

Britain Debates *Life's Ultimate Question*

The re-emergence of media coverage of atheism in 2006 has helped focus British attention on that most crucial of all questions: Does God exist?

Columnist Gerard Baker of *The Times* recently called 2006 'a good year for religious conflict and atheism'. Across the Atlantic, columnist Jeff Jacoby of *The Boston Globe* also commented: 'You don't have to be especially religious to find this atheist zealotry alarming nor do you have to live in Europe. Though religion remains important in American life, anti-religious passion is surging here too' (*International Herald Tribune*).

The apostle of atheism

Many things have been and are being written about Oxford professor Richard Dawkins' disbelief in God. He is perhaps the world's foremost apostle of atheism.

John Preston, writing in *Seven* (the magazine supplement of *The Sunday Telegraph*), stated that Dawkins 'is almost evangelical in telling Christians they are misguided in their faith.' Even those who vehemently oppose his views generally acknowledge that Professor Dawkins 'has caused a sensation this year with the runaway success of his anti-religious book, *The God Delusion*' (*The Sunday Times*). His book heads the

nonfiction bestseller list in Britain, and stayed on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 14 weeks. (Please see the accompanying book review on page 2.)

On a recent train and ferry trip to and from Northern Ireland, I saw at least two individuals reading *The God Delusion* intently. In one case I sat down opposite a businessman, and a conversation about Professor Dawkins' book soon ensued. It turned out to be a friendly discussion in which I (hopefully tactfully and diplomatically) pointed out some of the flaws in the author's rationale.

Richard Dawkins started his aggressive campaign with a two-part television documentary titled *The Root of All Evil?* – meaning religion in general and Christianity in particular.

Education and religion

Professor Dawkins states that 'there is a strong correlation between religion

and education: the more educated people are, the less religious' (*FT Magazine*). If we are focusing on certain aspects of the secular education offered by this world's colleges and universities, his assessment bears marks of truth. But only those who believe in the reality of a personal God have examined the evidence and are truly educated.

Nonetheless, this exponent of atheism is not at all satisfied with education, even in elementary schools that mostly emphasise secularism. A fairly recent report stated that 'the Oxford professor and campaigning atheist is planning to take his fight against God into the classroom by flooding schools with anti-religious literature' (*The Sunday Times*).

Dawkins plans to set up a charity that 'will subsidise books, pamphlets and DVDs attacking the "educational scandal" of theories such as creationism while promoting rational and scientific



thought' (ibid). Sam Harris' atheistic *Letter to a Christian Nation* is on the nonfiction bestseller list in America, and is scheduled to hit the bookshelves in Britain in early February. It 'portrays Christianity as a kind of malign non-sense' (*International Herald Tribune*).

Far too many erroneously believe that religion is chiefly responsible for every human wrong in the world. Gerard Baker counters this false notion with the thought that: 'You don't have to be religious to have a dangerous inclination to bend others to your own views. Professor Richard Dawkins provided a timely reminder that belligerent

intolerance of the beliefs of others is by no means the preserve of the faithful' (*The Times*).

Beliefs of many British and Europeans

Historian Felipe Fernandez-Armesto recently assessed the current state of British religious interest in general terms. He stated: 'Sermons are about society, not salvation. Alastair Campbell spoke for England when he said *we don't do God*. The British now respond to religion with the embarrassment once provoked only by sex' (*The Independent*, emphasis added throughout).

Educational authorities like Chris Woodhead have indicated that 'RE [Religious Education] lessons are badly taught and fail to instil faith and tolerance. They should be axed' (*The Sunday Times*). Even the Jewish community in Britain has adherents in the atheist/agnostic camp, while still claiming to hold to some aspects of Judaism.

For instance, one couple gave their twin sons 'a faith-free Barmitzvah'. The two are quoted by *The Jewish Chronicle* as saying, 'You can be Jewish without praying to a God you don't believe in.'

(Continued on page 4)

Book Review

The God Delusion

Oxford professor Richard Dawkins indicates that religious faith has been the principal cause of suffering and violence in the world. His new book challenges belief in God on every level. Let's examine some of his conclusions from a biblical point of view.

Richard Dawkins is probably the world's chief and most vocal academic exponent of evolution. One of the main conclusions of his recently published book is 'God almost certainly does not exist' (p. 158).

We will focus here on Professor Dawkins' multiple attacks on God's Word rather than his scientific arguments. He states on page 237: 'Begin in Genesis with the well-loved story of Noah, derived from Babylonian myth of Uta-Naphisthim and known from the older mythologies of several centuries.'

Able supported by both the apostles Peter and Paul (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:15-17), Christians believe that God rather than myth is the ultimate source of the Bible, and that His servant Moses was the author of the first five books including Genesis (John 5:46).

Jesus Christ Himself authenticates the major epochal events described in Genesis, including the creation of the world (Mark 13:19), the creation of the first man and woman (Mark 10:6), Noah's flood (Luke 17:26-27) and the demise of Sodom and Gomorrah (verses 28-29).

Dawkins vigorously attacks the lack of morality in the book of Judges without any real comprehension of its basic intent and how the New Testament tells Christians to understand bad behaviour in the Hebrew Bible. The apostle Paul wrote: 'Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted . . . Now all these things happened to them as examples, and

they were written for our admonition' (see 1 Corinthians 10:6-11, excerpts). Indeed the concluding verse in Judges itself provides us an important key to properly understanding its contents. 'In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes' (Judges 21:25).

Professor Dawkins transitions from his attacks on the Old Testament by asking the question, 'Is the New Testament any better? Well there's no denying that, from a moral point of view, Jesus is a huge improvement over the cruel ogre of the Old Testament' (p. 250).

Clearly Dawkins does not realize how the events of the Hebrew Bible fit into the whole plan of God, and that the pre-existent Jesus was the God of the Old Testament (see 1 Corinthians 10:4; John 8:58; Exodus 3:13-14, etc). For further biblical evidence, please request our free booklet *Who Is God?*

His view of Christ's sacrifice is totally unacceptable to every Christian. He wrote: 'I have described atonement, the central doctrine of Christianity, as vicious, sado-masochistic and repellent. We should also dismiss it as barking mad' (page 253).

One reviewer rightly described the essence of the entire book as 'a counsel of despair'. Although we cannot recommend that you read *The God Delusion*, it does reflect the overall secular view of God and the Bible that predominates in much of the scholarly, academic world today.

Instead of reading *The God Delusion*, we recommend that you request and read our free booklets *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*

John Ross Schroeder

The God Delusion, Bantam Press, London, 2006

Stand Up and Be Counted!

It could hardly be a more realistic setting for the release of a new James Bond film.

Ian Fleming's 'Casino Royale' has been an incredible box office success in the United Kingdom for several reasons. One of them may well be the intrigue connected to the recent death of two Russians.

On 7th October, 45-year-old Russian investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya was murdered outside her home in Moscow. As a journalist she accused officials of abuses of power and wrote about events behind the scenes in Russian politics.

Then the death in London of 43-year-old Alexander Litvinenko, a former KGB colonel, has been linked to his desire to publicise details about Politkovskaya's death. For over three weeks he lay in hospital as his body tissue was under attack from a deadly dose of radioactive polonium-210.

People may speculate as to where the blame lies for the execution of both individuals. Politkovskaya and Litvinenko put their lives on the line for what they believed should be told to the world.

But how zealous are we to deliver

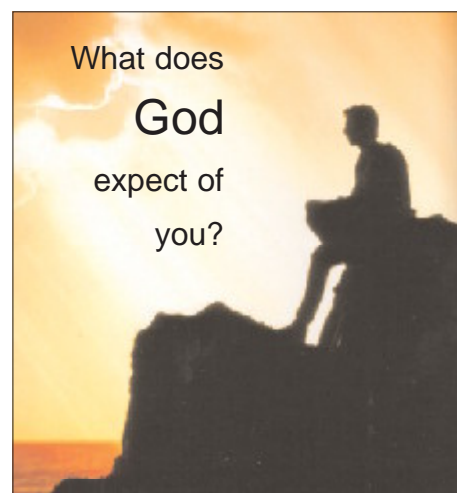
the message entrusted to us by Jesus Christ?

Inaction, fear and indifference

The opposite of conviction is inaction, fear, and indifference.

Irwin Cotler, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, in a speech in May 2005, declared: 'The genocide of European Jewry succeeded not only because of the culture of hate and industry of death but because of crimes of indifference, because of conspiracies of silence. And we have witnessed an appalling indifference and silence in our own day which took us down the road to the unthinkable – ethnic cleansing in the Balkans – and down the road to the unspeakable – the genocide in Rwanda – made even more unspeakable because this genocide was preventable. No one can say that we did not know. But we did not act. And we did not act in the genocide by attrition in Darfur.

'And so, it is our responsibility to break down these walls of indifference, to shatter these conspiracies of silence – to stand up and be counted and not look around to see whoever else is standing before we make a



judgement to do so – because in the world in which we live, there are few people prepared to stand, let alone be counted. The words of Edmund Burke come back to haunt us – “the surest way to ensure that evil will triumph in the world is for enough good people to do nothing.”

There should be things we believe with all our being – standards and issues that are worthy of putting our lives at risk. If we are truly Christians, are we willing to stand up and be counted for our foundational beliefs, the teachings found in the Holy Scriptures?

Most of what happens in society is based on core values of *self-interest*. As John, the last of the original apostles, wrote, 'For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world' (1 John 2:16).

The priority of the true values

Those who claim to follow Jesus Christ should be driven by a deep belief that their lives must be committed to action. That action should first be focused on the principle of renewing and reorienting their minds towards God and fellow man, and then on proclaiming how God wants



Christians were sometimes martyred before an audience of thousands in a Roman amphitheatre.

Sonja Hawkins

to present that same wonderful opportunity to all humanity.

People who see that the moral standards and religious beliefs of the majority do not match the Bible need to take personal action, to become actively involved in the Christian mission to awaken and enlighten others. Students of the New Testament who realize that many of the core beliefs and practices of the early Church have been discarded or changed should stand up and be counted.

As Jude wrote in his short letter, 'I found it necessary to write to you

exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was *once for all* delivered to the saints' (verse 3, emphasis added). The true Christian faith is not adaptable to every new whim of our current society.

To shrink back from being actively involved would show we fear the world and its powers more than the Judge of all men. Knowing the truth demands action, change and commitment. (To understand more, please read the article about true worship beginning on page 6.)

Jesus Christ spoke plainly: 'For whoever is ashamed of Me and My

words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels' (Mark 8:38).

Peter Hawkins

Be sure to read online, download copies or request printed copies of our free publications Transforming Your Life and The Church Jesus Built. They will show you the foundational biblical concepts and will help you to understand how to stand up and be counted.

Britain Debates

(Continued from page 2)

According to Harvard professor and author Niall Ferguson, 'the Gallup Millennium Survey of Religious Attitudes shows that 'barely 20 per cent of West Europeans attend church services at least once a week, compared with 47 per cent of North Americans and 82 per cent of West Africans. Less than half of Western Europeans say that God is a "very important" part of their lives, as against 83 per cent of Americans and virtually all West Africans. And fully 15 per cent of Western Europeans deny that there is any kind of "spirit, God or life force"' (*The Daily Telegraph*).

British author Roger Scruton has cannily observed in *The American Spectator* that 'this growing secularism is a dangerous luxury. *The dwindling of [Christian] faith among the Europeans has left them unprotected against the belligerent dogmatism of Islam*, which does not merely flow into every undefended space but actively excludes its rivals, once installed. In the face of the paranoid posture of European Muslims, the governments and people of Europe are relinquishing one by one the freedoms acquired over centuries, including the freedom of conscience.'

The other side of the debate

Daily Mail columnist and author Melanie Phillips pointed out that 'religion lies at the heart of our society's greatest achievements because it enables the human spirit to soar . . . It was this Judeo-Christian heritage that has given us values that secularists prize, such as human rights and tolerance.

'Religion gives us a code to live by which helps make us better people . . . The value we in the West place on every individual and on the principle of equality is based on our foundation religious doctrine that *we are all created equal in the image of God.*'

Columnist Jeff Jacoby articulated the fact that 'without God the difference between good and evil becomes purely subjective' (*International Herald Tribune*).

At least a few scientists also ask some searching questions relevant to life's ultimate question. For instance, Martin Rees, president of the Royal Society, stated: 'The pre-eminent mystery is why anything exists at all. What breathes life into the equations; and actualized them in a real cosmos. Such questions lie beyond science, however; they are the province of philosophers and theologians' (*The Sunday Times*).

A cover article in *Time* magazine (international edition) stated: 'The universe seems uncannily well suited to the existence of life. *Could that really be an accident?*'

In yet another piece from *Time* Francis Collins, director of the Human Genome Research Institute states: 'For me the fundamental answers about the meaning of life come not from science, but from a consideration of the origins of our uniquely human sense of right and wrong and from the historical record of Christ's life on earth.'

The testimony of a former atheist

It happens! About three years ago, 'One of the most renowned atheists of the past half century . . . changed his mind and decided that there is a God after all. Anthony Flew [now 84], emeritus professor of philosophy at Reading University, whose arguments for atheism have influenced scholars the world over, has been converted to the view that some sort of deity created the universe' (*The Sunday Times*).

To quote this long-believing atheist directly, Professor Flew stated: 'I have been persuaded that it is simply out of the question that the first living matter evolved out of dead matter and then developed into an extraordinary creature' (*ibid.*).

It is axiomatic that *life comes from life!* The question is: Who possessed life before the creation? The Bible tells us that both the Father and the Son have

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Worship God – Together and in Private

What does it mean to worship God. What does the Bible say about the acceptable way to worship Him?

Consider the personal testimony of a vision given to the Hebrew prophet Isaiah: ‘In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the LORD, sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple’ (Isaiah 6:1). Then one angelic being in attendance cried to another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory’ (verse 3).

An Anglican theologian once commented that ‘God has been abridged, reduced modified, edited, changed and amended until He is no longer the God Isaiah saw, high and lifted up.’ Many mainstream churches have come to the place which Jesus Christ described in Mark 7:7: ‘*In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*’ (emphasis added throughout). So it is possible to worship God in vain, without any positive results for the worshipper.

Today we need to be sure we are pleasing God in how we worship Him. We need to know just what is acceptable in His sight.

The Oxford Shorter Historical Dictionary defines worship as:

- Respect or honour shown to a person.
- Reverence or veneration paid to a thing, or supernatural power or being regarded as divine.
- The actions or practice of displaying the above, in appropriate acts, rites or ceremonies.

So far so good. But what does the Bible say about true worship?

What the Bible says is true worship

How does God view it? Jesus Christ said to the Samaritan woman at the well: ‘You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, *when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father seeks such to worship Him*’ (John 4:22-23).

‘In spirit and in truth’ indicates

‘Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?’

that we really mean it. This leads us to the crucial question of how we should show this heartfelt respect to God in our thoughts, actions, practice, and ceremonies.

Obedience and worship

Where better to begin than Exodus 20:1-5, the account of the giving of the Ten Commandments: ‘God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the LORD your God . . . You shall have no other gods before Me . . . You shall not bow down to them nor serve them’ (excerpts).

There is a fundamental truth here that we must understand. Worship in essence is *obedience*. This truth is in agreement with the dictionary definition. Notice Jesus’ question in Luke 6:46: ‘Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?’ Matthew’s gospel centres on the same theme: ‘Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he [or she] who does the will of My

Father in heaven’ (Matthew 7:21).

In exactly the same way, faith must be verified and validated by works. The apostle James firmly stated: ‘I will show you my faith by my works’ (James 2:18). So our worship must be declared by our deeds. One good synonym for worship is *obedience to God’s will*.

But what should be our attitude of mind while we are worshipping God? He had said of ancient Israel: ‘Oh that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever’ (Deuteronomy 5:29).

So having the right attitude of heart and mind is of supreme importance.

The one true way to worship God is to be found by using the whole Bible. Notice what Paul said on this point in his defence to Felix in Acts 24:14: ‘This I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and the Prophets.’

So to worship God we must pay attention to the whole Word. We should not add or detract from Scripture.

Fine-tuning our worship

The Creator of the Universe has noticed us! We are His children. The psalmist said: ‘Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.’ This sentence appears three times in the Old Testament: Psalm 29:2, Psalm 96:9, and 1 Chronicles 16:29.

We worship God in righteous actions or we are not worshipping Him at all.

We all without thinking stop on occasion and remove a speck of something off our clothes. Our worship must be similarly improved regularly.

In summary, we are now beginning to understand the truth of God about worship. We are to do it in spirit and in truth. That means it should be heartfelt and reflect our eagerness and enthusiasm for God. And we should worship according to His will, which is only expressed in His word (1 John 5:14-15). Doing the will of our Father in heaven is not a chore, not a legalistic requirement (verse 3). So we see from God's Word that it is our pleasurable duty to please our Creator.

With this foundational knowledge firmly in place, let's now look briefly at worship in the private and public spheres.

Private worship

Matthew 6:9-13 gives us what is often known as the Lord's Prayer. But this particular chapter also lays some of the ground rules for our private worship of God. It's all about a relationship with God and putting Him first in our lives.

The instruction provided in the Sermon on the Mount includes giving to the poor. As much as possible this should be done privately (verses 2-3). Likewise prayers to the Father should basically be of a private nature (verses 5-6). And we should not fast to be seen of men (verses 17-18). Otherwise we have no reward for doing these things from our Father in heaven. Yet if we follow His instructions, the Father has promised to reward us openly.

How does a close bond between friends become established? It is formed

in the time they spend together sharing common goals and interests. More specifically, if two people are getting to know one another with a view to marrying, do they do this always in a group? Of course not. That's common sense.

Through Christ's death we can gain direct access to God the Father. The implication is that, being God, He wants a warm personal, direct relationship with His children.

Worship in public

Do these passages in Matthew 6 mean then that we should never speak to God publicly and we should never pray publicly? Of course not. Christ and the apostles often did.

Jesus Christ told us to let our lights shine before men, but not necessarily always with our voices. The apostle Peter gives us some important additional instruction. 'Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks

How does a close bond become established? It is formed in the time two individuals spend together.

you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear' (1 Peter 3:15). We are also told by the apostle Paul to 'become blameless and harmless, children of God, without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world' (Philippians 2:15).

Finally, Jesus Christ told Christians that they should be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). This is an important aspect of true worship. Yet we don't need to put up a sign telling others about our good works.

Worship God together in Church services

According to Leviticus 23:3, attending Sabbath services is commanded. It is not optional for Christians, if it is at all geographically feasible, health and weather permitting (see also Hebrews 10:25).

There was a time when we took our God and the Christian religion more seriously. Prayers, the psalms, readings from the Bible and useful sermons were much more common.

We may not be able to turn back the clock for the nation, but we can begin to worship God properly ourselves (2 Kings 22:11-13).

Worshipping with the right body of believers and on the correct day is of crucial importance. To understand when and how, request our free booklets *The Church Jesus Built*, and *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*.

In conclusion

Worship consists of obedience to our God. This includes the proper respect and honour fitting for our Creator. We are all bought with the price of Christ's precious blood. We are to be subject to God even in our thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Worship must always be underpinned by respect and honour, in accordance with God's Word. Our worship must also be from the heart, fully recognising our status with respect to our Creator. 'Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear' (Hebrews 12:28).

Will McLoughlin

How our literature is funded

The United Church of God – British Isles is registered as a charity in England and Wales (number 1079192). The publication of this Supplement and other literature is funded by the generosity of members of the Church, co-workers and our readers. Following Jesus Christ's instruction (Matthew 10:8), it is supplied free of charge so that His message can be made available to all. We are grateful to those who assist financially in the work done by *The Good News*. Donations may be sent to: The United Church of God, PO Box 705, WATFORD WD19 6FZ, United Kingdom.

Questions & Answers

Q Is there any difference in the Bible between physical and spiritual baptism?

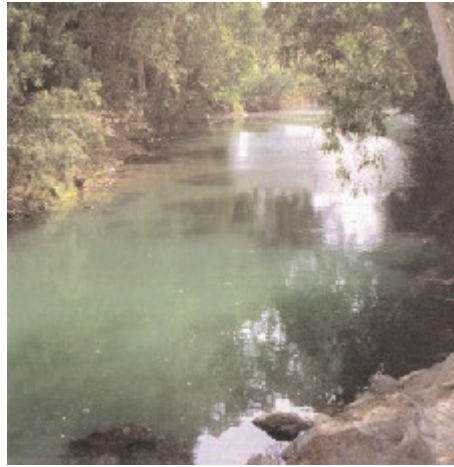
M P, Liverpool

A The English word 'baptism' is transliterated from the Greek (the language of the New Testament). *Baptizmo* means immersion in water. Although this is a physical act, it has important spiritual implications because Ananias told Paul, 'Arise and be baptised, and wash away your sins' (Acts 22:16, emphasis added throughout).

This shows that the popular sprinkling with a few drops of water isn't a biblical baptism. Jesus instructed John to baptise Him in the river Jordan because he could immerse Christ completely in the water. Notice that after the ceremony had taken place, Jesus came up *out of the water* (Mark 1:10). Also see John 3:23: 'Now John was also baptising in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.' Wherever baptism takes place (whether in a swimming pool, river, lake or sea), there has to be sufficient water for a proper biblical baptism.

The physical act symbolises the death of the old, sinful man or woman. The apostle Paul plainly stated: 'Do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life' (Romans 6:3-4). Burial of a deceased person normally consists of putting that individual completely underground. The analogy is consistent.

Paul alluded to this symbolic burial of water baptism to the brethren at Colosse. 'If then you were raised with Christ [out of the waters of baptism], seek those things which are



Jordan River, where John baptised.

above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God . . . For you died [figuratively by baptism] and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory' (Colossians 3:1-4).

This takes place by and through the first resurrection. 'For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection' (Romans 6:5). This passage abundantly underscores the importance of water baptism in the salvation process. And: 'He who believes and is baptised will be saved' (Mark 16:16).

John the Baptist also speaks of being baptised with the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 3:11-12). This scripture has reference to receiving the Holy Spirit after true repentance and water baptism. The apostle Peter instructed early Christians: 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38).

Notice that there is a progressive order: first repentance, then water baptism, followed by the reception of the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus 'who bap-

tises with the Holy Spirit' (John 1:33; compare Mark 1:8). After we receive the Holy Spirit we then become an integral part of Christ's body, which is the Church (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Ephesians 1:22-23). Also: 'For by one Spirit [the Holy Spirit] we are all baptised into one body [Christ's body, the Church] . . . and have all been made to drink into one Spirit' (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Although water baptism is a physical act, it has deep spiritual implications and is normally followed by the receiving of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by the ministry. For a much more detailed understanding of water baptism, request our two free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

Britain Debates

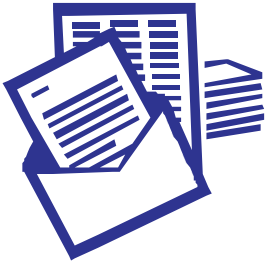
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life within themselves (John 5:26).

During the mid first-century the apostle Paul addressed academics in Athens, declaring the reality of the Creator God to the Greek philosophers of his day (see Acts 17:16-28). In a very real sense this aspect of the gospel is also a part of the brief of the United Church of God today.

We have written in detail about the many reasons why we believe there is a personal Creator God who has always existed. Please be sure to request (or download) our free booklets on this important subject – *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?, Who Is God?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* The rationale for these three booklets springs from the Bible and from the perspective and evidence of true science.

John Ross Schroeder



Letters From Our Readers

The Good News

Thank you so much for answering my question. I really appreciate the time and trouble you went to. Thanks to you, I now have peace of mind. May I take the opportunity to also thank you for a wonderful magazine and an excellent Web site? I find the *Bible Study Course* a great help as well. God's Word is a really fascinating thing. I find it very comforting and moving when I think of John 3:16. It's a pity more people don't realise this. But thanks to people like you, more people can now learn about it and look forward to the resurrection Jesus talks about in John 5:28. May the Lord continue to be with you in your excellent work.

R M, Belfast, Northern Ireland

I enjoy reading *The Good News*. I refer certain points for thought to my son and daughter. I agree so much with the article about Christmas.

Mrs M M, Wiltshire

I am very grateful for the past year's issues and very much appreciate the booklets too. I'm looking forward to future issues of *The Good News*. Your publications are helping me to understand parts of the Bible that I'd found difficult. And they are inspiring me to keep on reading and studying. I've been reading the book of Revelation recently, so your booklet about it came at the right time.

Miss G M T, Wirral

The Good News is a stimulating, thought-provoking read. Can you please send me more information about The United Church of God? I am a committed Christian and a

member of the Church of England, but am always intrigued to know more about the other Christian denominations.

B E, Bath

• *As you will discover by reading our recently posted free booklet, This Is the United Church of God, we are not a denomination in the usual sense.*

From a former atheist

I used to be a devout atheist for 38 years, so I definitely believe in miracles! I didn't even know about the Holy Spirit. I had never read the Bible. The joy inside me is from God and I am sure the meaning of life is to come to know God during our lifetime on earth. I have no earthly desires but just to know and come closer to God while I'm alive on this beautiful planet. Thank you for your booklets.

J D R, Penzance

Response to regional letter

Thank you for sending me the two booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *How to Understand Bible Prophecy*. I am sure I will enjoy studying your views. Because I have received these booklets, you must have received my application for another year's supply of *The Good News* as the request was written on the same coupon.

Mrs J T, Ferndown

Seriously considering water baptism

I would like to say thank you for the numerous newsletters. They have helped me to come closer to the truth

and to understand the meaning of various topics concerning the Bible and becoming a true Christian. I am 18 years old and accepted Christ in my life two years ago. I am still in the process of maturing. The next step is water baptism. I ask that you will pray for me that I may come to the conclusion of making the decision for water baptism as I have just read that it is vital to receive the Holy Spirit of God.

T H, Birmingham

• *You may wish to read the Questions & Answers on page 7, explaining more about water baptism, and also request the suggested free literature about this subject at its conclusion.*

Bible Study Course

Many thanks for your informative, helpful and interesting *Bible Study Course*. I have learned more from it than all the other Bible courses put together probably because instead of just being required to listen, I had to take part and look through the Bible myself. I intend to reread and go through my workbooks again in the new year.

Mrs J R, Witney

Readers help with costs

Thank you for sending me *The Good News*. Please accept this little gift. It will help with the cost.

D M, Armagh, Northern Ireland

The Good News is instructive, interesting and helpful in this darkening hour. Thank you. The enclosed is a donation to help you provide these resources to us.

J C, Plymouth