

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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“THE POLLUTIONS OF THE WORLD”

The question of “pollution” is never far away: indeed it confronts us, in some form, nearly every day. Again, this week, we have been watching (on TV) the dreadful spectacle of thousands of Blackfoot penguins choking in a morass of oil, off the South African coast and the desperate efforts of volunteers to save them. It seems impossible even in these days, with modern purpose-built tankers, to transport oil without eventually spilling some of it on the coast-line and doing irreparable damage to flora and fauna. There seems also to be a general impression that because the world is so large, and the oceans so vast, that man is too puny to be able to do any lasting damage to his habitat, but the fallacy is gradually fading and the world is beginning to look its age and show the scars of the abuse man is constantly inflicting upon it. For many years man has been happily billowing cascades of toxic gases and fumes up into the heavens, and now there seems to be a distinct hole in the ozone layer (with serious ramifications for the future). For the same reason, God’s gentle rain is now distinctly acid and is killing off vast acres of forest, and causing stone buildings and statues to crumble. Pollution of the environment comes now in many forms; oil slicks from tankers; toxic fumes; acid rain; poisoned rivers and even nuclear “fall-out” from places as far away as Chernobyl, but there are, of course, new areas of suspected pollution coming to light every day. Many of our beaches are “no-go” areas because they are either “radio-active” or contaminated by untreated sewage. Our lovely countryside is often besmirched with litter and children can’t play in many public parks because of dog-fouling. Fish can’t live in the rivers, seafood around our coasts create a risk if eaten and, at the moment the Germans won’t eat British beef because of the fear of B.S.E. On a global basis there are many species of bird and beast which are virtually extinct, and men could quite easily be found who would be prepared to kill the very last breeding pair for a few dollars: just as some would be quite happy to slaughter the whale into complete extinction. Man seems to be driven by some vicious form of environmental insanity whereby he shows a complete disregard for the wellbeing of the planet in which he lives, or of the generations yet to live on it. This world, when it left God’s hands, was a beautiful place but man has exploited it, ravaged it and now seems bent upon destroying it, whether it be by the increase in global temperature, nuclear contamination, environmental pollution or simply by the senseless burning of 100 square miles of tropical rainforest every day. In short, man ruins and pollutes everything he touches.

POLLUTION IN THE O.T.

We might imagine that, because in recent times, the word “pollution” is regularly upon somebody’s lips that the word itself is of recent coinage, and that “pollution” is

a fairly new phenomenon, but this would not be so. Pollution has been around for a very long time and is not confined to the environment. There is moral pollution in the world; political pollution; pollution of the sciences, the arts, pollution of education, medicine and a general pollution of society. There is also a pollution of religion: and there always has been. The term "pollution" can be found in the O.T. as early as the Exodus, and occurs regularly: appearing nine times in Ezek. 20. Every religious thing the Jews managed to pollute. They defiled "the holy things of the children of Israel." God warned, "Neither shall ye POLLUTE the holy things of the children of Israel lest ye die" but His warning went unheeded and their sacrilege took many forms.

They polluted GOD'S HOUSE :-

"And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the House of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God. O ye House of Israel. Let it suffice thee of thine abominations. In that ye have brought into My sanctuary, strangers, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary, to POLLUTE IT, even My house." (Ezek. 44:6). God pronounced woe on "a polluted city," whose people would not receive correction, and Zephaniah said, "Her prophets are light and treacherous persons, her priests have POLLUTED the sanctuary, and they have done violence to the law." (Zeph. 3:4).

They polluted GOD'S SABBATH :-

God through Ezekiel, said, "But the House of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness, they walked not in my statutes, and they despised My judgements which if a man do he shall live in them: and My sabbaths have they GREATLY POLLUTED. Then I said I would pour My fury upon them in the wilderness and consume them. But I wrought for My name's sake that it should not be POLLUTED before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out" (20:13). We notice here that whereas Israel greatly polluted God's sabbaths and rebelled against Him in the wilderness, God hesitated to pour out His fury upon them in order, to protect His own good name, lest it be polluted amongst the heathen (especially the Egyptians). These Gentile heathenish nations would, of course, have rejoiced with great glee to see God's controversy with His own people.

They Polluted THEIR OWN LAND :-

The Psalmist describes how the Israelites "Mingled with the heathen and learned their works." He also says, "And they served their idols which were a snare unto them. Yea they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan, and the land was POLLUTED with blood." (Ps. 106:35). Similarly, in respect of the "Cities of Refuge" Moses said, "So shall ye not POLLUTE the land wherein ye are: for blood defileth the land and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood therein but by the blood of him that shed it." (Num. 35:33). Society is still being polluted by bloodshed and man seems to be plagued by a persistent and insatiable desire to spill blood: beginning with the blood of Abel and still to be seen in Bosnia, Rwanda and a dozen other places at this present time.

Space does not allow us to pursue this enquiry much further but suffice to say that there was very little the Children of Israel did not manage to pollute. They polluted their genealogies; their land; their laws; their feasts and even their food. God in His controversy with Judah says, "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: How then are thou turned into a degenerate plant of strange vine unto Me? For thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord God. How canst thou say, I am NOT POLLUTED; I have not gone after Baalam?." (Jer, 2:21).

The fault did not lie with God: He had planted a noble vine from the best of seed, but the plant had not turned out very well.

ISRAEL NEVER CHANGED

The main source of Israel's pollution arose from the adoption of the heathen

gods, idolatry and all the abominations that were part and parcel of such idolatry, including human sacrifices (that of their children to the god Molech) and many similar forms of depravity. They also polluted the pure worship by their enthusiastic engagement in divination, astrology, witchcraft, enchantment, spiritism, sooth-saying, necromancy, etc., notwithstanding the fact that God had said, **“For all that do such things are an abomination unto the Lord.”** (Deut. 18:12).

Even after a very long, and very chequered career of religious “highs and lows” we find that, in the very last book of the O.T. (Malachi) that nothing much had really changed in Israel and that the Jews were still as devious as ever, and still as indifferent to God as they had always been. The very last glimpse of them, in Malachi (and just prior to the 400 years silence in the run up to N.T. times) is far from prepossessing. **“The burden of the Lord to Israel by Malachi”** describes God’s assessment of the lamentable spiritual condition of the people of God. When God professed to love Israel, the people repudiated His claim and demanded evidence of God’s alleged love. It was as bad as that. In Chap. 1:6 God says **“A son honoureth his father, and a servant his Master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and I be a Master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you O priests, that despise My name.”** Their ingratitude and impiety was such that even priests despised God’s name. The priests indignantly wanted to know **“Wherein have we despised thy Name?”** God’s answer shows that religious pollution was still alive and well. **“Ye offer POLLUTED bread upom Mine altar: and ye say, Wherein have we polluted Thee? In that, ye say the Table of the Lord is contemptible.”** (1:7).

Strangely enough, it is quite often in the small things (the details) that we betray our true attitude to God and His holy ordinances. Apparently the priests thought that any old thing would do for God, and that God would probably never notice that the bread they placed on God’s altar was stale and blemished (polluted).

There was also a mercenary side to this and they wanted their religion on the cheap. **“Offer it now to thy governor”—** said God **“Will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person, saith the Lord of hosts?”** Earthly employers would never have been expected to accept the shoddy standard they offered to God. I suppose it is often quite true, in the Church, that if we offered to our employer the standard of effort we give to God, we would quickly get “our jotters.” The mercenary attitude was seen also in the fact that nobody wanted to do anything for the Lord unless they were going to be paid for it. **“Who is there among you that would shut the doors for nought: neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought: I have no pleasures in you saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.”** (1:10). In addition to this, the people, when presenting an animal to God in sacrifice, used to search their flocks for an animal that was blind, or lame or diseased, i.e. the worst in flock: and God was not supposed to notice, or not to mind.

God, of course, did notice, and did mind, and declared that, in the time to come, God would seek, and find, a much better reception amongst the Gentiles. **“For My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts, but ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The Table of the Lord is POLLUTED, and the fruit thereof, even His meat is contemptible.”** (1:11).

Thus the Jews almost from the beginning and certainly to the end, polluted their religion in a fully comprehensive way, polluting even “The Table of the Lord” by having things upon it that ought never to have been there.

THE POLLUTION OF THIS WORLD

Nor did anything change during the 400 years of religious limbo between the O.T. and the N.T., for when Jesus came into the world He referred many times to the ways in which the Jews had polluted their religion and called upon them to mend their ways. Indeed He described (sometimes with the aid of parables) how that they were receiving a “last chance” to repent and turn to God; to ditch all their devious

ways of circumventing the Mosaic law, and to give God His proper place in their lives. As we know, in the event, they not only failed to grasp the opportunity, but they killed the Messenger and brought upon their heads all the dire consequences. They had shouted **“His blood be upon our heads and upon our children”** and they were certainly granted their wish.

The Gentiles, on the other hand, had not been guilty of polluting their religion for the simple reason that they had no God-given religion, and that their “gods” were no gods at all. What the Gentiles had in common with the Jews, however, was a vulnerability to “the pollutions of this world”: a form of moral pollution which gave rise to the need for religion in the first place, and which was (and is) the most dangerous form of pollution of all. The apostle Peter refers to this pollution and says **“For if, after they have escaped THE POLLUTIONS OF THE WORLD through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, They are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment.”** (2 Peter 2:20).

These Christians had ESCAPED from “The Pollutions of this World.” What were these pollutions? Obviously the apostle was not referring to smog, oil-slicks, greenhouse effect, toxic fumes or such like, but the much deadlier type of moral and spiritual pollution. We are certainly right to worry about all the damage we are inflicting upon this lovely orb of ours, but we should surely be much more worried about the type of pollution the apostle is talking about. Since man is composed of body, soul and spirit, some pollutions affect his body only, while others affect his soul and spirit. While many in the world are worried about the former: very few seem to be too worried about the latter. Many walk the broad road which leadeth to destruction: whereas precious few seem interested in the narrow way which leadeth unto life.

What then, were some of these “Pollutions of the World” from which the Christians had escaped? A general list of these is given by Paul in 1 Cor. 6:9 when he says, **“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers; nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. BUT SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God.”** Sweeping as this statement is, it is not entirely comprehensive and we must add to it Paul’s other list in Gal. 5:19 viz. **“Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings AND SUCH LIKE, of the which I tell you, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.”**

These then are the real pollutions: “The pollutions of the world”. Immorality, homosexuality, drunkenness, debauchery, cruelty, selfishness: heresy, envy, hatred, extortion, dishonesty, deceit, violence, murder, theft, avarice, witchcraft, idolatry and other things SUCH LIKE. It is possible to “escape” from these pollutions and the early Christians had done so: but Peter sounds a warning note: that it is possible to be caught up in these pollutions again and overcome.

CONCLUSION

Those who had escaped those terrible pollutions had done so by their obedience to Christ’s gospel and by having their souls (not their bodies) washed clean in baptism and their rising from “the watery grave” to “walk in newness of life” (Rom.6) **“But such were some of you”** says Paul, **“But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God”**. Even the apostle Paul himself, at his own conversion to Christ, was instructed to **“Arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”** (Acts 22:16): an instruction

which Paul obeyed without delay and without question. When watching those poor penguins, and other sea birds, being rescued from the oily quagmire and subsequently dipped in the cleansing fluid to free them from the deadly oil, it was not difficult to think of the apostle's words. Once freed from the polluting oil, the liberated creatures must not, of course, be allowed to get back into the sea and become contaminated all over again. We can well imagine how disappointed the rescuers would be to see birds, previously cleansed, back in the oil-slick for a second time. This might give us some idea how sad and disappointed God must feel when cleansed Christians go back into fellowship with "the pollutions of this world". Peter says that those who get "entangled" again with the pollutions of this world "**and are overcome**"; the "**latter end is worse with them than the beginning**". Such a situation, says Peter (i.e. those washed clean from the world's pollutions and wanting to go back again) reminded him (not so much of penguins jumping back into an oily morass) but was, as he says "**According to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again: and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire**". Not a pretty picture perhaps but, according to the apostle, very true.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

ENOUGH

"I AM so weak, dear Lord, I cannot stand
One moment without Thee!
But oh! the tenderness of Thine enfolding,
And oh! the faithfulness of Thine upholding,
And oh! the strength of Thy right hand!
That strength is enough for me!"

F.R.H.

"AND THE LIFE"

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." (John 14:6).

"FOR THE LIFE WAS MANIFESTED"

THE IMPOTENT MAN:— "AFTER this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep-market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath."

John 5 1-9

WE QUOTE — CAMPBELL MORGAN

"We look then first at the man. He passes before us nameless. He is seen as one of a crowd. John's description of that crowd is graphic in the extreme. He says that in the porches lay a multitude of "sick, blind, halt, withered." "Sick," that is utterly

strengthless; "blind," sightless; "halt," crippled; and, finally, that almost terrific word, "withered." Here we see a company of the unfit, the derelicts, the outcasts, and all this by reason of physical disability: and in all likelihood, in the majority of cases such disability resulting from moral malady."

"As we turn to watch the details of the story, we are first impressed with the fact that passing through Bethesda's porches He saw the man. It is, as we said at the beginning, a dramatic story, for He only spoke to this man three times. If we set the three sayings out, these are they.

"Wouldst thou be made whole?"

"Arise, take up thy bed, and walk."

"Behold, thou art made whole; no longer continue in sin, lest a worse thing befall thee."

In these brief sentences considered in relation to the man, and their effect upon him, the whole method of God in Christ with derelict humanity stands vividly revealed." . . .

"Thus we see this man, a morally depraved, physical derelict, a withered soul, implicitly confessing that the deepest thing in his life was the desire for wholeness. He told this Stranger that his case was hopeless, and yet by the very fact of his speech, revealed something which he saw in the personality of Jesus which arrested him, and called forth his speech.

It was at this point that Jesus spoke again, and said:

"Arise, take up thy bed, and walk."

"FOR THE LIFE WAS MANIFESTED."

"Who touched me?" "And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him and thronged Him."

"And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she heard of Jesus, came in the press behind and touched his garment.

For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto Him, thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, who touched me?

And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

And he said unto her, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

Mark 5:24-34.

WE QUOTE — CAMPBELL MORGAN

"The twelve years had been years of struggle, which had ended hopelessly. She had spent all that she had, which necessarily means that at the time she was reduced to poverty. As we look at her, we, therefore, unquestionably see a woman not only helpless but hopeless after these long and agonising years. This is the woman whose life for twelve years had been ebbing away, weak and was and emaciated, whom we see coming to Jesus.

Mark says, "Having heard the things concerning Jesus." That was the inspiration of her great adventure. We are not told that she had ever seen Him before. Possibly she had, but Mark's suggestion would lead us to think otherwise. She came, "having heard the things concerning Jesus." . . .

On the basis of the reports concerning Him there came to her a conviction that if she might make contact with Him, there might be hope even for her. Matthew and Mark tell us that that conviction within herself was a very clear one, for they tell us that she said:

“If I touch but His garments, I shall be made whole”

Then the narrative tells the story of the contact she made, and Matthew, Mark and Luke use the same word. We have rendered it in each case, “touched.” Now I want us to realise that that word gives an entirely wrong impression of what she did. The idea conveyed by our translations is that she merely touched the edge of His robe. To begin with, the Greek word does not mean a touch of that kind. Whereas it may not sound so euphemistic, the force of the Greek word would be far more accurately rendered “clutched, or grasped.” This is what the woman had been saying in her heart, that if she might grasp His garment, she would be made whole. Her word suggests an action of force and of desperation

Immediately she found her confidence vindicated, for the trouble of the long twelve years was over. Her blood was staunched, and she knew it. She endeavoured to slip quietly away. She had gained that for which she came.

So we see this woman, an outcast and helpless, hearing about Jesus, coming to the conviction that if no-one else could do anything for her, He could; seizing her opportunity as He passed her way, grasping the **kraspedon**, and immediately finding the healing she sought.”

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

HOW DO WE RATE AS PRIESTS?

(Substance of address given at recent Mutual Benefit Meeting)

“What does it mean to be a priest in the New Covenant?”

To me that Question assumes that **we all know that we are** priests in the New Testament and it suggests the inquiry concerns our job description.

We all know that the Old Testament Priests worked hard and there is no indication in our “Better covenant” that **the work load** has altered.

So we should be deeply grateful as we study the priesthood of past ages that “**God had forseen something better for us**” (Heb. 11:40).

Because we are in a **better** Covenant today does not mean we can assume that we don't have to work.

The priests associated with Aaron were very similar to Christians today; both were associated with a High Priest in the service of God.

Today every Christian is set apart as a priest in this dispensation. There is only one High priest, albeit many priests.

Every priest of God is of equal importance in God's sight. The common priests of the Old Covenant were all sons of the high priest. Their priesthood grew out of their relationship to him. They became priests because they were born into his family.

So it is in this new dispensation. We are priests of God because of our relationship to Christ and for no other reason. We become priests by being “born again”.

The steps required to make us sons and daughters of God, introduce us into the priesthood.

There was only **one** priesthood for Aaron's descendants. There is only **one** Priesthood today in Christ. It is only as He lives in us and we live in Him, that we become “**a kingdom of priests unto God.**”

It is for this reason we say that those who have not been baptized into Christ are not accepted as priests of God. Only God can stipulate the terms by which men approach unto him in acceptable service.

The Old Covenant priests were ordained to serve and not to be served. They were set apart to minister and not to be ministered unto.

Every priest of God was set apart to serve and was expected to engage *actively* in that service. The priests could not hire a **substitute** to officiate in their places.

Priesthood conferred a *special personal obligation* to minister unto God and to others.

The priests did not all do the same thing at the same time, but they did, in turn, whatever service was required and whatever fell their lot at any given time.

It is said of Zechariah (in Luke 1:8 & 9.) **“Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense”**.

There is a lesson in this for God’s priests today: to prepare themselves *to do anything required* in the service of God.

I personally think that the problem with the Church today, lies in the fact that many of us don’t consider ourselves as priests, even although we teach this.

We also don’t act like priests. The service is done by a few in each congregation. Some consider it **their right**, to be served.

Aaron and his sons were ordained to **“serve God as priests”** (Exo. 28:1) and not to be served. Unless God’s people today personally minister unto Him as priests they defeat His plan.

CONSECRATION

In the Old Testament the blood of the sacrifice was applied to the extremities of each priest.

It was placed upon the tip of his right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the great toe of the right foot.

This dedicated the whole body to God. From this time forward he was **“God’s man.”**

It was not enough that the sacrifice be killed and the blood shed. That blood had to be applied to each individual.

So it is today also with God’s priests ... The blood must be applied to each heart.

It is in view of this that the record declares, **“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus ... let us draw, near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”** (Heb. 10: 19, 22).

The Christian is God’s man. He belongs wholly unto God. Paul has this to say (in 1st Cor. 6:19). **“You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body”**.

A Levitical priest met death if he forgot the sanctification of the blood. In Heb. 10:29 we read concerning the New Covenant ... **“How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished, who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?”**

The most holy place was a type of heaven. Into this ... only the high priest went.

The holy place before the curtain represents the Church. It was here the common priests ministered. In Hebrews 9:6 we read **“The priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties”**.

In the outer tent, stood the table containing the bread of the Presence. There were twelve loaves, one for each tribe. This bread could be eaten only by the priests, and had to be eaten in the tent. It was changed once every seven days, and was eaten at that time.

The Lord has a table in his Church today. It contains the bread of his Presence. There is but one loaf upon it, because there is no longer any **tribal distinction**. In 1st Cor. 10:17 we read **"Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf"**.

It was the duty of the priests in the Mosaic dispensation to attend to the lamps daily. They were to see that these lamps were always prepared to shine brightly, and that they were **"set up so as to give light upon the space in front of it"** (Ex. 25:37).

Today the priest of God, should daily attend to the study and proclamation of God's Word. We are meant to be a light to this world. This was true in the primitive Church, **"Every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ"**. (Acts 5:42).

If you were to die today, do you think you would be remembered as one who **DID NOT CEASE TEACHING AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST?**

God's priests in this age should minister daily at **"the golden altar"** for we are instructed, **"Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name"** Heb. 13:15).

Every person who accepts the Gospel is to be a priest, every such person is to be a minister. Every Christian is a priest because they minister to others.

God's people are no longer to be a kingdom **with** priests, but a kingdom **of** priests; they are not to be a congregation **with** ministers, but a congregation **of** ministers.

God promised Israel that if they would obey his voice and keep his covenant they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation unto him. But they did not obey his voice nor did they keep his covenant.

They never realised the blessings of that promise, because they failed to meet the conditions.

But God's purpose was not defeated. He created a new Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) made up of those who are Christ's, and are Abraham's offspring, and heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:29).

To bring about this great transformation there had to be a **new covenant, a new altar and a new sacrifice**.

In Hebrews 7:11 & 12 we read **"For when there is a change in the priest, there is necessarily a change in the law as well"**.

It is a great privilege for each of us to be serving, ministering priests today, but a constant battle must be waged to keep an indifferent, lazy membership from surrendering their privileges and responsibilities to a group of professional ministers.

It is amazing that when men could not be priests they wished to be; and now that they can be they prefer to hire another to minister in their stead.

When the members of the Church become so indifferent and wrapped up with worldliness that they no longer study the holy scriptures when they become so indifferent to the needs of their brethren that they no longer seek to excel to the edifying of the Church when freedom means so little that they will gladly surrender it, they invariably seek to pay someone to do their work for them.

An excellent example of this is seen in denominationalism today. At our Tuesday Bible study this week, a regular visitor said concerning his denomination, **"We are too busy to visit the sick and the old in our congregation, that is the minister's job."**

The speaker's platform was always meant for humble farmers, labourers and white-collar workers to exhort their fellow Christians to endure trials, overcome temptation and grow in grace; but it is becoming a stage on which a polished performer presents a perfected speech for which he has been personally prepared.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

The New Testament clearly declares ... **"But you are a chosen race a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people that you may declare the wonderful deeds**

of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

This is a significant passage because the "royal priesthood", is identified as God's people.

God's people are not those to whom messages of God are brought; but they are themselves to be the bringers of God's message to others.

The people of God are not those who listen to "a minister" declare the wonderful works of God, but they are the ministers who are to do the declaring.

It is easier of course, to let someone else study and teach the Word: than to nourish the thought that "**Ye ought to be teachers.**"

It is much more convenient to let someone else visit the sick, comfort the afflicted, restore the erring, care for the widows and orphans, proclaim the glad tidings, and minister unto the saints, than it is to do these things personally.

Sadly, some of us consider that our Christian privileges are as onerous and disagreeable duties, which we are happy to saddle upon any willing horse.

Some cannot take time from their favourite television programmes to study the Word of the Lord. Personal pleasure occupies so much of our time that we cannot carry the glad tidings to dying souls.

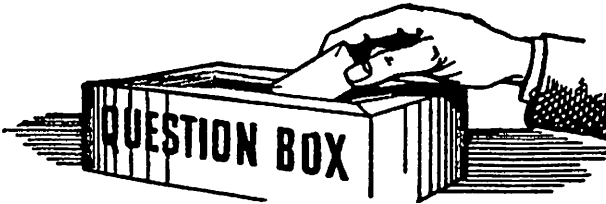
Unfortunately too many are ... "at ease in Zion."

Many do not recognize their abilities, because it has been so long since they used them.

No sacrifice is demanded of one of God's people today, which is not demanded of all. The sacrifice may differ in degree, but not in nature.

To be a priest in the New Covenant is a great privilege and there is no doubt in my mind that God requires each and every one of us to be faithful to our trust and to meet our responsibilities as "priests unto God", worthy of the name.

Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

**"Both Jesus and Paul seem to be very scathing about traditionalism.
Should Christians today also be wary about traditions?"**

This question, as many do, arose out of a Bible Study discussion which indicated a degree of divergent views. I have always held that if Christians differ in their interpretation of the Bible then some effort should be made to clarify the issue, or at least bring it forward for further discussion and study. I think it best to deal with the question in a way which reproduces the differences as they came up. As happens so often during discussions, people give 'off-the-cuff' views without actually exploring the basis of what they are really talking about (I believe we are all guilty of this deplorable attitude at times). So let's see if we can 'get back to basics' as the politicians are always saying.

How do we define 'traditions'?

Before we do this, I would just like to comment on one thing which troubles me, and that is the subject of Bible Study. Study is not half sermon or talk and half discussion on what has been said; it is a meditative examination of the subject matter (in our case the Bible) with a view to understanding it. Even if we have to spend the whole time on *one word*, if that word is crucial to our understanding, then we must

do it. We should also have handy such 'tools' as we may need, e.g. Concordance, Dictionary of N.T. words, different versions of the Scriptures, etc.; if we do not, then we shall be giving our own opinions as to what is meant. At the very top of our list should be the willingness to learn. As we advance in years we begin to realise how little we really know. I thought I'd just get that off my chest, so now to our definition.

Traditions may be defined as "statements, beliefs, customs, etc., transmitted by word of mouth or by practice without writing." Oral traditions are handed down from generation to generation; they may gain or lose a little in the transmission over a period of time. The Scriptures, of course, *are* written accounts of God's dealings with His Creation, and it is these that we must refer ourselves when we want to know the truth. Jesus did *not* say to the Jews, "Search the traditions," He said, "**Search the Scriptures.**" See John 5:39. My own observations have led me to believe that much confusion has resulted from *private* interpretations of Scripture being handed down to future generations, and such interpretations being almost venerated by some until they have become inviolable *traditions*. It is incumbent on us all to act like the Bereans; they heard, and then searched the Scriptures in order to find out if what they had heard was true. So should we.

What did Jesus identify as wrong traditions?

Refer to Mark 7:1-13. The Pharisees confronted Jesus with a 'fault' of His disciples, i.e., They did not wash their hands before eating; they were therefore violating the 'traditions of the elders.' This drew a stinging rebuke from Jesus, "**in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men**" (v7). In this they had "laid aside the commandments of God." Later on, He explained that it wasn't that which went *into* a man from *outside* which defiled him, but it was that which 'came out' from *within* that defiled.

The sin of the Pharisees was not being *irreligious*; it was the fact that what came out from the lips reflected the 'uncircumcised' heart within.

Paul takes up the same theme in Gal. 1:11-24. The Gospel he preached was 'not after man' (v11). He reminds the readers that he profited above many his equals, "**Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.**" So we conclude that, subject to what happened later, the traditions of the 'fathers' had not led him in the right direction. He then makes, what is to me, a crucial point. God, by His grace, had separated him so that he might declare Christ to the heathen (Gentiles); he then goes on "**immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me**" (vv16,17). There were to be no 'middle men,' Christian or otherwise, in Paul's preparation for the truth which God wanted him to declare. Even the darts of the evil one can penetrate the armour of the Christian spirit, for Paul says that he had to withstand Peter to his face, "**because he was to be blamed.**" Peter's blame lay in the fact that he was being 'two-faced' with regard to eating with the Gentiles. Paul saw, "that they walked not uprightly *according to the truth of the Gospel.*" Could there be Christians today who rely on traditions rather than on the purity of the Word? It may be hard to say, but I am convinced there can be.

Should we then ignore traditions?

No, not if they are *right* traditions. Paul exhorted Timothy, "**Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to the faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.**" 2 Tim. 2:1,2. Now we must understand that the things which had to be handed down from generation to generation were not the words or teaching of a *man*. In Tim. 3:16 Paul makes a categorical statement, "**All scripture is given by inspiration of God,**" i. e., the words which Paul spoke were "God-breathed," therefore they could be 'handed over' (that's what tradition really means) with certainty. They

did not, as Jesus rebuked the Jews, “**lay aside the commandment of God;**” how could they, if God had inspired them? Historically, we have seen that ideas and practices which were not Bible based, e.g., the elevation and veneration of the Virgin Mary, the Papacy, etc., were traditions challenged by the Reformists at the time of the Reformation and after. Indeed, the main Reformation teaching was that **all** traditions must be tested by the Bible. So ‘good traditions,’ like the Breaking of Bread, can and should be handed over to faithful Christians who will then pass them on undiluted.

Are there other good traditions?

Yes. We should never despise the power of good example. Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Those things which ye have both learned, and received and heard, *and seen in me*, do.” Phil. 4:9. Similarly to the brethren in Thessalonica, “For yourselves know how ye ought *to follow us*; for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you” 2 Thess. 3:7. And who can forget his advice to Timothy? “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” 1 Tim. 4:12.

To learn from good, faithful Christians, who have the Christ and the Word always before them, is a ‘tradition’ which the Church should not ignore. You see, such men will not ‘put aside’ the commandment of God, but will be so intent on maintaining the purity of Christ and His Word, that nothing of them personally, except their example, will show through. The words of John the Baptist are pertinent in the spiritual sense to every individual Christian, “He must increase, but I must decrease;” then we shall hand over traditions which will always enhance the Lord and His Church. But even though we may have respect and regard for our spiritual forefathers, and even though we may honour their work and word, there may come a time when we have to say, like Peter before the Council, “**We ought to obey God rather than men.**”

In conclusion, then, we can say, “Yes, we should be wary of the traditions of men which are not endorsed by God, but those good traditions which **are**, we should strive to maintain in our lives, and ‘hand them down’ to faithful men who will seek to preserve them. Nothing less is acceptable for the Christ whom we love, and for His Church, the glory of which we want to endorse in our lives. For His sake.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sept 4	1 Samuel 16:1-13	Acts 9:1-22
Sept 11	2 Kings 4:8-37	Acts 9:23-43
Sept 18	Leviticus 11:1-25	Acts 10:1-23
Sept 25	Isaiah 49:1-13	Acts 10:24-48

SAUL'S CONVERSION

The conversion of the future apostle Paul is an important event in the history of the world. Of course, he had previously been a persecutor of the early saints (9:1,2), a fact that he never forgot the rest of his life (1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13). But God saw in this man of Tarsus an ideal figure to help bridge the gap between the Jewish world and the Gentile world.

We read in Acts 9 of Saul journeying to the city of Damascus to continue his act of persecution upon the humble disciples of Jesus. His intention was to find men and women and bring them bound to Jerusalem (9:2). However, near to Damascus he encountered Jesus in a very dramatic way. A blinding light from heaven shone round about him and on falling to the ground he heard a voice saying: “Saul, Saul, **why do you persecute me?**” “**Who are you Lord?**” Saul asked. “**I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.**” He replied. “**Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do**” (9:4-6).

Conversion is a word that speaks of a turning in company with some one. I believe that Saul's conversion did not

take place on the road to Damascus, but in Damascus itself. Ananias, a disciple at Damascus, was the one chosen by God to inform Saul of exactly what he had to do. Ananias was obviously very reticent in approving Saul, but God had told him: **“Go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”** (9:15,16). It was through Ananias that Saul’s sight was restored and it was from him he heard the famous words: **“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on His name”** (Acts 22:16, N.I.V.). So it was in the identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (in the waters of baptism) that Saul had his sins washed away and that he turned with the Lord from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. What I have written is endorsed by Alexander Brown in his outstanding book *Conversion to God*. In response to the often-heard question: **“Was not Saul converted when the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus?”** He wrote: **“It will not be asserted that he was a convert until he was forgiven. But his sins were still unforgiven when, in Damascus, Ananias said to him ‘Arise, and be baptised, and wash away your sins.’ That he was unforgiven, unsaved, and unhappy, accounts for him being without food and drink for three days after the Lord had appeared to him. He was pardoned, saved, and became a Christian when he was immersed.”**

I think a lot about Saul or Paul, as he later was to become known. For example, I often wonder what was going through his mind for those three days when he was **“without sight and neither did eat nor drink”** (9:9). Certainly, he never forgot what happened to him on the road to Damascus and in the city itself. I like the fact that in no time at all he was preaching **“Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God”** (9:20). But soon the persecutor became

persecuted (9:23-25). Things were never to be the same for him again.

DORCAS

Dorcas means “gazelle” which was an emblem of beauty. Dorcas is the first Greek name of a female in the New Testament, its Hebrew equivalent being Tabitha.

Dorcas was a disciple (9:36). She was of the city of Joppa (modern Jaffa) and perhaps came to know Jesus through the church there.

She was a philanthropist. We read **“This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did”** (9:36). Herbert Lockyer has written: **“How significant are these last three words! Too many well-meaning people sit around and talk charitable work they never do. Sometimes they propose these works and leave others to execute them. Dorcas not only thought up ways of relieving the needy, but she also carried out her plans . . . She knew what she could do and did it.”**

She was mourned and missed. It was a very sad day for the church in Joppa when one of its most beloved and devoted members died. Since then, all churches have experienced such a loss, I am certain we can all identify with the congregation of Joppa at this time.

She was raised from the dead. This was done through the instrumentality of the apostle Peter (9:40,41). The feelings of the saints can only be imagined when he **“presented her alive”** (9:41). Tears of mourning turned to tears of joy!

She helped bring others to Jesus. We read: **“And it was known throughout all Joppa: and many believed in the Lord”** (9:42). And what happened to her thereafter? Well the record is silent on the matter. Perhaps we can endorse the words of Edith Deen when she wrote: **“Nothing is recorded of Dorcas after her healing, but in all probability her service increased.”**

CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

Cornelius and his household were the first Gentile converts to Christ. Cor-

nelius was an outstanding individual (10:1,2), yet he needed the blood of Jesus to cleanse him and make him whole. The apostle Peter was the one who was chosen to bring the good news of salvation in Christ.

It was not easy for Peter to mix readily with Gentiles. His strict Jewish background had had a profound influence upon his thinking. To orthodox Jews in that day, Gentiles were common and unclean. They thought they were outside the pale as far as the blessings of God were concerned. Peter had to unlearn this before Cornelius and his household could be brought into the family of God.

Peter received a vision "and saw heaven opened and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners and let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not common. This was done three times: and the vessel was received up into heaven" (10:11-16). The lesson was clear: Once Peter would have called a Gentile unclean; but now God had prepared him for the visitors who would come.

We read that the Holy Spirit fell on them who heard the word (10:44) prior to their being baptised in water (10:48). This is a puzzle to some. Obviously, this to the Jews was the final proof of the astonishing fact that God had given His Spirit to the Gentiles too. However, I do see in this something else. I see the Father welcoming the Gentiles to His home before they actually stepped inside. (An act similar to that of the father in the story of the prodigal son [Luke 15:20].)

As a Gentile myself, I am so glad that the gospel is not limited to the Jewish race, but is for all people

everywhere. I take comfort from this passage in Revelation: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands; and cried with as loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb" (7:9,10).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

LETTERS FROM AFRICA

I get more letters from brethren in Africa than I can scarcely answer. Most of them are appealing, either as individuals or congregations, for financial support so that they might better preach the gospel but mainly so that they can support a preacher. Most of these letters are quite lengthy and I can't print them in full in the "S.S." I can but print some of them in the hope that churches or individuals here who can render any support or assistance will do so.

From what I hear, there are at the moment, some evangelists from the U.S.A. travelling about in some parts of Africa causing considerable anguish and strife by teaching that it is a sin to "break the bread" at the Lord's Table. Readers may find this hard to believe, but I am assured that it is so. The following is part (a small part of a lengthy letter) from brethren who seem to be suffering such anguish and I print it because these brethren seem desperate for some help.

(Ed.)

DO WE HAVE BRETHREN SOMEWHERE ?

The Church of Christ that meets at Iyi-Enu Ogidi in Nigeria, wish to know through the "Scripture Standard", if we have brethren somewhere on this Planet. We are a congregation that have been rejected by the brethren that uses multi-cups in the communion service. This is because we believe in the use of one loaf and one cup. Even though they say both are right, yet they do not extend

the right hand of fellowship to us. The one cup brethren also shun co-operation with us because they say that it is a sin to break the bread. They teach that the Passover lamb was not cut into pieces and a bone of it was not broken, therefore it is a sin to break the loaf. They are also being supported by the American one-cup Churches, who send them communion wine and other things like teaching aids and support for all their preachers.

We need an evangelist but we cannot support him. However, we have succeeded in planting another Church at Obosi.

Assanama Uffert Akpan,

Church Secretary, Church of Christ,
Iyi-Enu Ogidi, P.O. Box 7174,
Onitsha, NIGERIA.

TEST YOUR

BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. How many priests of Nob did Doeg murder?
2. Where was Samuel buried?
3. These two men of the province of Asia deserted Paul.
4. Which of Job's friends was first to offer advice?
5. What was the name of Moses' second son?
6. Who anointed King Saul?
7. What was the name of the centurion who guarded Paul on the journey to Rome?
8. Who acted as interpreters as Ezra read out the Law to the Israelites?
9. Name the two wives of Elkanah.
10. Solomon sent how many men to the quarry to cut stone for the temple?

AN APPEAL

Many years ago I organised the Cameroons Evangelisation Fund and sent a quantity of gospel material, etc. and a large printing press to Bro. D. N. Elangwe in Kumba, West Cameroon. Bro. Elangwe did much good with the press in furthering the gospel in that country but sadly died a few years ago. (I had a visit from his son Jonah recently).

Bro. A. T. Martins has written to me

once or twice from Cameroons asking that the fund be resuscitated and that he be given financial support in preaching the gospel in his area. Bro. Martins says that there are a great many congregations in the Cameroons dwindling away because of lack of leadership and full-time preachers. During the course of a year I get many similar letters from brethren in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa and there are already appeals for funds for Ghana and Nigeria.

Those willing to assist Bro. Martins should contact him at:- P.O. Box 121, Kumba Town, Meme Division, South West Province, Cameroons, West Africa.

Ed.

OBITUARIES

Dennyloanhead: The church here regrets the passing of our dear sister Nan White, on 12th June, 1994, at Falkirk Royal Infirmary. She was born in 1919 in the village of Slamannan where she spent most of her early years, and in 1943 was married to James White in the Slamannan Meeting Place by Walter Crosthwaite the well-known evangelist. For over 60 years she has been a faithful member of the Church and regular attender of all meetings and activities. She was a very humble Christian with a cheerful disposition and we mourn her passing. We commend her family to the God of all comfort, and trust that they will find solace through His word. The funeral service was held in Falkirk and later at Larbert Cemetery by the writer assisted by Bro. Peter Sneddon.

Joseph M. Malcolm.

Motherwell, Scotland: The Church at Motherwell reports the passing of Sister Peggy Williamson on the 28th of April, 1994 in Almondvale Home, Blackburn, West Lothian. Sister Williamson was a faithful servant of God for ninety-five years. She was associated with three congregations - Carluke, Fauldhouse (where she lived prior to entering the home) and Motherwell. Her husband John Williamson, died in 1941, which meant she was a widow for 53 years. To them were born Isobel and Ian, who were a loving daughter and son to the end. The church at Motherwell was

represented by a number of members at the service at the Home and the graveside in Fauldhouse. Both services were conducted by Bro. Ian Davidson. We thank the Lord for Sister Williamson's faithfulness to the end and rejoice that she is now with Him in the glory world. Special thanks go to the nursing staff at Almondvale for their tender and loving care over many years.
 William Purcell, Secy.

COMING EVENTS

ANNUAL SOCIAL NEWTONGRANGE
 Saturday, 8th October, 1994
 4.00 p.m. in Meetingplace

Speakers:

Bro. David Ferguson, Mayfield
 Bro. Robert Hughes, Kirkcaldy

We look forward to a rich time of fellowship with the various congregations in the Lord.

Joe Currie (Sec/Treas.)

GHANA APPEAL

Again we sincerely thank those who have contributed to the growth of the Lord's Kingdom in Ghana and encourage the contribution of the vital work. The results have been extremely encouraging and the number of congregations has grown tremendously. This has been a combined operation. Our Ghanaian brethren have an outstanding zeal and enthusiasm to spread the word, bring others to Christ and extend God's Kingdom. They put the funds raised to excellent use. Open air preaching has been used extensively, but the P.A. system recently broke down, possibly

beyond repair.

With so many infant churches being established there is a great demand for Bible and Hymn books.

We are all one in Christ, love prevades the Body of Christ (John 13:34,35) and churches use their medical resources well for necessary treatment.

Brethren so much has been achieved in this joint effort and it could be said that we are victims of our own success. The number of congregations has so grown that funds are being stretched over a very much greater number. By "we" I refer to both our Ghanaian brethren who so successfully work at extending the Lord's Kingdom, and those who respond to provide the wherewithall to use in achieving this success.

To paraphrase a secular leader's words of days gone by "Give us the tools and we will do the job."

Bill Cook.

Please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to:-

Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways,
 Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU.
 Telephone: (0383) 728624.

- 10. 80,000 (1 Kings 5:15)
- 9. Hannah & Penimah (1 Samuel 1:2)
- 8. Levites (Nehemiah 8:7)
- 7. Julius (Acts 27:1)
- 6. Samuel (1 Samuel 10:1)
- 5. Eliezer (Exodus 18:4)
- 4. Eliphaz (Job 4:1)
- 3. Phygellus & Hermogenes (2 Timothy 1:15)
- 2. Ramah (1 Samuel 25:1)
- 1. 85 (1 Samuel 22:18)

ANSWERS

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