

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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PROMISES — PROMISES

"WHEN I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us," So said the apostle Paul to the Corinthians (II Cor. 1:17), from Macedonia concerning his change of plans to visit Corinth. Evidently there were some brethren in Corinth insinuating that his promises were unreliable and perhaps he would not come at all. Paul asks the Corinthians if they think that he would break a promise lightly, or was he so fickle that his yea could just as easily be nay? Paul asserts that whatever they might think of him, in his change of plans, his preaching of Christ was never yea or nay but was YEA. "For" says Paul, "All the promises of God in Christ are YEA, and in Him Amen". There is no uncertainty or vacillation in Christ, or in the preaching of Christ either by Paul, or Silvanus or Timotheus. Paul had good reasons for his change of plan but we can see how quickly his brethren were ready to assume the worst. Nevertheless when church members break, or fail to honour, promises it does not reflect well either upon them or upon the church. We are not too surprised when men outwith the church enter into an agreement and just as readily renounce it. Indeed when some politicians make a promise it is the occasion of great hilarity amongst those listening. Imagine people actually laughing at any promise of our. Broken promises and breach of promise are the tools in trade, every day, amongst politicians, business men and nations: which is why so much has to be contained in small print and why there are so many lawyers around. On a personal level we have all, no doubt, been let down by friends on many occasions with unfulfilled promises and just as often we, in turn, have not always been guiltless of the same thing.

God's Promises

But not so with God's promises. Solomon could say to the Jewish people, "Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest to His people, according to all He hath promised, *there hath not failed one word* of all His good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses". (1 Kings 8:56). Joshua said, "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: *all*

came to pass". God's promises to man began in Old Testament times embodied mainly in the statements made principally to Abraham and to the early Fathers. Paul continually prayed for his kinsmen in the flesh, "Who are Israelites: to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and *the promises...*" (Rom. 9:4). Gentiles were, of course, at that time "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from *the covenants of promise...*" (Eph. 2:12). But God's promises to Israel derived specially from Abraham. The promises to Abraham were three-fold (a) land — (hence the 'Promised Land') (b) a son and a progeny as numerous as the sand on any seashore, and (c) blessings which would accrue to ALL nations, through the Messiah. These were *'the promises'* to which Paul makes such constant reference. Abraham 'staggered not' at the promises of God "Through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that what God had promised *he was able also to perform*", (Rom. 4:21). In one of Paul's references to these promises he makes the point that Christ was the true and complete fulfillment of all of God's promises, viz. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds as of many; but as of one, which is Christ." (Gal. 3:16). When God made the promise to bless all nations through Abraham's *seed* he did not mean 'children' or 'descendants' but meant 'seed', in the singular, and in the person of Christ. ALL nations (Jews and Gentiles) were to be thus blessed, and so, in effect, the gospel was being preached in that very promise (given 430 years before the Mosaic law) to Abraham. Thus Paul says in the same chapter (Gal. 3) "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed. So then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." (v.8) and "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law... That the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit through faith*". (v.13, 14). This latter verse not only confirms that the promises made to Abraham have accrued to the gentiles through Christ, but also introduces us to one other momentous promise - the promise of the Holy Spirit. The 'Spirit' here represents all the blessings connected with the Christian religion, and includes the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit: and all his influence in renewing the heart, in sanctifying the soul and in comforting the people of God (For he is the Comforter). These influences of the Spirit were obtained by virtue of the sufferings and death of the Saviour and were the sum of all the blessings promised by the prophets. Thus, says Paul, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). Is that not truly wonderful? Jesus then is the consummation of all Jewish hopes and dreams of the past (could they but see it) but Jesus not only fulfills the promises of old but He surpasses them with even better promises. The writer to the Hebrews claims that Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry than Moses and that He is the mediator "of a better covenant which was established upon *better promises*". (Heb. 8:6). Clearly these better promises come to us through the gospel and indeed *the gospel itself* was an age-old promise as Paul points out (in Rom 1:2) "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God (which He had promised by His prophets in the holy scriptures) concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord". Again, in Paul's speech in the synagogue in Antioch, he said, "And we declare unto you the glad tidings how that the promise which was made unto the fathers God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children in that He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son. This day have I begotten thee." (Acts 13:32).

Great and Precious

The apostle Peter describes these 'better' promises as '*great and precious*'. Talking of God's power and our calling he says, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." These great and precious promises are numberless and some are probably impossible to identify. James ranks the kingdom of God amongst these. He says that God hath chosen the poor of this world, albeit rich in faith, and made them "heirs of *the kingdom* which God hath promised to them that love him". (2:5). In the previous chapter the same apostle says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation for when he is tried, he shall receive the *crown of life*, which the Lord has promised to them that love him". (1:12) John says, "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, *even eternal life*." (1 John 5:25). Paul says this promise of life eternal was made "before the world began but God hath in due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." (Titus 1:2).

And so the 'great and precious' promises of God, in these latter days, include *the gospel; the kingdom of God; the crown of righteousness* (eternal life) *the Holy Spirit* and *Jesus Himself*. From those basic promises numberless others are derived and in day-to-day transactions God promises to the faithful the umbrella of His love; His succour in sickness; exaltation to the truly humble; courage to the fearful; abundance to the generous; forgiveness to the penitent; tranquility to the peacemakers; strength to the feeble; final victory to the oppressed; assurance to the perplexed; light for dark days; sufficiency of His grace; protection from dangers seen and unseen; satisfaction to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; rest to all those 'who labour and are heavy laden'; and resurrection to the dead and the slain.

Slackness - or Yea and Nay

God's promises are free and are available to all. God is kind, compassionate and most gracious, and all his great and precious promises are based upon His infinite grace. No one prompted God to make them, or could have forced God to make them by arm-twisting or holding a pistol to the head. Many promises made by men have to be extracted from them by threats and coercion, but not so with God. Whereas man deserves death and disgrace God gives him Life and Sonship. Nor is God *slack concerning His promises* albeit they are based entirely upon His generosity. The apostle Peter assures us that "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9). In making the point (That God's promises are sure and steadfast) Peter also warns us in this verse that some will perish and will not come to repentance. Thus God's promises are conditional. The crown of Life and the kingdom of God mentioned in the quotations from James are, you would notice, for those "that love Him", and to those who "endureth temptation and are tried". "Let us therefore", says the writer to the Hebrews, "beware lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1), and again, "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36).

We should, perhaps, regard promises as sacred things and treat them with the gravity that God does. To breach them does not show us in a very good light and often reflects badly upon the church. In the passage at the beginning of this article (from II Cor. 1:17) Paul hoped that he would not be regarded as one of those

'yea and nay' individuals, whose promises or undertakings might be carried out, but just as surely might *not* be. Concerning promises may we like our heavenly Father — i.e. not 'yea and nay' but decidedly and most definitely Yea, and YEA again. "For all the promises of God in Him are YEA, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God..."

EDITOR

GLEANINGS

"Let her glean even among the sheaves". Ruth 2:15

THE DIGNITY OF GOD'S IMAGE

"He that holds himself in reverence and due esteem both for the dignity of God's image upon Him, and for the price of his redemption which he thinks is visibly marked upon his forehead, thinks himself both a fit person to do the noblest and godliest deeds, and much better worth than to deject and defile with such a debasement and pollution as sin is, himself, so highly ransomed and ennobled to a new friendship and filial relation with God. Nor can he fear so much the offence and reproach of others as he dreads and would blush at the reflection of his own severe and modest eye upon Himself, if it should see him doing or imagining that which is sinful, though in the deepest secrecy."

MILTON

The Bible is a Critic

"We want new eyes. The Bible has been very much criticised of late years, but we are forgetting the fact that the Bible is itself a critic. 'The Word of God is quick.' What does that mean? Live, and powerful. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. So if there are critics of the Bible, remember the Bible is a critic. What we have got to do is not so much to criticise the Bible as to let it criticise us. I wish many people would remember that".

DINSDALE YOUNG

We Quote — SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

"Build your nest on no tree here for God has sold the whole forest over to death.' Learn the grim yet sanative lesson and you know the secret of boundless blessedness."

Wise Words

"Be willing to have it so, acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequence of any misfortune".

WILLIAN JAMES

Go Into Action

"William James said this; "When once a decision is reached and execution is the order of the day, dismiss absolutely all responsibility and care about the outcome." (In this case, William James undoubtedly used the word "care" as a synonym for anxiety"). He meant — once you have made a careful decision based on facts, go into action. Don't stop to reconsider. Don't begin to hesitate, worry and retrace your steps. Don't lose yourself in self-doubting which begets other doubts. Don't keep looking back over your shoulder."

DALE CARNEGIE

Meditate on Divine Things

"Meditate on Divine things, my brethren. Be men of mind, and be sure you be men of meditation, Mind is the highest thing, and meditation is the highest use of mind; it is the true root, and sap, and fatness of all faith and prayer and spiritual obedience. Why are our minds so blighted and so barren in the things of God? Why have we so little faith? Why have we so little hold of the reality and nobility of Divine things? The reason is plain — we seldom or never meditate. We read our New Testament, on occasion, and we hear it read, but we do not take time to

meditate. We pray sometimes, or we pretend to pray; but do we ever set ourselves to prepare our hearts for the mercy-seat by strenuous meditation on who and what we are; on who and what He is to whom we pretend to pray; and on what it is we are to say, and do, and ask, and receive?"

ALEXANDER WHYTE

"Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he". Proverbs 16:20

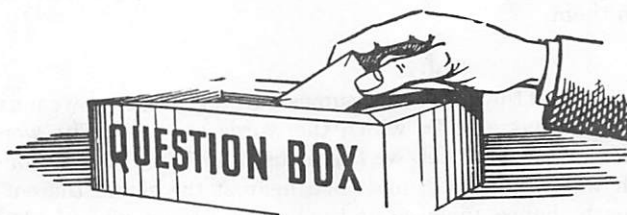
"Who is the happy man? Who knows Most joy, no matter where he goes?
Who leads his fellows? Has more Zest And aim in life? At night, more rest?
More patient hope in suffering? Who has the sweetest song to sing?
Who in each new-born day can see The wealth of possibility?
Who has been show the surest plan For life? Who is the happy man?"

In want and rags, or on a throne, Lost in a crowd, or all alone,
Unschool'd or wise, or six feet tall, Or short and only four feet small,
In hospital or factory, Or mending nets, or out at sea,
Up in the clouds, or down a mine, Or putting callers on a line,
Or pushing pen, or turning sod — He is the man who walks with God."

MAURICE COX

"Faith and hope and love, we see, joining hand in hand, agree;
But the greatest of the three and the best is love." C.G.

Selected by LEONARD MORGAN



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"What is the difference between the soul and spirit of man?"

We must look to the second account of the creation of man as recorded in Genesis before we can begin to trace the origins which lie behind the question. In Genesis 2:7 we read, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul".

Now let us analyse the above statement and see what we can learn. In the first place we read, "God formed man of the dust of the ground." I think the only interpretation we can put on this is that the bone, sinews, and flesh of man were formed by God, and in this initial created state man was inanimate. Secondly, we read "(God) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life". According to the Hebrew text a more correct rendering would be "the breath of lives" (plural number). Here we have a picture of inanimate man, formed of the flesh by God, having 'lives' breathed into him. Thirdly, we see the effect of this, "And man became a living soul". So here we see inanimate man springing to life by the impartation of life from the life-giving Source, God.

Body, Soul, and Spirit.

In our reasoning we have reached the point where created man has been animated by the soul which God has imparted to him. There are those who say that the body of man is his soul, but surely they have failed to note the distinction made by Jesus, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the

soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul *and* body in hell (Matt. 10:28). So according to Jesus, the soul and the body are not one and the same.

It is also evident that the soul of man is *not* his spirit. In Hebrews we read, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Paul also made the composition of man very clear when he wrote to the saints at Thessalonica, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23). Furthermore, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that God is the Father of spirits, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which have corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live" (Heb. 12:9). See also Numbers 16:22).

It is now quite clear that when God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of lives, He meant man to have a body, soul, and spirit. God wants all souls to be saved, because they are His. He wants all the spirits of men to be renewed because He is the Father of spirits; surely this is why Paul refers to the last Adam, Christ, as a 'quickening spirit' (1 Cor. 15:45).

We now know that every man has a soul and a spirit; we must try to discover the distinction between them.

Spirit

If there is a distinction, and the question assumes that there is, then we must make a careful study of the passages in which the words are used. The word 'spirit' (Greek PNEUMA, Hebrew RUAH) we find is used for 'wind', hence John 3:8. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof". Again it is used for 'breath', hence, yielding up the breath, "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost" (Matt. 27:50).

Jesus Himself indicated the true nature of God when He declared, "God is Spirit". Angels are also designated as spirits, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister" (Heb. 1:14). The spirituality of God must have a reaction from the portion of man's nature which we are trying to establish, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). The absolute personal application is found in the statement, "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him" (1 Cor. 2:11).

In Romans 2:29 we find the spirit tied with the heart, "And circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter". If response from the heart is said to be 'in the spirit' then this gives a new dimension to the word 'spirit'. It seems to suggest that the spiritual part of man is the Divine in man. The Christian is the recipient of the Holy Spirit. His responses to God are 'in the spirit'. It is the highest part of human nature, and when we have been quickened by the 'quickening spirit', Christ, the scriptures examined suggest to us that we are related to the angels, and to God Himself.

Soul

The word 'soul' (Greek PSUCHE) denotes the breath, the breath of life, then the soul. It refers to the natural life of the body, hence, "And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life (Psuche) is in him" (Acts 20:10).

We do not read of God being referred to as 'the Holy Soul'. Paul teaches us also, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). This indicates to us that the 'natural man', the 'soulish' man, cannot respond to the higher spiritual nature because he is spiritually dead; he needs the 'quickening spirit' before his spiritual discernment can be exercised. Paul also argues that 'to be carnally minded is death', i.e. that the form of life associated only with the flesh, the 'soul-life', cannot be associated with that spirit-orientated life which is the response of the believer to God.

The *regenerative* process needs a little explanation. A man who is dead in trespasses and sins needs a spiritual change to take place in him. Being dead in trespasses and sins does not preclude intellectual activity, otherwise such a person could not reasonably appreciate and respond to the Gospel. Such a death affects only the spirit, but because the person is said to be 'spiritually dead', we are not to conclude that the spirit in that person is non-existent. A tree is dead insofar that it has no communication with man, but it has weight, it occupies space, it exists. A spirit is dead when it is not the recipient of, nor is the instrument of expression of the Divine Spirit; it lie dormant, ready to be regenerated by 'the quickening spirit'. When it is quickened, it becomes again, as Peter explains it, "a partaker of the Divine Nature" (2 Pet. 1:4).

Conclusion

Man, then, is body, soul, and spirit. The body is the flesh which is animated by the soul and the spirit. The soul and spirit are closely connected but are distinct. The spirit of man may be looked upon as the highest part of the human nature, especially when associated with the heart. Justin Martyr in his treatise on the Resurrection says, "The body is the dwelling of the soul, the soul the dwelling of the spirit". W.E.Vine comments, "The spirit may be recognised as the life principle bestowed on man by God, the soul as the resulting life constituted in the individual, the body being the material organism animated by soul and spirit". That, I think, is about as near as we can get.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Hayfield, Wigan.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

MARCH 1983

6	Exodus 16:9-36	Luke 9:1-17
13	Exodus 33:17-34:4	Luke 9:18-36
20	Numbers 11:16-29	Luke 9:37-48
27	2 Kings 1	Luke 9:49-62

FIRST APOSTOLIC COMMISSION

(Luke 9:1)

HOWEVER hard an effort we make to put ourselves into the place of the twelve men chosen by Jesus for this wonderful work, shall we ever really appreciate what they had to face?

Imagine for instance what four of these certainly did! They were fishermen, related and in partnership with a prosperous though hard and sometimes dangerous business for the support of themselves and families. They were called out of all this to a life of uncertain physical, mental and spiritual stress. The personality of Jesus, His magnetic and severely righteous character, His drastic demand for self-denial, must have overcome all doubts, and reconciled the natural human reservations. Their final step into service was sudden but John gives us the prior consideration brought by John Baptist's testimony (John 1:35-51). We are now viewing

committal to obedience. Miraculous power is received, good tidings for future blessing and cure of disease are assured, They have experienced all this *with* Jesus, now they are to put the same into practice themselves. They are to rely upon response, uncertain response, and act upon it absolutely without any material provision of their own, and with a duty to show a stern attitude upon rejection. This first effort at nationwide publicity was to be limited "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). The limitation was not continued with the greater effort (see verse 51 and 10:1 & 17). Their successes following their faith and obedience in detail brought them satisfaction (Mark 6:30 & 31), and Jesus wanted private fellowship with them, but it was prevented or shortened by the crowds. The fishing industry on Galilee is forsaken now. Earthly material rewards are given up for the heavenly treasure — "Eye hath not seen...nor ear heard.." (1 Cor. 2:9). Have we made a corresponding choice?

Compassion in Practice

(verses 11 & 17: see also Mark 8:1-3)

For what did the crowds follow Jesus around the lakeside (John 6:3; Matt. 14:13 & 14)? They were not disappointed, even though their motives and understanding were so mixed and defective (John 6:26 & 27). We are liable by familiarity to miss the stupendous nature of this miracle. Remember it is the ONE miracle recorded by all four gospel writers, and the only occasion when enthusiasm rose so high that violent men were prepared to take Jesus by force and make Him King! How many tons of food were actually distributed (weight — my guess, but think!)? William Barclay suggests turning the wonder into a psychological one, but this involves a falsification of language. Did the people only THINK they had enough to eat? The record makes it plain that Jesus HANDLED the food and so did the disciples. Physical bodies

received physical nourishment from which came physical satisfaction. This was indeed a SIGN OF DIVINE POWER UNEXPLAINABLE OTHERWISE. The people as with the other SIGNS felt the benefit most plainly, and remained satisfied (again John 6:26 & 27). Jesus must have had difficulty in thwarting the design of the violent — as is indicated too in His dismissing His disciples (John 6:15; Mark 6:45 & 46). His retirement surely conceals the critical point in His powerful ministry. Consent to worldly popularity would have meant conflict with Rome. We dare not try to explain or explain away the multiplication of the food, only to think it happened in course of distribution. How could a disciple carry food for a group of fifty hungry folk? We note that compassion cannot be satisfied with doctrine. It has to give material aid regardless of response.

A King's Curiosity

We understand Herod (Antipas) WAS influenced by John Baptist (Mark 6:20). He did works of mercy and favour, but it was shallow. He feared on hearing about Jesus but if he really determined to see Him, he could have done so at the expense of his pride. He would have had to humble himself before his courtiers and particularly Herodias into whose hands his surrender to lust had committed him. Finally he did face the silent rebuke of Jesus to which he replied with brutal torture and indifference to justice — to his own condemnation. Royalty could not face righteousness without fear, but was powerless to accept its influence. The true and the false then stood face to face! (Luke 23:6-12).

The Transfiguration

That the IMMORTAL INVISIBLE GOD should manifest Himself in the flesh is hardly conceivable, but He did so as the apostle John so emphatically records, as though saying to us "You can hardly believe it, but I can assure

you!" (1 John 1:1-3). At this juncture Jesus is revealing the fact that He is to die upon a cross — the most shocking and disgraceful way of dying. His closest disciples never believed Him until it happened — and then forgot the climax. At the very time of His triumphant public ministry, He made no secret of it. They had tasted rejection but could not believe that could continue and be successful against His DIVINE power. John Baptist's testimony of the voice from heaven, Jesus's authority over demons and His healing power had convinced them of His Christhood, the expected MESSIAH of Israel, a mighty worldly conqueror. It was necessary that the leaders of the apostolic band should have a more than earthly assurance of their Master's deity. Was this the "sign from heaven" requested by the religious authorities and denied to them? It did remain a secret revelation to the chosen few until that SIGN which Jonah prefigured removed any excuse for unbelief. Up the mountain side went the four men together, perhaps a frequent condition of darkness and silence for the Saviour's prayer. The disciples were overcome with sleep while Jesus prayed, when upon Him came the divine glory and the companionship of Moses and Elijah. Awakened into complete physical perception, Peter at least felt the wonder of a heavenly glory and in amazed consciousness expressed his longing to remain there, to forget earth, and share glory with Jesus and the saints of old. He did not realise what he was asking, and was terror-struck at his own "impudence" as the cloud and the voice testified to Jesus. It was an unforgettable moment — only a moment! but sufficient! No earthly tabernacle could house the divine presences. Reverential awe brought the natural response as before (Luke 5:8). We read Peter's own comments in his second letter (1:13-18). We note his reference there to his tabernacle, and

would suggest A. P. Stanley's hymn "O, Master it is good to be high on the mountain here with Thee" (no. 210 1908 Book). How near is heaven to earth? So real was the vision the disciples were astonished to be with Jesus only, and descending to find a crowd gathered the appearance of Jesus caused amazement as though the glory had not left Him. Some ran towards Him and gave Him respectful greeting with the distressed father who had sought relief from his awfully afflicted child, and had failed to get it. The majesty of God shone forth as the work of the devil before whom all were powerless was completely overcome as the hands of Jesus lifted up the boy completely cured. The glory of God upon Jesus on the hilltop was manifested in the valley before the arguing scribes and the astonished crowd and father.

The Course Set

It is thought that Jesus attended at least three Passover Feasts during His ministry. It seems that "He set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem" indicates approaching the last of these — at which he was crucified. Thus verse 51 of our chapter begins the journey and as far as chronologically possible relates events and teaching given on that critical journey. It may criss-cross Jordan Valley, Galilee, Samaria, Perea and Judaea, and the teaching may vary according to people and circumstances. Our chapter is shot through with prophecy and warnings of the hardships and difficulties of following Jesus. There is no question of offering an easy path. The three aspirants (verses 57-82) are faced with demands, not promises and following is plainly to be thorough and complete putting Jesus FIRST (verses 23-27). Service of one another is to be the mark of discipleship (46-48). Pharisaic self-importance is discouraged (29 & 30). Violence against rejection is forbidden as being out of harmony with the Christ spirit (51-56). Weaknesses of

disciples come to light even leading to an expression of impatience by the Saviour (verse 41), "faced with faltering disciples, degraded sufferers and wrangling scribes" (Farrar). His disciples seemed slow to learn as we also may well be. How full is one chapter of the God-breathed writings recording our Saviour's priceless life.

R. B. SCOTT

1894 - AND ALL THAT

A few months ago a good brother from the USA wrote to ask me if I could give him the date when individual containers were first used in 'the faithful' churches of Christ in Britain.

I replied stating that to the best of my knowledge they were introduced into Britain in 1956, in Edinburgh, by brother Clyde P. Findlay from Texas, USA. This enquiry from a brother in America sparked off my interest to know when individual containers were introduced into the churches of Christ in USA. Apparently G. C. Brewer claims the distinction (or blame) and the year was 1915, against opposition.

I know I would hate to have to explain to some young convert the apostolic beginnings of a practice in the church, introduced only in 1915 and I have often wondered how it is accomplished. Perhaps such a conversation between the 'Preacher' (P) and the convert (C) would run along the following lines:—

(C) — I'm sure glad I've found the true church.

(P) — Yes, we are the only church which insists on a "Thus saith the Lord". We demand scripture for all we believe and practice. You know our 'Plea', of course, and we speak only where the Bible speaks and we are silent where the Bible is silent. We insist on a return to the 'ancient order' and we utterly reject all manmade innovations.

(C) — Yes, so you have told me, and it's very commendable. There seems however, to be some divisions in the church over the use of individual containers on the Lord's table. When were they first used?

(P) — 1915 - But they might have been used in N.T. times.

(C) — 1915? Does that not class them as a recent manmade innovation? Why were they introduced?

(P) — Some congregations are very large.

(C) — Were there no large congregations prior to 1915? Besides, I think some fairly small congregations use them. In any case, even large congregations do not need a separate container for each individual member, do they?

(P) — We must be progressive. Those who oppose individual containers are usually small in number and backward. Does that itself not prove that we must be right to use them?

(C) — Were brethren prior to 1915 all backward, ill-informed and small in number?

(P) — I think you are being awkward.

(C) — Who invented individual containers, and why?

(P) — They were invented by a Presbyterian clergyman named Dr. J.G. Thomas, who got a patent for his invention in March, 1894.

(C) — Am I to understand that you are saying that an invention patented in 1894 is part of the apostle's doctrine, and that you have a "Thus saith the Lord" for it? That it is part of the 'Ancient order' that you keep talking about?

(P) — You are being extremely offensive to the honesty, integrity and scholarship of all the good brethren who use them.

- (C) — Surely churches of Christ have not got a monopoly of integrity, scholarship or, indeed, of honesty. You have not explained how the invention of a Presbyterian minister in 1894 can possibly be part of the apostle's doctrine?
- (P) — It would take a long course of instruction to convince you, but let me assure you that the practice is clearly taught in the N.T. and I'm prepared to debate on the matter. In fact I have already won a debate on the subject.
- (C) — How do you know you won the debate?
- (P) — My wife and supporters told me.
- (C) — When you said that it would take a long course of instruction to convince me did you mean 'brainwashing'.
- (P) — I'm beginning to see that you are a potential trouble-maker in the church.
- (C) — If individual containers on the Lord's table are clearly taught in the N.T. why did it take until 1894 for anyone to notice it? None of the scholarly men (like Luther) of the Reformation came up with them. None of the scholarly men (like Alexander Campbell) of the Restoration movement seem to have been aware of them. I suppose we should be eternally grateful to Dr. Thomas for discovering what all others, for 2000 years, had missed. He should be given a high place in Restoration Movement history.
- (P) — You are being difficult. In any event there is no scripture which says we *must not* use individual containers.
- (C) — Equally there is no scripture which says we *shall not* use musical instruments in the worship — but you would not use an organ, would you? Are you saying that we can do anything provided there is no scripture which expressly forbids it?
- (P) — Many good and scholarly brethren use them — do you think they are mistaken?
- (C) — Many good and scholarly brethren use an organ in the worship — do you think they are mistaken?
- (P) — Those who oppose individual containers are small in number and backward. I have told you before. We must be progressive.
- (C) — Doesn't being 'progressive' clash with your alleged commitment to restore the 'ancient order' and to be *silent* where the Bible is silent?
- (P) — Thousands of good brethren can't be wrong.
- (C) — You have not yet told me WHY individual containers were invented in 1894. The Rev. Thomas was also a doctor was he not?
- (P) — Yes he was a physician and he reckoned that individual containers would be more hygienic.
- (C) — So, the good doctor did not make any claims to be restoring the 'ancient order' or getting back to the 'apostolic doctrine' — he was just trying to avoid contamination with germs?
- (P) — Yes, I suppose so.
- (C) — Why then do you try and make the practice appear to be sanctioned in the New Testament?
- (P) — You are being difficult again.
- (C) — Can we not assume that our Lord Jesus Christ would know as much about microbes as our good doctor, and if there had been any danger would have made the necessary arrangements — or do you reckon that Jesus wanted to leave it in the hands of the good doctor.
- (P) — Oh I don't use the containers because of reasons of hygiene. I know our congregation will grow and we'll need them.

(C) — But we have already agreed that small congregations use them, and in any case, a large congregation does not require an individual container for each member, does it? It strikes me that if you do not use the containers because of hygiene, (and large congregations don't need to use them) — then you use them merely to be 'progressive', and if that is so I can only be sorry for you.

(P) — I can see that I am wasting my time and that you would be better off in a small congregation of backward brethren.

(C) — Have a care that being 'progressive' does not mean 'digressive'. If you are telling me, on the one hand, that you are committed to sweeping away all man-made innovations in the worship, and set on getting back to the simplicity of the N.T., and on the other hand you endorse as scriptural the invention of a Presbyterian minister in 1894, then I can only pity you. In the circumstances you should change your practice or else change your famous 'plea' of being silent where the Bible is silent. Perhaps also before urging the denominational bodies to get back to the 'New Testament pattern' you should first of all get rid of your own innovations. Surely if there was ever a classic case of a man-made innovation in the worship of God, it is the invention of a Presbyterian minister, patented in March, 1894.

(P) — Remind me to score your name off my Christmas Card list.

(C) — Faced with a choice of being 'progressive' or 'backward' I think I'd rather be amongst the backward brethren. The only way forward is to go backwards to Jerusalem. Didn't you know that — it's part of your 'Plea'.

EDITOR

BELIEF (6)

Entering into

Relationship with Jesus Christ

OUR Lord's final words to his disciples at the Last Supper (see John chapters 14 to 17) reveal the wonderful relationship or fellowship (*koinonia*) that he describes in his first epistle, chapter one. What greater epitome could we find of such a fellowship than that described in John 14:23; "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him and we will make our abode with him".

Note the community of interest, involving a giving on both sides, in this statement of our Lord's. Ponder deeply the wonderful import behind the words.

First we observe how the words "If a man love me" closely agree with our previous statements that the central theme of the Scriptures and of belief is the acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God. This is the truth which all believers are required to endorse as the basis of their belief.

Second, we see that such belief, in order to be acceptable, must involve "keeping his words," which Jesus equates with loving him. This is shown clearly in verse 21; "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me". To such, and such alone the promise is given.

Third, and in consequence, we are faced with the wonderful promise to all true disciples, the indwelling presence and fellowship of the Father and Son themselves.

We may say that this is too great for us to understand, so it is if we do not first put into action what our Lord commands. But supposing we do put it into action, what then? Will it not come to pass as promised — this wonderful experience, this unmerited blessing, to which the world with all its wealth and resources cannot even remotely approach?

Its Possibility

The casual, disinterested or self-opinionated reader will say: "This is impossible. I could never keep it up." The earnest enquirer, however, will realise that our Lord's words search the deep currents and meanings of life itself. Such will realise that here One is speaking as no man ever spake before (John 7:46); who came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10); who said, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3); who was interested in the salvation of our souls in that he said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37). Then he said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy angels" (Mark 8:38. Compare 2 Thessalonians 1:7-12). The anxious enquirer will ask, "Surely it is possible to keep his words, or he would not have said so. But assuming it is possible, how am I going to keep it up?"

Can we keep Jesus' words?

The importance of this question cannot be over-emphasised. It looms large, as a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to belief; but is it so formidable an obstacle?

Note the order of the words of Jesus:

- (1) "If a man love me..."
- (2) "he will keep my words..."

(3) "my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."

If therefore, as a result of our belief in the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, we obey and keep his words (John 14:21), both the Father and Son will make their abode with us. Will not that make a tremendous difference to our ability to keep his words?

The Obedience of Belief

It is certain that no such fellowship or intimate relationship can exist without something besides mere belief — merely believing about Jesus. That is why James said "the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). This implies that the devils (demons) merely believe *about* God — they do not trust in him, or submit to him. What then is the difference between these two aspects of belief? This: that *believing in Jesus* involves obedience and a determination to obey his "sayings" (see Luke 6:46); whilst *believing about him* includes no intention of obeying him.

In other words, the obedience of belief referred to by Paul (Romans 1:5), is the essence of the wonderful and tender relationship of which our Lord said: "If a man loves me *he will keep my words* and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and we will make our abode with him." Is it possible? See our next article for further development of this absorbing subject. In the meantime try these:—

Exercises in Belief

Matthew 19:25-26; Mark 9:23; Luke 18:27; Matthew 7:24-29; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 Peter 1:2, 17-25.

W. BROWN

(To be continued)

BREVITIES

RECIPE for a better tomorrow: Give the best you have today.

Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible, and achieves the impossible.

It's hard to remove the beam from our own eye if our hands are full of stones.

We defend our friends in the same proportion that we love them.

Dishonesty is a forsaking of permanent for temporary advantages.

Persecution is not wrong because it is cruel, but cruel because it is wrong.

Some people try to serve the devil in such a way as not to offend God.

To banish, imprison, plunder, starve, hang, and burn men for religion is not the gospel of Christ, but the policy of the devil. Christ never used force or violence but once, and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, not to drive them in.

AVARICE reigns most in those who have but few good qualities to recommend them. It is a weed that will grow in barren soil. — Hughes.

IT IS impossible for that man to despair who remembers his Helper is omnipotent.

CHRIST'S limitless resources meet our endless needs.

EVERY family tree has some sap in it.

LAUGHTER purchased at the expense of decency costs too much.

SOME come to the Bible to drink of the Water of Life — some come merely to gargle.

THE LORD'S WORK IN GHANA

First I must apologise on behalf of my wife and myself for not informing many of our brethren of our whereabouts when we left Britain. Those we did not see or tell of our plans, we do apologise for such behaviour. We do hope that now that you have our address you would take the opportunity to write.

There are so many problems scripturally with the Churches here. In actual fact there are many digressions. We have started working among some

of the Churches and we have seen a lot of willingness in some brethren to know and to do the will of God.

At the moment two congregations have taken upon themselves to walk in the old path J.c.r. 6:16. Many of them have told me that they have for a long time felt uneasy about many things they have been reading when they compare them to the practices in the congregations. They have been for a long time influenced by man's interpretation and not by GOD's teaching. One brother retorted, "Now I believe that I am speaking as the oracle of GOD" 1 Pet. 4:11.

Brethren, pray for us here. The going is hard. One has to live on bare necessities but we believe that with your fervent and constant prayers all will be well.

The grace of our Lord be with you all.
David Arku-Mensah & Family,
P.O. Box M230,
Accra,
GHANA.

SOMEONE HAS SAID

Happiness cannot be multiplied unless it be divided.

No man is free who is not master of Himself.

If there is anything better than to be loved, it is to love.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dennyloanhead, Scotland: The church here held another Saturday evening Gospel Meeting. This was our last meeting of the present series and our visiting speaker was bro. Jack Nisbet, from Ulverston.

Once again we were pleased to see the meeting well attended. There were quite a number of non-members present and we also had a goodly number of brethren from sister churches, (to whom we express our sincere thanks for their support). Bro. Jack Nisbet preached the word of God clearly and plainly stressing that 'in these last days' God has spoken unto us by His Son, and that we should accept with grateful hearts His teaching and his promises. We do pray that the seed sown may have fallen into good ground and eventually bring forth fruit unto the praise and glory of God. Brother Nisbet also served the church speaking on Lord's day morning and preaching again in the evening.

On behalf of the church I would again thank all those brethren who helped and supported us by their presence. May we also have received strength and encouragement during this sweet time of fellowship.

Joseph M. Malcolm, Sec.

Manchester: On Sunday the 5th of December we benefitted from messages from God's word given to us by our Brother Graham Fisher from Liverpool. During the afternoon meeting 86 years old John Cole spontaneously expressed his faith in Jesus. Afterwards in discussion with young brother Emanuel Scott he expressed his desire to be baptised. Scholes brethren kindly provided the facilities and John was baptised on Tuesday the 7th.

John, the son of a runaway negro slave, was born in Bolton. He has spent most of his adult years busking, mainly in the streets of Manchester. The people of Manchester call him "Jaz" Cole. His singing and dancing has brought happiness to many people. A recent severe stroke has left him slightly disabled but this has not discouraged him from continuing his profession.

Now there is joy amongst the angels over another soul turned to the Christ.

In the side room after the baptism he said "I am an old man. I have spent too many years serving Satan. Now I must serve Jesus." May the Lord bless him and strengthen him. Thank you Lord for such a wonderful confession.

Please pray for him.

When you see him outside the Arndale centre in Manchester, singing, Let him know that he is your brother.

On behalf of the church which meets in our home. Yours in our Saviour's most precious name.

Allan Ashurst

OBITUARY

Slamannan, Scotland: It is with much sorrow that we record the passing of our beloved sister Jean Beveridge, at the age of 89 years. She will be sadly missed by young and old in the congregation here. Her Christian life was an example to us all. She always expressed in all that she said and did the joy of being a child of the Lord. Although we who are left sorrow yet we rejoice because we know that Jeanie has left to be with the Lord for ever.

The funeral services were taken by bro. Alex Brown (Dennyloanhead) to whom the heartfelt appreciation of the congregation goes.

Sister Beveridge has been a widow for 42 years. Her eldest daughter died in 1945; her younger daughter followed in 1946 and her youngest son, Andrew died suddenly two years ago past September. Sister Beveridge was baptised approx. 34 years ago while holidaying in Canada, staying with Bro. & Sister Adam Bruce. She remained a faithful and cheerful member right up until her death and would have celebrated her 89th birthday on 10-1-83 had the Lord spared her.

John B. Wilson. Sec.

AID TO INDIA FUND

I am happy to report that help for our Indian brethren is continuing to arrive and I would like to acknowledge the very kind but anonymous gift of £10. Thank you all very much brethren. We are hoping for your continued generosity and I shall be happy to receive contributions no matter how small. Readers and contributors will be pleased to know that we sent £100 to the church members in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, who were victims of the Cyclone, mentioned in the December issue of the 'S.S.'. All gifts and contributions can be sent to me at 1F Station Court, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

Miss Ruth Nisbet

INSIDE RUSSIA

A recent newspaper quote regarding the work of the Rev. Michael Bourdeaux, who has written several books on preaching in Russia.

"He last visited the Soviet Union in 1979. In 1980, his application for a visa was refused on the grounds that on a previous visit he had taken part in an illegal service of worship which he denies.

Mr Bourdeaux, who travels the world lecturing on his work, says that the Soviet Union is far from being the atheistic state that one might imagine. He estimates that out of a population of about 260 million people there are at least 40 million Christians in the USSR. They are not, of course, free to practise their faith.

"We know the names of about 390 people who are in prison in the Soviet Union today solely because of their religious beliefs," Mr Bourdeaux says."

WHOSE FOOL ARE YOU

IN a busy London street lots of people smiled when they saw these words, as a man approached with "sandwich boards" - "I am a fool for Christ's sake." But the smile faded off many faces when he had passed. On the board behind him was the question, "Whose fool are you".

BIBLE STUDY

SOME come to drink of the waters of Life. Some come just to gargle.

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