

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD

Almost every news-bulletin these days, highlights the extremely high level of strife and animosity which permeates nearly every country in the world, and it's difficult not to despair for the future. There is still no "ceasefire" from the I.R.A., and "nail bombs" killed and maimed many, only yesterday, in Palestine. What then, are the chances in 1997 of seeing any signs of reconciliation amongst all the warring factions.? Not much, it seems. It becomes increasingly clear that man will have to be reconciled to his Maker before he can truly hope to be reconciled to his neighbour. A temporary truce is not quite the same as a genuine reconciliation.

In 2 Cor. 5:18-20 we read *"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."*

The New Testament introduces us to some grand and glorious themes, REPENTANCE: REFORMATION: JUSTIFICATION: CONVERSION: REGENERATION: REMISSION: RESURRECTION: ELECTION: RESTORATION: RESTITUTION are just a few. We could add to this list, of course, and surely one of the most beautiful additions would be RECONCILIATION. We can't always measure the importance of a subject by the number of times it receives mention in the N.T. but Paul (exclusively) advances this subject in his epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Corinthians and the Hebrews. In a discussion with a Christadelphian, recently, it was inferred that the importance of a matter is proportionate to the number of times it is mentioned in the N.T. As far as I am concerned a matter requires *only one mention* in scripture to be important, and as important as anything else; albeit referred to fifty times. When we remember that God **"was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"** there can be little danger of us over-emphasising the importance of reconciliation. Indeed, Paul aware of the continual process of reconciliation between men referred to **"THE reconciliation"** - the reconciliation to end all reconciliations. This reference (in Rom. 5:11) is translated by the KJV as **"The Atonement"** (the only mention of the word in the N.T.) but is correctly rendered 'reconciliation' in the Revised Version.

We are no strangers to the need for reconciliation between man and man. Squabbings and animosities began early in the human family (it begins in the Kindergarten over a teddy-bear) and gets more deadly and serious the older we grow. Time would fail us to enumerate areas of human conflict, ranging from fully fledged wars to terrorist activities (e.g. Northern

Ireland).

We all recently witnessed unbelievable levels of hatred and vicious animosity in Bosnia and one is left wondering if such wounds can be healed - if a place can be found for reconciliation. Apart from actual bloodshed there are the ongoing 'wars' *on a personal level* in the home, in business and in politics. Matrimonial disharmony is also rife and divorces common-place. Couples now change partners, it seems, as often as the furniture. What a little matter can rupture harmony between humans.

### THE IRRECONCILABLE

The very term 'Reconciliation' carries with it a bitter sweet association. Nothing can be more satisfying to the contemplation than the thought of two warring factions being brought together again in peace and harmony. However, the mention of 'Reconciliation' presupposes that estrangement exists and that the parties are (or were) at odds with one another. Fortunate is the individual who has never experienced any form of alienation, and thus has no need of conciliation. Paul (Rom. 14:10) recognises that alienation, even in the Churches, will not be unknown and asks "**But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ!**" *Our function*, Paul states, is merely that of a humble servant and the role of Judge is restricted to, Jesus. "**Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or any occasion to fall, in his brother's way.**" This is the awesome responsibility upon each one of us that not only do we not *set at nought* our brother, but that nothing we say or do can possibly cause him *to stumble* much less to fall. *The value* which the Lord placed upon harmony amongst men is well seen in the following: "**If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way. First be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.**" This is a beautiful Christian law in the setting of a Jewish ceremony. The altar and the gifts may have passed but *the principle* remains.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. "**For He is our peace, who had made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us . . . for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby!**" (Eph. 2:14). Paul is here saying that God hath reconciled by Christ, both Jew and Gentile together but we might be excused for doubting this as we watch (on TV News Bulletins) the Jews and Gentiles blowing one another to bits with bombs and shells. Paul qualifies the matter, of course, and says that the two are reconciled *in the one body, in the Church* of Jesus Christ. Outside the Church the old scores remain to be settled and the carnage goes on. Inside the Church swords are beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks but only those *who come to Christ* can be expected to participate in such reconciliation. **Those reconciled to Jesus are usually reconciled to one another.** Those who come to learn at the feet of Jesus will find others there. However, in coming to Christ we risk other alienations for Jesus said, "**Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set the son at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a mans' foes shall be they of his own household .**" There will, then, be situations where reconciliation is difficult, if not impossible. *Error* can never be reconciled with *truth* just as oil cannot be mixed with water. Jesus said two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Paul said, "**Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? . . . Wherefore come ye out**

from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." (2 Cor. 6:14). Certain things are almost incapable of reconciliation and truth must never bow the knee to error in the cause of reconciliation - rather the reverse. We must abandon self-will and humbly come to the feet of Jesus. We must change.

### THERE MUST BE CHANGE

If there is to be reconciliation in Northern Ireland there must be change - not that Protestants should become Catholics, or vice-versa, but that all should become followers of Christ. The problems between white men and black, rich and poor, east and west, left or right, can all be resolved if there is a willingness to change. This indeed is the meaning of the Greek word (*katallasssein*) which is translated 'Reconciliation,' a change from a disposition of enmity to one of friendship. William Barclay, in "N.T. Words" explains that the Greek '*allasssein*' means *change of any kind* (e.g. Stephen accused of wanting to change the customs of the Jews (Acts 6:14) or Paul accusing the ungodly of wanting to change God's glory into totem poles (Rom. 1:23); or where the inspired writer tells us that the world will be *changed* as a garment is changed (Heb. 1:12). *Katallasssein*, however, generally means the change involved in man's *reconciliation with God* - (i.e. a change in mental attitude from hostility to one of affection) I quote from Wm. Barclay only because I know nothing of Greek, but other Greek Concordances will confirm the above. The word implies a *resumption of dialogue* between God and man for, after all, man was made by God with the intention that a close bond of fellowship and conversation should exist. The first thing, usually, in an estrangement is that conversation is terminated and the parties cease to be 'on speaking terms.' By man's disobedience and rebellious intransigence close fellowship with God is terminated. Jesus came to restore to former harmony by His atoning sacrifice. "The Atonement (or at/one/ment) has been brought about by Jesus and man can not be at/one with his Maker. We must, however, keep the matter in true perspective for God has not found it necessary to change - *man must change*. It was man who moved away from God - it is man who must return. Nothing lessened God's love for man. Nothing turned that love to hate. Indeed God *so loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Man sinned but God still loved. Man must seek the at-one-ment with God.

### THE OFFENDED TAKES THE INITIATIVE

The bitter aspect of 'Reconciliation' is, therefore, that there was any alienation in the first place, but the sweet part is the actual reunion of the estranged parties. A time indeed, for rejoicing, as did the father of the Prodigal Son and as do the very Angels when any of the sons of men repenteth. The wonderful thing is that it was God who took the initiative. Probably the most difficult thing to achieve in any reconciliation amongst men is to get one party to take the first step. Human pride and obstinacy being what it is, no-one is prepared to take the first move. By the world's standards to seek conciliation is taken as a sign of weakness. Amongst men it is usual for the poor to seek to pacify the wealthy and the weak to seek conciliation with the strong, but God, *the offended*, seeks a restoration of fellowship with the offenders (the enemies). It is also rare amongst men for the *offended* to seek reunion with the offender but probably the most best known instance would be restoration of Joseph to his brethren. After scheming to kill Joseph and finally selling him into slavery, Joseph's brethren found it impossible to believe that he could forgive them. Joseph had to make a great effort to convince them, pointing out how well their selling of him had turned out and how God's over-ruling hand had emerged. Joseph "**comforted them and spake kindly unto them.**" As we read of the very emotional and tearful re-union we are almost moved to tears ourselves as we witness this amazing example of brotherly love. How much more should we be moved to imagine God of the Universe seeking reconciliation with puny, weak, foolish, sinful little man. "Enough to melt our hearts and prove, the antidote of sin."

What a delight it is to know that God excels *in love* far and beyond His wisdom, power, strength and creative wonders.

These reconciliations in the Bible, such as Joseph to his brethren, Jacob and Esau, and the many more, are surely amongst the most blessed and happy experiences in life, and did not Jesus pronounce a blessing upon all those who would try to bring such scenes about - the Peacemaker - (the go-betweenes). **"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."**

### THE MEDIATOR

We are conversant with the fact that in the event of an impasse between two alienated parties an **arbiter** must be found. Indeed, in the world of commerce and industrial relations there are many professional arbiters who successfully arbitrate between the factions and establish common ground. Quite often a third party can bring the other two together. Jesus mediates between man and God. Paul never speaks of God being reconciled to man but three times speaks of God reconciling man unto Himself. This reconciliation has been achieved through *the sacrifice of Jesus*, for it was **"by the cross"** that Jesus **"slew the enmity"** between **"Jew and Gentile"** and **"reconciled both unto God in one body"** (Eph. 2:16). And so, Jesus, in one great master stroke, not only reconciled *man to man* but also all *men to God*. **"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."** In any reunion, one party must be induced to confess wrongdoing and desire forgiveness, while the other must be induced to forgive. Thus Joab intervened to get David to forgive and bring home his banished son, Absalom. In the case where *the injured party* is ready and anxious to forgive, the battle is seemingly half won. All that remains is to persuade the wrongdoer to acknowledge his wrongdoing and accept the offer of forgiveness. But this is surely the stumbling block for man is most reluctant to do any such thing. Man is the immovable object. At school it used to be a boyish conundrum to ask "What would happen if an irresistible force was to meet an immovable object." I now know, of course, that it is impossible to have both phenomena co-existent but at the time the usual answer was that there would be a great and noisy explosion. I suppose that, in a spiritual sense, we could ask the same question today. God is the irresistible force who has removed all obstacles, legal or moral, to a free reconciliation with man, and man in turn, is the immovable object, cold, hostile, disinterested and implacable. We can but marvel with the Psalmist. **"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visiteth him."** Man can thus 'cock-a-snook' at an all powerful God and is allowed to resist the Omnipotent God.

Jesus was highly qualified to be the go-between in that He was endowed both with the divine and human nature. He was intimately acquainted with God and man. He was a friend of both parties and loved both parties. It might be thought that, as God was desirous of forgiving the world all He had to do was proclaim a general amnesty to all men. Doubtless this would be well received but would ignore the problem of Sin. Forgiveness of sin could only be obtained at a great price. God had to demonstrate His hatred of sin by providing a sacrifice. His own Son. **"Without the shedding of blood"** there could be no remission of sins and so Jesus was Mediator in a very real sense - for He was the actual sacrifice. **"The Lord laid upon Him the iniquities of us all,"** Jesus did not have to die to pacify an angry God. God is the Governor of the Universe and, as *His law* is necessary to the happiness and harmony of all His intelligent subjects so *His love* demanded that pardon must be obtained *without dishonouring that law* - and so sin had to be over-come. He who knew no sin was made sin for us. The death of Jesus did not result in God loving us, but rather God's loving us, resulted in the death of Jesus.

### BE YE RECONCILED

**"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."** God's initiative in this is a measure of His love for us. God has acted and we must respond. In the world around us, in

Palestine, N. Ireland, Russia, S. Africa, etc., it seems that men are busily re-erecting barriers that Christ has already broken down. When we consider God (holy and undefiled) and then look at man, and see a vast disparity between them (Potter and clay), are we not lost in wonder, love and praise that God would seek such a reconciliation? The barricades will come down only "in Christ."

According to our quotation from 2 Cor. (at the beginning of this article) God has given *to the Church* "the ministry of reconciliation" and the Church must honour this ministry. The quotation also says that we have received "the word of reconciliation" and we must publish this good news in every corner of the world. As "ambassadors for Christ" in this ministry of reconciliation we have a great compliment given to us in that God depends upon us to tell the world that He is prepared to receive sinful men in reconciliation. And so the joyful function of God's preacher is not to announce the threat of God's wrath, but the proclamation of God's offer of love. The task of the preacher is to break mens' hearts at the sight of the broken heart of God. Contemplate the cross and see how much God loved us. Jesus has removed all obstacles to reunion with God and this is the most important theme of the gospel, if not the most beautiful. What unfeigned joy there would be at the news. Let us not be cold and implacable, let us not be the unmovable object but let us succumb to the irresistible love of God, for God is indeed irresistible in more ways than one.

**"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, (as though God did beseech you by us). We pray you (in Christ's stead). Be ye reconciled in God."**

Any meaningful reconciliation amongst men must begin with men being reconciled to God, their Maker.

EDITOR.

## GLEANINGS

Readers will be disappointed to note the absence of this month's "Gleanings." Sadly, the originator and contributor of "Gleanings", brother Leonard Morgan, whose passing is mentioned elsewhere in this paper, died on the 6th of January, 1997, aged 91 years, after a long illness. Indeed, only a force as strong as death was able, or likely to be able, to bring to an end the boundless energy and activity in the Lord's service of our dear brother. Brother Morgan spent an entire lifetime in spreading the gospel and contending earnestly for the faith, and his work for the "Scripture Standard" was but a tiny fraction of his efforts.

Others, south of the border, are much better qualified than I am to write a tribute to Leonard, but I would like to mention his work with our little paper. During my association with the "Scripture Standard" Leonard was always vitally interested in its success, was a true friend to the paper and a staunch supporter of it during all of its difficult years. During 1974, Leonard conducted a monthly feature called "Messages From The Past", and from November, 1974 to December, 1975, he conducted a monthly feature called "It Is My Psalm, Is It Yours?" From January, 1976, to January, 1979, he contributed monthly articles under the title "Ask" and from January, 1979, until last month's issue of the paper he produced the feature called "Gleanings." Leonard had a substantial library and "Gleanings" was a question (very time consuming) of extracting "little gems" from some older volumes on his shelves. It is difficult for me to over-estimate the value of Leonard's interest, input and support for the "S.S." and consequently his passing has left a space very difficult to fill.

Quite apart from his interest in the "S.S.," Leonard was always a powerful preacher, a wise counsellor, a kind benefactor, and, in short, a giant in the faith. I'm sure that all our readers, home and abroad, would wish me to express our appreciation for his sterling work

over the years, and to convey our sincere sympathy to his local congregation, and particularly to his wife and family: commending them all to the grace of God.

EDITOR.

## HEBREW SCRIPTURE ENIGMAS RESOLVED (2)

### SACRIFICES ARE ODD (Hebrews 9:1-15)

#### THE CREATOR! - THE ALMIGHTY CREATOR!

First there was nothing, then God created absolutely everything. Did He need anyone to advise Him on the ethical issues involved or on how to get it done?

**"Who has sussed out the Eternal Being's Spirit, or being His mentor has educated Him? To whom did He resort for guidance, thus gaining acumen, plus instruction in ethical correctness, plus skill training, so endowing Him with perception?"** Isaiah 40:13-14.

No-one! God spoke and it was! The literal Hebrew of Gen. 1:3 is **"Light be and light was."** This knowledge is absolutely fundamental to correct religious insight. This profound belief Muslims share with us. In the Qur'an it says "To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: "Be,"and it is." Surah 2:117.

There was nothing. He spoke and it was. This strikes one with tremendous awe. It is fundamental to the beginning of godliness, Godliness, (from Greek word *euseneia*) means to be deeply in awe, in deep awe of the almighty God. Deep awe for God holding complete sway over our minds and life style.

**"Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell us, if you think you have it all worked out!"** Job 38:4.

**"The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and do obeisance to Him who lives for ever and ever, and shed their crowns before the throne, saying O Lord and our God, YOU are WORTHY to receive fame and esteem and supremacy: for you have generated everything, and they existed and were generated because of your will"** Rev. 4:10-11.

He has only to will it and it is. So what need has the Almighty God of anything?

#### THE NONSENSE OF SACRIFICES

Some say that sacrifices are a way of offering the best of one's possessions to God. A very noble thought, but what need has the Creator of the heavens and the earth of anything from us? Does the offering of crops benefit Him in some way, even if it is the best? Does the slaying of an innocent animal really please Him? Does He enjoy the aroma of roasted meat? Does the cleansing of the animal in water in preparation for the sacrifice make it more acceptable to Him?

#### WHERE DID THE RITUALS COME FROM ORIGINALLY?

In Judaism and other eastern religions, where did the religious dowsing of hands before meals come from and where did the dowsing of hands and feet before worship originate? Their ancient religious cleansing ritual of immersing themselves in the household baptistry, along with all the goods bought, on return from the market, where did that start? How did the practice of immersing Jewish proselytes begin? When and why did people start sacrificing animals?

#### CORRUPTED RITUALS

I don't need to explain that human sacrifices are heinously evil, However the whole idea of appeasement by sacrifice, human or animal, is irrational. Yet these, which were widespread practices, must have had a common origin. How could different, widely

separated cultures, independently dream up the same far-fetched ideas of sacrificing to a creator God and of atonement by sacrifice?

### ARE THEY TRACEABLE?

Let's consider the sacrificing of animals for atonement. Many people find this concept the most difficult to swallow.

Ancient historical documents show sacrificing of animals for appeasement goes back to the dawn of history, in other words to the first human beings. The records state that the sons of Adam were the first to make offerings to their God. Genesis 4:1-7. Evidently God had required it, for one offering was rejected and another accepted as that of a righteous man, Hebrews 11:4 and 1 John 3:12. Animal sacrifices continued to be offered and the practice was regularised under the Law given by God through Moses and further regularised at the building of Solomon's temple

God Legislated:-

- (1) Who should perform the ceremonies.
- (2) How He should prepare himself for carrying out the ceremonies.
- (3) How the animal should be prepared for sacrifice.
- (4) How it should be sacrificed.
- (5) What the sacrifices signified, for example the animal sacrifice offered for the atonement of the people's sins (Lev. 16:27-34).

When Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem ten brass tanks were provided, five on each side of the temple. The capacity of each was approximately 200 gallons. These were for dunking the sacrifices in, before they were slaughtered. 1 Kings 7:38, 2 Chronicles 4:6 (note not NIV). Ellicott's commentary points out that the Hebrew word strictly means "thrust, plunge." The innocent animal was thrust in the tank water to prepare it for sacrifice. Why?

### THE NONSENSE OF ATONEMENT BY ANIMAL SACRIFICE

Human beings do the sinning. Why kill an innocent animal and conclude that that will put it right?

The by-proxy bloodshed of animals for man's atonement is repulsive, objectionable and makes no sense UNTIL SEEN FULFILLED IN THE MESSIAH, the Christ. What happened to the Lord Jesus was also repulsive, objectionable, and that was for us. Herein is a clue.

### MOSES HAD TO FOLLOW THE PATTERN, EXACTLY! WHY?

Was it just because God said so? It is true that we should do exactly what God says, but did God require exact performance of these strange rites just to be pedantic?

Hebrews 8:5 Since Moses was given a warning when he was about to make the tabernacle, (it is evident that) the performance the temple priests carried out was a demonstration and portrayal of the heavenly things, for God said, "see that you make everything just like the pattern I showed you in the mountain."

It is vital to bottom the underlying reason for this directive!

### ALL THAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THE LORD JESUS HAD BEEN PREDICTED

After His resurrection, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Lord Jesus said "O foolish ones, and slow in your heart to accept everything the prophets have said. Didn't the Christ have to suffer these things, even to enter into His glory?" "Then beginning with Moses, then all the prophets. He explained to them the things in all the scriptures about HIMSELF" (Luke 24:25-27).

It all pointed to Him. It was there, in their sacred scriptures, all the way through, all the time. They all spoke eloquently of Him.

Furthermore the prophets who predicted these things, themselves tried to fathom "if the

**Spirit of Christ in them (whilst giving evidence in advance about Christ's suffering and the subsequent glory) indicated when or in what circumstances" it would happen, 1 Peter 1:11.**

Every time an innocent first-born male lamb or bullock was slain for atonement, it spoke of the Lord Jesus.

**WHAT DID THE LORD MEAN BY :-**

**"Thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness?"** Matt. 5:15.

Of necessity, because of their incongruity, lots of questions arise when considering Old Testament ritual. Why have a priestly caste? Why must they be sons of Aaron? Why must the sacrifices be first-born male and without blemish? Why a day of atonement? More questions than we can answer here. Sufficient to say that none make complete sense until seen fulfilled in the New Covenant.

But why, when John the Immerser expressed reluctance to immerse Him, did the Lord Jesus say to him **"Thus it becomes US to fulfil all righteousness?"** God told John that the Son of God would be revealed to him and that is why He came immersing people in water, John 1:6,31-34. But he did the immersing for the removal of repentant persons' sins. The Lord Jesus was totally without sin. What significance had immersion for Him?

When the angel predicted John's birth to Zechariah, his father, Zechariah was carrying out his priestly duties. He was a descendant of Aaron. So John also was of Aaron's priestly cast. A priest would enter upon his duties at about 30 years of age. John had turned thirty.

Every time a priest thrust the innocent victim into the tank of water he was preparing it for sacrifice. The Jews were well aware of this. It went on all the time in the temple at Jerusalem. They saw it as an act of dedication.

So, then, John was preparing the victim for sacrifice, the innocent for the guilty.

#### **EXACTLY ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN**

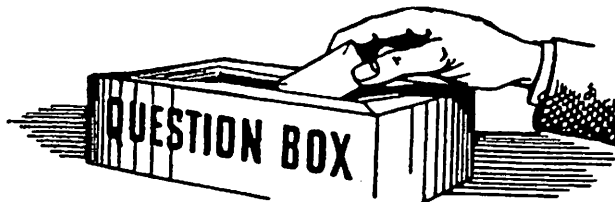
Tampering with the pattern would have been tampering with the prediction.

Why immerse the Lord Jesus in water? It was a dedication. It was a burial AND a resurrection! Praise the Lord!

John the immerser came to prepare the way of the Lord. He came to prepare the way of **"the Lamb of God."**

HAVING PREPARED HIM FOR SACRIFICE JOHN DECLARED FOR ALL TO HEAR:- **"BEHOLD! THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD."** John 1:29.

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Conducted by  
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**"I hear so much talk these days about 'progressive revelation' and how the doctrine of the Church should change in order to accommodate modern thinking.**

**What would be your answer to this?"**

I am not quite sure what 'progressive revelation' means because the apologists of this doctrine never really say. However, we do know that 'progressive' is defined as 'moving



forward; proceeding step by step,' and that 'revelation' means, 'the disclosing of knowledge to man by divine agency' so I suppose what is meant in the Christian sense is that God is uncovering various aspects of His Divine Will step by step down through the ages and that He will continue to do so until the end of time. The flaw in this teaching ought to be obvious to everyone because it means that no man in any age has ever known the complete Will of God, and no man until the end of time will ever know the complete Will of God unless that cataclysmic event coincides with the final bit of revelation from God.

It is also interesting to speculate how this additional revelation should come. Will God reveal it to individuals, to the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to any latter day Madhi, or will it be through any of the many groups of activists throughout the world. We have all seen the effects of the theory of so-called doctrinal development - the theory which promotes the idea that doctrine and theology can change and develop - and we are currently seeing this theory being put into practice in attempts to unify the differing strands of doctrine in the major religious groups. Documents like 'Faith in the City' indicate the more liberal, political, and pastoral aspects of the Anglican Church particularly, and in order to accommodate this shift in emphasis, doctrine and theology will have to change. We can see this in the inevitability of the ordination of women as priests; in the explaining away of God as a Person and the emergence of Him as some kind of 'force,' and in the denial of the Virgin Birth of Christ, and in His resurrection being explained as some kind of cosmic trick. We can expect other changes of doctrine and the theology in the future. Church leaders no longer lead, they bow to the so-called 'reforming' attitudes of peoples who have long since ceased to believe in the immutability of the counsel of God.

### IS REVELATION PROGRESSIVE

I think we all understand that progression is possible only until final fulfilment occurs. For example, certain diseases will progress in the body until they become terminal; when the disease has fulfilled itself, progression will cease and the person will die. Likewise, we see the progression of the revelation of God through the O.T. and into the new, culminating in the coming of Christ. As the writer of the Hebrew letter says, "In the past God spoke to our fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1,2. NIV).

So in Christ we saw the embodiment of God Himself, "full of grace and truth". But that wasn't quite the end of the revelation; shortly before Jesus left His sorrowing Disciples He promised them that another "Comforter" should come (read John 14:15-26. In that discourse, note the words of Judas, 'Lord, why do you intend to show (reveal) yourself to us and not to the world' v. 22). Later, in the same Gospel record, Jesus answers the question posed by Judas (read John 16:1-15). You will notice that Jesus told the Disciples (later to be the Apostles) that the Holy Spirit would guide them into **all the truth, and would bring to their remembrance all that He (Jesus) had spoken to them.** So with the Apostolic Era we have the complete scenario of revelation from the Godhead (God, Christ, the Holy Spirit). It must be said, of course, that the Apostleship of Paul, who wrote most of the recorded N.T. letters, is well attested to in Scripture and cannot be mistaken.

So at the end of the Apostolic Era the revelation, which had progressed until then, was completed and ended. **All** the truth had been revealed. What man had to do was to interpret the revealed Will of God (the unchanging Will, we might add) in the light of every age in which he has lived since then. And therein has lain the problem and the tragedy of interpretation.

### WHAT DID GOD REVEAL

Before we answer this further question let us think why God needed to give any revelation at all. Man was lost in sin - for which the penalty was death and eternal separation

from God - and could do nothing to save himself, therefore, unless He wanted to lose His whole creation, HE had to act. A vicarious sacrifice was needed to remove the guilt and consequences of sin, and so God 'stepped down' from Heaven in the person of His Son and died on the Cross, the Guiltless for the guilty. It was also necessary for man to know that he still had the power of choice, to live or die. Further, God needed to re-state the type of life that man should live if, in fact, he chose life in Christ. It was essential from God's point of view that man should know and understand these things, hence revelation was necessary. The question we now have to address ourselves to is "what did God reveal"?

If we posed this question to a group of Christians we might get the answer, "well, He revealed enough to ensure our salvation." If pressed further, they might direct us to Acts 2:38 which reads, "repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Obedience to a textual directive, it is said, would produce salvation. But do textual directives comprise the whole of revelation? Surely God intended something in addition to this, important though the text is.

The plain and simple answer is that God revealed **Himself**; we have been shown His essential nature. Sometimes we shy away from Scripture because we say that there are some things that we are meant not to understand, consequently, we stop looking. But when we examine the Bible from Genesis to Revelation we see our Divine Creator laid bare before our wondering eyes. We see His creative power, integrity, long-suffering, steadfastness, love, compassion, wrath, endurance, majesty, righteousness; need we go on. And yet, there are those who say that He is so far above us that we can never really know Him; all we have to do is exactly what He tells us to do according to the text of the Bible. Well, all I can say is this; if Christianity means just appropriating to ourselves the text without appropriating the One who is revealed by the text, then small wonder that it is meeting with no great success. If a prospective employer had as many facts on an application form about a prospective employee as the Bible has about God, then he wouldn't consider it necessary to hold an interview in order to find any further information. The very heart and nature of the Godhead is uncovered to our understanding. Oh, why do we not read it, and revel in it? Furthermore, there is a wealth of information revealed to us so that we can live our lives in the benign and spiritually affluent ways of God. Leaping out to us from the written page we see our God and His Christ, and we are amazed at the scope of His Revelation. Why do we linger in the shadows?

### THE DOCTRINE OF CHANGE

People living in the 20th century cannot countenance that the 17th century could be classed as 'modern' when contrasted with, say, the 12th century. Does 'modern' man of any historical period think that the Christian doctrine should be changed and brought up-to-date in order to accommodate his modernity. Has God made a mistake in failing to appreciate that the 20th century would be different from its predecessors? This is what the apologies for a modern theology would seem to affirm. God failed to see that promiscuity would be rampant in the 20th century so His teaching about chastity and marital fidelity must have been wrong for us; what a puerile argument this is.

I read recently of one Anglican apologist who was commenting on the fact that the Anglican church in its training of the clergy had switched the emphasis from theology to pastoral expertise. He went on to say, "It is ironical, then, that our chief pastoral difficulties should be caused by a specific theological deficiency." Referring this statement to sexual promiscuity I take it to mean that the doctrine of Christian morality should be eased so that the pastoral care of those who live immoral lives would become easier to deal with. If this is the result of modern thinking then we can truly say that the Will of God has been really subordinated to the will of man. God has finally been relegated to non-league status and by

people who purport to lead others in His name. In all the welter of advice and information about means of containing the A.I.D.S. virus I have listened in vain for someone to champion the God-given doctrine of chastity and morality, but no, all we hear are means of making immorality safer. What was it Jesus said about the blind leading the blind?

Brethren, let us stand firm. The latter part of the 20th century has been characterised by falling standards in many areas. Let it never be said of us that we stood idly by while people trampled underfoot that glorious revelation that God gave and which cost Him so much.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden

20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan, Lancs. WN3 6ES)

## THE WORD OF GOD

Here are a few good points to remember about God's Word and the chapter and verse of the Bible where they are found:

**I. What is the word of God?** John 17:17 tells us that it is **the word of truth**. Ps. 119:105 says it is a **lamp and light**. Luke 8:11 says it is **the seed of the Kingdom**. In Peter 1:23 we read that it is **the incorruptible seed**. Eph. 6:17 teaches us that it is **The sword of the spirit** and Heb. 4:12 adds that it is quick and powerful. John 6:63 says it is **the spirit and the life**. We find in Acts 13:26 that it is **the word of life**. 2 Cor. 5:19 tells us that it is **the word of reconciliation**.

**II. What does the Word of God do?** In 2 Tim. 3:15 we read that it makes one **wise unto salvation**. James 1:21 tells us that it **saves the soul**. In Acts 20:32 we find it **builds us up**. It **discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart** according to Heb. 4:12. In Tim. 3:16-17 we are taught that it **completely furnishes us unto every good work**. John 15:3 tells us that it **cleanses us** from the evil and it **makes one free** according to John 8:32. It tells us **how to behave** ourselves in the house of God. (1 Tim. 3:15). James 1:25 we find that the New Testament is the **perfect law of liberty** and in Heb. 10:19-20 that it **contains the new and living way** to heaven. The old law was only temporary in that the sins of the people were rolled forward a year at a time and that done by the shedding of the blood of animals. (Heb. 10:1-4). It required the shed blood of the sinless, stainless, spotless Son of the living God on Calvary's cruel cross that mankind might be saved eternally in heaven. There is now a **NEW and living way** to heaven, although it is more than 1900 years old. (Heb. 10:19-20). The old way was done away at the cross and it was superseded by the new way.

### III. What is the new way?

1. Hear the word. Mark 12:29; Rom. 10:17.
2. Believe it. John 8:24; Rom. 10:10.
3. Repent of sins. Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30.
4. Confess Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10.
5. Be baptized for the remission of sins. Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21.
6. After these things are done we must live the Christian life as God directs. When we come to the river of death we can go across unafraid, there to enjoy the sunlight of God's eternal love. We, as Christians, are sometimes prone to neglect **the last major point** in this new way - Rev. 2:10 sums it up - **BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH**.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

March 2	Exodus 21:1-17	Mark 7:1-23
March 9	Leviticus 19:1-14	Mark 7:24-37
March 16	Exodus 16:1-18	Mark 8:1-21
March 23	Psalm 16	Mark 8:22-9:1
March 30	Malachi 3:16-4:6	Mark 9:2-13

### THE HEART

The scribes and Pharisees were always contending with Jesus. They were legalists concerned more with the traditions of men than the commandments of God. In fact, through their teaching and actions they made the word of God "none effect" (7:13).

These legalists were obsessed with the externals of religion. Jesus, for example, said: **"For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things you do"** (7:8). The Lord condemned them as hypocrites for paying mere lip-service to the Father's will (7:6).

What is meant by these verses? **"But you say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever you might be profited by me; he shall be free. And you suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which you have delivered, and many such like things do you"** (7:11-13). E. M. Zerr has written: "*Corban* is defined in the lexicon, 'a gift offered to God'. These Pharisees pretended to have put their money into the Lord's treasury instead of using it to provide some benefit for their parents. On the pretence that they had put their money into the treasury, they claimed exemption from considering their parents as dependents. In the aforesaid practice they made their traditions more important than the inspired law that had

been delivered to them by the hand of Moses".

Robert Burns once wrote: "The heart aye's the part aye, that makes us right or wrang". Jesus pointed out in His day the importance of the heart of man and how that a corrupt heart results in defilement (7:21-23). So, to change the man, the heart of man must be cleansed. This is what Jesus is able to do wholly and completely.

### THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN

Jesus at this time was in the Gentile territory of Tyre and Sidon, famous cities in Old Testament history. He entered a house somewhere in the area and encountered a woman who sought help for her demon-possessed daughter. Their exchange is something else! **"Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs"** (7:27). Here there are obvious references to the Jews and the Gentiles. Incidentally, the word "dog" was usually used derogatively in those days. However, I think Jesus here was referring not to the wild dogs of the streets, but the lap-dogs of the house. The woman immediately cottoned on to what He was saying. **"Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs"** (7:28). Adam Clarke commented: "I do not desire what is provided for these highly favoured children, only what they leave: a single exertion of your almighty power, in the healing of my afflicted daughter, is all that I wish for; and this the highly favoured Jews can well spare, without lessening the provision made for themselves. Is not this the sense of this noble woman's reply?". The Gentile woman's faith resulted in the healing of her daughter.

### THE FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND

Here is another remarkable event in the ministry of Jesus. The miracle was performed out of compassion for the people (8:2). The Master created a feast out of

seven loaves and a few fishes - and the left-overs filled seven baskets! I like the fact that before he passed the loaves to His disciples He gave thanks for them (8:6). Also, there was a blessing prior to the distribution of the fishes (8:7). Everyone in the end was filled with food as well as filled with amazement.

### PETER'S CONFESSION

It was in Caesarea Philippi that Peter made the great confession regarding Jesus: **"You are the Christ"** (8:29). The district of Caesarea Philippi was about twenty-five miles north-east of the Sea of Galilee and about four miles from the site of Dan, the northern most city of the ancient tribal inheritance. W. Carl Ketcherside has written: "The area was populated heavily with non-Jews and rival cultures and religions strove for recognition." Perhaps it was because of this background that Jesus asked the vital question here: **"But whom do you say that I am?"** (8:29).

When Peter said He was the Christ or the Messiah, he uttered the truth. The Messiah was, of course, the one the Jews were anticipating. He was the one who would fulfil all the promises of God. He would be anointed of God and the conquering the King.

A suffering Messiah was a contradiction in terms. Peter rebuked the Master for His teaching on the coming suffering and death of the Son of man. Jesus, in turn, rebuked Peter: **"Get you behind me Satan: for you do not savour the things that be of God, but the things that be of men"** (8:33). The word "*Satan*" is not a good translation. Jesus did not equate Peter with the devil, but simply called him an adversary for obvious reasons.

### TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

To say that these words (8:34-38) of Jesus are challenging is something of an understatement. The point is this: belief or disbelief in Jesus is a matter of life or death. It is that simple. Dear reader, your eternal destiny depends upon your rela-

tionship with Christ Jesus. He loves you, and above all, wants to see you saved. The Scripture says: **"The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"** (2 Peter 3:9) Yes, the denial of self is undoubtedly tough, but the taking up of one's cross and following Him is what it is all about. To find, one has to lose; to gain, one has to forfeit. As one writer put it: "The very essence of life is in risking life and spending life, not in saving it and hoarding it. True, it is the way of weariness, of exhaustion, of giving to the uttermost - but it is better any day to burn out than rust out, for that is the way to happiness and the way to God."

My beloved brother in the Lord, Leonard Morgan, of the Church in Hindley, England has recently died at the age of ninety-one. Virtually his whole life was dedicated in service to the Master. Sceptics would say it was a wasted life, but we in Christ know otherwise. We know what motivated him and why. We know why he remained faithful unto death despite all the trials and tribulations of this world. His life was a life of faith, of hope, and of love. It was a life in tune with reality because it was a life in tune with God. Christians like Leonard motivate us who are left to greater efforts for the Master.

### THE TRANSFIGURATION

What a mountain-top experience this was for the disciples Peter, James and John! Jesus transfigured before them! The appearance of Elijah and Moses! An overshadowing cloud! A voice saying, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him!" who could forget it? Certainly, Peter didn't. He later wrote: **"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory. This is**

my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Ian S. Davidson,  
Motherwell.

#### BROTHER LEONARD MORGAN

Sister Elizabeth Jess has just telephoned to inform me of the death of our beloved brother Leonard Morgan. I received the news with much sadness. However, I know he has gone to his eternal rest after more than ninety years on this earth.

I really only got to know our brother Leonard later on in his life, although, of course, I had heard much about him and indeed was familiar with his voice from listening to a taped New Year Social address delivered sometime in the fifties. It was a voice with which I was to become very familiar.

It was a real privilege to stay with Rene and Leonard at their home in Hindley Green, Wigan. We all loved to talk about the past and especially the history of the Church in the United Kingdom. We often discussed outstanding personalities, some of whom he had met, and we frequently referred to books or pamphlets they had written and which Leonard possessed. His library was an important one and ever available to me. Rene and Leonard were the kindest of hosts and it was always a joy to be with them. My only regret is that I was not able to visit them more frequently because of pressure of work.

Brother Leonard was a devout, faithful and dedicated Christian all his life. His labours for the Master are so well known that I need hardly mention them here. Suffice to say that he was an example to me as I am sure he was to everyone who met him. He had, of course, strong beliefs based upon his "old-paths" background and I think he and I agreed on most things. I

truly loved him in the Lord.

We are all going to miss him, but especially Rene, John and the family, and all the saints at Hindley. God bless them all at this sad time. But we also rejoice at Leonard's devoted life to the Lord. We thank God that He gave us such a wonderful servant as Leonard Morgan in these dark and difficult days. Thank you brother Leonard and we look forward to meeting you again in that "land that is fairer than day."

Ian S. Davidson,  
Motherwell.

### TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Was the camel an unclean animal according to Mosaic law?
2. For how long was Jair, the Gileadite, a judge over Israel?
3. What was Abner's position in Saul's army?
4. Who had a grandson named Omar?
5. Who was David's grandfather?
6. Who was the grandson of Iddo?
7. Which Roman governor hoped that Paul would offer him a bribe?
8. Under the rule of Claudius, which city did the Jews have to leave?
9. A Christian who returns to a life of sin is compared to what animal.
10. After Jesus fed the five thousand, how many baskets of left-overs were filled?

### OBITUARY

**Burnaby, Canada:** We were greatly saddened to hear of the passing of our dear sister Rene Severson of the Burnaby congregation. Her frequent visits to this country with husband Earl, were always anticipated with pleasure by those who knew her, here and certainly by the brethren at Haddington. Sister Severson was a

lady of quality and charm, very well informed on most subjects and particularly on God's word. her comprehensive knowledge of British history put us all to shame. Our sister had been very ill for some time but has now been released from her pain and gone to be with her heavenly Father. We offer to Earl and all her family our most sincere condolences and pray that in their great loss, they will be comforted in the knowledge that she was faithful to the end. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.

(Ed.)

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*(The "Three Tracts" are typically excellent treatments of the three subjects by David King and highly recommended. Sister Payne should be greatly commended for her initiative in producing these old treasures long out of print and should receive our support. Having just received my own copy of the "Three Tracts" I was*

*astounded at the amount of work expended by our sister in producing these volumes, and also amazed at the quality of the finished product. This gives bible students a rare opportunity not only to acquire these works but to acquire them inexpensively. Ed.)*

## COMING EVENTS

(A note for your diary)

### TRANENT ANNUAL SOCIAL

15th March, 1997

at Loch Centre, Tranent

Details later.

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## GHANA APPEAL

The following appeal comes to the Scripture Standard direct from Ghana:-

Last year was an historic one in the working relationship between the British and their Ghanaian brethren. The history was not made with the numerous imports pushed into the work, but the visit of brothers Graeme and Bill to Ghana. That visit ended the many years of working with us in absence.

This visit indeed changed the course of many things. We came to know each other, understood and appreciated situations better, removed doubt and put priorities right. The determination to forge ahead in our working relationship well discussed and most importantly the love of God which binds us together was greatly manifested in fellowship. "Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love, the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above".

Brother Graeme Pearson, in his article on Ghana in the November edition of the SS, gives a detailed description of the situation of the ground. Yes, the health education cannot be over emphasized. It is equally a priority on our national agenda. The educational literature being sent is

very good and helpful. To all those who gave to the roofing of Odumasi church meeting place, they say thank you. By the time you read this report some materials for the roof of Odumasi might be purchased with the money in hand. We are yet to receive the estimated £2,500 to complete this project and we will greatly appreciate any further assistance in this project. Reflecting on our achievements over the years, the desire to press ahead with harder work for the Lord is paramount in our hearts. Therefore at a meeting in mid December last year of evangelists and church leaders to review the growth of the churches, it was realised that more work needs to be done to strengthen the young and weak churches and that this should be given priority. Equally we should be breaking new ground of the expansion of the Lord's Kingdom. There will require to be a movement of both humans and material resources from one place to another at certain times. Human resources abound. Men are ready to go out. We know that this work is dear to many hearts among those who support this work in Ghana. Yes you have really helped us through your material and spiritual support. We prayerfully envisage getting the roofs over three churches this year, Odumasi, Koforidua

and Patriensa. Well, all our projections for the year when put together look quite a loadful of expectations. But we know that it can fit into the Lord's abundant provision for the year. This we believe.

Wisdom Kpehor

*Please make cheques payable to  
Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal),  
and send to G. Pearson, 13 Fairways,  
Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU.  
Tel: 01383 728624*

If the world contains so much wickedness  
with religion what would it be without it?

10. Twelve (John 6:13).
9. Sow (2 Peter 2:22).
8. Rome (Acts 18:2).
7. Felix (Acts 24: 25,26)
6. Zechariah (1:1).
5. Obed (Ruth 4:17).
4. Esau (Genesis 36:11).
3. Commander (1 Samuel 14:50).
2. Twenty-two (Judges 10:3).
1. Yes (Leviticus 11:4).

#### ANSWERS

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