

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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“THE FOOL HATH SAID”

In the news this week is the C. of E. priest who has been sacked from his post by the Bishop of Chichester on the grounds that he (the priest) does not believe in God. The sacked priest: the Rev. Anthony Freeman, has, apparently, just written a book in which he comes to the conclusion that God does not exist and that “there is nothing out there: or if there is, we have no knowledge of it.” To hear someone say “God does not exist” is not too unusual, but the “ministry” seems a strange choice of profession for one who carries that view. However, from experience, we can never be too surprised at outbursts of the clergy, especially the C. of E. What, to me, is surprising, however, is that the sacking of the Rev. Freeman has caused such an outcry in the C. of E., that no less than sixty-five priests have resented the action of the Bishop, and have signed a petition calling for the reinstatement of the maverick priest. This call is based on the grounds that priests should be allowed “freedom of expression,” and, given that the C. of E. has never defined “God,” priests should be allowed their own views of God no matter how unorthodox (including the idea that God is merely “that which is best and highest in man”), and that there can be a large range of varying views on the subject. The Bishop, interviewed on T.V. was pilloried by some of the priests for being “old fashioned” and some wanted to know how “narrow minded could a Bishop be.” The Bishop, however, surprisingly held his ground but then explained that the “main reason” for the dismissal of the priest was that he (the priest) was currently engaged in the teaching and training of other younger trainee priests and that such an atheistic outlook would not be conducive to such training, or a good example to these young men. Otherwise, it seems that the Rev. Freeman might well have been allowed to remain in his post.

The mind reels, does it not, at the contemplation of a clergyman going through the motions of Sunday Services; reading from the scriptures; preaching the sermon; teaching trainee priests, getting dressed up in the official robes and dog-collar (as he appeared on T.V.) when all the time he is firmly of the view that there is no God: “there is just nothing out there.” Surely this clergyman should return his robes to the C. of E.; give up his salary; throw his Bible in the nearest dustbin and get a real job somewhere; doing something useful. Any average person or “the man in the street,” even with scant education and no professional training, can see the complete incongruity of a clergyman carrying on his “ministry” while at the same time writing books to demonstrate that God does not exist. However it should worry us (or it should worry the C. of E.) that sixty-five apparently intelligent priests, some with “doctorate” degrees should **protest against** a sacking, the reason for which is so patently obvious to “the man in the street,” and could be understood by even a small child. Clearly we live in a crazy world but it seems to get crazier by the minute.

NOT FAR FROM ANY ONE OF US

Not having read the Rev. Freeman's book I can't say how or why he reached his firm conclusion that God does not exist, but how can anyone be sure that "there is nothing out there" unless they have looked **everywhere**? Before we have the right to discount the existence of God we must have searched **everywhere** for God, for if we omit to look in any one particular place, that, for all we know, may be the very place where God is readily found. We can safely say that the Rev. Freeman has not looked everywhere. I say this because, firstly: it is not possible to look everywhere: and secondly, because if we were to look thoroughly for God we could find Him, Paul urged the Athenians to "seek the Lord" (Acts 17). He said **"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, though He be not far from any one of us: For in Him we live and move, and have our being . . ."** Paul says God is not far from any of us, and can be found. Before we can seriously say that there is no God we must have plumbed the depths of nature, and explored every branch of science, and this is obviously quite an impossibility. Indeed science is making new and revolutionary discoveries every day. If the Rev. Freeman had lived a few years ago, not only would he have disbelieved in the existence of God, but neither would he have believed in the existence of things like electricity, gravity, X-rays, radio-waves, nuclear power, electronics, computer technology etc. (and he certainly would not have believed that men would get onto the surface of the Moon and back). These things have **always** been present in the world albeit undiscovered until recently. They have been found because of man's insatiable thirst for knowledge and unrelenting quest for information. Clearly, man has still a great deal to find out and doubtless there are a multitude of wonderful discoveries, presently concealed, waiting to be uncovered. Thus no-one, not even the most distinguished scientists, can say they have plumbed the depths of discovery, and thus no-one can say they have looked **everywhere** for God: and having failed to find Him, are justified in the claim, "There is no God." Before we can say that we need answers to a multitude of questions and many of these vital answers may never be found: indeed **can never be found**. Job was, I am sure, a more perceptive man than the Rev. Freeman (or any of us) and he said that the ways of God are past finding out. Paul thought so much of Job's remark that he quotes it (in Rom. 11:33) when he says, **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God: How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out."** David was also a man of some sagacity and he saw the problem in reverse: i.e. he had no difficulty in finding God, but could never hide from Him. He said, **"If I ascend into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me"** (Ps. 139:7). And so God is around us, and not so far from anyone of us, if we have the eyes to see. Just because many during the "Gold Rush" couldn't find gold did not mean that gold did not exist.

DESIGN AND ORDER

Even in the remotest parts of the Scottish Highlands hikers may occasionally come across a rough hut built to give shelter from the snow or rain. Grateful hikers on stormy days may have wondered who it was who took the trouble to build these huts. They would certainly know that the huts did not get there by accident. Obviously, everything that is made had to be made by something or somebody: whether a building; a watch; a car or ship etc. Something can't come from nothing and the object made **tells us something about the maker**: i.e. most of us could make a rough hut, but it would take great skill to construct a watch. And it took even greater skill and intelligence not only to send men to the Moon, but to bring them back again. Anyone who looks thoughtfully at his surroundings in this fascinating world, the scenic beauty, the skies at night, the seas and their contents; the great variety of birds and animals; the trees, flowers and crops must surely acknowledge that, behind it all, there was a

great Designer: a supreme Intelligence. And what about the making of man? What kind of Intelligence would be needed to make a creature such as man? The medical men who, every day grapple with the complexities of the human frame, would, I am sure, readily echo the conclusion of the Psalmist that man is "fearfully and wonderfully made." We rightly marvel at the genius who invented the camera, but such talent fades into complete insignificance when we consider the Maker of the human eye. If man was clever in inventing the camera, how clever was the One who designed the human eye? And not only invent the eye, but design the absolutely baffling process by which the image, seen by the eye, is transferred to the mind? Such design requires a Designer. And who was the designer? Such a question demands an answer.

The human ear is probably more intricate and complicated than even the human eye. Who designed the ear: or the kidney? Medical science has designed a kidney-dialysis machine which is of great bulk and which does a far from perfect job: yet the great Designer compressed all this man-made technology into a small fist-sized organ called a kidney which does a job which can only be described as fantastic. And what about the liver; the lungs; the blood; the stomach; the intestines (a small chemical factory); and of course the heart (a pump of incredible strength silently operating, maintenance-free, for over 100 years in some cases). And then, of course, there's the human brain. Words fail even to try and describe the complexity of the human brain. Who could have designed such a thing as the human brain? Add to all this the "miracle" of the procreation of the species and the eternal mysteries of birth, death, sleep, guilt, fear, tears, memory, conscience, ageing process etc. If all this happened "by accident" it was some accident. The great Designer is, of course, and can only be, the great Creator: the only true and living God, and the only materials He used for all these wonders of the human body, was a handful of dust. Incredibly the eye, ear, kidney, heart, etc., are nothing more than a puff of dust. Disgusted with all the hullabaloo which attends a Miss World contest, one commentator remarked that basically Miss World was merely a small collection of dust and chemicals, the sum-total of which was worth about £1, but I'm sure the crowds of spectators did not see her in that light. Physically man is just dust, but he is made in the image of God; has a soul and spirit; and is the crowning glory of God's creative power. If we all take a little time out, and carefully look around us, we cannot fail to see Order, Design, Intelligence and Beauty in this wonderful world: nor can we lightly dismiss it all as some unlikely cosmic accident.

LIKE PRODUCES LIKE

Evolutionists, however, explain all this by telling us that all life has evolved from a speck of life in primaeval swamps; omitting, of course, to say how the swamps got there and where the "speck of life" came from in the first place. Truly "The Missing Link" is the very first one. Personally, I would like to know if the evolutionary process has now stopped, and if so, who stopped it (and who started it, for that matter). And if it took millions of years for man to evolve from apes, why do we still have a large variety of apes: from the huge gorilla to the tiny Rhesus monkey.? Why have all the apes not evolved into men? Darwin saw "broad similarities" between men and monkeys and drew the conclusion that the former evolved from the latter. But surely these broad similarities occur everywhere. The tabby-cat is "similar" to the tiger but nobody supposes that tigers evolved from house cats, or that mice evolved into lions; or that turkeys evolved into the ostrich? And what did the giraffe, the rhinoceros or the whale evolve from: and (more to the point) what will they yet evolve into (if the evolutionary process has not stopped?) There are also "broad similarities" between the sparrow and the eagle but nobody suggests that the one evolved from the other. Such evolutionary traits seem strangely confined to man and monkeys! And what did bees, wasps and butterflies etc. evolve from? It is quite obvious that there are multitudes of different animals, birds, fish, reptiles and insects which have always been species

in their own right, and have never evolved from anything else: nor indeed can: for **“Like produces like.”** Men can tinker with cross-breeding but cannot change the species. All creatures were created by God, and unless man kills them to extinction, they will remain that way: mice, rats, lions, leopards, pigeons, seagulls, trout, salmon, sharks, moths, dogs, cats, seals, bears, etc., etc., etc.

And did the alleged evolutionary process not also involve trees and plants as well? Who designed the fig, the apple, the banana, the turnip, the carrot, the cabbage, the melon, the potato, the cereals, the citrus etc., etc.? In the vast pile of rotting seaweed, in the great primaeval swamps in the barren wastes at the dawn of time; all as envisaged by the materialists; did the various sprigs of seaweed all resolve to evolve into the various fruits and vegetables we have today? Did each little sprig say to itself, “I know it will take me millions of years, but I am determined to become a turnip, because I know that if ever men evolve, they will need me for food.” Other little sprigs said, “Me too. But I think I will be a carrot,” (or an onion, or a Brussels sprout etc., etc.). Some other little sprigs were more ambitious and realised that if, in millions of years, men evolved, they would need great timbers to make houses and ships, and use for fuel, so they resolved that they would fight to become oak, fir and beech trees. And again if the evolutionary process has not stopped (and why should it) what will all these, trees and vegetables eventually become? What other great ambition do the cabbage and the carrot have? And then there are the herbs and the countless varieties of flowers. It is not enough to say that flowers evolved their colours and aromas to attract bees and insects. Obviously flowers do attract bees but surely this is not because flowers decided (milions of years ago) that this would be their role in life. Flowers are here to brighten our lives with colour and scent: and since God gave man his five senses He also gave man the means by which these senses might be exercised.

Even the most careless and thoughtless of us must eventually see that the Great Architect made all things mainly for man’s benefit. It is difficult to watch a fish being gutted or a rabbit skinned without thinking how conveniently arranged these things are for man: or to peel an orange or banana or shell peas without thinking the same thing. Most farmers must have realised how easily many animals lend themselves to preparation for human consumption: how easily crops and fruits can be harvested: and how various animals (all eating the same grass) produce, not only milk, but meat, leather and wool: with numberless by-products. Even the most committed evolutionist can hardly imagine that all the things that seem to have been designed precisely for man’s well being, got here by their own volition and conscious decision. Let’s face it, if wheat, olives, rhubarb, parsley, turnips, beetroot, etc., etc. (and a thousand similar things) are not here for **man’s benefit**, for whose benefit are they here? They are certainly not here for the benefit of slugs or insects. In short, the evolutionist theory of how things got here calls for a greater stretch of the imagination than they say Genesis does.

CONCLUSION

There is little space left to conclude such a subject. If the two men who walked on the Moon had found even a crude building, or a plaque, or a coin, an explanation as to how these things got there would have been required. If the Rev. A. Freeman had lived on the Moon there might be some justification for his thinking that “there is no God”, but there is really no excuse for such an opinion on this planet (planet Earth) for **we are surrounded** by the evidences of not only a living God but a loving God: omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipercipient, and yet extremely benevolent. Mr. Freeman should postpone his atheistic conclusion until he has looked everywhere. None of us **can actually** see electricity, or the force of gravity or magnetism but we know they exist from seeing the effects they produce. Similarly, although we can’t see God, or put Him under a microscope, or in a jar, we can see His handiwork

in the world and the evidences of His existence are there for all those who have eyes to see. The Psalmist said, **"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard"** (19:1). "The heavens" (Sun, Moon, heavenly bodies and Stars, seasons and weather) all declare the awesome power, wisdom and majesty of God. Each day "Uttereth speech" and each night "Sheweth knowledge." Each bright day and each starry night are alike in their eloquence: in proclaiming the existence of God and "there is no language where their voice is not heard." The language of "Nature" is a universal language, transcending all human forms of tongue or dialect, and in this language she literally shouts at us "that God exists": ". . . that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" This seems a far cry from the clergyman's conclusion that "There is just nothing out there." And, of course, the Psalmist had something else to say on the subject. He said, **"The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God'"**. May heaven help us all, not to be foolish but to open our eyes.

EDITOR

GLEANINGS

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

ENOUGH

"I am so needy, Lord, and yet I know
All fullness dwells in Thee;
And hour by hour that never-failing treasure
Supplies and fills, in overflowing measure,
My least, my greatest need; and so
Thy grace is enough for me!"

F.R.H.

"AND THE LIFE"

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

WE QUOTE - W. E. SANGSTER

"Not only did Paul discover on the Damascus road that Christ was alive, but he discovered also that the living Christ is able and willing to live in the lives of any who would give themselves to Him. The Damascus experience was over – perhaps in less than half an hour – and nothing quite the same ever happened to Paul again. What was not over, and what grew on him through the months and through the years – in freedom and captivity; on land and at sea; in success and in failure; in youth and old age – was the wonderful realisation that the same Lord was not only with him but in him, thinking, feeling and willing the life of His obedient servant. Of all Paul's many discoveries, none was more wonderful than this. Indeed, it seemed the sum of all the rest. Whatever Jesus was and is, He still is, at any moment of time, right at the heart of those who bid Him welcome."

STRONG IN THE STRENGTH

"It is not hard to see what this meant for Paul! That old wretchedness was gone; that dreadful weariness born of self effort and constant defeat; that see-saw life of alternating failure and success. Previously, he was constantly failing in his thinking, feeling, willing – now he had a steady success.

With Christ living in him, his thoughts were pure. Temptations still assaulted him (did they not constantly assault his Master?), but, as he was now strong in the strength of his resident Lord, they could not pass his moral guard.

With Christ living in him, his feelings were loving. Hate and lust might suddenly flare up from his subconscious – but they would as quickly die down. They had no fuel in a heart filled full of holy love.”

WITH CHRIST LIVING IN HIM

“With Christ living in him, his will was unconquerable. The things his Lord wanted him to do, he did. Indeed, they did them together. He said: ‘I can do all things - in Christ. . . .’

Dr. Adolf Deismann, the eminent German scholar, has counted the number of times Paul uses this expression – and its sister-phrases (“in Him,” “in the Lord”). He found that it came to 164. Think: – 164 times in thirteen letters, only one of which could be called long.

How important it must have seemed to him! It was the key of all he had to say. The victorious life, or – as we are saying here – the Radiant Life, is the life that is lived in Him. That is how one becomes “a new creature,” Paul said himself: “**If any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.**” And this is what is meant, also, by being “born again.”

Christ lives in me! That is the secret of radiant living. Not just Christ as my “Friend, Companion, Help and Guide” – precious and true as all those terms unquestionably are. But Christ in me.”

HE LIFTED ME

“There is a hymn with a haunting refrain I love to sing, and which expresses my personal faith.

In loving – kindness Jesus came,
My soul in mercy to reclaim,
And from the depths of sin and shame
Through Grace He lifted me.

I can’t help loving and believing in Christ, love must come before belief – you see, He lifted me and made my life radiant. ‘He lifted me’, means, for me, pardon and peace and power. My theology has been painfully acquired and it is often in need of repair, but my faith has always been very simple. The world will be redeemed, not by theories, but by consecrated men and women who, in every walk of life and service, point to Him as Saviour and Friend.

From sinking sand He lifted me;
With tender hand He lifted me;
From shades of night to plains of light,
O praise His name, He lifted me!” Gardner Miller.

“AS I HAVE LOVED YOU”

“Broadly, the love of Christ was the spirit of giving all He had to give. ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.’ Christ’s love was not a sentiment; it was a self-giving. To that His adversaries bore testimony:– ‘He saved others; himself He cannot save.’ Often as we have read these words, did it ever strike us, and if not, does it not bring a flash of surprise when we perceive it, that these words, meant as a taunt, were really the noblest panegyric, a testimony higher and more adequate far than even that of the centurion? ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save.’ The first clause contained the answer to the second – ‘Himself He cannot save!’ How *could* He, having saved others? How can any keep that he gives? How can any live for self, when he is living for others? Unconsciously, those enemies were enunciating the very principle of Christianity, the grand law of all existence, that only by losing self can you save others; that only by giving life you can bless. Love gives itself”.

Frederick W. Robertson.

WE ARE A "NEW CREATION IN CHRIST JESUS"

Jesus is 'the Author and Finisher of our faith.' We are a 'new creation in Christ Jesus.' He is the Alpha of the perfect life. 'In Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel.' Passing along the street one day, a preacher was accosted by a drunken man with the remark – "You converted me, Sir." "Yes." Was the reply, "I must have; it doesn't look much like the work of my Master." The stream can rise no higher than its source. No more can the life of the Christian. If the origin of that life is mere esteem for a preacher, or simple conformity to custom, it will manifest but little growth it will be of the earth – earthy. **'He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God shall not see life.'** The new life is acquired by intelligent faith in Christ. **'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.'**

On the Mount of Transfiguration the apostles lifted up their eyes and saw no man, but Jesus only. All our efforts to extend the kingdom of God will fail except as we exalt the matchless character and spotless life of Jesus, and attract men to Him. The perfect life must begin in the Son of God. It can have no other origin."

H. G. Harward.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOUR

Most of my life I have had a tendency to ridicule the expression, "Accept Jesus as your personal Saviour." Probably I did it because, in the first place it is not a scriptural expression, and it has long been my conviction that one of the best ways to express a scriptural thought is to put it in scriptural language, whenever possible. However, it is my observation that most of us who think of ourselves as "sound" or "conservative" gospel preachers, though we give lip service to the above principle, are frequent, yea, constant, – in our expressing what we claim are scriptural ideas in our own words. In fact, practically all sermons, even those studded with scripture as in days of yore, are an effort to express God's ideas and words in human language – paraphrase, explanation, etc.

The second reason I ridiculed the expression, "Accept Jesus as your personal Saviour" is that, inasmuch as it was not a biblical expression and had therefore no stable referent, no one could be sure what the one who was using it meant. For example, does "accept" mean "intellectually accept" "emotionally accept" "verbally accept" or "practically accept." When a person asks a girl, "Will you accept me as your husband?" and she says "Yes!" has she? If she has is he her husband? If she has not, has she lied? Furthermore, does the person mean "accept the fact that Jesus *has* saved you" that "Jesus *can* save you" or that "Jesus *will* save you?" In what way is "personal" used? Does it refer to your person, or to the person of Christ? Could you accept Him as an impersonal Saviour? If you did would that differ from being personally saved? I have my own personal wife. That means she belongs to me, and not to you. If I have my own personal Saviour does that mean he belongs to me, and not to you? If not, what does it mean?

Or perhaps the person who uses the expression "personal Saviour" is using the word "personal" to refer to the fact that Saviour is a person, not just a ritual. His act of dying for me was a *personal* act – not just something like an offering of a lamb on an altar.

We personally have no doubt that a good number of those who use the expression have no clear-cut idea of exactly what they mean by it. But it sounds as if it should mean something good, so it is used.

But, having ridiculed the expression for almost half a century, it is my firm conviction, and always has been as far back as I can remember, that one should do what the expression says, if he knows what he is doing.

For example, “accept” means “intellectually be aware of the facts of the gospel (believe), emotionally respond to the message of the gospel (repent), verbally express acceptance of the Lordship of Christ (confess), and practically accept the salvation He offers by being united with Him in the likeness of His death (be baptised for remission of sins).”

“Jesus” means the only begotten, virgin-born, crucified and resurrected historically valid Son of God, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, presently King of kings and Lord of lords, ruling and reigning over His people. If “Jesus” means some mythological, non-historical, unreal, imaginative, impersonal, subjective experience, then you have no Saviour.

“Personal” means to me that I need to conceive of Him as a real, personal being – a flesh and blood man, who as the divine Son of God actually, personally went to the cross because He has a personal concern for me – not merely an abstract wish that everyone might be nice and be saved. It is my opinion that a large number of those connected with the Church of our Lord do not feel the proper personal relationship with Him. He is conceived of as a sort of impersonal (that does not mean non-person) Ruler who laid out some regulations rather than a loving personal Saviour whose only purpose in giving regulations was to help us to be more like Him – a real, authentic, living, joyous, loving person.

It is my further conviction that instead of merely ridiculing denominational expressions which may have no meaning, or a “fuzzy” meaning, or a variety of meanings, if we can take the living word of God, express it and expound upon it in positive, clear-cut, meaningful expressions, we will do more good. I still remember an expression I read many years ago by one of our smart (maybe brilliant) liberal (maybe modernistic) preachers: “It is not the virgin birth of Christ that made His message relevant, but His virgin life.” If you were able to figure out what it meant, it might have been worth something – which is doubtful. After talking with him for some hours, I eventually concluded that he meant, “It does not really matter whether you believe what the Bible says about the virgin birth of Christ, if you believe that He lived a pure and holy life, you can be saved.” If he had said that in the first place, even my simple mind could have grasped and rejected it immediately.

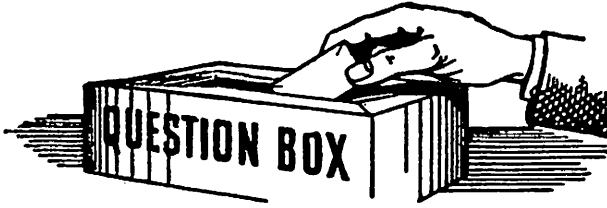
At any rate, if you have “accepted” Jesus, you need to know for sure exactly what you have done. *What* “Jesus” you have accepted, whether you, personally have accepted Him, or whether you have impersonally accepted Him, and whether you have accepted Him, personally, or whether He is merely an impersonal sort of “story-book” figure. I recognise that Napoleon Buonaparte was a person, but I do not *feel* quite as personal about him as I do my next door neighbour. How do you feel about Jesus? And how would you act if he were personally to stand by your chair, ask you to be baptised, or to follow him and be a fisher of men? Does the fact that we have so few fishers of men stem from the fact that we did not think of Him personally inviting us? Would you turn down a personal invitation of your Saviour to be present at services in his honour, Sunday?

T. P. Brown.

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Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Every Sunday the presiding Brother passes the collection bag “For the Lord’s work.” What exactly is the Lord’s work, and does it include good work to non-members?”

In answering this question, and since ‘collecting bags’ are mentioned, I shall assume that ‘good works’ to non-members means either financial help from the treasury, or things bought with money from the treasury. Furthermore, the Lord’s work could mean either the work of the Lord God, or the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; in this case, however, there could be no real distinction because they would be complementary regarding the work that needed to be done. Finally, it is **money** which is being referred to here, because that is what is put into the collecting bag.

GIVING

As this is a question about **using** rather than giving, I shall not be exhaustive in dealing with the letter. Nevertheless, there are one or two pertinent points which need to be made.

The post-Pentecostal saints had evidently, according to Acts 2: 44-47 and Acts 4: 32-37, been greatly motivated to give. This was either because they had been at the ‘sharp end’ of the sacrifice of Jesus and wanted to respond equally sacrificially, or they were ‘clearing the decks’, so to speak, for the imminent return of the Lord (the latter may sound a little brutal but it is not intended to be; they would undoubtedly have shown great love for the brethren even in this). An interesting point is that they were not all poor; some had land and possessions to sell. Anyway, they gave liberally, and their liberality was administered by the Apostles.

In his letter to Corinth, Paul takes up the same theme; they were to give as they were *prospered*. See 1 Cor. 16:2. You will notice in v1 that he says it was “**a collection for the saints,**” but we’ll return to that later. No doubt the words of Jesus would be remembered, “**For whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.**” Luke 12:48.

So the principle was established in the early days: they who had much *should* give more; they who didn’t have much probably *couldn’t* give much, but they could give *something*. Paul is at pains to point out in 2 Cor. chapters 8 and 9, that there should be a relative equality both in giving and receiving. This has been referred to as the first communist society, but it is far removed from the Marxist philosophy; it was far more altruistic than Marxism could ever be. The really important point, though, is given in 2 Cor. 8:5, where Paul says, “**but (they) first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.**”

USING

The ‘giving’ is unto the Lord, but each community of Christians is responsible for the stewardship of that which is given. Ideally, the administration of Church finances should be by Elders and Deacons. When we have given into the treasury, we shouldn’t keep peering over the shoulders of these men to see how they administer it; *we* put them in office, and consequently we should trust them. They should, however, keep their respective assemblies fully informed, and if there seems to be a misuse of funds then the church has a right to ask questions. So how *can* the Lord’s money be used according to scripture?

Relief of Saints

In 2 Cor. 8:2 Paul speaks about “the great trial of affliction,” and the “deep poverty” of the saints in Macedonia. Yet in great joy they were willing to give “beyond their power” in liberality for the relief of other saints. With “prayer and much intreaty” they asked Paul to receive their gift. The Apostle tells the saints at Corinth about this and asks the saints there for “a performance out of that which ye have.” There are three pre-requisites: (a) a willing mind, (b) a gift out of that which a man *has*, (c) a desire for equality: there is also the proviso, as I mentioned earlier, that the giver has first given *himself* to the Lord.

We must bear in mind that we refer to the 1st century A.D., and a time of incipient Christianity. Even though the Gospel had brought great blessings of grace, it had also brought greater problems to those who accepted it. The hostility which had been directed at Christ would henceforth be directed at His followers. Furthermore, the Gospel, with its promise of ‘untold wealth’, would appeal to the poor. Most of these would no doubt exhibit genuine faith, but there would be those who would be looking for more tangible rewards in the immediate future, not realising, or not having been taught, that the *constraints* which they had lived under would be replaced by *restraints* which obedience to the Gospel would lay on them. Whatever the reason, there would be those who would need help, and it was part of the Apostles’ work to see that they got it. Both rich and poor had *something* to contribute; the fact that *both* should give out of what they *had* was, perhaps, a painful lesson which many would have to learn.

The Church is now in the 20th century. Poverty and riches are relative terms and, in spite of the Welfare State, poverty still exists; we are still a long way from a classless society. Consequently, there will be saints who need help today, and the Church, in its several localities, should supply that help out of the gifts made to God by the brethren.

Relief of Non-Christians

Is this a scriptural concept? Yes, it is! Who can doubt what is stated and implied in the parable of the Good Samaritan? And who can misunderstand what Jesus said as recorded by Matthew (25:33-46)? Furthermore in Gal. 6:10 Paul says, “As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

The crux of the matter can be simply stated: is such teaching meant for individual Christians to comply with in *addition* to their contributions to the church treasury? or can help be given *from* the church treasury. I have known Christians who, in a desire to help good causes, have kept back money which they would normally have put into the treasury. That, of course, raises another problem, viz., is that the right thing to do? I know my own inclination, but the problem is a personal one, and depends very much on circumstances, financial or otherwise. The most crucial aspect of this question is what we perceive the character of the Godhead to be. We give to the Lord for His work. Can we conceive of a situation where God and Christ, if they saw real distress in *anyone*, would withhold that which *we* had, in faith, given to them? I think not, and therefore I believe that non-Christians can be helped, on a selective basis, out of church funds, irrespective of what *individuals* may want to do in addition.

Other ‘Work’

Take worship. O know this isn’t strictly a ‘work’, but I believe all equipment on the Lord’s Table should be bought out of church funds. Why? Because if individuals bought it, they would look on this as *their* ‘work of faith’, and anything which can elevate the individual above his Lord, – even in his own mind – should be avoided. Absurd, you say? Well, why do people want stones into the side of church buildings with their names on them. To elevate the Lord, or to see their own names.

The promotion of the Gospel is, of course, God's work, and can be supported out of that which we give to Him. But what do we mean by 'Gospel-work'? Is it just supporting full-time workers, printing tracts, sending money overseas, or are there other *ancillary* costs which have to be met? Take the 'special effort' or the 'Bible Fellowship'. Can the costs of accommodation be supported out of the treasury? Some members might be prohibited from taking people into their homes because of the lack of cash; others who *do* may find it difficult to 'make ends meet' because of extra domestic costs for food, etc. Can such be helped from the treasury to help defray such costs? After all, it can all be described as 'Gospel work'. I know some will remind me of the 'extra mile' teaching but I think that misses the point I am making. I am of the opinion that whatever a church organises it does not organise it for its **entertainment value**. I take it that the aim is to equip, strengthen, and prepare the saints, as a community, for the doing of 'God's work'. If that is the case, then I see no reason for withholding financial help from the treasury. We must look at the broader aspects of 'God's work'.

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

LETTER FROM CANADA

Dear Editor,

The letter from Canada commenting on the Editorial in the May issue, and the subject of repentance as it appears in Heb. 6:6, deserves further consideration.

The idea that one can be renewed no matter what sin he may commit is as dangerous as the doctrines of "Once Saved, Always Saved," and "Salvation by Faith ONLY," and is simply not taught in the word of God.

Our study must include the entire passage from v.4, "**For it is IMPOSSIBLE for them who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, IF THEY SHALL FALL AWAY, TO RENEW them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.**"

No sensible person will seek to question the fact that the PENITENT sinner will be forgiven. BUT that is not the problem being dealt with here! Here is a dire warning that a Christian CAN so FALL AWAY that he CANNOT be brought to repentance, and so has no hope of forgiveness. We ignore this warning only at the peril of eternal condemnation.

This subject is dealt with elsewhere in this letter to the Hebrews. The writer cites the case of Esau in Ch. 12:15, ". . . look DILIGENTLY, lest any man FAIL of the grace of God . . . Lest there be any fornicator, or PROFANE person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat SOLD HIS BIRTHRIGHT. For ye know that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, HE WAS REJECTED, for he FOUND NO PLACE FOR REPENTANCE, THOUGH HE SOUGHT IT CAREFULLY . . . WITH TEARS."

We are thus warned that we can so sin that we cannot repent, and lose our eternal inheritance. We also need to look at the text of Matt. 12:31-32 with greater care. Jesus said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; BUT blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall NOT be forgiven unto men. And whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit. It SHALL NOT be forgiven him, NEITHER IN THIS WORLD, NEITHER IN THE WORLD TO COME."

The knowledge of the truth of the gospel and the blessings which accrue from it enumerated in Heb. 6 come to us essentially through the word of God. "Faith comes by HEARING and HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD." Rom. 10:16. Since all Scripture is given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, knowing and deliberate

perversion of the word in effect, is speaking against the Holy Spirit, and this has NEVER forgiveness in the eyes of God.

Rom. 11:18-25 has reference to the Israelites AS A PEOPLE. It must not be imagined that the individuals who were CUT OFF because of unbelief (that the Gentiles might be grafted in) are the same individuals who will be grafted in "**When the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.**" V.25. The Jews referred to never had been Christians in the first place. It must also be noted that those Jews who crucified Christ did so in ignorance, and unbelief. A Christian who crucifies Christ is in an entirely different situation altogether. He crucifies AFRESH, and therefore stands condemned.

Heb. 10:23-26 is an exhortation to, ". . . hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering . . . for if we sin WILFULLY after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains NO MORE SACRIFICE for sins, but a certain fearful looking for judgement, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

Gal. 6:1 should be considered together with 1 John 5:16-17. There are sins from which a Christian CAN, and from which he CANNOT be restored.

"Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace. Whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." Heb. 12:28-29.

John M. Wood,
19 Venturefair Avenue,
Dunfermline. KY12 0PF.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Oct 2	Isaiah 62:	Acts 11:
Oct 9	Daniel 6:1-24	Acts 12:
Oct 16	Nehemiah 8:1-12	Acts 13:1-15
Oct 23	Habakkuk 1:	Acts 13:16-41
Oct 30	Isaiah 42:1-16	Acts 13:42-52

BARNABAS

Barnabas' original name was Joseph, but he had been renamed Barnabas by the apostles because of his encouraging character (Acts 4:36). He was a Levite from Cyprus. It was Barnabas who brought Paul and the apostles together (Acts 9:27).

Barnabas, in fact, was a man of whom nothing but good was reported. Luke summed up his character by saying: "**He was a good man**" (Acts 11:24). F.F. Bruce has written: "And throughout the apostolic record, Barnabas lived up to this reputation: wherever he found a person or a cause needing to be encouraged, he supplied all the encouragement he could . . . his interposition on Paul's behalf in Jerusalem is completely in character."

Barnabas and Paul became a great partnership in missionary work, as can clearly be seen from chapter 13, which details part of Paul's first missionary journey. Barnabas then is an important figure in the Pauline circle. The history of the early Church would have been quite different without him.

PETER AND HEROD

The apostle Peter was a fearless and tireless worker for the Lord. He, of course, had a profound influence in the development of the kingdom of God on earth. He faced many hardships and dangerous foes throughout his eventful ministry and his constant courage is an example to us all. He lived for Jesus and he died for Jesus.

Herod hated him. Who was this Herod? He was Herod Agrippa I, real name Marcus Julius Agrippa, king of Judea 41-44 A.D. He was a friend of Rome, popular, ambitious and extravagant. His grandfather was Herod the Great, whom he tried to emulate in his building programmes. He generally supported the Jews and opposed the Christians. As we read in chapter 12, he killed James and imprisoned Peter. The

Lord destroyed him in the end (Acts 12:23).

It is interesting to note that the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, wrote also about the death of Herod. His account differs in details from Luke's, but they both agree in the main features. Adam Clarke has commented: "Notwithstanding the embellishments of the Jewish historian, it agrees in the main surprisingly with the account given by Luke. Josephus, it is true, suppresses some circumstances, which would have been dishonourable to this pious king." Josephus was a great historian, but so also was Luke, the inspired one.

The release of Peter from prison was an answer to prayer (12:5). But when he came knocking to Mary's house, they did not believe it was he (12:12-15). I have always found it fascinating that the saints in the house said: "It is his angel" (12:15). This is probably where we get the idea of a guardian angel. I understand that it was a common belief of the Jews that each individual had assigned to him at birth, a celestial spirit, whose office was to guard and defend him through life. Could this be true? Personally, I like to think so.

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

An outstanding book I studied recently was *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* by The Rev. W. J. Conybeare and the Very Rev. J. S. Howson. The new edition dates to 1877. (I am always amazed at the scholarship of the nineteenth century). Granted, a lot of their information on the various places has since been updated (archaeology never stands still!), but the research of these men from Cambridge and Chester is truly staggering. They give me insights into Paul's life and work that I never read anywhere else. They inspired me to do my own research, which resulted in a series of presentations at Motherwell on the theme - Paul's Missionary Journeys. It is a great subject.

Paul and Barnabas began this journey in Syrian Antioch. Next to Rome

and Alexandria, it was the largest city in the world with a population in Paul's day of around five hundred thousand. The city was sited on the river Orontes and was about three hundred miles from Jerusalem. Pompey had conquered Antioch for the Romans in 64 B.C. Here Jew and Gentile met and here Christianity had been firmly planted about ten years after the founding of the church in Jerusalem.

They visited the island of Cyprus (Barnabas' home island). It was also called Kittim in the O.T., and sometimes Makaria (happy isle) in N.T. times, because of its excellent climate and good resources. Cyprus is about 110 miles long and 50 miles wide and is named after the Latin word for copper. Paphos was the centre of Roman rule and also the centre of the cult of Aphrodite (Venus), who, as a result, was frequently referred to as "the Paphian." Salamis was a town on the east coast of the central plain of Cyprus. It rivalled Paphos in importance and eventually superseded it. The Jewish community there in the first century was obviously large enough to have more than one synagogue (13:5).

Perga in Pamphylia was an ancient city of unknown origin. It was the religious capital of Pamphylia, like Ephesus, a 'cathedral city' of Artemis (Diana), whose temple stood on a nearby hill. Perga was sited a little inland from the coast and was served by a river harbour. Anyone using the coastal road from Ephesus to Tarsus passed through Perga.

Psidian Antioch, located in Phrygia, was one of a number of Antiochs founded by a Macedonian cavalry leader, Seleucus I. Nicator. The City was on the main trading route between Ephesus and Cilicia and had an elevation of 3600 feet. To reach it, one had to cross the Taurus range of mountains by one of the hardest roads in Asia Minor.

Psidian Antioch was a prominent centre for Hellenism in the pre-Christian period. Augustus made it one of a series

of Roman colonies. I understand that women enjoyed prestige here and sometimes occupied civic offices. The site is now in ruins and is near Yalvac in modern Turkey.

F.F. Bruce has written in reference to the address in Pisidian Antioch: "Luke ascribes to Paul the outline of a homily, which probably summarises the way in which the gospel was presented to a synagogue congregation, comprising Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, against the familiar background of the history of Israel." the address is well worth studying in detail. So is the overall response to it. The God-fearers were especially attracted by Paul's message, with the result that many of the Gentiles, unlike the Jews, accepted the salvation through Christ. These formed a Christian group in separation from the synagogue - the first of the churches in Galatia.

We read: "**And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region**" (13:49). Our prayer should be that this will also happen in our regions today no matter the opposition to it and its messengers. Paul and Barnabas were brave. May we be likewise.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. What nation did David put to hard physical labour?
2. Micah came from which town?
3. How many in Jerusalem plotted to kill Paul?
4. What was Ruth's nationality?
5. When Moses first left Egypt, to which land did he go?
6. Who accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey?
7. How many camels did Job originally own?
8. Ezekiel and the exiles settled along which river?
9. Zacchaeus lived in which city?
10. In what town did the woman anoint Jesus with precious ointment?

OBITUARY

Kentish Town, London: We report with sadness the passing of Sis. Nan Black on Sunday, 3rd July at the age of 89. She attended faithfully until bodily weakness made it impossible. However, the regular visits of Bro. & Sis. Campbell (Old Street) enabled her to continue to Break Bread. She had recently been expressing her wish to be with the Lord.

Bro. & Sis. Black came to London from Pennyvenie, Ayrshire many years ago and worshipped and served at Kentish Town until they moved to Ulverston. They were there until Bro. Black died, after which, Sis. Black returned to London to be with her daughter Esther, and family.

We are also sad to report the passing of our Sis. Norton's husband, Terry, after a long and painful illness.

We extend to these families and friends our love and sympathy and pray that God will comfort them in their sorrow.

Dorothy Proud (Sec.).

COMING EVENTS

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

Speakers:

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

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

Joe Currie (Sec/Treas.)

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Kentish Town. We are having our 123rd Anniversary Meeting on Saturday, 8th October, 1994, 3.00 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. Tea at 4.45 p.m. Bro. Geoff Daniel from Bristol is speaking. We look forward to a time of fellowship and encouragement. Please come and join us!

Dorothy Proud (Sec.)

BOOKS WANTED

Several years ago I was the guarantor to someone who wished to borrow some books from a private library of which I am a member. The person failed to return the books and over the years I have been unsuccessful in trying to locate replacement copies. I would value your help through the Scripture Standard in trying to locate replacement copies for which I am prepared to pay the market price.

The books are:-

Chalmers – Essay on Christian Unity – 3rd Edition 1845.

Gilmore – Christian Baptism.

Paley – A View of Evidences – 1901 Edition.

No. 86 of the Victoria Institutes proceedings.

Any information to Bro. Brian Boland, "The Croft," 1 Chapel Lane, Midgley, Halifax. HX2 6XG.

APPEAL FROM MALAWI

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Though we very well know that a building is not the Church of Christ, the congregation of this place is lacking a prayer house. The congregation here was established on March 12, 1989 started with three families, now our Lord has added more brothers and sisters in his Church. The congregation has been trying to raise funds but always end up unsuccessful, since 1989 we have been paying rent to the District Council Chamber up to date which is very expensive to compare with our collections.

Therefore, the purpose of our letter is to ask some congregations or individuals to give us assistance in form of money so that our bills can be easily paid or use for building a prayer house. Sponsoring congregations will always be informed how the church will be progressing if God blesses.

We are still looking to you brethren.

If aid granted to our congregation:

- (a) The congregation has agreed to mould bricks by selfhelp.

- (b) Money have already paid for a place where a prayer house to be built.

- (c) The main aim of the congregation is to preach here at Mwanza Township and save the souls of many people who have lost their lives and all villages around the town.

R. Dickson, S. G. Masina, J. Dickson,
Church of Christ,
Mwanza Boma,
c/o S. G. Masina,
P.O. Box 98,
Mwanza, Malawi.

(Above information confirmed by letter from Bro. Wilks and Bro. Phiri, of Namikango Bible School, Thondwe, Malawi).

A CHURCH WAKES UP!

For the last two years, I have been researching in order to compile a history of the Church in Kirkcaldy, covering its two hundred years of witness.

During this work I have uncovered some interesting things, which, in themselves are thought-provoking.

The following is one of those taken from an article which I found in the Church Intelligence section of the *Bible Advocate* published on the 30th October, 1903:-

KIRCALDY (Rose Street) – The Church here is presently being greatly cheered, strengthened, and encouraged in their efforts to spread the joyful news of salvation. For a long time now we have just been plodding along in our own little way getting the help of brethren from the Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dunfermline and Sinclairtown churches, who were ever ready to come amongst us to help and encourage us. But we felt it our duty to make some greater effort and try to reach the masses and spread the Gospel message to a wider circle. Through the kindness of the Bryson Road (Edinburgh) and Tranent brethren we now have the services of Brother Henry Hart, whose untiring efforts and deep earnestness are proving most successful in many ways. The bret-

hrens are being roused to a greater sense of responsibility: greater unity and earnestness are being manifested; and above all, souls are being won for Jesus Christ

I believe that the brethren in Kirkcaldy can relate to the 'plodding along' situation that existed in the Church nearly a century ago. I cannot believe we are alone in this situation and therefore offer this article as stimulant to the readers of S.S.

Robert Hughes (Kirkcaldy).

GHANA APPEAL

Donations to the work of the Lord's church in Ghana are very much appreciated, and we thank all donors most sincerely. At the same time we must commend our Ghanaian brethren for their drive and enthusiasm in serving our Lord so successfully - in bringing others to Christ, extending God's Kingdom and for their caring love for one another.

Let us not forget the inspired words of the apostle Paul in Galatians 6:9,10.

In larger towns and cities the provision of accommodation for meeting is scarce and expensive, while the competition from other religious groups is keen. This is presently holding up the planned establishment of one such congregation, although competent brothers are ready to go out there to commence this work.

Brethren, the combined effect of donors and those who use the funds in the Lord's work has far surpassed our most optimistic expectations. A plentiful harvest still awaits so let us not grow weary in our efforts, but continue with renewed enthusiasm to support our Ghanaian brethren in this most vital work.

We express our thanks for the anonymous donation of £50 which was received on 6th July.

Bill Cook.

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

Graeme Pearson,
13 Fairways,
Dunfermline,
Fife. KY12 0DU.

Telephone: (0383) 728624.

1. Ammonites (2 Samuel 12:31)
2. Moresheth (Micah 1:1)
3. More than forty (Acts 23:13)
4. Moabite (Ruth 1:4)
5. Midian (Exodus 2:15)
6. Silas (Acts 15:40)
7. 3000 (Job 1:3)
8. Chebar (Ezekiel 1:1)
9. Jericho (Luke 19:1,2)
10. Bethany (Matthew 26:6)

ANSWERS

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