortunately, this false accusation has been perpetuated in Christadelphia ever since the 1870s as *'The Clean Flesh Heresy'*. A fair reading of Turney's lecture of 1873 will clearly show that he believed that Jesus was of the **selfsame nature as all mankind, including its potential for sin**. In spite of this, Roberts accused him of **denying that Jesus came 'in the flesh'**. (The true nature of the dispute between the two men was over Roberts' view that when Adam sinned, the sentence that God passed upon him **changed his nature** from a good state, into **literally 'Sinful Flesh'** flesh which from then on was only fit for destruction).

In view of the above accusation against Turney, it seems rather strange that Roberts was not more careful in his drafting of the Statement of Faith, especially Clause 9. After mentioning in Clause 5 *'the sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being'*, the Statement goes on to refer to God's kindness in His plan of restoration, involving Jesus Christ who would, *'by perfect obedience, and, by dying, abrogate the law of condemnation . . .'* (Clauses 6, 7, & 8). Clause 9 then states: *'It was this mission that necessitated the miraculous begotting of Christ . . . enabling him to bear our condemnation, and, at the same time, to be a sinless bearer thereof . . .'*

It is plain then that Roberts himself, rather than Turney, was the one suggesting that Jesus had a **different nature** to the rest of mankind – a nature that **'enabled' him to be sinless**.

Turney, in his lecture, cited the following words of Roberts: *'Yet he was tempted because he possessed the impulses common to our nature. He possessed, however, the counter-balancing endowment of knowledge and superior power which enabled him to do what no man ever has done, that is to pass through this state of existence without sin.'*

It would appear then to have been Roberts, not Turney, that denied the words of Hebrews 2: *'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest . . . For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.'* What I understand the writer to the Hebrews to be saying here, is that Jesus was indeed made just like us and, that his temptations were **real**. It was the fact that he suffered **real temptations** that enabled him to **empathise** with and to **succour** others who are tempted.

I have studied Turney's lecture of 1873, and Roberts' attempted refutation in his lecture delivered on the following evening. It is very clear to me that a number of clauses, both positive and negative ones, of the BASF, received their present format in order to ensure that Roberts' views prevailed over those of Turney. In my view it is a great pity that the Statement of Faith, with its 30 positive and 33 negative clauses, was ever compiled in such detail. That beliefs and doctrines – bearing in many respects the unmistakable stamp of one dogmatic and opinionated brother – should have been set down in black and white, at a moment in time over 120 years ago, never again to be questioned in any particular, to me seems incredible! We now have The Christadelphian Magazine Committee insisting that this is how things should be. The BASF is now the equivalent of 'The Laws of the Medes and Persians, which changeth not'.

Sincerely,

Cyril Marsters

Reply

Dear Bro. Marsters,

Your letter dated March 15, while claiming to correct comments made in the editorial article in *The Christadelphian* of November 2009, actually misrepresents the history relating to Bro. Edward Turney's renouncing of his earlier beliefs.

He stated, during his 1873 lecture on 'The Sacrifice of Christ': 'The second man, the last Adam, the Christ, came into the world as free as the first Adam, not under condemnation to death, caused by the first man's transgression. He had a life as free as Adam's was when he sprang from the ground a living soul. Now, that life was the price or ransom that had to be paid for those who lost theirs by Adam's transgression.'

Because this was the view consistently expressed by Bro. Turney after his change of heart, Bro. Roberts sought to debate the matter with him, proposing to speak in support of the proposition, 'That Christ, in the days of his flesh, was, and his mission required him to be, equally affected with ourselves by the sentence of death passed upon Adam.' He explained his choice of proposition in the following way: 'Jesus, in the days of his flesh, inherited and experienced the results and feelings that have come by Adam's transgression; from which I will argue, and prove otherwise my argument, that this inheritance extended to mortality itself, and that 'free life', so-called, is a myth.'

The brief explanation in last November's Editorial article of the dispute over this teaching is therefore an accurate summary, referring to Bro. Turney's views as, 'the false teaching that Jesus did not fully share the mortal, sin-prone nature of all mankind.'
Sincerely on behalf of the Committee,
John Hellowell, Secretary

Cyril has replied to this letter and his response will be published in the next issue along with any further response from the Committee. Other readers may like to comment on the above correspondence.

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

William Cowper

The funny side of life

A little girl asked her father what Adam and Eve used to sew their fig leaves. 'Dunno', said father. How did Noah catch the two snakes he took into the ark? 'Dunno,' said father. How could the trumpets cause the walls of Jericho to fall? 'Dunno', said father, eliciting the peeved retort, 'Well, I shan't ask you anything ever again'. Alarmed, father exclaimed, 'Don't be like that. If you don't ask questions, how are you ever going to learn?'

The children were lined up in the canteen of a church primary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. A notice had been placed on the apple tray: 'Take only ONE. God is watching.'
Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. Next, to it, in a child's handwriting, was a sign: 'Take all you want. God is watching the apples.'

Getting old has its benefits

1. Kidnappers are not very interested in you.
2. In a hostage situation you are likely to be released first.
3. No one expects you to run into a burning building
4. People call at 9 p.m. and ask, 'Did I wake you?'
5. People no longer view you as a hypochondriac.
6. There's nothing left to learn the hard way.
7. Things you buy now won't wear out.
8. You can eat dinner at 4 p.m.
9. You enjoy hearing about other people's operations.
10. You get into a heated argument about pension plans.
11. You have a party and the neighbours don't even realize it
12. You no longer think of speed limits as a challenge.
13. You stop trying to hold your stomach in, no matter who walks into the room.
14. Your eyes won't get much worse.
15. Your investment in health insurance is finally beginning to pay off.
16. Your joints are more accurate meteorologists than the Met Office.
17. Your secrets are safe with your friends because they can't remember them either.
18. Your supply of brain cells is finally down to a manageable size.

A teacher was giving a lesson on the circulation of the blood. Trying to make the matter clearer, she said, 'Now, class, if I stood on my head, the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I would turn red in the face.' 'Yes,' the class said.

'Then why is it that while I am standing upright in the ordinary position, the blood doesn't run into my feet?'

A little lad shouted, 'Cause your feet ain't empty, Miss!'

New Booklet

Climate Change, a Challenge for the Christian?

Laurence Kimpton

A5 booklet, 44 pages. Price £2 including p&p.

Available from the editor.

Laurence is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, having been a teacher of Geography, an author of Geography textbooks and a contributor to educational projects on climate change in polar regions. The purpose of this booklet is to discuss the Christian's response to climate change. As a foundation to a discussion of the various issues involved, the first half of the booklet contains a clear introduction to the science behind climate change and global warming, illustrated with helpful diagrams.

Change us, not God

The new book by Brother John Launchbury (Portland Ecclesia, Oregon, USA) entitled *Change us, not God* and subtitled *Biblical meditations on the death of Christ*, and which was reviewed in E122, is now readily available in the UK. Paul and Rita Launchbury hold ample stocks. The book costs £8.50, including p&p. Orders may be placed by email to the following addresses: paul.launchbury@btinternet.com rita.launchbury@btinternet.com or by telephone at 01474 854890.