

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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SURPRISE, SURPRISE

Lately these editorial articles have become longer and longer - perhaps it is time to shorten them. Life, they say, is full of surprises, and so it is. Some surprises are pleasant and some not so. The other day someone said that they had bad news for me and were reluctant to give it, but they need not have worried for, after all, we have all learned to thrive on bad news. In the Britain of today the newspapers are crammed with, in the main, bad news. Many of our young people have been reared, since birth, on a regular diet of bad news and, on leaving school to start their adult life, are given the further bad news that there are just no jobs for them and nothing for them to do (and no prospects in the future either). In such circumstances it is easy to sink into the doldrums and see life under sombre clouds of depression. It was refreshing, the other day, to read in the columns of the "Scotsman" amongst all the bad news, an incident involving a pleasant little surprise for the former Mayoress of Manchester. Apparently Councillor Tucker (ex-Mayoress) had been to New York on business with other Councillors and had been driven to the airport, for her homecoming, by a New York cabbie. She inadvertently left her purse, containing £300, Credit Cards etc. etc. in the taxi-cab and reckoned she had seen the last of them. New York has, of course, a reputation, like most large cities, for dishonesty, where commuters on the Underground are robbed on a regular basis and where tourists in Central Park can be mugged before they have gone a hundred yards. Imagine, therefore, the pleasant surprise experienced by Mrs. Tucker when the cabbie sent back to England the purse and contents. I suppose it is really a sad reflection upon modern society that Mrs. Tucker should have been surprised at this example of simple honesty, but surprised she was and said "This man's honesty has restored my faith in human nature". The honest cabbie was Mr. Ioan Zmeu, an ethnic Rumanian, who speaks only a few words of English. The other feature of this happy story was the fact that the Councillor thought that honesty should have a little more than its own reward and invited the cabbie, his wife and daughter-in-law, over to Manchester for a holiday (flying over in Concorde) entirely free. A local hotel provided the free accommodation and Manchester cabbies took the visitors around in the familiar black cabs. The moral of the tale seems to be that we must not take too jaundiced a view of the world - there are occasional bright spots.

A Surprise For Elijah

I suppose we all experience periods of great depression when we look at the state of the world and then look at the puny efforts being made to 'convert' it. Satan seems to hold full sway and have complete control over all mankind.

Attacking the bastions of evil with the resources at our disposal seems to be like storming Edinburgh Castle with a toothbrush. Error and vice are thriving - honesty and virtue are the subjects of mirth and ridicule. Some may even imagine that God has turned away from the world and abandoned it, as before, to a reprobate mind. However such feelings are not new and the world has been in this state before, and God's servants have been depressed before. God, however, is well aware of all that is going on and takes an intense interest in all the human drama taking place here on *terra firma*. There was a time, and more than one, when the very prophets of God (in the O.T.) thought that God had deserted them and that they were bereft of all help. even Elijah, that fearless spokesman for God, did reach a stage, with good reason, where he reckoned all was lost, and took shelter from his enemies in a remote cave. His despondent prayer was "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers" God sought him in the cave in the still small voice and asked, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" With his face hidden in his mantle Elijah explained and said, "I have been very jealous for the God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left: and they seek my life to take it away." Elijah was indeed at the end of his tether and who could blame him. God's own people had forsaken God's covenant, broken down God's altars and put God's prophets to the sword. In addition, Jezebel had sent a special message to Elijah that she had sworn to execute him within twenty four hours. Thus as he cowered in that cave in the wilderness, a day's journey from Beersheba, he acknowledged his redundancy and, in the extremities of his great loneliness, wished for death. God's reply was, "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus" (for God had work for him still to do) and on the question of Elijah being *the last* of God's servants God added, "Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." And so the picture was black but not as black as Elijah understood it. God still had, in reserve, seven thousand men who had not succumbed to Baal, and Elijah was not in as big a minority as he thought he was. Perhaps we, likewise, are not the very small minority we think we are.

God the Statistician

I suppose it is natural to draw comparisons between our large and modern cities, like New York, London, Paris etc. with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for they must surely have much in common. When we consider that the city of Sodom gave its name to the practice of sodomy, or homosexuality, and we consider the manner in which the present world accepts, and even approves, the vile practice then we realise that we cannot be far behind the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the league-table of vice. I used to be a member of a Trades Union which asked members for special donations to fight "for the rights of the 'Gay' " (whatever rights these may be) and it's not uncommon to encounter pressure groups and lobbies (with placards) for "Gay rights", personally endorsed by the presence of some T.V. personality, or Member of Parliament. We now, apparently, have churches for the 'Gay' and clergymen who will marry 'gay' couples. What a terrible misuse of such an otherwise pretty little word 'gay' for there cannot, even in the wildest flights of imagination, be anything remotely 'gay' in two grown men engaged in such a revolting and repulsive activity. Sophisticated society have tried to get the medical profession to regard it, and alcoholism, as an illness but both homosexuality and drunkenness will keep participants out of heaven, and it is unlikely that God would allow *illness* to keep people out of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is certainly *a weakness* but not *an illness*. When Abraham accompanied the two angels to inspect the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah prior to their destruction Abraham, we read, stepped back and had a conversation with God, which, is surely

interesting and very instructive. Abraham, after apologising to God for the liberty he was taking in asking the question, asked, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Getting bolder, Abraham asked, "Peradventure there be 50 righteous within the city; wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the 50 righteous that are therein." The Lord assured Abraham that if there were 50 righteous in the city He would spare the whole city on their account. Abraham then asked if God would also spare the city if only 45 righteous were in the city, and again God assured Abraham that He would spare the city even for the sake of the 45 righteous. Growing more confident but apologising all the time Abraham continued to question God on this theme and postulated ever reducing numbers of 40, 30 and 20. Finally Abraham asked if God would still be prepared to save the city for the sake of 10 righteous (but apparently shrank from asking if God would spare it for the sake of ONE person) and again God gave the assurance that, for the sake of 10 righteous He would spare an entire, and evil, city. From this enlightening conversation it would appear, firstly, that there were not even ten righteous in the city of Sodom or the city of Gomorrah. for these cities were most comprehensively destroyed. Secondly, we learn that God would not destroy the wicked if damage to the righteous would be involved and this might explain why evil in today's world seems to prosper unabated. Thirdly, and most importantly for our present purposes, we recognise that God was completely knowledgeable with reference to *who the righteous were*, in the city, and exactly how many they were in number. Thus we realise that even in vast cities like New York and London, where the underworld forces are legion, God knows to a man, or a woman, those who can be classed as righteous. Of such statistics God has an intimate knowledge and, as Jesus assured His disciples, if God has knowledge of every sparrow that falls He has also the number of the hairs of our heads. God is also used to dealing with small minorities: for, after all, only eight souls were saved in the ark just as, with reference to the Kingdom Of Heaven, *few there will be* that will find it.

Even Jesus was Surprised

Life is indeed full of surprises. We might imagine that Jesus, with all His powers, even to the reading of thoughts and minds, would have been incapable of being surprised but He was indeed surprised, on two occasions. The actual word 'surprise' does not appear in the N.T. although it appears four or five times in the O.T. The N.T. does however, talk about people being *amazed and astonished*. When Jesus mingled with the people we read that some were "astonished with great astonishment"; some "were greatly amazed"; the multitudes marvelled; Pilate marvelled; a Governor marvelled; Jesus' own mother marvelled; Paul marvelled. Jesus however, "marvelled" (or expressed surprise) only twice. The first occasion was when He encountered the Centurion in Capernaum. The Centurion confessed himself unworthy that Jesus should enter under his roof but should 'speak the word only' and that that would be enough to heal his servant of the palsy. Coming from what the Jews would call a *heathen man* this was a great show of confidence in the power and the dignity of Jesus and so Jesus marvelled and said, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in all Israel". (Mark 8: 10). The second occasion was when Jesus returned to Nazareth, to 'His own country' where He had been brought up. It is fairly universally true that a man is least thought of by his own acquaintance, and Jesus was, apparently, no exception to that rule. When He taught in the local synagogue they were offended and reminded Him that He was just a local lad, son of the carpenter, whose mother and father stayed nearby. Everybody knew them and knew that they were 'nothing special'. Who did Jesus think He was? Thus Jesus was surprised and astonished at the scepticism of His very own kin and was prompted to say, "A prophet is not without honour, except

in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." "And He marvelled because of their unbelief".

Surprise The World With Good.

To the Councillor visiting New York (the city with the well-earned reputation for crime and violence) the picture was not as black as it seemed and that city sprung a pleasant surprise, in the person of Mr Ioan Zmeu, the honest cabbie. The darker the world becomes the more brightly will shine acts of mercy, chivalry and honesty. Let us, therefore, be like cities set on a hill that cannot be hid. Let those see the good works and glorify God in heaven. Job was a man who became used to bad news, but, as we know, he remained faithful in spite of all advice to the contrary, and the end was indeed a happy one. Let us try and remain strong and faithful no matter what might happen, committing our entire hope and trust to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. The beleaguered Elijah thought that he was waging a lone and very uneven struggle, and must have been pleasantly surprised to know that God had, in reserve, seven thousand men staunch and true. Jesus was pleasantly surprised at the simple, but real faith of the heathenish Roman soldier, but sadly surprised at the level of unbelief to be found amongst His own brethren and kinsmen. Perhaps we should encourage our 'local' brethren more and see to it that a prophet does not require to leave his own country to receive a modicum of honour. The apostle Paul expressed surprise on one occasion (Gal. 1:6) and this was at the speed at which some of the Christians at Galatia had removed themselves from Him that had called them to grace, and had followed another gospel. Let us resolve never to spring such unhappy surprises, but that our activities and actions will be a blessing and a benefit to the world at large, and to our brethren in particular. The cabbie surprised the ex-Mayoress with his honesty. Let us surprise the world with similar good works. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven." (Matt.5:6).

EDITOR

GLEANINGS

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

HIS WORD IS ENOUGH

"To Christian men Christ becomes an objective conscience. They do not argue that Christ wrought miracles; that therefore it is certain that He came from God; and that therefore He must be obeyed. His word is enough. Conscience recognises in Him the rightful Lord of conduct, and does Him homage. He speaks, "not as the scribes," nor even as the prophets of the older Faith, or as the apostles of the new. He stands alone and apart, the very Voice and Word of the eternal law of righteousness.

Nor is it conscience alone that discovers His glory. He appeals, and appeals immediately, to all those elements and powers of life that give answer to the manifestations of the presence of God. What it is to find God or to be found of God every devout man knows, but the secret cannot be told. We feel His touch, and we know that the unseen Hand can be only His. There is a power upon us, and we need no visible sign or symbol to assure us that it is the power of the Eternal. A light shines; we know that it is Divine. In solitary places, — on the hills, by the sea, among the cornfields, in the woods, — in the crowded streets of great cities, the glory finds us. It finds us when we do not seek it; sometimes when we seek we cannot find it. And to Christian men these great hours often come when they are reading the Four Gospels. They witness a diviner transfiguration than that which Peter, James, and John saw on the sides of Hermon. They become independent of the proof-texts on which biblical

theologians have built their argument for our Lord's divinity; as they read, Christ commands their reverence, their love, their worship. They may know nothing of theological definitions, they may be perplexed by the terms of the creeds; but to them Christ is what God is, and apart even from the authority of His own words, it would be in their hearts to say that, having seen Him, they have seen the Father." R. W. Dale.

THE ART OF SELF-DEFENCE

"Have you ever studied the art of self-defence?" said a young fellow to a man of magnificent physique and noble bearing.

The elder man looked at the questioner with a quiet smile, and then answered, thoughtfully:- "Yes, I have both studied and practised it."

"Ah!" said the other, eagerly, "Whose system did you adopt?"

"Solomon's!" was the reply.

Somewhat abashed, the youth stammered out, "Solomon's! And what is the special point of his system of training?"

"Briefly this", replied the other, "A soft answer turneth away wrath."

For a moment the youth felt an inclination to laugh, and looked at his friend anxiously, to see whether he was serious. But a glance at the accomplished athlete was enough, and soon a very different set of feelings came over the youth as his muscular companion added, with a solemn emphasis, "Try it."

The recommendation is worthy of everyone's serious consideration. There must be times in the lives of all when we need a system of self-defence, and to go into training on Solomon's method will avert many a painful conflict. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." -Sel

HELPFUL HINTS

"The work an unknown good man has done is like a vein of water flowing hidden underground, secretly making the ground green." -Carlyle

"Where Christ brings His cross He brings His presence, and where He is none are desolate, and there is no room for despair. As He knows His own, so He knows how to comfort them, using sometimes the very grief itself, and straining it to a sweetness of peace unattainable by those ignorant of sorrow."

-E. B. Browning

"Sin is a very simple word, but it is a very awful thing. A child could spell the word, but no one, not even the angels, could explain the thing, or tell the evils it has wrought. It is a deadly tree, whose fruit and whose shadows have filled the world, and from which everybody has suffered." -Sel.

TALES WORTH TELLING

"At a mission hall in London a wealthy lady, who was unfortunately deaf, made good use of her riches by providing for the poor some excellent gospel services. On one occasion a celebrated preacher said to her, "And what part do you take in this noble work?" "Oh", she answered quietly, "I smile them in, and I smile them out again." Soon after this the preacher saw the good result of her sympathy as a crowd of working men entered the hall looking delighted to get a smile from her.

SELECTED BY LEONARD MORGAN

BREAKING THE BREAD

I thank Bro. Orton for his reply to my previous articles on the above subject. In the interests of brevity I took the liberty of numbering the paras. in Bro. Orton's article requiring comment. When there are gaps of months between contributions to this subject readers are inclined to lose the thread of the exchanges. There may also be those not interested in this subject and I would ask them to bear, a little longer, with those who are.

(1) Bro. Orton states that it was *since the 1930's* that brethren "*ultimately rejected the practice of dividing the loaf*". Readers may be surprised that it took until the year 1930 before brethren realised that it was wrong to "*Divide the loaf*"? The switch in terminology from "Breaking The Bread" to "Dividing The Loaf" does not help our brother's case. Surely the purpose of our gathering together is to "*Divide the Loaf*" by breaking it and eating it. Jesus said of the Passover cup, "Take this and *divide it among yourselves*". How can Christians "reject the practice of "*dividing the loaf*"?"

(2) Those who teach that Jesus ate the bread at the institution of the 'Lord's Table' have a responsibility to prove it. Readers can judge for themselves how successfully this has been done.

(3) *We cannot suppose* that because Jesus ate the bread at the Passover that He would also, of necessity, eat the bread when He instituted the feast in memory of His own death. Jesus had *eaten the bread at Passovers all His life* - (it was nothing new) but we have no right *to assume* that He also partook of the emblems at the institution of His own Table'. In John 6:53 Jesus said, "Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son Of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." This we do in a figurative sense but I doubt if Jesus would *eat His own flesh and drink His own blood* even in that sense.

(4) Christ's baptism by John Baptist must surely be regarded as a very weak argument that Jesus ate the bread when He instituted the 'Lord's Supper'. In the N.T. we have *John's baptism* and we have *Christ's baptism*. Jesus was baptised with John's baptism to 'fulfil all righteousness' (to show that He was not exempt from God's commandments) but nowhere do we read that Jesus was baptised *with His Own baptism*. Indeed Jesus did not remain on earth until His baptism came into force, nor even until the Kingdom of God came into being. Had Jesus been baptised *in His own baptism* Bro. Orton might have drawn the analogy he seeks. It is an intriguing question as to whether, had He remained on earth long enough, Jesus would have been baptised in His own baptism, and even more intriguing as to whom He would ask to do the baptising (Peter or Matthew or whoever) - but this is of little help in proving that Jesus ate the bread.

(5) Bro. Orton is not quite accurate when he says that the disciples *prepared the Lord's Supper*. The disciples prepared *the Passover* only. The Lord's Supper did not require any preparation for Jesus used what was left over from the Passover. "This do" had reference to *all that Jesus did* (taking a loaf, giving thanks for it, breaking it, passing it to the disciples with the instructions *to eat* and *to drink*). In the absence of Jesus, some brother (called the Presiding Brother merely for convenience) must see to this.

(6) James says that I am unlikely to stick with the analogy I drew regarding the feeding of the wild birds. I fail to see why. Indeed every time anyone feeds the wild birds (or ducks in the local duck pond) *they illustrate the very truth of my words* — that we can break the bread without eating it ourselves. The N.T. says that Jesus *broke the bread* but nowhere does it say that He also *ate it*. We do not have to depend, however, upon my analogy about the birds for we have the instances (mentioned at

length in my last article) where Jesus broke 5 loaves into fragments with His hands and distributed them to feed the 5,000 and later dealt similarly with 7 loaves. Here are cases in the N.T. (we don't have to depend on the birds analogy) *where Jesus broke bread without eating it*. In addition we can also say that the Greek *Klao* used in the breaking of the 5 loaves is also used of 'Break' when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. I asked for evidence that the word *Klao* changed in meaning between the two cases but, so far, have not received any.

(7) Bro. Orton asks, "Does this mean that the disciples came together to sit around the Lord's Table and break bread into pieces and leave without anybody eating it." James *seems to keep forgetting* that Jesus also said, "Take, Eat". *Jesus instructs us to "Eat and Drink"* and so there is no danger of us leaving without eating. We must break the bread but also eat it.

(8) The quotation set out in capitals is from page 96 of E. M. Zerr's Bible Commentary where Mr. Zerr after quoting Thayer says, "To Break 'Used in the N.T. of the breaking of the bread'. He also cites Matt. 14 (breaking 5 loaves) and other places where we know it refers to the act of dividing a loaf so that more than one person could properly partake of it." On re-reading the quotation it seems that the statement in capitals is Mr. Zerr's understanding of what Thayer says rather than Thayer's actual words. I was not trying to deceive anyone and neither, I suspect, is Mr. Zerr - indeed when we consider Matt. 14:19 (the breaking of the 5 loaves to feed 5,000) *Klao* there means "the act of dividing a loaf so that more than one person can properly partake of it." In my article I quoted also from Robinson, Bauer, Vine - we do not have to depend on Thayer for a definition of 'break'. There is certainly no mystery as to its meaning.

(9) Mr. Orton's offering of 'proof' that Jesus ate the bread is that *it is unlikely* that Jesus would have drunk of the cup and not eaten of the bread. Bro. Orton assumes (again) that Jesus must have drunk of the cup because Jesus said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day....." (Matt. 26:29). This might be a valid argument for Bro. Orton had those words been uttered at the institution of the Lord's Supper. Unfortunately for James these words had direct reference to the Passover, and so rather than helping our brother's view, hinders it greatly. James knows as well as anybody does that all the gospels are complementary and supplementary to one another. Some tell us more than the others - some gospels tell us what the others do not. It so happens that Luke (in Chap. 22:15-18) relates to us how Jesus said (AT THE PASSOVER) after eating the bread at the Passover "I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God". Then "He (Jesus) took the cup, (still at the Passover) and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come." It was *after this* (verses 19 & 20) that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (when He took the bread and broke it and when He took the cup and passed it around). After saying *at the Passover* that He would not drink of the fruit of the vine until the K. Of. G. came (at Pentecost), would Jesus immediately change his mind and drink the fruit of the vine at the institution of the Lord's Supper? I asked this question in my last article *but have not, so far, received an answer*. E. M. Zerr in his 'Bible Commentary' explains how that some verses in the gospels are out of chronological order and that Luke 22:15-20 gives the best sequence of events. (No one requires to accept my word for this but can read for themselves the rendering of Luke 22 in the Revised Version; Weymouth's Version; Englishman's Greek New Testament; People's New Testament (B. W. Johnson); New Testament Commentary by J. S. Lamar; etc. etc.) And so Bro. Orton's argument from Matt. 26:26 (that Jesus drank the cup at the institution of the Lord's Supper) is based on a false premise. James seems to be saying that he accepts what Matthew says but is not happy about Luke, but I

know him well enough to know he can't mean that. Surely he knows Matt. 26:29 must be understood in terms of Luke 22:20?

(10) This last statement is very strange. Certainly Jesus *ate the Passover* but what does this prove in respect of the Lord's table? Jesus, as we have seen (at the Passover) said that He would *drink no more* of the fruit of the vine until *that day* (when He drank it new with them). *WHAT DAY?* Obviously *a different day* from the day of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus was physically gone to heaven before the Kingdom Of God came into being and so eats and drinks with us in a spiritual sense only - certainly not in a literal sense. Bro. Orton asks, finally, "How much more proof does one require to accept that the Lord broke the loaf and ate with His disciples". Readers can decide for themselves *if it has been proved that:-*

- (1) The meaning of 'break' changes as between Matt. 14:19 (the breaking of the 5 loaves) and Matt. 26:26 (institution of the Lord's Supper).
- (2) That the loaf *must be 'preserved whole'* while it is being 'broken'.
- (3) That Jesus Himself actually ate of the bread or drank the cup at the institution of the Lord's Supper.
- (4) That a Presiding Brother (or anybody else) can break the loaf into a lesser number than two pieces. (It's difficult to break the bread without breaking it).
- (5) That any Greek Lexicographer ever defined 'break' (Klao) as meaning "to retain whole".

These comments on brother Orton's article are offered for consideration by all those interested in the subject, and I only wish that more brethren had considered the matter worthy of their participation in the discussion. Readers may, or may not be, surprised to know that those who object to the Presiding Brother breaking the loaf into two pieces did not avail themselves of my offer to supply the loaf if they would demonstrate how to break it without breaking it into a minimum of two pieces. Presumably such an objection will, in fairness, now cease. Just as a woman cannot be 'slightly pregnant' so the bread cannot be 'scarcely broken'. The bread is either broken, or it is not broken. In my last article I supplied quotations from William Barclay, David King, E. M. Kerr, MacKnight, Alexander Campbell and J. W. McGarvey (all Bible students or Greek scholars of some repute) all of whom agreed that Jesus *broke the bread into pieces* before passing it to His disciples, at the institution of the 'Lord's Table. *I have not come across any* who would state that the bread must remain whole. I think it significant that the feast later came to be called not "The Eating Of The Bread" but rather "The Breaking Of Bread". The eating is important but obviously so is the breaking. Those who do not consider the issue of any importance should know that in some places it is, I understand, a test of fellowship - and that must surely make it important. I agree, however, with those who believe that both points of view have been sufficiently aired, and that ample opportunity has been given to everyone to comment, and that the matter should close unless anything can be usefully added.

EDITOR

EDIFICATION

"The original word signifies to build, and is applied to the people of God in association. The apostles represented the church as a house, a building of God, a temple, a habitation. The Lord Jesus is the chief corner stone of this building — the sure foundation, and believers are lively stones, built up a spiritual house. (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 3:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:5) thus constituting that church, which the apostles call "the household of Faith, (Gal. 6:10). It is evident from this view of the subject, that it is

the duty of all believers to associate in holy fellowship for the edifying or building up of the church. The promises of God, and the consolation of the Spirit, are not made so much to isolated persons as to the church as a whole. Eph. 4:8-16. The term applied to individual character, denotes endeavours to instruct, comfort, console, and establish one another, by the means of grace, and by conversation and prayer with and for one another."

(NICHOLSON- Bible Students Companion.)

With the foregoing in mind, we see the importance of each individual in the body of Christ. The work of building up the church is a co-operative function, not only the elders or even the preachers and teachers, but each one share a part in this important task.

Charles Wesley must have had this in mind when he wrote the hymn:

1. "All praise to our redeeming Lord
Who joins us by His Grace,
And bids us each to each restored
Together seek His face.
2. He bids us build each other up;
And gathered into one,
To our high calling's glorious hope
We hand in hand go on.
3. E'en now we think and speak the same,
And cordially agree,
Concentred all through Jesus' Name,
In perfect harmony.
4. The gift which He on one bestows,
We all delight to prove;
His Grace through every vessel flows,
In purest streams of love.
5. We all partake the joys of one,
The common peace we feel;
A peace to sensual minds unknown
A joy unspeakable.
6. And if our fellowship below
In Jesus be so sweet.
What heights of rapture shall we know
When round His throne we meet!

Can we sing such words as these without realizing their implication? that the church on earth must be truly representative of that great assembly which one day will be in the abode of God.

Let us love one another with a pure heart fervently. Let joys and sorrows be mutually shared. Let us consider one another to provoke unto Love and Good Works, building and being built into a Holy Temple in the Lord. Let us shine as lights in the World, that men seeing our good works may glorify our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

TOM KEMP, Wigan

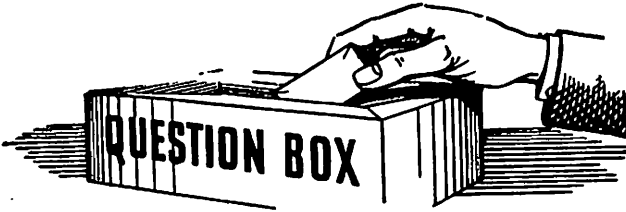
ARE YOU A PREACHER?

A preacher is a herald of good news. His purpose is not to tickle the ears or impress the intellect, but to instruct simple people unto righteousness. He, or she, is the sower of Godly truths, a distributor of the great saving doctrine of God through Christ. The task is an everlasting one. Each generation born has a right to hear the Good News. We must be ever telling the gospel message. Truly the gospel is God's only power unto the saving of souls. The message is already framed and all that requires to be done is to bring it to the world. It must be proclaimed, declared and preached to all who will hear, not only in this country, but to every nation.

The message changes not and must not be changed. The message to be proclaimed today *must be exactly* the same message as that upon the tongues of the faithful apostles. All forms of 'gimmicks' are to be shunned and the preaching must be plain and presented soberly and with due reverence. The aim of the preaching must always be that men shall respond by asking, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved".

A preacher is not necessarily the product of some ecclesiastical academy or Training College - indeed most of the early preachers had never heard of such things, but earnest, dedicated tellers of the good news of free pardon. How much preaching is being done by us today? Is it sufficient? Are we satisfied with our efforts? Are we waiting for others to do it all? We have been saved to serve, my brethren. The Lord expects you, my brother, you, my sister, to make the effort to preach the gospel to a dying world. Jesus expects us to go into all the world and to preach to every creature. Are we letting Him down? Are we letting ourselves down? The fields are truly white unto harvest but the labourers are few. Are you one of the few? Are you a preacher of the glad tidings?

ANDREW SHARP, Newtongrange



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Should a preacher take up speaking appointments at assemblies where unsound teaching and practices are allowed, and likewise should assemblies invite preachers whom they consider to be unsound?"

The maintenance of the purity of teaching and practice in Churches of Christ has always seemed to be of paramount importance, so much so, in fact, that a great deal of bitterness and frustration has been engendered over the years. We have endured the cups problem, the instrumental music problem, the 'open' communion problem, the head-covering problem, and we are now, I believe, set to endure the divorce and re-marriage problem. Whenever there has been a change in social or environmental conditions, then the Church has had a problem. We shall continue to be perplexed by this state of affairs until we realise the futility of that quaint expression we use, i.e., "we are *in* the world, but not *of* the world". Of course we are *of* the world; even the most cursory examination of the lives of most Christians will signify this. There may be isolated Christians who have made a *complete* renunciation of the world, but

personally I do not know of any. Being *of* the world does not imply, of course, that we are habitual sinners, but it *does* mean that the *influence* of temporal things in our lives may give rise to judgments which may classify us at any given time as 'sound' or 'unsound'. The paradox is that a Christian can slip in and out of these categories every time a problem presents itself, so I can be 'sound' at one time, and 'unsound' a little later. This can be very confusing for most of us, and almost paranoiac for the one who has to fill a speakers plan.

What does it mean to be 'sound' —

The Greek word is HUGIAINO from which is the English word 'hygiene', and translated it means 'safe and sound' (See Luke 15:27). The word is used metaphorically of doctrine, and is found in 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9 and 2:1. An examination of these passages will convince us that the Apostle is listing pretty 'heavy' stuff when he lists who are 'unsound', i.e., unhealthy and unwholesome regarding teaching and practice. He speaks of lawless and disobedient, unholy and profane, murderers of parents, whoremongers, menstealers, in fact everything that would ensue from such people and would be clearly contrary to sound doctrine.

The Titus passages indicate what sound doctrine means. In Titus 1:9 we find it referred to the Elders, the most important point being "holding fast the faithful word". In 2:1 Paul says, "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine". He then refers this to four groups of people; the aged men; aged women; young women; and young men. Soundness is defined as sobriety, gravity, temperance, patience, love, holiness, discretion, chastity, faithfulness to the word, uncorruptness in doctrine; in fact, everything that shows a pattern of good works.

Now it is fairly clear that the so-called Pastoral Epistles were written to counter the effects of Gnosticism and Judaism. The point also ought to be made that these people were intent on the *destruction* of the Christian doctrine, a calculated and persistent offensive which sought to bring to nought the revealed Will of God. The question we now have to ask ourselves is this: if a community of Christians chooses, for example, to worship without head-covering for women, ought they to be classified in the same category as the 'unsound' people who were, and are, intent on destroying the Christian doctrine? Each Christian must answer *that* question in the most satisfactory way that he or she can. If the answer is 'yes' then that answer must be consistently applied at all times, even to the extent of the most meticulous scrutiny of every individual Christian and community of Christians; if the answer is 'no' then that answer must also be consistently applied at all times. In the first instance the only logical outcome would be a withdrawal of fellowship; in the second instance fellowship would be retained and every opportunity taken to give corrective teaching.

Congregational Autonomy

It has been said that congregational autonomy has been well stated, but ill practiced; well, let's start practicing it. If a brother comes into an assembly and the Elders have a mind for him to speak, must they first question him as to his beliefs to see if he is 'sound', according to *their* description of soundness? If they found his personal beliefs such that they felt they could not allow him the platform, would they still have fellowship with him? There are those who say that personal views and beliefs held by a Christian should not be discriminated against unless and until they are stated publicly so as to influence others (I refer, of course, to personal views and beliefs which would be classified as 'unsound'). It seems to me that Jesus, when discussing adultery, made it clear that it was not necessary to commit the overt act before a person became guilty; if adultery was in his heart he was guilty already; "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he". I would hold no brief for a speaker who, holding certain convictions quite seriously, refrained from stating those convictions in an assembly where he knew they would be unpopular. If convictions are worth having,

they are worth stating, and if they are shown to be in error then they are worth forsaking, and should be forsaken. Such a person might lament on the Day of Judgment, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept" (Song of Solomon 1:6).

If we consider congregational autonomy relative to the question before us then we can readily see that each community of Christians could find other communities 'unsound' in some aspect of doctrine and practice; where would we then find inter-community fellowship. We have even reached the state when *nationality* can classify a speaker as 'unsound'. Furthermore, we have reached the ludicrous situation when assembly 'A' will support assembly 'B' providing that assembly 'B' uses a speaker whom assembly 'A' approves of. But immediately 'B' uses a speaker that 'A' *disapproves* of, then support is withheld. Logically, I would argue that if an assembly uses speakers who could be classified as 'unsound' by other assemblies, then the assembly who uses such speakers becomes as guilty as the speakers are and should in no way be supported in any circumstance. But, you see, the difficulty with that argument is that the assembly who uses him may not consider him to be 'unsound'. So we are back to square one.

The Test of Soundness

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the standard of 'soundness' depends in the ultimate on interpretation of the Word, whether individually or corporately. If this is so, then instead of definitive standards, universally applied, we shall have variable standards. I say this because our ideas of congregational autonomy forbid any thought of what I term 'concensus interpretation', i.e., inter-community agreement (and it may very well boil down to majority agreement) on difficult issues. We do this relative to the Way of Salvation, but even here it is a very sobering thought that some four hundred religious groups, comprising many millions of adherents, do not believe as we do. This fact doesn't cause us to despair, but it *does* illustrate how different interpretations of the Word have drastically eroded the power of the Christian witness to the world.

I think we understand that real progress comes through conflict. If individuals or nations are faced with the problem of survival then they have to do things very quickly. I believe we in the Church are faced with the problem of survival; we need to act very quickly. We have engaged ourselves in our internecine struggles for far too long. No one would deny that the world is either apathetic or antagonistic to the Gospel. So what do we do? are we to avoid people because they do not believe as we do? No, we go out to teach them what we believe to be the error of their ways. So what do we do with our brethren. Do we ignore them and think them beyond redemption because they do not agree with us on every issue? No, we keep on teaching and reasoning with each other until we arrive at the truth.

The trouble is, of course, that hostility leads us into entrenched positions, and those positions can become almost impregnable. Much devolves on how we interpret 'the faith' because the scriptural exhortation is that we should contend for it. A Christian with a different view may contend just as earnestly for that view until he is convinced otherwise, but if he or they are deliberately isolated then his or their view(s) become more stubbornly held, and so division is perpetuated; surely love, patience, discretion, and faithfulness to the Word can triumph in the end.

I have always campaigned for the purity and integrity of the Word, and I always shall. I have spoken what I understand to be the Truth at Methodist, Anglican, and other Bible classes. I have contended for it in peoples homes. Some, including myself, were not born into Church of Christ families, and consequently we know what it is to become estranged from dear friends for the sake of the Truth. My own view is that preachers have a *duty* to teach the Truth, if they are invited, at assemblies where we

believe it is not lovingly held. If the Truth cuts and rebukes then we may not be re-invited, but that is the prerogative of the assembly concerned. If any preacher comes to Albert St. and speaks what we consider to be error, then we will discuss with him, as Aquila and Priscilla did with Apollos in those early days of Christianity, as to how we may be able to reconcile our views. If someone needs to be admonished, then it will be as a brother and not as an infidel. That is my position, and that is what I would advise. Let us only look to the ultimate decision of withdrawal of fellowship when the ultimate impasse has been reached.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

AUGUST 1985

4—Lev. 19:1-18	Matt. 20:20-34
11—Gen. 37:3-28	Matt. 20:20-34
18—Zech. 9	Matt. 21:1-22
25—Mal. 2:17 to 3:18	Matt. 21:23-46

THE PARABLE OF THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

A number of years ago I undertook a special study of the parables of Jesus. It lasted a lot longer than I ever imagined. Of course, I am still learning a great deal from these unforgettable sayings of the Master Teacher.

To teach in parables is to teach in pictures. An old proverb says: "One seeing is worth a hundred telling." Matthew earlier revealed: "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them" (13:34). In so doing, He fulfilled prophecy (Matthew 13:35).

I think this parable has a lot to do with the grace of God. So does Edward A. Armstrong, for in his book *The Gospel Parables* he gives this parable the subtitle "God's Grace".

Brother Alf Marsden has been conducting *Question Box* for over eleven years now. We appreciate his efforts very much indeed. He dealt with this parable in November 1983. First he pointed out the importance of the context and then

went on to say: "I have little doubt that the significance of this parable would not be lost on the disciples, nor ought it to be lost on us. Some of the disciples saw themselves as having borne the burden and heat of the day with the Lord, and consequently they had the impression that they were entitled to greater consideration; perhaps some of us think like that also. But we should realise that to labour in the kingdom is a blessing in itself no matter how arduous or demanding the tasks may be. To receive a reward on top of that is a measure of the love and concern of our Divine Householder." Go back and read his article again. You will profit by it.

JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Jesus foresaw everything that would happen to Him. Did that make it any easier for Him? I think not. A Christian apologist at Hyde Park Corner, London once said this in reply to the question by a sceptic: "Wasn't the temptation a farce, if he knew He could not fail?" "No, I don't think so. It is often the people who resist most who most feel the force of temptation... I dare say you have heard of the man who said, 'I always get rid of my temptations by yielding to them'. It is not the man who surrenders at once who has the hard fight, but the man who knows that nothing on earth will make him give in that has the long and exhausting struggle. Temptation means trial, and Christ, being perfect, stood a trial such as no one else could have."

I think of my Lord, for example, at the time of his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Do you think that I cannot now pray to my Father and He will provide me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). Consider that question in the light of all that Jesus suffered and endured at the hands of his enemies.

Note especially that Jesus said He would rise again. As one writer has put it: "Beyond the curtain of suffering lay the revelation of glory; beyond the Cross was the Crown; beyond the defeat was triumph; and beyond death was life".

TRUE GREATNESS

The mother of James and John had asked a favour of Jesus. "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on the right hand and the other on the left, in your kingdom" (20:21). Clearly, she was far from a complete understanding of the nature of His kingdom.

The Lord then went on to reveal the sons' future participation in His afflictions. He also spoke of the true way to greatness. "But whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (20:26-28). Here indeed is the Christian revolution. Here is the complete reversal of all the world's standards. A complete new set of values has been brought into life.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Zechariah 9:9 reads: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on an ass, a colt, the foal of an ass." Jesus' triumphal entry was, therefore, the fulfilment of prophecy.

This incident shows us a number of

things. One thing it reveals is that Jesus came in peace. We must remember that in these days the horse was the mount of war, but the ass the mount of peace. Jesus was a king of peace. He came not to destroy but to love.

The incident also reveals the courage of Jesus. Despite the welcome of the multitude He was, in many ways, entering a hostile city. The Jewish leaders despised him, and this event would certainly increase their hatred.

The very great multitude "spread their clothes on the road" (21:8). This was a token of respect (2 Kings 9:13). They also cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road (21:8). John says (12:13) that these branches were branches of the palm-tree. The palm was an emblem of joy and victory. Barnes says: "It was used by the Roman soldiers, as well as the Jews, as a symbol of peace" (Revelation 7:9).

THE LESSON OF THE WITHERED FIG TREE

This incident of the withered fig tree clearly showed Jesus' power over nature. Also, it was a dramatic lesson for the disciples. Jesus took occasion from it to establish their faith in God. "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also, if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea', it will be done. And all these things whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (21:21-22).

Adam Clarke in his commentary says of these verses: "Removing mountains, and rooting up mountains, are phrases very generally used to signify the removing or conquering great difficulties - getting through perplexities.. He that has faith will get through every difficulty and perplexity; mountains shall become mole-hills or plains before him. The

saying is neither to be taken in its literal sense, nor is it hyperbolic: it is a proverbial form of speech, which no Jew could misunderstand, and with which no Christian ought to be puzzled." Dear reader, do you have a faith that can remove mountains?

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED VINE-DRESSERS

From my notes on Jesus' parables I see that this particular one is found in all three of the synoptic Gospels. Perhaps that is a measure of its importance.

The "servants" in this story I understand to be the prophets of God. How badly treated they were! A number of passages immediately spring to mind. Luke 13:34: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" Hebrews 11:37-38: "They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented - of whom the world was not worthy." 1 Kings 19:10 - "I (Elijah) have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life..."

The son (Jesus) fared no better. And what was to be the outcome of it all? "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vine-dressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons" (21:41). (Note who uttered these words). The "other vine-dressers" are the Gentiles (Acts 28:28).

IAN S. DAVIDSON, Motherwell

IT IS better to fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than to succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kirkcaldy, Scotland: On 11th April, 1985, Alistair McNamee, was baptised for the remission of sins. He is a young man who has come to Sunday School and Bible Classes for many years. Pray for him as he starts his journey with us to the heavenly destination.

R. W. HUGHES, Sec.

Cape Town, R.S.A.: "We have a (what I term A Special) Gospel Meeting (each year in April & November Lord willing) which is a One Day 10-30 a.m. & 6 p.m. where we meet in a Primary School room in the area of Bokmakierie, Athlone area.

This April meeting which I conducted had as a theme for the meeting "Who Is The Wisest Person?" my lessons were "What Think Ye of Christ" a.m. & p.m. it was "Salvation authorised"! The service was very well attended almost 40 in the morning and almost 60 in the evening. Which was our members visitors and members of one of our Southern suburb congregations, namely Steenberg.

At the evening meeting, after the invitation Hymn, one of our sisters, who had encouraged her friend and neighbour to our services Tuesdays evenings, & Bible study Thursdays came forward to express her desire to give her life to Christ. On her own request she was baptized Tuesday afternoon the 30th April 1985. Yes, our sister's friend made her willing decision to the praise of God.

There were others of whom I am aware, who were thinking about their soul salvation, all we can do, is to pray that that day to become The Wisest Person" shall not be too long. So now, up to date, from April 1979 when I offered my voluntary full-time service to the congregation, up-to-date then we have witnessed 28 baptisms. But some of

individual ones, and families had moved to other areas, close to other congregations, thank God for that! (I should have said April 1979 to April 1985. Sorry for omitting it that way.)"

T. W. HARTLE, Evangelist

Stretford, Manchester: We thank our Lord for the baptism, into Christ, of Philip Day, on Monday 10th June, at Stretford Swimming Baths. Philip is from Runcorn, Cheshire. He came to appreciate the significance of baptism whilst on a visit with brother Emanuel Scott. Will any brethren in his area please contact him. He lives with his mother at 3 Leyton Close, Runcorn, Cheshire. He has a deep faith. Please pray that the Lord will use him to His glory.

ALLAN ASHURST

OBITUARY

Kirkcaldy, Scotland: Joe McCallum was taken suddenly to be with his Lord, having only recently retired. Joe accepted Jesus as his Saviour only a few years ago but since then his quiet manner and new found life in Christ have influenced all the family to the point where they too have come to the Lord. Your prayers are solicited for the family.

R. W. HUGHES

SOCIAL

The church at Newtongrange intend (D.V.) to hold its ANNUAL SOCIAL on Saturday 19th October, 1985, at 4 p.m. The Speakers will be:-
Bro. D. Chalmers (Dalmellington)
Bro. Brown (Dennyloanhead)
Chairman Bro. R. Hunter (Newtongrange)
Try to be with us - A Warm Welcome awaits you.

A. P. SHARP, Sec.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The new address of Bro. T. Kemp is 41 Sussex Close, Hindley, Wigan.
Tel. No. (0942) 53867

SPECIAL MEETINGS

Special Saturday evening meetings, August 24th; August 31st; and 7th September (all at 6.30 p.m.) to be held, God willing, in the church meetinghouse in Motherwell. Bro. Ian Davidson will deliver talks on Philemon, 2nd & 3rd John, and consider their relevance to today. He will also examine the background material viz. Roman Slavery (Philemon) and the Gnostic Philosophy (2nd & 3rd John). These meetings are for earnest students of the Word of God.

Plan to attend.

I.D.

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