

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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HIS WORKMANSHIP

A few days ago, on 5th July, in Christie's famous Auction Rooms in London, a bundle of etchings sold for £21,000,000. About the same time a fairly small canvas, painted by Turner, fetched a staggering £7,000,000. Some years ago I saw most of Turner's paintings, on view in the National Gallery in Edinburgh, and I was not impressed by any of them. This just goes to show what little I know of art appreciation, for there, at Christie's, dozens of art dealers and picture connoisseurs were locked in combat to see who would have the privilege of paying seven million pounds for this very small item. Has the world gone crazy? I don't suppose the world is any more crazy than it has always been. I remember my father thinking the world had gone crazy the first time he heard jazz music. Certainly seven million pounds is an awesome figure. The English language isn't expressive enough to describe the enormity of such a sum, and even if it could I doubt if the human brain could cope with quantities of such immensity. The word 'million' trips easily off the human lip (and indeed our 'evolutionist' friends talk glibly in terms of 'thousands of millions' of years) yet few of us have any real conception of such a sum. When we think of all the centuries of history which have transpired since Christ was here (right on down through the Middle Ages) is it not astonishing to reflect that *a million days* have not yet passed since Jesus was here? Or indeed to realise that it will take *almost another additional thousand years (840 years or so) before a million days have passed? This, perhaps, will give us a very rough impression of 'a million'. But this little painting didn't sell for one million pounds, but seven million - the equivalent of seven millionaires having to join forces, and having to add their entire fortunes together, in order to be able to afford to buy this little scrap of canvas. The Seller, when interviewed, said that he was sad because he would now have to find something to hang in the hall, in place of the picture sold, and this would not be easy. Doubtless many in the country would love to be faced with this man's problem.*

We are His Workmanship

One's *first reaction* to this sale is "has the world gone crazy" but few can accuse the hard-bitten businessmen bidding at Christie's of being careless with cheque-books. After all, seven million pounds to an 'Oil Sheik' is just loose change and very often art treasures are bought simply as a hedge against inflation. In any case, for security reasons, the picture will now require to be locked away in a deep vault, kept at the proper temperature, in the correct humidity, rigorously protected from fire and seldom exposed to normal daylight. It will rarely ever be

seen but will cost a fortune annually to insure and preserve. The *second reaction* is; (and to my mind the real marvel in the situation) is how any painter could take a piece of canvas, worth a few pence, and by dabbing paint upon it produce something later to be sold for seven million pounds. The intrinsic value, after all, of the painting (the materials used by Turner) must have amounted to a few coppers; yet from nothing he produced a work of art which is 'really something'. From a dull and dingy piece of cloth the artist brought forth a thing of beauty - a joy for ever.

This, to my mind is *the real marvel*. After all, in spite of all the claims that there is a close association between man and the monkey, it will be many a long day before a monkey paints a landscape, or composes a symphony, writes a book, builds a cathedral or pens a poem. It is true that ants, spiders, bees and birds are programmed to build amazing homes, but there is a creative gulf between man and all other creatures which can never be bridged. Man alone was made in the image of God. Only man has an immortal soul. Why is man artistic? why is man drawn to express himself and deploy his most marvellous talents? Why indeed is man so talented? - it is, I suggest, because he is the offspring of God - and God is talented: God is artistic. No rational person can look at the handiwork of God and fail to see His artistry. We are confronted by it on every side - not only in the flowers of an English garden, but in the jungle; in the desert; in the sea. Closer inspection of God's creation merely exposes deeper and deeper layers of sheer complexity. Many a botanist or naturalist have reeled under the magnitude of their discoveries. Man, to date however, has merely pricked the surface as far as his appreciation of God's creative power is concerned. Turner took a canvas, worth a few pence, and turned it into a creation of considerable value. *The urge* doubtless came from his Maker, Who, at the dawn of time took a handful of dust (not even worth a few pence) and transformed it into a creation of inestimable value - MAN: "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.." (Gen 1:27). As a physical creature man was a magnificent specimen (indeed the mysteries of the human-body still baffle the medical world today) but there was even more to it than that, for God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives: *and man became a living soul*" Gen. 2:7). The human animal is the pinnacle of God's creative power - the crowning glory of all that God has made. But *Man has an immortal soul* - man is made in the image of God. James says (3:9) that man was made in the similitude of God. Paul, in his address to the Athenians at Mars Hill, does not dispute the belief of some Greek poets 'That we are the offspring of God' but rather confirms it. We are the offspring of God and consequently *the characteristics of God* should be seen in us. This is why man is so creative. This is why he is so superior to all other forms of living creature. This is why man so often, sometimes quite unwittingly, displays the attributes of God. Man is clearly the offspring of God.

While this might explain Turner's *urge* to paint, and his obvious *ability* to paint, it still does not explain why his paintings are so valuable. Dealers would explain their value by saying that they are *unique*, i.e. only *one* of a kind or class. This, of course, is very true - there is only one Mona Lisa, there is only one Taj Mahal, there is only one 'Great Wall' in China. (While this is true, it is not of course the whole truth for many of us have produced paintings undoubtedly 'unique' but of little value). The law of 'demand and supply' gives commercial value to that which is unique - that which is in short supply. Turner produced many paintings but each is distinctly unique and this gives it particular value.

Parents may have many children but *each* child is unique - and rather special. Each one of us is unique in the eyes of God. God has many millions, in each succeeding generation of offspring, but each one is *an individual* - each one is

very special to God. In some countries life is considered 'cheap' and the lives of the citizens easily expendible, but this is not so in God's eyes. God gives a soul to each child born and that soul is priceless. Jesus once said that if any man should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul in doing so, he had made an extremely bad bargain. A human soul is worth more than the world itself, yet notwithstanding this high value which God places upon man, man himself often shows little interest in himself or in his future destiny. A human life is precious; a living soul is priceless; and disciples of Christ have a duty both to preserve life and save souls. James in the last verse of his epistle says, "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." When men are 'down and out', (especially when it is due to their own disinterest) we are apt to wash our hands of them and say, "If that's how they want it, let them be", but yet each soul is unique and one for which Christ died. May we so grieve for the lost souls of men that we shall burn in a desire to save them, "snatching them from the fire" as Jude puts it. Even those generally despised, such as the habitual drunk, lying in the gutter in fouled clothing, are the offspring of God, made in His likeness and after His similitude. Such are unique creations of God - made from worthless dust but endowed with priceless souls. Everyone matters to God.

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
 Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
 Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
 Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.

I suppose there is a sense in which, at birth, we are all given a canvas and some brushes and our lives become a painting, built up year after year. At the end some are bright and pleasant; some are sombre and sad. Certainly the Psalmist likened the human life to a tale that is told. Paul using similar imagery, said that the lives of the Christians at Corinth were like epistles; like open letters read of all men. These epistles, explained Paul (2 Cor 3:3) were not written with ink but with the Spirit of God, not on tables of stone but in the fleshy tables of the heart. Paul was certainly not averse to the employment of such figurative language. It is also thought that in Eph. 2:10 that he says that Christians are God's poems. In that verse Paul states, "For we are *His workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." My English Dictionary tells me that the word 'poem' comes from a Greek word *poiema*, and my Young's Greek Concordance tells me that this same word is used here in Eph. 2:10 translated 'a work' or 'workmanship'. Paul agreed with the Greek poets that we "are God's offspring" but to say that "we are God's workmanship" is saying rather more. If Turner's workmanship is valuable God's is certainly more-so - and we are God's canvas upon which He works, or, to change the figure, we are his poems. Notice that this is achieved only "In Christ Jesus". Those "created in Christ Jesus" doing the "good works" "long before ordained" are the lyrical expressions of God. Apparently they are His epistles, or poems, for men to read. The common man may not read his bible to any great extent but he does pay attention to the lives of those who claim to follow Christ. In Paul's words Christians are "known and read of all men".

Our Use of Money

One final thought which comes to mind when we think of this Auctioneer's transaction is the stewardship of money. Certainly the rich seem to get richer and the poor get poorer. Those *who 'have'* seem increasingly to be less aware of the needs of the *'have nots'*. We wonder how dozens of rich men could vie with one-another to spend enormous sums on a small painting when large areas of the world's population die from malnutrition. For that matter, we wonder how

governments can spend massive amounts of money on bombs and missiles when there is so much ill-health and abject poverty. No doubt the anonymous person (or syndicate) who bought Turner's painting could give us a very long list of apparently good reasons for paying such a price, but when all is said and done it is surely quite inexcusable. Jesus had much to say about the rich and the poor but even long before then the Jews were schooled into having due regard for the under-dog. The Psalmist said, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." Isn't that wonderful? And again, Solomon said "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again." Anything we give to the poor is but a loan to the Lord which He will repay us. Moses said, "If there be among you a poor man ... thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother." (Deut 15:7). Paul, when exhorted to "remember the poor" said that this 'he was forward to do'. (Gal 2:10). Quite apart from trying to help those less fortunate than ourselves we have a duty to further the gospel and give 'as the Lord has prospered us'. Can Christ's disciples spend large sums on past-times, hobbies, pleasures, home comforts or even a meal and then baulk at paying a few pounds for gospel literature? We all have differing ideas of what spending priorities should be. The man who won first prize on the Pool's said that he had spent ninety-per-cent of the fortune on wine, women and song and that he had just 'squandered' the rest. The world is on the broad road leading to destruction - let's 'squander' some money on trying to save them. Many of us spend most of our money on ourselves and squander a little on others. Let's 'squander' a little more on the Lord. Turner's canvas fetched £10,000 per square inch. What value do we put on a man's soul? *The world* will pay £7M for a painting - what are we, *the church*, prepared to pay to save souls?

EDITOR

ZACCHAEUS - THE LITTLE BIG MAN

THE words and works of Jesus inevitably drew *all kinds of people* to Him. Some, like the rich young ruler, turned away again sorrowful, for Christ's words did not please everyone. Equally today, many turn away because His words are inconvenient. Unlike many of the current religious organisations however, Jesus sought the person, not their purse. Even Jesus' close disciples weighed up the situation (counted the cost) from time to time, and Peter, on one occasion, voiced their thoughts when he said, "Lord we have left all to follow thee". What a blessing there is for all who can truthfully say such a thing. Jesus assured them that any such would find great recompence in this world and much more in the world to come. Jesus took nothing from the people but gave to them so bountifully. The blind man called out "Have mercy on me". Predictably, when Jesus asked what He might do for him, the blind man replied, "That I might receive my sight". Jesus restored to him his sight the same hour.

Naturally such exciting incidents drew the crowds. The blind man, having had his sight restored, followed Jesus glorifying God and all the people, on seeing these things "gave praise unto God". As Jesus passed through Jericho there was, among the throngs a man, apparently small of stature, called Zacchaeus. Only Luke mentions this little gem of an incident. Doubtless men had differing motives for wanting to see Jesus and we have no idea what Zacchaeus' reasons were, but certainly "He sought to see Jesus, who He was." Zacchaeus certainly was not bent

on begging for he was very rich. By occupation he was a tax-gatherer and as such he would be a rather isolated person in that noisy throng. Doubtless he got little sympathy from the crowd in his efforts to see Jesus and was probably pushed and jostled to the back of the waiting ranks. Not to be so easily outdone, Zacchaeus ran on and scrambled up a sycamore tree.

Jesus, hemmed in as He was on all sides by a curious humanity, ventured to predict that His drawing-power would continue even after His demise. He said "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." This He said, signifying what manner of death He would die. This prophetic outburst was fulfilled to the letter and He was lifted up on a cross to die. He was also *lifted up* from the tomb and again He was finally *lifted up* from the earth back to heaven and God's right hand. 2,000 years later His words remain just as true and He is drawing all manner of men, and women, unto Him. His words have still their ancient power. Even today, those who are as keen to see Jesus as Zacchaeus was, can see Him. When Jesus passed by and perceived that the diminutive taxman had overcome even his physical inability to see Him, He was impressed and stopped to converse with the little man up in the branches of the tree. "Make haste and come down", called Jesus "For today I will abide at thy house." Zacchaeus made haste, came down and received Jesus joyfully.

Truely this was 'one in the eye' for all the self-righteous in the crowd. "Imagine" they thought, "That this Jesus (who claimed to be the Son of God) would prefer the company of this little rascal to any of us good citizens." The crowd soon passed their judgment, as crowds always do, and branded Jesus as either inexcusably nieve, or down-right hypocritical. Thank God, however, that Jesus will come into the homes and hearts of the deepest-dyed sinners. Praise the Lord that He will be Guest to any who will receive Him. We have no record of the conversation which took place in the home of Zacchaeus but we do know that in the wave of repentance which overwhelmed him he resolved to give half his riches to the poor and to restore four times the value to any he had defrauded. "Today is salvation come to this house", said Jesus, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost."

What a happy and satisfying ending to this charming account of the Lord's meeting with Zacchaeus. It need not be unique. Indeed it is not unique. Such happy associations between Jesus and sinners are struck every day. Jesus still draws all men unto Him. There are still countless thousands on the broad road to destruction, but there are still those who must "see Jesus" and having seen Him will not let Him go. Jesus stands at each heart door and knocks - those who open to Him receive the most wonderful guest they ever had. Mankind lost his inheritance at Eden. Jesus restored that inheritance at Calvary. The word 'lost' means 'out of its rightful place' and man is lost in that sense. Jesus came to restore man 'to his rightful place' with God - the reconciliation of God and man. My message to all sinners (and *al have sinned* and come short of the glory of God) is that they should *seek the Lord*. That they should (like Zacchaeus) *overcome all obstacles* which might prevent them seeing Jesus, and (like Zacchaeus) having seen Him they might embrace Him; and that even today salvation might come to their house. "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20).

GLEANINGS

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

"THY LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE" SONG OF SOLOMON 1:2.

"Nothing gives the believer so much joy as fellowship with Christ. He has enjoyment as others have in the common mercies of life, he can be glad both in God's gifts and God's works; but in all these separately, yea, and in all of them added together, he doth not find such substantial delight as in the matchless person of his Lord Jesus. He has wine which no vineyard on earth ever yielded; he has bread which all the corn-fields of Egypt could never bring forth. Where can such sweetness be found as we have tasted in communion with our Beloved? In our esteem, the joys of earth are little better than husks for swine compared with Jesus, the heavenly manna. We would rather have one mouthful of Christ's love, and a sip of his fellowship, than a whole world full of carnal delights. What is the chaff to the wheat? What is the sparkling paste to the true diamond? What is a dream to the glorious reality? What is time's mirth, in its best trim, compared to our Lord Jesus in His most despised estate? If you know anything of the inner life, you will confess that our highest, purest, and most enduring joys must be the fruit of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. No spring yields such sweet water as that well of God which was digged with the soldier's spear. All earthly bliss is of the earth earthy, but the comforts of Christ's presence are like Himself., heavenly. We can review our communion with Jesus, and find no regrets of emptiness therein; there are no dregs in this wine, no dead flies in this ointment. The joy of the Lord is solid and enduring. Vanity hath not looked upon it, but discretion and prudence testify that it abideth the test of years, and is in time and in eternity worthy to be called "the only true delight." For nourishment, consolation, exhilaration, and refreshment, no wine can rival the love of Jesus. Let us drink to the full".

C. H. Spurgeon

WE QUOTE - H. W. BEECHER

"The doctrines which many schools teach are no more like those of the Bible than the carved beams of Solomon's temple were like God's cedar trees on Mount Lebanon. But men cut and hew till they have shaped their own fancies out of God's timber, and then they get upon them like judgment-day thrones, and call all the world to answer at their feet for heresies against their idols."

THE PERSONALITY OF THE LORD JESUS

"He was with God." We may not at first perceive the significance of this clause, any more than the casual tourist sees the importance of an embrasure in the fortifications where sheep browse, and soldiers stand at ease. But if ever there should come again days of conflict, like those which swept across the early Church, in which men should assert that the Word was but a momentary and impersonal manifestation of God, we should instantly revert to this significant clause, and cry, It cannot be - The Word was WITH God. The same was in the beginning WITH God.

The preposition selected by the Evangelist is very significant. It means communion with and movement towards. It denotes the intimate fellowship subsisting between two, and well befits the intercourse of the distinct Persons of the one and ever-blessed God. "The face of the everlasting Word was ever directed towards the face of the everlasting Father." He was in the bosom of the Father. "He makes the Divine glory shine outwardly because He is filled inwardly. He contemplates before He reflects. He receives before He gives."

We are not then surprised to hear the Divine colloquy: "Let us make man"; or to

learn that Jesus knew the Father (10:15). How could He do other, when, "trailing clouds of glory behind Him," He proceeded and came forth from God? Let us never forget that our Saviour, who lived, and died, and rose, and is our familiar Friend, is a distinct personality, who was before all worlds, and will be unchanged for evermore. This is what we want. It is not enough to give us an abstraction, an ideal, a word. Our hearts crave One, and, blessed be God, they may have One who may be a living, bright reality.

More present to faith's vision keen
 Than any earthly object seen;
 More dear, more intimately nigh,
 Than e'en the dearest earthly tie."

F.B. Meyer

GOD'S CHOICE MY CHOICE

"Fine day", said a man to a farmer. "Bad for the potatoes," was the discontented reply. Next day being wet, "Fine weather for the potatoes," said the man. "Yes, but bad for the corn," said the farmer. Many, like him, stay at Grumble Corner. Paul said, "I have learned..to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

"It aint no use to grumble and complain,
 It's just as cheap and easy to rejoice;
 When God sorts out the weather and sends rain,
 Why, rain's my choice."

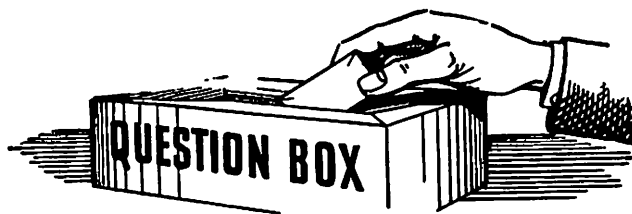
T.W.T.

The Positive Commandments of God

"Let the Bible be substituted for all human creeds; facts, for definitions; things, for words; faith, for speculation; unity of faith, for unity of opinion; the positive commandments of God, for human legislation and tradition; piety, for ceremony; morality, for partisan zeal; the practise of religion, for the mere profession of it: and the work is done."

Alexander Campbell

SELECTED BY LEONARD MORGAN.



Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

"I am a Christian but I do not understand why God allows such suffering and violence as we see in the world today. Could you please explain?"

This is a question which keeps recurring, and I am sure that I have made reference to it at various times, but *because* it keeps recurring there must be some deep underlying confusion in some minds as to why these things should be.

I seem to get the impression, from Christian and non-Christian alike, that God is viewed as some kind of Divine ombudsman who is constantly surveying the whole world in order to detect racial and social inequalities, and then doing nothing by way of intervention in the affairs of men. What people *seem* to be doing is to be acting *like* God to God by saying that He *should* intervene decisively when He sees these inequalities going on, but personally I feel sure that such observations illustrate a complete misunderstanding of the true nature of God,

and, not only that, they infer that the goodness and justice of God leave something to be desired. The latter inference, I think, is unworthy of the One, who called all things into being, and by His power sustains all things. It seems, therefore, that we need to investigate the true nature of God.

God's Ways

It is the prophet Isaiah who reports God's self-revelation of His own ways, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts". (Isa. 55:8,9). From this statement we *must* learn the fundamental lesson that we must never question the ways and the mind of God, for, as Paul says, "who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?" (1 Cor. 2:16).

We must make up our minds about God, not only about His power but also about the unerring way in which He leads. Eliphaz answered Job and said, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number." (Job 5:8,9). Do we really believe that, and can we bring ourselves to trust Him completely so that we are not forever questioning His ways? What, to your mind, is the alternative? Do you look for succour to your fellow-men? Oh, yes, they may have something to offer by way of consolation and help during times of trouble, but God is concerned with eternal destinies, *our* destinies, and when we consider objectively the appalling state of the world, which is directly attributable to mans' government of it, we must be inevitably led to the same conclusion that Jeremiah was, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps". (Jer. 10:23). Dear reader, this is a personal question which *you* must answer: "If you cannot trust God to lead you, who *can* you trust?"

Is God Asleep?

After viewing on television the poor, emaciated bodies of starving children in the so-called Third World, a friend of mine was moved to say, "Is God asleep, so that He cannot see the atrocities which are being committed in the world?" He is not alone in this cry of anguish; many thousands of others are echoing his cry. When we analyse the cry, however, it seems to me that we are criticising God for *allowing* these things to *continue*, and yet scarcely giving a thought to the greedy and avaricious people who have brought these conditions *into being*. Do you really believe that a loving and compassionate God is unmoved by the gross excesses of some of the more privileged parts of His creation (maybe including ourselves) when He Himself, out of His providential hand, has given enough to feed His whole creation many times over? Or is it that the God of Peace delights in the wasting of resources to the tune of billions of pounds in order to produce weapons of war, the effects of which are too horrific to consider?

No, God is not asleep, but it is more to the point that *we* should awake to our own situation and stop hitting out at God because we are perplexed by certain events. Evil things are in the world because of *sin*, and for no other reason. But suppose that God were to banish all evil from the world at any given time, say

tonight; how many of us, do you think, would be left in the world. Are we so self-righteous that we believe that it is God only who is failing the world? The plain fact of the matter is that God *has* done something to deal with the problem of evil. He emptied Heaven of its most precious possession so that we might see how good could triumph over evil, but the world rejected Jesus and thereby condemned itself, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come in to the world, and men loved (preferred) darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). The very ones who complain about God's inactivity in dealing with evil, are the ones who are perpetrating it in the world. They are become pall-bearers at their own funerals.

Further Perplexities

There are many people who ask, "How can a God of love send people to hell." As with so many other perplexing questions we must find some solid, factual ground to stand on. In the first place does God really want to send people to hell? Ezekiel the prophet records God as saying, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel" (Ezek. 33:11). Paul teaches us that "all have sinned", "there is none righteous, no, not one". So *everyone* is under condemnation because of sin.

It is also to be noticed that hell is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). Every judgment of God carries a warning to us, and if we do not heed that warning and accept Jesus Christ as Saviour, then it is *not God* who sends us to hell but *we ourselves* because of our disobedience. God doesn't want us to go there, and He sent Jesus so that we might escape from sin, and so find our way back to Him through Christ. Put the doubt behind you. Trust and obey God and all will be well.

Then there are the doubts which arise because of the death of a loved one. We pray fervently, and God doesn't seem to hear; we then begin to question the goodness of God, and this then becomes a test of our faith. But God *is* good, and of one thing I am sure; *He* never takes away our loved ones, and even though we may not understand all His ways we must nonetheless trust Him for His grace and say with Paul, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things" (Rom. 8:32). Even when death, through disease, illness, or accident, does separate us humanly, we always have the great promise that nothing can separate the Christian from God's love, "For I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38,39).

Finally, when we have viewed it all, been perplexed, suffered grief, we have to say with Habakkuk the prophet, "Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation". (Habakkuk 3:17,18).

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

THE FOUR PILLARS OF WISDOM

THERE are four grand arguments for the Bible as the Holy Word of God. The first, the miracles it records; the second, the prophecies it contains; the third, the goodness of the doctrine; and the fourth, the moral character of the writers.

The miracles flow from divine power; the prophecies from divine understanding; the excellencies of the doctrine from divine goodness; and the moral character of the writers from Him who was without sin.

Thus Christianity is built upon four immovable pillars: the power of God; the understanding of God; the goodness of God; and the purity of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour.

R. NAYLOR.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SEPTEMBER 1984

2—Gen. 21:1-13	Romans 9:1-18
9—Hosea 1	Romans 9:19-33
16—Isaiah 65:1-12	Romans 10
23—1 Kings 19:1-18	Romans 11:1-21
30—Isaiah 59	Romans 11:22-36

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

Paul was educated at Jerusalem under Gamaliel (Acts 5:34; 22:3). He was a Pharisee, and therefore keen to uphold God's election of Israel. Can we appreciate the breaking of his heart involved in God's election of him for bringing salvation to the uncircumcised heathen? He faced rejection by the majority of his own people, whom he recognised to have worse than rejected their Saviour God! "Exceedingly mad against the remnant who believed" (Acts 9:1; Romans 11:5) describes Saul the Pharisee. He understood their obstinacy, and its fatal results. He had to suffer the loss of all he had held dear in his early life. There was surely a very special sense in which God called him, but are not each of us called, chosen to a changed and god-ordered life? Have WE recognised the broken heart, the contrite spirit which separates us from the world of earlier days? We have become the children of promise, and

"the rest are hardened," and yet may still be the called, "Sons of the Living God" (9:26). Yes! It is by grace through FAITH. Jesus said surely with deep sorrow, "Many are called but few are chosen". (Matt. 20:16; 22:14). No wonder that Paul could truly long with sorrow for the lost children. There are many Jews in the world today who, having received Christ as Saviour, seek their unbelieving brethren by giving them the New Testament translated into Hebrew - the calling of God, also of every preacher of the gospel, and every Christian. How abundantly they have been privileged by common descent from the Patriarchs, Abraham, David according to the flesh with Immanuel (Isa. 7:14).

God's Sovereignty and Grace

The chosen race and the whole human race has chosen to oppose God's law of righteousness and holiness. He cannot approve sin in any way. Therefore His wrath against it must be manifested, and complete power shown over all His works. The where, the when and the how are in His hands and while men and nations have been seen to have sway in the world, and of course still do, their power is limited and changes are brought about as God designs. Solomon has summed up the matter - "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man, for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it

be evil." (Ecc. 12:13 & 14). It is the common thought that "God ought to do this or that" according to our views of right or wrong, but finally we are not in a position to settle anything, but we have His word to guide us in the way of life. Some are hardened by their trials and general circumstances of life; some are rightly exercised thereby. (Heb. 4:2; 12:9-11; 1 Tim 4:7-10). We may well think it strange that Israel had to reject God's Son, so that He might become the Saviour of the Gentiles, but once revealed, our reasoning powers perceive it as part of His Eternal Purpose (Eph. 3:8-11). It is surely also strange that the man elected of God to bear the message should be a Jew of all Jews most opposed to Gentile salvation. With an intense love for his own people he could ascribe to God with complete submission and humility the divine majesty and glory (11:33-36). With Paul we bow in humble worship!

Rejection of Israel

It may be the majority of professing christians are expecting all Israel to be saved literally, but it cannot be a literal promise because salvation depends upon obedience produced by individual faith in Christ. That faith too must be accompanied by an acceptance of the gospel which involves a new kind of life in which Jesus rules. We know well that complete obedience is not possible, for every christian knows that he is still a sinner - for if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8). It is only the broken spirit and the contrite heart that is acceptable to God or can qualify for forgiveness. These may be to many unacceptable facts, and can cause us all at times deep grief because the answer to "Are there few that be saved?" (Luke 13:23) is the instruction to "strive to enter by the narrow door." We suggest that the fulfilment of the statement is literal, however, if we agree that "they

are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all Israel because they are the seed of Abraham.....but the children of the promise are counted as the seed" (9:6 & 8). We read further that before the twins were born to Rebecca, it was appointed that "the elder shall serve the younger". So the purpose of God was prior to the disgraceful deception instigated by Rebecca upon Isaac, and that was preceded by carelessness of Esau, who sold his rights by birth for satisfaction of temporary hunger. So we might follow through the history of the falling away of the nation through the times of the judges and the kings to Solomon who loved the LORD but also loved his wives, and began unwittingly the division of the kingdom to God's rejection in the captivity. The remnant that believed were able to return from Babylon and all the lands into which they had been scattered among the heathen. God brought the rulers to acknowledgement of His Sovereignty through the faithfulness of some of the remnant (Daniel 4:37; 6:25-28) THAT BELIEVED. Through the vicissitudes of world conflicts Israel was brought together in its own land to fulfill the final revelation of God in the person of His Son. Thus the elect nation had the highest privilege of all in witnessing a personal ministry never equalled in history, and so wonderful that the four memoirs of it enshrine a SAVIOUR WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit these with the letters and the Revelation form the New Covenant "once and for all delivered." When He returns according to His promise all spiritual Israel will be saved - and this will include a multitude unnumbered of the natural as well as the spiritual children of Abraham.

Lessons For This Day

Perhaps the Romans or residents in Rome would feel resentful on account of the rejection of the gospel by so many of the Jews about them. Indeed it does

seem that Paul faced certainly as much opposition from them in some places as from the heathen people. The later attitude of supposed christians to Jews was a disgrace to the name for centuries in Europe. It fulfilled the curses in Deuteronomy in some measure, and Anti-Semitism is not uncommon in today's world. Cromwell was the first British sovereign, I believe, who gave them "religious freedom", while he denied it to the "Papists". Paul's love for them is a lesson for us that any other attitude is wrong, and THE FAITH is "for the Jew first" (Rom. 1:16). We rejoice alike without distinction of race, and we are warned to remain very humble. It is well to be among the "seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal", or "the remnant that believed". (11:4 & 5). Finally we draw attention to the little word "IF" so many times repeated in ch. 11:11-25. Do we need also to remember the gospel is not belief and confession ONLY?

R. B. SCOTT

BELIEF : (24)

THE WAY OF LOVE

The way of love originated with God, the Father, who is the essence of love (1 John 4:8). God sent his beloved Son into the world to endure the cross and to save all who listen to his voice and follow him. The way of love then is the way of obedience. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9).

So far as our Lord was concerned the way of love was the way of obedience which led to the cross. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8).

So far as those who would be his disciples are concerned the way of love

is also by obedience - humble obedience to our Lord's command to believe and be immersed. This leads not to the cross, but to forgiveness of sins, sanctification and salvation, or life eternal.

Two Aspects

These two aspects of the way of love are the essential features of man's reconciliation and adoption as children by our heavenly Father. (See Galatians 4:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

God

So far as God, the Father is concerned, he has shown clearly his desire that we be reconciled to Him and become his children. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). Our Lord himself has repeated his Father's desire in the words: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Peter (who on the day of Pentecost delivered the first gospel message of repentance and remission of sins) confirmed God's love for man thus: God "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

This phraseology clearly shows what mankind generally seems not to realise: that all are cut off from God until they are reconciled to him. For this reason and this only, God in his great love has made provision for the forgiveness of our sins-it is our sins which cut us off from God-by giving his Son to die for us (1 Peter 1:18-21). *This is the procuring cause of remission of sins.*

Man

So far as man is concerned the significance and value of God's way of love exists in the fact that the Father is involved and we can be reconciled to him (becoming his children) by obeying his command to be immersed into Christ (Galatians 3:26-27).

Thus can the sinner avail himself of the sacrifice of our Lord's precious blood. Immersion, consequent upon belief, is the means by which we avail ourselves of God's offer of forgiveness. *This is the availing cause of the remission of sins.*

God and Man

It is only by a combination of these two aspects, causes or conditions that man can be saved (2 Corinthians 5:14-21). It matters not that men have preached otherwise and that many have accepted the commandments of men rather than of God. False doctrine obeyed will not save a single soul.

One would have thought that Scripture warnings against false teaching would suffice; but judging by the amount of false doctrine preached it would seem that men will never take to heart the Lord's warning: "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9; see Colossians 2:22; Hebrews 8:13).

The True Doctrine

Only the doctrine of our Lord and his apostles will save sinners. This doctrine purifies or sanctifies and so sets apart and reconciles men to God. This takes place on one basis only—God's own word, which declares: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). And the Son has said, "He who believes and is immersed shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Exercises in Belief

2 Kings 5:1-14; Luke 4:27; Romans 6:17-18, 22:23; Romans 16:17-19; Ephesians 4:4-6, 14-15; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 3:13-17; Titus 2:1, 7-15; 2 John 9; Hebrews 13:9.

W. BROWN

(To be continued)

TEMPTATION

(James 1:12-16).

Defined: 1. "That which tries or proves us". In this sense God tempts us (Gen. 22:1).

2. That which entices or incites to evil. God does not tempt in this way.

A common experience. All men, irrespective of their station, have felt it. Jesus' deity did not exempt him (Heb.4:15). It is not a sin to meet temptation, but it is a sin, after the meeting, to turn and follow it.

I. The Source.

1. Temptations do not come from God. His power pulls us in the opposite direction (Jas. 1:13).

2. They arise from a natural weakness within and an evil world without. Man is "drawn away" - caught like an animal in a noose - "by his own lust and enticed" - lured like a bird into a snare. Satan, the tempter, presents the evil world to our weak nature.

Note the three avenues (1 John 2:15, 16).

II. The Victims.

1. *The undernourished.* Men must have the proper nourishment to resist disease germs. God's word is the solid food (Matt. 4:4). We don't wonder that people perish when we see their diet (Rom. 8:13).

2. *The ill-clad.* "Fiery darts of the evil one" fill the atmosphere. Unless we put on the divine panoply our cause is lost (Eph. 6:10ff).

3. *Those with chronic ailments.* Continued sickness breaks down the power of resistance. Those in the habit of sinning find it harder to turn from temptations (2 Tim. 3:3; 2 Pet. 2:14a).

4. *Those who breathe impure atmosphere.* We are subject to the influence of our associates (1 Cor. 15:33).

5. *The inactive.* David was idle on the day of his fall (2 Sam. 11). We don't wonder that people are overcome when they have nothing to do.

III. The Victors.

1. *The vigorous.* God's word the preventive (Ps. 119:11). It prepares the mind for the battles of to-morrow. "It is written" was Jesus' weapon (Matt. 4:1ff).

2. *The watchful* (Matt. 26:41). There is a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:12,13). The vigilant can see it.

3. *The prayerful* (Matt. 26:41). Prayer puts us in touch with God, the source of strength (see Jas. 4:8a).

4. *The purposeful.* Daniel overcame because "he purposed" in his heart (Dan. 1:8). The man with his heart set is hard to move. There is safety in an active life.

IV. The Blessedness of the Victors.

There is a twofold possibility in every temptation: a curse if we yield; a blessing if we overcome.

1. *Strength.* Certain ancient people believed that the strength of the vanquished passed unto the victor. Every temptation conquered gives us strength and confidence.

2. *Exaltation.* After his victory, Joseph was exalted (Gen. 39:9-13; 41:37ff). After conquering, Jesus was exalted to Father's right hand (Rev. 3:21; James 1:12).

F.L.C. ("Spotlight").

DISCERNMENT

"Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by

reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Hebrews 5:14

Christians ought to be able to discern between good and evil. God's word clearly sets forth what is that good and acceptable will of God. All that pertains to life and godliness is herein contained. The Bible is for our use. We are to give attention to reading; to meditate that we may know what the mind of the Lord is. The knowledge of the Lord will not come in any magical way, but by the use of the faculties with which we are endowed; eyes to see, ears to hear, and a mind to understand.

We must grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being no longer children who are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. We must be able to tell the difference between right and wrong and do only that which is good.

Care must be taken in every aspect of our lives in order to come to the right conclusions. Paul instructs, "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good."

Spiritual prosperity is the state of those who love God and keep His commandments.

TOM KEMP, Hindley.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT- STEVEN MASOOD

So far we have received promises of regular gifts which amount to £272.62 per four week month. The remainder consist of spontaneous gifts. At the present time we are paying Steven £85.00 per week which is equivalent to £340.00 per four weeks from this fund and buying him four weekly run-about bus tickets at £22.80 from the Asian work fund. This enables him to travel anywhere in the Greater Manchester area.

We are thankful to the Lord for seeing to our needs in this work and

grateful to all who have given us their support.

We know that £85.00 per week gross is a very inadequate income for a family man and we do wish we could increase it. Steven is very diligent in his work and deserves much more. We would appreciate any help the brethren can give us however small.

If anyone would like to offer further regular amounts to Steven's support and the production of tracts etc. please contact me.

Thank you for your concern.

ALLAN ASHURST

P.S. If anyone would like a copy of the itemised accounts, please send a stamped addressed envelope.

Correspondence address:

Allan Ashurst,
60 Kenwood Road, Stretford,
Manchester M32 8PT
Phone (061) 865 4242

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kirkcaldy Scotland: The seed of the gospel has borne fruit as four precious souls have been added to His kingdom. Alistair Macgregor (husband of sister Macgregor) put on his Lord in baptism on 2nd June; Bill and Jean Barnes and Linda Drummond put on their Lord in baptism on 24th June. May God richly bless them during their earthly pilgrimage. Robert Hughes (Sec)

Zambia: Angela Woodhall, of Zambia will be in the U.K. from July 3rd to August 16th, 1984. Her address will be 10 Heathlands Road, Sutton-Coldfield, West Midlands, and her 'phone No. 354 1894. This visit is in connection with her autistic son Ian. Chester is still in Zambia - at same address:- Church of Christ, P.O. Box 22297, Kitwe, Zambia.

THANKS

Sister E. Gardiner, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian, would like to thank all concerned for the many cards and 'phone calls she received recently. She was quite overwhelmed by the many expressions of love and concern for her during her recent misfortune. She is now getting about not too badly on sticks.

OBITUARY

Beulah Road, Kirkby In Ashfield: It is with deep regret that we have to announce the passing of our dear Brother Harold Farnham at the age of 89 years on the 13th June. Bro. Farnham was a faithful christian for over 70 years and served as a local preacher in the Notts District for many years. He worked loyally for the Peace movement and underwent imprisonment for his christian beliefs during the 14/18 war. His chief interest in the church was with the children and a great deal of love and service went into a period of 25 years as Sunday School teacher and superintendent. He was well known and loved in the district, having been a member of the church at Nuncargate and Mutton Hill, finally taking up membership at Beulah Road when the latter building had to be demolished a few years ago.

Bro. Farnham was respected by us all and he will be greatly missed, but we are confident he will be welcomed into his final heavenly home by our Lord.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to his loved ones but they can look back with pride and satisfaction on the life that has now been taken from among them.

The mortal remains of our Brother were cremated after a service at Mansfield Crematorium on 25th June, the service being conducted by the writer.

Tom Woodhouse (Sec)

COMING EVENTS

The 113th ANNIVERSARY MEETING will be held, God willing, at KENTISH TOWN, LONDON, on Saturday, 6th October.

The visiting speaker will be:
Bro. Ian Davidson of Motherwell.
Afternoon 3 p.m.
Evening 6.30 p.m.
Tea and Fellowship at 5 p.m.

ANNUAL SOCIAL at Newtongrange, God willing, on 29th September, 1984, at the Meeting House. Chairman will be Joe Currie, but names of speakers and other details will be announced later. The Social is usually held in October, of course, but special circumstances have caused us to change to September. Please amend diaries.
A. P. SHARP (Sec)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The new address of bro. Tom Nisbet is:
9 The Butts, Haddington,
East Lothian, EH 41 4DE.
Telephone No. (062082) 3358

NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS

The "Scripture Standard" seems to be well received by readers and recently I have been greatly encouraged by quite unsolicited letters from readers, especially from the U.S.A. saying what a valuable publication the "S.S." is. One brother, a full-time preacher of some repute, votes it one of the best religious papers in the U.S.A. This good brother has even been contributing some small but pithy articles recently. Some readers have mentioned their enjoyment of them. Some brethren are energetic in seeking to increase the readership and we have no less than five new readers this month. We hope that more brethren will seek to circulate the magazine more widely, and we would exhort more of our brethren in Britain to supply us with articles and material for publication. The paper could be much better if more would contribute. One of our new readers would like us to include his name and address for general information and also the name and address of brother Edeagu.
Leslie Taylor,
41 Madresseh Street, Farzin Street,
Niavaran Avelue, Tehran, IRAN, 19347.
Sunday N. Edeagu
Embassy of Nigeria, 31st Street,
No. 9 Avenue Vozara, Tehran, IRAN.

Editor.

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