

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## CHURCH OR LODGE ?

This week the Church of Scotland published a report expressing concern about the in-compatibility of Christianity with Freemasonry and asking any of their members, who are also Freemasons, to 'think again'. The Church of Scotland are not using strong language on the issue for they know that many of their clergymen are Freemasons, and the Church is very short of clergymen. Indeed many clergymen of the C. of E. are Freemasons, including Bishops. By pure coincidence one of the subjects for discussion at the Mutual Benefit Meeting, at Motherwell, last Saturday was this very subject: "Can a Christian be a Freemason" and some brethren south of the border have expressed a hope that some mention could be made of the matter in the *Scripture Standard*. What follows is a gist of the subject as discussed at Motherwell. Nothing is to be construed as a personal criticism of Masons, as individuals, for, by-and-large, they are very well-behaved, and even benevolent, citizens. The issue is whether Freemasonry, as a secret society, is compatible with true Christianity? Obviously, space allows only a very brief mention of each item.

### HISTORY

Freemasons claim that their history goes back to the time of Moses; certainly to Solomon and his temple, and they draw on the O.T. for words and symbols. Few would take the claim seriously, but certainly the craft goes back as far as the 16th Century in this country. The oldest Masonic record is said to be dated 1599, with a Lodge in Aberdeen in 1670, and Kilwinning in 1696. The oldest Masonic motto; "God is our guide" is on a tombstone in St. Helen's 1594. Masonic Lodges appeared in the U.S.A. around 1733 and perhaps earlier. In this country it would seem that, at first, membership was confined to actual masons (stone masons) and might have been an early form of trade-unionism. Their tools of trade: apron, trowel, square, plumbline and compasses figure greatly in all their ritual, even today. Other trades had their 'Guilds' but Masonry was more of a 'brotherhood' with good and benevolent ideals: i.e. that of mutual assistance. There is controversy, as to how Masons came to be called 'Freemasons' but it is thought to have been due to those unattached to set masters: i.e. free agents to go and work where they pleased. Later other trades and artisans were allowed membership, and, even later, "speculative" members (noblemen and the influential) were welcomed. Such "speculative" members have included men like Sir Walter Scott, Sir Christopher Wren, Duke of Cumberland, King Edward 7th, King George IV, George Washington; and currently, Duke of Edinburgh, and a great many more. Lodges were originally fairly autonomous but Grand Lodges were formed in England in 1717, and in Scotland in 1736, and now oversee many Lodges. Today Freemasonry is to be found in nearly every country but is banned in some (such as Italy and Greece) as being a danger to the State. Statistics are difficult to come by,

but it is thought that there must be about 12 Million Freemasons in the world and many thousands of Lodges.

### INITIATION

Candidates for membership have to undergo 'secret' initiation ceremonies and take solemn oaths. They have to agree to abide by the ancient or 'Old Charges' (or 'Constitutions') and Craft Masonry degrees consist of (1) Entered Apprentice (2) Fellow Craft and (3) Master Mason. There are, however many other Higher Degrees in Royal Arch Masonry (no less than 33 such degrees in Scotland and 96 in Egyptian Masonry.) Recruits are not supposed to be solicited to join Masonry (they are supposed to come forward voluntarily through admiration for Freemasonry) but in practice are recommended by members. Although Freemasonry is a 'secret' Society it is quite true to say that very few of their secrets remain undiscovered, and one can readily acquire in any bookshop, detailed information regarding passwords, rituals, questions and responses, for virtually every degree. C. Penny Hunt, B.A. writes, "The Candidate for the first degree is introduced in a semi-naked state, blindfolded, with a cable tow noose round his neck and a sharp instrument pointed at his naked left breast to indicate the peril he runs in seeking 'Light'. He then requests to be admitted to the mysteries and privileges of Masonry 'by the help of God'. He is led in darkness to a kneeling stool. The deacons join their wands over his head. This forms the sign of the Viscera Piscis of the ancient pagan rites, to indicate that the candidate is being born again." A Prayer is offered. Later he takes the Oath of secrecy and restored to 'Light'. Wilmhurst says, "the first degree corresponds with ... the Sacrament of Baptism." Later, in the third degree, the candidate rises as a 'corpse' (sometimes from a coffin) to be 'regenerated life' and "is no longer an ordinary man but a divinised man" (Wilmhurst). One wonders what all this has to do with the trade of laying stones. One also wonders how any C. of E. Bishop (or any clergyman, or any Christian) could stand dressed (or semi-naked), cutting such a ludicrous figure, in such an environment of pagan symbolism, and plead with Masonry to be given "Light"? Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. How could any follower of Christ seek 'Light' in a Freemason's, Lodge or anywhere else for that matter? The Psalmist said, "**The entrance of *THY WORDS* giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple**". (117: 130) And how could any Christian seek to be reborn in a Freemason's Lodge when he has already been born again, 'of water and the Spirit'? "**To the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them**". Thus it is an obvious insult to Christ, the Light of men, for any of His disciples to seek 'true enlightenment' in a Masonic Lodge.

### MASONIC ATTITUDE TO THE BIBLE

How does Freemasonry regard the Bible? It is merely part of the Lodge furniture. It is called the 'Volume of Sacred Law' and is one of the "Three Greater Lights" (the Square and the Compasses being the other two) but is only a **Symbol**. The Koran (Muslims) or the Vedas (Hindus) or indeed the Book of Mormon could be used instead if the local preponderance of Lodge members were Muslims, Hindus or Mormons. The message of the Bible is largely ignored and is, in any case, usually misquoted, used out of context and adapted to suit Masonic ritual. Again, we might wonder how any Christian could continue in membership of any Society which placed the Bible on a par with the Koran, the Vedas, or the Book of Mormon and could tolerate its use as a symbolical piece of furniture.

### MASONIC ATTITUDE TO CHRIST

Christ's Name must never be mentioned in a Freemason's Lodge. Mason's say, "We adopt the excellent principle of silence, lest at any time there should be among us those trained in other than the Christian faith, and to whom, on that account, the mention of the Christian Master's name might be an offence" (The Meaning of

Masonry, by Wilmhurst). And so Christ's Name must never be mentioned in the Lodge in case it gives offence. This situation might be quite acceptable to those who claim no relationship with Jesus Christ, but it is difficult to understand any true Christian being a member of any association which would ban any reference to Christ. Amongst Masons Christ is just one 'exemplar' but there can be many others (again, it depends upon the religion of the preponderance of the local membership). Other exemplars could be Osirus (Egypt); Baachus (amongst Greeks); Baldur in Scandinavia and similar other prototype like Buddha or Mohammed. The generally accepted prototype of Freemasonry is Hiram Abiff. And so Christ is relegated to the level of sinful men, false prophets, philosophers and mythological 'gods'. How can any genuine disciple of Christ tolerate God's Son to be denegated in this way, and to regularly frequent premises where Christ's name must not be mentioned, lest it give offence. General Booth, of the Salvation Army sent a letter to all his Officers saying, "No language of mine can be too strong in condemning any officer's affiliation with any society which shuts Christ outside its temples; and in which its religious ceremonies gives Him nor His name any place." God gave Christ a name which is above every name, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9). "And whatsoever ye do in word, or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Col. 3:17). "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father". (John 5:23).

#### OATH-TAKING

James says, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, nor by earth, NOR ANY OTHER oath; but let your yea be yea and your nay be nay, that ye fall not under judgement." (5:12) Notwithstanding, there are Christians and clergymen who have taken oaths administered by Freemasonry, and outrageous oaths they are. It seems a foolish thing for a man to join a society for reasons he won't know until he has actually joined. It seems twice as foolish for a man to take an oath, the full import of which is kept from him, until he has taken it. The oath (or 'obligation') of the Entered Apprentice is fairly long and is taken word by word and sentence by sentence. In effect the candidate has taken it before he fully appreciates its total implication." The oath ends with "So help me God, and keep me steadfast in this my great and solemn obligation" and the apprentice kisses the Bible. The candidate repeats the oath line by line with no idea of what is coming next, in a kneeling position, with his right hand on the Bible and his left holding compasses pointing at his bare breast. Nowadays Masons try to say that the oath is not taken too seriously but the wording of it belies any such claim. The candidate "solemnly swears" before God "without evasion, equivocation or mental reservation of any kind" and "under no less a penalty, on violation of the oath, of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the root, and buried in the sand of the sea at low water mark, or a cables' length from the shore ..." Again one must ask how any clergyman or Christian could take such an oath or administer such an oath, and associate God's name with it, and call upon God's help in keeping such an oath. How could a Christian be a member of any society which would afflict such a savage, barbarous, repugnant, immoral and illegal penalty for any defaulter i.e. having their throat cut and their tongue torn out by the root? But there are many more similar oaths. Royal Arch Masons take an oath to help a fellow Mason who is in any difficulty (whether involving murder or treason) and will assist him whether he be right or wrong. Such oaths are positively sinister and could affect political and judicial decisions; could affect the attitude of policemen, jury-men and magistrates to a fellow-mason on trial. The police force is traditionally predominated by Freemasonry but recently young recruits have been advised by some Chief Constables not to join, because of graft and corruption. Joseph Smith, the alleged author of the Book of Mormon was a Mason and the Masonic influence can be seen

in the book. He gave the Masonic distress call in the jail but was shot dead just the same. About the same time (1836) there was a great tide of anti-Freemason feeling in America. William Morgan fell out with his Lodge and threatened to reveal Masonic secrets. He was kidnapped from his wife and two children and held forcibly at Fort Niagra by seven Masons. After drawing lots, three tied weights to William Morgan and threw him in the river. Disgust swept the Lodges and 45,000 Masons left the craft, leaving only 5,000. It was thought that this would be the end of Freemasonry in USA but the unpopularity got in the way of politics and was soon played down. Pauls says, **“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them”**. Having one’s throat cut, or tongue torn out at its roots, must surely qualify for “unfruitful works of darkness” and how can we “reprove” such if we, ourselves, are fully paid-up members?

### MASONRY A RELIGION?

Freemasonry denies being a religion and claims to be as innocuous as the Boy Scout Movement. It claims to be “the spirit of all religions” (except Roman Catholicism). I suppose it depends upon our definition of ‘religion’ but Freemasonry certainly has all the trappings of a religion.

Their meetings open and close with prayers, they sing hymns, have Chaplains and organists. There is solemn ceremony and ritual, candles are lit and the Bible is always open before the Worshipful Master. Members must believe in God, be seeking for ‘Light’, and be hoping for immortality when “called to the Grand Lodge above, where the world’s Great Architect lives and reigns for ever”. Their ceremonies are held in Lodges, Chapters and Temples and the Grand and Royal sign is accompanied by the exclamation, “All glory to the Most High”. And so if Freemasonry is not a religion it certainly greatly resembles one and is no place for those who have already named the name of Christ and entered His church and kingdom. Paul says, **“And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power”**. (Col. 2:10) Peter says that Christ, according to His divine power, **“hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness ...”** If, in the church, we have **all things** that pertain to life and godliness how can we seek ‘light’, or anything else, in the Lodge? If Freemasonry is as old as is claimed (to Solomon’s time) it is never mentioned in the Bible and certainly would be cancelled out when the church (or kingdom of God) arrived at Pentecost. Indeed when the gospel was preached many that believed **“came, and confessed and showed their deeds. And many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men ...”** (Acts 19:19). If Freemasonry is not a religion it certainly would seem to be a curious art, and should disappear in the smoke of the burning of its many signs, symbols, rituals, pagan utterances and its many books.

Freemasonry has been repudiated by Presbyterians; as early as 1757 by the Original Secession Church; by The Reformed Church of Ireland; by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, in 1927; by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America; by the English Methodists in 1927 (the year of their Report); by the Salvation Army; by the Roman Catholic Church; by the American Lutheran Churches; in parts by the Church of England and now tentatively by the Church of Scotland. Like all else, Freemasonry must be judged by God’s Word; and the Bible seems to make no provision for it whatsoever; rather the reverse.

EDITOR.

In the character of Christ there is height, and a depth, a humility and a grandeur, a simplicity and a profundity, a strength and a purity that wins our affections, instructs our intellect, humbles our pride, convicts our sin, and blesses our whole being.

*James Anderson*

## GLEANINGS

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

### A THEME — THY TENDER MERCIES

#### A TEXT

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

Psalm 51:1

#### THE PROBLEM

"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."

Psalm 51:3

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity."	ME	VERSE 2
"Cleanse me from my sin."	ME	VERSE 2
"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."	ME	VERSE 7
"Make me to hear joy and gladness."	ME	VERSE 8
"Create in me a clean heart, O God."	ME	VERSE 10
"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."	ME	VERSE 12
"Deliver me from bloodguiltiness."	ME	VERSE 14

#### We Quote Campbell Morgan

"The whole song is a clear revelation of his consciousness that sin can only be dealt with by God. No plan is urged. From beginning to end the song is prayer, petition following petition. It is the cry of a soul who can have no hope except in the mercy of God ... The standard by which sin is known is that of the soul's relation to God, and therefore in the last analysis this penitent uttered a tremendous truth when he said: "Against Thee only, have I sinned." Yet again the consciousness of the sinning soul as to its own need is clearly manifested. The penitent asks that sin may be blotted out; that he may be washed, cleansed, made pure, purged with hyssop. The need is for infinitely more than forgiveness, as we are able to extend it to our fellow-men. It is for complete deliverance from the pollution of sin. This great song, pulsating with the agony of a sin-stricken soul, helps us to understand the stupendous wonder of the everlasting mercy of our God. Calvary is God's answer; and it is enough."

#### WE QUOTE THE PSALMIST

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Psalm 51:17

"Better to cry for mercy than live in sin."

J.B. Phillips.

#### WE QUOTE PETER

"In time past you had no experience of His mercy, but now it is intimately yours."

I Peter 2:10

#### WE QUOTE PAUL

"He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit."

Titus 3:5 (R.S.V.)

#### A VERSE

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view, I'm lost  
In wonder, love, and praise."

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

## DEMAS

Oh, if we could travel one year with the apostle Paul; how strong we would be. He could point out our weaknesses, correct our slight errands, answer all our questions, and help us plot a course in life. Yet what do we find?

“Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you” (Col. 4:14).

“Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee; and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers” (Phil 23, 24).

“Give diligence to come shortly unto me for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world” (II Tim.4:9,10).

How could it happen? What dark shadows lurk in a man’s soul to cause him to fall violently, even while he associates with an earthen vessel that was such a great treasury of God’s truth? What sweet melodious chords of the heart may Satan strum with the hand of a master, to so lure Demas as a dumb brute to the inevitable slaughter? Besides the love of the world (I Jn. 2: 15-17), the call of the wild, what may cause us to lose our soul? The drift of those questions, it is the design of this article to answer.

### Answer Number One

Contemplate first, the damnable notion that we are more religious than we actually are. Paul charges each man, “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think” (Rom. 12:3), and that he “that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12).

We suppose we hate sin, know truth, and are fully able to resist any onslaught. Yet we scarcely know what we are up against. Our enemy is dreadful. He is subtle (Gen. 3:1), a wicked enemy (Matt. 13:9; Matt. 13:39), a murderer of the worst stripe (Jn. 8:44), a liar (Jn. 8:44), a prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; Jn. 14:30), full of devices (II Cor. 2:11), a god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), and he hungrily seeks to devour all (I Pet. 5:8,9).

Now is not the time to suppose we are all right, assume we are strong, and let our guard down. How many nations have crumbled, how many armies were destroyed, and how many Christian soldiers were destined to hell, because the troops were green, unwary, unknowing, unarmed, and unwatchful?!

If we run a race, let us not run uncertainly, but as if only one can get the prize (I Cor. 9:24,26). If we fight in the ring, let us not waste a moment beating the air (I Cor. 9:26). If we face our own body, let us bruise it piteously, and lead it about as a prisoner of war (I Cor. 9:27). If we enlist as a soldier, let us disentangle ourselves from the world (II Tim.2:4), and suffer hardship (II Tim. 2:3). If we approach the hour of battle, let us put on the whole armour of God (Eph. 6:11). If we join in battle; “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (I Cor. 16:13), I know of no quicker way to die, than to make the dreadful assumption that we are more religious than we are. Regarding Satan and eternal damnation, nothing we have witnessed in the Christian life has given me grounds to be lax or careless. Our enemy is a horrible opponent, utterly experienced, and he knows each of us as a book. Take care! Take care! Or, fallen, be forever ashamed.

### Answer Number Two

Consider, too, what a dreadful effect the mistaking of good feelings for real religion has on our lives. What an awesome gap there is between feeling and acting.

What do people think when they amble down the broad way through the wide gate (Matt. 7:13). I visualize them pausing, looking sincerely back, vowing that tomorrow they will make changes. They shuffle along, say noble things to each other, finding courage through the sheer number of company they have.

Notice how Balaam revered God in his speech: “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God to do less or

more ..." (Num. 22:18). What a grand wish he had: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Num. 23:10). But he died the death of an enemy of God (Num. 31:8). Did he make the tragic mistake of mistaking good feelings for good deeds?

Certainly an important verse is II Corinthians 13:5:

"Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate."

Yes, let us love God, feel good intentions and fine notions. But let us always have the custom of trying ourselves by specific works. Good feelings are never the down payment nor the proof of real religion.

#### Answer Number Three

We must never be beguiled by past devotion, as if one good deed is the pledge of another. Thinking that past accomplishments take care of future requirements is certainly a cause of unfaithfulness. As Yogi Berra says of a baseball game, "It ain't over till it's over."

How grand it is to be of the house of Christ. But the Holy Spirit says, "whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6). And again he says, "for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:14).

Saul was head and shoulders above the people of Israel (I Sam. 9:2). How humble he was before Samuel. He did not feel worthy to be king, since he came from such a small tribe and tiny family (I Sam. 9:21). Our heart leaps with joy at his faith and decisiveness in stopping the arrogant, cruel Nahash of the Ammonites (I Sam. 11). But it is all downhill from there. His past devotion did not prevent his ignoble end (I Sam 15ff).

Remember the seed which fell on the rock (Lk. 8:13). They receive the word with joy, but in time of temptation fall away. One good deed is not the pledge of another.

What else might the Bible say of Demas? Like the dreadful, ominous toll of a funeral bell, we hear over and over, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15; 13:9; 13:43).

J. Moffit.

## HOW SATAN WINS A CHRISTIAN

The scriptures of God are replete with the admonition that a child of God, once saved, can so live or fail to live, as to be eternally lost. If a child of God could not be lost, Satan would be the biggest fool in the world to spend so much time trying to make something happen that could not happen. But he is cunning, subtle, and highly effective. Just how does he go about winning a child of God?

*First, he gradually gets him interested in other things.* Things other than his heavenly calling and his duty to Christ and His church. This is the way you shoot a rabbit. Whistle just enough to get his attention, pause, prick up his ears to listen. A rabbit is vulnerable at this point, and so is a Christian. He pauses just long enough to look about him at all he has been missing by his isolation from the world. Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom and it was not long before he was living in Sodom.

*Second, Satan gets a Christian to be bored with his religion.* He tires of the sermons. He grows weary with Bible study. He tires mostly of Sunday evening and midweek services, and finding other things to do, eases his conscience by occupation in them, Apostasy usually begins on Sunday nights and midweeks. It's the first symptom of the whole disease. When a Christian starts dropping out on Sunday nights, it isn't long before his love for Christ is extremely weak. Shockingly enough, we have brethren who believe Sunday night worship is a matter of opinion and convenience. Let us be

reminded that the Lord's day includes Sunday night! In fact, the church at Troas had its most meaningful meeting "Sunday night" and the preaching lasted until midnight! (Acts 20:7). And assembling ourselves together includes midweek (Heb. 10:25). If not, why not? As overbearing as to some it may sound, I have a duty to be at the house of God every time the doors are open. Prove me wrong.

*Third, Satan knows that if he can get a Christian to start missing services, he will gradually grow weak, and will not be long before Satan has him in his clutches and under his power.* Soon Satan will be able to say to a once faithful Christian, "Now you are mine! The neon world shall have carried him into a far country, into a far country where the church does not meet.

Sunday by Sunday — Lord's day, midweek service gospel meetings, all assembling, and he who was possibly once a consecrated faithful Christian, will be attending no more. He will grow cold and indifferent and Satan will have won. If you doubt this, just look about you.

Brethren, have we forgotten that one all imperative word in Hebrews 10:25 — "Exhort!"

S.E. Sayers.

## QUESTION BOX — A REACTION

I read Bro. Marsden's comments (in *Question Box* — March issue) with very mixed feelings. I read into it some disappointment, but I would not agree to widening our 'plea' to compromise with other bodies. This would only lead to lowering of (N.T.) standards. I honestly believe that our forefathers in the Church had the right interpretation of New Testament Christianity, but in their enthusiasm they settled into settled, and self-satisfied ways. They should have placed more emphasis on members bringing their friends and families to hear God's word.

What really happened was that we were encouraged to attend Sunday School. Then an evangelist would visit us once or twice a year and encourage the eldest members to attend gospel meetings: hoping that some would step out and make the good confession. I was one of these. If my memory serves me correctly, I was 14 years of age when I accepted Christ as my Saviour and was baptised for the remission of sins. There were many others at the time who did the same. My point is this: we should have been urged to bring others to hear the word of God, but also, we should also have been speaking to others on their doorstep. The church at Albert Street, Nr. Wigan, was started, I believe, by a man named Adams preaching in the street, near to where my grandparents stayed. My grandparents went to the door to listen to what he was saying, and after the man was finished preaching he came over to ask them if he could hold a meeting in their house. When they agreed he asked that they might also invite their friends and neighbours to come along. Thus the start of the church at Albert Street, their building being now sold, I am sorry to say. But I do remember that building being often packed with people, both downstairs and upstairs. We have to ask ourselves as to what has happened since? I hope that we have not become too complacent or self-satisfied. I am now 85 years of age and I still talk to people about Jesus and His church. I know the work is hard today because of general prosperity and our minimal attendance to the Lord's work. But the answer is not found in any kind of compromise. We may be a minority of Church people but God's word must be adhered to.

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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**“Could you please tell me what Paul meant when he says, ‘I have fought with the beasts at Ephesus’ (1 Cor, 15:32). Is he talking about animals or human beings?”**

The answer to a question like this would be no more than a partial answer if its only purpose was to say something of historical interest about the great Apostle. The importance of the question to the Christian is far greater than that, indeed, one might say that a correct understanding is **crucial** to the life of a Christian.

As I have pointed out in answers to previous questions, we need to follow the basic rules of interpretation and perhaps one of the most important of those rules is that we must look at this statement by Paul in the context of the rest of this chapter.

#### The Context

First of all let us see what that particular verse says, “if after the manner of men I have fought with the beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.”

Before we can understand this verse properly we need to know something of the background to the situation in Ephesus. The city was the gateway to Asia Minor and it became a most important port for trade flowing from Persia in the East, and from the increasingly prosperous lands in the Western Mediterranean. In 1000 BC Greeks settled there from the mainland of Greece and built a splendid city. They worshipped a goddess called Artemis who became known as Diana of the Ephesians during the later Roman occupation. It is evident that Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey but did not stay long in the city on that occasion, making it his intention to visit again during his third missionary journey (read Acts 18). In Acts chapter 19 we are told that he came again to the city and there found certain disciples who had only received John’s baptism; he acknowledged John’s baptism but told them that John had said that they should believe in him which should come after him, that is, in Christ Jesus. When they heard this they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.

As Paul continued to preach and teach concerning the Kingdom of God he came into conflict with one Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines for Diana (Acts 19:23ff. These shrines were evidently for people to buy and keep in their homes, and this is an indication as to how powerful a hold the worship of this fertility goddess had on the people of Ephesus). Demetrius and his fellow-silversmiths, seeing the prospect of their profit disappearing because of the preaching of Paul, turned on him and would no doubt have harmed him if some of the Asiarchs had not intervened on his behalf and calmed the people. (Read Acts ch. 19).

A Mr. Wood, excavating on the site of Ephesus in the year 1870, uncovered what was the grandeur of the Temple of Diana and also the great theatre there. The theatre, capable of holding an estimated 24,000 people, would no doubt be used for the ‘sport’ of men fighting animals, and indeed, of men fighting men; this was the Roman custom.

This, then, was the situation in which Paul found himself at Ephesus. The reader will no doubt recall that Paul left Ephesus on his way back to Jerusalem so that he could be there for Pentecost. On the way they stopped at Miletus and it was from there that he sent for the elders of the Church at Ephesus and delivered to them some

of the most beautiful and moving words that one can read, and also gave them a solemn warning to watch over the Church.

#### The Context

The whole of I Cor. 15 has to do with the argument of Paul concerning what I term 'resurrection faith'. He starts the chapter with a statement about the facts of the Gospel, and then goes on to show how the arguments of those who say that there is no resurrection of the dead are really absurd. He even shows the absurdity of the custom of being baptised for the dead if at the end of the day there is no resurrection. It is at the end of the chapter that he uses those magnificent and earth-transcending words which, rather unfortunately, we always seem to reserve for funerals but which are really the essence of the Gospel.

It is in this context that we must now analyse our verse. In the few words of verse 30 there is indicated to us the great and constant dangers faced by the early saints when they preached the Gospel. Paul himself, from the time when he was apprehended by Christ on the Damascus road until his last visit to Rome, was never out of danger. In his second letter to Corinth he recalls the perils in Asia and gives words of consolation, "**And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation .... we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead; Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver**" (2 Cor.1:7-10). Paul was never too far away from his God. He realised the glory of the Gospel, as he says in 2 Cor.4:6-12, "**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**" (read on). He was dogged in his efforts to spread the Gospel because of Judaizing teachers who followed him everywhere, but he was willing to resist them to the point of death because he knew that if Judaism took over, then the Gospel was dead.

In verse 32 the phrase 'fought with beasts' is rendered by the Greek word **THERIOMACHOS** and means literally 'a fighter with wild beasts'. We have already said that in Ephesus men would fight with animals in the arena for the 'sport' of the people so we can see quite clearly why Paul should use such a phrase. Furthermore we notice that he does not say, 'I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus' but '**if after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus**'. I think we can readily understand that in conflict with wild beasts some men would die in the arena, so what Paul seems to be saying is "**if I, like some men do, fought with the beasts at Ephesus and were killed, what would it profit me if there were no resurrection of the dead; I might as well say, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'**" In saying this, Paul is not giving his own view, but that of people who deny the resurrection, like the Epicureans, for instance. No, he is further stating his argument for the resurrection because in the very next verse he says, "Be not deceived", in other words 'do not be led astray by such a false philosophy of life'.

It seems to me that the evidence points to the fact that he is using **figurative** language in verse 32; this view is strengthened because he does not mention such a peril when he wrote his second letter to Corinth wherein he catalogues all the perils and dangers endured by himself and others (see 2 Cor.4:8-12; also 11: 22-28). Furthermore, Paul was a Roman citizen and it would have been unlawful to put him into the arena at Ephesus, or anywhere else which was under Roman jurisdiction for that matter.

We can trace in the writings of this great Apostle his abiding passion for the knowledge of Christ. We see him almost at the end of his days in house custody in Rome but he is still writing and speaking about the glorious Gospel he has embraced.

We see the grandeur of the upward call of God in his letter to Philippi, **“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead”** (Phil.3:10,11). At the end of that particular chapter the Spirit drives him ever upward in thought, **“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself”** (vv 20,21). The truly amazing thought is that Paul is our Brother in Christ.

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

### CAN A CHRISTIAN “COMPROMISE”

It seems to the writer that the Truth is the **one** thing that cannot be “compromised.” When the “cup versus cups” question arises, sometimes someone says **“A compromise must be reached.”** How can anyone enter into a compromise with God without going against the rules of the Lord’s Table laid down in the New Testament ?

When a U.S.A. brother offers thanks for the **one** cup and prays that he hopes this will **“be acceptable to God and not HINDER the spread of the Gospel,”** this makes me wonder ! How far this sentiment is from the New Testament. Would God HINDER his own work, for which His Son gave up his life? We have even had suggestions that one cup, surrounded by individual cups, might be placed on the Lord’s Table, but surely this would only exhibit to the world our DISUNITY ! When worldly ways come in, we have almost become just another denomination, albeit the motive was to increase our congregations, but surely we must put aside our own ideas and worship in Spirit and Truth. (Sometimes even Bible studies can be used as a forum for propagating the leader’s viewpoints, which **might** be wrong). What great responsibilities rest on teachers and preachers who will receive harsher judgment. Yes, even on Bible Colleges, for **“judgment is to begin at the house of God.”** Unfortunately one or two visitors to our shores seek to alter our services and say **“they are not happy with the way the communion service is conducted.”** This is very sad indeed and ultimately can produce an impossible situation, where it seems better for each party to separate and meet for worship with kindred spirits in other groups, with a clear conscience. We speak from bitter experience — **a one cup assembly which has been meeting consistently for 28 years** is now disbanded by conflict within — four folk wanting change, two against, which is an unequal struggle. We feel we **“must stand up and be counted, and our trumpet must give forth a CERTAIN sound.”** May the Lord help us to this end and may we be found faithful.

Although we have had with us almost 100 visitors, many from the States, during the course of time, we have not met much opposition before, and write this to keep the record straight.

(Mrs.) E. C. Payne.

(Sister E. Payne, and her daughter, Rose have been sending items for the “S.S.” over many years now, but this surely must be the saddest. For the benefit of those who don’t know — these two ladies have, for 28 years, been struggling to keep the light of the Gospel burning in Reading, and setting the Lord’s Table each Sunday. Ten years ago they were allowed to meet in a local Library Hall and Rose collected the key each Saturday and returned it on the Sunday. Recently a young American Serviceman (from a local Army Base) and his wife raised their numbers to six. Apparently, this young man considers the one cup unscriptural and has installed individual containers. Sister E. Payne and Rose now meet in their home, as stated.

This unhappy circumstance reminded me, as it will many others, of the time (some 25 years ago) when containers were imported into Britain for the very first time. Those who refused to use them were branded as 'lacking in brotherly love' 'backward' and 'anti-American'. One wonders what these two sisters will be accused of. This incident certainly gives the lie to the claim we used to hear; that size of congregation rendered these gadgets necessary. It could hardly be the reason in this case. On behalf of all the readers who will be saddened by this business I offer Sister E. and Rose our sympathy and support. (Ed.)

### A NEW CONVERT'S EXPERIENCE

I was brought up by a father who had a strong feeling for Scotland and a mother who had a strong feeling for God and what she considered to be the church – in this case, the Church of Scotland. My father became an elder, not because of any enthusiasm on his part but because he was respected and we all went to church on Sundays.

I went through the various stages in the Church of Scotland, of attendance at Sunday School; Bible Class and Youth Fellowship; after which I became a Sunday school teacher; a Life Boy Leader and later served on the Board of Management. The natural result of this upbringing was a very strong feeling and love for the traditions of Scotland, and a feeling of responsibility to God. To me the Church of Scotland supplied these needs to absolute perfection and by reason and emotion, particularly the latter, I felt very close to it. As the Episcopal Church was known as "the English Church" I would have nothing to do with it. Incidentally, my father's influence came out in the more secular side of my life and I also became an active member of the Scottish National Party.

This may all seem irrelevant, but I have written it to emphasise the strongly traditional state of my mind when, at the age of fifty-five I attended a gospel meeting at Glenrothes and heard a sermon on "baptism for remission of sins." This was all very new to me, as was the name "Church of Christ" by which these people were called, and I felt that such a claim should be investigated. After studying the matter for ten weeks I was convinced of its truth from Scripture and was obedient to the gospel after which a serious conflict began between my previous feelings and an increasing understanding of the Gospel.

I was happy to be a member of this group which called itself the Church of Christ. I learned that, by holding firmly to **all of Scripture**, we were **the true church** (unlike the denominations which, although comprising good God-loving people, went astray by not observing **all of God's Word**).

In August 1985, two years after accepting early retirement, I went to Corby to study for two years at the British Bible School. The Director and staff were kindness itself but, during my second year there, I **independently** studied the question of both the Cup on the Lord's Table and the head-covering of our sisters in the assembly. By the time I left the Bible School I had come to the only conclusion anyone who studies the Scriptures prayerfully and with an open, unbiased mind could come to – that we are commanded to share one cup in observing the Lord's Supper, and our sisters must observe God's order by covering their heads in the assembly.

After devoting myself to this group of Churches of Christ for six years I now realise that, by their very own definition, they are merely another denomination.

On returning home from Corby I visited as many "Old Path" churches as I could where, I believe, the form of worship conformed to Scripture, but again I received a severe shock and disappointment. "I found that many of these "true" churches were willing to place their names alongside those of the apostate churches which I was now leaving. Now in my view the eventual outcome of this can only be a drift of the children of God into the ways of the apostasy with which they are associating them-

selves, as well as to confuse new converts. Do we imagine that a denial of a **certain number** of divine commands is acceptable, but more than that is not? Or is denial of some **parts** of Scripture acceptable, but not of others.

Surely the gospel is not confined to the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ but involves **everything** from Matthew's gospel to the Revelation.

The Holy Spirit in His wisdom warns us against any association with false doctrines, and we should remember how Israel espoused ruin when they copied their pagan neighbours.

And so my earnest exhortation to all my brothers and sisters, with all the caring love of which I am capable, is that we might get back to the simple teaching of the New Testament, and not contribute to the destruction of the faith handed down to us by inspired apostles, (and by the pioneers).

I came out of the Church of Scotland on the grand basis that we must be governed by **what the scriptures actually say**. Now I discover that the Churches of Christ are not governed by what the scriptures actually say. Where do I go from here?

Bill Cook, 22 The Beeches, Woodside, Glenrothes, Fife KY7 5EA.

(For some time brother Cook has wanted me to publish his strong sentiments. In view of sister Payne's experience I have now agreed but have altered and 'toned down' his article somewhat. However, the question remains. Is sister Payne and bro. Cook justified in their belief that some Churches of Christ are becoming, or have already become, just another denomination? When bro. Cook said good-bye to his 'Minister' of the Church of Scotland, was he welcomed by the 'Minister' in the Church of Christ? Is bro. Cook entitled to be disappointed and justified in his strong criticisms? Or, does anybody care, anymore? Ed.)

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 7	Zech. 9:9-17	Mark 10:46 to 11:10
May. 14	Isa. 56	Mark 11:11-26
May. 21	Isa. 5:1-17	Mark 11:27 to 12-12
May. 28	Deut. 25:1-10	Mark 12:13-27

### The Triumphal Entry

Jesus came to Jerusalem in peace. A horse was a symbol of war, but a colt was a symbol of peace. His coming was the fulfilment of prophecy. For example, in Zechariah we read: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King comes unto you: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass (9:9)." The following verse reads: "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

Jesus spells *peace*. There is a lot in this word. In the New Testament the Greek word *eirene* (peace) occurs eighty-eight times and it occurs in every book. The New Testament is, therefore, a book of peace. Peace is much more than a cessation of hostilities. Peace is everything which makes for a man's highest good. Let us note what the apostle Paul wrote in a world which was divided into Jew and Gentile. "For Jesus is our peace who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace (Ephesians 2:14-15). I quote Karl Ketcherside on this passage. "Our peace is *personal*. It is not achieved by a plan, programme or proposition. 'He is our peace.' In the last analysis all peace must be personal because it is a relation between persons. Our peace is a *divine product*. He 'made us both one.' We did not come together, but we came to Him and this brought

us together. Our peace is *practical*. 'He broke down the dividing wall of hostility.' The spite fence has been abrogated. When you wall others out you wall yourself in. The higher you build the wall of hate the less sunshine you can enjoy. Our peace is *purposeful*. It was to 'reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end'".

### The Barren Fig Tree

A lot of people do not like the fact that Jesus cursed this fig tree. Some say that the act betokened a mean spirit and that the withering of the tree for not bearing fruit was most unwarrantable. Cannon Farrar in his *Life of Christ* has written: "The criticisms upon this miracle have been singularly irreverent, because they have been based for the most part on ignorance or on prejudice. . . . Is it a crime under any circumstance to destroy a useless tree? If not, is it more a crime to do so by miracle? Why then is the Saviour of the world — to whom Lebanon would be too little for a burnt offering — to be blamed by petulant critics because He hastened the withering of one barren tree and founded on the destruction of its uselessness three eternal lessons — a symbol of the destruction of impenitence, a warning of the peril of hypocrisy, an illustration of the power of faith?"

### The temple Cleansed

Jesus in His life was the supreme example of meekness. A lot of people equate meekness with weakness, but that is a great mistake and manifests ignorance of the true meaning of the word. William Barclay once wrote that "the man who is *praus* (Greek for meek) is the man who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time." Was Jesus justified in showing righteous indignation on this occasion to those who bought and sold in the temple and exchanged money? Surely the answer is a resounding — Yes.

But why were such people resident in the temple in the first place? Every Jew had to pay a temple tax of one half

shekel a year. (The sum was about double the day's wage for a working man.) The tax had to be paid in Hebrew currency. Coins of Greece, Rome, Syria, Egypt, Phoenicia, etc. were not acceptable and, therefore, had to be exchanged. This is where the money-changers came in and they, of course, exploited the situation to the full. The pilgrims ended up paying extortionate fees. As for the sellers of doves — doves played a major part in the sacrificial system (Leviticus 12:8; 14:22; 15:14). A sacrificial victim had to be without blemish. William Barclay has written: "Doves could be bought cheaply enough outside, but the temple inspectors would be sure to find something wrong with them, and worshippers were advised to buy them at the temple stalls. Outside, doves cost as little as 3p. a pair; inside, they cost as much as 75p. Again, it was sheer imposition, and what made matters worse was that the business of buying and selling belonged to the family of Annas who had been High Priest." As Jesus said, these people had made the house of God "a den of thieves." Corruption was what he faced and corruption had to be dealt with face on — thus His wrath. Man's exploitation of man always provokes the wrath of God and doubly so when it is made under the cloak of religion.

### Christ's Authority Challenged

The chief priests, the scribes and the elders were continually challenging the Master. Frequently, they tried to corner Him, but without success. On this occasion (11:27-33) He had them on the horns of a dilemma. Whichever way they answered His question — The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? — they would stand condemned. So they replied: "We cannot tell." And so Jesus answered: "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things."

We see clearly from this passage the importance of Jesus' submitting to John's baptism at the commencement of His ministry. If He had not done so then we can imagine the difficulties He would

have faced. Certainly, for one thing, He could not have silenced His enemies at this time.

#### Parable Of The Vineyard

As I read this parable, I think of how the Jews treated the prophets of God and the Son of God. Jesus once cried: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets, and stoned them who were sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not" (Matthew 23:37)! Jesus went on to say: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." His words, of course, were fulfilled within that generation. What a tragedy!

His enemies knew that He had spoken the parable against them (12:12). They would have liked to get hold of Him, but could not because they feared the people. This clearly indicates that Jesus had a certain popularity with the common folk. Indeed, I think of the statement soon to be read: "And the common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37). I wish today that a lot of the so-called experts gave more time to the common people and endeavoured to speak their language. Theologians take note!

#### The Sadducees Silenced

Jesus met the Sadducees on their own ground — the Pentateuch or Torah. I think His reference to that incident in the book of Exodus was very telling.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob might be dead to mankind, but they are certainly alive to God. "God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living" (12:27). Those, like the Sadducees, who reject the teaching of the resurrection, err because they know not the scriptures neither the power of God (12:24). It is all a lot clearer since Jesus came because He "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). He declared: "I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). Yes, there

is life after death to those who obey God, but there is also death after death to those who disobey Him. Life is union, death is separation. One speaks of heaven, the other of hell. Dear reader, where you spend eternity is of your making. But remember: "God is not willing that you should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Reading:** The former secretary and treasurer have found it necessary to withdraw from the congregation meeting at the Library Hall, Southcote Lane, as there are now only two men in the church, and both are agreed that they wish individual containers to be introduced. We intend meeting at home for the time being.

(Miss) R. M. Payne.

**Slamannan District:** The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place on 11th March at Motherwell Meeting House when a fairly large gathering enjoyed another wonderful time of fellowship and discussion. After tea the chairman for the day, Graeme Pearson welcomed the gathering and introduced the speakers. Harry McGinn from New Cumnock spoke on the subject "Can a Christian be a member of a Trade Union?" This was closely followed by the second speaker, J. R. Gardiner, who dealt with the subject "Can a Christian be a member of a Freemason's Lodge." Thereafter there was a lively discussion with many interesting contributions from the brethren in the audience. A very instructive and enjoyable time was had by all. The next meeting, God willing, will be at New Cumnock, on 13th May at 4 p.m. when the chairman will be Mark Plain (senr.) and the speakers will be Hugh Davidson, Motherwell, and Jack Nisbet, Haddington. The subject for mutual discussion will be "What does God's word teach about man's

treatment of animals, and is vegetarianism Biblical?"

Hugh Davidson (Sec.).

**Haddington:** We hope, God willing, to hold some Saturday evening Gospel Meetings. The first was held on Saturday, 4th March in our Meetinghouse. Our speaker was John Morgan from Hindley (Wigan), on this occasion, and he gave a very powerful gospel message. Previously we had issued about 4,000 handbills and tracts in the town. Some interest was expressed and we were greatly supported by sister congregations. The preaching was followed by tea and chat and we hope to repeat this kind of meeting. God willing we intend to have Ian Davidson as our speaker on 8th April, Jack Parker (Wigan) on 6th May and Graeme Pearson on 20th May. All are welcome to these meetings.

Ruth Nisbet (Sec.).

**Kitwe, Zambia:** Chester Woodhall was attacked by armed bandits as he approached Mission House in Riverside area of Kitwe. Woodhall sharply reversed his Peugeot pick-up, disturbing the aim of the bandit with the gun at his head. He was pursued through the streets of Riverside and eventually lost the carload of bandits in the maze of roads and pulled in at a friend's house for assistance. Meanwhile at the house, Angela put out a "May-Day" or

emergency message on the house-based citizen's band radio and several neighbours — some with guns, one with a bow and arrow — were at the house within five minutes and went after the bandits. The bandits escaped the dragnet and carried out another hold-up that night. The police were brought by a private individual in his car to the Woodhall house an hour later but were unable to render any assistance. Many have commented that Woodhall is alive because of his fast reactions.

Chester Woodhall,  
P.O. Box 22297,  
Kitwe, Zambia.

## COMING EVENTS

**Kirkcaldy :** Annual Social on 8th April, 1989 at 3.30 p.m. Speaker Graeme Pearson.

**Buckie :** ANNUAL SOCIAL on 20th May, 1989 at 3.00 p.m. Speaker Bro. Nat Cooper, Dundee. Any items for the programme will be greatly appreciated. Requests for accommodation to The Secretary, Hunter Pirie, The Bield, 23 Harbour Place, Portnockie, Buckie, Banffshire. Soon as possible.

**Peterhead :** Annual Social on Saturday, 22nd April, commencing at 2.00 p.m. Speakers: Bro. M. Ireland, Bro. A. Ferric. Those intending to be present please inform Secretary. All Welcome.

Andrew Brown (Sec.)

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