

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 58 No. 7

JULY 1990

HOMOSEXUALITY

As mentioned in last month's issue, I have been prompted by the remarks of a local clergyman, to offer these few thoughts on homosexuality. There was a time, not so long ago, when such a subject would have been completely taboo for general discussion. After all, sodomy is not the kind of subject to bring up in after-dinner chats with grannie in the drawing-room. However it seems that we now live in emancipated days of enlightenment, and the subject now gets as much coverage in the media as the weather. When I was a youth the matter was spoken of in whispers and indeed I was about 16 years of age before I even heard that men did such things, and only then because of a newspaper report of an incident down a local coal-mine. Now I am assured that everyone, from very small children to elderly ladies (especially those in the "TV addict" category) now know more about it than I do, and that sensitivities will not be outraged by anything that is said.

I have no wish to be an expert on the topic and all I hope to do is to quote the Bible and show how God regards it. This seems increasingly necessary in view of the ever-improving press homosexuality gets and the general sympathetic support coming from various quarters. Even in this quiet back-water of Scotland it is difficult not to notice the considerable upsurge of interest and popularity accorded to homosexuality not only on a local basis but world-wide. Locally this has been starkly illustrated by the dismay and surprise of learning that it has found its way even into what is surely the last bastion of sense and sobriety, the Scottish Law Courts, where recently solemn Judges have confessed and resigned. Evidently the days when seedy men in dirty raincoats haunted the gents' toilets have gone, and now the new and growing army of today's homosexuals are brash, brazen and bright and certainly not shy in flaunting their debaucheries. A certain pride and sophistication attends their activities and there are now numerous 'trendy' trysting places: 'Gay' pubs, bars and discos. Only today a presenter on a TV Holiday Guide programme listed as one of the attributes of a town in Ibiza, the many 'Gay' bars and clubs. This is what we have come to, but perhaps no real surprise when we realise that a great many TV personalities, on 'soaps', panel games etc., have declared themselves 'Gay' (as if this was a plus to their other talents). All of this has been assisted greatly by the sympathetic encouragement given by the 'Church' to homosexuality and the pathetic platitudes which fall from the lips of clergymen in support of homosexuals (some of the clergy are, of course, homosexuals themselves). Indeed homosexuals now have their own 'Church' (The Metropolitan Community Church) world-wide with their own clergy prepared to carry out 'marriages' of members of the same sex, and I understand a branch is soon to open here in Edinburgh.

Just last month, in an interim Report, the Methodist Church declared that "Methodists should not be debarred from the ministry on the grounds of their sexual orientation," and although this was cautiously welcomed by the "Lesbian & Gay Christian Movement" the Movement expressed regret that they had not received "an express and unambiguous welcome". Add to this the very active and militant campaigning for 'Gay Rights' (whatever these might be) by small pressure groups and large Trade Unions, and we begin to get some impression of the dangers to the youth of our country from a rapidly advancing 'Gay' movement. Homosexuality has, in fact, reached such a stage of accepted respectability that there is currently on TV a one-hour programme, each week, entirely devoted to the promotion of homosexuality, with Gays and Lesbians talking quite conversationally about their lovers and their perverted activities, illustrated by video films they had taken at the time. In a few years, if not already, young people will grow up thinking that homosexuality is perfectly normal, and a legitimate option to be followed.

A Disease?

How true is it, as the 'Gays' allege, that homosexuality is 'natural' and therefore healthy and wholesome: and that previously 'Gays' have been merely 'misunderstood'? Even some Quakers have said that homosexuality is no more deviant than is left-handedness, while others class it as a 'disease' which has fastened itself on innocent victims.

The first thing that must strike us, if homosexuality is so natural and healthy, was the obvious need for the coinage of an acceptable terminology by which homosexuals could be known and described. To improve the image the term 'Gay' was introduced and obviously was considered a much better option than 'queer' or Sodomist. The historical connotations of Sodom, and Sodomist are not lost upon homosexuals. 'Gay' must, of course, be the euphemism to end all euphemisms, and a moment's brief reflection on what these men do to one another, and to their 'Rent Boys', will convince us that there is nothing at all 'gay' about homosexuality, but rather it is sordid, loathsome, vile, depraved and hideously obscene. It is no more 'natural' than is incest (which, apparently, is also quite rampant in the world) or bestiality (which is certainly not unknown in the world). How any 'Church' or clergyman can countenance sodomy, much less support it, is a complete mystery, and how any clergyman can be a sodomist, and remain a clergyman, must be an even bigger mystery.

There was a time when physiological excuses were made for the practice of homosexuality, and it was alleged that these poor unfortunates were the unwitting victims of physical deformity at birth. Certainly a man born with some physical deformity, whereby he is scarcely one gender or the other, would receive a certain sympathy from most of us, and any judgement on the behaviour of such a person would be left in God's hands. Obviously these cases do occur. But it is very hard to believe that the many thousands, nowadays who seek one another out at 'Gay' bars and discos have any serious physical deformity. Indeed, it seems that most of them go out of their way to show, by their dress and posturing, how robust and masculine they are. Psychiatrists are also engaged to convince us that homosexuality, and deviant sexual practice, is caused by the upbringing and previous home environment of these individuals, and various reasons are ascribed, including aggressive fathers, indulgent mothers etc., etc. Again it is difficult to believe that all the many thousands of homosexuals worldwide have been mentally crippled by their parents in this way. Many of us may have had aggressive fathers, or indulgent mothers, without us seeking out a 'rent boy'. Again we are asked to accept that homosexuality is a disease 'just like alcoholism' and that those addicted have as little control over their lives as have diabetics or cancer victims. Alcoholism is not in my view a disease but a human weakness which can be cured, and to be 'Gay' is not a disease any more than is an addiction to tobacco, or heroin, and many are cured by a strong will and strict discipline. Disease and moral

weakness are two very different things. Homosexuality is therefore an evil perversity and no more a disease than incest, bestiality or, for that matter, polygamy or idolatry. The apostle Paul says (1 Cor. 6:10) that various types of person shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, and he includes homosexuals and alcoholics (drunkards). It surely would be strange that God would deny access to the Kingdom of God to those who were innocent victims of a disease. No other 'diseases' (like Parkinson's, Arthritis, Asthma, Dementia etc.) seem to be listed as likely to exclude people from Heaven.

Psychiatry, in seeking to explain human weakness, rarely seems to take account of a small word, 'evil' (and an evil disposition), personified so obviously all around us (and seen to good effect at Lockerbie and in the mindless killings and carnage by the I.R.A. and the other terrorist organisations).

Homosexuality Condemned

Laying aside the opinion of Psychiatry, let us see what the Bible has to say about homosexuality. The KJV, having been printed in 1611, does not employ the word but modern versions do. The KJV does, however, talk of men "who are abusers of themselves with mankind" (1 Cor. 6:9) and "them that defile themselves with mankind" (1 Tim. 1:10) and so, far from regarding homosexuality as natural and healthy, regards it as abuse and defilement. The RSV uses the term "sexual pervert" (1 Cor. 6:9) and "sodomites" (1 Tim. 1:10). This mention of Sodomites reminds us that homosexuality is so abhorrent to God that He completely destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone and, ever since, homosexuality has been rightly described as "Sodom".

Homosexuality (by males or females) is not new but is as old as "the oldest profession in the world" and is as repugnant to God as incest or bestiality. Away back in the Book of Leviticus God charged that a man "shall not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is an abomination. Neither shall thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith." (18:22,23). This verse as I say, puts homosexuality on a par with bestiality. Again (in 20:18) God repeats the charge and adds the penalty, "If a man also lie with mankind as he lieth with womankind, both of them hath committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death: their blood shall be upon them." Thus, with God, homosexuality is not natural and healthy, gay or trendy, but vile, obscene, abominable and worthy of death. There were no mitigating circumstances and those found together were put to death, (whether or not they had aggressive fathers or indulgent mothers).

Notwithstanding God's unequivocal prohibition of the practice, the children of Israel had a long and varied association with Sodomy. In 1 Kings 14:24 mention is made of the fact that in Rehoboam's reign, in Judah, "The people provoked God above all that their fathers had done. For they built them high places and images and groves on every high hill and under every green tree. And there were Sodomites in the land, and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel." These "Sodomites in the land" were tolerated until the 20th year of Jeroboam's reign, when Asa became king, "And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and did as his father, David. And he took away the Sodomites out of the land, and he removed all the idols that his father had made." (1 Kings 15:9-12). And so King Asa got rid of all the homosexuals but they soon crept back and it was left to Jehoshaphat, Asa's son, to get rid of "the remnant of the Sodomites which remained in the days of his father Asa: and he took them out of the land." (1 Kings 22:46). Notwithstanding these thorough purges it is remarkable to read that when King Josiah came to the throne of Judah the people had reverted to full-scale idolatry. Josiah spent his entire reign in restoring the written law, demolishing the groves, idols, and high places, altars and other paraphernalia of idolatry, "And broke down the houses of the Sodomites, that were by the 'House of the Lord, where the women wove the hangings for the groves." (2 Kings 23:7). And so these male

prostitutes (used in idolatry) were not only back in the land, but occupied housing given specially to them to be conveniently next door to the very temple. The clergy of today may smile benignly upon homosexuality but God condemned it and the good kings of Israel and Judah rooted it out.

The Gentiles

Sodomy was condemned in the O.T. but what of the N.T. and **what of the Gentile world:** were they as contaminated with it as were the Jews? It seems from Paul's comments on the Gentile world, that they were. He says **"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonour their own bodies between themselves. For this cause God gave them up to vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another: men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their errors which was meet (and V.32) "Who, knowing the judgement of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."** (Rom. 1:26-32). From Paul's review we learn that what these women and men did was not natural but very unnatural (contrary to nature) and men "burned in their lust towards one another" (disease or malformity had nothing to do with it). Certainly when Paul wrote, Greek and Roman society was riddled with homosexuality. William Barclay in **"Flesh & Spirit"** describes this and says that sodomy was "a vice which Romans learned from Greece," and reminds us that Gibbon (Rise and Fall of Roman Empire) states that of the **first fifteen Roman Emperors only Claudius was sexually normal. Julius Caesar 'loved' King Nicodemus of Bithynia (Lesbos) and Nero 'married' a castrated youth called Sporus, albeit 'married' to another man called Doryphorus. Hadrian 'had a passion of males' in general, and Antinous, in particular. If space permitted a great deal more could be said. Alexander the Great was a homosexual and indeed the practice was not really considered to be immoral. Alexander Severus did consider passing legislation to prohibit sodomy but desisted; realising that the vice would only be driven underground "and the lusts of men would make it impossible to eliminate" (Scriptores Historia: Severus). ('Lesbian', by the way, is from Lesbos, a Greek island peopled by the poetess Sappho, and many other Lesbian women. Lesbos is also called Bithynia).**

Conclusion

Space has gone and how can the subject be summed up? Let us never be influenced by the pathetic platitudes which fall from the lips of the clergy on this subject: like one the other morning on the radio who said, "That it was time for the church to re-examine its attitude to human sexuality as clearly there is a freshness and richness about all the variants." Surely when God angrily rained down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, it was not because they were the innocent victims of disease, but because the practice of sodomy was unnatural, defiling, depraved, disgusting, obscene, repugnant, vile, degrading, dissolute, debase, indecent and hideously evil. Sodomy is utterly condemned not only throughout the O.T. but also the N.T. and Sodom is mentioned by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Zephaniah; by Christ, Paul, Peter, Jude and John (in the Revelation) and so it is not a thing of the past. Paul says that **"It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret"** and obviously this article is far from uplifting, but amidst all the sympathetic noises we hear in support of a "better understanding" of homosexuality I thought it necessary to remind readers how despicable and heinous the practice is in the eyes of God. There is no "freshness or richness" of this sexual variant, as suggested by the clergyman. Sodomy ever remains an abomination in the eyes of God, and worthy of death. Nothing has changed: homosexuality is completely, and utterly, an abomination to God, and so are all those who engage in it.

Editor.

GLEANINGS

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

SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY

"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Matthew 6:33-34 (RV).

WISE WORDS FROM THE BOOKS OF W. RILEY

"It is stupid to let tomorrow's cares cloud today's contentments."

"Never come to a hasty decision — wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast."

"The book in his pocket seemed to suggest that it was unprofitable to worry."

"Why carry care when he had money in his pocket, strength in his limbs, and hope in his heart."

"I've been praying for help and guidance, and I'm not one o' them that knocks and doesn't expect the door to be opened."

"There is no sense in fretting over next year's crops."

"Time enough to think of supping that porridge when we see it in the pan."

"I'm not one that frets might's ha' beens, but if I slip on a bit of orange peel I like to kick it off causeway, chance anybody else falls."

"A dark cloud may lighten even though the sun does not appear."

"I'm looking through a telescope," laughed Betty, "a telescope called faith.,"

"When you've an awkward warp in your loom you'll do no good throwing t' shuttle at it."

"If you'll take an old man's advice you'll seek help where it won't be denied you."

"Do one thing at a time, carry one load at a time, live one day at a time — that's been my practice. I've never been one to climb a wall so as to see round the next bend."

"Steady mister," she said; "the lad has found his City of Refuge."

"I was in t'valley, right enough, three years ago tonight, but I wasn't there by myself, and I trusted in that word o' promise, 'no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly,' so I did my best to keep both my head and my heart up. And I found the springs.

"It's against my principles to worry."

"I've always been one who was willing to sup my share of trouble, but not a fortnight before time."

"I see no sense in choking before water gets up to your chin."

"We're not all us botherin' folks to have some more when there's plenty before 'em, an' all they've got to do is reach out for 't."

However, for the mariner in danger of shipwreck to criticise the harbour of refuge in which he finds himself is mean ingratitude."

"I've lived long enough to know 'at 'man's born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards,' as 't Owd Book put it; an' if you're going to fret your heart out every time it comes your way, you'll spend your life in a mournin' coach."

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

WE NEED HANDS

EVERY day, in various walks of life we see how hands play an important part. Hospitals and 'old-age' homes could not exist unless hands were there. When we consider life within the walls of hospitals we think of the hands of the nurses and doctors. HANDS are indeed important.

Let us consider this matter from a Spiritual aspect, suggesting first of all *CLOSED HANDS*. These depict selfishness, anger, temper, and vile-ness. They even express covetousness and self-centredness. A closed hand is a very poor exhibit of willingness to attend to the sick, the needy, and the distressed. "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack" (Proverbs 28:27). "Withold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it" (Proverbs 3:27). God *shares* His mercy and love, (both material and Spiritual) with ALL who are prepared to love, fear and obey HIM. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17). God does not expect us to live our lives with *CLOSED HANDS*; they must be *WILLING* hands.

There is also a *WITHERED HAND* (Mark 3:1-2). This type of hand depicts helplessness, uselessness, and an inability to do anything. Figuratively, withered hands are those which have become unable to do anything pertaining to the Lord's church. YOU, dear Christian, once saw the need of a Saviour when you were lost in sin, and now God wants you to prove your appreciation. You have hands to do it; pray that they may not be withered hands. Such hands are of no use to God and Christ. There is much for you to do.

Then there are *CLEAN HANDS*, as conveyed by Psalm 24:3-4 "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His Holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul in vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (See also Job 19:9, and Isaiah 1:16 & 52:11). Clean hands exhibit a clean and exemplary life, a life of integrity.

A City that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, but is there for all the world to see. The best expression of the gospel message is YOUR life, and mine. Clean hands are willing, working, open hands, doing that which is honest, pure, just and true, and ever ready to obey the Master's will. Are we as Christians fulfilling our obligation to worship, to continue steadfastly, to lay by in store upon the first day of the week as God has prospered us? Are we willing to lift the weak and the fallen, ever conscious that "we who are strong" are also subject to life's limitations and allurements? Clean hands never allow adversity, discouragement, persecution, distress, to discourage them, but exclaim with our beloved Paul "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phillipians 1:21). If we are in Christ, HE and He alone will have the pre-eminence in our lives at all times and under all circumstances.

Finally, let us consider and conclude with the most important the *INCOMPARABLE HANDS*. These are the untiring hands of Jesus our Saviour, the pierced hands that suffered on the cross of Calvary. Long before Christ's judgement in Pilate's hall, those hands showed sympathy and love for the blind, the sick, the deaf, the maimed and the dead. Those hands were never, in any fashion, withered or closed hands, they were kept busy by an inward love and compassion for all.

Many of us so often fail miserably to "follow in His steps." Jesus proved His identity to Thomas when he said; "Behold my hands." Yes, these were the hands by which Jesus hung suspended on that cruel tree, when He gave testimony in these words: "Father I have glorified thee on the earth, now I have finished the work thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Those pierced hands will be a living witness in the DAY OF ACCOUNTABILITY. Those of us who have been aware of our obligations to Him may hang our heads in shame, but then it will be too late. We must have hands busy in God's service.

Will your song be "Must I go empty handed, thus my dear Redeemer meet, not one day of service give HIM, lay no trophy at His feet?" Dear friend would you like to meet Jesus that way? Won't you place your hand in that nail-pierced hand which at this moment knocks at the door of your heart? "If any man will open the door I will come in and sup with him and he with me." "If any man will hear my voice."

(Revelation 3:20).

In hearing His voice through His written word, we are called upon to believe in Him, and “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). WE must also repent of our sins (Acts 17:30) “Confess Christ with our sins” (Acts 2:38). Then we can “Arise to walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Yes, *Newness of life* means to have willing hands, not withered, closed or unclean hands.

Perhaps we can see how important hands are, not only in the natural life, but more especially in the Spiritual life. Christ requires clean hands and busy hands. Only then can we sing:

“Triumphant through grace I shall someday stand,
With Jesus at home on the golden strand,
His face in its beauty at last to see,
MY HANDS IN HIS HANDS, THAT WERE PIERCED FOR ME.”

Thomas W. Hartle,

11 Killarney Mansions, Gorge Road, Oranjezicht, Cape Town, 8001 Republic S.A.

BIBLE STUDY ESSENTIAL IN SCHOOLS

Premier Vander Zalm recently observed that even Jesus would be low in the polls. The media – all Pharisees, no doubt – promptly hooted at him.

Actually, most of us wouldn't know a Pharisee if he bit us. Not only Jesus is low in the polls. The general level of Biblical illiteracy ought to alarm everyone, not just hardshell fundamentalists.

Sooke English teacher, Winston Jackson made that point in Victoria's Monday Magazine recently. Because students know little or nothing about the Bible, his job as a teacher of literature is a lot tougher.

“Only four kids in my class of thirty had ever heard of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden,” he wrote. “No wonder they have trouble with the theme of the Lord of the Flies.”

His students didn't know Satan was originally an angel, so Paradise Lost was doubly lost on them. When he tried to teach T. S. Elliot's *The Journey of the Magi*, students asked: “Who are these Maggies?”

Not to know the Bible is to be disinherited from western civilisation. (I was tempted to say we've given up our birthright for a mess of pottage, but who would understand the Biblical allusion?). For centuries people all over Europe grew up learning the stories and images of the Bible, sharing a tradition that transcended national and cultural boundaries.

English speakers since the 17th century have been specially fortunate. The King James Bible has provided the foundation for everything from literacy training through political oratory to the most impassioned fiction and poetry. Even children's names, taken from the Bible, give them a momentous heritage – if they know the meanings and associations of those names.

No secular literature in any western nation has ever been free of the Bible's influence. Even atheist writers steal gratefully from it knowing its themes and images are universal. And, as James says, no literature can be understood without understanding the Bible first.

That makes the job of the secular educator very difficult indeed. In trying to separate church and state, we have taken the Bible out of the curriculum. It has been replaced by the literary masterpieces of Judy Blume and other supposedly relevant authors. The effect has been like ripping all but the last chapter out of a novel and trying to understand that chapter while ignorant of everything that's gone before.

Admittedly the Bible is hard to teach as literature. For some Christians and Jews, discussing it simply as a text is deeply offensive. For students from other religions the Bible as literature still looks like an attempt at conversion and an assertion of some kind of cultural superiority.

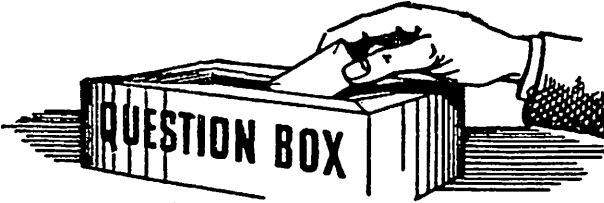
Well, literary analysis that deepens understanding and appreciation of the Bible should be no threat to anyone's religion — quite the contrary. And the Bible's cultural supremacy in the West is a simple fact to be accepted, like the predominance of Japanese speakers in Japan.

Far from shunning the Bible, we should let no one escape from elementary school without at least some exposure to its stories, themes and images. By the end of high school students should have studied it more closely along with the Koran and the Sacred writings of Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. Armed with that knowledge, students of any cultural background could feel at home with the literatures and philosophies of most of the major world civilizations.

The indoctrination of religion of course has no place in the public schools. The teaching of religion should have a major place in the curriculum. Religions have founded and destroyed empires, brought peace and ignited wars. We can no more ignore them as a subject for study than we can ignore earthquakes and rainbows.

If we continue to neglect the Bible in public education, that's not a judgement on the Bible, but on ourselves.

Crawford Killian,
(sent in by Bro. E. Severson, Burnaby, Vancouver.)



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I have heard you express thoughts about the O.T. scriptures which seem different from what I have been taught in the past. Would you please explain your attitude to the O.T.?"

Before I proceed to answer the question in detail, let me make several points clear. The Word of God, so far as I am concerned, is a **complete** revelation. I would not wish to add anything to it or take anything away from it. The Pharisees and Sadducees did just that, and they were rebuked by Jesus (See Mark 7:9-13; and Mark 12:18-27 but particularly v24).

Jesus himself put his authority behind the O.T. Scriptures (See Matt. 5:17-20). I think we should point out that Jesus was not bringing a **new** doctrine in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, but He was reiterating that teaching which had always been in the mind of God but which had been displaced by the traditions taught by the Scribes and Pharisees.

We cannot **begin** to understand our God without reference to the O.T. The Bible is not a collection of wise sayings which — when learned and committed to memory and recited with textual precision as the occasion demands — can make people **better** people, but it is God's revelation of **Himself**, and how can we begin to **love** Him if we do not **know** Him, and how can we know Him if we ignore part of His revelation? So I am no exponent of a **divided** revelation of God, but if anyone were to ask me which part of the Bible was more important to me as a **Gentile** convert in the 20th century then I would unhesitatingly answer that it would have to be the N.T.

Setting the O.T. Scene

God chose Himself a people out of all the nations on the earth; He chose the Jews. They weren't chosen because they were any **better** than other peoples, but because God loved them (See Deut. 7:6-8). He was keeping the oath which he had sworn to their fathers. God does things **His** way because he is God. His ways are past finding out, and had he not chosen to reveal Himself then we would still be without knowledge of His nature.

God made covenants with various people in O.T. times, the principal ones being with **Abraham** (Gen. 15, and confirmed with a weird and awful ceremony v10ff.; cp Jer. 34:18), and with **Moses** for Israel (Ex. 24:3ff; this covenant confirmed by sacrifice and sprinkling of blood). The sign of the covenant with Abraham was circumcision, and of that with Moses, the Sabbath. It must not be supposed that these covenants were negotiated and agreed **as between equals**; they should be seen as the Divine will toward man, expressed in ordinance and appointment, not 'contract'. They were fulfilled by outward observance, but when the people declined from God as they often did, the observances were neglected. Consequently, the prophets looked deeper into the spiritual implications of relationships with God and predicted the establishment of a new covenant which would not rely on the outward rite but on inward conformity to the will of God (See Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 37:26-28. cp. Heb. 13:20,21). It is this latter covenant with which Christians today are primarily concerned, and it is this new covenant, sealed with the blood of my Saviour and King, which determines my attitude to the O.T. scriptures.

The Message of the Bible

There is a central message throughout the Bible; I believe that message to be, quite simply, "that a loving God cares for His people and desires in return that they should love Him," He has covenanted for this. The Old Covenant, the requirements of which were faith in God and the obedient observance of external rites; the New Covenant, the requirements of which are faith in God, love and obedience to His Christ, and the inward conformity to the new spiritual nature, prompted and controlled by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life.

A cursory examination of the N.T. scripture will illustrate the supremacy of the New over the Old. After telling us that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins," the writer of the Hebrew letter says, "**Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first (covenant), that he may establish the second (covenant). By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the blood of Jesus Christ once and for all**" (Heb. 10:4,9,10. The bracketed words are mine). Paul teaches, "**But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter**" (Rom. 7:6). These scriptures together with many others, tell us that the Old Testament has been abrogated and has been replaced by the New Testament. Is the central message still the same in the N.T.? Yes, it must be, because the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is also the God of Peter, Paul and every new Covenant Christian. He does not change; indeed He **cannot** change because of His nature. He still demands faith, love and obedience from His children, but what has changed is the **law** governing the responses of love, obedience and faith. Christians now live under "**the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus,**" which has replaced "**the law of sin and death.**" No longer should the observance of external rites be paramount; Christians are to follow a **better way, reinforced by better promises.**"

What About the O.T.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**" (2 Tim. 3:16). This statement, of course, includes the O.T. scriptures so it would be

foolish to say that these scriptures could be dispensed with. However, we have said that Christians now live under the law of Christ, so we ask ourselves, "of what use, then, is the O.T. to them?"

Our questioner has probably heard me say that I consider the O.T. to be a 'dead letter'. Well I stand by that insofar as it goes, because Paul teaches me that **"ye also (Christians) are become dead to the law by the body of Christ,"** and we have already quoted him as saying that we should serve 'not in the oldness of the letter,' so I conclude that the law of sin which held me is now 'dead' and that I am 'married' to Christ to live the life of the Spirit; this seems to me to be good Bible exegesis. That is not to say however, that there are no lessons to be learned from the O.T. From the emphasis which I have placed on the New Covenant scripture you will perhaps have gathered that my most fruitful study from the O.T. has been to trace all of the Messianic prophecies and find them all culminating in Christ; after all, isn't that what God intended when He indicted Satan in the Garden of Eden. **"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"** (Gen. 3:15).

So what is the sum of my attitude to the O.T.? I believe that history, fascinating though it may be, is not very profitable unless it impinges on the present; I believe that 'impinging' has culminated in Christ and His Church. The principles governing this I can trace in both Old and New Testaments; the detail as to who killed who, and how many people were killed with the jawbone of an ass, I find to be of limited value. Practically every situation commented on in detail in the O.T. I can summarise like this; when people pleased God by acting in conformity to His will, He blessed them; when people ignored God's expressed wishes and commands, He punished them. That I suggest, is a salutary lesson which permeates the whole Bible, and which everyone would do well to learn. So often we learn, and teach, such trivia as names, places, dates, etc., etc., so that we can demonstrate our prowess at answering questions in such things at a Bible School quiz and miss the real import of the teaching; I have always found this to be a waste of valuable Bible study time, but perhaps I am wrong. Anyway, I shall persist in appropriating as much as I can of my Lord and Master because He is my Saviour and He has revealed my Father unto me; perhaps others will be able to open up a more fertile field in their study of the history and detail of the recorded incidents in the O.T. I wish them well.

(All questions please to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,
Winstanley, Wigan. WN3 6ES.)

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

Jesus said in Mathew 5:5 *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."* "Meekness" is difficult to understand due to current usage of the word in our society. It is usually equated with weakness, indolence, peace at any price, indifference and spineless gentleness. None of these is characteristic of being meek.

God's people are told in Zephaniah 2:3 to *"seek righteousness, seek meekness."* Titus was to show meekness towards all men (Titus 3:2). Meekness is a fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:23. It is with meekness that we are to receive the engrafted word which is able to save our soul (James 1:21). We are to answer those that ask us of our salvation with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15). A woman is to have a meek and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4). When we approach the erring we are to do so in a spirit of meekness considering thyself lest we also be tempted (Galatians 6:1).

Meekness is opposed to arrogance. It is not meanness, nor a surrender of our rights nor cowardice. It is mild, gentle, patient, not harsh or implacable. Implacable is "not capable of being appeased or pacified" and is condemned in Romans 1:31. Meekness is the opposite of the ambitious self-seeking attitude that characterises men

of the world. Meekness is the opposite of sudden anger, malice or vengeance. Meekness produces peace.

Meekness is not "getting even" but at the same time shows respect for what is right. Jesus was within his right to request his accusers to bear witness of the evil he had done (John 18:23). Since he had done no evil, it was only right that he not be treated as if he had. Paul was within his right to be released from prison by his accusers since he had been jailed falsely (Acts 16:37). Both Jesus and Paul showed great meekness in the endurance of their sufferings. It takes more courage and strength to be meek than to fight for your rights although neither Jesus nor Paul ever "ran-over" anyone to obtain what was rightfully theirs.

Meekness is one of the greatest Christian virtues. It has been possessed by many great men of God. Moses (Numbers 12:3), David (Psalms 37), and Jesus (Matthew 11:28-30) are among the many who were meek.

The Bible says meekness can be learned. It is not just something you either have or do not have. True it comes easier for some than it does for others, but it still does not lessen our responsibility to learn it. Since we are commanded to be meek, it stands to reason we can attain that which God desires we have. There are many other things we can learn such as : being "slow to anger" (James 1:19), "to be content" (Philippians 4:22), "love one another" (John 13:35), and to "bear much fruit" (John 15:8). We learn to do or be whatever God commands.

Jesus said the meek "*shall inherit the earth.*" To inherit the earth was a common figure used in Bible times to denote anything of a great blessing. It is used here to denote that the meek will enjoy God's blessings in this life as well as the one to come.

G. M. Robinson.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

| | | |
|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Aug. 5 | Lev. 19:23-37 | 1Tim. 5:1-16 |
| Aug. 12 | Prov. 23:23-35 | 1Tim. 5:17-6:10 |
| Aug. 19 | Prov. 15:1-18 | 1Tim. 6:11-21 |
| Aug. 26 | Psa. 119:1-16 | 2Tim. 1 |

WIDOWS

The support of widows was an important feature of the early Church. In the West today, many family obligations have been taken over by the State, but we must remember that there was no social welfare in Paul's day. David King has written well on the subject of widows. In an analysis of 1 Timothy 5 he wrote "What then is that office, work, or number, into which certain widows are to be admitted, and from which all under sixty years of age are excluded? The chapter from which the foregoing verses are quoted, by stating certain requirements and prohibitions, and giving certain qualifications and certain intima-

tions of work to be accomplished and evils to be avoided, places fairly well before us widow-ministry of the church of God . . . It is not merely a question of relief, but of work by a duly appointed band — into which young widows may not be admitted, however great their piety and need, and into which aged widows are not received unless their lives are known to have been such as to make them examples to the flock, in which they undertake to devote the remainder of their days to Christ and incur condemnation if they cast off the obligation . . . The church cannot make widows and would not desire so to do. But widows will be found in its membership. Let the church which possesses one or more, duly qualified, undertake to provide plain, comfortable lodging, with what is needful for necessity and comfort and let those widows take their proper office and work."

MASTERS AND SLAVES

It is difficult for us to realise what

an integral part slavery was of the ancient world. The whole of society was built on it. For example it is interesting to note that in the first century B.C. the Roman slave dealers were putting through their hands every week ten thousand slaves on the island of Delos, which acted as one of the clearing houses for slaves.

Christianity did not destroy slavery immediately, but gradually worked to undermine the whole wretched system. One writer has commented: "If Christianity had, in fact, given the slaves any encouragement to revolt or to leave their masters, nothing but tragedy could have followed. Any such revolt would have been savagely crushed; any slave who took his freedom would have been mercilessly punished; and Christianity would itself have been branded as revolutionary and subversive. Given the Christian faith, emancipation was bound to come — and to have encouraged slaves to hope for it, and seize it, would have done infinitely more harm than good. There are some things which cannot be achieved, and for which the world must wait, until the leaven works."

THINGS TO FOLLOW AFTER

Paul wrote: "**But you, o man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness**" (6:11). Righteousness is *dikaion*. This is defined as "giving both to men and to God their due." William Barclay said that "it was the most comprehensive of the virtues; the righteous man is he who does his duty to God and to his fellow men." Godliness is *eusebia* and is the reverence of the man who never ceases to be aware that life is lived in the presence of God. R.C. Trench wrote that "It was mingled fear and love." The word in Latin is *pietas*. *Pietas* was the spirit of devotion to goodness, to humour, to honesty and duty. Faith is *pistis* and here means fidelity and is the virtue of the man who, through all

the chances and changes of life, down even to the gates of death, is loyal to God. Love is *agape*. *Agape* is the spirit which says "no matter what any man does to me, I will never seek to do harm to him; I will never set out for revenge; I will always seek nothing but his highest good." Patience is *Hupomone* — a beautiful word. *Hupomone* is literally steadfast endurance. It is the quality which keeps a man on his feet with his face to the wind. It is the virtue which can transmute the highest trial into glory because beyond the pain it sees the goal. Chrysostom described *hupomone* as "the queen of virtues." Meekness is *praupatheia*. Barclay wrote: "It describes the spirit which never blazes into anger for its own wrongs but can be devastatingly angry for the wrongs of others. It describes the spirit which knows how to forgive and yet knows how to wage the battle of righteousness. It describes the spirit which walks at once in humility and yet in pride of its high calling from God. It describes the virtue by which at all times a man is enabled rightly to treat his fellow men and rightly to regard himself."

MONEY

Paul made some comments in this portion of Scripture on money and riches (6:6-10; 17-19). The famous statement "for the love of money is the root of all evil" (6:10) is probably better translated in the N.I.V. as "**for a love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.**" I know a lot of people who are obsessed with money — principally the rich. Here are some comments on money: "Money is what makes the world go round." "Remember, that time is money." "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money." "Money is like muck, not good except it be spread." "Money by right means if you can, if not, by any means, money."

The Bible frequently tells us of the perils of earthly riches and often charges the wealthy never to trust in these uncer-

tain riches. I think of Jesus himself. He never really had very much when He was in this world. Indeed, at one point during His ministry He once declared: **"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has no where to lay his head"** (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58). W. J. Dawson has written: "Moreover, we forget that the Divine Man adored by Christendom was a poor man. It may be doubted if Christ ever possessed any money after He left Nazareth. We never read of His giving money. He had none to give. When He wanted a coin to illustrate His teaching, He had to borrow it. I do not suppose He had a purse, for when they crucified Him the soldiers gambled for His clothes, but found no money on Him which they could divide. Yet was He unhappy? Did poverty chill the ardour of His soul or poison the sweetness of His life? Here is the reply, **My peace I leave unto you.**" That was the wealth of Jesus — Peace.'

Let it be emphasised that Jesus does not condemn earthly riches as such. He does warn those who trust in uncertain riches. On this theme, the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12 should be carefully studied. Jesus said prior to the parable: **"Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses"** (12:15). Dear reader, analyse what he said after the parable as well.

2 TIMOTHY

WRITER: apostle Paul.

PLACE: ROME.

DATE: C.65-67 A.D. It contains the last recorded words of the apostle.

DESIGN: "The immediate design of Paul was to apprise Timothy of the circumstances that had befallen him during his imprisonment at Rome and to request him to come to him before the ensuing winter. But, being uncertain whether he should live so long, he gave him in this letter a variety of advices, charges and encouragements, for the

faithful discharge of his ministerial functions, with the solemnity and affection of a dying parent; in order that, if he should be put to death before Timothy's arrival, the loss might in some measure be compensated to him by the instructions contained in this admirable epistle"
(Thomas Hartwell Horne).

SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST

Paul wrote: " . . . but be you a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles" (1:8-11).

Death meant extinction to many in the ancient world. There was, therefore, a great fear of death. But Jesus came **"to deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"** (Hebrew 2:15). One writer has said: "A Christian does not suffer loss but makes a gain in death. He does not leave home, he goes home. He does not end it all, but all that is precious begins. It was the cheerfulness of the primitive Christians in the face of death which so amazed the pagans. The futile fatalism of the heathen was in marked contrast to the fervent faithfulness of those in Christ. It was expressed in the words of the apostle, **"that you sorrow not as others which have no hope."**

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

THE one who, in trials, will be found capable of great acts of love is ever the one who is always doing considerate small ones.

F. W. Robertson

COMING EVENTS

Saturday Evening Meetings at Motherwell Meeting House, August 18th and 25th, September 1st all at 6.30 p.m.

Subject: "The Old Testament Scriptures and Their Background."

Speaker: Ian S. Davidson
Plan to Attend

GHANA REPORT

To date (11/6/90) £14,167.64 has been collected from brethren through the Scripture Standard appeals.

On 29/5/90 £1,250 was sent to Ghana to be used in the following way:- Roofing Materials - £790, Medical aid - £135, Bibles - £100, Cement - £100 and help with schooling fees for Lawrence K. Savi - £25.

Once again may I thank everyone who has made this work in Ghana possible.

GHANA APPEAL

Having taken on the job of appealing on behalf of the brethren in Ghana, collecting money and sending it out I have received many requests for aid from individuals in Ghana to whom I have had to explain that resources are limited and I cannot normally help individuals. However, I did receive a request from Kodwo Mensah, a preacher in Takoradi. I will quote part of his letter, dated 24/4/90, which moved me to contact the brethren in Haddington for help.

"There is a faithful brother here by name Lawrence K. Savi who attends a Secondary school. His father who looks after him operates a liquor parlour. The father wants this brother to assist in serving the customers who come into buy drinks. This brother who is now growing spiritually feels it is wrong for him to do this. He explained to the father that it is against his religion to sell drinks for

people to get drunk (Hab. 2 v 15; Gal. 5 v 21). This has made the father to retaliate by not being willing to pay for his school fees because he says he will not sell for people and use the profit to pay for his schooling. This brother is in his last year. For the first academic term we, the congregation at Angu, have paid for his expenses. We are left with two more academic terms for this brother to complete his secondary education.

We, on behalf of this brother, are appealing to you if you could explain the situation to the brethren in Scotland to extend their benevolence arm in the form of financial assistance to this brother for the last two academic terms. We feel there is no need to mention the amount involved but any amount with which you can assist will be greatly appreciated.

I wrote and asked how much was required but thought £25 would probably be about right which the brethren in Haddington very kindly donated. Today I received brother Kodwo Mensah's reply which I quote in full:-

"Dear Brother G. Pearson,

Thank you for yours dated 14/5/90. I returned to Takoradi on the 29/5/90 after a 17 days preaching and evangelism at Nyakrom to meet your kind letter. Below is the estimates for Lawrence K. Savi to complete his schooling:-

| | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Tuition and Boarding | £ 80 |
| 2. Clothing and Pocket Money | £ 50 |
| 3. Registration Fee for final Examination | £ 30 |
| 4. Previous arrears owed to the school to be settled before final exams | £ 40 |
| | <u>£200</u> |

Please note that it is an appeal we are making so any donation the brethren in Haddington will give will be accepted.

Do remember us in your prayers and greetings to all the faithful in Britain.

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours in His Service
Kodwo Mensah.”

This month if anyone would wish to help raise money I will post it to Kodwo Mensah in Takoradi.

Donations should be made out to:-

G. Pearson (Ghana Appeal)

and sent to :- 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU. Tel. 0383 728624.

APPEAL FROM NIGERIA

Stretford Manchester.

We are receiving two or three letters a week from Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya (the majority from Nigeria) requesting assistance. This is a result of an American and Swiss church publishing the tracts (in both English and French) that were in the compendium on Islam produced by our brother Stephen Masood and brother Allan Ashurst. These tracts have been published in full and still contain our address. It is extremely encouraging that the work done by Stephen and Allan is beginning to bear so much fruit, albeit in an area we didn't expect. The brethren who supported this work will be especially encouraged.

The assistance requested by the majority of these letters is not financial but is for further copies of the tracts to give to other Muslims and for Bibles, Christian literature, correspondence courses, hymn books, etc.

One ex-muslim has written that it is his dearest wish to have a complete Bible of his own.

We will be doing our best to help them in anyway we can and if any other brethren would like to help financially, providing Bibles, or correspondence courses, etc., then our sister Margery Purcell of 3 Dale Avenue, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire. SK7 2JP is acting as the co-ordinator. Please contact her if you can help in any way.

Steven and Allan will continue to answer queries raised by Muslims who

dispute what has been written in the tracts and will be happy to assist any of the brethren with their Muslim contacts either with advice or by written answers to specific questions. Unfortunately we do not have any further copies of the compendium available at the moment.

Steven Masood advises us that his book "Into the Light" has now been printed in NINE languages.

Church of Christ Stretford.

John S. Purcell.

A MIND TO WORK

If we "have a mind to work" then the seemingly impossible can be achieved. This was true of Nehemiah and the exiles of Israel who returned to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah prayed a penitent prayer to God asking to be allowed to return to the city where God's name dwelt (Neh. 1:4-11). Obtaining the permission of King Artaxerxes, but with a definite time to return to the king, he set off to complete the task (Neh. 2:1-8). Though enemies arose within the land of Israel to oppose them and stop the work, they were not deterred (Neh. 2:17-20). Nehemiah 3 details the people and the tasks they undertook. Sanballat and Tobiah became very angry and conspired with others to fight against them and destroy the work (Neh. 4:1-3, 7-8, 11). With God's help a plan was devised to enable the wall to be rebuilt and defended at the same time (Neh. 4:4-6, 9-23). In Nehemiah 4:17-18 we read that they built the walls with swords in one hand and tools in the other. Though further plots were made by their enemies (Chap. 6), the "seemingly impossible" task was completed in fifty-two days. The reason why this was achieved was that "the people had a mind to work." As for their enemies, "*they lost their confidence for they recognised that this work had been accomplished with the help of God*" (6:16).

This presents a great lesson for us today. God's word assures us that what is impossible with men IS possible with God (cf. Matt. 17:20; 19:26; Mark 10:27). Today the Christian's task is to build up the Lord's Church in every place; this can only be carried out through the preaching of the gospel. See Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16; Eph. 4:11-16.

Many, as they take account of the opposition from every side, conclude that the task is impossible. If we rely on ourselves it is impossible. If we rely on the power of God in the gospel, then through the foolishness of the "message preached" the souls of men will be reached (1 Cor. 1:18-25). May each one imitate Israel of old and take the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, in our hand to fight against sin and Satan (Eph. 6:10-18). Then work with the greatest urgency to save "those that believe."

Brethren, if we have the same enthusiasm, then we will "have a mind to work." We are assured that God is with us; what then will prevent our preaching the power of God? We close with the warning of the Spirit of the fate awaiting those who do not obey the gospel. "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1:8-9). May we love our fellow

man so much that we will "have a mind to work" to save them from this kind of eternity.

Derek Daniell,
Tunbridge Wells.

AIN'T IT GOOD TO GIVE?

*When a feller's feelin' friendly
Cause he's got a bit ahead,
And he sees some little person
With a heart that feels like lead,
Perhaps a helpless cripple,
Crying for the right to live.
Ain't it good to have a nest egg?
Tell me . . . Ain't it good to give?*

*Little babies, pale and helpless,
Older youngsters, bent and grey,
Folks like you and me with feelin's
Hurt by pranks that fate can play.
They're a lookin' and a hopin'
For a better chance to live.
When so much help costs so little,
Tell me . . . Ain't it good to give?*

*Will you see a youngster stumble
When by stretchin' out your hand
You can get him past the rough spot,
And help him straight to stand?
Can you take the chance to leavin'
Helpless youths in sin to live?
When at night you face your conscience,
Tell me . . . Ain't it good to give?*

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER YEAR — POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH £ 6.00
CANADA & U.S.A. \$10.00
AIR MAIL please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Telephone: Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian,
Scotland EH37 5PT. Telephone: Ford 320 527

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by
Lothian Printers, 109 High Street, Dunbar, East Lothian. Tel: (0368) 63785