

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1461

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Across – page 3***

***The Bible in
Ireland – page 8***

***The Origin of the
Universe – page 15***



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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

122nd Year

B06

1461

A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world. Its objectives are – to encourage study of the Bible as God's inspired message to men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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blisher: The Glad Tidings Publishing Association (a registered charity) number 248352

Bible Talks, Study Classes, Sunday Schools and Youth Clubs are held regularly by Christadelphians worldwide. The address of your nearest group can be obtained from either the Distribution Secretaries or from the local agents or information addresses given above.

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Photographs:

O'Connell Street, Dublin
Glad Tidings

Illustrations:

www.thespire.com pg3; Art Today pgs 4-6,12-18; Brian Keller pg 4; Marsden Collection pg 10.

Bible Versions

The version most used in this issue is the New King James Version (NKJV) and other versions are sometimes used.

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Getting the Message Across

Walk down O'Connell Street in the centre of Dublin, Ireland, and you cannot fail to see the Dublin Spire. Even if you're not looking up, you soon will be.

The Spire is 120 metres high: and it tapers from a three metre-wide base to a beacon which is just 15 centimetres wide at the top. Built between December 2002 and January 2003, it was the successful entrant in an architectural competition to replace a statue to Lord Nelson, which had been destroyed in 1966.

Far exceeding the height of nearby buildings – it is seven times the height of the Post Office building, shown on the left of this month's cover photograph – the Spire gets its message across by a combination of grace and power. It soars skyward.

But there are other ways of communicating which can be just as effective.

Jim Larkin

Still on O'Connell Street, and also near the Post Office, stands a much lower statue commemorating the life and work of Jim Larkin, who was a social activist and co-founder of the Irish Labour Party. He was evidently a good communicator,

indeed in 1911 he founded a newspaper the “*Irish Worker and People's Advocate*”, which at one time reached a circulation of 20,000 copies. Just as the Spire was controversial in certain quarters, so the statue was criticised when first unveiled because the sculptor had chosen to make a very particular point about communication. Do you notice something unusual about it?

Oisín Kelly has deliberately enlarged the hands of his subject to make them even more impressive than they were in real life. Perhaps you know people who speak with their hands, and who would hardly utter one word if their hands were tied down! There is even an indication in the Bible that the apostle Paul used his hands extensively when speaking, for whilst little is said about personal appearances or the physical characteristics of people who feature in the Bible record, we are told about Paul that:

*After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, “Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” Then Paul stood up, and **motioning with his hand** said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen ...” (Acts 13:15,16).*

Reaching Across

Paul was an avid preacher who really wanted to get his message across. He said on one occasion that he was willing to be “*all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*” (1 Corinthians 9:22). So, the very act of him reaching out in the synagogue in Antioch, part way



through the first preaching journey into Asia Minor, is expressive of his desire to reach out and save those who heard the gospel of salvation he was sharing with them. There is a vast gulf that now separates mankind from Almighty God and we very much need someone who can reach across and help us.

Jesus once encountered a man who was unsure about his credentials as the Son of God. His name was Nathaniel and he was sitting thinking about things, quite by himself, until he was invited to meet Jesus. He was

sceptical because he thought Jesus was born and bred in the village of Nazareth, which had a bad reputation in first century times, though Jesus was in fact born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

Nathaniel's uncertainty soon disappeared when Jesus disclosed that he knew exactly where Nathaniel had been in his solitary meditation. Immediately he acclaimed Jesus both as "Son of God" and "King of Israel" (John 1:49). But then Jesus said:

"You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (1:50,51).

Reaching Up

Jesus was alluding to the time when, long before, his ancestor Jacob had once spent a lonely and unsettling night during which he dreamed about the angels of God walking up and down a ladder between earth and heaven (Genesis 28:12). He awoke much encouraged to realise that the angels of God were there

with him already, although he could not see them, and that theirs was a living and vital line of communication between earth and heaven. So, Jesus was saying, he was that living link for Nathaniel and for all those who put their trust in him.

Like the Dublin Spire he could reach heavenward, and now he is in heaven itself, the only man ever to have ascended there (John 3:13). From there he communicates with us still, when we read his words and act upon them.

This issue also features an article about the translation of the Bible into

Irish. As always, it required much dedication and personal endeavour to make that happen, and it was a dangerous task for at least one man who was helping with the work. The translators must have reckoned that people wanted to know what God had to say to them, as they evidently did themselves. For in His Word God is reaching across to communicate with us. Ezekiel, one of God's prophets, once saw his commission in very vivid terms which he described as follows:

"Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. Then he spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe" (Ezekiel 2:9,10).

We shall never be summoned by God in such a way, but the Bible contains all that Ezekiel was summoned to preach and teach. In it God is getting His message across to us and it is vitally important that we take note.

Editor



Part Two

God's New Society

*In the previous article in this series **Tom Barling** encouraged us to climb into a time machine and whiz back to the first century, to visit a town called Colosse. There, in the spacious villa of a certain Philemon, we found Philemon himself in the company of his runaway slave, Onesimus, who had now returned to his household and had been accepted back. That was a remarkable result for those days – a pointer to a new society that was being established: one that we can become part of.*

Philemon and Onesimus

They were together in the villa as if nothing had happened, both partaking of the bread and wine in memory of the Lord Jesus – a runaway slave, who had stolen from his master, and the master who had now forgiven him. There would be no parallel for this unusual situation except in other Christian assemblies, as they too came together to partake of bread and wine. But how did this remarkable situation come about?

To find our answer we must, as seems always to be the case, go back to the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Our search begins with a very robust character who appeared on the scene just before Jesus began his public ministry.

John the Baptist

John could have been a priest serving in the Temple at Jerusalem. Instead he accepted a life in the wilderness and from there he now appeared, calling on his fellow Jews to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins:

“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is

near” ... People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River” (Matthew 3:1-6).

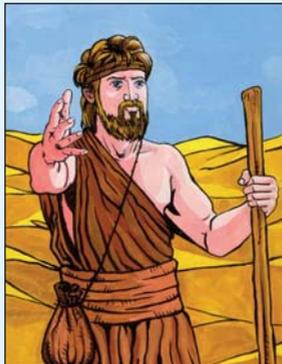
What was unusual about this was that the nation who practised circumcision, and still does so, was told this was not sufficient in itself. They had to recognize they were sinners before God, and needed to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. This was precisely the message which the Lord Jesus himself then took up:

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matthew 4:17).

Something More Needed

We need to reflect upon the meaning of all this; John and the Lord were saying: “There is really no difference between you and the other nations; you need to recognize you are sinners, in need of God's forgiveness, and this you can get if you submit to baptism”.

As we read the Gospels, while we shall find plenty of evidence that Jews can indeed be sinners, we also discover that certain Gen-



tiles can show characteristics acceptable to God. There is a fascinating incident which shows this; a certain Roman officer, a centurion, had a beloved servant who was near death (Luke 7:2). The officer himself was a remarkable man, for he loved the Jewish people and had even built a synagogue for them. He expressed complete confidence in the Lord's authority and in his ability to cure his servant, even at a distance (v.6,7). Jesus was amazed at the man's faith (we must notice this key word) and exclaims:

"I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel!" (Luke 7:9).

But the Lord does something more than merely expressing wonder at the officer's faith. Matthew tells us, Jesus was also moved to exclaim:

"I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11).

Now this statement is very important: it shows that being given a place in the Kingdom which the Lord Jesus will establish at his Second Coming will depend not upon being circumcised, but upon having faith.

Faith the Key

Faith is indeed the key word – faith in God, in His Word, in the acceptance of it, and in obedience to what it says. Take a brief look at Abraham and you will find that these are developed features of the character of this man. To

do this we need to go back to the beginning of Genesis 12. God told Abram, as he was then called, to leave his home in Ur and to go to a land God would show him. This he did, abandoning his old associations. There was a clear divine purpose behind all this, for God told him:

"I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:2-3).

It is of the utmost importance that we take note of this great purpose God had in mind when Abram received the call to leave his old associations. Through him God was to bless all nations. Abram also was told that his elderly wife Sarai

was to bear him a son. Time went by, and the fulfilment of the promise appeared more and more improbable. However, God reassured his servant: Abram was invited to look at the heavens, which he did; then God said: "So shall your offspring be" (Genesis 15:5).

Such a development seemed utterly improbable but Abram accepted it. And here is a key statement:

"Abram believed the LORD, and he (God) credited it to him for righteousness" (15:6).

Just as he had not hesitated to leave his old associations in obedience to God's words, so now Abram's faith in God's Word did not falter. We note how thus, so early in the Old Testament, we have the great New Testament teaching that belief in God's Word is associated with righteousness, a theme developed by Paul in his letter to the Romans (see 4:1-3).



New Testament Truth

When we turn again to the New Testament, we find it opens with these words: *“A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1)*. There is here not only a vital link with the Old Testament but also a precious clue to the understanding of God’s purpose with mankind as it is revealed in the New.

Abraham, as we shall now call him – for his name was later changed – had physical descendants, Israelites or, as we know them today, Jews. While there can be no question that God’s purpose with Israel is very important, and is a subject in its own right, what really matters for us Gentiles is that we can become the spiritual descendants of Abraham by sharing his faith in God, and following his example of obedience. This is brought out in a very revealing manner in a conversation Jesus had with certain of his fellow countrymen.

They were so proud of their descent from Abraham that they could boast: *“Abraham is our father” (John 8:39)*, to which Jesus immediately retorted, *“If you were Abraham’s children, then you would do the things Abraham did”*. In this conversation the Lord accused

them of intending to kill him, something Abraham would never have contemplated. This was no idle charge for we know the Jews later insisted on having Jesus crucified.

Saviour of the World

There are a number of the Lord’s sayings which show that he was indeed to be the saviour of the world and that God’s purpose included nations other than the Jews. Thus, in the chapter where Jesus speaks of himself as the good shepherd, he refers to the fact that amongst his followers there would be others, in addition to his immediate followers who were all Jews:

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I will bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16 Revised Version).

In our next study we hope to bring forward further evidence that during his ministry the Lord was well aware that he was engaged in the wonderful process of creating a new society, one which would have no national barriers but would be truly international.

Tom Barling

Quotations from the NIV

The Christian Obligation

This does not come from a demand to satisfy law; it comes from the necessity to respond to love. The ethical demand comes not from fear of breaking the law, but from the conviction that a man must be prepared to sweat his very heart out to seek to deserve the love with which he has been loved. The motive of any action makes all the difference to the character of the action. If a man is good only because he sees a law which bids him to be good, and a law which he breaks at his peril, then his goodness is the result of fear, and fear is the great creator of tension. But if a man is good because he feels that the miraculous privilege of being loved will not allow him to be anything else, then his goodness is the product of an inner yearning, and not of an externally imposed compulsion.

William Barclay

The Bible in Ireland

Ask anyone about Christianity in Ireland and they are likely to tell you about St Patrick, for St Patrick's Day is widely known as a day for celebration and having a good time. But, whilst quite a lot of people in the English speaking world know about Bible translators such as John Wycliffe or William Tyndale, not so much is known about those who translated the Bible into Irish. In this article **Arthur Sheppard** explains how the first translation came about.

Latin Texts

Patrick was a member of the Roman Catholic Church, which in the fifth century was still organised along monastic lines. The monks produced copies of standard Latin texts and used the current artistic tradition in the illumination of their manuscripts. Examples of their work remain in the Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow, both to be found in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.

The earliest Irish manuscript of importance to survive is the **Cathach of St. Columba**, a copy of the Psalms which was written in the early Irish version of the majuscule script (large letters). It consists of 58 leaves containing 64 Psalms, all of them written in Latin in dark brown ink.

It is likely that for the first few hundred years or so almost all the books in Ireland were written in Latin. The script was rounded, elegant and clear – one of the first major achievements of the Irish monastic school.

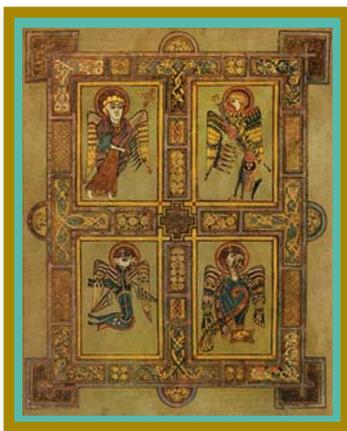
Some Ancient Manuscripts

The **Book of Durrow** (associated with the Columban monastery of Durrow in Co. Offaly) is a work of great beauty. It is

almost complete, having 248 leaves, each about 9fi x 6fi inches (25 x 17 cm). It contains the Latin (Vulgate) text of the four gospels and some introductory matter. Again the script is handsome and clear, firm Irish majuscule, written in black-brown ink. One feature of this elaborately ornamented book is its 'carpet' pages – introductory pages which were wholly ornamental. There is now general agreement among scholars that it was copied in the latter part of the 7th Century.

The **Book of Kells** is the best known of these ancient books, taking its name from the place where it was found (Ceannus Mor, Co. Meath). It contains the Latin text (a mixture of the Vulgate with many words and phrases from the earlier old Latin translation) in Insular majuscule script. It is lavishly printed and illuminated. It is a large book of 370 folios (some of which are missing) averaging 13 x 9fi inches (33 x 25cm.) and contains the four gospels and various commentaries. It is now housed in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.

Church services for centuries would use the Latin versions of the Scriptures,



The four evangelists from the Book of Kells

and according to Professor Zimmer: “No versions of the Bible or of simple Biblical books in any of the Celtic dialects has come down from the pre-reformation period, though a few Biblical extracts in Old Irish (8th-11th centuries) are extant in homilies”.

English Bibles

The Reformation came late to Ireland, but with it came copies of the Bible in English. A copy of the Great Bible of 1539 was once to be seen in the ancient library of Cashel Cathedral. Later, in 1560, numbers of people were to be seen in St. Patrick’s Cathedral and in Christ Church, listening to the message of the Great Bible. “*Doctor Heath, Archbishop of York, sent two Deans and Chapters of Dublin, viz, of Christ Church and St. Patrick’s, a large Bible to each, to be placed in the middle of their Quiers; which two Bibles, at their first setting up to public view, caused a great Restor of People thither on purpose to read therein.*”.

The old brass eagle lectern in Christ Church Cathedral which supported the volume is still to be seen, showing the holes which received the chains securing the book against theft. This Great Bible sold 7000 copies in Ireland in two years. To get an idea of how the archaic English in that translation would have read, here is an extract from Luke 11, verse 1:

“And it fortun'd as he was praying in a certayne place....”

Irish New Testament

In 1571 the wave of the Reformation had nearly spent its force, when Queen

Elizabeth I sent, at her own expense, a fount of Irish type and a printing press to Dublin: “In the hope that God in His mercy would raise up some to translate the New Testament into the mother tongue.” She also required an Irish grammar for herself, as she was a enthusiastic linguist and the Primer which was prepared by Lord Devlin still exists in the British Museum.

The printing press was set up in Trinity College and by 1597 the New Testament as far as the 6th chapter of Luke’s gospel was in type. William O’Donnell, who had considerable skill in Greek and Hebrew and who was a scholar at Trinity, and subsequently Archbishop of Tuam, produced 500 copies in 1602 at the Dublin house of Sir William Ussher. Some copies of this historic work are to be found in libraries, for it was reprinted by Mr Boyle in 1681.

William Bedell

The year 1571 was to prove significant, for it was then that William Bedell was born, and his contribution was to be a major one. He has been described as: “*the great apostle of the Bible in the Irish tongue*”. An Englishman, he was born at Black Notley in Essex and was appointed Provost of Trinity College in 1626. “The mass of people in his diocese were in a sad state of



spiritual destitution. There were no clergymen able or willing to preach the gospel in Irish, the only language which the people understood. There was no complete Bible in Irish, and the copies of the New Testament issued by O’Donnell were quite inadequate to supply the large population and it had become scarce.”

Bedell learned the Irish language and, with assistance, set to work “to turn the last translation of the English Bible into the plainest Irish most understood by the vulgar”. Two native assistants were Murtagh King and James Nangle. The translation, which was completed about 1640, was from the English Authorised Version, the Hebrew, the Septuagint and Diodati’s Italian Version. A handwritten copy remains.

Robert Boyle

Publication was interrupted by the rebellion of 1641, Bedell’s death and “jealousies and slanders”. The Hon. Robert Boyle “ordered a fount of Irish type to be cast in London for printing the Bedell Bible, and the work was completed by Robert Everingham of London. Boyle had, in fact, to order the translation of parts of the Old Testament anew, because the manuscript was in a confused heap, pitifully defaced and broken. Others associated with Boyle were Andrew Sall, Archbishop Narcissus Marsh and the Rev. Paul Higgins, Rector of Templemore, and Mr. Boyle paid for the work.

The manuscript and typescript of Bedell’s Old Testament are partly in Marsh’s Library, Dublin, and partly in University Library, Cambridge. The Apocrypha has never been printed. In 1690, Mr. Boyle printed O’Donnell’s New Testament and Bedell’s Old Testament in one volume. This was in Roman type (one in Irish character came in 1827).

More Recent Developments

 In **1799**, Dr. Whitley Stokes published the *gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles in one volume*

with the Irish and English placed in parallel columns, the former in Roman characters and phonetic spelling.

 In **1806**, Dr. Stokes published the *Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles in Irish and English – the Irish in the Roman character.*

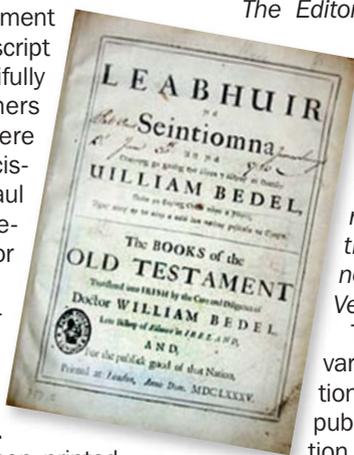
 In **1815** came the *Book of Proverbs in Irish and English - the Irish in the native character.*

 In **1810** came the *British and Foreign Bible Society’s issue of the Irish New Testament in the Roman character, following the 1681 text, but with italics as used in the Authorised Version.*

 In **1917** the Bible Society published a new edition of the whole Bible. The Editor, Mr. James McQuigge, was authorised “to adopt the textual corrections of the English version in places manifestly erroneous, such textual corrections being rendered into Irish”. So the text was brought nearer to the Authorised Version.

There were subsequently various reprintings. An edition of the whole Bible was published in **1830**, an edition which “followed almost verbally, Mr. Boyle’s edition of 1681-85 except in three passages. The readings of the 1681-85 edition were given at the foot of the pages”.

There are two modern versions – one published in **1970** by the Hibernian Bible Society. This is a translation based on the Revised Standard Version. The Maynooth Version was published in **1981** by the Roman Catholic Church.



Peter's Defence

*Gentile believers had been received into the Christian faith and some Jewish converts to the new faith were shocked at this turn of events. Whatever would happen next, and what would the apostle Peter have to say for himself when he returned to Jerusalem? In this article **John Hellawell** shows how Peter explained the importance of what had just happened at Caesarea.*

Peter is accused

The acceptance of the first Gentiles into the faith was a source of anxiety to some disciples who, on learning what had happened at Caesarea, took the opportunity to remonstrate with Peter when he next visited Jerusalem.

Their concern, it seems, was not only that Gentiles had been baptised, but also that Peter had shared a meal with them! Of course, Peter was fully aware that this was not acceptable to Jews in normal circumstances and had said as much to the group of Gentiles with whom he had stayed:

“You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28).

He wanted to tell them why this case was different. So Peter realised that the only way to convince his critics was to tell them exactly what had happened to him from the very beginning.

Peter's Vision

The strange vision that Peter had experienced while he was praying on the rooftop at Simon the Tanner's house in Joppa was now recounted in all its detail. A detailed comparison of the



accounts in Acts 10 with the one given before Peter's critics shows no significant differences.

But the fact that it is repeated in such careful detail emphasises how important this event was. It was a turning point in the history of the spread of the gospel and indicated that Christianity was not going to be a Jewish-only movement.

Peter carefully rehearsed his experiences in full so that his accusers could fully appreciate that what happened was by God's command. The sheet-like vessel containing the 'unclean' animals clearly indicated Gentiles – who were so regarded by the Jewish world – as unclean! The fact that the vision was repeated three times would be understood by his hearers to signify that the message from God was being emphasised in this way to indicate its very great importance.

To Caesarea

The arrival of the deputation from Cornelius just as the vision ended could hardly be coincidence and when the Holy Spirit told Peter to accompany them, “*doubting nothing*”, there could be no doubt as to what God intended. Peter was also careful to emphasise that he did not undertake the visit alone: six disciples had gone with him. They were present at the meeting with Cornelius and so could corroborate what he had said, if further testimony was needed.

Peter then described what happened at Caesarea. A further piece of incontrovertible evidence was the appearance of the angel to Cornelius who had told him to send men to Joppa to find Peter who would explain how he, and his household, could be saved.

Seal of Approval.

Peter then explained that, while he was still addressing the assembled Gentiles, the Holy Spirit descended on his audience “*as upon us at the beginning*” (Acts 11:15), that is, just as on the Day of Pentecost. As if this was not sufficient proof of God’s intention, Peter recalled how the Lord Jesus had said:

“John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (11:16).

He drew the inescapable conclusion, and now invited his questioners to reach the same view:

“If therefore God gave them the same gift as he gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:17).

Sure enough, the audience’s response at hearing all this evidence in Peter’s defence was that they were first rendered speechless and then began to glorify God:

When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (11:18).

They saw the deep significance in what had happened, not just for Cornelius and his household. It was a pointer to the fact that God was now encouraging Gentiles to believe the gospel, be baptised, and thus join the family of God.

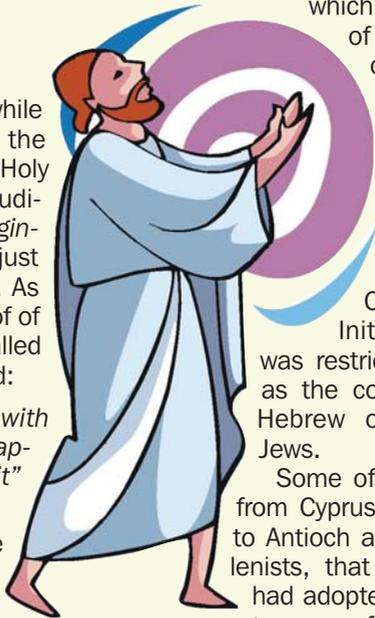
As far as Antioch

The persecution of the disciples which followed the murder of Stephen was largely orchestrated by Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul. It resulted in a dispersion of the faithful who carried the Gospel message to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch.

Initially the preaching was restricted to ‘Jews’ which, as the context shows, means Hebrew or Aramaic-speaking Jews.

Some of the disciples – men from Cyprus and Cyrene – came to Antioch and spoke to the Hellenists, that is, those Jews who had adopted a more cosmopolitan way of life and whose main language was Greek. These men also responded to the Gospel message and word of their conversion came to Jerusalem.

In order to be sure that these new



converts were genuine, Barnabas was sent to assess the situation. On arriving at Antioch he was delighted to discover that these new converts were indeed faithful and he took the opportunity of staying for a while, assisting in the preaching work. The result was that many more people joined the community. As the missionary work was going so well, Barnabas set off to Tarsus to find Paul and, having done so, he invited him to return to Antioch and help with the preaching. These two spent a whole year in Antioch and the effect was to gain even more converts. Luke informs us that it was at Antioch that the epithet “Christian” was first coined.

Christian Charity

Several prophets came to Antioch from Jerusalem, amongst whom was Agabus. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that there was going to be a great famine throughout the greater part of the Roman Empire. This took place some time later during the reign of the Emperor Claudius.

Knowing that the disciples in Jerusalem would be amongst those hardest hit by such an event, since as

Christians they were denied the relief available to the Jews, the disciples in Antioch decided to each make a contribution to a relief fund. This would assist their fellow-believers when the price of staple food began to rocket as the famine took hold. Earlier in Acts we have an account of the way in which the richer disciples in Jerusalem had sold their possessions and land in order to provide funds to help the poorer ones (Acts 4:32-37). These funds might now be running low, so the help from Antioch would be especially appreciated.

They sent the funds in the care of Barnabas and Saul (that is, Paul). This gift would indicate that the disciples in Antioch understood the Christian principles of mutual love and concern. The Lord Jesus had made it clear that to care for one’s fellow was to care for him (see Matthew 25:40).

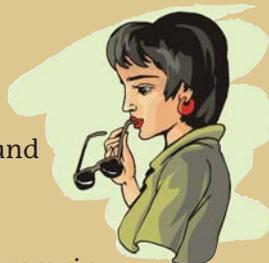
This new partnership of Barnabas and Paul was another exciting development in the spread of the gospel and that would lead on to even greater things in years to come, as we shall see, God willing.

John Hellowell

Memories

How precious are the memories we store up in our minds,
And then look back on in advancing years:
The hopes, the fears, the times we’ve shared with family and
friends;
Our memories of the laughter and the tears.

And when we grow too old to dream, these memories will remain,
For dreams so quickly fade whilst memories last,
And, as we recollect God’s love – the blessings we’ve received,
We’ll thank Him for the memories of the past.



Colleen Simons

The Failure of Humanism – 4

The Origin of the Universe

*In this series **Malcolm Edwards** examines the failure of mankind to solve its own problems or to answer the big questions of life. Now he considers where the human race came from and how it all happened. If you leave God out of account, what then?*

Creation or Chance?

Whether a person believes in the Big Bang or the Steady State theories regarding the origin of our universe, it contains laws of physics which are in perfect balance. It is more reasonable to postulate that such order was caused by a superior intelligence than by accidents of blind chance.

It is equally reasonable to assume that, since our planet contains intelligence, a higher intelligence has introduced it. Humanism must of course reject all this, and clings to the absurd alternative, that all the laws of the universe, the microscopic world of atoms, came about due to unintelligent and random forces.

Mankind without God cannot say what was before the Big Bang, or how the galaxies were formed. Did matter always exist? Who can say? This is quite a major confession of ignorance amongst a group so confident that there is no controlling intelligence behind it all. They are also forced to view our planet as the most accident-

prone in the universe, as we shall next consider.

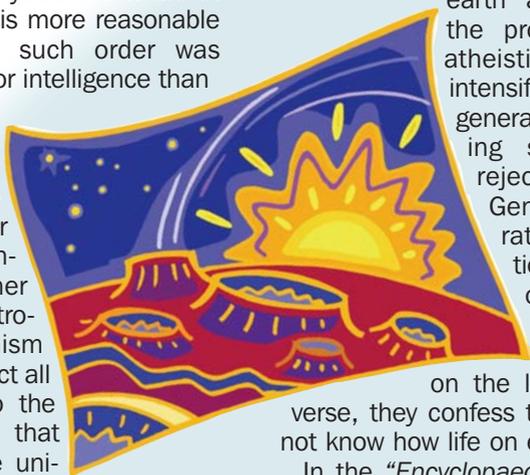
The Origin of Life on Earth

Turning to the question of how life on earth actually arrived, the problems for the atheistic humanist intensify. There is a new generation of questioning scientists, who reject Spontaneous Generation as a rational explanation of how life on our planet began. Like cosmologists

on the laws of the universe, they confess that they just do not know how life on earth originated.

In the *“Encyclopaedia of Evolution”* by Richard Milner, which has a foreword by the prominent evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould, the following comment appeared in regard to the subject of the origin of life:

“Unfortunately, as Margolis admits, ‘no cell has yet crawled out of a test tube’, and thousands of similar experiments have produced goopy organic tars, but no recognisable life. Decades of persistent failure to ‘create life’ by the



‘spark-in-the-soup’ method (or to find such productions in nature), have caused other researchers to seek other approaches to the great enigma.”

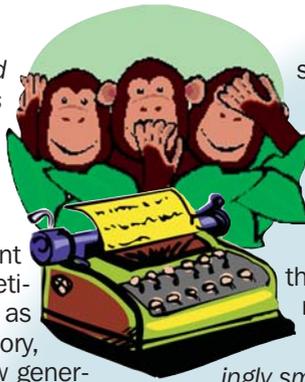
In other places the comment is even more critical, yet repetition of the evolutionary idea as though it were fact not theory, has done a disservice to new generations by capping their curiosity about a profound and open question.

To dismiss these wide-open questions with pseudo answers just to fill in unanswerable gaps, is ineffectually dishonest and no service to Science. When asked about the origin of life, for instance, some say “it probably came about when a spark of lightning hit a primeval soup of organic chemicals”. That research direction has been pursued for years but never proven; its mindless repetition only stifles student’s creativity in coming up with new approaches to science’s greatest mystery

Super-Intelligence

Since atheists cannot answer basic questions about the laws of the Universe and the origin of life on earth, it is illogical to stubbornly refuse to consider that a Super-Intelligence is a reasonable alternative.

The Nobel Prize-winner Francis Crick in his book *“Life Itself – Its Origins and Nature”* considers that the chance of the required twenty amino acids being in the correct order to produce one protein is 10 to the power of 260. This is 1 followed by 260 zeros. He goes on to say that this is con-



siderably more than all the fundamental particles in the known universe, which is estimated at only 10 to the power of 80.

He comments further on the unlikelyhood of life occurring on earth by accident:

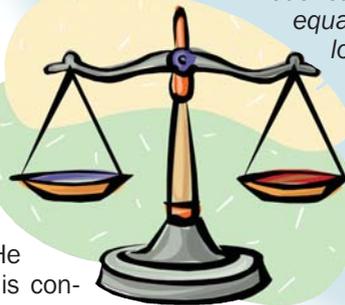
“There is in fact a vanishingly small hope that even a billion monkeys, on a billion typewriters ever typing correctly even one sonnet of Shakespeare during the present existence of the universe.”

Consequently Crick has rejected spontaneous generation in favour of the theory that life was originally brought to our planet by external intelligences.

Similarly, Sir Fred Hoyle and Prof Chandra Wickramasinghe, both unbelievers in biblical creation, express total dissatisfaction with the theory of Spontaneous Generation. In their book *“Cosmic Life Force”* they suggest a cosmic source for the origin of life on Earth. they say:

“The outstanding question ... 2000 or more enzymes are crucial across a wide spectrum of [Earth] life ... the chance of obtaining the necessary total of 2000 enzymes by randomly assembling amino acid chains is ... p to 1 against, with p minimally an enormous super-astronomical number equal to 10 40,000 (1 followed by 40,000 zeros).

The odds ... are only for enzymes ... if all other relevant molecules for life are also taken account of in our calculation the situation for conventional biology



becomes ... intrinsically insuperable. The alternative to assembly of life by random, mindless processes is assembly through the intervention of some type of cosmic intelligence. The ultimate cosmic intelligence built from ... more robust structures [than our own] could well be thought to persist for exceedingly long timescales, even for an eternity

A cosmic intelligence could be envisioned on a much more ambitious scale than the capacity of our own brains”

This concept would be rejected out of hand by most scientists although there is no rational argument for such a rejection. Their conclusion seems to point more towards Creationism than Darwinism.

Balanced View

The truth must be that there is a lot that is basically wrong with Darwinism, and a good deal that is in essence (though not in detail) right with the fundamentalist point of view

This is courageous writing for scientists of such distinction, and no doubt it is the inevitable conclusion for researchers who have freed themselves from Darwinian prejudice and are open to other possibilities.



For the Bible reader there is, of course, another profound option: that everything began from God, who is declared to be:

“from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2).

No wonder the Bible begins with the simply profound comment:

“In the beginning God...”, and then adds: “...created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

Which is the hardest thing to believe? That something inanimate existed from the beginning of time and that accident after major accident occurred eventually to bring us into existence? Or that we are the product of intelligence far beyond us, and that the universe, our world and humankind have come about because of the work of a powerful Creator, who has a gracious and purposeful plan for His Creation?

All the evidence around us, from the things we see, points to that inevitable and wonderful conclusion. There is a God in heaven and He wants a relationship with mankind, if only we will set human pride aside and listen to what He has to say.

Malcolm Edwards

The Theory of Evolution

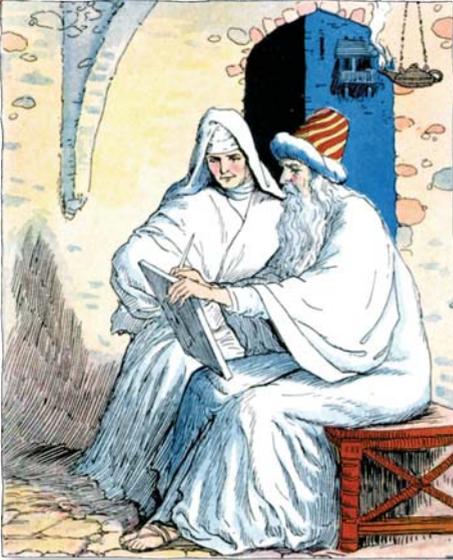
It has to be accepted that Darwin’s ideas are incapable of scientific proof. *“Survival of the fittest”* seems plausible enough, but closer examination reveals a circular argument. The late Professor H. G. Cannon of Manchester University, a staunch sceptic of Darwinism, asked: *“How are we to know which forms are the fittest?”* The answer is: *“Those that survive”*. So, *“the survival of the fittest”* is *“the survival of those that survive”*; hardly a scientific breakthrough!

John Hellawell: “Creation or Evolution?”

Have You Read?

About Zacharias and Elisabeth

What is it about?



Elisabeth and Zacharias appear at the start of the New Testament. They were a faithful older couple who were devoted to the Mosaic Law, a God-given system of worship which had existed for a thousand years. Elisabeth and Zacharias were both from priestly families and he served in the Temple at Jerusalem. Their understanding of God's Word meant that they looked for the appearance of a Messiah in Israel, who would save them from their sins. Despite years of childlessness the couple were eventually privileged to be the parents of John the Baptist. John prepared the people for Jesus' coming. Jesus said of John that there was no greater prophet (Luke 7:28).

What was life like in Israel at that time?



Israel was occupied by the Romans, but Temple services were still allowed to continue under this pagan rule. The Jews hated their lack of self-rule and longed to be the kind of nation they had been in the days of their illustrious kings, David and Solomon. Elisabeth and Zacharias' story shows how even those steeped in the Law could see that it pointed to something greater – the coming of Jesus Christ.

When did this happen?

About 4 BC (the precise date of the birth of Jesus is uncertain)

How many chapters?

You can read about it in just one chapter – Luke chapter 1

What should I look out for?



- ⌘ *Zacharias went to serve at the Temple in Jerusalem under an arrangement that had been made in the time of King David (1 Chron. 24): a turn at temple service came very rarely in the life of a priest in those days.*
- ⌘ *Elisabeth had clearly longed for a child; when she became pregnant she talked of her 'reproach among men' (Lk. 1:25) indicating that she had publicly suffered because of her barrenness.*
- ⌘ *Because Zacharias failed to believe the angel who brought him the news of Elisabeth's pregnancy, he was struck dumb; he had to gesture to the congregation (Lk. 1:22) and, later, his family made signs to him (1:62); this symbolised the inadequacy of the Mosaic Law which was soon to be replaced by Christ.*
- ⌘ *When she knew she was pregnant, Elisabeth hid herself away, for the angel had commanded that her child would be a Nazarite from the womb (Numb 6; Judg. 13:7; Luke 1:15). A Nazarite was someone specially dedicated to God.*
- ⌘ *Elisabeth showed no jealousy towards the much younger virgin Mary who visited her from Nazareth: 'Blessed art thou among women' said Elisabeth (Lk. 1:42), acknowledging that Mary's was the more significant of the two children.*
- ⌘ *Once Zacharias demonstrated his belief in the angel's message and declared the name to be given to his newborn son, he was released from his dumbness, that had lasted over 9 months (Lk.1:63).*
- ⌘ *Now Zacharias, spirit filled, spoke eloquently of the coming Messiah, acknowledging his greatness, just as Elisabeth had done (Luke 1:67-79). Neither parent tried to vaunt their own child, John, above Christ.*
- ⌘ *Elisabeth and Zacharias were clearly the right parents for John. When John appeared in the wilderness of Judea (Matt.3:1 & 4) he too lived under the Nazarite vow. He also had properly grown to understand his position in relation to Jesus Christ. 'He must increase, but I must decrease' he said (Jn. 3:30).*

What does it mean for me?

- ⌘ *That prayers are heard and answered (Lk. 1:13)*
- ⌘ *To accept a lower position is humbling, but it is highly regarded in God's eyes (Lk. 1:43; Isaiah 66:2; James 4:6)*
- ⌘ *Sometimes faith falters, but God does not give up on us (Lk. 1:20;67-79)*
- ⌘ *Faithful service can take a long time to bear fruit (Lk. 1:13-15; Matt. 3:1-6; Lk.7:28)*
- ⌘ *Don't allow chastisement to make you bitter: Zacharias did not (Lk. 1:20;67,68)*
- ⌘ *Elisabeth and Zacharias had a strong belief in the prophets and knew (from Dan. 9:24) that Messiah was due to appear. Zacharias declaration (Lk. 1:67-79) shows how he had faith in the coming Messiah, as did Elisabeth (1:42-45). Scripture tells us that Messiah will appear a second time ... to bring salvation (Heb. 9:28) so we, like Zacharias and Elisabeth, should develop faith and be ready for him.*

Joan Lewis

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