

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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TRY THE SPIRITS

This morning's newspaper carries a warning that a new religious cult is about to assault our shores. Apparently, an Australian cult-leader, who preaches that people can live on light and air alone, is planning to visit Scotland. The cult leader is a self-styled guru, of 42 years of age, who calls herself "Jasmuheen" (formerly Miss Ellen Greve), and who apparently believes that people who are "spiritually pure" can survive indefinitely without food or drink. Her cult, called the "Movement Of A Positive And Awakened Society" espouses "Breatharianism" (whatever that may be) and has been blamed for the death of three followers so far, who spurned food in search of "spiritual purity" (whatever that may be). The latest victim, who died recently in Scotland some weeks ago, appears to have been an Australian, Miss Verity Linn, 49 years of age, who died of starvation on some open ground on a remote hillside in Sutherland, whose diary nearby indicated that she had been following the teachings of Jasmuheen.

Jasmuheen's proposed visit to Scotland has brought protests from politicians and religious leaders, calling for her entry to be banned. Jasmuheen herself claims to have lived without food or drink for the past two years and claims that some of her followers have not consumed food or drink for the past six years. She founded her movement after discovering "Pranic Light" (alleged to be a light from God thought by eastern spiritualist to exist within everyone). Information about all these things is obviously rather sketchy at the moment but we shall no doubt learn more later, if and when she arrives here. Jasmuheen hopes to spend two days in London next month as part of a promotional tour to publicise her new book. Her intention to come to Scotland may have been prompted by the death of Miss Linn, but she denies any responsibility for any deaths amongst her followers, on the basis that the inventor of the gun is not responsible for all gun-shot wounds. Ian Howarth, of the Cult Information Service says that he has been tracking Miss Greve's activities for some months, and that four families have come to him in a frantic state because some members of these families have already joined the cult and stopped eating. He is sure that many others will join if Jasmuheen is allowed to come here.

PUBLIC GULLIBILITY

In view of the above what can one say? The constant stream of religious cults never ceases to amaze, of course, but what is much more astonishing is the gullibility of the general public. After all, how simple has a person to be to believe, for even a moment, that we can live for any length of time without eating or drinking. One has to feel extremely sorry for the late Miss Linn, and for any others who might get involved with

Jasmuheen, but any wee schoolboy could tell them that living without eating and drinking is a complete "non-starter" in any context, religious or otherwise. Surely we have all heard the old joke about the miner who trained his greyhound to live without eating: and just had it trained when it died. To poor Miss Linn it proved to be no joke. Sadly, people prefer fanciful illusions (no matter how bizarre) to sober realities. Preach the truth, and it falls mainly on deaf ears. Preach some outlandish nonsense and, in no time, people are falling over themselves to participate. Christ's wonderful offer of remission of sins to those who would repent and be baptised is met with a firm disinclination: whereas a call to stop eating and drinking permanently, will doubtless be met with ready anticipation, and much enthusiasm. Such is man.

SPIRITUAL PURITY

In my humble view "Spiritual Purity" is like "Sinlessness": i.e. a life's aim and serious endeavour, albeit an impossibility. We daily must try to eradicate sin from our lives but who, and at what stage, will ever claim to have reached personal sinlessness? The Bible nowhere talks of those who are "pure in spirit" but Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit", which is something quite different. Nonetheless Jasmuheen teaches that those who are "Spiritually Pure" can live without eating and drinking, and claims that she, herself, has lived thus for two years: indicating that she must be "Spiritually Pure". It would seem, therefore, that those cult-members who stop eating and drinking and thereafter die, merely demonstrate that they were not spiritually pure. This seems a drastic way of finding out, and sounds a bit like the test for witchcraft in the Middle Ages. If the poor wretch survived drowning on the ducking stool, it merely proved that she was indeed a witch, and thus a fit subject for burning at the stake, Certainly being able to live without food on a permanent basis has much to commend it, and is obviously a very cheap and trouble-free way of getting through life, but it's doubtful if the super-markets would like it. Cynics, no doubt, would like Jasmuheen to be put under close surveillance for a month or two to see how literal her claim of abstinence might be. After all, medical science (and personal experience) tells us that human beings can survive without food but not long without water. We have no way of knowing how "Spiritually Pure" Jasmuheen might be (whatever that term is meant to convey) but we do know that Jesus was the ONLY person ever to be truly pure in every sense: and the only person entirely sinless. Jesus was tested and tried in every shape and form, as we are, yet, "**He was without sin**". Even the many worthies of the O.T., such as Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Enoch, David, etc. etc., could never claim to be without sin. And these are all names that would never be uttered in the same breath as "Jasmuheen". And yet the sinless Son of God, the purest of the pure, could not live without eating and drinking: and certainly never ever hinted that humans could live without food and water. Jesus fasted, yes, and even fasted for an incredible forty days, but surely such a fast must pale into complete insignificance if the likes of Jasmuheen can "fast" for two years, and some of her devotees for six. Jesus had much to say about purity, and He also had much to say about food and drink, but certainly never ever indicated that possession of the former would do away with the necessity of the latter. Indeed it was while Jesus was actually very hungry and very thirsty that He had the enlightening conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. During that conversation, Jesus, physically and spiritually pure as He uniquely was, not only asked for a drink to cure His thirst, but took the occasion to give to the world some extremely vital information *about thirsting and drinking*, (and how **spiritual** thirsting could only be permanently satisfied by water - THE WATER OF LIFE.)

SYCHER'S WELL

Jesus sat alone on the well because His disciples had gone into a local village *to buy food*. Obviously they could have saved themselves a lot of time, trouble and money if they had only known what Jasmuheen says she knows. He watched the Samaritan woman draw water and asked for a drink. The woman expressed great surprise at the request "For", as she said "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans". Jesus said, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith unto thee, 'Give Me to drink', thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water." The women pointed out that Jesus had no bucket, and the well was very deep. How, therefore, could He talk of "giving water." She also marvelled at His presumption of superiority over Jacob, for Jacob himself had dug the well; providing excellent water over many centuries. Jesus, however, had no fault to find, either with Jacob or the well, save to say that those who drank at it "would thirst again." "But", said Jesus, "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst again, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him, a well of water springing up into eternal life." The woman said, "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." Jesus said unto her, "go call thy husband and come hither." The fact that Jacob (holy man as he was) found it necessary to dig a well, shows, I think, that he (and all those thousands that used the well thereafter) had obviously not discovered the secret of "pranic light", or "breatharianism", or the blessings of "Spiritual purity". Jesus, sharing this ignorance, pointed out that those drinking water *would "thirst again"*. Surely Jesus would have been astonished had He been told that the "spiritually pure" never needed to drink water. Those who drank the natural water from the well would thirst again, but those who drank of Christ's living water would (spiritually) never thirst again. The spiritual blessings which Jesus would bestow upon a individual would be *as a "well of water"* within him, and this water would "spring up into everlasting life". Later in the temple, Jesus meant much the same thing when He cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, Out of his belly shall flow living waters". (John 7:37-39). Thus our Lord's analogy is very fitting: man's thirst for natural water being so similar to his spiritual needs, and his, sometimes subconscious, necessity for a closer fellowship with his Maker. The "living water" not only confers blessings upon man in this life, but "springs up into everlasting life." Some well! Some water!

THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

Yes, Jesus spoke of *water*, but He also spoke about *food*, where again, He introduces a telling spiritual application. Many amongst the multitudes which followed the Lord, did so only because they sought *the physical food* (the loaves and the fishes): not the spiritual food. He warned them, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you . . ." In reply, the Jews pressed Jesus for a sign from heaven, sufficient in magnitude to prove His identity. After all, (they suggested) God, through Moses, had fed tens of thousands of Israelites for forty years with "bread from heaven": whereas Jesus had fed only a few thousand, and that only once or twice. Jesus replied, "Verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of Life: he

that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst". (John 6:32). We don't have to be rocket-scientists to understand that Jesus is again speaking figuratively. Jesus is "the Bread of God" sent down to earth amongst fallen humanity, offering forgiveness of sins and the promise of life everlasting. At v.48 Jesus went on to say, **"I am the bread of life . . . Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven that a man may eat thereof and not die. If any man eat of this bread he will live for ever, and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."**

These same Jews, who were quoting Moses and the days when "God gave them bread from heaven to eat" seemed completely unaware of the fact that God gave the Israelites manna to teach them a lesson. Deuteronomy tells us while God had **"to suffer the manners"** of the people for 40 years in the wilderness, He was forced to chastise them oftentimes, and He made them to hunger. The manna was to teach them **"that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God"**, (a verse quoted by Jesus when tempted of the devil: Matt. 4:4). This is still a vital lesson for man today. God never intended man to live without eating bread, (whether for two years or six years), but neither did God intend for man to live *solely* on bread. Jesus is the **"Bread from heaven"**, the true bread, **"That a man may eat thereof and never die"**.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

How then can we sum up? Christ's words to the Samaritan woman, and His words on the "Bread of God" discourse, plainly illustrate (1) that Jesus never asked, taught or expected human beings to try to live without eating or drinking. We can but be sorry for the deaths of any misguided souls foolish enough to attempt such a pointless and dangerous endeavour. (2) Christ's "Living Water" and "Living Bread" are the really important victuals in this life, *for these will sustain us into the life yet to come*.

Jesus acknowledged that man's eating and drinking will ever be a continuous process. Did He not say that those drinking from Jacob's well would **"thirst again"**? This is true not only of man's constant recourse to the kitchen tap, but true indeed of all of man's activities. The world of today is more materialistically minded than ever. We drink at the earthen wells of *materialism*, but we always **"Thirst again"**. Some seek *riches* only to discover that great possessions do not provide a lasting satisfaction - the rich seek to become even richer. Some seek *fame and popularity*, and, having found them, are disappointed enough to enter a depression. Some seek *power and influence*. Some drink at the earthen wells of *pleasure-seeking* only to discover that pleasures are fleeting, deceitful, transient and not to be confused with true happiness. From all these "wells without water" men will **"Thirst again"** (and again). Surely Solomon drank deeply at all those worldly wells, and what was his verdict? **"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"**. Man's whole duty, he said, was **"To fear God and keep His commandments"**. Man is the "offspring of God" and, as such, will never be truly happy until he is at one with his God, and reconciled to his Maker. Jasmuheen (giving her the benefit of any doubts) may offer her devotees a few years free from food, but Jesus offers "Life Everlasting" to all those who drink of His "Living Water" and eat of His "Living Bread". No contest.

EDITOR.

(Some days after this was written Jasmuheen was subjected to a test in Australia, under close supervision 24 hours per day, but had to be rescued by medics after four days,

due to her dangerous medical state. She had lost a stone in weight, her eyes were sunken and her pulse rate had doubled. Surprise, surprise. Ed.)

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:19-22, New International Version).

Christianity is realistic. It is a way of life that is based on certain truths such as: (1) Christ existed from the beginning with God; (2) He became like us and lived on earth as a man; (3) He died on the cross for our sins; and (4) He was raised again on the third day that we might have eternal life if we believe in Him and obey. These facts are true and are just as relevant as they were so many centuries ago.

Christianity is a spiritual way of life. It also admits to material things being necessary; but not all important. How can we as Christians make our faith realistic for ourselves and others we are trying to reach?

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

Christ is our prime example of seeing the material needs of others and giving the spiritual as well. When Jesus fed the multitudes He realized the people were coming to Him for the food to satisfy their physical hunger yet He had so much more than food to give them. **"When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him 'Rabbi, when did you get here?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, you are looking for Me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the son of Man will give you'"** (John 6:25-27). Here Jesus plainly instructs us to be realistic Christians, pursuing those things that are eternal and refusing to let the things that perish possess us. Jesus also said, **"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"** (Matthew 6:19-21).

MAKING CHRISTIANITY REALISTIC

How can we make Christianity realistic to others? First of all *is it realistic to us?* If our faith is not all important and vital in our lives how can we make it so to others?

Secondly, do we bother to see the needs and problems in the people around us? Are we, like Paul in his statement in 1 Corinthians, trying to be all things to all men in hopes we may win a few? Our relationships with people need to be much more than just a casual, "Hi! Nice day, Bye" conversation. However, we must not get involved to the point we are busy-bodies and gossips. We really need to know people - their hopes, their fears, and their joys - in order to make the gospel relevant to their needs.

Thirdly, we need to get to know people and understand them from a "non-church" point of view and to be informed about what is going on in the world. It would be easy

to say, "No, I am a Christian. I am above wordly things," and then bury our heads in our Bibles. We are living on earth with wordly people and we need to know what is going on around us. In order to help people see how the Bible and a strong faith in God can sustain us through any crisis the world can give us, we need to know what the crises are. By reading newspapers, magazines, watching the news documentaries on T.V., etc. we can see terrible things the world offers an unbeliever, and hopefully we will turn to the Bible and show them the peace God offers.

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT NEEDED

We cannot make our faith truly relevant to people if we do not get involved with them personally and let them know we really understand and care. What do we have to offer the world, our community, the woman or man next door? Is there something in us that others can see and want in their lives? One author puts it this way, "Non-Christians are carefully examining the Church and its individual members to see if they really have found an eternal dimension in life. A superficial profession won't convince them. They're looking for the real thing - a genuine, living faith" (Source Unknown). Do we have this genuine, living faith and if we don't, why? How are we going to make our faith real?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

I was hungry and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger.

Thank you.

I was imprisoned and you crept off quietly to your chapel in the cellar and prayed for my release.

I was naked and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance.

I was sick and you knelt and thanked God for your health.

I was homeless and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God.

I was lonely and you left me alone - to pray for me.

You seem so holy; So close to God; But I'm still very hungry and lonely, and cold.

(quoted by S. Humphrey,
What Do You Communicate?)

Is this realistic Christianity?

L. MOFFITT.

LOVE: WHAT IT IS AND IS NOT

Love is very important. It is the great command (Matt. 22:37-39). God is love (1 John 4:16). Christians are people who practise love (John 13:35). We are to love others like (in the way that) Christ loves us (John 13:34). Love may not be exactly *defined* but it is *described* (1 Cor. 13:4-7, for example). And it is *demonstrated* for us (1 John 3:16). Love is the greatest of all (1 Cor. 13:13).

But love is much misunderstood. Some say, "If you really love me, . . ." But is that the true gauge of true love? What is love?

Surely love is more than a rosy outlook or an emotion. Someone has aptly said, "Love is not an emotion of sentimental notion."

It sounds shocking to say, "Love is *not a feeling*" but true, Bible love is not a feeling; it may lead to some feelings (emotions) but it is an effect that has been caused in us. True love acts as God's word directs regardless of how we may feel! Love is a

command (Matt. 22:37-39; 1 John 4:21).

A COMMAND

A feeling cannot be commanded, but is from inside us and depends on us, not our reaction properly to what God has said. Love is like the spiritual guidance we all need (Jer. 10:23): it does not originate from within.

Love is *caused*. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (John 4:19). Love is an attitude: reverence, obedience and thankfulness to God, and care and concern for one another (1 John 5:3; 4:16; 4:7-11; 3:16; 4:9, 10. Please read in this order).

God gave, God sent, and "we ought" (to love). Love is what we ought to do because God said so (1 John 4:20; 5:3).

And love is *not a liking*, nor acceptance, nor approval. God loves sinners, but He does not like their doings (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16; Eph. 2:4,5; Titus 3:4,5; 1 John 3:1). We do not have to approve evil; rather we must always stand against it (Eph. 5:11). Instead of bringing the standard "back to the troops," "the troops must be brought up to the standard."

CORRECTION

But love is *correction*, as shocking as that sounds! See Luke 17:3,4, Galatians 4:16, and Hebrews 12:5-7. God corrects us through His word because he loves us. Truly our hearts are heavy when one strays away and we are deeply crushed over the ungodly actions of a fallen brother (Prov. 3:11,12; 27:5,6).

Love is *rebuking* evil. Paul loved the church at Corinth and rebuked them. (See 1 Corinthians letter and their many problems. Then see 2 Corinthians. They made correction. Loved worked! Corinth was willing to receive correction, and they too showed their love by obeying God's word through Paul.) Love caused Paul to withstand (rebuke) Peter (Gal. 2:11ff.). Yes, love is rebuking evil, strange as that sounds. And disagreement on some details is not hatred (Acts 15:36-41).

NOT FELLOWSHIP

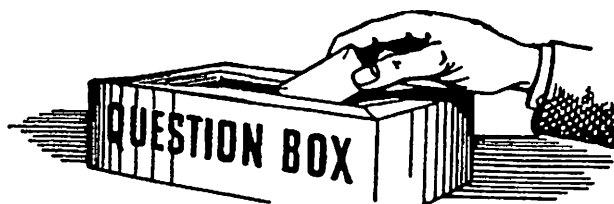
Love is *not fellowship*. God loves sinners and wants them to change and be saved, but fellowship is only for those who agree with and walk with God (1 John 1:3-7). Fellowship is based on agreement - without agreement there is no fellowship (Amos 3:3). If we do not agree with God's words, (His teaching) and walk in them, there is no fellowship. So it is with people - there must be agreement, at least on basics, in order to have fellowship.

God wants people to have fellowship with Him and with His people (1 John 1:7), but we must be willing to walk with Him, in the light of His word.

Love is *not condoning*. It is not true love to condone evil in anyone, even the nearest and dearest to us. True love protects from harm; it does not allow harm. It is destructive to condone evil, not constructive. Parents who truly love their children correct them. Love restricts, draws proper loving bounds. Eli failed to restrain his sons, and because of this he was not a good father.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:15ff, 2 Timothy 1:17, Galatians 5:6, and Hebrews 5:9. We cannot really love God and doubt his words. Seek the well-being of others. The Greek definition of love (*agapao*) is: "to be full of goodwill and exhibit the same;" "wish well to, regard the welfare of."

Love makes obedience a pleasure. To keep law for the sake of only law-keeping is to frustrate God's grace, but grace without proper response (loving obedience) is a false hope! Let us really practise love.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

A brother from India has asked the following question:

"In John 13:14-15, the Lord Jesus said, 'If I, then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you'. Why (do) not we practise this?"

Please read again **John 13: 1-20**, where the occasion to which our brother refers is described, and then consider what had occurred before it.

Mark 14:3 records that Jesus was at Bethany, a village on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, when He instructed two of His disciples to go ahead of Him into Jerusalem, to prepare for the celebration of the forth-coming Passover (vv. 13-15). That evening, He and the rest of the Twelve followed them into the city, to the Upper-Room which had now been made ready for the Passover meal.

From Bethany they had walked about two miles to Jerusalem, along dry, dusty roads, and had entered the Upper-Room with feet which were not only hot and uncomfortable, but dirty also.

We know, of course, that, in those days and in that culture, people did not wear socks or stockings as in western countries and other parts of the world, because the climate rendered them unnecessary. Their bare feet were covered only by open sandals.

We know also, that it was regarded as an essential courtesy, that when guests entered a house, the host should have arranged for a most welcome act of hospitality to be performed; namely, the washing of their tired feet.

A servant placed a bowl under the feet of the guest and cool, refreshing water was then poured over them, after which the feet would then be gently dried with the towel.

The book of Genesis records that this was one of the most ancient expressions of Eastern hospitality.

Gen. 18:4 records that Abraham extended it to his visitors.

Lot, also in the wicked city of Sodom, offered it to his visitors (**Gen. 19:2**).

We find it again in **Gen. 43:24**, when the sons of Jacob went to Egypt to buy food.

Thus, the washing of feet of a guest was a custom which had continued for thousands of years and which was woven into the very fabric of Middle Eastern culture.

THE CUSTOM NEGLECTED!

But, on this occasion, in the Upper-Room, this traditional act did not occur! The bowl, the pitcher of water and the towel, had all been provided, but there was no host present to greet the Lord and his disciples when they arrived, and no servant to wash their feet.

Jesus, therefore, waited to see if anyone among his disciples would volunteer to perform this service, which, though usually the duty of a household servant or slave, was considered a very important act.

Indeed, he waited until the supper was actually *over* (v.2). But, apparently, it did not enter the mind of any of the Twelve to volunteer to take on this menial role! It was plainly very far from their thoughts, because **Luke 22:24** tells us that, even in the Upper-Room, once again 'a dispute had arisen among the disciples, as to which of

them was to be regarded the greatest'. How sad it is that, whilst Jesus was burdened with the knowledge that a cross was awaiting Him, His closest disciples were insensitively thinking about crowns!

THE OLD DEBATE

I say that the dispute had arisen 'once again', because it was not new. Some time earlier (Mark 9:33-36), Jesus had overheard them having the same argument as they followed Him along the road, and when they reached their destination He had tried to teach them the lesson of humility and service, using a little child as an example.

They had clearly not learned the lesson.

There had also been another occasion, when the mother of James and John, no doubt prompted by her two sons, came to Jesus asking that they might sit with Him on thrones when His kingdom was established (Matt. 20:20). Verse 24 tells us that the rest of the disciples were angry with the two brothers, most probably because they felt that, with their request, James and John had stolen a march on them!

It was unlikely, then, that, in the mood which prevailed among them in the Upper Room that evening, any one of them would be willing to tie about himself the linen towel which was the badge of the household servant, and kneel to wash the feet of his fellows.

THE LORD'S EXAMPLE

We must, therefore, try to imagine the consternation and embarrassment experienced by the Twelve, when Jesus himself quietly arose from His place at the table and knelt before them to wash their feet! With the exception of the ever-impetuous Peter, it seems that no one spoke. The rest submitted in silence whilst this humble service was performed, until the Lord resumed His place at the table. It was then that He once again tried to make them understand that true greatness is demonstrated in the willingness to become a servant.

They had heard Him say on one occasion. *'The Son of Man came, not to be served, but to serve'*, and it does not appear that they understood the significance of that statement.

But this startling act of feet washing was different. It was something, which Peter certainly never forgot. In 1 Peter 5:5, he wrote,

'All of you, be subject to one another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble'.

A literal translation of the words, *'be clothed with humility'*, would be, *'put on humility as a knotted garment'*.

And if we could ask Peter how he came upon the illustration of the 'knotted garment', he would surely tell us, *'I learned it that night in the upper-room, when my Lord and Master clothed Himself with a servant's linen towel and knelt before me to wash my feet'*.

FEET-WASHING TODAY?

It is true that there are a few groups who today have turned the washing of feet into a formal religious ceremony, and it pleases them to think that in this way they are demonstrating humility. But theirs is a religious ceremony of their own manufacture, and it does not have the authority of a divine command.

In New Testament times the washing of feet was not a formal ceremony and it was certainly not a religious one. Indeed, it had no religious significance whatsoever. It was, as has already been stated, a common and customary act of hospitality and welcome, which any host would extend to his guests, and the fact is that, in modern western

society, such an act would not mean what it meant in those days.

Today we may just as effectively show that our guests are welcome, by offering them a cup of tea!

CONCLUSION: A DEEPER SIGNIFICANCE

What, then, are we to learn from what happened in the Upper-Room that evening?

We should remember that our Lord has a wonderful way of taking ordinary, everyday things and turning them into opportunities from which to teach important lessons.

Look upon the washing of the feet of the disciples as a kind of object-lesson.

Consider that He was giving them a practical demonstration of the spirit of humility which they must possess, if they were to become true servants. The *spoken word* had not evidently impressed them. Perhaps the performance of an *act of service* would.

I believe that the importance of the washing of the feet of the disciples was a far more urgent and serious matter than is usually recognised.

Notice the manner in which **John 13** introduces the scene from the Upper Room. John tells us, in v.3, that Jesus, fully aware that the time was close at hand when He should return to the Father from whom He came, rose from supper and proceeded to wash the feet of the disciples. This means that it was the knowledge of the imminence of His death and His return to the Father which prompted His action.

These men were to become His ambassadors, His apostles, who were to speak on His behalf. The first preaching of the Gospel and the leadership of the early Church, were among the grave responsibilities which He intended them to bear.

How could they fulfil their commission, if they continued to squabble among themselves as to who among them was the greatest? It was therefore imperative that they should realise that He had chosen them to serve and not to exercise lordship over each other.

The explanation of the Lord's action is found in His words in verses 12-17, which might be loosely rendered as follows:

"Have you really grasped what I have just done?"

You are right when you call me 'Lord', and 'Master' because I am truly your Lord and Master. But I have just been listening to you, as each of you have sought to elevate himself above his fellows. You all want to be 'lords' and 'masters', with the result that, this evening, you have ignored the opportunity to serve!

If I, then, who possess true Lordship, have been willing to become your servant, you have a moral obligation to serve each other.

You should now understand that I have, this evening, set you the example of service, and if you do understand, you will be happy to act on what you have learned."

There is no doubt those first Christians who lived in the lands of the New Testament continued the traditional social practice of the washing of feet. But it was not regarded by the early Church as a divinely-commanded religious ordinance, and we, likewise, must be careful to avoid making laws and devising ceremonies where the Lord has not done so.

In India, from where our brother has sent this question, for a traveller to have his feet washed may very well be a welcome act of kindness, bearing in mind the climate and the culture. But, to impose it on the Church as a religious ceremony and as a command of God, is an act which is both unauthorised by scripture and even

presumptuous.

We all need to cultivate the humility which enables us to accept the lowliest of tasks without complaining, and wherever we live, Christians should be mature enough to be able to find more useful ways than 'feet-washing' in which to demonstrate the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who told His disciples:

"Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve." (Matt. 20:27-28).

(Questions to : Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire, Scotland, PA6 7NZ.)

DEVELOPING SELF-WORTH (SOME COMMENTS)

I offer some comments on the article *"Developing Self-worth"* which appeared in the October issue.

There is no doubt the author meant well. However, she advocates that we rely on our "feelings". This word "feelings" and or "feel" is used by her no less than 15 times throughout the article.

Perhaps the author's purpose was to (I do not imply that I can read her mind but can only hope that her intended purpose was as I hope) to elaborate on the scriptural admonition to "examine yourselves" - (2nd Cor. 13:5) - to see whether we are in the faith, and to "test ourselves". However this passage does not, by any stretch of the imagination, suggest that we should be; of and by ourselves; *placing a value on ourselves*, but rather to see if we are truly in "the" faith. God does the evaluation and the judging of each of His children - 1st Cor. 4:1-5 and this is done in accordance with His view of our "worth", not ours.

The idea of *"Self-worth"* is not found anywhere in the Bible, except in the form or sense of an unacceptable principle or concept. The exact phrase itself is not used anywhere.

This concept or idea of "self-worth" is an entirely worldly philosophy which gained great popularity in the worldly realm of making money by the writers of such books as; *"How To Make Friends and Influence People"*, *"Think And Grow Rich"*, *"The Power Of Positive Thinking"* and many, many others. The popularity of exalting oneself and thereby "empowering" oneself has, regrettably, spilled over from the world into many congregations of the Lord's Church, to the end that those, who, by and of themselves, have determined that there are some among them whose talents for years have been neglected and have not been given the opportunity to use them, and must now therefore be given their opportunity to show their true worth (ignoring completely God's plan and Jesus' authority in the Church). The result of all of this self-evaluation and self-determination is that we now hear of women confidently relying on their "Feelings of self-worth", taking over the functions of preaching, teaching, and presiding at the Lord's table; they of course see themselves as doing a great service, of great value.

WHAT IS OUR WORTH?

Jesus was the ultimate example of selflessness (Phil. 2:7-8). He did not cling to His equality with God but let it go in order that He might become "Nothing" (N.I.V.) or "of no reputation" (K.J.V.) and as regards "self" will, we hear Him say to our Father in heaven - "not what I will but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14:36).

We are told that we must have the mind of Christ - Phil. 2:5 (K.J.V.) "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus".

If we are to please Jesus (and that is the reason for self-examination - not to find "self-worth") then according to scripture we must humble ourselves - (James 4:6, 4:10; 1st Peter 5:5). **"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time"**. Jesus himself gave us a great example of what it means to see ourselves as worthless, and as having no value, when he compared this attitude to the one, who through self-will and self-worth, was able to see that *in His own eyes* He was of great value (in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector - Luke 18:9-14).

What value do you place on yourself - what are you worth? - There are those who come to John claiming to be valuable because they were Abraham's children, but as for that evaluation they were told that God could raise up children from the stones lying about. What makes us so valuable? Nothing at all that we could ever do or claim. Nothing. (Luke 3:8).

HOW "DESERVING" CAN WE EVER BE?

One particular line in the article stands out: viz. "How can we develop self worth? Remember that we have to develop something of value, someone deserving".

By this line we see that what is being advocated is something that we *MUST do* - "we have to" in order to please God: we must become "*deserving*". The emphasis is being placed on becoming deserving. However, the scriptures teach us that if we all got what we deserved we would be condemned for ever, for Jesus himself said that the whole world was "**condemned already**" (John 3:16-21). If we look at Ephs. 2:1-8 we can see clearly that it is by **God's grace** we are saved - not by anything we may have done or now could do - we receive a salvation that we do not "deserve" and by our own righteousness can never deserve.

Finally as regards the subject of "feelings", as opposed to or concerning the truth: the examples that our Lord and Saviour gave us are, in every instance (when he was confronted with error) completely free of any concern, on His part, for the "feelings" of those whom He corrected. There are many examples, but one or two come to mind: Matt. 16:22-23; John 13:8. In both of these instances His rebuke was swift and sharp and clear with no regard to how His listeners might "feel". We must therefore never compromise the truth in order to spare the "feelings" of those around us, or those who might have their feelings hurt.

One last word on "worth". Read Chapter 5 of the book of Revelation (verses 4 and 5). Out of all the billions of people who ever walked the face of this earth, only Jesus, the Lamb of God, was able to open up, and reveal, the teachings of the New Testament, and redeem us to God by His blood.

GEORGE SILLMAN, Canada.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jan. 2	Genesis 49: 1-12	Revelation 5
Jan. 9	Isaiah 34	Revelation 6
Jan. 16	Isaiah 49: 8-26	Revelation 7
Jan. 23	Psalm 141	Revelation 8
Jan. 30	Joel 2: 1-7	Revelation 9

CHAPTER FIVE

We are introduced in this chapter to

the seven-sealed scroll written on both sides (5:1). John wept because "**no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon**" (5:3). However, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah", "the root of David", "the Lamb" (all titles of Jesus) "prevailed to open the book and loosen the seven seals" (5:5).

It is interesting to note that in this chapter the Lion has become the Lamb.

Jesus is called "the Lamb" not because of His meekness, but because of His sacrificial love. We are reminded here of the words of John the Baptist: "**Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world**" (John 1:29).

Again, the "elders" and the "beasts" are mentioned in this chapter. I reiterate that these terms have reference to special orders of angels. The rest of the angels are so numerous that they can only be described by John as "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands" (5:11). No wonder Jesus could have called upon more than "twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53) to save Him from the cross. They did not come to His rescue on that occasion because the way to glory was through the cross.

Jesus did not die for angels, but for human beings. The translation in the Authorised Version of verses 9 and 10 of chapter 5 is, therefore, misleading. The word "us" in both verses should read "them" to make the statement clear and accurate.

Jesus is now worthy of all power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and blessing (5:12). What honour I have I must give to Him; what wisdom I have I must give to Him; what riches I have I must give to Him; etc. In worshipping Jesus I know I am worshipping God. It is Jesus who has given me life, joy and hope. Indeed, truth to tell, I owe Him everything. He is my everything, He is my all.

CHAPTER SIX

This chapter reveals the opening of six of the seals. We read of the opening of the seventh in chapter 8. In the opening of the first seal we read of a white horse (6:2); in the opening of the second, a red horse (6:4); in the opening of the third, a black horse (6:5); and in the opening of the fourth, a pale horse (6:8). What do these horses represent? I believe they refer to periods of the

Roman Empire.

One of the great books written on Revelation was that penned by Barton W. Johnson entitled *Vision of the Ages or Lectures on the Apocalypse*. Johnson, at one time, was a student under Alexander Campbell. In this book he writes: "The white horse indicates conquering war. As a symbol, it always indicates triumphant war . . . The red horse is a symbol of carnage; the black, of mourning; and the pale horse of famine and pestilence". So, we have references here to a period of conquest and prosperity in the Roman world; a period of civil strife; a period of calamity and famine; and a period of plague and death. Does Roman history accord with these symbols? The answer, in short, is yes.

The first period includes the epoch of the Antonines, which, Edward Gibbon said, was the happiest time the world had ever known. The Antonine age included Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161); Marcus Aurelius (161-180); and Commodus (180-192). They had been preceded by three other notable emperors - Nerva (96-98); Trajan (98-117); and Hadrian (117-138). I quote Gibbon in greater detail: "If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian (A.D. 96) to the accession of Commodus (180)." As I write this article, I have before me Michael Grant's book *The Antonines*. I wish I could quote it in full.

Next, there was a period of civil commotion. Jean-Charles-Leonard Simonde de Sismondi wrote: "With Commodus commenced the third and most calamitous period. It lasted 92 years from A.D. 192 - 284. During that period, thirty-two emperors and twenty-seven pretenders alternatively hurled each other from the throne by incessant

civil warfare. Ninety-two years of almost incessant civil warfare taught the world on what frail foundation the virtue of the Antonines had placed the felicity of the Roman Empire."

War always results in famine and death - thus the black horse and the pale horse. On the latter, Death was the rider and Hades followed closely behind (6:8). Scarcity, want, hunger and pestilence were evident in the latter portion of the period of civil commotion. A quarter of the population perished (6:8).

The fifth seal reveals a picture of the victorious Christian martyrs, who had suffered ten major persecutions in the Empire from Nero (A.D. 54-68) to Diocletian (284 - 305). The opening of the sixth seal is full of imagery and has to do with the end of Paganism and the revolution instigated by the first "Christian" emperor - Constantine the Great (306-337). "The vengeance that was wrought, the sweeping revolutions that took place, the upturning of the old order, and the overthrow of the heathen temples, were all recognised as exhibitions of the wrath of the Lamb; and we are told that more than one imperial champion of Paganism called, in his hour of distress, to Christ, to have mercy. Some of the Pagan writers almost use the language of Revelation in describing this period. The ruin of the Pagan religion is described by the Sophists, says Gibbon, 'as a dreadful and amazing prodigy, which covered the earth with darkness and restored the ancient dominion of chaos and night'" Barton W. Johnson.

CHAPTERS SEVEN & EIGHT

At the commencement of chapter 7 we see the restraining power of God at work. The four winds represent the destructive forces upon the Empire and the four angels represent the restraining power (7:1). If the latter had not been done then Christianity could not have taken hold upon the Roman world as it

eventually did. Those sealed on their foreheads were those who made an open profession of their faith (7:3-4). A number is given - 144,000. 12,000 times 12 (the number of tribes in ancient Israel) gives the total figure. Judah is the first tribe mentioned, probably because the Messiah came from this tribe. The tribe of Dan is excluded. Some commentators have suggested that the exclusion results from the fact that this was the first tribe to fall into idolatry. Personally, I do not take these figures literally; but I do believe they have reference to the first-fruits of the gospel i.e. converted Jews. Remember, the gospel is for the Jew first and then the Gentile (Romans 1:16). Verse 9 of this chapter proves that all the Gentile world was included in the gospel call. The saved in heaven are clothed with white robes (7:9,13,14). These were made white by the blood of the Lamb (7:14). What a paradox! We also read: "And he said to me, **These are they who came out of great tribulation . . .**" (7:14). We shall never know this side of heaven all that they really endured. They are an example to us all.

The opening of the seventh seal results in the sounding of seven trumpets. When we all hear the last trumpet then that will be the end. But what of the other six? I see in these soundings the agents that came against Rome. The Goths (8:7), who destroyed the trees; the Vandals (8:8-9), who came by sea; the Huns (8:10-11), who damaged rivers; the Heruli (8:12-13), who ushered in the "Dark Ages". The Latin third part of the world is that to which John refers. Obviously, space prevents me from going into great detail on Attila the Hun, Alaric the Goth, Genseric the Vandal, Odoacer, king of the Heruli, etc. It is all fascinating history.

CHAPTER NINE

Chapter 9 deals with the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets. The fifth trumpet sounds warning about the

Arabs, who attacked the Eastern Empire. I think the star in verse 1 has reference to Mohammed. The Arabs were great horsemen and appeared like locusts (9:3,7). They had beards ("faces of men," [7]), Long hair ("hair of women" [8]), and wore coats of mail ("breastplates of iron" [9]). In the year A.D. 632 the Saracens marched out of Arabia to subvert the world to the sway of the Koran. Baghdad eventually fell 150 years later (the 5 months or 130 days of prophecy [10]). The sixth trumpet reveals the rise of the Turks, who were the first to employ gunpowder on a large scale (18). It was in 1057 A.D. that the Turkish armies crossed the Euphrates to assail the Eastern Empire and in 1453 Constantinople fell to them - one of the darkest days in history, as far as ancient Christendom was concerned. This period fits in with 396 years of verse 15. Again, I wish I had the space to discuss, for example, the Ottoman Turks and the Koran, which I once read from cover to cover. Dear reader, I leave you to undertake your own research on these subjects.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who was told to wash in the Jordan river seven times?
2. Who was king Saul's chief shepherd?
3. Name Isaiah's father.
4. Nehemiah was cupbearer to which king?
5. Who made a new robe each year for her son?
6. Who was Berekiah?
7. From which city did Lydia come?
8. Who left Paul and Barnabas in Perga?
9. According to John, what does perfect love drive out?

10. In which of Paul's epistles is Sosthenes mentioned?

OBITUARY

Newtongrange: The church here regrets to report the passing of Sister Phemie Millar, on Saturday, 30th October, 1999, at the age of 83 years. Phemie was a sister of the late Jim Morris. Phemie was baptised over fifty years ago and was always in her place at the meetings until ill health prevented her in latter years. She was a quiet and retiring person, never seeking attention but working away quietly in the background. She was much loved and will be greatly missed. Phemie spent a short while in Springfield Bank Nursing Home, where she was well cared for.

The funeral service in the Meeting-place and Newbattle Cemetery was ably conducted by Bro. Joe Currie. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family at this time.

Margaret Hunter (Sec.)

Buckie: The Church in Buckie mourns the passing, to be with Christ, of our Sister Mary Geddes. She departed this life on Thursday, 4th November, 1999 at the age of 78 years.

Mary had been a Christian for almost 63 years, and her advice and presence will be sadly missed. She was a constant attender at all the meetings of the Church until the last six weeks when she was hospitalised. During this period, she encouraged her many visitors with her courage and deep faith. We would do well to imitate her faith and spirituality.

The funeral service, which took place at the meeting hall, on Monday, 8th November was well attended by relatives, friends and brethren.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord".

W. Mair (Sec.)

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD
SPECIAL WEEK-END MEETINGS
 on DECEMBER 4th & 5th, 1999
 SATURDAY at 7.00pm
Speaker: Adam Barr
Sunday meetings as usual

GLENROTHES
MENS' DAY
 on MARCH 12th, 2000
Second Coming of Christ

BUCKIE
SOCIAL MEETING
D.V. to be held
 on SATURDAY 28th APRIL, 2000
Details Later

GHANA APPEAL

When Loraine and I were in Ghana on October, we met a number of brothers and sisters in Christ who requested medical aid but we were unable to help them even although we could plainly see their needs of assistance. One of the hardest words we sometimes had to say on the trip was "no". There is never enough money to meet the needs. We made no promises, that we could not keep. Now that we have dealt with all the immediate needs,

it would be good if we could now help a few who need operations. We know of one operation which has taken place but the church has not paid for it yet.

At the end of this month, "our world" will spend extravagantly to celebrate the new millennium. Let us remember "that we are not of this world" and the third world have nothing to celebrate. May we celebrate the new century simply, so that we can help our brethren to simply live. Our Lord loves a cheerful giver.

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

- 1. Naaman (2 Kings 5:10).
- 2. Doeg (1 Samuel 21:7).
- 3. Amoz (Isaiah 1:1).
- 4. Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1).
- 5. Hannah (1 Samuel 2:19).
- 6. The father of the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 1:1).
- 7. Thyatira (Acts 16:14).
- 8. John Mark (Acts 13:13).
- 9. Fear (1 John 4:18).
- 10. 1 Corinthians (1:1).

ANSWERS

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