

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL.51 No.8

AUGUST 1983

BOOK OF MORMON - AGAIN

BACK in 1978 I wrote in this magazine some articles entitled 'The Book of Mormon - True Or False'. These engendered a certain interest and I had requests for copies from as far away as the Shetland Islands. I have never quite been able to understand why many of the intelligent people in the Mormon faith cannot see the falsity of many aspects of the B. of M. even when it is pointed out to them. In the many discussions I have had with young Mormon evangelists I have always been unable to get straight answers to the many questions induced by the claim that the B. of M. came directly from God through Joseph Smith. With this in mind I wrote recently to the Mission President of the Edinburgh Headquarters of the Mormon Church and asked for the answers to six fairly straightforward questions. I could have asked another dozen questions quite readily but I wanted to keep the task within reasonable proportions. It should be remembered that Mormons say that the Bible can be accepted only insofar as it is correctly translated - (and most of us might agree with this,) but the implication in this statement is, of course, that no such problem arises with the B. of M. because *it is correctly translated*. Indeed Mormons claim that the B. of M. is unique and of unparalleled distinction in that it was translated by 'the gift and power of God'; that a miraculous device called the 'Urim & Thummim' was supplied to Joseph Smith by God (and delivered by an angel) in order to perform the super-natural wonder of translating the book from the unknown 'Reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics' into English. Furthermore an angel was sent from God no less than fifteen times to *make certain* that the B. of M. was *properly translated and printed*. Joseph Smith himself said that the B. of M. was '*the most correct of any book on earth*' and a man would get nearer to God by its precepts than any other book (including the Bible no doubt). It should also be remembered that when Joseph Smith was 'translating' the B. of M. from the letters on the golden plates he first put the magic 'seer stone' into a hat and then put his face in the hat to exclude the light. In the darkness the 'spiritual light' shone and something resembling parchment would appear, and on that the writing. One character at a time would appear and under it was a sub-title in English. Joseph Smith would read this through a curtain to Oliver Cowdery (the principal scribe) who, when he had written the word would repeat it to Joseph Smith to see if it was correct. If it was correct it would disappear and another character with its English interpretation would appear. "Thus", says David Whitmer (one of the 3 witnesses

to the B. of M.) as he describes the procedure during the translation, "Thus the B. of M. was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man". It will be seen from all the above that the B. of M. *should* (according to all the claims for it and 15 visits of the angel) have been infallibly correct in every tiny detail. Indeed it was not so much 'a translation' as it was a direct revelation. If indeed it was translated 'by the gift and power of God' we would expect it to be complete and perfect in every detail. This super-natural volume - (result of the miraculous 'Urim & Thummim' sent specially by God) was published in 1830. The edition of today however bears little resemblance to the original edition of 1830 because the Mormon church have had to make some three thousand alterations to it (not little things but big things - changes to the sense and wording of sentences, words added, words omitted, phraseology, spelling, grammar and punctuation). Indeed on page 52 alone there have been made over fifty-three changes. The Mormon Church cannot deny this because *they* themselves have seen the errors and *they* have corrected them. Another very important point to remember is that the plates from which Joseph is alleged to have translated the B. of M. were said to have been placed in a hole in the earth some 400 years A.D. and remained there, quite undiscovered, until Joseph Smith was told by the angel where they were and to go and dig them up (just prior to their publication in 1830). Thus the contents of the B. of M. were placed on plates long prior to 400 A.D. and *did not see the light of day* from 400 A.D. until God and Jesus (both together) visited Joseph Smith in 1820, (so the story goes). In view of all this my questions (which I am here abbreviating to save space) were as follows:-

- (1) Why is the B. of M. incomplete? The 1830 edition states in a 'Preface (omitted from today's version) that 116 pages of Joseph Smith's manuscripts were stolen - notwithstanding the 15 angelic visits to 'make sure it would be properly translated and *published*'. (1) Why did God *fail* in His bid to get the Book properly printed & published? (2) Was there anything of importance on these 116 pages? (3) if 'Yes' how can we do without them? (4) If nothing of importance was on them are there *other* pages in the Book with nothing important on them? (5) Why could J. Smith not repeat them? (6) Why has this 'Preface' been dropped from today's edition?
- (2) Why were golden plates with hieroglyphics necessary if, at the translation, J. Smith had his hat drawn over his face and could not see the plates but had 'subtitles' (each word placed before his eyes in the darkness) in English?
- (3) If the B. of M. 'most correct book on earth' and by verbal inspiration direct to J. Smith 'by the gift and power of God' (not forgetting the 15 angelic visits) how is it that the Mormons have found it necessary to make over 3,000 corrections to errors in the Book. Is God's '*power*' as weak as all this suggests? Was God's angel completely incompetent?
- (4) The Book of Mormon (Chap. 9:32-34) gives an explanation as to why the text on the gold plates was in 'Reformed Egyptian' (whatever that was) and why another language such as Hebrew was not used and states, "But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also *that none other people knoweth our language*; therefore he hath prepared means of interpretation thereof". In view of the fact that "None other people knoweth our language" (Reformed Egyptian) why:-
 - (a) Why did J. Smith allow Martin Harris to take copies of the translation of plates to experts in languages when *he knew* they could not possibly translate the so-called 'Reformed Egyptian' since it was a language 'None

other people knew', and since only J. Smith with the magical 'Urim & Thummim' could decipher it.

- (b) Mormons claim that one of these language experts, Professor Anthon, declared that these said copies shown him by Martin Harris were true and genuine. J. Smith said, 'Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, moreso than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian.' (The same Professor denied that he had said any such thing - rather the reverse). Please explain how the Professor could have said the translation was genuine if 'Reformed Egyptian' was a completely unknown language needing a 'Urim & Thummim' for its decipherment?
- (5) The B. of M. came direct from 'golden Plates' contained in a language called 'Reformed Egyptian' (exclusively understood by the Nephites) and these plates did not see the light of day from 400 A.D. to 1820. Yet when translated they contain large chunks of the King James Version (indeed 27,000 words from the K.J.V.) For example Mosiah 14 is a direct copy from Isaiah 53 in the King James Version (including the words in italics - interpolated by the 1611 translators). Please explain this apparent absurdity? How could words written in 1611 get on to plates secreted in the earth in 400 A.D. (long before the English language had even been formed)? Translators of the K.J.V. placed the word 'easily' in 1 Cor. 13:5 without any justification - i.e. "love is not, *easily* provoked". The Revised Version and the American Standard Version omit the word 'easily' because it ought not to be there. The writer of the B. of M. was obviously unaware of this for Moroni Chap. 7:45 quotes the K.J.V. and includes the word 'easily'. Does not this prove that the writer of the B. of M. copied straight from his copy of the K.J.V.?
- (6) On June 1st, 1978, the Presidency and Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church voted to permit *black people* to hold office in the Mormon Church. Some say that this was due to public pressure. Prior to that time Mormons taught that "*one drop*" of negro blood was sufficient to bring a person under curse and bar him from the Priesthood." Indeed, did not Brigham Young say, "... the first Presidency, the Twelve, the High Council, the Bishoprick, and all the Elders Of Israel, suppose we summon them to appear here, and here declare that it is right to mingle our seed with the black race of Cain, that they should come in with us, and be partakers of all the blessings God has given us. *On that very day*, and from the hour we should do so, the Priesthood is taken away fom this Church and kingdom, and God leaves us to our fate. The moment we consent to mingle with the seed of Cain, the Church must go to destruction - we should receive the curse which has been placed upon the seed of Cain, and never more be numbered with the children of Adam who are heirs to the Priesthood until that curse be removed." Now that Mormons are mingling their seed with the cursed 'black race of Cain' will the predictions of Prophet Brigham Young come to pass i.e. that 'from that very hour' the Priesthood will be taken from the Mormon Church and the church must go to destruction? Or was the Prophet mistaken?

The above is the gist of the questions I sent to the Mission President in Edinburgh on 24/4/83. I received no reply and 2 months later I wrote to ask if he would, at least, tell me if he had received my letter. On 2/7/83 I received an apology for not replying and another apology for having lost my letter but offering to call and answer the questions verbally. On 6/7/83 I re-sent the questions declining the offer of a personal visit and asked specifically for a written reply. I wanted not the opinion of some of their young men (I have had these many times) but I wanted a

fairly authoritative answer from the Mormon Church. On 7/7/83 two young men arrived on my door-step, quite unannounced, at 8 p.m., to verbally answer my questions. I declined to agree to this but invited them in. they said my questions would not be answered in writing as 'I might later take them out of context', but they would be happy to explain them verbally. I replied that when they were gone I would have no record of what they had said, but they explained that I could take notes. I replied that perhaps I conceivably might take their *verbal* statements 'out of context' and that later they might dispute my notes. I then asked them to send me a letter explaining they they could not give me answers in writing. At least I would then have a tangible record of their refusal. This request they also refused. I asked if there was anyone in the Mormon Church who would answer my questions and they said that the President in Utah might (but he is such a busy man). After some difficulty I obtained from them the President's address in Salt Lake City and so I will now write to him. As it was we only dealt lightly with one of my questions although our talk lasted until 11.30 p.m. I did not bother to 'take notes' albeit the two men, under pressure, admitted that Joseph Smith was only a fallible man and that the B. of M. might indeed *be full of errors* (an admission I was not likely to get in writing). They also admitted "Yes, there were over 3,000 errors in the B. of M. - Yes there is a quotation from Shakespeare in the B. of M. and a few Frenchwords - Yes, the King James Version is quoted in the B. of M." but what does all that matter - God has, after all, told them that the Book of Mormon is true. That to them is all that matters. Clearly these young men would have said the same thing even if I could have shown that there were Nursery Rhymes in the Book of Mormon. Readers, however, might like to ask these kind of questions (as roughly outlined under the above six headings) of any Mormon 'missionaries' who may arrive at the door, and might also ask for an answer in writing. Meanwhile I shall keep readers informed of the President's reaction from Salt Lake City, or lack of it.

EDITOR

ARE CHILDREN TOTALLY DEPRAVED?

(Part 1)

FOR many readers of this journal, the title of this article will seem to pose a useless question. Their minds are already settled on the matter. We have been schooled in the statements of Jesus that express a loving attitude toward children. "Come unto me", he called to them; and to his disciples "forbid them not". (Mk. 10:14) His feuding followers were warned "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3) To us, those statements are incompatible with the notion that children are depraved in heart and mind and capable of no good impulse toward God.

But for a very large segment of what is called the Christian world, the matter is quite different. They refer to a different set of scriptures that, to them, sound equally authoritative in showing that at the time of the original sin, man's pure, "image of God" nature was changed to one of thorough-going corruption. Furthermore, they believe that depraved nature was passed on to Adam's posterity. Thus, little children must be saved from this inherited sin through baptism, or they too shall be lost.

I gained a new respect for the complexity of this doctrine when several months ago I studied the question and decided to write a series of articles about it.

I am still completely convinced the doctrine is wrong, but I am now convinced after having waded through a complex (and at times boring) history of how the belief system developed in the religious world, and after considering at length the texts that are believed to support it. Most Christians would be surprised at how long the idea has been around and at some of the people who have privately worried about it. Alexander Campbell put a note in his diary on January 15th, 1809 wondering if he were not totally depraved.

In this article I will develop two lines of thought. The first will be to explain the doctrine and show some of the ramifications of it. The second will be to briefly trace the history of the idea. "Those who are ignorant of history are destined to repeat it", at least so wise men have said. That may not be as true in religion as it is in social and political matters. It definitely will not be true if men will allow themselves to be guided by the word. Nevertheless, a knowledge of history is helpful in nearly any situation.

Two additional articles will follow this one. In the next one we will discuss the biblical references that are supposed to teach the doctrine of total depravity. The third and last article will discuss when and how children do become accountable to God.

The Doctrine and Its Ramifications

Generally, proponents of total depravity believe that before the fall Adam and Eve had special spiritual powers that enabled them to relate appropriately to God. When they sinned, they lost these special gifts, and got in their place a nature so corrupt, so alienated from God that it guaranteed their rebellion against His will. Thus, there is a negative and a positive side to the doctrine: the loss of a special righteousness, which is sometimes referred to as "deprivation", and the gaining of a perfectly corrupt nature, or "depravation". Adam's passage of this nature on to his descendants accounts for the universality of the tendency to sin.

There are various explanations of how Adam passed his evil nature on to posterity and why God is just in holding all mankind guilty for Adam's sin. One view, called the seed theory, holds that the human race was present in Adam at the fall. Adam was the seed of the human race. As the oak tree is present in the acorn, it is said, we were all there in him and, in that way, partakers of his sin.

A second view asserts that Adam was a "representative" of the human race. In the same way that an ambassador acts for a government, Adam was empowered to act for us. Furthermore, it is argued, he was a "fair" representative, and did exactly what we would have done had we been there. Thus, again, we are all guilty. Both of these views see God as dealing with the whole human race as a unit.

A third and more simple explanation says tersely that Adam fell and became a sinner. It is a universal law of nature, so the argument goes, that like begets like. Since Adam was a sinner with a depraved nature, he could not possibly beget anything but sinners with depraved natures.

Since my purpose at this point is simply to explain the doctrine, no attempt will be made here to evaluate the credibility of these assumptions. One can see, however, that a belief like that just described would have far-reaching implications. For one thing, if children are sinners because of Adam, then infant baptism is required to keep them from being lost. Furthermore, if humans have no power of their own to do anything except rebel against God, then an

irresistable grace on God's part will be required to save them. If God's grace is irresistable, then man could not refuse it and man has lost his freewill. If man has no freedom to obey God on his own, then the saved and the lost must be so because God predestined it that way. The doctrines of infant baptism, lack of moral freedom in man, irresistable grace, and predestination all have their roots in the conception of the original sin. The validity of all of them stands or falls on the same basis.

History of the Doctrine

Even the most knowledgeable and ardent proponents of the doctrine of total depravity agree that it was unknown in the early church in its present form. Many Christians assume it began in the middle ages with reformers like John Calvin. It was developed, however, much earlier than that.

Some religious historians trace unconnected parts of the doctrine to Jewish literature many years prior to Christ. The Hebrew book called WISDOM, for example, speaks of the "actuality of transmitted depravity". But these writers believed the source to be Cain and his descendants. A little later, the BOOK OF THE SECRETS OF ENOCH referred to original sin derived from Adam. Other parts of the doctrine described above are not included in their views. Irenaeus, who was born about A.D. 140, believed the fall of Adam was a collective deed of the race, but he went no further than that. Origen (A.D. 185-254) supposedly taught an inborn guiltiness of sin. His view did not relate it to Adam. He thought the paradise story was an allegory about how each man had fallen from the grace of God in some previous existence.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430) is credited with the first organized doctrine of original sin and total depravity. In fact, he and another Christian philosopher, named Pelagius, debated the question in a way that might have taken place in Oklahoma City. Pelagius affirmed the freewill of man by arguing "If I ought, I can". The controversy stirred up by these two men rocked the church in the late fourth and early fifth centuries.

The "psychologist" in me always looks for what motivates a man, and there is plenty in the background of Augustine to intrigue the student of human behaviour. His teachings that "every man is in the power of the devil" were probably more reflective of his own exceptionally sensual personality in his early years than of ideas gleaned from the scriptures.

The controversy over the original sin seems to have rather subsided after the death of Augustine and Pelagius. It was resurrected by John Calvin, Martin Luther and other reformers in the late 15th and early 16th centuries in their fight with the Catholic Church. These men used it particularly to combat the Roman doctrine of meritorious works that was so much abused in their time. Total depravity came to be seen as one of the five major tenents of Calvinism. It is in the teachings of the denominations influenced by Calvin and others that we most frequently meet the doctrine today. Among others, those are Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Congregationalists, and Methodist.

In the next article we will examine the scriptural references usually used to support the doctrine of total depravity.

Sent for inclusion in the "S.S." by James D. Orten,
8049 Brookshire Dr. Oklahoma City, OK 73132

GLEANINGS

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

HIDE IN HIM!

"Are you driven by the wind, "tossed with the tempest, and not comforted"? Hide in Him! Get into Him, as the bark, strained and leaking, gets within the shelter of the mole or harbour-bar. Look out on the fury of the storm from the protecting environment of His presence. Often we have been hidden from the strife of tongues, or the sharp arrows of cruel and unjust scandal, in the thought of the love of some one for whom we have suffered, and one smile from whom has made us impervious to the assault. And how often have we retired within the strong and tender advice or succour of some noble, and wealthy, and capable friend, making our refuge with him until certain calamities have passed by! And why should we not do this with the Man of men, of whom all other men are suggestions and hints, and partial representations? Why should not those words of David fit us more literally, and be more frequently on our lips? - "The Lord is my rock, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.""

F. B. Meyer

WE QUOTE - H. W. BEECHER

"What would you think if there were to be an insurrection in a hospital, and sick man should conspire with sick man, and on a certain day they should rise up and reject the doctors and nurses? There they would be - sickness and disease within, and all the help without. Yet what is a hospital compared to this fever-ridden world, which goes swinging in pain and anguish through the centuries, where men say, "We have got rid of the atonement, and we are rid of the Bible?" Yes, and you have rid yourselves of salvation."

PRESIDENT GARFIELD SAID-

"During the 20 years I have been in public life I have tried to do one thing. Whether I was mistaken or otherwise, it has been the plan of my life to follow my convictions, at whatever cost to myself. I have represented for many years in congress a district whose approbation I greatly desired; but though it may seem a little egotistical to say it, I have desired still more the approbation of one person, and his name is Garfield. He is the only man that I am compelled to sleep with, and live with, and die with, and if I could not have his approbation I should have had companion-ship."

LORD AND CHRIST

"The kingdom of Christ is not a republic, but an absolute monarchy. On its throne is Jesus of Nazareth who has been made both Lord and Christ. To Him is given all authority in heaven and earth. To His will all must humbly and gladly submit or cast away all hope of present pardon and eternal redemption."

BEATEN OIL FOR THE LAMPS OF THE SANCTUARY

"The best and holiest men have ever made prayer the most important part of pulpit preparation. It is said of M'Cheyne, "Anxious to give his people on the Sabbath what had cost him somewhat, he never, without an urgent reason, went before them without much previous meditation and prayer. His principle on this subject was embodied in a remark he made to some of us who were conversing on the matter. Being asked his view of diligent preparation for the pulpit, he reminded us of Exodus 27:20. *'Beaten oil - beaten oil for the lamps of the sanctuary.'* And yet his prayerfulness was greater still. Indeed, he could not neglect fellowship with God before entering the congregation. He needed to be

bathed in the love of God. His ministry was so much a bringing out of views that had first sanctified his own soul, that the healthiness of his soul was absolutely needful to the vigour and power of his ministrations." "With him the commencement of all labour invariably consisted in the preparation of his own soul. The walls of his chamber were witnesses of his prayerfulness and of his tears, as well as of his cries."

C. H. Spurgeon

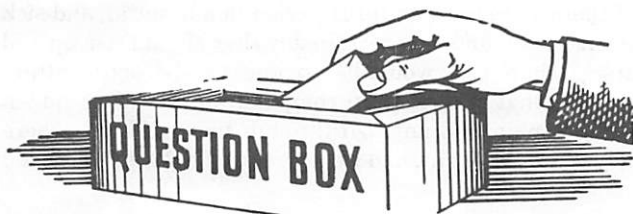
STOP ... LOOK ... LISTEN

"He prayed me into a good frame of mind," George Whitfield once said of a certain preacher, "and if he had stopped there, it would have been very well; but he prayed me out of it again by keeping on."

THE GREAT NEED

"There is more need than ever of faithfulness to the letter and spirit of the Gospel in rebuking iniquity and strengthening the things that remain. We need a new measurement of all things in the Church by the Gospel standard, a total rejection of everything not directly approved of the Lord, speaking through the Holy Spirit in the apostles."

SELECTED BY LEONARD MORGAN



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"There seems to be a lot of movement of Christians from assembly to assembly these days without anything being done about it. I have my own views regarding this, but I would like to hear your comments."

I DO not know, dear questioner, what your views *are* on the subject, but you have asked for mine and I shall give them as lovingly and as honestly as I can.

The problem is not new. The migration of Christians from assembly to assembly has been going on as long as I have been in the Church. The reasons for this are not always readily apparent, and, unless investigation in depth is carried out, may remain obscure, to the possible detriment of the assemblies concerned. For this reason I strongly deprecate this migration unless the position is clarified at the highest level in the assemblies concerned. But let us examine the problem in detail.

The Origin

To my mind, the origin of this problem lies in the reason which is most commonly adduced for its existence. Some Christians are loathe to identify themselves with a particular community of Christians, because, they say, the Church is to be viewed in its universal character, and therefore *any* Christian has the right to meet with *any* community of Christians wherever and whenever he or she decides to do so. I certainly would not deny this right, nor, I think, would anyone else, but surely there is a vast difference between meeting with fellow-Christians *for a specific purpose*, and the sort of indiscriminate wanderings which some Christians seem to delight in.

It would seem, then, that we need to reconcile the universal view of the Church with the community or assembly view, and see whether or not this reconciliation of views will lead to a crystallisation of our understanding of what membership really entails.

The Scriptural Reconciliation

It is undeniably true that the universal character of the Church is well attested to in the New Testament. Paul wrote, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). In the fifth chapter of the same letter, Paul makes it plain that when he speaks about the 'one body' he is speaking about the Church. So the Body of Christ is the Church of Christ.

Having accepted the above as true, which it undoubtedly is, we must also accept that the Church as revealed in the New Testament is synonymous with a *local* community of Christians, hence, Paul wrote letters addressed to "the Church at Corinth; the Church at Ephesus; the Churches in Galatia", etc. Furthermore, we are not to suppose that these local communities of Christians are merely *parts* of the one Church; each local community *is* the Church in that particular locality. The fact that the Church is a local community of Christians does not interfere with the *universality* of the Church. Wherever the Gospel is preached, and people respond by believing, repenting, and being immersed into Christ, then a community of Christians will exist in that locality, and consequently the Church will also appear in that locality.

Someone may ask, "Well how are these local communities directed from the central organisation?" The answer is that they are not, because there *is* no central organisation. Each member in each place recognises only the authority of God in Christ. In the Church "the head of every man is Christ; and Christ is God's". In every Church, when it is organised properly, there is a government of Elders and Deacons who know only the Headship of Christ. Each local community is completely autonomous and governs its own affairs, its life and practice being monitored by the Word of God, the Bible. No local assembly can exercise jurisdiction over another. The unity of Churches is unique; it does not depend on external organisation but is enshrined in the Unity of the Spirit. This spiritual unity, of course, transcends local barriers, and ensures that if one member of the Body suffers, than all suffer with it.

So we see, the local Church is, in microcosm, the Church universal, and consequently the itinerant Christian should not plead the universality of the Church as an excuse for non-commitment to any local community. The reasons for this ought to be obvious, but I am afraid that we shall have to explain.

Commitment to Service

Any local community of Christians is a family of God, bearing the marks of divine and spiritual relationships. The well-being of an earthly family is determined by the time and effort which each member expends in maintaining it. Similarly, the well-being of a local Church depends for *its* maintenance upon the time and effort which each *Christian* expends for it. After all, the responsibility which devolves on any Christian is a measure of the tasks which he undertakes to do, whatever those tasks may be. A Christian surely abrogates his responsibility to the local Church of which he is a member, when he chooses to meet wherever *he* wants to.

To my mind, itinerant Christians can be placed in the same category as what I term 'sporadic-attending Christians'; no community can devise any long-term programme of work around them. It is no doubt very nice, especially during the summer months, if one can travel through beautiful countryside, meet with fellow-Christians in other communities, enjoy to the full their fellowship, and return home replete, both physically and spiritually. But what about the saints who, week in and week out, are wrestling with problems associated with the promotion of the Gospel and the maintenance of the community. They surely need help and encouragement. Sometimes I am amazed at what we *all* maybe take for granted. We turn up at the Meeting Place and expect the doors to be open, the place to be clean and well-heated, necessary repairs carried out, everything to hand so that the various services can proceed, and a variety of other undefined tasks which are necessary for the efficient functioning of the community. One is puzzled as to whether the attitude suggests a lack of concern, or a supreme confidence that things *will* be done.

However, you see what I am driving at. Commitment to the local Church is necessary, and that commitment should be total.

Discipline

If a Christian chooses not to place membership with a local Church, then an additional question needs to be asked, namely, "who will administer discipline to that Christian should the need ever arise?" This is an important question because one who is not *committed* to a local Church cannot come under the jurisdiction of the Oversight of that Church.

The verb 'to discipline' means 'to save the mind', and it may very well be that a disciple needs to be admonished or called back to a soundness of mind. There are some who would say that the reading and understanding of the Bible would evoke self-discipline, and consequently admonition from anyone else would not be necessary. But such an answer would indicate to me *unsoundness* of mind on the part of the one who said it, because the same Bible teaches, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). I suggest to you, dear reader, that unless one is prepared to place oneself under the rule of those who watch over the souls of the saints then this part of the word can never be fulfilled by the ones who choose to ignore it. Does that indicate soundness of mind on their part? Not in the least, I would say.

Letters of Commendation

What about the Christian who meets regularly with a local Church and then for some reason leaves and turns up at another local Church. Should there be indifference at the Church he has turned from, and joy in the Church he has turned to because they have 'recruited' another member? My view is that neither attitude can be justified. What then should be done?

We are guided by the Bible in Acts of Apostles 18:24-28. This concerns Apollos, an eloquent speaker, who knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila heard him, took him to one side, and taught him further. At verse 27 we read, "And when he (Apollos) was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him". In other words, they sent a letter commending Apollos to the disciples with whom he would meet in the new location.

Conversely, we have Paul defending his Apostleship as recorded in 2 Cor. 3:1 ff. which reads, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?" So it appears that in the early Church commendatory letters (or non-commendatory as well, I suppose) was the usual practice when saints moved from Church to Church. Consequently, I hold the view that the Church of the New Testament should follow this practice today so that the purity of the Brotherhood can be maintained, and that possible harmful repercussions can be avoided.

Well, dear questioner, you asked for my views and I have given them. I stress that they are *my personal views*, but I believe them to be substantiated by Scripture and by Church policy.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SEPTEMBER 1983

4—Ezek. 3:15-27	Luke 21:20-38
11—Ex. 12:1-20	Luke 22:1-23
18—Num. 12	Luke 22:24-38
25—Psa. 41	Luke 22:39-53

WARNINGS OF DOOM

"Beautiful for situation" describes Jerusalem, and the Temple built under Herod, the Great, was famed as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Little wonder then that the disciples, and no doubt others, drew the attention of Jesus to these when approaching from the mount of Olives, or going out that way in the evenings. It must have riled the religious leaders to see "in the day time He was teaching IN THE TEMPLE, and all the people came early in the morning FOR TO HEAR HIM." There are three distinct subjects in His responses about the coming destruction of Temple and city, the coming violent treatment of His followers, and the end of the world. It requires a careful reading and comparison of the accounts in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 to harmonise them. There is no doubt however that it is the physical destruction of the Temple and city. The Romans certainly did invest the area with armies, besiege it and batter down the walls,

and followers of Jesus were thus given notice that when the armies gathered around, it was necessary to get out with haste. There could then be no mistake about the signs, but other events related to that destruction of place and nation would fulfill the curses in Deut. 28:15-68. So much was literally fulfilled in 70 A.D. The persecutions and other troubles have been partly fulfilled in history, and even in the world of this day. Surely we do not know the day, but all the warning signs have been with us ever since Jerusalem was destroyed. Today TV and Radio reports assure us OUR SAVIOUR can come at any moment and be in accord with prophecy. Not one of us has assurance of another day of life. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation!" "Surfeiting and drunkenness" we indeed recognise as an impossible part of christian behaviour but cares and pleasures of this life, are they not equally to be received with prayerful limitation and how much more dangerous on account of their apparent innocence! Shall we humbly pray with the hymn writer "We thank Thee more that all our joy is touched with pain, that shadows fall on brightest hours, that thorns remain, so that earth's bliss may be our guide, and not our chain." (1908 No. 548: Wigan 327: Christian Hymnary 356; Eph. 5:19).

Betrayal and Arrest

Judas ALAS! was ready as Satan's tool. Deep sorrow fills our hearts when we read this story. But it cannot be as great as his Master's. How could it be that one in close touch and trusted for three wonderful years of love and companionship could allow thoughts of enmity to take possession of his soul? Yet it has so often been so since the first murder. The envious thought can perhaps of all motives of the human heart be the easy point of attack for Satan. We must not speculate but we are all subject to sinful suggestions of the evil one. Peter never thought he could possibly deny knowing Jesus - but he did! The reproachful look brought him too late to acknowledge his sin - to confess and repent - but Judas went too far. The awful truth had been spoken, "it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24). The determination to destroy Jesus had been in the black hearts of the religious bosses for a long time. Their closed minds (6:11; Matt. 13, 14 & 15) and devilish envy were clear even to Pilate (Mark 15:10). They thought they would avoid publicity because they feared the people, who loved Jesus, so that Judas was able to do what they would not have known to do, a midnight arrest, violent indignities and degrading insults. Thus they presented the prophet from Nazareth as a powerless prisoner in their hands. THEN the awful nature of his sin struck the heart of Judas (Matt. 27:3-10) and in hopeless despair he died (Acts 1:18 & 19). We are shown glimpses into Judas's descent in John's gospel indicating moral weakness connected with love of money and covetousness. How far an evil motive can take us! The scene of the arrest is illustrated by all four evangelists, John giving details not mentioned by the others, see John 18:4-9. The plan for the kiss was doubtless executed in haste and became totally unnecessary through the manly courage of Jesus,

and His well-deserved rebuke. Once His submission was obvious the cowardly brutality of the soldiery took over, and full advantage taken by those, whose real and dastardly work it was. Hatred satisfies itself by cruelty. It is terribly at work in today's world where the helpless victims of political ambition are herded together. Let us help where we can - "inasmuch"! "They shall look on Him Whom they pierced". What a prospect for THEM! We observe that Peter did not fail to exercise courage and violence on behalf of His Master, but it was indeed a futile exercise and resulted in rebuke and warning. He however ran the risk of arrest and punishment from which the last kindly act of healing by Jesus, saved him.

Words at the Supper Table

The institution of the "Lord's Table" needs special and separate treatment. We comment only on Luke's record of the Saviour's words. Jesus regarded this meal with His apostles with special earnestness, and the five accounts illustrate this. Was it not HIS passover not THE PASSOVER meal? He ate with His apostles after sunset (our Thursday, the Jewish Friday) the day when the lambs were slain for the feast, the Preparation day on which the Lamb of God was slain for us. He would not eat or drink or it again until it is fulfilled in the "kingdom of God" surely referring to the church. "The fruit of the vine" (not wine) was in the cup they shared at the beginning and end of the meal. "Fruit" is Greek "Gennema" (generation or production). God makes grapes, vintners make wine out of them. Jesus first repeated His warning of His imminent death with the sad fact of betrayal, indicating only to John and Peter that it was Judas who should do it (John 13:22-30). The other disciples were distressed and doubtful of their own innocence. Then followed a few gracious words and a still more emphatic practical lesson became

necessary on account of strife about relative positions in the apostolate. John 13 records the act and Luke the insistence on brotherly submission, necessary humility and equality in favour - a kingdom with twelve tribes over whom to rule - and a common table - feeding together spirituality and physically, one level, no greater or lesser. Through Peter Jesus gave a plain warning of the tremendous shaking they were to receive with special prayer for Peter's recovery, and a duty towards his brother apostles. This brought an earnest but ill conceived boast of faithfulness at any cost. Then to them all a further warning of trouble to come without miraculous aid. They were to view His humiliation, and must expect to have a share of the same. Obviously two swords were useless, and His "enough" indicated a spiritual significance not realised at the time.

Gethsemane

Here we can only bow our heads - and hearts - in humble reverence before a scene of total and infinite submission to a self-set task entirely beyond our conception. One sin in the mind cannot be undone. "He that hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). An unkind thought is against the "spirit of Christ", and "he that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). We think of the "small" offences against God and our neighbour, and perhaps how little we are doing for our Saviour, and then, as it were, try to weigh the burden these must be to the God Who is utterly holy AND IS LOVE. The hideous torture of the cross, invented by man for man as a deterrent and punishment for sin, the worst and most degraded of men. To face it must have been too terrifying, but to choose it for the sake of us poor unworthy sinners, and to bear it without blenching! The hours of prayer in the garden proved to be so terrible a physical strain upon spirit, soul and

body that the sweat wrung from the body was heavy like blood, and the power to bear sustained by angelic aid. Only after fasting without food in the waste, howling wilderness to the point of complete physical exhaustion did the Saviour previously have that angelic aid. (Mark 1:13). We need often to re-read all three accounts of this anticipation and choice (Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 30-46). "All it has won for us the lost, all it cost Thee the Son."

R.B. SCOTT

THE NAME "CHRISTIAN"

WHEN a man is asked of his religion it is rarely indeed that he will answer first of all that he is a "Christian". He will usually say he is a "Presbyterian" (for example), and when one suggests that the followers of Christ should be known simply as "Christians", he replies, "Oh yes, I'm a Christian first, and a Presbyterian second". It has always seemed strange to me, if that be the case that he doesn't say *first* of all, "I'm a Christian".

As most religious people believe that God allows one to "join the church of his own choice", and of course there would be no choice if all were of the same pattern, then the sectarian names do their part in distinguishing between the "choices".

Is a name important? If one calls a house a "barn", is it not still a house? Call your neighbours house a "barn" and see if it matters to him! It is also true in religious matters; one religious group will not accept the name of another. Names are important for they usually designate ownership, relationship, and the essential character or quality of a person or thing.

God's people in all ages have worn names given them by him. God named Adam, Abraham, and Israel. "Israel" even became the surname of God's people (Isa. 44:5). The importance of a

name is positively stated in Acts 4:11,12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name given among men, whereby we must be saved."

There is positive biblical teaching concerning the common name by which the followers of Christ are to be known. It is a "worthy name" which was blasphemed (Jas. 2:7), a name because of which they suffered, and in which they were to glorify God (1 Ptr. 4:14-16); it is the name *Christian*.

In Acts 11:26 we read, "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch". The Greek word translated "called" in this passage has significance. Thayer says the word was used of "judges, magistrates, rulers, and kings. Hence in some later Greek writings "To give a response to those consulting an oracle, to give a divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven." The word occurs in the N.T. nine times in the verb form, and once as a noun. These appear in Matt. 2:12,22; Heb. 11:7 ('being warned of God'), Lk. 2:26 ('revealed by the Holy Ghost'), Acts 10:22 ('was warned from God'), Rom. 7:3 ('Shall be called'), Heb. 8:5 ('was admonished of God'), Heb. 12:25 ('spake'), Acts 11:26 ('were called'). The noun occurs in Rom. 11:4 ('answer of God').

Disregarding Acts 11:26 for the moment, and examining in context each of the other scriptures already cited, it will become obvious that in each case the "warning, revealing, calling, admonishing, speaking, and answering", was from a *divine source*. For example, in Rom. 7:3 the woman would be called an "adulteress" by the law of God. In Heb. 12:25 it was God who spake at Mt. Sinai, and through the prophets.

It was therefore by *divine instruction* that the disciples were called "Christians" first in Antioch, and it is

by *divine admonition* that this be the name in which God is glorified today (Jn. 5:23; 1 Ptr. 4:16).

Roland J. McDowell

WILLING SERVICE

A musician is not recommended for playing long, but for playing well. It is obeying God willingly, that is accepted; the Lord hates that which is forced, it is rather a tax than an offering. Cain served God grudgingly; he brought his sacrifice, not his heart. To obey God's commandments unwillingly is like the devils who came out of the man possessed, at Christ's command, but with reluctance and against their will. Good duties must not be pressed and beaten out of us, as the waters came out of the rock when Moses smote it with his rod; but must freely drop from us, as myrr from the tree, or honey from the comb. If a willing mind be wanting, there wants that flower which should perfume our obedience, and make it a sweet-smelling savor unto God.

SEEKING THE GOSPEL

"Have you ever heard the gospel?" a missionary asked a Chinaman. "No" was the reply, "but I have seen it. I saw a man who was the terror of the district. He was as fierce as a wild animal, and an opium smoker. When he accepted the Jesus religion he became changed. Now he is meek, no longer wicked, and has given up opium smoking. I can see by that the gospel of Christ."

BELIEF : (12)

The Tragic Results of Sin

The tragic results of sin are evident all around us, but this very evidence sometimes dulls our minds to the effect of sin in *ourselves*.

It is so easy to say like the self-righteous Pharisee, "I thank God I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican" (Luke 18:11) - as if we had never sinned ourselves, or as if sin was only sin when it appeared in others. On the contrary, Paul says, "For *all* have sinned" (Romans 3:23). John says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). This includes all men and women everywhere.

And the results of sin? Who can say what immediate effects sin has, not merely on ourselves, but also on others - our families, relatives, friends, neighbours and others?

The Final Result of Sin

Who can judge the final result of sin? We may try to ignore this question, but neither our apathy nor indifference can affect the fact itself. The final result of unrepented sin has been expressed by God himself in warnings like these: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "Sin, when it is finished, *bringeth forth death*" (James 1:15).

Sin and Death

The "death" mentioned here is not the death to which we are all subject - when the time comes to "depart this life". This is obvious and is clearly shown by Paul's words, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God" (Romans 6:23). Here we have a people who had been made free from sin, and yet, as we well know, they, as well as those who had not been made free from sin, were subject to death.

In fact, "ordinary" death, if we may so term it, is the penalty of *Adam's* sin, not our own (Genesis 2:17; 3:19), hence the apostle's use of the phrase "as in *Adam all die*" (1 Corinthians 15:22). What then is the death which Paul calls "the wages of sin"?

The Second Death

Note the contrast, "The wages of sin is death" Paul says, but he follows this up with, "but the gift of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Surely then the death here contrasted with eternal life must be *eternal death* or the *second death*. "But the tearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the *second death*" (Revelation 21:8).

These are grim words, but are they less grim than those of our Lord himself: "But the children of the kingdom (the Jews who were then God's people, but who rejected God's Son) shall be cast into *outer darkness*: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12). If this is to happen to God's people of old, who rejected his Son, where will they stand who today disbelieve in Jesus?

Repentance and Remission of Sins

Do not these warnings provide a strong reason for repentance? Remember that the primary object of our Lord's sacrifice on the Cross was that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

Why will men and women continue to hide their heads in the sand, and by refusing to listen to the warnings of God, meet the terrible fate which will be justifiably deserved?

But more about the consequences of sin in succeeding articles, when we shall also consider how we may escape this terrible judgment. In the meantime, study these

Exercises in Belief

Matthew 3:5-8, 8:5-13, 13:37-43, 49-50, 22:12-13, 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; Colossians 1:28; Luke 16:19-41.

(To be continued)

W. BROWN

NO STRONG DRINK

WE have this record of God's dealings with his people during their wilderness wandering. God said, "And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the Lord your God" (Deut. 29:5,6).

Rationing is nothing new, for it was instituted by the Lord as far back as the time of Israel's wilderness wanderings. For forty years there was a daily ration of manna. They were allowed so much each day, and no more. God's reason was not because of the shortage of supplies, however, it was "That I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no" (Ex. 16:4). He wanted to know whether they would trust Him daily for their daily bread. And though it took the equivalent of one hundred and eighty freight car loads of manna each day to feed these three million Israelites, and the equivalent of ninety-four tank cars of water per day, God did not let them lack at any time. However, not one gallon of wine, not one pint of strong

drink was included in the forty-year provision. They were "a total abstinence people" — and not a feeble form among them for forty years! Is it not significant?

Though God saw to it that prohibition prevailed in a nation for forty years, we have nations today that license liquor. All licenses are a permit to turn health into disease, decency into indecency, love into estrangement, young beauty into loathsomeness, woman's modesty into coarse effrontery, mother's milk into poison, manliness into beastliness, happiness into horror, honor into disgrace, intellect into driveling idiocy, plenty into poverty, comeliness into corruption, merriment into misery.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kirkcaldy, Scotland: The seed of the gospel has again borne fruit in that Pamela and Les Carter confessed Jesus as Lord and were baptised for the remission of their sins on Lord's Day, 3rd July, 1983. May the blessing of God be with them throughout life's journey with the Lord and with each other.

Robert Hughes, Sec.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH	£5.00
CANADA & U.S.A.	\$10.00
AIR MAIL please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates				

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Tel. No. Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead Midlothian, Scotland, EH37 5PT Telephone Ford 320 527

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd., Langley Mill, Nottm. Tel. 07737 (Langley Mill) 2266