

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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WHAT PRICE UNITY

I note from the newspapers that the world has just received a new pope. Reports say that the enthronement of Pope John Paul I, and the funeral of his predecessor, cost the Roman Catholic Church about three million pounds - an expensive business but peanuts to a body with the fabulous wealth and financial interests characteristic of the R.C. church. It is claimed that, notwithstanding the voting by the cardinals, it really is God who makes the choice - and so we are forced to the conclusion that God has a particular liking for the candidates from Italy. The new Pontiff in the various speeches he has been making, has been assuring the world that he shall push ahead with efforts to re-unite Roman Catholics and Anglicans, Orthodox believers and other Christians. Before we go running into the streets in general rejoicing over this news I suggest we consider first of all, what the pope has in mind when he talks about unity. After all his idea of 'unity' may have little similarity to your understanding of the word. We could suggest, of course, that the pope begin his reign with efforts to try and unite the Roman Catholic Church itself - for I understand that there is greater division within the R.C. church than in any other religious body. Most churches are pre-occupied with the subject of "Unity" these days, and have been, it seems, for a good number of years now. Progress has been virtually non-existent. I wonder why?

It's not a new subject, of course, The apostle Paul foresaw and predicted division in the church (Acts 20:29) when he addressed the elders at Ephesus and warned them thus, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears". Division then, and now, is caused usually by some of our own number, arising and speaking perverse things and drawing away disciples after them. Paul also made a plea to the disciples of Christ at Ephesus in his epistles (Chap. 4:1-6) to the end that they might keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, emphasising that there is ONE BODY, just as there is only one Lord, one faith, one hope, and one baptism. Paul's plea for unity was, of course, in complete harmony with the prayer of our Lord Himself when He prayed 'that they may all be one' and that the unity might be as total and complete as the unity which exists between Father and Son. We hesitate to believe that Jesus prayed for an impossibility and so men will be held responsible for the divided state of the religious world and the disastrous effect that such division has on an unbelieving world.

Two thousand years later, we are able to see how the predictions of the apostle Paul have unfolded. Men within the Church of the Lord certainly did arise, speaking perverse things, and

led men away after them. History illustrates that that division resulted in the coming into being of the Roman Catholic Church and the many sub-divisions into various denominational bodies since. The situation varies little each hundred years and many church-goers fail totally to realise the true origin of the place of worship at which they attend. They are as puppets controlled by strings held in the hands of dead men, as described in the following quotation, "The influence of Constantine went far toward turning the religion of our Lord from the lofty ideals by which it was governed in its primitive stage, and facilitated its despicable subordination to the kings of the earth. This momentous era has long since closed, and yet we suffer, many of us perhaps unconsciously, from its mischievous movements. Its alliances and councils have confused our moral judgements, and have enslaved us to ideas and methods that are vicious and delusive. Dead hands pull the wires that are composed of centuries of fatuity and falseness, and the poor puppets of this generation go mechanically through their pious platitudinising and attitudinising. No organisation has as yet been able to break entirely the spell of that long past. It reigns supreme. If deliverance is to be attained, it can come only through a resolute determination to return to the Christianity of the New Testament. But so great a change, so remarkable a reaction, would be a marvel as stupendous as that which ushered in the establishment of the primitive Church". Dr. G. C. Lorimer (*People's Bible History*, p 851).

We can be sure that Alexander Campbell would have agreed with the sentiments of that quotation for he wrote, "Let the bible be substituted for all human creeds; facts for definitions; things for words. faith for speculation; unity of faith for unity of opinion; the positive commandments of God for human legislation and tradition; peity for ceremony; morality for partisan zeal; the practice of religion for the mere profession of it; and the work is done". (*Christian System* p. 118). The various 'pioneers' of the churches of Christ also determined to restore the church to the New Testament pattern. They said, "Where the bible speaks, we speak; Where the bible is silent, we are silent". "That we return to the same ground on which the churches stood at the beginning". "Nothing is to be received, as a matter of faith and duty, for which there is not produced a "Thus saith the Lord" either in express terms, or by approved scripture precedent". "That the Word or the testimony of the Apostles is, itself, all-sufficient and alone sufficient for the union of all christians." They also contended that, "If these principles are surrendered, our continuance in separation from surrounding denominations has no justification". It is said that history clearly shows that no religious movement retains its purity for more than a hundred years. The pioneers were certainly enthusiastic about the work of restoring the true church to the world and they jealously guarded the tenets of the faith mentioned above, but now, one hundred years later those pioneers have gone and one detects that the singleness of purpose has gone too. Indeed it is stated by some brethren, in other countries, that some segments of the 'Churches of Christ' are about as denominational as the 'denominations' and that the influence is rapidly spreading. The pioneer slogans are still around but their spirit and substance has gone — the restoration movement has come to a grinding halt? If this is true it is very sad but we are persuaded that there is some of the restoration spirit left, even in our own localities. It really is up to each one of us, brethren, to see that we do not adopt a casual approach to the New Testament and to see that we do not follow the herd in accepting an innovation because it receives general acceptance. Is the restoration spirit of the pioneers still in evidence in your congregation, or for that matter, in you?

Why then are we not dancing with joy at the new pope's declared intentions to seek unity among Christians? We've certainly heard it all before, and not only from the pope. Every religious body talks about unity. There is plenty of talk about it. Indeed it appears that they who talk most about it are those who caused the disunity in the first place. Those who complain most of the lack of brotherly love are the ones who showed so little of it that they divided the brotherhood. Those who wring their hands most in anguish at the 'sinful division' in the church are usually the ones who could do something about it but will not — we have all been unfortunate enough to see it in our own lifetime, in our own island. There is no shortage of talk but what of action? If this is true of us, there is small hope of us expecting any concessions from the pope. When the pope talks of unity he has his own conception of that word — and that does not include giving any ground. The same could be said for most religious bodies — they all have their own

circumscribed understanding of the term and are looking for concessions, not giving them. Thus 'unity' is a kind of spiritual mirage which really disappears the closer we seem like getting to it. Some years ago after a two week conference on the unity subject by 230 theologians from forty countries, sponsored by the World Council of Churches, the spokesman said, "We have not resolved our differences, not brought forth before the world a simple method of achieving unity". And yet the remedy is one of profound simplicity. Unity need not be a mirage. Our Lord did not pray for the impossible. Alexander Campbell has already expressed it far better than I can. Real, true and lasting unity will not be obtained by compromise, or mere concession, but must be based on the solid ground of New Testament teaching and practice, with nothing added and nothing diminished therefrom. If each of us do not want to implement such a remedy, unity will never ever come. The process will require humility and this perhaps is what we lack. Throw completely overboard all things in faith and practice which are unauthorised by the New Testament and, overnight, we shall find ourselves truly united at the feet of Christ Jesus. This is the price that men must pay for unity.

EDITOR

THE MINDFULNESS OF GOD

This article or topic should give us cause to ponder prayerfully and sincerely David's question in Psalm 8:4 "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" First of all to be mindful is to be attentive, in other words living with an awareness, or bearing in mind. The negative side of being mindful is to be UNMINDFUL, which is to be inattentive and heedless!

Were we take time out to roam through the pages of the Bible, we would find that even from the time of creation, God has ALWAYS been mindful of mankind. In Psalm 124:1-8 we read, "IF it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us" (read the Psalm for yourself). The Psalm ends with these words, "our help is in the name of the Lord". In these but few words we can clearly see without any doubt the MINDFULNESS of God for MANKIND.

Bear in mind these words, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" and "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side?" They are indeed great questions to consider; they referred to Israel at that time, but we of the 20th Century could ask ourselves these questions today! In the time of creation God was mindful; In Noah's day and time, In Abraham's day and time; in the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage; in their deliverance from the Red sea, and although man has remained most of the time unmindful, disobedient, rebellious, unwilling to respond to the mercy and longsuffering of God, God has remained to be MINDFUL!

Now it was because of man's unmindfulness towards God, that David was inspired of God to ask this great and important question, "WHAT IS MAN THAT THOU ART MINDFUL OF HIM?" While O.T. occurrences of man's rebellion, disobedience and unthankfulness, were normality for them they shall ever remain to be warnings to us; written "for our learning and admonition", since WE HAVE TO DO with the same God. Let us then, bring this topic, right down to our present time, and note that God is mindful about the lost soul as written, "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21), and in Luke 12:7 Jesus said: "Ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Speaking of unmindful man the sinner). Yes God's word places great value upon the soul viz: (a) God was and is still mindful towards mankind in LOVE (John 3:16; (b) God was and is still mindful in His purpose (1 John 3:8); (c) God is still mindful, as He has always been, in His promises (John 14:2,3) (d) God is and always has been interested in becoming a guest in your home (Rev. 3:20) (Isaiah 1:18, Matt. 11:28, Rev. 22:17). (e) God is still mindful to share His friendship with you (John 15:13-14) (f) God is still mindful to give you hope (1 Peter 1:3-5, Rom. 8:24-25) (g) God is still mindful to grant you an inheritance with Him and His Son (Rom. 8:17).

All these privileges mentioned could be yours to share, were you to submit to the claims of the gospel of Christ, by hearing, believing, repenting, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and finally be being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins; becoming a member of the "body of Christ which is the church, the pillar and ground of the truth", for which Christ died (Rom. 10:17; Luke 13:3; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 2:38).

In this manner you will have expressed as a non-christian, your sincere mindfulness of God's goodness, His love mercy and longsuffering. Then to those of us who are Christians, God is also mindful of us, in the fact that our bodies are "the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that we are not your own, we have been bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19-21). God is further mindful (as we should be mindful) that we were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

While at most times we tend to look back upon Israel, as those who were unmindful of God's goodness etc. etc., IT IS HIGH TIME THAT THESE POINTERS come to us, who claim or profess Christianity, Although we as mankind, shall ever tend to be unmindful, unthankful, and unwilling to be faithful, God shall never change in His purpose or attitude to THE faithful. He shall ever be dependable, merciful, loveable, longsuffering and a forgiving God! As we consider God's care, protection, daily provision, our homes, our livelihood, our salvation, our inheritance, our hope, our friendship, and promises through Christ, He being the guest of our homes, DO WE TRULY APPRECIATE THE MINDFULNESS OF GOD? HOW MINDFUL HAVE WE BEEN... HOW FAITHFUL IN WORSHIP ... IN EXEMPLARY IN LIVING IN HAVING MADE USE OF OUR TALENTS AND CAPABILITIES? YOU AND I ALONE HOLD THE ANSWER, of either being mindful or unmindful of God's goodness. If you have failed, determine that in Future you shall be mindful, purposeful and meaningful to the best of your ability as a Christian. And to you who are not a Christian, who has not as yet willingly, sincerely and humbly seen the deep need, of considering this wonderful, loving and MINDFUL GOD, in all that He offers, (which is far above and surpasses all that this world can offer) decide to do so TODAY; tomorrow might be too late!

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ASK

"Lord, let me feel Thy power
The power of Thine own love,
And all that hinders in my heart
I trust Thee to remove".

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us". Ephesians 3:20.

ASK WHAT DO WE ASK? For "the power that worketh in us".

It is said:- By accident a relative of Ruskin spilt ink over a most beautiful silk handkerchief. She wept until her heart literally ached. Then Ruskin came in and smilingly took it from her. Going to his study he set to work upon that blot, drawing figures upon it; then with delicate brush movements he painted a beautiful picture and returned the handkerchief, "Oh," she said, "this is not my handkerchief!" "Yes, it is yours. I simply took the ugly blot and transformed it into a picture". I wonder whether we are ready to allow Him "that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think", to work mightily in our lives? In

In the November issue of the Scripture Standard 1977, we reminded the readers that the power of God, was Divine power, Eternal power, Mighty power. Glorious power, and that we could be kept by the power of God. How can we have that power working in us? What can He do with one who can say? "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way". Isaiah 53:6 What can He do with one who can say with the Apostle Paul?—"But I am carnal, sold under sin" Romans 7:14.

Two quotes from W. Riley may help us:- "but when your soul gets hurt there's no putting any ointment on it, an' there's no doctor in t' world can do you any good". "But I like to take the raw material of humanity and make something good out of it." So we turn to the friend of sinners - the great physician, and to our loving heavenly Father:- for "the power that worketh in us". "Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." Jeremiah 18:3,4. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them". Ephesians 2:10. Someone has said:- "The blacksmith puts the iron in the fire and works with it. The potter puts the vessel in the furnace as well as on the wheel and he works with it. The lapidary chips away the roughness from the precious diamond as he works with it. In each case the finished product proclaims the skill of the workman. A practiced eye could easily tell whose work it is. The heating and the chiselling go on with us. It seems painful work. When the vessel is finished, if not before, all shall know that the Workman was the Lord. It is all for His name's sake. His great and gracious name will be honoured in His dealings with me".

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? For "the power that worketh in us."

THE POWER WORKS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD WHICH LIVETH.

"Being born again, not of the corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Peter 1:23. "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." Hebrews 4:12 (R.V.)

May I quote Philip Mauro:- "The power of discernment belongs only to an intelligent living being; and the power of discernment possessed by man does not go beneath the surface of things. Yet the passage in Hebrews... (4:12) asserts that the Word of God is a "Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart". This is a very remarkable statement, yet it is true; and millions of men have felt and recognised the searching and discerning power of the Word of God. We go to it not so much to learn the thoughts of other men, as to learn our own thoughts. We go to other books to find what was in the hearts and minds of their authors; but we go to this book to find what is in our own hearts and minds. To one who reads it with ever so little spiritual intelligence, there comes a perception of the fact that this book understands and knows all about Him. It lays bare the deepest secrets of his heart, and brings to the surface of his consciousness, out of the unfathomable depths and unexplorable recesses of his own being, "thoughts and intents" whose existence was unsuspected. It reveals man to himself in a way difficult to describe, and absolutely peculiar to itself. It is a faithful mirror which reflects us exactly as we are. It detects our motives, discerns our needs; and, having truthfully discovered to us our real selves, it counsels, reproves, exhorts, guides, refreshes, strengthens, and illuminates".

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? For "the power that worketh in us".

"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work". 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (R.V.)

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure". Philippians 2:13 (R.V.).

Campbell Morgan wrote:- "God worketh in you". This implies the actual presence of God at the centre of our being. The very simplicity of these words renders them difficult of understanding; for no man understands the complex and marvellous mechanism of his own personality. God worketh in you - not outside, but in - in the place where thought is born, and the throne of the will is set up, and the affections have their seat; in the inward shrine of the being God worketh. Put emphasis now on another word. "God worketh in you". He is there, not merely holding possession while we work, but also to

"Direct, control, suggest each day,

All we design, or do, or say;
That all our powers, with all their might,
In His sole glory may unite".....

"God which worketh in you" implies perfect union. God in you, creating desire, energizing the will, so that the will becomes, not merely as a poetical sentiment, but as a glorious fact, the Will of God. That is, indeed, the supreme glory of the Christian position — "it is God which worketh", not "for" merely; not "with" only; but "it is God which worketh in you".

Hudson Taylor said:- "I used to ask God if He would come and help me; then I asked God if I might come and help Him; then I ended by asking God to do His work through me".

"Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine!
Mine, to tell me whence I came;
Mine, to teach me what I am.

Mine, to chide me when I rove;
Mine, to show a Saviour's love;
Mine art thou to guide my feet;
Mine, to judge, condemn, acquit.

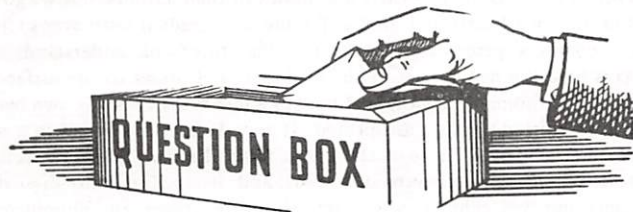
Mine to comfort in distress,
And with truth my soul impress;
Mine, to show by living faith,
How to triumph over death.

Mine, to tell of joys to come,
Or the rebel sinner's doom;
Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine!

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? For..... "the power that worketh in us".

And may the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

AS I indicated in the last issue of the S.S. we are to continue the question relative to the christian and television; to enquire into the divine ownership of a christian's money and possessions; and to attempt to draw some conclusions from our complete study.

Divine Ownership

The question to which we have now to turn our attention is, 'Does God own every possession that the christian has?' The questioner directs our minds to a statement made in Haggai 2:8 which says, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts". Furthermore when God spoke to Moses He said, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Exodus 19:5). On the face of it, the language of the O.T. seems to support the theory which is expressed like this: God created the heavens and the earth, and all living things including man; therefore, all things and creatures are His, and everything which they yield is also His. This important view is shared and stated by many christians, but whether or not that which is stated is actually practices we shall have to find out.

Ownership and choice

There are two ways in which God could have dealt with the people He created. He could have made them follow His declared Will like automatons, or He could have given them a free will so that they would voluntarily obey Him and follow His Will because they wanted to. In His infinite wisdom, God chose the latter course, and even though we were and are His creation He nevertheless gives us the choice as to whether we will obey Him or not. This is a very important principle of both the Old and New Testaments, because by it God is able to equate blessings with obedience. Just consider the Exodus passage again in the light of this, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine". In the very last book of the O.T. when He had endured for a long time the defection of His chosen people, He makes the same urgent appeal, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:8-10). Yes, God endorses the idea that it is robbery for the created to withhold from the Creator those things which may be considered to be His, but He evidently leaves the choice to the individual, having warned of the consequences.

The N.T. seemingly supports this view in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, and an examination of the text will reveal a little more about the ownership and choice. You will recall that this husband and wife had a possession which they decided to sell. They agreed that they would only bring part of the receipts from the sale, and say to the apostles that they had brought it all. This they did, but during the dialogue with Ananias, Peter made a very telling statement, "Whiles it remained (the possession, presumably), was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" (Acts 5:4). This scripture seems to teach that Ananias and Sapphira owned the possession, and even when they had sold it they still had the power to decide where the receipts should go. Their sin was not so much in keeping back part of the price (although, no doubt, God would have expected them to do what all the other christians were doing), but in attempting to lie to and deceive the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, we are left with the strong impression that even though God indirectly owns all things, man is also the owner of possessions over which he must exercise good stewardship. I have gone to some lengths to explain this point because I consider it to be essential to our understanding of the teaching, and more particularly in supplying a more meaningful answer to the question.

The summation

I think we are now in a position to state several fundamental and scriptural principles which are inherent in the answer to the question.

- 1 God created man and all other things, and as such can claim to be the universal owner of all things which accrue from that creation.
- 2 He has given a man a free will to choose whether to obey or disobey, but He has equated blessings with obedience and warned quite clearly about the consequences of disobedience.
- 3 Even though HE can be rightly looked upon as the owner of all things, He has transferred ownership to individuals of possessions which they may have: this includes money and all material things. Incidentally, He has also given His most precious possession, the gospel, into our care and keeping.
- 4 He expects that we will be good stewards of those things which we possess.

Conclusions

There is no doubt at all in my mind that as the christian has the right to choose whether or not he will follow the whole counsel of God, so he has the right to choose how he will dispose of the possessions which he has. Many christians (including the writer) have exercised

that right and for better or worse have bought television receivers. This does not make the buying of a television receiver right; it is merely a fact. The stewardship of our possessions will be answerable later in another place.

It is undoubtedly true that television is a very potent force for evil influences, but so are many other things. If the christian possesses a television receiver and has a family of impressionable age, then the duty of care, which is a bounden duty in all situations, should be exercised by the parents, and they should see to it that evil influences are not allowed to escalate. We cannot, I fear, in this world of ours shield everyone all the time from evil influences; we must teach them to overcome evil with good.

Television can be, and is in some places, a very persuasive medium for spreading the gospel of Christ. I am quite sure that if we had the resources to buy time on it to promote the gospel of our dear Saviour then we would do so. That would be good utilisation of our God-given resources.

I do understand, and endorse, the deep concern of our questioner. The only thing I can

I do understand, and endorse, the deep concern of our questioner. The only thing I can say is that if I felt that any possession of mine was leading me or any of my brethren in Christ into sin, then that possession would have to go.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

NOVEMBER 1978

5—Psalm 46	John 11:19-44
12—Psalm 37:1-17	John 11:45-57
19—Zech. 9:9-17	John 12:1-19
26—Psalm 110	John 12:20-36

JESUS WEPT!

Luke introduces us to the house of Martha (10:38-42). It is a delightful picture of a lovely homely woman, "a keeper at home" (Titus 2:5), who graciously opened her house to the penniless travelling preacher with His band of lowly followers, (BUT HOW FABULOUSLY RICH THEY WERE!). We do not know how many times the visitors came, but they were enough to make more than a casual acquaintance, Jesus loved the inmates of that home and they loved Him. Martha's love issued in the hospitality, Mary in sitting at His feet. Both found happiness in their functions. Their difference did not affect their relationship, else Martha would not have shown such loving concern for her sister (John 11:28 & 12:2). Many had come to console but only Martha could really share the grief. Hence her attempt at secrecy which apparently failed. The mourners real and officious were quickly at hand,

some with not too good motives (11:31 & 46). The Jewish customs involved a lot of noise, and with this we cannot think Jesus had sympathy (Matt. 9:23; Mark 5:38; Luke 8:54). Weeping is the outcome of deep grief in the heart. Twice we read that Jesus "groaned" (11:33 & 38). Efforts to express the meaning of this have varied. The same word is translated "straitly charged" on two occasions and once "murmured", but the Revised margin gives "moved with indignation". Barclay suggests "deeply moved in spirit so that an involuntary groan burst from Him", combining the thought of the heart's feeling with an outward expression which must have been heard by the witnesses including doubtless John himself. We may ask what moved Jesus so deeply? Any kind-hearted person would be moved at the sight of so many folk manifesting deep grief, and Jesus was one of us and it is a heart-rending experience when those closest to us pass away. We have a High Priest Who can be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, but there is a highest consolation because we know God Himself is grieved with our grief. Jesus in this case entered fully into the thought of the sisters who had hoped in vain that He would come and raise Lazarus from sickness — not from the grave. He had disappointed the sisters so deeply. Their distress distressed Him, but a purpose of God had to be fulfilled. Their immediate distress was not to be compared with the glory of God revealed through their brother's death (Rom.

8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17). Jesus was aware of the predicament into which this miracle would bring the Jewish authorities. His deliberate delay made the sign so incontrovertible and so near to Jerusalem as to drive authority to desperate measures. His tears manifested His personal involvement with those who loved Him so dearly. His exercise of Power involved Him with those who hated Him beyond words.

"Jesus wept! those tears are over,
But His heart is still the same:
Kinsman, Friend, and Elder Brother,
Is His everlasting name.
Saviour, who can love like Thee,
Gracious One of Bethany?"

The Plotters

Probably we do not appreciate how greatly Jesus was influencing the people. Without knowing the extent of His work in Jerusalem we can see clearly from John's gospel that the Chief Priests would be indignant at the way in which Jesus defied their authority in cleansing the Temple, and the Pharisees equally in His defiance of their traditions. The cures He wrought on the Sabbath brought the people's approval and support, and excited the bitter jealousy of both parties. They misunderstood Jesus sufficiently to think He might gather supporters against them and against Rome, and bring disaster upon the nation and upon their position as collaborators with Rome. I assume this from the words of Caiaphas (11:48). He did not know how true his words were. We are astonished at the wickedness of men in high positions? Did they have any excuse at all for regarding Jesus as dangerous? "He stirreth up the people" (Luke 23:5) was true but what for? Certainly not to violence. Loving enemies is hardly exciting to rebellion. Some of those in authority must have heard Him, and have witnessed many of the miracles He performed. Works of mercy and words of love cannot make excuse for repression. Pride, prejudice and ignorance combine against purity and holiness. Judas the plotters' willing tool ultimately knew and acknowledged the truth which they all knew beforehand, making their guilt the more inexcusable, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4). His guilt developed from love of money and is magnified by his close contact with His Master, while those who paid him must have stifled any conscience they had. Was there ever such a combination of evil motives? Well did

Solomon write "Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Not one of us can afford to neglect this exercise guided as we must be by the word of God.

Brief Triumph

"Ride on! ride on in majesty!
"In lowly pomp ride on to die!"

Jesus has been in voluntary exile with His disciples, but He must needs go to Jerusalem, 'I must go on my way the day following' (Luke 13:33). The disciples must know the crisis is near. They are with Him. They know there is danger (John 11:16). He could later say to them "Ye are they who have continued with Me in My temptations" (Luke 22:28). They must have been surprised at the enthusiasm of the crowds knowing the opposition of the authorities. The other gospels give us details of the miraculous provision for the fulfilment of prophecy into which the disciples entered without appreciating it. We comment that an unbroken colt carried the Saviour into Jerusalem amid the shouting people. A trained cart horse could not do that. Jerusalem had been stirred before about the coming of Jesus, and we suppose He had been present at each of the law-appointed feasts since He began His ministry. At the previous feast (the feast of Tabernacles preceding the Passover) His coming was anticipated, again in spite of the unknown opposition of the rulers, "Where is HE?" was the great point of discussion. He had become the centre of their thoughts, and the rulers likewise feared, always apparently anxious to discredit Him. Opinion was divided but not among those who came with Him from Bethany. News of the most astonishing of His SIGNS was spreading so rapidly that a plan and plot had to be hatched at once. Even the Pharisees thought Jesus, so to speak, had won! "Behold the world is gone after Him" (12:19). Then began that busy few days of signs and words to be concluded with "the world" howling for the crucifixion of the One Who raised Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb. We have seen in these readings the loveliness of true friendship, the loyalty of a few faithful men, and the dark and dreadful wickedness of men who should have known better. The outstanding courage of our Saviour shines brightly through it all.

R. B. SCOTT

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Bedminster; Bristol: It was with great joy that we witnessed the baptism of Mrs. Hope Davey; Mrs. Anne Sellers; and Mrs. June Westall. They each have two children in the Sunday School and it was here that their first contacts were made. We do pray that they may be kept faithful and be a means of much blessing to the church; also in the home. This was during a three months mission with brother Murrell.

L. DANIELL

Devonport: The church meets in the 'Boy Scouts' Hut, Blockhouse, Packington Street, Stoke, Plymouth, at 3 p.m. (instead of 10.45 a.m.) each Lord's Day. P. LAKEMAN.

Kirkcaldy; Scotland: We have great pleasure in receiving into fellowship sister Cheryl Banner who was baptised at Camp Heatherbell, on 25th July.

Cheryl was a member of the Sunday School and we trust and pray that she will prove to be a valuable asset in the work here, especially amongst the young.

A. ROBERTS. Sec.

Mill Hill, Blackburn: The Christians meeting at New Wellington Street have been encouraged by the addition to their number of two precious souls. On Lord's Day August 6th, 1978, David Brunton was immersed into His Lord, and on August 13th, his sister Lynn obeyed the gospel confessing Jesus as her Saviour. David and Lynn are Alan and 'Bunty' Brunton's children. We give thanks to God for further manifestations of the power of the Gospel, and pray that they may serve their Master faithfully and well.

ROY RINSHAW, Sec.

Newtongrange, Scotland: The church which meets here was delighted to witness the baptism of Mrs Jean Darkins, who has been meeting with us for a period of months. We thank Jesus and pray that our sister will be blessed in her service to her Lord and Master, and that her good works may be seen to glorify her Father in Heaven.

JOE CURRIE

The churches in the Slamannan District held their quarterly "Mutual Benefit" meeting in Tranent Meeting House on Saturday 2nd Sept.

The subject under discussion on this occasion was 'What really is worship – true (and false) worship'. In the chair was brother Hugh Davidson, Motherwell, and the two speakers were brother James Sinclair (Snr) Tranent, and brother Ian Davidson, Motherwell. As usual the speakers were subjected to some penetrating questions and a lively discussion followed. The next 'Mutual Benefit' will be held at Haddington.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Newtongrange, Scotland. The new secretary will now be Mr. A. P. SHARP, 66 Maryburn Road, Easthouses, Dalkeith, Midlothian, EH22 4EU. Tel: 031-663-5294

This will take effect from 1/11/78.

Things that will Impress our Visitors

- 1 Two or three prayers that cannot be heard.
- 2 Members day-dreaming and sleeping through the services.
- 3 A generous supply of dirty Kleenex, gum, papers, on the floor, seats and in the book holders, and scribbling in song books.
- 4 Members who are continually coming late.
- 5 Members who permit their children to continually cry and disturb.
- 6 Members who persist in talking, whispering, note writing, picture passing during worship.
- 7 A dozen or more people who never bother to speak or welcome them back to other services.
- 8 Several persons who just must leave before the closing prayer.

Yes, these are things that will surely impress our visitors – but it isn't the kind of impression we wish to leave.

THE CAUSE

Suppose a man should come to a table and there is a knife laid at his trencher, and it should be told him, "This is the knife that cut the throat

of your child, or your father"; if he could now use that knife as he would any other knife would not one say, "Surely there was but little love either to the father or to the child?" So, when there is a temptation to any sin, this is the knife that cut the throat of Christ, that pierced His side, that was the cause of His suffering, that made Christ to be a curse. Now, wilt thou not look on that as a cursed thing that made Christ to be a curse?

Oh with what detestation would a man or a woman fling away such a knife, and with the like detestation it is required that a man should renounce sin, for that, and that only, was the cause of the death of Christ.

Alphonsus ab Avendano

Do we really mean what we sing?

"Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious, and a song of praise is seemly."
—Psalm 147:1.

Over the years I have often heard it said that we do not mean what we say in the songs that we use. Recently I came across this unusual comparison someone has made:—

We sing "Heavenly sunshine," and stay away from services when it's too hot.

We sing "Onward Christian soldiers" and have to be drafted for His service.

We sing "Hiding in Thee," and then go and hide from Him.

We sing "Marching to Zion," but fail to march to Bible class and worship services.

We sing "I love to tell the story," but never mention it to anyone year after year.

We sing "Cast thy care on the Lord," and worry ourselves into nervous breakdowns.

We sing "Throw out the lifeline," and content ourselves with throwing out the fishing line.

We sing "Blest be the tie that binds," and then let the slightest offence sever it.

—Selected.

OBITUARY

Devonport: With sorrow we announce the passing of our beloved sister Irene Brown, aged 79, after an illness of many weeks. She was a loyal and devoted servant of the Lord; we shall miss her. P. LAKEMAN

Kirkcaldy; Scotland: It is with deep regret that we record the passing of Sister Davidson, wife of Bro. J. Davidson, one of our elders, after a long illness. Sister Davidson will always be remembered for her quiet and steady support of the many activities of the church, over many years.

We commend our brother Jim to the comfort and care of our heavenly Father, knowing full well that it is wonderful to be assured that the loving arms are open and that our sister has entered into the joy of her rest. Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep.

A. ROBERTS. Sec.

Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan: It is with deep sadness that we record the passing of sister Margaret Melling, wife of brother Carlton Melling. She died in hospital in Huddersfield, on August 24th, and was laid to rest on August 29th, brother J. Parker officiating at the service held in the meetingplace at Longshoot.

Sister Melling had been a member of the church for over fifty years, and had been active in the Lord's service until about three-and-a-half years ago when she suffered a stroke. Since that time she had been lovingly cared for by her daughter Barbara in Huddersfield.

Whilst she will be greatly missed by many of her brethren, we mourn not as those without hope, but rejoice in the sure knowledge of the resurrection.

Brother Carlton and family would like to take this opportunity to thank all the brethren for their love shown in the thoughts, prayers and remembrances which have been a great comfort to them in their bereavement.

"We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear,
And often for each other flows,
The sympathising tear.

D. MELLING

PASSING OF SISTER MELLING

Sister Margaret is freed from her suffering and pain.
 We mourn, yet we know we shall see her again.
 Her long day is ended and nightfall has come;
 The Saviour has summoned His weary one home.
 She sleeps for a while, she has well earned her rest,
 And we know those who die in the Lord are the blest.
 The eventide falls, but a new Day will dawn;
 The darkness but heralds the bright shining morn
 When the Archangel's trumpet will sunder the skies,
 And all those asleep in the Lord will arise.
 The grave has no terror, and death has no sting,
 Their power all destroyed by our conquering King.
 When those who are living have joined that vast throng
 The heavens will resound with our victory song.
 We shall meet our great Captain up in the air,
 He'll take us all home to dwell with Him there
 In the mansions of glory He's gone to prepare

I wonder, my friend, will you also be there?

Inserted by J.J. SMITH.

PRODUCTIVITY — We are all called to serve. This is a subject we hear much about nowadays. However, it is not by any means new. The Preacher Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" for example, be thorough; do the most work in the least time. There is to be no slackness and we are to be workmen who needeth not to be ashamed. What a difference it would make if our whole nation adopted such a policy now not serving as men pleasers but serving God. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord". As an old hymn says, "Only remembered by what we have done".

Our Master came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Let us follow in His footsteps. Sister E. C. Payne, Reading.

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