

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning*

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SAVED IN THE SCRIPTURAL MANNER

Those who take upon themselves the task of writing and publishing religious tracts, and other gospel literature, shoulder a great responsibility. One might even say, an awesome responsibility. And yet when we read the many tracts which come our way it is staggering to see that the vast majority of them not only give misinformation, but would confuse and lead the seeker-after-truth astray.

All types of tracts reach us from time to time, and I have, in the past, occasionally made some comments upon some of them. At the moment I have a tract before me, recently sent to me all the way from Canada which, like so many others, gives some serious misinformation. It purports to guide enquirers in to the ways of salvation, but, sadly, follows the long tradition of so many other similar tracts, by telling penitents that they need "ONLY BELIEVE."

For the benefit of some of our younger readers, or readers otherwise new to this widespread doctrine, I offer the following comments and if anything unfair or inaccurate is said by me I hope I will be challenged. I will certainly print any ensuing correspondence. In trying to be charitable we imagine that some of these tract-writers don't know any better, and are doing their best with the knowledge that they have, but invariably we are forced to the conclusion that they certainly should know better and *studiously avoid* all passages of scripture which may interfere with their chosen subject.

Although there are slight variations to the theme of "only believe", the basic core of the dogma is that people can be saved instantaneously (even sitting beside their radio sets or driving their cars) by suddenly "believing" in Jesus. Those who preach this particular belief and accept it (and there are vast numbers), would advise enquirers that they have nothing to DO in regard to their salvation (for Christ did it all on the cross) and they need simply believe. Obviously we must all BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, and certainly Christ accomplished our salvation on the cross, but, as we shall clearly see from the N.T., there are also things that we must DO in our acceptance of salvation. We do not have to rely on the interpretation of one or two verses of scriptures on this subject for, in the Acts of the Apostles, we have **several clear examples** of conversion, and what can be better than *real examples* of how men, and women, from all walks of life, were saved in N.T. times? From these examples we can judge for ourselves as to whether the apostle Peter believed in the "only believe" teaching, or Philip, or Ananias or Paul. In short, *how* did the apostles carry out Christ's instructions to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? What did they understand by this and *how did they* convert enquirers?

REAL EXAMPLES OF TRUE CONVERSIONS

The book of Acts takes up where the Gospels leave off. The Gospels close with the account of the ascension of Jesus to God's right hand in heaven, after giving His final instructions to His apostles. These instructions, according to Mark, were **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."** (16:15). Even at the outset, these instructions of Christ seem to be in conflict with the tract in that, according to Jesus Himself, salvation *was to be preceded* not only by belief, but repentance and baptism. We shall see if this view is borne out by how the apostles interpreted Christ's instructions. Subsequent to Christ's instructions, the first recorded instance of the preaching of the gospel is by the apostle Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, and is in consequence of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the assembled apostles (Acts 2).

THE SAVING OF THE 3,000 AT PENTECOST (Acts 2)

Moved, supernaturally, by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, Peter preached to a massive Jewish audience so effectively that he convicted them of having killed the Messiah, the Son of God. Stricken in conscience they called out **"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"** In Peter's reply we shall notice that he did not tell them to BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, for evidently they already believed in Him, but he directed them in *the next steps* of their conversion. He said, **"Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"** (2:37). Here is a passage of which our tract writer must be completely unaware for it does not mention "belief" but does mention repentance and baptism. And baptism is for the remission of sins. And surely, "remission of sins" must be *a very important ingredient* in a person's salvation. In response to Peter's preaching 3,000 souls **"gladly received his word and were baptised"** that same day (v.41). Baptism didn't seem "unnecessary" to those 3,000.

PHILIP AND THE SAMARITANS (Acts 8)

The next conversions in the Acts refer to the preaching of Philip the evangelist to the Samaritans. This was during the persecution of the Churches in Jerusalem orchestrated by Saul (later Paul). Many of the citizens of Samaria had hitherto been under the spell of Simon the Sorcerer, who had **"For a long time bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptised he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and the signs which were done"** (v.12). Here we are informed that the large numbers of Samaritans who believed were also baptised (including Simon the Sorcerer).

PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH (Acts 8)

The next conversion mentioned in Acts involves the Ethiopian Eunuch, Chancellor of the Exchequer to Queen Candace. The eunuch is returning home on his chariot from Jerusalem and is not only reading Isaiah Chap. 53 but is debating within himself as to whom it refers. The Holy Spirit brings Philip to the chariot, and Philip at the eunuch's request, boards the chariot and enters into a conversation on the predictions of Isaiah. **"Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised."** Before we look at what happened next we should, I think, wonder how the eunuch knew to mention baptism. It seems clear that Philip was not preaching an "only believe"

doctrine: but baptism was an important element of his gospel message. Philip had preached unto him "Jesus" and obviously this included the element of baptism. We notice, too, that the eunuch did not say, "Who is going to force me to be baptised" but rather "What can stop me from being baptised." Clearly the eunuch had the attitude that God requires, **"And Philip said, if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest . . . And he commanded the chariot to stand still and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch and he baptised him"** (v.38). Thus according to Philip, only those who believe in Christ totally (with all their hearts) are fit subjects for baptism. Can any sane person contemplate Philip telling the eunuch about baptism, stopping the chariot, going down into a pool of water waist-high and immersing the eunuch if the whole business was quite unnecessary? Can we imagine it? And yet many tract writers either manage to avoid the mention of baptism, or completely dismiss it as "unnecessary to salvation." Perhaps they have overlooked Acts 8.

PAUL'S OWN CONVERSION (Acts 9)

Paul was an unlikely candidate for God's selection to service. It was while Paul (then Saul) was **"Yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord"** (and was in fact, on his way to Damascus to wreak havoc on the Christians there) that he was struck down and blinded by the Lord Jesus Christ. Horrified to learn that he had, in fact, been persecuting Christ, he **"trembling and astonished, asked the Lord, What will Thou have me do?"** This, of course, was a golden opportunity for Jesus to say, "Do? You have nothing to do: Only believe." But the Lord said no such thing. **"Jesus said, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou MUST DO."** Struck temporarily blind, Paul was led by the hand into Damascus and was in such a state of mental turmoil that **"He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."** After three days God sent a reluctant Ananias to Saul to restore his sight and tell him what he must do. **"Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received his sight forthwith, and arose and was baptised"** Luke (who wrote the Acts) merely mentions that Paul **"arose and was baptised."** However, years later, when Paul was recounting the circumstances of his own conversion, he gave us a little more detail. He says that after Ananias had restored his sight, Ananias informed him that he (Paul) had been chosen by God to know God's will and **"to see the Just One, and to hear word from His mouth, For thou shalt be a witness to all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now, why tarriest thou, Arise, and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"** (Acts 22:15). One would have imagined that if Paul was specially chosen by God to do God's will, and to actually see Christ, and actually hear Christ's words, that baptism could have been dispensed with. Some tract-writers would think so. Yet Paul's conversion is similar to all the rest: God is no respecter of persons in this. Paul had spent the last three days in remorse, fasting and prayers, but these prayers had not erased his sins; otherwise Ananias, at the end of the three would not have said **"Arise, and be baptised and wash away thy sins . . ."** Again, we cannot imagine a man being "saved" if, three days later, he is still "in his sins." Thus Paul was not "saved" at his meeting with Christ, but was saved only after the three days when he had "obeyed the gospel" in baptism, and had "washed away" (not "prayed away") his sins. Thus Ananias confirms the words of Peter (in Acts 2:37) that *baptism is for the remission of sins*: and "remission of sins" is a very important consideration in a person being "saved." How can tract-writers ignore such things?

CORNELIUS AND HIS HOUSEHOLD (Acts 10)

After Paul's conversion in Chap. 9 we have the conversion of the first Gentiles in

Chap. 10. We see from the record that the apostle Peter had to be convinced by a vision from God that the Gentiles should receive the gospel. However reluctant Peter may have been, he duly arrives at the house of Cornelius, a Roman soldier, and preaches to a very enthusiastic group of Gentiles. Peter concludes his gospel address with these words: **"To Him (Christ) give all the prophets witness that, through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed (the Jews) were astonished (as many as came with Peter) because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the Holy Spirit."** (There are only two recorded instances in the N.T. of baptism in the Holy Spirit: this one and that of the apostles, in Acts 2). Most of our tract-writing friends would tell us that men baptised in the Holy Spirit were highly honoured and certainly saved instantaneously. Yet Peter, after he recovered from his astonishment that the Gentiles had been baptised in the Holy Spirit, said, **"Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptised (which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we). And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord"** (v.47). To Peter, baptism in water was not some unnecessary humbug, or optional appendage to salvation, but was vital and something he *commanded to be done*, even with those who had just, in his presence, been baptised by God, in the Holy Spirit.

CONVERSION OF LYDIA (Acts 16)

Paul and Silas describe how, on their second missionary journey, they came to Philippi and stayed there several days. **"And on the sabbath we went out of the city by the riverside, where prayer was wont to be made: and we sat down and spoke to the women that resorted thither. A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord had opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptised and her household, she besought us saying, If ye have judged me faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there."** Again, all those who heard the gospel and believed it, were baptised.

CONVERSION OF THE JAILER (Acts 16)

While in the same city of Philippi, Paul and Silas later encountered much persecution and ended up in jail. God intervened, and means of an earthquake sundered open the prison doors. Thinking that the prisoners had escaped, the jailer prepared to kill himself but Paul restrained him and said, **"Do thyself no harm, for we are all here."** Although the jailer was a heathen man, he was astute enough to realise he had angered the God of Peter and Silas, and, in fear and trembling, said, **"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"** Paul replied, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,"** Plainly the jailer knew nothing about Christ and so **"Paul spoke unto him in the word of the Lord, and to all that were in the house."** The outcome is recorded in the next verse. **"And he, (the jailer) took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and WAS BAPTISED he and all his straightaway."** The jailer and his household were baptised *immediately*.

THE CORINTHIANS (Acts 18)

Paul, still on his second missionary journey, came from Athens to Corinth, and preached the gospel to everyone: Jews and Gentiles. When many Jews rejected his message and blasphemed, Paul concentrated his efforts on the Gentiles, **"And Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptised"** (v.8). And so the pattern is maintained: those in Corinth who heard and believed, were immersed.

THE EPHESIANS (Acts 19)

The last relevant mention of baptism in Acts relates to what Paul found at Ephesus. When he asked certain brethren if they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed they replied, in surprise, that they had never even heard of the Holy Spirit. This, in turn, surprised Paul, and he asked, "Unto what, then, were ye baptised? And they said, **Unto John's baptism.**" Paul then explained to them that whereas John's baptism had been previously relevant, it had now been superseded and overtaken by Christ's baptism. "And when they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord." Thus we have here an example of *Godly men*, who having already been baptised with John's baptism, and had to be baptised again, with Christ's baptism. This incident is of great interest and shows us *the importance* that Paul attached to baptism: Christ's baptism.

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

"But," someone says, "The thief on the cross was 'saved' without being baptised. I want to be saved like the thief on the cross."

Prior to Pentecost, and while Jesus trode the earth, being all powerful, He could at will, retain sins or forgive sins on *whatever terms He pleased*, or indeed *upon no terms whatsoever*. This was during His ministry and prior to His burial. After His death however, the will of Christ as Testator assumed its full force and, since Christ had ascended into heaven, He was in any case, no longer here to forgive people personally. Thus from the time of the ascension, Christ's terms for salvation were committed into the hands of His earthly representatives (the apostles) and they were sent into all the world to make these terms known. As we have already seen, Christ's parting instructions to His apostles were, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Consequently people today cannot be 'saved' like the thief on the cross, who was, after all, the *only person* to whom Jesus ever said "Today thou will be with Me in paradise," (whatever that meant). Similarly Jesus said to various people, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" and to the woman taken in adultery, He said, "neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." But no one expects that to happen today. Those who asked to be saved like the thief on the cross are very selective and, predictably don't want to be saved on the terms given to the rich young ruler: "Go and sell all thou hast and give it to the poor." We can't ask to be saved in a preferred manner. Salvation is non-negotiable. Even Paul (a chosen vessel) as we have seen, was not "saved like the thief on the cross" but was instructed by Christ personally, to go into the city and wait until he was told the things he must do. The *terms of entry* into the Kingdom of God, and for the remission of sins, were enunciated at Pentecost and have never changed.

CONCLUSION

Many years ago, the late brother David Dougal, an evangelist for whom I had great respect and admiration, assured me that once we had a solid grasp of the Acts of the Apostles we could go anywhere. His words are so true and a study of the Acts is one of the most profitable pursuits of the Bible student. It certainly sheds much light on the question of conversion: and how men can be saved.

Fortunately in this article, it has been possible to squeeze in all the conversions in the Acts, and surely the record speaks for itself. Every conversion there (without any exception) has clearly shown us that, in N.T. times, all believers were called upon to renounce sin (repent) and to be baptised (immersed) that their past sins might be washed away and that they might rise from that watery grave to walk in a newness of life (Rom. 6). Certain tract-writers will doubtless continue to write their tracts and

maintain that we need "only believe" but from this very brief look at the Acts we have seen that Peter did not subscribe to the doctrine and neither did Philip, Ananias or Paul. This is hardly surprising when we remember that Jesus, in His commission, said, "He that believeth and is baptised will be saved." Jesus in His purpose, placed baptism between belief and salvation, and as I say, a great responsibility rests with those who would alter the sequence of Christ's words and would make Him say, "He that believeth is saved, and may be baptised if he feels the need." Truly an awesome responsibility rests on those who write tracts. Tracts should reflect the facts in Acts.

(I regret this article is even longer than usual, but I wanted to include all the conversions in Acts)

EDITOR.

THE HIGHWAY TO LIFE EVERLASTING

Life is a journey. Isaiah said that God's highway would be so plain that even a fool could travel it without error. But Jesus warned that few would find the road to life in comparison to the many that travel the road to destruction. Which highway are you travelling today?

The journey of life begins with a physical birth. We all love the sweet innocence of little children, how we all gather around new mothers and marvel that another soul has come into being! Jesus pointed to the attitude and innocence of children as examples of citizens in the kingdom of heaven: **"suffer little children and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."** **"Except ye become converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."**

As children grow up they are subjected to the influences of a sinful world; they come into contact with the wiles of Satan and sin separates them from God. We call this change from innocence "reaching the age of accountability." When this occurs the person becomes subject to the gospel call to obedience through faith in Jesus Christ that their sins may be blotted out.

Exactly how old a child must be to reach the age of accountability we cannot say; it varies with the rate of maturity and knowledge of the child. If he is old enough to believe, to be conscious of his sins, old enough to repent, to confess his faith and to be immersed in water for the remission of sins, he is old enough to obey the gospel and be added to the Church, the Body of Christ.

At the tender age of 12 Jesus asked His parents **"wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? . . . and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and MAN."** Thus Jesus left an ideal example for the growth and development of young people.

In the Old Testament God commanded children to obey their parents; in the New Testament, the apostle Paul wrote **"Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth."**

One enters through the straight gate and begins his journey on the narrow road that leads to life by obeying the gospel. Jesus told Nicodemus that a man must be born again to see God; that he must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God.

THE PERFECT GUIDE

The Bible is a perfect guide for those who travel the road of life: **"Wherewithal**

shall a young man cleanse his ways? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word." "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths."

In walking the narrow road one must always be aware of Satan; his great aim is to make Christians think that they have heavy black loads to bear, but he is lying. Jesus said "my yolk is easy and My burden is light" . . . "Casting all your cares on Him for He careth for you."

That the road is narrow does not mean that it is crowded; we walk it freely with light and joyful steps. To the contrary the broad road is heavily crowded with much pushing and jostling; people walk it heavily burdened with sins and sorrows.

Death inevitably ends the road that we travel here below: "It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment." But there is a vast difference in the consequences of whether we die in the Lord, or in our sins: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." On the other hand, Jesus told those on the broad road "I go my way, and ye shall seek Me and shall die in your sins: Whither I go, ye cannot come."

Life is indeed a journey from birth to the grave; a miraculous gift from the Almighty creator of the Universe who holds the keys of our destiny in His hands. He has revealed our origin and our final destiny in the Bible. He gives us the choice of two roads to travel: the narrow way to life everlasting or the broad way to destruction.

Each moment of our lives we are on one or other of these two roads. It is crucial for us to realise the awful consequences of ending our journey on the wrong road that we may keep our feet from straying from following the Lord. Jesus ever invites us to renounce evil, to repent of our sins and come to Him for the rest promised from the foundation of the world.

A. F. ARNOLD.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

This month we have been asked to consider a question which, at first glance, may appear to fall outside the scope of "Question Box," since the topics with which we usually deal are those that obviously have to do either with the scriptures or with our faith,

The question, which has been sent in, is this:

"Is it alright for a Christian to be a Worshipful Master in the Freemasons?"

However, if we read chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation, where we find the letters of the Lord Jesus to seven churches of Asia, we see that this question is not at all irrelevant, because those letters reveal a very real problem that had to be faced by the churches to whom they were sent; a problem that was created by the Trade Guilds which, in New Testament times, exerted a powerful influence on all life in the cities named in the letters - Guilds to which all who followed a particular trade were expected to belong. The dilemma that confronted Christian tradesmen was simple, but inescapable. They must either compromise their faith and join a Trade Guild, or remain

true to their faith and refuse to become involved in an organisation which recognised a false god as its patron. They knew that if they refused to join they would find themselves denied the right to earn a living.

A Brief History

To explain the connection between 'then' and 'now' let me point out that, even after these Trade Guilds ceased to be idolatrous in nature, they survived for many centuries: well into the Middle Ages and one of the most influential of them was the '*Guild of the Masons.*' Originally, membership in this Guild was restricted to the stonemasons who, in the 14th century, built some of the great cathedrals, and it was set up by the masons themselves, '*for mutual help and brotherly association.*'

It was some time later that the conditions of membership were relaxed to allow in wealthy and important people, and it was this broadening of the Guild's membership that inevitably produced a shift of emphasis in the nature of its aims from business matters to social activities.

Eventually, as membership continued to grow, and especially when members of the nobility and of the Royal family joined the 'Lodge' several Guilds agreed to unite to form '*The Grand Lodge of London and Westminster.*' That was in 1717, and those in that association were known as '*The Free and Accepted Masons.*' Less than six years later this 'Grand Lodge' took the name, '*Grand Lodge of England*' and, it is claimed by some, that from this body, which they describe as the 'mother lodge' all recognised Masonic Lodges throughout the world derive their origin.

A Status Symbol

It is not surprising that, because members of the nobility and people of wealth and influence were known to belong to the Lodge, merchants and business-men quickly came to regard membership in the 'Freemasons' not only as an indication of social status, but also as an essential aid to success in business. Consequently, Freemasonry gradually assumed the character of an 'upper and middle-class' philanthropic society, which, today, claims to be '*essentially an educational society, attempting to teach its members a moral philosophy of life.*'

At least, this is how it officially represents itself. But although it strongly denies that it is a 'religion' it has quite definitely taken on itself a religious veneer by making use of the Bible in its rituals, and especially, those Old Testament passages which relate to Solomon's Temple. As you will appreciate, considering its early beginnings among the stonemasons, details concerning the building of the First Temple have become the basis of the 'rites' and ceremonies of The Masonic Lodge.

Appropriate for a Christian

The brother who asked this month's question wishes to know if a Christian can be a '*Worshipful Master*' in the Freemasons.

First, although the Masonic Order claims to be an impartial philanthropic society, extending benevolence to any and all who may be in need, it is, in reality, an exclusive society. With its closely guarded rituals, its secret signs and its coded language - (proceedings, it should be noted, that are enforced by the taking of an oath. See what the Lord says about this, in Matt. 5:34-37) - it cannot be denied that Freemasonry is a secret association, and this fact alone should cause any Christian to ask himself if, as a follower of Jesus Christ, is it an organisation to which he can belong, much less, in which he can accept office.

The Freemason's oath, to which I have referred, is taken on the Bible, '*or the book held sacred by those concerned*' whichever book that may be, and the stated purpose of the rituals is '*to help to keep secret a Freemason's means of recognition.*'

Incidentally, I might mention that the word *'Bible'* is not used in the language of the Lodge, probably to avoid giving offence to non-Christian Masons. Instead, they refer to *'The Volume of the Sacred Law,'* and we are told that *'it is always open at every meeting.'*

Opposition to A Secret Society

To say that the secrets of the Lodge are closely guarded is no exaggeration and is not difficult to prove. For instance, in 1826 William Morgan, who lived in New York and who was a Freemason, threatened to reveal the secrets of the Masonic Order.

This man was arrested on a flimsy charge of theft and debt and was convicted and imprisoned. There was widespread suspicion at the time, that the charge was a pretext for silencing him and the suspicion was deepened when, shortly afterwards he was kidnapped.

Morgan was never seen again and what happened to him is still not known, but it was widely believed that he had been abducted and murdered by the Masons. Whether this was true, or not, the incident resulted in a wave of 'anti-Masonic' feeling in the United States, and in certain States several Lodges were abandoned. The Morgan affair resulted in the formation of the 'Anti-Masonic Party' about two years later, but the Party did not survive for very long, due to political changes in the United States.

An Unchristian and Deistic Organisation

Another fact to take into consideration is that the Masonic Order cannot be regarded as a 'Christian' organisation, since what 'religion' it represents is 'Deism,' which is *the recognition of the existence of a Supreme Being, independent of any particular religious creed.*

This is a philosophy which is very convenient and accommodating, and one which many people in the world today find acceptable, but it is not one to which anyone who calls himself a Christian can subscribe, unless he is prepared to compromise his own Christian faith and accept the popular view that *'one religion is just as good as another.'*

The Lord Jesus said, *"I am the Way . . . no one comes to the Father except by Me"* John 14:6. The liberal attitude of Freemasonry rejects this.

In fact, if we look at the principles of Freemasonry we find among them, that:

1. It claims that *'religion is the private concern of the individual himself, and what a man chooses to believe or not believe, is his own business.*
2. It is *'open to men of all religious faiths, and the discussion of religion at its meetings is forbidden.'*
3. It demands that all its members have a *'belief in a Supreme Being.'*
4. It states that, *'A Freemason's God remains the God of the religion he professes.'*
5. It says that, Freemasons (of all religious persuasions) *'meet in common respect for the Supreme Being, and it is no part of Freemasonry to attempt to join religions together.'*

Notice the use of the description, *'Supreme Being.'* Care is taken not to use any name for God that could possibly give offence to non-Christians, and, I have to say that, it seems a little odd that an organisation which denies being a religion, should *'demand belief in a Supreme Being.'*

Opposition

Bearing in mind that Freemasonry developed in the Middle Ages, before the rise of 'Protestantism,' thus, when the Church of Rome held both political and religious power in the world, its clerics were regarded as the guardians of the Christian faith, and it was such principles as those I have outlined that, centuries ago, raised the opposition the Church of Rome against Freemasonry. That opposition caused it to be banned in

countries such as Spain, where, even today, Rome has great influence. In France the situation was quite the reverse. As a result of the French Revolution when Christianity was rejected and France declared itself an atheistic country, Freemasonry flourished.

It is sometimes said that 'Roman Catholics' are not admitted into the Masonic Lodge, but, the reality is not as simple as that. When I sought the view of someone who has been deeply involved in Freemasonry for many years. I learned that, in theory, a member of the Church of Rome might join the Freemasons, *providing he is prepared to 'swear on the Bible that he will follow the principles of Masonry.'*

But, once he learns the nature of those 'principles' it is unlikely that a true 'Roman Catholic' would be able - or willing - to make that commitment. In any case, according to the Law of the Church of Rome, if he *did* join the Freemasons, he would be liable to excommunication from his Church.

The Ultimate Question

For the Christians who lived in the cities of the book of the Revelation, the Guilds were not merely a subject for academic discussion. They presented a very real, life-affecting problem. A Christian tradesman had to decide whether to join, or refuse to join.

In these days Christians are under no such pressure. The question, therefore, which arises in my mind is simply this:

What can a present-day Christian find in Freemasonry, that the Lord Jesus has not already provided for him in His Church?

Or, let me put that another way: *What legitimate, personal need, experienced by a Christian, can be met by the Masonic Lodge, that cannot be met by Jesus Christ and the Church He established?*

Now - reverse the question! *What does the Jesus Christ provide which cannot be provided by the Freemasons? And I leave you to work that out for yourselves!*

If a member of the Lord's Church finds it necessary to turn to the Freemasons to find fulfilment, something is radically amiss somewhere!

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LAW & LIBERTY IN CHRIST

Sometimes Biblical truth is suspended between what appears at first to be contradictory statements. Galatians 3:24-25 says, "**The law is our custodian, and now that faith is come we are no longer under a custodian.**" Therefore we are no longer under Law. Galatians 5:18 says "**If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law**" (RSV), (see also Rom. 6:14; Gal. 2:16).

On the other hand, Gal. 6:2 says we are to "**fulfill the law of Christ**" (see also 1 Cor. 9:21). Is this a contradiction? How can there be "*a law of Christ*" and yet we are *not under law*?

Does law here specifically refer to the law of Moses? Likely not, as in over half of its uses in the book of Galatians there is no definite article. The Greek speaks of "**law**," not "**the law**." This passage is not saying that we **once** were under an "Old Testament code," but **now** we are under a "New Testament code." Its aim is to refute the doctrine of justification by any code of meritorious works.

Actually, this passage (and others) indicates that Paul is talking about two different kinds of law.

The Old Testament law is a code of regulations. It did not save. Rather, it guided

behaviour and defined sin.

In the New Testament "the law of Christ" is the principle of life issuing from the will and nature of a person. It is the will and nature of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I once followed my father's commands because I was afraid not to. He loved me, though. And even then, I did not obey him in order to earn sonship. Now that I am an adult my love for him has matured. He would not punish me for disobedience to his will, and has no authority over me by way of force. But I try with all that's in me to do his will. Why? Is it his legal code that motivates me? Do I see detailed obedience to his regulations as a means of gaining or keeping his love? No! It is not his commands but his nature with which I try to live in harmony. And this not to get his acceptance, but because I already enjoy his acceptance.

FOLLOWING A PERSON

In the New Testament, it is the person of Jesus we are anxious to obey, not a code of law. And we see His will revealed not only in His commands. They are really very few. But is His nature which is amply revealed by numerous narratives of His relationships with people and with His Father.

The Jews tried to be justified by keeping the old code. In the New Testament we are not justified by keeping any code. We are justified by faith in and obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. After that, we do not do the will of Jesus in order to stay saved or get saved. We want to do His will **because we are saved**. Our hearts are changed. We love Him **"The love of Christ constrains us."**

A core message of the Galatian letter is "there is no saving effect in law-keeping." This is true whether it is Old Testament law or any other code of meritorious behaviour. Justification comes not by works but through obedient faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, once we are Christians we are **"under the law of Christ."** This is no legal code, but a principle of behaviour. It issues from knowing the person Jesus Christ and thus loving His will (Eph. 5:17). Christian good deeds are not done in order to obtain justification, but to express love toward the One who has already justified us.

So it is true if we **"walk by the spirit, we are not under law."** On the other hand it does not mean that we are without chart and compass for life. Jesus Christ becomes our Lord. His will becomes our norm (Gal. 5:13).

"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another" (RSV).

Most of Jesus' will is expressed in His *person*. Thus, the more we come to know His nature, the more we come to know how He wants us to live. But some is also definitely expressed in His direct commands in the New Testament. Through such a response to the Lord Jesus, we "fulfill the law of Christ."

L. ANDERSON.

THE ART OF LISTENING

LISTENING is considered the essential factor in face-to-face communication. To appreciate the full meaning of this statement, the following analogy will help:

When we "tune in" a certain radio station, we at the same time, "tune out" other stations. If the station drifts, we try to focus it again for better reception. We are not satisfied with anything less. The human mind operates very much on the same order. When we speak to someone, the listener may or may not have anything on his mind. To listen well, he must clear his "mental decks"; he will then be "in tune" with the person who is speaking.

It is quite true that on subjects in which we have a deep interest, and in which we are personally involved, it is difficult not to be in a listening mood. However, we assume that a student has a lot to gain even from material with which he is only vaguely familiar.

To help the student get the most from listening, the following guideposts are offered:

1. Listen actively - not passively
2. Train yourself to get the main idea meaning from material spoken.
3. Exclude from your thinking while listening, interfering thoughts and feelings.
4. Make the speaker realise you are with him while he speaks.
5. Have an open mind on what the speaker has to say.
6. Allow the speaker to finish before asking questions.
7. Check yourself to see if you "drift" while supposedly listening.
8. Remember that there is no limit on improvement in listening habits.
9. Make it your business that once you decide to listen, this will serve as motivation for further listening.
10. Don't be annoyed by a poor speaker, he still may have something important to say.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 6	Daniel 12	Matthew 13:24-43
May 13	Daniel 2:36-49	Matthew 13:44-58
May 20	2 Kings 4:38-44	Matthew 14:1-21
May 27	Psalms 107: 17-32	Matthew 14: 22-36

VARIOUS PARABLES

Frederic W. Farrar once wrote this of our Lord's parables:

"A method of instruction so rare, so stimulating, so full of interest - a method which, in its unapproachable beauty and finish, is unique in the annals of human speech . . ." Edward A. Armstrong has commented: "To folk of all kinds, simple and learned, the educated Westerner and people in New Guinea just emerging from the Stone Age, the parables are a vehicle of truth, moral and spiritual, for they reveal not only the path of virtue but also the truth as it is in Jesus . . . We gain new inspiration and perceive deeper implications as we ponder on them. All who come asking, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus' (John 12:21) may meet Him in the stories He told". W. Sanday said: "The parable. . . had been employed in OT and by the Rabbis,

but it had never before been employed with so high a purpose, on so large a scale, or with such varied application and unflinching perfection of form".

First, there is the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (13:24-30). Jesus later, in private, interpreted this parable for His disciples (36-43). Jesus' words are clear: the world will one day end; the angels will come as reapers; there will be a harvesting, a universal judgement, a separation of the righteous and the wicked; and in consequence there will either be eternal condemnation in hell, or eternal joy in heaven. The enemy of God is clearly identified in this parable - the devil (39). He is the one who sowed the tares. The tares are, in fact, **"the children of the wicked one"** (38). The devil has got a lot to answer for! I take comfort in these words: **"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever"** (Revelation 20:10).

Second, we have the parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed (31-32). Robert Milligan wrote that the scope of this parable is the great outward enlargement of the Church. He refers to Daniel 2:35:

". . . and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth". Of course, Daniel spoke of four great world empires - the Babylonian, the Persian, the Macedonian and the Roman. **"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"** (Daniel 2:44). **Third**, there is the Parable of the Leaven (33), the scope of which is "the inner workings and assimilating power of the gospel" (Milligan). **Fourth**, we have the Parable of the Hidden Treasure (44), which stresses the paramount value of the kingdom of heaven. **Fifth**, we read of the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (45-46), the scope of which is similar to the Hidden Treasure parable. "The fact that the first man hit upon the treasure by chance, while the merchant was engaged in the search for 'fine pearls', is probably irrelevant to the main lesson. It is better that a man should let everything else go than he should miss this, for to enter the kingdom of heaven is to possess eternal life" (F.F. Bruce). **Finally**, in this section of Scripture, there is the Parable of the Dragnet (47-50). There are similarities between this parable and the Wheat and the Tares parable. The separation of the just and the wicked is again highlighted. What a day it is going to be when Jesus returns to judge the world in righteousness! **"For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad"** (2 Corinthians 5:10).

WITHOUT HONOUR AT NAZARETH

I take it that "his own country" (54) has reference to the town of Nazareth, where, of course, Jesus grew up. Jesus

encountered prejudice here when, perhaps, He would have expected praise. It is quite incredible to read that **"He did not many mighty works there because of there unbelief"** (58). His fellow townsmen had difficulty in accepting the carpenter's son, the local boy, should have gained a reputation for "wisdom" and "mighty works" (54). I suppose this viewpoint is quite similar to a famous Glasgow expression: "Him dae that! I kent his faither!" Joseph is not mentioned by name, which might well be an indication that he was dead by this time. I find it all rather sad when I read this portion of Scripture.

DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

"Herod the tetrach" (14:1) was Herod Antipas, the youngest son of Herod the Great. He became ruler of Galilee and Peraea following his father's death in 4 B.C. He retained this position until A.D. 39 when he was disposed by the Roman Emperor Caligula. Jesus once described Antipas as a fox (Luke 13:32). John the Baptist had told him that it was unlawful for him to have Herodias as his wife because she was not only the wife of his half-brother Philip, but also the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus. "Marriage with a brother's wife was forbidden by Leviticus 18:16 (apart from the 'levirate marriage' of Deuteronomy 25:5ff); it was the more heinous when (as in this case) the brother was still alive. John's denunciation of this illicit match was quite in the O.T. prophetic tradition, and his influence with the people was such that Herodias could not feel her position secure while he was alive" (Bruce). The prison where John had been held was the fortress of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. We learn this from Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, who also wrote about the great man's imprisonment and death. The death of John obviously preyed on Antipas' mind - and no wonder! Jesus was a puzzle to him and he

thought He was John resurrected (2).

FIVE THOUSAND FED

We read at the conclusion of this miracle: **"And they had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children"** (14:21). Jesus was like a second Moses in the desert miraculously feeding the multitude. I once read that there is first-century evidence for the Jewish expectation that the gift of manna would be renewed when the Messiah was revealed. Surely things should have fallen into place for them here? Surely they should all have realised, following this miracle, that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, the Son of God? Who else could have fed them all from five loaves and two fishes? Yes, they were in the presence of the true manna from heaven. **"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"** (John 6:51).

WALKING ON THE SEA

Sudden storms could rise in the Sea of Galilee. We have already read of one in this Gospel record (8:23-27). Then, the disciples were going in the opposite direction with Jesus on board. Now they were travelling east to west without the Master. However, we read that **"Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea"** (25). Here was a great miracle indeed. Peter's faith was tested on this occasion. The incident of his sinking through lack of faith is paralleled, I think, in the later account of his denial. Having witnessed these events, including the stilling of the storm, the disciples were led inevitably to worship Jesus and to declare, **"Of a truth thou art the Son of God"** (33). What other conclusion could they have come to? The evidence was clear. God was in their midst in human form. Jesus of Nazareth was undoubtedly the promised Messiah.

IAN S. DAVIDSON, Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who was Abraham's nephew?
2. What false god did many in Israel worship in the days of Elijah?
3. Who answered God's call by saying, "Here am I, send me."
4. Which king ordered the three Hebrew men to be thrown into the fiery furnace?
5. Who was Jemima?
6. Micah said that he would mourn like these birds. Which birds?
7. To whom did John write his second epistle?
8. Jesus said that this person was "worthy of his hire."
9. Who was the captain who rescued Paul from the Jews of Jerusalem?
10. Name a goddess of Ephesus.

OBITUARY

Cape Town: Those of us who remember, with great fondness, Bro. T. Hartle, his work in South Africa, and his many excellent articles in the "Scripture Standard" some years back, will be sad to hear that his dear wife passed away on 27th February, this year. Sister Marion Blanche Hartle was 95 years of age, and sadly, had been suffering from dementia for the past six years. Daughter Ruth Hartle has very kindly written to us with this sad news, and, as we thank our sister for this information, we would also like to offer our sincere condolences to all the Hartle family as they come to terms with their great loss.

EDITOR.

Tranent: It is with great sadness that the Church in Tranent reports the passing of brother David Scott. Bro. Scott was baptised in 1931 and has been a faithful member for the seventy years since then. He served the Church well by preaching and teaching the Word and also for many years as precentor and an Elder. He passed to be with his Lord on 28th February, 2001. Bro. Mark Plain

conducted the funeral service in the Meeting Place and at the Graveside.

The congregation here will greatly miss his presence at the Lord's table, his leadership and his service to the Master but we rejoice that his labour is ended and that he is with his Lord.

We offer our condolences to his daughter Lynda and to his sisters Mary and Ella.

J. Colgan (Secy).

Tranent: The Church here suffered another great loss with the passing of our brother James Sinclair on March 8th this year. Bro. James was immersed in 1948 and remained a faithful and active member at Tranent for the following 53 years. He was well known in the Churches throughout all of Scotland and was well liked for his quiet unassuming nature. He served his Master through teaching the Word, leading singing even on the last occasion when he was able to meet, and as an Elder. The congregation at Tranent will greatly miss his presence, his guidance and his service but we rejoice that his life work has ended and he is now at peace with his Lord and Master.

We commend his widow, our Sister Elsie, to the Lord as she copes with life without Bro. James. They enjoyed nearly 61 years of marriage, having celebrated their Diamond Wedding last March.

Bro. Ian Davidson conducted the Service at Elcho Place Hall, Port Seton, and at the Graveside.

J. Colgan (Secy).

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD:

Annual Social:

Dates/Times:

Saturday 14th April, 3 pm, 6 pm

Sunday, 15th April, 10 am, 11 am, 6 pm.

Speakers: S. Worgan (Livingston)

and J. Mooney (Livingston)

Gospel Campaign:

With Harding Students in June.

17th to 24th June.

(No meeting on 22nd)

Speaker: Jack Strachan (East Kilbride)

A warm welcome awaits all.

GLENROTHES

Gospel Mission:

With Harding Students

20th to 25th May (7.30 pm)

Speaker: Frank Worgan

BUCKIE

Annual Social:

Saturday, 5th May, 2001, 3.00 pm.

Speaker: Bro. M. Heinemeir.

BOOK FOR SALE

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S

"FIVE DAYS IN FIFE"

The Kirkcaldy church has just published the second book written by Robert Hughes, under the above title. It contains a diary of the events and repercussions of the visits which Alexander Campbell made to the churches in Kirkcaldy, Cupar, Auchtermuchty and Dunfermline in August, 1847.

The contents include newspaper reports and discussions, letters, posters, etc., relating to his persecution by the Scottish Anti-Slavery Society. It is a must for anyone who is interested in the life and works of Alexander Campbell and has many original items and illustrations. The book contains over 12,000 words and 10 illustrations. It is a companion book to the previously published "Churches of Christ in the County of Fife, Scotland."

We ask that a donation is made to cover the cost of printing, postage and packing of £1.50 (UK only) payments made out to "Church of Christ"

Copies of "Churches of Christ in the County of Fife, Scotland," which was published 2 years ago to mark our 200

year celebration are still available for £4.00 per copy.

Both books can be purchased for £5.00 including postage and packing (UK only). Prices outwith UK on application.

Hayfield Road, Kirkcaldy. KY2 5DG.

GHANA APPEAL

Through the generous response to this appeal, the zeal of our Ghanaian brethren has been more effective in extending God's Kingdom in that land. Many there have received an understanding of the Gospel and through teaching and study, some have quickly reached the stage of being teachers themselves so that the Church continues to grow.

A brother who has written a tract in his own language has requested a Bible dictionary so if anybody has one to spare, a concordance or other suitable study material, this would be gratefully received. There is a considerable demand for such items.

Provided they are cement-rendered, mud-brick walls are successfully used for building in small towns and villages, the main expense being for roofing materials. One of the newer churches is appealing for funds to roof such a meeting house.

Although much attention is given to

evangelism, the original reason for the Ghana Appeal, relief of suffering and death through disease is also a priority. There is excellent medical attention available but the cost is beyond many of our brethren, so your contributions have saved many lives in the past and continue to do so. In this way your loving concern is clearly seen by others and when a sick brother was helped in this way the neighbours were so impressed that we are told the whole village cheered.

Contributions would be gratefully received, cheques made payable to Den-nyloanhead (Church of Christ) Ghana Fund and sent to the treasurer: Mrs. Janet W. Macdonald, 12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk FK5 3HB Stirlingshire. Tel: 01324 562480.

1. Lot (genesis 11:31).
2. Baal (1 Kings 16:32).
3. Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8).
4. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:3-21).
5. A daughter of Job (Job 42:14).
6. Owls (Micah 1:8).
7. The elect lady and her children (verse 1).
8. The labourer (Luke 10:7).
9. Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26-35).
10. Diana or Artemis (Acts 19:27).

ANSWERS

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