

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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FATHER ABRAHAM - A GENTILE?

Surely there can be little doubt that Abraham is the most prominent figure of the Old Testament. With him, as the great ancestor of the Hebrew race, the history of Israel begins. The familiar intercourse that Abraham enjoyed with God earned him the name of 'Friend Of God', a term by which he is known in the east even to this day. Abraham's great faith in God is unsurpassed and was 'counted unto him for righteousness'. By it he secured all of the blessings promised unto him by God, and such was his faith that many thousands of years later it is still the object of great admiration, and a perpetual theme of praise. It was inevitable I suppose, that mere natural descent from Abraham was popularly supposed by the Jews to confer the blessings and attributes of Abraham (upon the Jews exclusively) and this was an error exposed both by John the Baptist and by Jesus Himself. 'By faith' the Gentiles can be brought within the range and scope of the promises made to faithful Abraham, and this is the grand and glorious basis of much of what Paul has to say to the brethren at Rome and Galatia. Abraham ranks not only as the great ancestor of many nations but also as *a prophet* (Gen. 20:7) through whom the revelation was begun. Mainly however, he was *the founder* of the religion which was to gather *all peoples* within its scope. So closely is the revelation associated with Abraham that God, the Supreme Deity, is never spoken of as the 'God of Adam', or of Moses, Enoch or Noah, but solely as 'the God of Abraham'. God had a personal covenant with Abraham and made him many promises. God said that he would make Abraham a father of many nations and of kings; that God would give certain land to him, and to his generations after him; that God would give him a son in his very old age and that from that son would spring a progeny as numerous as the stars at night or the sand on the sea-shore. Sarah, his wife, would be 'the mother of many nations' in her great old age albeit she had been barren all the days of her life. Perhaps the most far-reaching promise of all was that 'in his seed' would all the nations of the earth be blessed.

It is not for nothing that Abraham is called '*faithful Abraham*'. Abraham's faith was solidly put to the test several times in his lifetime but it emerged each time completely untarnished. When God promised Abraham a child by Sarah, Abraham was not only physically 'as good as dead', and Sarah his wife was much more so, but, in spite of greeting the promise with a certain hilarity, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. If we recall that Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah 90 years old, when Isaac was eventually born we can perhaps understand the initial amusement and also the measure of

the old man's faith - especially when we remember that Sarah, even in the prime of youth, was quite incapable of conception. Occasionally we see on T.V. the birthday celebrations of some dear old lady who has amazingly reached the age of 100 years. There she sits in the hospital chair propped up in blankets surrounded by smiling but watchful nurses. The old lady croaks a few words of appreciation to the well-wishers and is then wheeled away back to bed, in case the excitement will prove too much for her. If someone was to suggest that the old lady would be giving birth to a child soon, we can imagine how such a suggestion might be received - by the old lady herself, by her friends and by the medical profession. This was *the kind* of faith that Abraham required, and *had to sustain* for about twenty years, until Isaac was actually born. Abraham's faith was again put to the test, some years later, when God called upon him to put Isaac to death - this very son given in fulfilment of God's solemn promise, and upon whom depended all the other promises and blessings. Oftentimes Abraham must have been puzzled and perplexed at God's instructions, especially to sacrifice Isaac, but his trust in God never wavered.

'The Friend Of God' - A Gentile?

Churches using the Scripture Reading Cards, produced by our esteemed brother Scott, will know that N.T. readings are currently from the Book of Romans. Last Sunday we read from Romans Chap. 4 some amazing statements about Abraham; matters which had evidently escaped the notice of the bulk of the Jews. As already mentioned, the Jews placed great trust in the promises God gave to 'Faithful Abraham' and basked in his reflected glory. They assumed, quite wrongly it seems, that because Abraham was righteous they were righteous, and that because Abraham was 'the friend of God' they were also God's friends. John the Baptist encountered this attitude, even in his day, and was prompted to declare to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came for baptism, "O' generation of vipers, who hath warned thee of the wrath to come. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham." Evidently the Jews regarded it as sufficient righteousness that they were descended from so holy a man as Abraham. John Baptist regarded them as being far removed from Abraham; referring to them as 'vipers'. He assured them that their claimed pedigree was of little consequence in God's eyes, and that if God wanted He could raise children to Abraham from the very rocks strewn around in Jordan. Mere nativity or accident of birth was not enough - God looks for *personal* integrity. Jesus encountered the same spirit when He told the Jews that they could know the truth and the truth would make them free. They replied, "We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man." They meant to indicate that they were not descendants of the son of the bondwoman (Ishmael) but were direct descendants (through Isaac) of Abraham. The claim, of never having been in bondage, was quite untrue, of course, for their fathers had been slaves in Egypt; enslaved in Babylon; repeatedly subjected to servility by the Assyrians, in the thralldom of Herod The Great, and were at that very moment under the yoke of a Roman occupation. Jesus added the fact that, far from being the 'children of Abraham' they were in fact, children of the devil. If they had been the children of Abraham they would have done the works of Abraham - but no, they did the works of the devil and his children they were. They were not 'free' as they supposed but were in true bondage - in the bondage of sin. Truly "his servants ye are to whom ye obey" (Rom. 6:16). Only the truth could make them free.

The apostle Paul, in turn, encountered this same smug attitude amongst the Jews and even amongst members of the church. Thus, in this epistle to the

Christians at Rome he directs the main thrust of the letter to the Judaizing Christians who were advocating a confidence in the Mosaic law, in circumcision, and in the paternity of Abraham. In this wonderful chapter (Chap.4) Paul emphasis the fact that Abraham was justified (made just) in God's sight by virtue of his *simple trust* in God (faith) - not by the accomplishment of great deeds (works). One is tempted, like Luther, to say that Abraham was justified by faith only, but faith is never alone. Certainly he was not justified by his works. If he had, says Paul, his justification would have been a matter of a debt owed him by God - but no debt or payment thereof was involved - Abraham was justified purely by God's grace. His justification was a *free gift* through the graciousness of God. Paul then quotes David extolling the happiness of the man whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered (i.e. who is justified) by God's great generosity. Is this blessed state (where God freely forgives sin) the preserve of the Jews or does it extend to the Gentiles as well? To prove that it indeed extends to the Gentiles Paul proceeds to show that 'Father Abraham' was a *Gentile* (in uncircumcision) when he was justified. Abraham "staggered not" at God's promise, "being fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform" (v.21). On the basis of that simple trust (in seemingly unlikely events) Abraham was justified. It had nothing to do with circumcision. It had *nothing whatever* to do with the Mosaic law. The Jews prided themselves in their unique traditions, in their God-given rite of circumcision and in their exclusive access to the law and the testimony, but Paul is saying that these things are of little consequence, for God justifies *men of faith* exclusively on the basis of their unfeigned faith, and that this principle stretches back in time to Abraham. It is not some new 'Christian' doctrine. As Paul has just quoted, David taught the principle (Ps. 32) and the Jews were unlikely to challenge David. This truth would doubtless rock the Jews back on their heels and they would challenge the matter, but the facts were there for all to inspect in the O.T. It was at least 13 years (and probably 20 years) *later* before Abraham was circumcised (in his 100th year). Thus he was justified 13 years *prior to being circumcised*. It was also, as Paul points out (in Gal. 3) some *430 years later* when the Mosaic law was given on Mount Sinai. Thus, says Paul, circumcision or the law have not the slightest bearing upon salvation, except perhaps to retard it, and both Gentile and Jew must now be justified *in* precisely the same way i.e. *by faith* (in Christ Jesus). Just as Abraham was justified *by faith* so must we all be justified. If we read Gal. Chap 3 in conjunction with Rom. 4 we shall understand it much better and we shall read of Paul's interpretation of the promise made to Abraham that "in his seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed". Paul explains that that word "seed" is used in the singular (not in the plural) and refers to just one person; Jesus Christ. "And the scripture, foreseeing that God *would justify the heathen* through *faith*, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be *of faith* are blessed with faithful Abraham." Thus the gospel was preached many thousands of years ago to 'Faithful Abraham'. Who then are the true 'Children of Abraham? - the Jews?. Let Paul answer, "Know ye, therefore, that they which are *of faith*, the same are the children of Abraham." (v.6). Isn't all this truly wonderful?

To sum up then; Abraham was not saved by his deeds (or by the works of the law) else he could have boasted that his justification was due to him as a debt, but rather his justification was due entirely to the generous grace of God, given, in Abraham's case, because of his supreme faith in God's words. This justification was given to him *while he was yet a Gentile*, many years before circumcision came into being and hundreds of years before the Mosaic law was given. Thus Jewish

nationality, circumcision or the Mosaic law had no bearing whatsoever in Abraham's justification. Men and women today, whether Jew or Gentile, can be justified in exactly similar fashion i.e. by *the grace of God* given to those who have genuine *faith* in God's promises through His Son. Thus all *believers* are the true "Children of Abraham".

But What is 'Faith'?

Insufficient space remains for me to describe the 'faith' that saves but I would refer readers to James' comments on the Subject, in chapter 2 of his epistle. It is sometimes alleged that James contradicts Paul on the question of exactly how Abraham was justified. Surely James is merely describing *the quality* of Abraham's faith. Abraham's faith was such that it galvanised him *into action*. Abraham's faith prompted his *unquestioning obedience* to God's instructions. Anyone who 'hums and haws' with 'ifs' and 'buts' at God's instructions has not got a saving-faith. After all, says James, the devils believe (v.19) but their belief will not save them but merely worry them. Faith must be perfected in obedience. When Abraham raised the knife preparatory to plunging it into his son Isaac he demonstrated the *depth* and *quality* of his faith in God. He could have argued a good case for refraining from doing it, but he did not even try. In short, James says, Abraham demonstrated *the quality* and *nature* of his faith by his 'works' - his actions. A faith which does not culminate in obedience is no faith at all - *it is dead*, says James. And so Paul's arguments in Rom. 4 stand intact. Abraham was indeed saved by his faith, and his justification was not in any sense earned by his deeds, but was freely bestowed by the sheer benevolence of God. Abraham's *faith* proved to be of the *required calibre* when put to the test, and Abraham's obedience (works) *merely confirmed* that he truly believed God (faith).

Many of us in the world lay claim to having faith in God. The extent and strength of our faith will soon become evident once it is put to the test. Only then shall we know if we have that saving faith, or alternatively whether our faith is dead 'being alone'. If when the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, and its terms made known to us, we approach it with our own pre-conditions, and our 'ifs' and 'buts', we can be fairly sure that we have not got the faith that Abraham had. If Abraham had been asked to "repent and be baptised" do we imagine that he would have hesitated, or would have quibbled about it? Abraham is indeed "the father of *all them that believe*." Praise God.

EDITOR

CARLTON MELLING, A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST.

Carlton Melling passed from this life on Thursday August 9th 1984. One finds it so difficult to find words to describe the life of this remarkable servant of the Lord Jesus.

He was born in a very large family, when times were hard, the family very poor, poor wages the order of the day, no child allowances in those days, the welfare state would have certainly been a rich blessing to the family.

At the age of 18 months he lost the use of his right arm and hand, through a form of Polio or infantile paralysis, which resulted in a crippled right arm.

He later contracted diabetes, and has suffered very many years with the many problems that this disease brings.

I have this morning had the privilege of listening to a tape that Carlton made for my brother, and at that time he was nearly totally blind, and when he made

this tape he was no longer able to read.

The reason that I give you these facts, is to give you a background of his sufferings, and to let you read some of the words he uttered on the tape. Sister June Gregson spent some time last evening typing some of his thoughts, some words here and there may be missing, but the message of his life clear. May I quote:-

"I have had a most interesting life,..I have had far more experiences than most. I have met many delightful people in the church, I have had far more sunshine than rain, far more brightness than dullness, far more light than darkness. I can testify that all of this is due to the fact that I have realised, and am realising even more in the greater measure, so many of these things have turned to good, by the faithfulness of the living God, whom I have tried to serve in my almost total blindness..... So far I am finding in my blindness, that I can meditate more, I can look back over my past life, and the things which happened to me then which I did not see any significance in, which I did not understand the meaning of, indeed they just happened to me without any purpose. Now those things I can see as having a meaning.....

The friends I have had, the conversations I have had, snatches from books that I have read, or some at this time trifling experiences. I look back over those things, this led to that, and that led to the other, so that I can see in these days, the purpose of God working out in my life that I never realised it was working out.

Some two hundred and fifty years ago, Joseph Addison, wrote a hymn which these past few years has become a great help to me because I feel the words, sentiments, and thought of that hymn have been realised by me in some measure in my own life.... (then he sang)

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

Unnumbered comforts on my soul
Thy tender care bestowed,
Before my infant heart conceived
From whence those comforts flowed.

When in the slippery paths of youth
With heedless steps I ran,
Thine arm, unseen, conveyed me sake,
And led me up to man.

Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ,
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
That tastes those gifts with joy.

Through all eternity to Thee
A joyful song I'll raise;
But O! eternity's too short,
To utter all Thy praise."

I feel those sentiments fit in very well with my own life, and that is why it has become a favourite hymn.

But a greater man than Joseph Addison, who wrote that hymn, can testify as to how God works, how God blesses even through suffering even through seeming adversity. After the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, no man greater than the Apostle Paul suffered more. Even for the sake of right, not for the sake of his own

sin. He suffered for righteousness sake. This great Apostle looks back over his own life, he writes as we find in Romans chapter 8 verse 28 "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good.".....

I can look back over my past life, the disappointing things, the distracting things, that I couldn't understand, I know those things have worked together for good in so far as I love and have loved God. Now I am trying to bring some comfort to you as a fellow sufferer. You suffer perhaps far more than I do. But the word comfort does not mean putting an hand on somebody's shoulder, or patting them on the back, and saying, never mind old chap, never mind old girl, it might never happen. The worst is over, keep your spirit up, every cloud has a silver lining, its not quite so easy as that. Indeed, things may get worse, but where it is with suffering we know that above all our Lord Jesus Christ suffers with us, and we are told that he is our fellow sufferer. There is a hymn that says:-

Our fellow sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling in our pains
He sympathizes with our grief
And to the sufferer sends relief.

Sufferers like yourselves to whom I am trying to give this message can help us, can help others who don't suffer equally as perhaps we can help you.....

Well that is what suffering is and I have found in my own experience, I don't call them sufferings that the reality of the fellowship of the brethren is a new thing to me, their friendship, their visits, their letters, their gifts have taught me how deeply they esteem me in their hearts. I have felt that the Lord's Day, Sunday, the first day of the week is like a new day to me, because I find new joy in the fellowship of my brethren.

I cannot now see them very well, but I know that they are with me, and I am with them in prayer, in praise and in service to Almighty God.

I hope that this message which I have tried to bring to you may be used by a blessing. God can use your suffering as a blessing and I pray that even through me he may bring new hope, new strength, new endurance, new comfort to you in your sad need. The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord lift up his face upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord keep you in His love and give you peace for His names sake." (End of Quotes)

Our "Thought for the Week" for August 12th is GOD SEES THE FINISHED WALLS, and the Text "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." Isaiah 49:16 May I quote John A. Hutton:- "The real fact about any situation or about a human soul is what lies within it for God, what it is worth to God. And this is the work of God, to make us believe, to make us see things and see ourselves and one another as He in his infinite hopefulness sees us all. Where we see ruins, He sees the walls. Where we see what appears to the eye, He sees all that may be, all that is there for the coming out. He sees what lies behind the appearance, what slumbers at the depths of the fact. He sees the Spring in the Winter; He sees the bud already on the bare branch. He hears the music which sleeps upon the strings. He sees His children, heirs with God, joint-heirs with Christ, in beings like you and me."

How are you Carlton?..... "Very well thank you." How often we have heard those words. His life is ended here, but his example still shines forth, his love for His Lord, his love for His word, his love for His Church, his love for His Day, his love for his family. His love for his brethren, all testify that he being dead yet speaketh. May his life be a lasting example to those left behind, is my prayer.

LEONARD MORGAN

GLEANINGS

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

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

"Truly, this was the SON OF GOD." Matthew 27:54

"Go a little deeper," said the wounded soldier of Napoleon's body-guard, as the surgeon was probing to find the ball lodged in his breast: go a little deeper, and you'll find the emperor."....

Nearly nineteen centuries ago, in an obscure town in Palestine, an event took place which has had more influence on the history of the world than any other since time began. A child was born - surely not so rare an occurrence as to awaken in itself any great interest. This was no son of distinguished parents, no heir to riches or royalty, no scion of a noble house, no prospective ruler of a world's empire. He was born in a stable and cradled in a manger, because in the inn there was no room for the mother even in the crisis of the sorrow of her sex. Yet about that natal hour, that lowly cradle and that humble child, the thought, love and life of millions have, from that day to this, been centred.....

We notice about Jesus no narrow limits of individuality. James Watt suggests the inventor; Benjamin West, the painter; Napoleon, the warrior; Columbus, the discoverer; Pitt, the statesman. Men of mark stand out from the mass with sharp, individual traits, as, in the apostolic company, we think of Peter's impetuosity, Paul's energy, John's love; and these traits both distinguish and separate certain men from others.

But Christ's peculiarities did not isolate him from other men. Nothing stands out so prominently as to draw some to him from a sense of sympathy and similarity, and drive others from him by a feeling of natural antagonism. He is not so allied to any peculiar temperament as to impress others with a lack of power to understand their individual cast of character. Yet there is no lack of positiveness in this perfect man, like a coat fitting everybody, yet fitting nobody; no such elasticity of character as stretches or contracts to suit every new demand; but such a common fitness as tells of something in common with every man; a beautiful fulfilment of the scriptural figure that "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." Any man, whatever his tastes or temperament, his type of mind or heart or disposition, finds in Jesus something answering to his need - a sympathizing brother!"

Arthur T. Pierson.

GOD AND GARFIELD

"There are two people I must please - God and Garfield. I must live with Garfield here, with God hereafter."

James A. Garfield

THE BEST GAME OF THEM ALL

"It's easy to cry that you're beaten - and die.
It's easy to crawfish and crawl;
But to fight and to fight when hope's out of sight,
Why, that's the best game of them all!
And though you come out of each gruelling bout
All broken and beaten and scarred,
Just have one more try - it's dead easy to die,
It's the keeping-on-living that's hard."

Robert Service

MAJOR POND SMASHED THE WINDOWS

"For fourteen years Major James B. Pond travelled all over the United States and Canada as manager for Henry Ward Beecher when that famous Brooklyn

preacher was at his flood tide as a popular lecturer. Before the audience assembled, Pond always visited the hall or church or theatre where Beecher was to appear, and rigorously inspected the lighting, seating, temperature, and ventilation. Pond had been a blustering, roaring old army officer; he loved to exercise authority; so if the place was too warm or the air was dead and he could not get the windows open, he hurled books through them, smashing and shattering the glass. He believed with Spurgeon that "the next best thing to the Grace of God for a preacher is oxygen."

D. Carnegie

SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY IS THE EVIL THEREOF

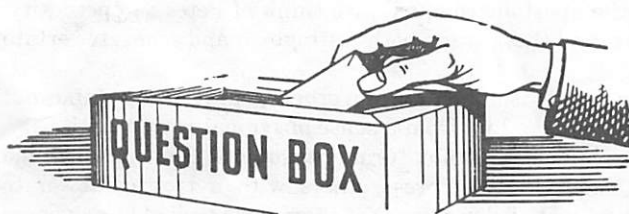
"TODAY is God's day; TOMORROW is the Devil's. To the un-saved, Satan says: WAIT until tomorrow. To the saved, he says: WORRY about tomorrow. But it is the adding of tomorrow's problems to today's that breaks us down. Some attribute this same advice to David Livingstone: "Leave tomorrow's trouble for tomorrow's strength; tomorrow's work for tomorrow's time; tomorrow's trials for tomorrow's grace and tomorrow's God." "

H. G. Mackay

WE QUOTE - KIPLING

"By your silence ye shall speak".

Selected by LEONARD MORGAN



Conducted by

Alf Marsden

"Many times I hear preachers quoting from the original Greek text when they are preaching and teaching. I am only an ordinary Christian and there must be many like me who wonder if they can ever understand the Bible properly. Should this upset me so much?"

There are one or two points about this question which disturb me. It seems that the questioner stands in some sort of awe of someone who can explain the original meaning of Greek words. There is no need for this. Very few who quote and purport to explain such words are, in fact, Greek scholars. They simply use standard written works, such as 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words' by W. E. Vine, and other works of similar nature, and quote extensively from the definitions therein. There is nothing wrong in that, and a variety of such works are available to all who want to use them. The trouble is that we may have become so preacher-orientated that we do not want to make the effort ourselves.

Furthermore, I do not understand why any Christian refers to himself or herself as an 'ordinary' Christian. Is there something 'extraordinary' in the way that a preacher is saved, which would then make him an 'extraordinary' Christian? No, the same sublime sacrifice was made for all. If we want to see the extraordinary then we must look at Jesus, God's Christ.

However, the question is a valid one, and it seems to me that the questioner has in mind the development of spiritual maturity; his or her own in particular. The mistake is in thinking that spiritual maturity can be equated with excellency of speech, and we know what Paul said about that (see 1 Cor. 2:1-2). I think a good starting point for our study is Hebrews 5:11-14.

Limitations to Maturity

All that God has revealed is for His Children. He has declared both Himself and all of the eternal realities. The only way in which the excellency of *that* knowledge can be limited is by our imperception of it.

There is a school of thought which asserts that the only thing the Christian needs to know is that he is saved; just rest on that assurance. A statement like that is, in my opinion, naive in the extreme. There are many things that God wants us to know; the pertinent question is 'can we accept them?' As the writer of the Hebrew letter says, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing" (5:11). He is obviously here referring to Jesus and His High Priesthood. The writer had a problem; he had many things to say regarding the Son of God as high priest, but he couldn't explain these because his readers had become 'dull of hearing'. What a tragedy; the teacher *wanting* to teach those things which would develop spiritual maturity, but the pupil unwilling to learn.

Do you realise, dear brother or sister, that your limitation of knowledge limits the effectiveness of your portrayal of Christ to the world? The Lord experienced the same problem with His disciples. Shortly before His departure from the earth He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Similarly Paul to the brethren at Corinth, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Cor. 1:1-3). There *are* things which are difficult to understand, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't *try* to understand them. Once the Word is left to a so-called elite to interpret to the masses, then we are skating on extremely thin ice.

Do not always blame the teacher if you cannot understand his lesson; it could be that the pupil has become "dull of hearing". Jesus said of the people of His day, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed" (Matt. 13:15). That must always be a recipe for spiritual immaturity. On the other hand, one must never assume that longevity of life, or the facility to present a lesson with correct phraseology and excellent delivery, is always indicative of deep spiritual maturity. It behoves every Christian to seek out those truths which are fundamental to the faith, so that he will grow into a mature Christian.

Usefulness to God

There is a saying in training circles, "If the pupil hasn't learned, then the teacher hasn't taught", but how can teachers teach what they themselves do not know or understand? The writer of our Hebrew passage seems to be saying that because of the time his readers had been Christians, they should now *themselves* be able to teach others; instead of that, they needed to be taught *again* the *first principles* of the oracles of God, because all that they could stomach was 'milk' and not 'meat'.

Many Christians fail to understand that there is an *obligation* laid on each one to teach. Those trade unionists who are interested enough to attend Branch meetings are usually the ones who later have much to say on the subject of industrial relations; they have been interested enough to learn. Are we stretching a point too far when we say that when a Christian grows dull of hearing that this bespeaks a lack of interest in learning the things of God? I am well aware that there are rules to observe if instruction to other people is to be effective, but such methods of instruction can be taught quite easily. Perhaps it would help if Bible study classes were actually used for studying the Bible, i.e. the session could be used as a tutorial with the one who is leading the group being the tutor. It follows, of course, that the tutor would not be a novice but would be fully conversant with

his subject matter, and would know how to lead and guide the group into fresh fields of understanding.

A child thinks and acts as a child and does not appreciate things as do the more mature. It is very frustrating for parents when the truths which *they* understand as mature people are not appreciated by their children; it is doubly frustrating when the parents *know* that the child *ought* to understand but has chosen to remain in a child-like state so far as understanding is concerned. The Hebrew writer had a real problem. *He* wanted them to go on to maturity in Christ; *they* wanted to return to those things concerning the Law of Moses from which they had been weaned. How sad, we say, but isn't it true that there are many Christians today exactly like that? Paul had exactly the same problem with the Churches in Galatia, and he met it in uncompromising language, "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor" (Gal. 2:18). It is time to put away childish things. The Church needs full-grown men, fully matured spiritually, able to assimilate the strong meat of the Word. Children, by the very fact of being children, are always immature.

First Principles

The Hebrew writer says of those who ought by now to have been teachers, "ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God" (5:12). In chapter 6 the writer tells his readers that the elementary principles of Christ should be left behind. He seems to be indicating that foundation should not be built on foundation; no one who worked on erecting a building would do that. The foundation had been laid; repentance from dead works, faith in God, teaching regarding baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment. These were the elements of their faith; they should now go on to more advanced things. He issues a severe warning; it is impossible to go back without openly shaming the Son of God.

How do we today react to this teaching? If we grasped the things mentioned we might think we have learned all that is necessary, but the writer says that his readers should press on to maturity. We must never be content with stunted growth; we can become better than we know. The writer says, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you", and we can echo that observation today in our own lives. We can follow his exhortation, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises".

Yes, if we have grown dull of hearing then we *do* need to worry about our spiritual condition. But worrying won't help us a lot. Constant application to the Word, and the consequent development of maturity will. May God help us to become what we are capable of.

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

THE TWO ADAMS

Humanly speaking the more titles a man has, the more aloof he becomes to the ordinary man.

Spiritually speaking, the many titles Jesus had (if understood) make Him dearer and bring Him nearer to us.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 45 Jesus was called 'The last Adam' and Paul proceeds to teach a *lesson of contrasts*.

Verses 21-23 By man came death — By man came also RESURRECTION.

In Adam all die — In Christ shall all be made ALIVE.

Adam died, followed by his followers to this day but Jesus Christ ROSE FROM THE DEAD that ALL MIGHT LIVE.

Verses 45-49 The first man Adam was — The last Adam a quickening made a living soul. Spirit

Adam was created by God — Jesus gives LIVE — He is THE CREATOR.

The first man was of the earth but the second is of HEAVEN.

The second man, Jesus, Who was of Heaven, was sacrificed in order that we, who have borne the image of the earthly, shall follow Him, be made like unto Him and BEAR THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY.

Romans chapter 5, verses 17-18. '...by one man's offence death reigned—by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life'.

Verse 19. '...By one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'

'Praise to the Holiest in the height
And in the depth be praise
In all His works most wonderful
Most sure in all His ways.

O loving wisdom of our God
When all was sin and shame
A SECOND ADAM to the fight
And TO THE RESCUE CAME.'

The third chapter of Genesis gives us the record of the closed gate. Broken friendship, the judgement of God and the expulsion from Paradise into a world where every small success would have to be won through toil and endeavour. There would be disappointment and frustration. Satan would tempt and rule the hearts of men and women; while physical death would come to all the created glories of God. This is the story of the first Adam.

In contrast, Revelation chapter 2 tells of the OPENED GATES — a restored fellowship. For whom? For the overcomer in the Churches — the separated one who resists the temptation of Satan and trusts implicitly in the Saving and Keeping Power of Jesus. The story in reverse. Not leaving the garden paradise to a world of disappointment, sorrow and death; but going on from such a state to overcome and prepare to enter the OPENED GATES. *THIS IS THE STORY OF THE LAST ADAM* and is gloriously possible for EACH ONE OF US.

Man cannot save himself, but the blessings which, in Adam were lost, can be regained by a surrender of the life to Jesus. This new life, for us, is in the midst of a company of fellow believers — a foretaste of GLORY DIVINE. Our days and our years represent a journey; a pilgrimage to the gates of the Eternal City — indescribable in human terms and incomprehensible in human thoughts.

As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made ALIVE.

Wrongdoing brings remorse and shame. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they hid from Him. They had not only forfeited the God given blessings, but in addition they hid from Him.

There is a place for hiding in God's great plan of Salvation, in Christ Jesus, who Paul called the LAST ADAM. The first Adam hid from the face of God but the Christian has the assurance that his or her life is hid *with* Christ in God. (Colossians 3).

Not hid *FROM* God but hid *WITH* God.

It is recorded that Augustus Toplady's wonderful Hymn, 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee;' was suggested to him whilst sheltering from a storm in a cleft of a rock. The otherwise solid rock, which borders each side of the gorge, had been severed by a previous storm and formed a cave-like shelter, providing cover for the author as he composed the greatly loved Hymn.

Luke chapter 19, verse 10. 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

Man has a free choice. He can see around him, on every hand, the result of Adam's sin, the rejection of God's Word and the acceptance of Satan's lie.

There are Biblical examples of sin, multiplied to the extent that God's judgement fell on city and land. The age in which we live is surely just such another, and many signs point unmistakably to the fact that God will intervene.

MAN STILL HAS A CHOICE. He can go with the many, regardless of consequences; or he can come into contact and eventually into fellowship with the last Adam. **THIS** makes **OUR** witness for **HIM** of **FIRST** importance. **THIS** makes our pulpit and Sunday School class room the very reason for our existence as a Church of Christ. **THIS** is the reason for Prayer Meetings, for it is here that every problem of the Church and every individual can be brought to God's Throne — every member can be remembered in Prayer. We can renew our faith in Jesus, our Saviour and study together the great and blessed Truth of God's Word.

For so it is written:— The first Adam became a living soul. **THE LAST ADAM BECAME A LIFE GIVING SPIRIT.**

F. R. W. KIMBERLEY

SCRIPTURE READINGS

OCTOBER 1984

7—Prov. 25:11-28	Romans 12
14—Lev. 19:1-18	Romans 13
21—Isaiah 45:14-25	Romans 14
28—Isaiah 11	Romans 15:1-13

THE REASONABLE WORSHIP

The apostle Paul in chapter 12 now deals with our obligation to our Heavenly Father.

Under the Old Covenant animal sacrifice was commanded by God. I recall for example the dedication of Solomon's temple. "And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the Lord, twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:63). Now under the New Covenant human sacrifice is sought by God. Observe that it is "a living sacrifice". That means it is continual and constant.

When Paul talks of "your reasonable service or worship" he means your rational, intelligent worship. It was

John R. W. Stott who wrote: "True worship is the highest and the noblest activity of which man, by the grace of God, is capable. Christian worship is rational (involves the mind), spiritual (involves man's spirit and God's), and moral (involves the conscience and the whole life)." True worship then consists of the surrender of self to God. It is giving one's eyes, mouth, tongue, hands, and feet to God. It is not limited to a time or a place. Every common deed is an act of worship.

WORLD

What is "the world?" John said: "Do not love the world or things in the world. If any man loves the world the love of the Father is not in Him" (1 John 2:15). William Barclay defines the world as: "Pagan society with its false values, its false standards and its false gods." C. H. Dodd says the world is: "Human society in so far as it is organised on wrong principles, and characterised by base desires, false values and egoism." My brethren, we are citizens of a kingdom which is not of this world. Consequently we have different values, different standards and a different God. Altogether we are different. Indeed that is why we are called "saints".

THE DIFFERENT GIFTS

The church of Jesus Christ is not so much an organisation but an organism. It is therefore truer to say that we are members of the body of Christ than members of the church of Christ. Paul here speaks of the one body (there is only one), and it is a favourite metaphor of his.

If you want to see unity in diversity then study the human body. The eye is quite different from the ear which is quite different from the foot. But each has an important function to fulfil.

It is the same in the spiritual body. Each member is an important part and each has a gift or gifts from God to be used for the common good. For example, some are good at teaching i.e. providing instruction, some at giving, while others are good at showing mercy i.e. demonstrating pity. We are not all qualified for every task. We cannot be. But our individual duty is to identify our talents and develop them. Not to do so will result in our condemnation from God (Matthew 25:14-30).

TEN RULES FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

These are found in chapter 12 verses 9-13. Paul, for example speaks of "rejoicing in hope". If Christianity is anything it is a religion of joy. Paul wrote to the Philippian saints: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). "Hope" is desire combined with expectation. Hope looks forward. The Christian's hope is for future good. It is based upon covenants, charters, promises, oaths, tendered by the eternal source of almighty truth and love.

"Patient in tribulation", says Paul. Chrysostom described the word "patient" as "the queen of virtues". It speaks of steadfast endurance. "Tribulation" is an interesting term. In the Greek it is the word for pressure. However, our English word is from the Latin *tribulum*, a threshing instrument. I am sure it is true to say that suffering and trials tend to separate the grain from the chaff.

Paul adds: "Continuing steadfastly in prayer". Think how often Jesus prayed. Think, dear reader, how often you pray.

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE STATE

These saints, to whom Paul wrote, resided in the capital of one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen. Of course, the Roman Empire at that time was a pagan empire, and as its summit was the Emperor who, in the terrible phrase of Gibbon, was at once a priest, an atheist, and a god. But how then should the disciples of Jesus live in such a world? Should they resist those in authority? Should they disregard the laws of the land? Should they be ungrateful for the "pax romana" - the peace of Rome? Should they pay the taxes levied by the government? etc.

Paul, himself a Roman citizen, is quite clear in his response to such questions. "Every Christian ought to obey the civil authorities, for all legitimate authority is derived from God's Authority and the existing authority is appointed under God. To oppose authority then is to oppose God, and such opposition is bound to be punished" (J. B. Phillips' translation). George Hamilton IV is a fine Country singer. I have attended a number of his concerts in Scotland. He once said: "My pet dislikes are hypocrisy and sophistication. I am very un-unique, have very little talent, but have a great desire to be a good Country singer, a good husband and father, and a decent citizen." His words have always stuck with me, and especially the last phrase - "a decent citizen." Should not every Christian be just that with all its implications? I think the phrase best sums up what Paul is saying here.

The great apostle goes on to discuss the importance of love and honest living. Love is the greatest dynamic in the universe because God Himself is love. Honesty is an outstanding quality. Burn's wrote: "An honest man's the noblest work of God".

RESPECT FOR SCRUPLES

The word scruple is from the Latin *scrupulus*, a hard pebble. In your shoe this could prove rather uncomfortable. So the word evolved to mean a thought or circumstance that troubles the mind or conscience, a cause of uneasiness. We all have scruples.

In Paul's day there were scruples about eating and drinking and keeping of days, etc. This is not surprising given the fact that many of the early disciples were from a Jewish background. (Orthodox Judaism today still has its *kashrut* - dietary laws). Paul urges us to think of everything as it affects others. He well points out that no pleasure is so important that it can justify bringing offence and grief, and even ruin, to our fellow saints. He does not say that it is *not good* to eat or drink certain things. Rather he says that it is *good not* to do so. Notice the distinction. It is an important one.

MARKS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship in the Greek is *koinonia* and means sharing in common. One writer has said: "On the Divine side, fellowship is a union with and participation in the life of Christ through the spirit; on the human side, it is a communion with brethren whose mutual relations have been transformed by the Spirit."

One mark of fellowship is *harmony*. That does not mean, however, that there will never be differences of opinion in the family of God. Differences there certainly will be, but unity exists in spite of them and not division because of them.

A second mark of fellowship is the *study of the scriptures*. From such study encouragement is gained. How can we fail to be strengthened in reading of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Esther, etc. Daily study of the Bible is a must for every disciple. Indeed we all should have an insatiable

appetite, an unquenchable thirst for the word of God.

Another mark of fellowship is *praise*. We read of the early saints "praising God and having favour with all the people" (Acts 2:47). The Hebrew writer declared: "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

IAN S. DAVIDSON, Motherwell

A PRACTICAL RELIGION

The religion of the New Testament is a practical religion. It deals with everyday life. It is for the man of the field and the man of the office. It is for the man at the workbench and for the man in the classroom. It is for the poor man and for the well-to-do man. It is for every man. If I am not a follower of Christ while I am mending shoes then my "Sunday religion" is worthless. I must be a faithful disciple while I am teaching school, working the engine, punching tickets, keeping the books, shovelling cement, or whatever my work may be. I must magnify Christ, I must reflect him in my life.

ONLY SIX!

IT is told that a Sunday school teacher was once lamenting to C. H. Spurgeon about the smallness of her class. Spurgeon asked her how many scholars she had. "Six" was the reply. "My dear", Spurgeon replied, "Enough for you to be responsible for in the day of judgement."

Shakespeare

wrote, "How far that little candle throws its beam, so shines a good deed in a naughty world ..."

BELIEF : (25)**: Sanctification**

OUR Lord's final prayer to his heavenly Father before his crucifixion is found in John 17. It is of profound significance to all, particularly in view of the explanations given in our previous chapters. These are based on divine truths delivered to the apostles both before and after his prayer in the garden. These later revelations were promised by our Lord in John 14:17-26, and confirmed by Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; and other passages.

Such additional truths in no way detract from John 17. They help us to understand even more fully the wonderful love therein shown by our Lord to his immediate disciples, and "them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20).

Acceptance of the New Testament**Record**

Sanctification is an act of separation effected by God through the enabling sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. We see from John 17:17-26 that this sanctification cannot be brought about until the sinner repents and obeys God's instructions in his Word. The word spoken by Jesus and his apostles is found only in the New Testament. So it follows that any instructions originating outside the New Testament cannot be God's and must be man's, so can be of no avail whatsoever in the sanctification and salvation of the sinner.

Common Errors

Common errors arising out of failure to observe this principle are many. Infant sprinkling and a religious hierarchy may be mentioned as two of the most serious departures from New Testament teaching. These represent not the will of God but the will of man, and thus constitute mere will-worship. Such worship is rejected by Paul in Colossians 2:18-23; Galatians 4:10 and 2 Timothy 3:4; also by Peter, and by

Our Lord (2 Peter 3:15-17; Matthew 15:8-9; 7:21-23).

What a terrible denunciation is contained in Matthew 7:21-23. It was spoken to those who thought they were doing the will of God! What a shock is in store for those who are so sure of their position spiritually that they will not trouble to search the Scriptures, to see if their belief and practice is correct (2 Timothy 3:13-17; Acts 17:10-12).

Since God is not willing that any should perish, it is our hope that such people will examine themselves, come down from their "pedestals", and humbly obey the will of God.

W. BROWN

(To Be Continued)

HOW TO USE THE BIBLE

GET everything out of it.

Do not read anything into it.

Let nothing remain unread in it.

J. A. BENGEL

OBITUARY

Longshoot, Scholes: It is with great sadness that the church at Longshoot, Scholes wish to announce the death of our beloved brother Carlton Melling at the age of 77 years.

He passed away in Leigh Infirmary after several weeks of illness and was laid to rest with his wife Margaret on Tuesday 14th August.

The church was filled to capacity for the funeral service. A mark of the love and esteem that so many of his brethren from near and far had for him,

He has left for us at Scholes, a tender memory of faithful christian service which was the hallmark of his life.

His presence among us will be sadly missed but we rejoice in the fact that he has gone to be with the Lord he so faithfully tried to follow.

Jack Parker



COMING EVENTS

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

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

ANNUAL SOCIAL at Newtongrange, God willing, on 29th September, 1984, at the Meeting House. Chairman will be Joe Currie, but names of speakers and other details will be announced later. . . . A. P. SHARP (Sec)

THE BIBLE CONTAINS:

The Mind of God.
The state of man.
The doom of sinners.
The happiness of believers.
Doctrines which are holy.
Precepts which are binding.
Histories which are true.
Decisions which are immutable.

COURAGE

THIS is something all Christians need. Mighty men of God were encouraged by God. Joshua was instructed to be courageous, and as we view his life we realize what a great leader of God's people he became.

Paul, also, was a courageous follower of Jesus, and yet there were times when he himself was helped and encouraged by his brethren Acts 28:15.

Let us have courage and encourage others.

T. KEMP

DO NOT BLAME GOD

If you are lost, who cares and who is to blame? God loved you so much that he gave His Son. Jesus, the Son of God, loved you so much that he gave his life that you might be saved, John 3:16

The Holy Spirit loved you so much that He came on Pentecost and brought all truth, (John 16:13 and Acts 2:4), and we have the gift of the Holy Spirit when we obey the gospel (Acts 2:38).

Who is to blame? Certainly not God, nor Christ, nor the Holy Spirit. *We must bear our own responsibility,* (Galatians 6:4-5).

If you are lost, who cares and who is to blame? Need the answer be given?

T. W. PHILLIPS II
Rosemead, California.

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