

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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*"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"*

## Editorial "Speaking where the Bible speaks..."

One of the phrases that I heard used on many occasions as I became exposed to the, often intense, discussions that took place about how the Lord's Church should best express itself in terms of its 'doctrine' was that 'we speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent'. It is a phrase that, with slight changes, has its background in the slogan coined by Thomas Campbell (father of Alexander) that in its original form stated: **"Where the Scriptures speak we speak;**

**where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent"**. It is a phrase that became the guiding light of the Reformation Movement. There is a long history to the circumstances that Thomas Campbell confronted in the United States that ultimately led to him, in September 1808, renouncing the authority of the Catholic organization, the Chartiers Presbytery. It was as a result of that, and Campbell's pleas for an outbreak of 'Christian unity' that he expounded the now famous phrase.

### SPEAKING WHERE THE BIBLE SPEAKS...?

It is one of those quirks of human nature (perhaps particularly so in matters of religion) that the expression quickly found favour amongst the brethren as a means of concisely expressing a determination to be faithful to the New Testament, and became commonly used because of those qualities. The phrase was coined as a means of saying that the Lord's Church takes only the Bible as its authority and carried the implication that even if the Bible is not necessarily a full revelation of everything that was available to be written down about the sayings and actions of Jesus (John 21:25), it does at least carry sufficient information for Christ's followers to know what God's plan for mankind is and how it is expected that Christians will conduct themselves in pursuit of the 'calling to which we have been called'. Furthermore, if we speak only where the Bible speaks etc, then it adds weight to the objective of following the faith and practice of the

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New Testament Church. Unfortunately in some respects, and I refer readers back to my editorials about denominationalism here, the slogan was taken up enthusiastically by three distinct bodies, all of whom would claim to be at the forefront of the Reformation movement – Churches of Christ, Christian Churches and Disciples of Christ. And of course, all claiming to base their faith and practice on the Scriptures only, they came up with some very fundamentally different interpretations about what Scripture did in fact reveal. Despite some noble attempts over the years to fulfil Campbell’s great objective of Christian unity, many of those differences still exist today.

I’m not a particular fan of clichéd phrases, though I’ve no doubt that I fall into the trap of using them on numerous occasions. Over time, and used repetitively, they make us lazy in our use of language and very often unthinking in our application of those clichés and/or phrases. In all walks of life they become an accepted part of the dogma that we adhere to whether or not they continue to be accurate or relevant. We lose the original intent and context of the phrase but continue to use it anyway. One of the other potential dangers of these expressions is that they come to be seen as having an authority that does not actually attach to them. In fact, if my information and understanding of the context of Campbell’s statement is correct, then I could envisage a significant number of members of our Christian communities today having a real problem with what Campbell was expounding. An essay on the ‘Historical Investigation and Interpretation of Thomas Campbell’s Motto’ makes the following conclusion:

“When Campbell initiated this famous slogan—We Speak Where the Bible Speaks—he did not intend to say that one must give book, chapter, and verse for everything one does. He primarily meant that he would not refuse the communion to other Presbyterians unless the Bible strictly forbade such actions. Thus, Campbell, when called upon the carpet for his ecumenical spirit, coined the phrase to mean: Unless the Bible forbids the actions that you condemn (the Synod), then I will speak where the Bible speaks and I will be silent where the Bible is silent. In other words, if the Bible outlaws my offering the communion to other Presbyterians that are not a part of our orthodox group, then I will withhold the communion. If the Bible is mute about this issue, then I will not refuse the communion to other believers.”  
(When he penned this expression Campbell, although defrocked, was still a Presbyterian).

Whilst God certainly tells Moses that under no circumstances should he even think about adding to or taking away from the Law (a warning that Moses passes on the Israelites) and Jesus himself imposes a warning, recorded in Revelation 22:18, against adding to or taking away from the ‘words of prophecy in this book’, the phrase that we are considering is nevertheless a man-made expression and not one that is taken directly from Scripture. So then, how true is it that ‘we speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent’? As we consider this let us bear in mind that it was in an attempt to create the environment for Christian unity that Campbell used this phrase, not as a basis for denominational differentiation.

## SPEAKING ABOUT JESUS AND THE GOSPEL

The gospel, by which I mean the revelation and fulfilment of the atoning work of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the grace that has been offered to all mankind as a result of that atoning work, is the ultimate expression of the relationship that God has established with His people. It would be an arrogant person indeed who believed that

they would have any right, or who indeed had any desire, to try to change what God had ordered. The fundamental truth that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and vicariously paid the price for our redemption, is still the foundation stone of our Christian faith. "For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11). It is pointless to even think about adding to or subtracting from that truth. The work has been done, the promise fulfilled, once but for all time, and nothing can ever change the nature of the relationship that God has established with His people. I've heard Christians conceptualise about the nature and form of God, listened to many views about the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, indulged in many debates about the God/man nature of Jesus, but I can't recall ever yet hearing any Christian preacher deny that the saving grace of Jesus is anything other than fundamental to the gospel. We may, as a result of our studies, interpret some of the actions and sayings of Jesus differently from some of our brethren, but we simply cannot, dare not, remove Jesus - his life, death and glorious resurrection - from the gospel message. The gospel call that has resounded down the ages remains clear. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

I believe that in our Christian communities we have remained faithful to the fundamental and foundational truths about Jesus, the Christ of God. Our reliance upon His grace and our own grace-inspired faith remain at the heart of our preaching and our personal witness. The 'washing of regeneration', in baptism, remains an essential part of that faith as we put on the new man in baptism. "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." I'm told that some have started to question the need for baptism and others, though still adhering to the practice, perhaps want to reduce its significance to that of a symbolic act. Acts 2 informs us that the reasons that we are baptised are to receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It appears to me that anyone believing that baptism is unnecessary must be absolutely convinced that forgiveness and the indwelling Spirit are received **without** baptism if their hope is to be secure. We know that heaven is going to be inhabited by the pure and spotless, that nothing perishable or unclean can inherit heaven. Without the indwelling presence of God in our lives we stand every chance of being overwhelmed by Satan; without the cleansing and of our sins we stand no chance of the achieving the eternal inheritance that God has prepared for His faithful people.

I consider that in our Christian communities, 2000 years on from the time of Christ, we have remained faithful to the primacy of Jesus the Christ in God's plan for the fullness of time and the He remains central to the preaching and teaching that is made. He must remain so because it is under the umbrella of the saving grace of Christ that we have any kind of Christian unity at all. But of course it is not Christian unity that is our objective, because we simply do not have the wherewithal to bring it about. We may quite happily leave the unification of believers to God, because it is the natural result of individuals responding, in faith, to the work that Christ has performed, not something that we achieve by doctrines and creeds. Nevertheless, if we are to refer to Campbell's phrase as any kind of measure at all, then I think that in the context of the gospel message we can, without invoking any complacency at all, justifiably claim to 'speak where the Bible speaks.'

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*(The influence of Campbell's phrase on the Christian church has been profound and has provoked great debates over the years. There is more to be said in future editorials.)*

# INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE FIRST CENTURY

(John H Diggle (Nottingham))

## STUDY 5 – THE spread of Christianity.

**"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"** (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV).

**"..... but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth"** (Acts 1:8 NASB).

**"In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among mountains, it will be raised above the hills and all nations will stream to it"** (Isaiah 2:2 NIV).

There were 120 of them, your brethren and mine, huddled, frightened, wondering and far from confident; and who could blame them? The vicious and vindictive Jewish authorities, which had been responsible for the murder of their Lord, albeit with a little spineless resistance from the Roman governor, were still on the prowl for further blood. Not an auspicious beginning for what had been represented by the prophet Daniel as "a rock cut out of a mountain" which would "crush kingdoms and bring them to an end" (Daniel 2:44 and 45).

### A Transforming 'holy spirit'

From Passover to Pentecost was seven weeks and by that time the picture could not have been more different. We know that they prayed and we know that they replaced Judas with the guidance of God; no doubt too they studied the scriptures, but we can be sure that they did not suddenly discover any marvellous piece of evangelistic technique, previously overlooked, nor did they conjure any clever scheme of their own at that time. It was not what, but whom, that made all the difference – the Holy Spirit of the risen Christ. The comment has been well made that the book that we now know as Acts of the Apostles would be as well call the Acts of the Holy Spirit as those of the apostles. And He is still just as willing and just as capable. Can we seriously believe that numerical growth of the Church is less dear to God's own heart than ours, and less important to him amongst 20th century souls than those of first century Judea? It seems to me that if we are fully sincere in our prayers for it, we are pushing at an open door. The tendency, when we think and speak of the spread of the gospel is to do so in terms of geographic reach, which was indeed impressive, yet perhaps we should not neglect a dimension of it that is, if anything even more impressive – that is, its penetration into cultures and religious backgrounds that we would be unlikely to count the most conducive to it.

### Transformation in unlikely places

Take the city of Tyre for example; remarkably, according to Acts 21:3,4, Paul and his mission group found disciples there. Few places had a more chequered religious background than Tyre and whilst the devastations visited upon it, just as Isaiah and Ezekiel had prophesied, must have had salutary effects, it remained the commercial capital of the Phoenician civilisation that had brought Baalism and Jezebel to the world. Considering the troubles and turmoil caused to a significant number of Old Testament prophets and kings by this dreadful religion, which included orgiastic worship and child sacrifice amongst its practices, and the overt evil of Jezebel and her brood, to here of the gospel's acceptance there is encouragement indeed when we reflect upon the grievous state of ungodliness in our own societies.

The same, but perhaps to an even greater extent, can be said of Egypt. To this day, it remains synonymous in our minds with captivity, pagan religion and that from which only God's power is sufficient for redemption. Isaiah 45:14 pointed to a time when Egypt would become gospel ground, and we have already seen how developments associated with the Diaspora, and the congregation of Egyptian representatives at Pentecost, may well have been preparatory to the fulfilment of this indication. Church history, after the end of the first century, indicates the establishment of a significant and influential body of Christians in Egypt. Origen of Alexandria and Clement, of their number, became prominent and renowned apologists, whose names are still associated with early efforts to establish the supremacy of scripture over speculative philosophy as a means of determining the path of practical godliness. In the light of the less desirable elements of Hellenism, that also had some of their major origins in this part of the world, as mentioned in a previous article, there is once again a surprising 'coincidence' between necessity and provision in God's superintendence of the true gospel's progress.

Luke tells us that amongst those who were assembled to hear Peter's Pentecost sermon, there were some from Crete, the island where Paul would later instruct Titus to remain in order to "straighten out that what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town..." It is also the place of which one of their own had said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons". A great place to launch a gospel mission then! Unfortunately even that scathing comment does not tell the half of it. If Corinthian was a term that came to be associated with the hedonistic lifestyle of booze, sex and vice in general, then Cretan was similarly associated with piracy, thuggery, child abandonment and youth yobbishness.

In the light of this context, the existence of the congregations in every town, something like forty, according to brother Carole Osborne's work on Titus, and the mere contemplation of the possibility of appointing elders in each of them, is truly remarkable, especially since Jewish influence was considerably less here than in most places. The same consideration, as brother Osborne pointed out, adds particular pungency to the requirement that his children must not be open to the charge of being 'wild and disobedient' but must 'believe'. In fact those qualifications as a whole, in their Cretan form, seem scarcely promising of a rich harvest of eldership material. I wonder if there is a message for us there?

### **Transformation in unlikely people**

Nor is it only surprising to consider the extension of Christianity into unpromising ethnic groups. Those echelons of society that we generally associate with resistance to the message are significantly represented in the composition of the early Church.

Paul himself is, of course, a prime example of this and marvelled at it for the remainder of his life (see Timothy 1:16). Lydia, as a wealthy business woman, Cornelius and the Philippian jailer as representatives of the occupying Roman powers, the Ethiopian eunuch and those who 'belonged to Caesar's household', may engender more surprise than they do were they to be translated into their equivalents of today.

For perhaps slightly different reasons, we might be equally startled by the inclusion of Simon the sorcerer, Crispus the synagogue ruler and Titius Justus, his next-door neighbour, in Corinth (Acts 18:7,8).

### **A continuing power to transform**

And the message for us? Is it not that we should learn to be less surprised by the transforming power of the Spirit of God, to the extent that we become prepared to venture with the gospel to people and places in which we have traditionally and tacitly sceptical of encountering any great receptiveness? In more recent times the former Soviet Union, Cuba, Korea, Albania and a host of former Communist states have greatly encouraged the confidence that He knows no territories 'out of bounds'. And what may be said of political, cultural, and prior religious discouragements to evangelism is no less true of today's drink and drug-crazed, sex-obsessed, materialistic and pleasure-seeking no-go areas either.



## QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE JEWISH TRADITIONS OF HEADCOVERING



A brother in Singapore has sent in several questions that are obviously based on a study of 1st Cor. 11, the chapter in which Paul writes about the Church at Worship.

For the sake of brevity I must deal with his questions in a manageable form, since space in the 'S.S.' is limited. Our brother asks:

1. Why do Jewish men wear a skullcap?
2. Why do women cover their heads and men do not?
3. What is meant by 'because of the angels'?

### Q. 1 The Jewish 'skull-cap', the YARMULKE

This is the name of the head covering worn by religious Jewish males, i.e. boys and men. Boys are encouraged to wear the yarmulke from an early age in order to develop the habit of wearing it, and there are some strict, orthodox Jews who never take it off.

Jewish authorities, however, will admit that the wearing of this form of head-covering is actually a custom or a tradition, which, with the passage of time, has become virtually compulsory, and if you were to ask an orthodox Jew why he wears it, he would give you at least one of several reasons. He will say that he wears it:

1. As a recognition and reminder of the Presence of God; it is on his head because God is '*above mankind*'.
2. To show that he accepts the authority of the '*mitsvot*'; that is, the 613 commandments of the Law.
3. To declare his identity as a Jew. In this connection it is interesting to note that one Jewish scholar says that Jewish men should *never* uncover their heads, in order to distinguish themselves from Christians, especially when they are at prayer.

There are, as one might expect, widely differing views as to *how* and *when* this head covering should be worn. For example:

- ❑ One Jewish authority states that a man should not *walk* more than 4 cubits with his head uncovered.
- ❑ Another reduces the distance to *less* than four cubits.
- ❑ And yet another says that he should wear his yarmulke even when *standing still*!

But there is one crucial fact that which Jewish teachers cannot deny. It is that there is no mention of this item of dress in the Old Testament scriptures - which they call the '*Tanach*'. In fact, the reason why the word '*yarmulke*' is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures is because it is not even a Hebrew word. It comes from a Polish word which simply means '*cap*', and we may be sure that, had the wearing of such a head-covering been imposed by divine command, rules governing its form and wear would have been very clearly laid down in the '*Torah*', the Law.

As it is, a Jew may buy his Yarmulke made of virtually any kind of fabric he wishes, from simple, plain cloth to the richest and most luxurious and ornate material available; all with a price-tag to match! This makes it possible for a Jew to make a statement about his social status, or about his religious beliefs, in the yarmulke that he wears, since the many different sects of Judaism wear head-coverings that differ

in style, material, and colour.

And, not surprisingly, special occasions in Jewish society, such as weddings and other celebrations, all provide excellent opportunities for the display of expensive yarmulkes. Consequently, there are many Jewish businesses that are happy to supply them in whatever material, and at whatever cost, the customer desires for such occasions.

If further proof of the fact that this head-covering is not worn because God has commanded it, in the United States, members of Jewish sports organizations often wear yarmulkes in their team colours, and those worn by small Jewish children are often decorated with cartoon characters. I understand that "Star Wars" characters are very popular!

Not surprisingly, strict, orthodox Jews disapprove of such behaviour, and regard it as unseemly and irreverent, and some Jewish schools strictly ban yarmulkes that do not conform to traditional values.

### **The yarmulke and Scripture?**

What we may learn from this is that, for the reason why Jewish men cover their heads in prayer we have to search outside of scriptures, and this means, looking into the Jewish 'Talmud', which is the collection of civil and religious rules, customs, traditions and legends, that cannot be traced back any farther than the 5th century A.D. It is the accumulated wisdom and teaching of their wisest men, and only the most fanatical Jew would claim it to be of divine origin.

### **Q.2. Why do Christian men pray with uncovered heads?**

**In contrast with the man-made tradition of the yarmulke, Christian men pray with uncovered heads because:**

- 1. They recognize that they are in the Presence of Deity, and**
- 2. Because they obey the clear teaching of God's word.**

In the first verse of 1st Cor.11, we read that '*the head of every man is Christ*', and then in v. 4, we are told that '*every man praying or prophesying having his head covered, dishonours his head*'. Who is the man's 'head'? The man's head is Christ. This means that if a male Christian were to pray with his head covered, he would be dishonouring, or, showing disrespect for Christ, Who is present when His Church meets in worship.

### **Q.3. What is meant by 'because of the angels'?**

This statement, found in verse 10, concerns the woman's head covering. As our brother mentions in his letter, there are some who believe that the instruction concerning the woman's head-covering relates only to a custom of that age, but when we begin to interpret scripture in a way which relegates the commands of God to limited times and cultures we are treading on very dangerous ground.

Are we to understand that angels are no longer interested in woman's acceptance of God's instruction in verse 10 because it applied only to that period? I think not!

In this case, the words '*because of the angels*', tell us that women's acceptance of the order revealed by the Holy Spirit in verse 1 of the chapter, and her compliance with the command in laid down v.10, constitutes an example of obedience, which the angels should observe and follow. Remember that angels have not always been obedient. (Jude.v.6. 2nd Pet.2:4).

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# STUDIES IN GENESIS 6

(Ian S Davidson, Motherwell)



The Patriarchal age features in the book of Genesis. It was an age when families were important and the father of the family was the head of the family. Indeed, in these early days of the world, the father acted as prophet, priest and king or lawgiver. He led family worship under Divine guidance. For well over two thousand years, the Sabbath, the service of the altar, oral instruction, prayer, praise and benediction continued from generation to generation.

## JOB

Job, who lived in the Patriarchal age, had a wife, seven sons and three daughters prior to his period of affliction. We read: **"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil...His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually"** (Job 1: 1-5). Clearly, he loved his family and wanted them to be right with God. Later on, this same Job acted as priest or intercessor on behalf of his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Job prayed for them and the Lord accepted his prayer and forgave them (Job 42: 7-10).

## MELCHIZEDEK

We read of one high or general priest in this age and he is Melchizedek, who was **"king of Salem...the priest of the most high God"** (Genesis 14:18). To him, Abraham paid tithes or gave a tenth of the spoils taken in war and, as a result, was blessed by him. "Melchizedek was an order of his own sort. He had no predecessor, successor, nor equal, in the age of family worship" (Alexander Campbell).

There are also references to Melchizedek in Psalm 110 and the book of Hebrews. We read: "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). **"Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils"** (Hebrews 7:4). The writer goes on to point out the superiority of the office of Melchizedek to that of Aaron's. Jesus is of the superior office, not the inferior. As one writer has pointed out: "One nation only claimed an interest in the office of Aaron. But the whole human race had an equal interest in that of Melchizedek". Today, the whole human race should acknowledge Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King. Failure to do so will result in eternal damnation.



## ENOCH

Enoch is an interesting patriarchal figure. We read: **“And Enoch walked with God: and was not; for God took him”** (Genesis 5:24). Actually, God took him to heaven in his three hundred and sixty-fifth year. He is the only person in the patriarchal age that did not taste death. He is, therefore, a very special individual. Enoch is mentioned in the great chapter of the faithful in the book of Hebrews. **“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God”** (Hebrews 11: 5). Enoch was a prophet and nearly twenty-five centuries later, another Prophet, Elijah, was similarly taken into heaven without dying (2 Kings 2: 11).

We know Enoch was a prophet because Jude tells us so. **“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convince all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed, and all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”** (Jude 14,15). Enoch has been described as the most enlightened and perfect man that lived during the first two thousand years of human history and the most gifted teacher in the science of morals. Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahaleel, Jared, Methuselah and Lamech were still around when he was taken; so all the generations between Adam and Noah had the advantage of his teaching, manner of life and translation. The effect Enoch had upon them is incalculable.

## KINGSHIP

First there were families, then clans, then tribes, then nations. In the early days, kings ruled over the nations. We read: **“And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; that these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar. All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.”** (Genesis 14: 1- 3). In an earlier chapter, we read of Nimrod’s kingdom (10:10). Undoubtedly, all these kingdoms were small. But, nevertheless, they were kingdoms and pre-dated the larger and more famous ones to come.

The nation of Israel was a kingdom. Jehovah reigned over it. Tragically, the Israelites grew dissatisfied with this arrangement and looked for an earthly king. **“Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah. And said unto him, Behold, you are old, and your sons walk in your ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations”** (I Samuel 8: 4-5). Samuel was displeased at the request and so was God. Indeed, God saw it as a rejection of Him. But the Lord gave them what they wanted. Samuel eventually anointed Saul as king, who, sadly, turned out to be a bit of a disaster. The same could be said of most of the kings who followed him.

# Satan and the body of Moses

Rose M. Payne.

In the epistle of Jude, verse 9 reads **“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.”** As Jude was an inspired writer, we must assume that the excerpt he has quoted is correct, although he only uses it as an example against evil speaking. A commentary tells us that this story comes from an apocryphal account that would have been known to Jude and his Jewish readers, in which Michael was sent to bury Moses but the devil challenged his right to the body, on the grounds that Moses had murdered an Egyptian.

Exodus 2, verses 11 to 15, relates how Moses came to kill an Egyptian. Maybe this was the only way for him to save the life of a fellow Hebrew at the time but, if Moses were to blame in any way, God had evidently forgiven him by the time he was called to lead Israel out of Egypt. Satan, who is known as “the accuser of the brethren” (Rev. 12:10) had no doubt brought up a false charge.

But what would the devil want with the dead body of Moses? Surely he is only interested in capturing souls? Possibly the explanation lies in the fact that the nation of Israel had only recently come from the land of Egypt. Satan may have wanted the Hebrews to be led astray once again into the idolatry of the Egyptians.

The Egyptians believed that the body must be preserved as a habitation for the soul until it entered the next life, and today we marvel at the pyramids and the wonderful goods they contained and the remarkable state of preservation of the mummified bodies. Of course, all this work could only be carried out for the rich, so the poor did not benefit from it. According to their beliefs, when Moses simply hid the body of the slain Egyptian in the sand, he prevented the proper funeral rites being carried out and jeopardised the man’s entry into the after-life, which to them was a serious matter.

While in Egypt, the Hebrews adopted Egyptian customs to the extent that Jacob’s body was embalmed (Gen. 50:2) before being returned to his family burial place in the cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan (Gen. 50:13). Later, Joseph’s body was similarly treated, and he probably had a fine temporary tomb in accordance with his rank in Egypt. But he had left instructions for his remains to be taken along with the Israelites when they left Egypt. Accordingly, after four hundred and thirty years, Moses took the bones of Joseph with him (Ex. 13:19), and after a long time in the wilderness they were finally buried in Shechem (Joshua 24:32) in a plot of land that Jacob had bought earlier to erect an altar. This was presumably a much more modest place of interment than he originally had in Egypt.

Neither Moses nor Aaron was allowed to have an elaborate tomb. Aaron was to die on Mount Hor. (Numbers 20:28) **And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.** Moses and Eleazar must

have buried Aaron, probably without marking the place in any special way.

Moses was apparently alone on the mountain when he died and his death is described in these words **"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."** (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). God sent the archangel Michael to bury Moses so that no human being could tell where the grave was.

So what would Satan have done with the dead body of Moses if he could have obtained it? Death is his business and he would like to remind people that the best and greatest will return to dust in the end. Possibly he would have influenced the Hebrews to preserve the body of this, their most outstanding prophet and leader (Deuteronomy 34:10), and build a lavish tomb or pyramid after the style of the Egyptians, which would have become a place of pilgrimage. So, what would have been the harm in this? Well, it could have diverted them from gathering at the proper place, which in those days was the tabernacle. Any kind of seemingly harmless innovation can be used by Satan to cause division. It might even have ended with Moses being worshipped by the Israelites. Therefore, the bodies of Moses and Aaron were concealed and not allowed to become a temptation, and in later times the body of Elijah was not left to them either.

Jesus said **"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets."** (Matt. 23:29, 30) The Jews of his day evidently thought it a praiseworthy enterprise to build new tombs for those prophets who were long dead and had a recognised burial place. This made the hypocrites feel good, and it was so much easier than paying attention to the words that the prophets had written in their own time concerning the Messiah. At the same time they were quite ready to persecute Jesus and his followers.

The first Christians had the glorious example of the empty tomb of Jesus, so they paid little attention to burial places. We do not know where Stephen the first martyr was buried, nor James and John, and although it is suggested that Peter and Paul were buried in Rome, there is no real evidence.

Too much care bestowed on relics and memorials can be a symptom of a lack of faith. Here in Britain we increasingly see a secular kind of funeral, which is a commemoration of the person's life accompanied by his or her favourite poetry and popular music, and after the cremation the relatives sometimes keep the ashes. There may be no reference to resurrection at all at the funeral, and especially not to a day of judgment.

We should rather dwell on the message of the angels at the sepulchre of Jesus, **"Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen:"** (Luke 24:5, 6) and, **"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth;..."** (John 5:28, 29).

# WHAT IS CHRISTIC BAPTISM?

Allan Ashurst (Stretford)

There is one baptism.

There is a novel doctrine about baptism, first put around in 1874 by a man named J.W. Dale, which he calls 'Christic Baptism'. He denies that the one baptism in Ephesians 4:3-6 is immersion in water. This doctrine is now becoming very popular in evangelical circles. No doubt you will come across it, even with folk who still practise baptism of believers in water, even though they deny it is the one baptism in Ephesians 4:3-6.

In his work entitled 'Christic Baptism', J.W. Dale asserts that the one baptism in Ephesians 4:3-6 is baptism by the Holy Spirit, for which he uses the term 'Christic Baptism', which he calls "*real, not ritual water, baptism*". He claims that Acts 2:38, Acts 8:12, Romans 6:3-6, Colossians 2:12 refer to 'Christic Baptism' which he says is "real baptism by the Holy Spirit" thus implying that baptism in water is not real baptism.

His arguments are lengthy and confusing. Here are a few examples, which I think are sufficient to show the error of his reasoning.

His interpretations of Acts 2:38 are contradictory.

- Acts 2:38: **"Then Peter said unto them, 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."**

In his comments on this verse Dale claims that sins were remitted before baptism. "Upon repentance each individual **was then to be baptised on the basis that the specific individual's sins had been remitted...**" (emphasis mine).

- Then, still commenting on Acts 2:38, he says that remission of sins was a result of baptism: "This **real baptism** takes the penitent sinner out of a state of guilt and **places him into (eis) a new state of remission**" (emphasis mine).

Even though here he renders 'eis' as into, elsewhere he tries to argue that in Acts 2:38 the word 'eis' does not mean into, but means "because of," claiming that folk were baptised because they had been forgiven their sins - not for their sins to be forgiven

- He also states that this baptism was "real baptism by the Holy Spirit". By this he is denying that Acts 2:41 refers to the Lord's disciples baptising people in water.

Acts 2:41: **"Then they that gladly received his word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."**

So which does he believe: that remission of sins is before or after baptism? Whether it was his 'real baptism by the Holy Spirit' or baptism in real water? This kind of confused reasoning prevails throughout his book.

Making reference to Colossians 2:12, he reasons that the relationship established by this baptism "can hardly be symbolised by a momentary dipping in water for the relationship is permanent." However Colossians 2:12 reads: **"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead."**

How can one be raised out of a permanent situation?

Both Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12 show that baptism is not just a burial but that it is both a burial and a resurrection. These passages clearly show that baptism is a momentary dipping under water. So Colossians 2:12 prove true what he actually denies.

When baptised in water the repentant believer is buried with the Lord for the remission of sins and raised with Him to walk in newness of life.



What do you think?

## **IS ABORTION EVER JUSTIFIED?**

It is possible that to even raise the question at all is an affront to the majority of Christians. However the question is raised following the recent decision by a number of Catholic Bishops to resign their memberships of the human rights organisation Amnesty International due to that organisations decision to change its stance on abortion from that of 'neutral' to that of campaigning for access to abortion in certain limited circumstances. Until reading some of the comment on this issue I was not aware that AI was in fact founded, in 1961, by a convert to Catholicism, one Peter Benenson. For many Catholics this no doubt adds further emotion to the current debate.

Amnesty decided at its annual meeting in Mexico in August that it would work to "support the decriminalisation of abortion, to ensure women have access to health care when complications arise from abortion and to defend women's access to abortion... when their health or human rights are in danger". The new policy had been prompted by rapes being deliberately used as an act of war in war zones such as Darfur and the decision to adopt it was consistent with a long-standing campaign against violence towards women.

The Bishop of East Anglia, Michael Evans, had been a member of AI for 31 years. Announcing his decision to end his membership of AI he said, "Among all human rights, the right to life is fundamental. Commitment to work to 'protect the human' can only be deeply compromised by any support for access to abortion."

Cardinal Renato Martino, the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in the Vatican, said that Amnesty had "betrayed its mission" by abandoning its traditional neutral policy on abortion in favour of a woman's right to choose. "It is never justifiable to take an innocent human life," he said.

Cardinal Keith O'Brien, Bishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh in Scotland has also left AI after 40 years membership. He said: "We are all members of the one human family and we must defend unborn children in our family however conceived. They may be seen as unwanted or inconvenient but they have, from moment of conception, been given the gift of life by Almighty God."

It is of course quite natural that senior members of the Catholic Church would support that Church's traditional view of abortion and it is anyway a topic that produces extremely strong responses from all walks of life. In commenting upon this latest outbreak of controversy, many people have referred to the Universal Declaration of Human rights – something that has been heart of Amnesty's work over the years. Here is some of the wide range of comments and opinion from the letters page of the Independent:

- "The right to life is the most basic and important human right; without it all other rights are meaningless. Abortion is not a human right, it is a human wrong, because it is the direct and deliberate taking of an innocent and defenceless human life."
- "Amnesty was set up to protect human rights; to prevent the vulnerable from having to suffer pain and torture and killing, in other words from having their humanity denied and ignored, their identity as a unique human being removed and their existence extinguished. This is precisely what abortion does to unborn children..."

- ❑ "The destruction of innocent human life, sentient or not, is never the answer to the problem of rape, in Darfur or elsewhere. Not only is it intrinsically and profoundly morally flawed, but it also fails to properly address the long-term needs of the rape victim, which can only be met by a real and lasting commitment to emotional and practical support."
- ❑ "While the destruction of future human life is deeply sad and can properly be seen as against the will of God as we can see it, there are other issues that Christians and all people of faith need to consider.. The New Testament teaches us that Jesus repeatedly broke the religious laws of his day because of his compassion for actual people whom he was with. I see Biblical support for Amnesty's decision, and I will continue to support them as best I can."
- ❑ "It is men's inhumanity to women that AI has had the courage to try and remedy. Would any father really expect his daughter to continue a pregnancy, which was the result of rape? Would he condemn her to years of misery bringing up a child the sight of whom would only remind her of the trauma of being raped?"
- ❑ "So far as I am aware, Amnesty is not "promoting abortion as a human good" or "claiming the right to kill", but merely acknowledging that it is sometimes a horrible necessity. Children impregnated by a relative, women raped as an act of war, women whose pregnancy is certain to kill them (and the child) – have they no right to self-defence? I am a practising and passionate Christian...."
- ❑ "Exodus 21:22 clearly states that whilst causing the death of a pregnant woman is murder, the loss of an unborn child is purely a civil matter for which compensation should be paid to the woman's husband."

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

1. Can a life that is conceived as a result of an often violent and brutal violation of a woman's body, ever be considered as 'the gift of life by Almighty God' as Cardinal Keith O'Brien's comment above implies? Should a woman be expected to bear and then love a child who will genetically be, at least in part, a product of the rapist.
2. In a Christian context we often speak of life as being 'God's to give and God's to take away'. Accepting that God is creator of all things, are we right to imply that God is at work in every act of conception and in every act of death? How does this inform our view of issues such as abortion?
3. One writer above asks if any father would really expect his daughter to continue a pregnancy that was the result of rape. Fathers; what advice would you give to your daughter? Church leader; what advice would you give to a female member of your congregation in such circumstances?
4. It is probably true to say that men have little if any understanding of either the trauma of rape or the emotions that women feel in connection with pregnancy and child-birth. Are men ever in a position to advise women on such issues or is this an area that should be left to the mother's instinct?
5. The advice of the medical team is that to run a pregnancy to full term is likely to lead to death of mother or child or both. Is it ever acceptable to take action that results in one or other being saved?
6. The sixth commandment says, "Thou shalt not kill." Is all of the above just so much unnecessary hand-wringing and should our attitude be that the sanctity of life prevails irrespective of the circumstances?

These are emotive and sensitive issues. What do you think? If you would like to contribute any thoughts that you think will be helpful, please forward to the editor (contact details on the back page).

## **News and Information**

### **THE EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WORKSHOP 2007**

The second Workshop was held at the end of August on the Lancaster University campus. I had attended, and enjoyed, the first one in 2006 and so determined to attend this year's as well. I had wondered if it would reach the standard of last year's Workshop but with a larger attendance and more classes to choose from it probably excelled. Paul Halliday and Stephen Woodcock are to be congratulated on organising another excellent ECW.

This year's theme was 'Growing Strong Hearts and Strong Churches' and had 4 classes running simultaneously so that we had the option of choosing which speaker/topic we wanted to hear. Many of the classes centred on the need for sound leadership to keep the churches on course and developing spiritually. All the lessons I attended were well prepared and presented, and increased my awareness of what could be achieved.

Randy Lowery, a lawyer specialising in 'conflict resolution', led the keynote sessions. These sessions stand-alone and everyone attends. He brought his legal experience to bear on the Church's business in a very informative and humorous way using Matt 18, v15-17 as the basis for his lessons.

It was truly a European workshop with speakers from Greece and Germany and visitors from other European countries as well as India and the USA. Robert Limb who works with the church in Paris ably led the praise sessions. With 72 visitors from 29 congregations in 14 countries there was a varied and deep sense of fellowship. As an older person it was

good to see younger Christians well represented.

The facilities on campus are excellent. Modern en-suite single rooms with attached kitchen facilities for an early morning or late night cup of coffee and some chat. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are all provided and were very enjoyable in the company of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Plans are being prepared for next year and I am happy to recommend the 'Workshops' to anyone interested in going. I shall look forward to seeing you there, God willing. The lessons are all recorded, to a high standard, by Leigh Halliday (known on campus as AV!) and may well be of use to anyone not able to attend but they won't fully convey the sense of fellowship that comes from attending. Book early and don't be disappointed.

John Kneller.

## **Question Box**

Readers are reminded that any questions that arise in discussion or from personal study can be forwarded to Bro. Frank Worgan for his consideration. At the moment the Question Box is empty and the feature will not appear in the SS until Frank has questions that he can usefully answer. Our policy is that only genuine reader's questions will be answered and that questions will not be fabricated just for the purpose of continuing this feature of the magazine. We are lucky to have the benefits of Frank's long experience and study at our disposal and I hope that through your questions we can get him back to work on your behalf as soon as possible. Please forward your questions directly to Frank by post to: Frank Worgan, 11, Stanier Road, Corby, Northants NN17 1XP or by email to: [Frank@fworgan0.talktalk.co.uk](mailto:Frank@fworgan0.talktalk.co.uk)

## Obituary Sis Bethia Davidson

### Dennyloanhead, Scotland

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of our much beloved sister Bethia Davidson on Tuesday 6th March aged 95 yrs. Thia became a Christian over 65 years ago and although confined to a wheelchair, had good health to meet with the brethren every Sunday until the Lord called her home. She was a stalwart in the Church confessing her Lord to all who knew her, and in her younger life acted as Secretary, Treasurer and Sunday School & Bible class teacher.

Thia was at her happiest doing the Lord's work and was still contributing articles to the Scripture Standard until she was 94 yrs of age. She was a fine example to all. Bro Peter Sneddon officiated at the funeral assisted by Bros Graeme & Alastair Scobbie. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"

John Kneller.

## Coming Events

### SATURDAY EVENING MEETING AT STRETFORD

To be held in the Green Hut,  
538 Kings Road, Stretford, Manchester.

The meeting will start at 7.00 pm  
and will consist of:  
**A Gospel Topic**, followed by  
**Light refreshments**, concluding with  
**Open Discussion**.

**20th October 2007**

*Ernest Makin, Wigan.*

### PETERHEAD, SCOTLAND

**Social Weekend, 29 & 30th  
September 2007**

Saturday Meetings:

3.00 pm and 6.00 pm

Sunday services as normal.

Speakers: **Bert Ritchie (Coleraine)**  
& **Graham McDonald (Cumbernauld)**

### NEWTONGRANGE, SCOTLAND

**Annual Social, Saturday  
13th October 2007**

Social will commence with a meal  
at 1.00 pm

Speaker: **John Morgan (Hindley)**

### EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WORKSHOP

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY  
THURS 28TH AUG – SAT 30TH AUG,  
2008.

*(More details to follow later)*  
See report on 2007's workshop  
elsewhere.

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