

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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WILL WE EVER LEARN

A few weeks ago brother Allan Ashurst kindly sent me some quotes from the pages of a booklet entitled "Let Sects & Parties Fall," published in 1980, which claims to be a short history of the Associated Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland. Brother Ashurst felt that the quotations deserved wider publication under the title "When Will We Ever Learn" and obviously he remembers the disastrous effect Overdale College had on the British Churches.

The first short quotation refers to the Annual Meeting in 1864, at Wigan, when the Evangelistic Committee were urged to pursue a proposal to receive American evangelists sent to England. "... the main argument against the proposal was that American brethren placed too much trust in preaching and college training, and not enough emphasis on mutual edification."

The second quotation is rather more lengthy and is as follows: "The most significant event for Churches of Christ in the inter-war years, and indeed the twentieth century as a whole, was the reorganisation of the training work which led to the foundation of the Overdale College in 1920. It was significant in two ways — in principle and in practice. The acceptance of the principle marked a turning away from David King's vigorous anti-college line and a desire for a longer period of training for those called to the ministry among the churches. In practice, the calling of William Robinson to be the first principal of Overdale College created the opportunity for the development of his great personal influence on Churches of Christ in the present century. By his theological scholarship he provided a reinterpretation of the "position and plea" appropriate to the conditions of the twentieth century, and through his office as Principal he shaped the thinking of a whole generation of ministers and leaders. This was to be seen particularly in the period after 1945."

Perhaps brother Ashurst shudders at the thought of any college principal introducing "a re-interpretation of the "position and plea" appropriate to the conditions of the twentieth century" or perhaps he trembles at the thought of how the Principal "shaped the thinking of a whole generation of ministers and leaders." The mind certainly boggles. However, from the title suggested by brother Ashurst, "When will we ever learn" I assume that his main concern is that "preacher training colleges" militate against the New Testament concept of mutual edification, and that such establishments have ever the possibility of being, like Overdale College,

factories engaged in producing clergymen. It's one thing to have a school for the enlightening of Christians — quite another to produce a clergy to minister to a laity. But perhaps today we have men more enlightened than David King. I share Brother Ashurst's concern, as many other brethren do, but from the experience of the last twenty years I doubt very much if anything he says, or I say, or anyone else says, will make much difference. Policy-making decisions are not always freely in the hands of brethren in Britain.

I think the answer to the question "Will We Ever Learn" must be in the negative. The bible appears to show that during mans' entire history he has never learned from *his own* experience, let alone the experience of previous generations. There are usually more pressing reasons for his actions; perhaps to please a friend or to accommodate an employer. Rarely is past experience invoked. Man goes his own way, often with good intentions and lofty ideals, and it is left to some subsequent generation to put things to right. Perhaps the kings of Israel and Judah illustrate the point with a good king being followed by a bad king followed fairly alternatively with good and not so good kings.

It was during the reign of one of the good kings, Josiah, that the book of the law, was found, apparently, by accident, in the House of the Lord and Josiah rent his clothes in anguish when he realised how far away from God's truth his people had strayed. I suppose Martin Luther must have felt much the same way and doubtless countless thousands of other men and women have, on studying their New Testament, been appalled at what is going on around them in the name of Christ, and what is being done in the guise of New Testament Christianity. The scribes and Pharisees didn't lack knowledge of God's word. Most Roman Catholic priests and cardinals have been reared in theological training colleges. God certainly does not commend ignorance in His subjects but those who have led Christ's church astray in past centuries were not ignorant men but many, or most, had had very extensive theological schooling. Many of the large denominational bodies are self-perpetuating by the cloning process of their theological seminaries and the church is no longer a family but has become a well-defined system, or institution.

It is said that money ruins everything it touches. It certainly has long been a lubricant for the machinery of politics and many administrations, especially in the "banana" Republics, function mainly on bribery and corruption. Money has also been greatly detrimental to the world of sport and the "sporting" element of many events has almost disappeared. The vast sums which can be amassed even in a year in golf, tennis or even football has brought sport to the stage where even a very slight "sporting gesture" by one of the participants is unusual enough to be commented on. The "profit motive" and financial inducement mentality has also found its way into the religious world and many denominations take great pride in their material wealth. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, is fabulously rich and their wealth defies any calculation. Similarly the Church of England has vast land holdings in Britain and is very wealthy in terms on money. The Mormon Church also takes pride in its great financial resources. Money is unfortunately required to pursue the extending of the Kingdom of God but the churches in this country have, traditionally, not given much priority to gathering large amounts of money. After all, mutual edification, does not require large sums of money. It would be difficult to deny, however, that the vast and far-reaching changes which have been witnessed over the past twenty years or so in the Old Path churches of this country have been due to an influx of large amounts of money into this island. Twenty years ago our esteemed brother Ketcherside, of the U.S.A., predicted that the "mighty dollar" would prevail in the British churches and he was, of course, howled-down at the time, but few today would even try to deny the truth of the prediction. Many of us

can remember the churches in the days of brother Crosthwaite. We can also read some of the old issues of the "Scripture Standard" and see who was writing articles then and what they were teaching. Some of these brethren would not now write articles for the "Scripture Standard" and if they did their teaching might not bear much resemblance to what they taught before. How could such a thing happen in only a few years? — brother Ketcherside very probably expressed the answer. If brother Crosthwaite could come back today and look around, he would see a few changes and receive a few surprises, not all pleasant. "Will we ever learn?" — it is really up to each member of each congregation to make up his or her mind on that score and not to be motivated by the "If you can't beat them, join them" philosophy, or the "If it works it must be scriptural" notion.

Every "Restoration Movement" starts off enthusiastically but after a hundred years or so runs out of steam and after the fire and thrust of the originators has gone, the generations who follow after are not usually too concerned and may even wonder what all the fuss was about. Things thereafter fall back into the old ways. A few generations later another "Restoration Movement" gets under way and a new set of "pioneers" arise. They fight the same old battles and retake much of the ground lost since the last "Movement." It is all rather like the swing of a pendulum. The trouble is that it is much easier to promote error than to re-instate truth. The people love the prophets to prophesy falsely and the religious world, in general, looks upon those who wish to restore the New Testament order as "crackpots" in the extreme. It is doubly difficult when there are men who measure success in terms of numbers at meetings. There was a fairly large "Restoration Movement" last century but now that the dust has settled it is fairly obvious that some of the ground gained is being lost with sectarian attitudes holding sway. There seems to be a desire to be like our denominational friends and to copy them. Our distinctive "plea" is not quite so distinctive as it used to be, and soon the "identity" of the Lord's church will be difficult to identify. Truth is often sacrificed upon the altar of expediency, necessity, efficiency and popularity, and we really must beware of the philosophy which judges a system on the basis of whether it works rather than whether it is in harmony with God's holy word.

Will we ever learn? The answer really depends upon each one of us. We should have the inquiring spirit of the "Pioneer" and constantly be analysing what we say and do, religiously speaking, to see if we conform as individuals and as congregations to the New Testament. None of us are infallible nor do any of us possess a monopoly on truth and so me must ever strive for that humility of mind necessary to learn from those who have gone before, and not to regard men like David King and Walter Crosthwaite as ill-informed old "fuddy-duddies." There is little merit in the claim that the Church of Christ is "the fastest growing denomination in the country," which it isn't anyway. If we adapt the gospel message to suit the public we could soon fill our meeting places, but there would be little merit in that either. We must strive lawfully to preach the old God-given message and resist the temptation to take short-cuts. Religious history over the centuries I think has shown that once we take the first faltering steps away from the simple truth and practice of the New Testament there is no stopping place. The "Pioneers" are required in every generation.

In closing may I refer again to the quote at the beginning of this article concerning the Principal of Overdale College that it was by his "*theological scholarship*" that he was able to provide a re-interpretation of the church's position and plea "*appropriate to the conditions of the twentieth century*" and he "*shaped the thinking*" of a whole generation of ministers and leaders. If it doesn't frighten us, it should.

LOVE. THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD

NO. 3 THE ETERNITY RING

I Cor. 13: 8

An 'Eternity Ring' is that which lovers give to each other to say "Forever." In verse 8 of this chapter in First Corinthians, Paul uses the phrase which prompts this title and suggests to me this picture of Love as an 'Eternity Ring.'

Here is an adornment of the finest gold set around with fourteen priceless gems. It is of inestimable price but having a value not created by its rarity but by its sheer desirability and infinite beauty. While we say its value is not created by rarity yet it is doubtful if we have ever seen it being worn. The truly wonderful thing about it is, we can, if we will, be the proud owner. No, not the PROUD owner, for that belies the possession. Rather we can each become the humble custodian of an Eternity Ring of Love.

Beware of imitations for there are many. The louder the insistence; the more persistent the claim by anyone to have this ring, the more suspect is their assertion. When someone has this most valuable asset it will be quite unnecessary to tell anyone, for all will be aware.

Let us first consider the Ring and at a future date we will look at each individual gem in its setting.

'Love never faileth'

Love is permanent, it is the irresistible force and the irremovable object. It is as permanent as God, for always remember, God is Love. As with God, who will never cease, so with Love, it goes on forever. As God never alters, so with Love, it never varies. There are no periods when Love is more, or less, available or potent.

'Love never faileth'

It may be well for us to recall our understanding of this wonderful word 'Love.'

"Unselfish acts, done at the sole cost to the doer, for the sole benefit of the recipient and performed without consideration of the nature of the reception."

This is the Love which never fails. It is always available to be exercised. As Jesus once said, "The poor ye have always with you." Equally true we have the whole world upon whom we can exercise this Love. Love, like the human hand, grows with use and this Love likes to be used.

'Love never faileth'

It is so perfectly versatile. True Love, as epitomized above is suited to all circumstances, it is adaptable to all conditions and compatible with all places. Never is it necessary to call for change in the recipient before Love can be exercised. No alteration in circumstance, position nor condition is required. No external power can stop or impede Love, for LOVE NEVER FAILETH.

The original Greek word used by Paul and translated into English by the word 'Fail,' has several shades of meaning. To put them all together will enhance our understanding of the text.

There is the reference to failing to keep to a set place or position as when the stars are said to fall from heaven. The Eternity Ring of Love is snug fitting and will not slip off accidentally or be pulled off by external pressure.

Again, the word means to fall or fade as the flowers. Your Eternity Ring of Love will never wither or perish. It will never lose its lustre, its beauty will never be dimmed by age and it will never wear thin.

Also in this word is the thought of chains falling from a prisoners hands and of a fortress capitulating to the enemy, a failing to keep and guard. Your Eternity Ring of Love will never lose its power, its potency will never diminish. It is equal to all trials. True love is unaltered by riches or poverty, unaffected by praise or defamation. Through all adversity and for all time Love remains constant.

Love never faileth

Here then, is the finest eternity ring anyone can wear. As we have suggested it is set around with fourteen wonderful jewels. These we will consider in more detail later on but let us note; the jewels are bonded together by the ring and are equally constant. Such adjectives or adverbs as, Sometimes, Usually, Normally, Often, are totally inapplicable to this Eternity Ring and the jewels with which it is formed.

Love never faileth and the jewels all together show Love. Each gem shines a different colour as the light of circumstance falls on it, but each is equal with its neighbour and all are dependent on each other and the base in which it is set. The whole comprise the Eternity Ring of Love. LOVE NEVER FAILETH.

Paul Jones

GLEANINGS

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

"ALL OF YOU GIRD YOURSELVES WITH HUMILITY."

1st PETER 5:5 RV

"Put on the apron of the slave! Go into the awful presence of the Lord, and contemplate His glory until the vision brings you wonderingly to your knees! "Go, stand on the mount of the Lord." "That is the place where we discover our size! No man speaks of his greatness who has been closeted with God. Lordliness changes into holy fear, and pride bows down in reverent supplication."

J. H. Jowett

STOOP IF WE WOULD RISE

"Earthly thrones are generally built with steps up to them; the remarkable thing about the thrones of the eternal Kingdom is that the steps are all down to them. We must descend if we would reign, stoop if we would rise."

F. B. Meyer

STOOPING LOWER

"I used to think God's gifts were on shelves one above the other, and that the taller we grow in Christian character the more easily we should reach them. I find now that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other, and that it is not a question of growing taller, but of stooping lower, and that we have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts."

B.T.I.

TALES WORTH TELLING

"A little boy, his eyes wide with wonder, asked, "Why is it that when I open a marigold it dies, but if God does it, it's so beautiful?" The fumbling fingers of my mind were still groping for an answer, when the little chap exclaimed, "I know! It's because God always works from the inside." Then I realised again why Jesus used a little child to teach wisdom to the wise."

Sunshine Magazine

BE HUMBLLED — WALK SOFTLY

"Ye will take a low ebb, and a deep cut, and a long lance, to go to the bottom of your wounds in saving humiliation, to make you a won prey for Christ. Be humbled;

walk softly. Down, down, for God's sake, my dear and worthy brother, with your topsail. Stoop, stoop! It is a low entry to go in at heaven's gate."

Samuel Rutherford

BEFORE HONOUR IS HUMILITY — PROVERBS 15:33

"Humiliation of soul always brings a positive blessing with it. If we empty our hearts of self God will fill them with His love. He who desires close communion with Christ should remember the word of the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." Stoop if you would climb to heaven." "The whole exchequer of God shall be made over by deed of gift to the soul which is humble enough to be able to receive it without growing proud because of it. God blesses us all up to the full measure and extremity of what it is safe for Him to do. If you do not get a blessing, it is because it is not safe for you to have one. If our heavenly Father were to let your unhumiliated spirit win a victory in His holy war, you would pilfer the crown for yourself, and meeting with a fresh enemy you would fall a victim; so that you are kept low for your own safety. When a man is sincerely humble, and never ventures to touch so much as a grain of the praise, there is scarcely any limit to what God will do for him."

C. H. Spurgeon

LOWER STILL LOWER

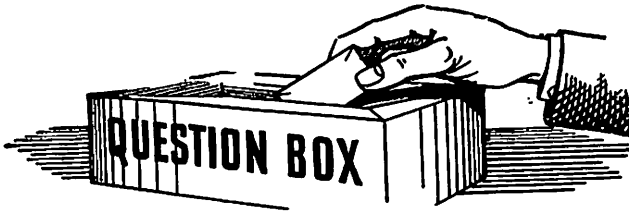
"Lower and lower, dear Lord, at Thy feet,
Seeking Thy Spirit, Thy mercy so sweet;
Down in our need, blessed Master, we fall,
Lower and lower: be Thou all in all."

"Lower and lower, down at Thy Cross,
All the world's treasure counting but dross;
Down at Thy feet, blessed Saviour, we fall,
Lower, still lower, Christ all in all!"

JESUS SAID

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:4.

Selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I and others have complained about a lack of reverence in our Meetings, particularly when we meet for the Breaking of Bread. Why should this lack of reverence exist, and is it important?"

I think many christians will sympathise with the questioner because I have heard others complain about this very thing. There are various reasons which could be given. For instance, the Church may have rebelled so much against the formalised worship of the denominations that it has swung over to the other extreme and has adopted a very informal posture. Or, we could say, "Well, look, society has changed

so much over the last few years that attitudes are changing with respect to the Church." Rather sadly, it may be that christians have lost that reverential awe of God, which in the past has so characterised the lives of those who have been truly committed to Him. Or it may be, even, that we have forgotten the teaching concerning reverence, and consequently, have deprived ourselves of a true relationship with Him in our christian experience.

Whatever the reason, I think we should learn all we can about the question so that if need be, we can modify our attitude towards the One whose grace and mercy have done so much for us.

The Problem Stated

Well, what is meant by "a lack of reverence"? I take it that we are considering here the behaviour of christians when they are met together corporately for worship and public ministry of the Word. In this context it is true to say that whatever behaviour christians exhibit will, to some degree, have a very real effect upon those who may come into our Meetings. What sort of impressions do they, in fact, get when they visit some of our assemblies?

For one thing, when they first enter some Churches of Christ, they might be excused for thinking that they had mistakenly entered a theatre or club. People are chattering loudly on a variety of topics, children are running around unattended, and there seems to be very little devotion to that which is about to be done. I am aware that many christians consider this attitude to express uninhibited freedom in the Lord, and love and joy in the Holy Spirit. They insist that the Gospel never intended us to be staid and straight-laced, and that there is no particular merit in the building itself anyway. Well, it is true that the Church is not the building, and that the christian's joy should be real and unconfined, but it is also true that the people of God are the Church and no matter where they are their attitude and behaviour should be as befits that high calling, especially when met before Him. The message of God to His people in olden days was, "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord". (LEV.19:30). We are also reminded in Ecclesiastes, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the House of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth: therefore let thy words be few" (ECCLES.5:1, 2).

Furthermore, visitors might be confronted with the money-jingling christian, the non-singing christian, the offspring-adoring christian, the bored christian, and other types which we know so well and often take for granted. Brethren, these things ought not so to be, and they do nothing but detract from the praise and glory of Him who called us out of darkness into His most marvellous light.

What is Reverence?

Matthew, Mark and Luke, in their Gospel records reveal to us the parable of the vineyard and the wicked husbandmen. We know that Jesus was speaking about His own rejection by the Jews when He said, "But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son" (MATT.21:37). Reverence in this scripture means "to feel respect for, to show deference to". In the Hebrew letter we find the use of the same word, "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? (HEB. 12:9). In both of these scriptures we are reminded that we should have respect for, and deference to the Most High God and His Christ.

There is another word for "reverence" used in the N.T. and that is the word PHOBEO, and this word has the root meaning of reverential fear. Paul uses it in

Ephesians when he says, "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself: and the wife that she reverence her husband" (EPH.5:33). Now this reverence is not the fear that a wife may have of a brutal, oppressive, and cruel husband, but is rather the fear of displeasing the husband by her attitude and actions. This is also true in our relationship with God, for Hebrews teaches us,

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we might serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (HEB. 12:28, 29). This is not to say that we are always shrinking under an oppressive retribution by God, but it does mean that we shall have a wholesome dread of displeasing Him; This would obviously influence our disposition and attitude no matter where we might be and no matter what we might be doing.

How do we show Reverence?

The questioner asks, "Is it important"? Well, I for one consider it to be vitally important. We discussed on a previous occasion the beauty and the maturity of the hierarchical structure from God to man. How can we ignore the majesty of God? How dare we approach Him with anything less than reverential awe? The perfect love which casteth out fear must have within itself a righteous respect for the One who is the object of our love and indeed the Source of it. We as christians are paying too much attention to the counsels of the world. Men are assuming a certain effeminacy which is contrary to their true God-given nature as family head and protector; women are paying too much attention to the counsels of the emancipationists and are neglecting their critical role as helper, supporter, and unifying influence in the family. Oh, if only we could accept the simple yet profound truth that God knows best.

When we come together we should have respect for the One we are meeting, and the quality of the purpose for which He asked us to meet together. If we meet together in His name, then His purpose and will must predominate, and who would be bold enough to say that idle gossip and chatter could provide a suitable overture to the worship and praise of God and His Christ. Is it asking too much to take our seats in a Meeting and to concentrate on God prior to our worship of Him? Is it beyond our capabilities to show respect for Him, and to teach our children to have respect for us as parents and consequently through us to Him? I marvel sometimes at the fawning respect given to men, and the callous indifference shown to God. Let us, when we meet together, display the quality and dignity of our relationship with God, and not the raucous and immature posturing of the market-place. Then, perhaps, we shall earn the plaudits given to those who love and respect their God, and who want to do nothing by attitude or word which would displease Him. In short, let us be reverent.

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

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

The above is a very simple question. Yet, how few individuals would give the real answer if considered in the light of God's word. We will all admit that in ordinary walks of life most men have a GOAL in mind.

Some aim to become sportsmen, professors, artists etc, while others seek the pleasures of this life. This lesson has a purpose to remind the true Christian and also to warn the unbeliever of the GOAL he should have in mind.

Some of us attend services merely from a family tradition; because mother and father go to church we feel that we must go. "God commendeth His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8), and "commandeth

men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Who is God, men will say, to tell me, a respectable person, who does no harm to anyone, pays his way through life, and gives to charity, that I must repent?

"Repent of what, may I ask?" This attitude is no better than that old Pharisee (in Luke chap. 18), who prayed to God, by saying, "I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Yet, we read ... that the poor publican was more justified when he smote on his breast saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The publican, thank God, was one out of the many ... individuals in this life who were aiming at the right GOAL. He realized and admitted he was a sinner.

Jesus said, "for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

Multitudes in the world adopt the attitude and self-righteous manner of that Pharisee in Luke chap. 18, which without any doubt places THEM in the "broad way," and few, but a few take the humble and penitent attitude of the publican, the "narrow way," that leadeth unto life, the RIGHT GOAL!

We can look for no better example than that of Jesus, who had one GOAL. "He set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem." That was His GOAL, the great sacrifice on Calvary, it meant life and hope for a world steeped in sin. Paul once said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phill. 1:21). Think of this bold statement brothers and sisters, TO LIVE IS CHRIST! Is this your GOAL? IF we expect to "live" it means more than just believing, singing, praying, or giving: it means self-denial, it means "Crucifying self." Jesus teaches us, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

Paul admonished his brethren, "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark (THE GOAL) for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phill. 3:13-14). Yes, indeed, for Paul "to live was Christ." Nothing else in this world was of greater value to him: it WAS CHRIST. Again he says, "Behold I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me." This warning caused no anxiety or fear, or loss of faith; nor did it cause Paul to give up preaching. He boldly declared further, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy" (Acts 20:22-24) THIS WAS PAUL'S GOAL!

That should be the life and attitude, and spirit of every Christian. On another occasion Paul said, "I glory not in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He also spoke of being in "perils, among robbers, in perils in the sea, beaten with rods, stoned, a night and day in the deep, thirty nine stripes, painfulness, hunger, thirst . . ." (2nd Cor, II: 23-27) Can one imagine his physical pain, yet admonishing his brethren to "press on"? "For to me to live is Christ," His GOAL WAS FIXED. So when he says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," when he said that he meant more than just, living, praying, giving he meant suffering too when necessary.

Paul further testifies, and says, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world ... Alexander the coppersmith, did me much evil" (2nd Tim. 4:10), yet, we say again, amid ALL this sad exhibition of some of Paul's experiences, did not move Paul away from his GOAL!

This determination and zeal was so fixed and rooted in the whole being of Paul that he could boldly say, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor ... Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor

depth, nor any creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8: 38-39).

Remember and bear in mind, that we, as sinners in human frames, are in no way different from Paul, and should therefore, endeavour to make Christ our GOAL IN LIFE. Moreso, as Christians, to be assured of this fact, that when we do make CHRIST OUR GOAL we have the promise, that we shall "enter into the Holy City, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, crying, nor teas, or pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

The Great and Important question? What is your goal? Christian or sinner friend?
 by Thomas W. Hartle (Evangelist)
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 Oranjezicht, Cape Town, Rep. S.A.

UNITY BY DECREE

Our text for this subject is to be found in Ephesians 2:6. Here Paul the apostle tells us that in times past we walk after the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind (verse 3) and then in our text he says, "And has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Thus we see that we are to sit together else we are not raised up by God, nor saved by grace (Eph. 2:5) for if we are raised up we are made to sit together. Thus we have unity for God makes us all to sit together. Sit together is equal to the statement in 1 Cor. 1:10, "Now, I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

In the light of these scriptures if we fail to manifest a spirit of unity we are disobeying a decree of God who has a perfect right to command. If we disobey the plan commands of decrees of men we will be surely punished if the men in authority know we have disobeyed them. Then if we disobey these plain commands of God will not all logic teach us that he will punish us also.

Let us sit together by speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where it is silent, discarding all human creeds and recognise only the divine creed as authority, the Bible.

H. S. BOYDSTON.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JULY 1981

July 5 Numbers 9,1-14 Mark
 14,12-36

July 12 Job 19,1-18 Mark 14,27-42

July 19 Psalm 41 Mark 14,43-52

July 26 Psalm 35,1-15 Mark
 14,53-72

Preparation

We must know that Jesus attended the appointed feasts (Lev.23) as a matter of obedience to the law under which he was born, and lived faultless.

So He knew Jerusalem. John's gospel in particular makes this clear. Coming now to the most important of the feasts, that of the Passover with seven days of unleavened bread, we assume that whole was called the Passover but the actual sacrifice and meal would be specifically of Nizam 14th.

It would begin in our measurement of days on the evening of Nizam 13th at sunset. Peter and John were sent ahead to make ready. They identified the house through the MAN bearing a pitcher of water — an unusual sight. Was he not saving his womenfolk the work — a gentleman? A friend of Jesus owning the house had already prepared

the "upper room" for use of Rabbi and disciples. Here the thirteen men came and reclined around the table in subdued frame of mind. Surely they had all a premonition of evil. They witnessed the disappointment of the people, and the fierce opposition of the authorities. Their fears and frustration cast gloom over the meal, and they must have been appalled at the horrible thought of betrayal. For many days they had been astonished at the calm and determined walk of Jesus to Jerusalem, and His unsparring words to the religious leaders (John 11,16; Mark 8,31; 9,12; 13,9-13). Even then however they had been discussing their relative positions in the KINGDOM, which in their view "was immediately to appear" (Luke 18,11). These thoughts were surely sunk for ever when He, their Lord and Master, arose and washed their feet.

The last meal

Every Jew revered the Passover, and cast his mind back to the exodus from Egypt. It was God's miraculous deliverance. The beginning of the holy people — which they now were! It was a religious festival not a time for mere physical satisfaction. The disciples must have celebrated it with Jesus before but now he says to them "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you BEFORE I SUFFER" (Luke 22,15). The institution of the Lord's Supper is described very briefly by Mark. It was a part of the meal. The loaf was taken up in Jesus' hands and made a symbol which they all shared, and later the cup containing the fruit of the vine (not specifically "wine") passed around and shared as was the loaf. We understand that at least four cups were thus shared during the meal. Luke only records the first at the commencement but all three writers record that which apparently concluded the meal, the contents symbolising the blood about to be shed for the world's sin, and giving opportunity for forgiveness. It is evident that Jesus was speaking His final earthly teaching at the meal and seeking to encourage His

disciples in preparation for the to-them tragedy they were shortly to witness.

It is perhaps hard for us to enter into their experience. We know that Isaiah 53 with other portions of prophecy relating the degradation and deepest humiliation of the prophet from Nazareth mighty in word and deed (Acts 10,38), but if we had seen that power in operation how would we have reacted to this total eclipse of His glory? The measure of the love which he thus chose to suffer is beyond human comprehension. It is this suffering by which He glorified God. (John 12,38).

Peter's fall

Jesus had pointedly warned his disciples of His coming decease (Luke 9,31). He had taken them aside at times to do this, and as the time drew nearer retired from publicity to be closer to them. They were unable to grasp the truth that He was to be glorified by death upon the cross. Now when they walked out with Him to Gethsemane they knew they were facing a disaster. He told them they would all fulfill prophecy by deserting Him. Peter, impetuous, brave and honest immediately responded with a declaration of unflinching loyalty. He did indeed act upon this on the spur of the moment of arrest, and was only saved from arrest and probably death by the intervention of Jesus in healing the ear of Malchus. Jesus also rebuked his action in words which have echoed down the centuries — "Put up thy sword into its sheath, they that take the sword shall perish by it". Physical resistance at that time was in any case futile humanly speaking. Peter and John followed however, anxious to know what would follow but not wanting to be identified. John was known to the household of the High Priest so did not have questions to answer, but Peter got into the courtyard, and upon being questioned denied any connection with the now helpless and disgraced prisoner. Mark here gives a detail which surely came from Peter himself. After denying he went out into

the porch and a cock crowed. Back among the servants he then twice again denied his Master who arraigned in the court turned and looked upon him.

Jesus had already been brutally struck and hid not His face from shame and spitting (Isaiah 50,6). Peter had become ASHAMED of Him for "as One from whom men hide their face He was despised" (Isaiah 53,3). He had thought "it was He who should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24,21) but now! Oh, no! It could not be — Peter thought! But that look! What agonising and bitter regret — was it not like Paul's "without sight and for three days did neither eat nor drink" (Acts 9,9)? We read the Lord hath appeared to Simon (Luke 24,34), surely to supply a special need, and more needed special words as recorded by John (21,15-19). Today it requires courage to confess Jesus in ordinary life among ordinary folk. They will shy from plain words about Him for they know how far they are from the holiness for which Jesus stands.

The mock trial

How cowardly, despicable and mean the Scribes and Rulers appear. Jesus rebuked them plainly in the few words He deigned to speak when being nominally JUDGED by the august council of the Sanhedrin. He said "I spake openly". They acted in the dark at dead of night. He said "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of it" when illegally smitten. They used violence — He behaved with dignity (Mark 14,65) Having got Him into their power they forgot all decent behaviour. They vented their spite upon Him, yet must have known Him to be absolutely innocent. It was merely a show of justice, a got-up trial, the court called at illegal hours, proceeded with paid false witnesses hopelessly contradicting one another, and obviously lying. In order that they might have excuse to pass the death sentence the judge asked the specific question "Art Thou the Christ?" not to consider the answer, whether true or not, but to impose or excuse a sentence

according to the will of the majority of the counsellors He knew they were with him in their hatred. What could Nicodemus or Joseph do if they were in fact present? We do indeed need to study the four accounts of the trial of Jesus which appears to have included one before Annas, apparently the power behind the High Priest, another at the House of the High Priest and finally before the whole Sanhedrin, called specially together at an early hour to impose its will upon Pilate, whose weakness they well knew. We think sometimes of the awful nature of the sin of Judas. What will those priestly hypocrites and murderers of Christ face when they see — as they certainly will — Jesus "coming in the clouds of heaven". The saintliest are deeply conscious of their need on that occasion — "Let me hide myself in Thee!"

R. B. Scott

WHY DO CHRISTIANS SING?

It has been said that a "fervent spirit of devotion instructively seeks to express itself in song."

In matter of faith and devotion, the Master has included worship in song as a definite, meaningful part of Christian experience.

It is one thing to know what the scriptures say ABOUT singing but it is still another for us to derive from worship in song what the Lord wants us to receive. For example, it is simple enough to read "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19) — but what about the actual DOING, the EXPERIENCING, of the truth? or again, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Colossians 3:16) — easy to read but do we personally realize every time we sing it is that we might WORSHIP the Lord?

I'M NOT GOING YOUR WAY

Author Unknown

"You're out of date," said young pastor
Bate

To one of our faithful old preachers,
Who had carried for years, in travail
and with tears
The gospel to poor sinful creatures.

"You still preach on Hades and shock
cultured ladies
With your barbarous doctrine of blood.
You're far behind; you'll never catch
up;
You're a flat tyre stuck in the mud."

For some little while, a wee bit of a smile
Played over the old preacher's face.
Being made the butt of ridicule's cut
Did not ruffle his sweetness or grace.

Then he turned to young Bate, so
smooth and sedate,
"Catch up, did my ears hear you say?
Why, I couldn't succeed if I doubled my
speed;
My friend, I'm not going your way."

MAN'S OBLIGATION

"I am not bound to win, but I am
bound to be true; I am not bound to
succeed, but I am bound to live up to
what light I have. I must stand with
anyone that stands right, stand with him
while he is right and part with him when
he goes wrong."

— Abraham Lincoln.

THE GOSPEL AND ATHEISM

Charles Bradlaugh, the atheist,
challenged Hugh Price Hughes to debate
with him on the truth of Christian faith.
The challenge was accepted, in these
words: "Courts in rendering verdicts do
not rely solely on arguments of lawyers.
They carefully scrutinize those who
have first-hand knowledge of facts. I will
bring with me to the debate one hundred
men who have been saved from sin by
the gospel of Christ. They will give
evidence and you will be allowed to
cross-examine them. I ask that you
bring one hundred men and women who

have been similarly helped by the gospel
of infidelity."

The debate did not take place.

**MODERN DISBELIEF AND
MATERIALISM**

Modernism and materialism must
bear their responsibility for the present-
day moral and spiritual "letdown." By
the negative process of saying "We do
not believe this" and "We do not accept
that" they have helped to undermine
and destroy the faith of this generation.
When you rob men of their faith in God
and the Bible moral decay sets in,
human passions are not restricted and
human life is cheap.

— *American Christian Review.***BE STRONG!****Maltbie Davenport Babcock**

Be strong!
We are not here to play, to dream, to
drift;
We have hard work to do and loads to
lift;
Shun not the struggle . . . face it; 'tis
God's gift.

Be strong!
Say not, "The days are evil. Who's to
blame?"
And fold the hands and ac-
quiesce . . . oh, shame!
Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in
God's name.

Be strong!
It matters not how deep entrenched the
wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day how
long;
Faint not . . . fight on! Tomorrow comes
the song.

**CAROLE ASHURST TO INDIA —
APPEAL**

60 Kenwood Road,
Stretford,
Manchester, 20-3-81.

Dear brethren,
Thank you very much for the support
and interest you have shown in my going

as a nurse to India. I have received a letter from a Mission Farm near Nainital in the north of India where I am hoping to go to acclimatise and gain experience with children before going to Madras. Maxton Strong (the founder) was strongly recommended to me by a brother in the church at Lucknow.

There are about 100 children being brought up on the farm — all of them very poor and many as orphans. They are taught trades and given a general education in a Christian atmosphere. They have no nurse there so I will learn a lot and also do my very best to help the Strong's who have been working and running the farm for 34 years. They are both ageing and recovering from major surgery. We don't know the exact group by which the mission is helped (we do know they practice immersion) but I will find out as soon as possible. If anyone has any doubts about supporting me in what may not be a strictly 'Church of Christ' venture, or may wish to know more before offering any financial aid, please do not hesitate to let me know. In case any money sent to me in India gets lost it might be best to send it to 'Carole Ashurst — India Account' and addressed to my home.

I have booked a flight to India for 27th May and am deeply grateful for the amount received which has covered the cost of a return ticket and also part of the monthly support promised. Again thanks to you all and I will try, with God's help, to use it to His glory.

Yours in Jesus, Carole Ashurst.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

In response to the rest from brother Mike Willis in last month's issue of the 'S.S' for chapter and verse to justify any church in supporting hospital staff, I have had one or two replies and publish two herewith:

Editor.

Downs View,
19 Godstone Road,

Old Oxted,
Surrey.
RH8 9JS
7-5-81

Dear brother Editor,

Firstly, there can be no doubt that there is no scriptural basis for the practice of Churches giving financial support to hospitals. It is an activity which can and will lead to the corruption of the Lord's body to the extent that it will become unrecognisable as such. It is a compromise that leads to further compromise; for it requires the acceptance not only of a doctrine which is unscriptural but also fellowship with those who hold to such teachings. We therefore cease to have any grounds to claim a purity of Truth as distinct from the 'secular Christian' world. The adoption of ascriptural practices prevents us speaking "the utterances of God" (1 Pet 4; 1); and we become guilty of preventing that unity of truth for which our Lord so earnestly prayed.

Thus the fundamental point behind Bro. Willis' letter can only cause us concern, and we should indeed take time to reappraise our practices.

That it requires a letter from a distant land to point out errors in our practices. While we may resent this we should not ignore such exhortations simply because they are from the U.S.; for if they are valid then they know no bounds. However we must not be apathetic — the Church in this country can only grow with the home-grown resources open to it. Let us be more diligent to "test ourselves to see if we are of the faith; examine ourselves!" (2 Cor 13; 5).

Yours in Him,

Kim J. Boland.

467 King's Road,
Stretford, Manchester.

Dear brother Editor,

In *The Scripture Standard* for May, Mike Willis requests the authority of "book, chapter and verse for the church to be involved in financing a hospital or supporting its staff" and asserts that

unless these tokens can be given, "work in these areas stand outside the revelation of God and condemned just as certainly as infant baptism would be."

It would be hard to discover anywhere a more jarring statement than this made by anybody professing to have the mind of Christ. What is it that governs Christian behaviour? Is it an appeal to the detailed minutiae of a divine code of laws such as governed the children of Israel under the old covenant? Or is it the all-embracing code of Christ with the command to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and our neighbour as ourself? Isn't that sufficient warrant to build and staff hospitals, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and generally to do good to all men? (See Gal. 6.10). Do we need to have every aspect of love to neighbour spelt out in detail for us, or shall we restrict ourselves literally to tending the wounds, only of those who fall among thieves on their way down from Jerusalem to Jericho?

Does Mr Willis drive a car? Has he got text and verse for this? Does he wear spectacles? Where is the text and verse? If we must cite a text for everything we do, then we must give up breathing.

Thanks be to God that Christ is the end of such law and if the Spirit of Christ moves one man to act in love for his neighbour, who are we to grieve Him by our own restrictions, which while having the appearance of scriptural warrant, fly in the face of the whole New Testament spirit?

But is the appeal of Mr Willis not so much made in a desire to find scriptural precedent for Christian hospital work, but rather in the fear that the preaching of the gospel may become supplanted by social ministry? There is no need to fear in this respect, for here we are clearly in the steps of the Master. Of Him it was said (and commonly known) that "he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10.38). It is more likely to be noticed that God is

with us, not because we preach at men's souls and neglect their bodies, but because we have a loving concern for the whole man as God has made him. When Jesus sent his disciples out to preach, he told them also to heal the sick (Mt. 10.7,8; Lk. 10.9). May God still grant us a testimony as rich as this.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

David Brady.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan. The church held a short mission in April when Michael Gaunt from Peterhead powerfully preached the word. The meetings were well supported by neighbouring congregations, and we would thank all those who came along to share in the fellowship. Our thanks also to the brethren at Peterhead for permitting Michael to come and help us, and to Michael himself for the excellent service he gave during his stay. We are praying that the seed sown will ultimately bear the desired fruit.

OBITUARY

Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan. We are sad to report the passing of Bro. James Melling on April 15th, aged 78 years. He had suffered from Parkinsons Disease for the last 10 years, but he will be remembered for the stalwart service he gave to the church prior to his illness. He had been a reliable and faithful member of the church in Scholes since his youth, and had served in every capacity, including elder. His dedicated service of the Master will long remain in the memories of those who knew him. Such faithful men are difficult to replace, but we know that those who mourn his passing will find comfort in the Lord.

D. Melling

REVERENCE

Today I came to worship. There was a burden on my heart, and I wanted to commune with God. I came early, so that I might meditate and concentrate upon Our Lord's goodness. His love and His sacrifice.

There was none there when first I came but there was the emblem of His body which was before me. I was glad to be alone with Him. "How much He loved," I thought, "How little He was understood while here on earth. How much He gave that I might have an insight into His infinite loving kindness. In the quietness of that moment I was overcome with a sense of relief. I heard His voice: "Come ye that are weary and find rest."

But the sweetness of that moment was broken, for others were coming to worship. Blithely they entered; happy and carefree they appeared; nonchalantly they spoke of the events of the past week, and glibly of the anticipation of the morrow. I gazed at the table on which lay the emblem of His body, and silently prayed:—

"Lord, at Thy feet I have left my care,
And I have gleaned from this precious hour
Real worship, which in truth is rare.
And now, the prayer which I leave with Thee:

O Lord, may my worship ever be
From all earthly thoughts and pleasures
free." — Selected.

No sermon can accomplish much without hitting somebody.

Some people think they are being frank when they are only unpleasant.

Nothing terrifies some men more than having to change a cherished opinion.

Never mind about doing extraordinary things: just do ordinary things extraordinarily well.

Real courage is going right ahead when you are afraid.

All of us intend to do better tomorrow, and would do if only we started today. Today is the tomorrow we intended to do so much in yesterday.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

There is no such thing as a juvenile problem as a thing apart. Children and adolescents are not a factor, but a product; not the actors, but the acted-upon. Youth is a perfect community thermometer, or an organ upon which the community plays for harmony or dischord; or a mirror which reflects the home, school, church and picture-show.

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