

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

Last year Mr. Topping, a Buckinghamshire farmer, had his whole arm wrenched off in a hay-baling machine. He ran for nearly a mile, with the severed arm tucked under his other arm, for help and surgeons managed to attach it again. A baby born in Belgium just a few days ago had a heart defect and was given a 'Pace-maker' about the size of a thumb nail. I notice from old notes that I tried to give a talk on this subject (Great Physician) in 1959 but *even since that date* medical science has made vast strides. Heart/lung transplants are now becoming regular events while heart, kidney and liver transplants are quite commonplace. Fantastic advances are being made yearly with new investigative machines, new surgical techniques, new drugs and new medical developments of all kinds. Illnesses, fatal fifty years ago, can now be easily dealt with. When we remember that, a little over a hundred years ago, very few patients survived an amputation, and when we remember that the stump was cauterised with a red-hot iron and the patient was anaesthetised with a few swigs of whisky, then we realise that we have come a long way. Indeed I remember, as a boy of 8 years, having an operation to cut a piece off the end of my poisoned thumb, and this was done on the kitchen table and the anaesthetic consisted of some drops of chloroform on a gauze on my face. We don't see much of that kind of thing nowadays, but memories of it make us sympathise with the poor unfortunates of other lands, like Africa and India, where anaesthetics and drugs are in short supply, or even non-existent.

The New Testament nowhere describes Jesus as 'The Great Physician' but the implication is in Matt. 9:12 where Jesus chided the smug self-righteousness of the Pharisees when He said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick ... For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." We note from this statement that Jesus not only implied that He had come as a physician but that He had come to deal with the sickness of SIN and to call *sinners to repentance*. Physicians are mentioned early in the Bible (Gen. 50:2) where, apparently, part of their duties was to embalm the dead, but, surprisingly, very few references (only four) are made to such an important personage through-out the scriptures. Asa, king of Judah, as he lay dying from gangrene is criticised for consulting his physician and not the Lord (2 Chron. 16): Job talks of his physicians of "having no value" (not an uncommon complaint) and Jeremiah asks "Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there." These constitute the only references to physicians in the entire O.T. which is surprising when we consider that every king, and indeed every man of any substance, would have a personal physician. Perhaps you have wondered, as I have, if the physicians of those early ages had to contend with maladies and diseases *similar to*

the ones we have with us today and certainly it seems that, apart from some modern industrial diseases and illnesses brought on by our 'modern living', the ancients had to cope with most of the serious ailments common to us. The Ebers papyrus, found in a tomb at Thebes in 1862, and written about the time of Moses, lists sixty or seventy diseases prevailing at that time, and many Egyptian mummies have provided evidence of gallstones, arthritis, mastoids, cancer, dental caries, pneumonia, smallpox, bubonic plague, tuberculosis, etc. etc. On the other hand the Bible mentions such things as leprosy, dysentery, dropsy, ulcers, tumours, ague, piles, consumption, fever, palsy, boils, epilepsy, scurvy; etc. etc. Thus we can see the need for many physicians (from Genesis onwards) and the challenge which confronted them. Robert Burns said, "Many and sharp the numerous ills inwoven with our frame" and truly there seems no limit to the things which can go wrong with the *human body*, let alone the *human-being* (mind and spirit).

Body, Soul & Spirit

Modern physicians, while undoubtedly fully pre-occupied with the ills of the *human body* are, I think, becoming increasingly aware of a distinct relationship between body and mind, and that many bodily symptoms have their roots in spirit and mind, so much so that we now have, from Freud and Jung, Psycho-analysts who investigate the affect our mental processes have on our lives. This relatively recent recognition that man is more than a human animal was, however, acknowledged about 2,000 years ago by Paul in his first epistle to the Thessalonians when he prayed that their "whole spirit and soul and body" be preserved blameless to the coming of the Lord. Jesus is "The Great Physician" in that He is able to secure the well-being of *the whole man* - spirit, soul and body.

When Jesus dealt with the *ailments of the body* He demonstrated a skill which can never ever be surpassed. He had no books, no medicines or drugs, no surgical instruments, no operating theatre — He did not even have any bandages and did not need to use anaesthetics yet He cured a man blind from birth — a cure which even his deadliest enemies had to concede. Indeed He restored sight to many of the blind; He cured the dumb and even deaf-mutes; He healed a blind and dumb demoniac and restored other demoniacs to their right mind; He healed the ten lepers; He restored the ear of Malchus; the woman with the issue of blood; the man sick of the palsy; the man with the dropsy; the man with the withered hand — and these are but a few examples. He merely said, "Lift up thy bed and walk" to the man whose limbs had been a tangled mess from birth. No matter how advanced our medical knowledge may become no modern physician will ever come close to the wonders performed by "The Great Physician".

Wonderful as these cures were it must be true to say that Jesus was more concerned with the spiritual state of mankind — more with man's *spirit and soul* than with his body. After all, the body is but a temporary vehicle in which to carry the soul. Even if our physician rescues us from various forms of distemper and illness we will, in the end, have to acknowledge that life is temporary and that after, 'threescore years and ten' we may well be called to 'our long home'. The soul is, on the other hand, the eternal part of man and as such will far outlive the body. Yet, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die". Thus the reason for Jesus being more concerned with sin than with sciatica; more concerned with abominable deeds than with abdominal needs; more worried about evil than about emerods; more vexed about lies than about livers; more disturbed about depravity than about dysentery; more dismayed with disobedience than with diabetes. This preferential regard for the soul, over bone and sinew, is expressed many times in the N.T. and is surely embodied in Christ's words to His disciples (in Matt. 10:28) — "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell," or in Paul's remarks to Timothy (Chap. 4:8) "For bodily exercise profiteth little:

but Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come". We should not be surprised, therefore, that Jesus pronounced the Kingdom of Heaven in preference to a National Health Service, that He produced His church in preference to a 'Fitness Farm'; and promoted congregations in preference to clinics. If we were all as interested in the condition of our souls as we evidently are in the health of our bodies we would, I suppose do well. Truly Jesus was a physician of great compassion and we read that as "His fame went throughout all Syria: they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them all" *yet it must be emphasised* that He came to save souls rather than salvage sanity, and to save sinners rather than to fight fevers or heal hernias.

Not Only Able, But Willing

Any self-respecting physician must be able to:-

- (1) *Correctly diagnose* the disease
- (2) Be *properly qualified* to treat that disease
- (3) *Prescribe the effective cure* for the disease.

How does Jesus shape up as The Great Physician with respect to these 3 propositions?

(1) Jesus correctly diagnosed man's true enemy as being SIN. The very term 'Physician' implies a disease. Why did Jesus have to die a terrible death if there was nothing dreadful to be saved from? "Christ died *for our sins*, according to the scriptures." We need to be rescued from not only the guilt of sin but also from its consequences. There are others in the world who diagnose the cause of a troubled world differently, ascribing it to bad living conditions, poverty, ignorance, insecurity, distrust, etc. etc. but Jesus attributed all our troubles to Sin. Naturally, 'Sin' is a very unpopular word even from the pulpits has been replaced with such terms as "blunders, mistakes, and misunderstandings". We may try to water it down in this way but the reality remains - "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8). Sin is universal and is as likely to be found in the royal Household as in big business; as likely in the Vatican as in your local branch of the Mafia. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Sin is of *epidemic proportions* and touches us all. Not only is it an epidemic but it is also *very contagious* — it spreads like a plague and involves everybody. A rotten apple in a barrel is certain to adversely affect the rest. Jesus said, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump". A child is born in a perfectly innocent condition but few men going to the grave can claim that same innocency. Sin is also incurable by man and very fatal. "The soul that sinneth it shall die". "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Surely no one can say that Jesus 'fudged' the issue, or 'Shilly-shallied" (as some doctors do), on the diagnosis of the root-cause of man's malady. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin and when sin is finished, *it bringeth forth death.*" (James 1:13).

(2) Is the Great Physician qualified to cope with sin? If we remember that Jesus was "God manifest in the flesh" we shall experience no difficulty in believing that Jesus can cure the ravages of sin. The wages of sin is certainly death "but the gift of God is eternal life". (Rom. 6:23). Jesus came so that we would not only have Life but have it more abundantly. The writer to the Hebrews says, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25). Why is Jesus able to save all men to the uttermost? Because *He ever liveth*, i.e. is not, like other Physicians (and Priests) subject to death, or likely to die tomorrow. Jesus not only personally conquered sin

(proving the possibility of a sinless life) but vanquished death itself. Death, as we know, is Satan's ultimate sanction on mankind but Jesus has conquered even there. Death is swallowed up in Christ's victory. Jesus has not only mastered sin but "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. 1:10). Jesus is not only *able* to deal with our sin but has also given expression to *His willingness* to do so., in such invitations as "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden" and "Behold I stand at the door and knock.." Truly Jesus is able and willing.

(3) Has the 'Great Physician' prescribed an effective cure? His remedy is foolishness in the eyes of the worldly-wise. "For the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." The Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1). These words were penned 2,000 years ago but things haven't changed. The Jews are still looking for a sign and the Gentiles still look upon the gospel as foolishness. The politicians wring their hands in agitation at the threat of war and industrial unrest; Social workers wring their hands at marital and drug problems; Police Chiefs wring their hands at the increase in violence and rising crime rate - even clergymen wring their hands at falling church attendance, but the answer to these difficulties is rarely sought in God's Word. Like King Asa, they consult their 'physicians' rather than the Lord. Ever since the 'League Of Nations' men have Thought that a solution can be found in politics but the present 'United Nations' has proved to be just as ineffectual as ever was the 'League Of Nations. There is no political answer to evil; neither is the answer to be found in philosophy; or science; in education; or better living-conditions; in Prison-reform or even in the arts. The answer is to be found only on the lips of the apostles as they preached the gospel of Christ. The gospel, foolish though it may be to many, is the only power of God unto the salvation of man (Rom.1:16). If, perchance, all men were today, to obey the gospel, and follow the directions prescribed by The Great Physician, the world's problems based on racism, greed, indifference, violence, intimidation, and poverty etc. etc. would vanish overnight. Not only would *the world* be better but we would all be *better individuals* with pardon from our own personal sins, and we would all be caught up into a wonderful reconciliation with our Maker. The simplicity of the remedy will, it seems, always escape the attention of the Powers That Be and they will go on with their Committees Of Enquiry and their Royal Commissions and get nowhere. The *gospel is simple* notwithstanding the efforts of 'theologians' to make it difficult. It portrays Christ as God's only Son who 'died in our stead' but who rose again, triumphant over the grave, and asks us to place our complete faith and trust in Him. It also calls upon us to repent from our past way of life and to, in future, walk in the steps of Jesus, and to stay therein (to the best of our ability) to the end of our lifetime. It also requires us to start off in this new life *with a clean sheet*; this being accomplished by our immersion in the waters of baptism from which we rise to walk in newness of life, and wherein we "put on Christ". (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:27). The remedy is useless unless we apply it, just as the medicine which remains in the bottle can never revive us. Seekers after help should however, beware for there are many 'physicians' in the religious marketplace today who are but dangerous 'quacks' and should be avoided. By far the best course is to *read, for ourselves*, the prescription penned in the pages of the N.T., and to listen only to the instruction of Jesus and His apostles. The Great Physician is able to heal us, is willing to save us but we must humbly implement His remedy. No man is so bad that he cannot come; no man is so good that he can afford to stay away.-

A WONDERFUL SAVIOUR

No. 1 The Saviour

FROM the time that man separated himself from his Creator by sin - the wilful act of disobedience - God promised that a Saviour would eventually come into the world to bring about a reconciliation. The prophecy was made as soon as the breach occurred (Genesis 3:15), and the promise was reiterated all down the ages.

A Deliverer Promised

Prophets were enabled to reveal more and yet more details of this One who was to be the Saviour of mankind. God called Abram, who by his ready obedience earned for himself the title "Friend of God" (James 2:23), and revealed to him his purpose, promising that through his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed.

His Ancestry Determined

After severe testing Abraham (for so was his name changed - Genesis 17:5), wavered not in his implicit obedience to God, and proved himself the father of the faithful. He was privileged, by the eye of faith, to see the day of the Saviour (John 8:56). Matthew's record of the genealogy of Jesus begins at Abraham (Matthew 1:2-17).

His Tribe Foretold

Gradually the descendants of Abraham became a mighty nation, as God had promised they would. All their long line of prophets foretold more and more of the coming, in the fulness of time, of the wonderful Saviour. He was to deliver his people from the bondage of sin and so make possible reconciliation to God. Isaiah foretold the virgin birth of this mighty deliverer (Isaiah 9:6-7). He was of the tribe of Judah.

His Birthplace Named

Micah was enabled to indicate the place of his birth (Micah 5:2). He was to be immediately preceded by the "voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Isaiah 40:3). All such prophecies were in due course fulfilled, as the New Testament record clearly shows.

His Imminence Announced

At the time of the Saviour's conception Joseph was informed that the long-promised event was about to be fulfilled by the birth of a baby to Mary. This command was given: "And thou shalt call his name JESUS, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). And so the wonderful Saviour came into the world.

Angels Heralded His Arrival

Heaven could not remain silent. The angel of the Lord appeared to humble shepherds in Bethlehem's plains with the glorious tidings: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10). Angels sang a welcome.

The Son of God

That babe grew to manhood. God said of him, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him!" — thus investing him with pre-eminent authority. Jesus, himself, claimed to possess such authority when he assured his apostles, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). This is he who claims, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him" (Hebrews 7:25).

He is Here!

There he stands then, your Saviour and mine if we will allow him to be. He issues the grandest of all invitations, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. for I am meek and lowly in

heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28-30). Millions have listened to that invitation and have responded to it. Have you? Can you also say, "He is my Saviour?"

FRED C. DAY

GLEANINGS

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

BECOMING A DISCIPLE

"DISCIPLES" is the term consistently used in the four Gospels to mark the relationship existing between Christ and His followers. Jesus used it Himself in speaking of them, and they, in speaking of each other. Neither did it pass out of use in the new days of Pentecostal power. It runs right through the Acts of the Apostles. It is interesting also to remember that it was on this wise that the Angels thought and spoke of these men: the use of the word in the days of the Incarnation is linked to the use of the word in the apostolic age by the angelic message to the women, "Go - tell His disciples and Peter" (Mark 16:7).....

The word itself signifies a taught or trained one, and gives us the ideal of relationship. Jesus is the Teacher. He has all knowledge of the ultimate purposes of God for man, of the will of God concerning man, of the laws of God that mark for man the path of his progress and final crowning.

Disciples are those who gather around this Teacher and are trained by Him. Seekers after truth, not merely in the abstract, but as a life-force, come to Him and join the circle of those to whom He reveals these great secrets of all true life. Sitting at His feet, they learn from the unfolding of His lessons the will and ways of God for them; and obeying each successive word, they realise within themselves the renewing force and uplifting power thereof. The true and perpetual condition of discipleship, and its ultimate issue, were clearly declared by the Lord Himself "to those Jews which believed on Him". "If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32)." Campbell Morgan

THE FACT OF GOD

"If the facts, the outward circumstances, the plain reading of events, were always friendly and inviting, there would be no need for faith, and no value to the spirit of man in being obedient to faith. Why, faith is just the protest of something glorious and unconquerable in the soul of man against the domination of what the world calls facts. Faith, too, has its facts, which it asserts are as truly as the facts which strike our mere sense. Faith takes its really unassailable stand upon the supreme fact — the fact of God!"

John A. Hutton

THEY ALSO SERVE

"Who best

Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is Kingly; thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Milton

SOMEBODY HAS FORGOTTEN

"Hullo, little man, what's the matter with you?" cried a stranger, as he saw a poor, barefooted little fellow crying pitifully. "I'm hungry and cold!" was the sobbing answer. "Do you believe that God cares for you?" asked the stranger. "Yes," was the quick reply. "Then why doesn't He tell some one to give you some fresh clothes and a good meal?" "I expect He has told some one, only somebody has forgotten." T.W.T.

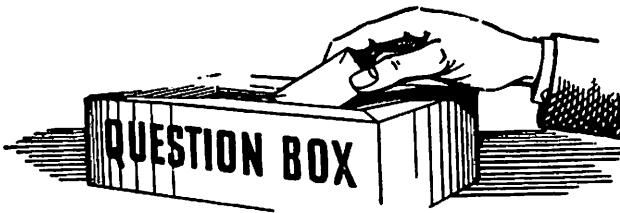
WE QUOTE - MADAME GUYON

"A little bird I am
 Shut from the fields of air;
 Yet in my cage I sit and sing
 To Him Who placed me there.
 Well pleased a prisoner to be,
 Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee."

"Nought have I else to do,
 I sing the whole day long;
 And He Who most I love to please
 Doth listen to my song.
 He caught and bound my wandering wing,
 And still He loves to hear me sing."

"Oh, it is good to soar
 These bolts and bars above,
 To Him Whose wisdom I adore
 Whose providence is love;
 And in His mighty will to find
 The flight, the freedom of the mind."

Selected by LEONARD MORGAN



Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

"Would you say that there are *Christians* in other religious groups?"

The regularity with which this subject is discussed is indicative of the uncertainty which seems to exist in some minds concerning it. I came to the conclusion a long time ago that it would be as futile for me to argue that there *are* Christians in diverse religious groups as it would be to say that there *are not*. I personally have been much influenced by the words of Jesus when He said, "We speak those things that we know" (John 3:11), and I am convinced that if we follow this excellent principle we shall arrive at satisfactory answers to many of our problems. It must be understood quite clearly, of course, that when we refer to the things that 'we know', we are speaking about those things which we have learned from God's revealed Will, whether or not this Will has been revealed by Prophet, Apostle, or by the Lord Himself. If any of us, at any time, feel that we *cannot* accept God's revealed will as being sacrosanct, then the *best* that we can contribute to any debate *must* be speculative and opinionated, and who wants to base his eternal destiny on *that* sort of evidence? I am also taking it that the questioner is referring to groups other than the Church of Christ. So what do "we know" about this subject?

The Church of Christ

The first, and perhaps the most important, fact that we know is that there *is* a Church of Christ. In the coasts of Caesarea Philippi Jesus took the confession of Peter who confessed that He, Jesus, was the Christ of God, and said that upon that foundation truth He would build His Church (see Matt.16:18). The reader will notice

that Jesus uses the personal, possessive pronoun "my", so we must conclude that the Church which would be built would be correctly named "the church of Christ."

Paul, in his letter to the Church at Ephesus, teaches us that the Church of Christ is "the Body of Christ"; in Eph. 1:22,23 we read, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Furthermore, in the same letter, Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it" (5:25). Our relationship with Christ is also made clear, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (5:30). Similarly, in Rom. 12:5 we read, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another."

Therefore, as far as we have gone in our investigation, we have established the following facts. Jesus is the Christ of God; the Church which Christ was to build was *His* Church, and therefore the Church of Christ; the Church so named is also referred to as 'the Body of Christ', so that if I am a member of that 'Body' I must automatically be a member of the Church of Christ, and all the members so joined form "the Body of Christ". So far so good. The next important question we need to address ourselves to is, "how does one become a member of the Body?"

The Christian

In Acts 11:26 we read, "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch", therefore it seems to me that if we can find how people became "disciples" then we shall know how one becomes a Christian. I think at this point it should be understood that we are not referring to the 'Twelve' whom Jesus called at the beginning of His ministry, but rather to those who became disciples by their belief in His teaching and by adherence to His Word.

A disciple may be thought of as one who follows another's teaching, not only as a pupil, but also as an adherent. To illustrate this we need to look at the words of Jesus as recorded in John's Gospel. As Jesus talked about His mission and His relationship with the Father, the scripture says, "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed (John 8:31). So here we have the twin ideas of belief and continuance in the Word. As if to seal these ideas, Jesus says later, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:7,8). It is important to notice here that Jesus *again* stresses continuance in His words. After Jesus had talked about the building of His Church, He spoke to His immediate disciples and said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:24,25).

Bearing in mind these words of Jesus, we now turn our attention to the Great Commission given to the Twelve by the Lord "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18-20 N.I.V.). Luke also records that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they were given power from on high, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in His name beginning at Jerusalem (See Luke 24:45-50). The Twelve received the power by baptism of the Holy Spirit, they spoke the Gospel message, and the people cried out "What must we do?" Peter gave them the inspired answer, "Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven" (Acts 2:37-40 N.I.V.). The three thousand who responded were the first 'disciples'. What is of paramount importance in our investigation now follows, "They (the newly-made disciples) devoted

themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers All the believers were together and had everything in common" (42-44).

It is quite evident that the people who were responding to the Gospel were called disciples. In Acts 6:1 we read "In those days when the number of *disciples* was increasing", etc.; and also in V2 "So the Twelve gathered all the *disciples* together," etc. In view of this, let us ask a few questions and supply the answers. Who were these disciples? they were the ones called Christians in Antioch. How did they become disciples? they believed, confessed Christ, and were immersed into Him. What did they subsequently do? they devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to breaking bread and prayers. They were together, and shared things together. Could it be said that they were members of the Body of Christ? seeing that they were immersed *into* Him (Read Rom. 6) it is difficult to see how they *could not* be members of His Body. They therefore constituted the Church of Christ? I would say undoubtedly.

In view of what we have said, can we reasonably affirm that there are Christians other than in the Church of Christ? I think not. If we *do* affirm that there may be those in other religious groups who are members of the "Body of Christ", then we would still be saying that they are members of the 'Church of Christ'. Furthermore, if there *are* immersed believers in other religious groups, how can they continue in the Apostles' doctrine if the group to which they attach themselves doesn't *teach* the Apostles' doctrine, and how can they have fellowship, and be together, with other members of the Lord's Body? We have learned from our investigation that to be a disciple I must not only *follow* the teaching of the Lord but I must also *adhere* to it. Can anyone seriously suggest that if I join myself to a group that does not even follow, let alone adhere to, the teaching of Jesus and His Apostles that I am doing what God wants me to do? But if it is said that the group think and act as any other group of Christians do, then why do they not call themselves the Church of Christ; which brings me to my final point.

Churches of Christ

There can surely be little doubt that groups of Christians, geographically located, ought scripturally to refer to themselves as 'Churches of Christ'; even a cursory glance at the N.T. will confirm this. If a child of God can rejoice in the name 'Christian', then surely a group of Christians, properly constituted and having fellowship together in the Apostles doctrine, and Breaking Bread together regularly, can, and ought, to rejoice in the name 'Church of Christ'. I strongly deprecate the present day definition which says, "I am simply a Christian meeting with a group of Christians"; it seems to me that they are making some sort of apology for God having used the sort of descriptive terms which He has. I wonder what the motive is in not wanting to say, "I belong to the Church of Christ in this or that location.

I have very little time for what I term "Free-lance" Christians. I look upon a properly constituted Church of Christ as one having Elders and Deacons. Can it be that there are some Christians who do not want the situation when someone "has the rule" over them? If the Christian views the Church as in a "group situation", then theoretically such a Christian can join himself to *any* group as he thinks fit. How, then, can a local Church function as intended if it has a number of itinerant members? From God's point of view, the attitude of "free-lance" Christians might be looked upon as semi-conformity without full responsibility.

It is time we stopped deluding ourselves. If some Christians are not functioning as they should, then it is not in their power to change God's arrangement, but rather to "get inside" and make the Church what they think it ought to be. I am proud to belong

to the Church of Christ, and if anyone examines the subject seriously then they will *have* to say that there are no Christians, in the terms in which we have described Christians, in any other religious group.

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

CHRISTIAN LIVING

The characteristics of Christian living can be summed up in the following statements of Jesus. He said, "Come unto me": "Follow me"; "Abide in me" and "Go ye". Simple words indeed. Today we tend to worry over the things we must not do, to the neglect of the things we should be doing.

The requests that the Lord makes of us are so simple, so straight forward, so unmistakable in meaning that even a child can understand. It would appear the difficulty does not lie in trying to decipher *the meaning* of Christ's commands, but in believing *with a sincere heart*: that seems to be the trouble. I am sure we pray often: but do we pray believing, not just hoping; expecting awaiting the force of the Holy Spirit. It seems not brethren. We fail in this, taking things for granted. God relates to those who are mighty in prayer; they will be used and blessed of Him.

"Come unto me"

To hear and respond to the call of Jesus, creates a new Christian, and praise the Lord, that's good. The more we go to Jesus, the closer our fellowship with Him will be. Our experience in the Lord will reach new heights. We must realise that Jesus says, "Come unto me" not once but often.

"Follow me"

When we come to Jesus we find a friend with power, influence and wisdom: such as no earthly friend can ever hope to have. Earthly friends can, at times, let us down: but Jesus, never. In Him all things are possible. We need to believe this. Many of us tend to falter. We need to follow on in the footsteps of Jesus, in close company. Failure results in sorrow.

"Abide in me"

To be in union with Christ is of the most importance. We must be in fellowship with Him, we must be working with Him. Jesus says, "I am the vine ye are the branches". Christian take note; no branch: no fruit. It is through the church the good news is to be preached, in all its facets. Through the Christian the good news is to be made known. For this we need to abide in Christ, for strength, for guidance, for help and for success. We must ever be aware of the possibility of failing in this by, standing on past laurels. To "abide in the Lord" means success in all things; that is the promise of God.

"Go ye"

To answer Christ's call of "GO", one needs courage, honesty and a stout heart. If truly abiding in Christ, these things can be ours. The Spirit will help you, guide us, direct us and care for us. A possible failing of the Christian may be that strict adherence to the first three commands create a neglect of the fourth "Go ye", to the hurt of the soul. "Go Ye", Christ says, but we stand static! "Go and preach the gospel", but we respond, "I can't do that, it's not very convenient". Attend meetings: go to the

soul that needs comfort; go to the brother that needs help; go to the person that is house-bound. In this, dear reader, you are helping to preach the gospel. It may be hard to understand this, but a static Christian is of no consequence. A Christian on fire for the Lord, can soon set alight a flame somewhere else, to the glory of God. We have to share the faith. If you really can't go then send a card, a note, an invitation, a tract, advice, help. We can all go, brethren, in some way or other. If not, help others to go. Be about the Lord's business in your own small way.

May the Lord bless us all, in the work He has set before us.

A. P. SHARP, Newtongrange.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

DECEMBER 1984

2—Isaiah 7:1-17 Matt. 1:1-2 & 16-25
 9—Micah 5:2-15 Matthew 2
 16—Isaiah 40:1-11 Matthew 3
 23—Psalm 91 Matthew 5:1-26

MATTHEW He was also known as Levi son of Alphaeus. He was a publican or tax-collector by profession, and it was while sitting at "the receipt of custom" that he was called by Jesus to become His follower (Matthew 9:9). Later he was appointed one of the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:3).

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL RECORD This is one of the synoptic Gospels. The others are by Mark and Luke. The word "synoptic" means literally "seeing together"; therefore these Gospels give an account of the events in Jesus's life from the same point of view or under the same general aspect.

Frank Charles Thompson in his analysis of this book writes: "The Jews are primarily the ones addressed. This view is confirmed by the fact that there are about sixty references to the Jewish prophecies and about forty quotations from the Old Testament."

KEY WORDS *Fulfilled* is a key word. The Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Christ. Also the word *Kingdom* occurs fifty times and the *Kingdom of Heaven* thirty times.

Alexander Campbell in his book *The Christian System* gives two good reasons why Matthew, the oldest Christian writer, generally prefers Kingdom or Reign of Heaven, to the Kingdom or Reign of God. First, he wrote to Jews in Judea who expected a Messiah, a King, and a Kingdom of God on earth — a mere improvement of the Jewish system; and therefore to raise their conception he delights to call it the Reign or Kingdom of Heaven, in contrast with that earthly Kingdom of God of which they were so long in possession. Second, he was authorised from the Jewish use of the word to regard it as equivalent to God.

DATE When exactly Matthew wrote this record is not known. Thomas Hartwell Horne writes: "Matthew is generally allowed to have written first of all the evangelists. His Gospel is uniformly placed first in all the codes or volumes of the Gospels: and the priority is constantly given to it in all the quotations of the primitive fathers, as well as of the early heretics."

PLACE Where this Gospel was composed is unknown; Jerusalem and Antioch in Syria have been suggested. The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible says: "The acquaintance with it shown by postapostolic writers in widely scattered localities proves that it obtained, as soon as it was published, general circulation."

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

The genealogical record detailed by Matthew should be compared with that presented by Luke (Luke 3:23-38). The latter begins with Joseph and ends with

Adam. The former commences with Abraham and concludes with "Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ". Both records reveal the perfect pedigree of Jesus. Study them in depth. It could prove inspirational.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The conception of Jesus was a miraculous event. "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). Mary and Joseph were to name their son Jesus which is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua. It means literally *Jehovah is salvation*. The birth was a fulfilment of prophecy, and Matthew quotes Isaiah (7:14), the Messianic Prophet. Wise men, (magi) came from the east (the area of ancient Babylonia) to Jerusalem to worship the infant Jesus. There has been a number of embellishments to the original story which require correction. First, the number of the wise men is not given. Second, the star did not guide them from their country all the way to Jerusalem. They first saw the star in the east and knew that the King of the Jews had been born. (The result of Daniel's teaching six hundred years earlier?) Third, the star re-appeared in Judea to guide them to the young child (2:9-10). Fourth, when the wise men came to Bethlehem Jesus must have been around two years old at the time else why did Herod authorise the slaughter of all the infants two years old and under (2:16)?

These men presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They were the right gifts because all of them would be useful in Egypt, the land to which the family fled. Frankincense and myrrh were used in the embalming process in Egypt. They could be sold with the gold to help maintain them.

The family finally settled in Nazareth. This fulfilled the prophecy that Jesus would be called a Nazarene or a Branch (2:23, Isaiah 11:1, Jeremiah 23:5, Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12).

JOHN THE BAPTIST

The work of John the Baptist was of great importance. He came in the spirit of Elijah (Malachi 4:5, Matthew 17:9-13). His message to the Jews was one of repentance because the Kingdom of heaven was near. He prepared the way of the Lord (3:3).

We read: "Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Saducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance...' " Certainly John did not miss them. It was a powerful and uncompromising admonition.

He spoke of Jesus baptizing them with the Holy Spirit and fire. Some people regard this as one and the same baptism, but I disagree. Surely verse twelve explains the baptism of fire.

Jesus came to be baptized of John. In response to the reluctant baptizer the Master said: "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness". Albert Barnes has written: "Jesus had no sin. But He was about to enter on His great work. It was proper that He be set apart by His forerunner, and show His connection with him, and give His approbation to what John had done. He submitted to the ordinance of baptism, also, in order that occasion might be taken, at the commencement of His work, for God publicly to declare his approbation of Him, and His solemn appointment to the office of the Messiah".

THE TEMPTATION

The majority of people today reject the fact that Satan exists. I happen to be with the minority. (I may add that this is a common experience for me). One reason I believe in the personality of the Devil is

because he was very real to my Saviour. Verses one to eleven of chapter four clearly show that Jesus conversed with the Devil or the Temptor. If that does not reveal personality then I do not know what does.

The Hebrew writer said of Jesus: "For we do not have an high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Brothers and sisters in the Lord, we should derive strength from that fact. Jesus overcame Satan, and we can too if we trust and live in Him. Remember, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

W. Carl Ketcherside in his book *Adventure of Faith* writes: "The word sermon does not appear in the Bible ... When we hear the word 'sermon' we conjure up a mental image of a man trained in the art of homiletics standing behind a rostrum on a raised platform. But Jesus simply sat down on a rocky hillside and shared with people. He was 'the Way, the Truth and the Life'. And what the 'Waysower' shared was truth and life. There is some evidence that the people in our day have been preached to death instead of taught how to live".

Someone described the Sermon on the Mount as the essence of Jesus's teaching. He also said that the Beatitudes were the essence of the Sermon on the Mount. So in the Beatitudes we have the essence of the essence. There is only space here to touch on one: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy".

The merciful are those who bear towards others that outgoing love which reflects and reproduces the outgoing love of God. The merciful are those who can completely identify with other people, who can see with their eyes, think with

their minds, and feel with their hearts. That makes tolerance and forgiveness a lot easier. But surely the supreme demonstration of this mercy is in the Incarnation. William Barclay wrote: "In Jesus Christ God literally entered into our skin seeing things with our eyes, thinking things with our minds, feeling things with our hearts. The Incarnation is God's complete self-identification with the sins, the sorrowings, and the sufferings of men. The supreme example of mercy is God's identification with men in Jesus Christ. The outgoing love of God was such that he made this supreme and sacrificial self-identification with man; and that is why God understands, forgives, and saves".

O the bliss of the poor! O the bliss of the sorrowful! O the bliss of the hungry and thirsty! etc. What startling contradictions of the world's standards!

IAN DAVIDSON, Motherwell

DESPISED AND REJECTED

by Homer A. Gray

Fulfilling the prophecy literally, Jesus at the time of his trial and crucifixion was "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). But, while it was the Christ who was despised, it was the other figures in the pitiful drama who were despicable. Practically every man whose name is mentioned in the tragic story behaved in a most despicable manner.

Judas is the recorded traitor in the story (Matt. 26:47, etc.) He had been a disgruntled disciple all the while, and the record declares him to be a thief. But it was his betrayal of his Master for blood money that gave him his unenviable record. He appears in the shadow of the cross with thirty pieces of silver in his hand, a heart as black as the ace of spades, and fades out of the picture as a self-destroyer (Matt. 27:5).

Peter's part in the drama is also a shabby part. He had boasted that even if

all others forsook the Lord, he would die before he left him (Matt. 26:33,35). But cowardice gripped him at the last, and he fled from the Master. Later on he was to laugh at death and defy the world, as he plead the cause of the Lord, but in the hour of his Master's danger, he denied with an oath that he even knew him.

No less dispicable was the part played by Pilate. He permitted the government he represented to be mobbed by the rabble. He found no fault in Jesus of Nazareth, and as the head of the government, he pronounced him faultless (Luke 23:4). He made a half-hearted effort to save his life; but he feared insurrection and yielded to the mob. He released a robber whose guilt was undenied and delivered to the mob the man he had pronounced innocent of all wrong. He washed his hands as a sign that he would have no part in the death of an innocent man, but 2,000 years have not been long enough to wash the stain from his reputation. And just here I would say with the poet:

*"No soap that I have ever seen,
Can make a man like that look clean,
For what I say of him is true:
That man was dirty thru and thru.
I think that those who have the power,
That's needed in a trying hour,
And fail that power to exercise,
Stand guilty in the Saviour's eyes".*

Nor is there anything commendable in the actions of the public at that time. The people who crowded around the seat of authority and demanded the blood of the most stainless character in history, were a part of the people who less than a week before had acclaimed his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. They knew nothing of what they were doing when they greeted Jesus as a king, and they knew no more when they demanded his execution—they merely followed the crowd as most people do today.

The only character in the play who did not play a dispicable part was the man

who was "despised and rejected". Sharp as the nails that pierced his hands and feet, was the knowledge that he had been forsaken by his most intimate associates, sold and betrayed by a long-time companion, and blasphemously denied by his leading disciple. Literally he was compelled to "tread the winepress alone, for, of the people, there were none with him" (Isa. 63:3). But there was neither bitterness nor resentment in the heart of the forsaken, betrayed, and dying Master. His very death rattle voiced a prayer for those who killed him.

When I think of all the Lord has done for me, I am constrained to say, "I'll be a friend to Jesus, my life for him I'll spend; So, while on earth I'm living, my Lord shall have a friend."

From: "The Light".

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dennyloanhead, Scotland: The church which meets here intends, God willing, to hold another series of Saturday evening gospel meetings on a monthly basis for a six-month period (October 1984 to March 1985). The first of these meetings will commence on Saturday October 27th followed by one on November 24th followed by another on December 15th - all commencing at 6 p.m. We invite your support for these meetings, brethren, either by your presence or your prayers for the success of the preaching of God's word.

J. Malcolm, Sec.

Kirkcaldy, Scotland: During the last few months a further three precious souls have obeyed the gospel. They are Susan Sharp (daughter of bro. and sister John Sharp); Jack Hazzard (husband of sister Joyce Hazzard); and John Drummond (husband of sister Linda Drummond). Now that they have put on their Lord in Baptism we solicit your prayers that these babes in Christ may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

R. Hughes.

Newtongrange: On Saturday, some friends and brethren met for a time of fellowship. The gathering being, the annual social of the church that meets at St. Davids, Newtongrange. A number of 86 souls turned up to enjoy the fellowship. Brother Currie, as chairman of the evening introduced the speakers. Brother Kneller, from the church at Tranent, ably spoke on the theme of "Goodness". This was well received. The other speaker of the evening, Brother Scobie (Dennyloanhead) exhorted the gathering on "Being in Christ". Much food for thought ensued.

Throughout the evening the brethren and friends were privileged to hear some fine singing. Duets by two sisters from Kirkcaldy stirred the emotions of the heart. Sister Wilson from the church of Slamannan, sister Coventry from Newtongrange, John McCallum (Motherwell) and Willie Allan (N. Berwick) all contributed to an afternoon of rich spiritual fare in the singing of solos. A very enjoyable time was experienced.

Previous to the study time, we met for a meal, prepared by the ladies of the church. A thank you to all concerned. The Lords day following the church had the pleasure of the services of Brother McCluckie from the church at Tranent. For this, we thank him. The church at Newtongrange, thank all the brethren and friends that gathered to hear the speakers on both occasions.

It was noted that some "weel kent" faces were missing from the social. We have reason to believe that sickness and work held them back. For instance, Brother Sharp had to be at work, and there was some truth in the rumour he had lost his voice for 3 days. A rumour no more, it has come back! Silence is golden, a worthy proverb no doubt!

As always, an open invitation awaits all who would visit with us. To the visitors with us this year, a special thank you for sharing in our fellowship. At a future date we plan to hold D.V., a short gospel mission.

Try to be with us.

A. P. Sharp (Sec)

Kitwe, Zambia: The Lord's body continues to grow here in the Copperbelt, Zambia. Numerous baptisms are occurring each month in the brotherhood here. Regularly we participate in broadcasting on the local radio - ranging from short "epilogues" to complete 45 minute service spots, with various activities in between. We also like to try to keep in contact with sister churches in nearby countries - Zaire being one from which we hear regularly and have a massive correspondence with.

Recently we have heard from the attending brethren there, that they were unable to attend a Leadership Training Programme held not so long ago. Apparently they were prevented by their government because of elections taking place - travel permits and documents were not allocated to them. The border was also closed to a party going from here to Zaire about the same time. We hope soon that physical contact will again be restored as this encourages us all in our service for the Lord.

Lack of transport continues to be a drawback to our missionary efforts and we pray continuously that funds for transport will be forthcoming. We send greetings to you from all the saints who meet here. Keep us in your prayers as you are in ours. May the God of all grace bless you all as you strive to please Him.

Jim McKeown,

P.O. Box 22297, Kitwe, Zambia.

OBITUARY

Easthouses/Mayfield, Scotland: It is with deep regret that we have to report the passing of our Brother Andrew Kerr on Thursday 20th September 1984. Andrew has been in poor health for the past few months in and out of hospitals. He will be sadly missed in the Assembly at Easthouses. The funeral service was held in the Meeting Place and then at Newbattle Cemetery.

Our prayers are with his wife Dora and his family at this their time of bereavement.

M. Finlay, Sec.

HEARING AND READING

If one does not wish to be caught on the horn of misunderstanding of what is heard or read, a wide range of studies must be a part of one's church life. *How* we hear and *how* we read can have a very wide range of meaning.

Every word that one chooses to use probably has many synonyms. Therefore, when reading or listening, be sure to verify that your understanding of the thought presented is correct.

The average person seldom retains what is read or heard for even an hour and retention drops off rapidly as the time-span lengthens.

The bottom line for both speaker and listener is: Be particular about what you say, because what you may have said is not always what *the listener thought* you said.

T.W. Phillips II
Rosemead, California.

Correction does much, but encouragement does more. Encouragement after censure is as the sun after a shower.

You are educated if you can do what you ought, whether you want to do it or not.

Some minds are like concrete—all mixed up and permanently set.

When the world is at its worst, the church should be at its best.

Kindness always pays, but pays most when it is not done for pay.

This great Book is the best gift God has ever given to man. But for it we could not know right from wrong.

Abraham Lincoln

There is no better exercise for strengthening the heart than reaching down and lifting up people.

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