

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

Vol. 65 No. 2

FEBRUARY, 1998

A QUESTION OF MONEY

Although the world, at one time, lived in fear of the mighty USSR, it seems, since the break-up, that Russia and the others are virtually bankrupt. According to a news-item on TV this week, most Russian hospitals and Homes for the Elderly are extremely basic through lack of funds, where essential drugs and medical supplies are in very short supply and where even things like vitamins and bandages are almost non-existent. The report, in highlighting these conditions, described how the Russian authorities launched an urgent appeal to the entire country, and especially to the rich, to give generously to alleviate this sorry plight of the hospitals. Russia is, of course, a massive country with a population of many millions, but at the end of this urgent country-wide campaign for help, had only the princely sum of £5,000 to show for the effort. Apparently, the reason for this derisory sum was the fact that Russians rarely give to charity, and indeed anyone giving to such causes would be considered to be in need of psychiatric help.

Clearly £5,000 would scarcely finance a hip-replacement, let alone upgrade Russian hospitals, and Russia's experiences illustrate, if any such illustration were needed, that financial resources are vital to any undertaking. It is sadly true that without proper funding nothing continues long, and even here in Britain neglect over many years has been the cause of our schools and other public buildings falling into serious disrepair: requiring a long programme of expensive rehabilitation to be embarked upon.

Quite often, natural laws operate in the spiritual world, and what has been said of the neglect of physical buildings can be equally true of the spiritual. To some of us it might seem strange that the things of God should need the support of a mundane thing like money (filthy lucre, some might say) but true it seems to be. Can something as impregnable as The House Of God suffer from lack of money.?

NEGLECT OF THE LORD'S HOUSE

It is extremely sad to see a neglected building fall into total decay. First of all a few tiles come loose; then unpainted windows lose a few panes; weeds obliterate the pathways; dampness brings plaster off the walls and soon the place is inhabited solely by pigeons and rats. Britain abounds in 'stately homes' and some mansion houses, although surrounded with acres of pleasantly landscaped parkland, lie completely abandoned and in a few years will become piles of rubble. Past glories are now forgotten and present economic circumstances decree the demise of such, once illustrious, piles. The Victorians built huge, often very ornate, church buildings to 'the

glory of God' and today, because the cost of upkeep of such edifices, many of them are abandoned, used as storage space or completely demolished. The obvious lesson, as all property owners know, is that unless care and money are spent on property in its preservation the consequences will be dire. 'The Lord's House' is not, of course, a literal building, of wood and brick, but consists of 'living stones' (men and women) cemented together by common interests and God's love. Nevertheless the need for money is ever present in the execution of the Lord's work, and in many quarters the 'House of the Lord' languishes and has fallen into decay through lack of funds. New congregations are not set up through lack of funds. The gospel is not sufficiently dispersed abroad through lack of funds. It would be extremely regrettable, and an indictment of church members, if the 'Lord's House' (the Church) was to pine and fade away through lack of financial support. We gladly pay all the bills for our earthly comforts, television licences, road fund tax, insurance policies, union dues, theatre tickets, rent, rates, daily newspapers, glossy magazine, 'RadioTimes' etc., etc. and then perhaps turn our noses up at having to pay a little, once a year, for a Church magazine, or giving, on the first day of the week, to the extent of God prospering of us.

A 'WILLING' HEART

Under the Jewish economy, the 'Lord's House' was very often very literal and the people were expected to contribute towards the construction of God's House and for its subsequent upkeep. Even when Moses was instructed to construct the Tabernacle, and the people were invited to subscribe towards its erection, the criterion was that offerings should be taken from "**whosoever is of a willing heart**" (Ex. 35:5) and readers of that chapter will find that this 'willingness' was an important pre-requisite and is mentioned several times. Thus God expects not only 'that every man will do his duty' but that he will do it with a good grace, and in the proper spirit. It is not enough to give of our financial resources, and our physical talents to the Lord, but they must be given, not reluctantly, but willingly. This is as important as the gift itself. Indeed this is **more important** than the gift. Giving to God is really a privilege and **how** we give is as much a measure of how we regard God, as is **what** we give. To those who say 'It's the thought that counts' the cynic replies 'It's the gift that counts' and, of course, men are inclined to equate the 'thought' with the actual value of the gift. Thus very few young men would insult the young lady they hope to impress, with a shabby gift. Is it possible that we treat God shabbily with not only the value of our gifts, but also with the spirit in which we present them?

God has always had a Treasury and Jesus, on one occasion, sat watching how the people cast their gifts into the Treasury. Jesus remarked upon the rich giving (of their abundance) and the poor widow casting in two mites (all she possessed). One wonders what went through the mind of Jesus as He regarded each contributor, as they queued to give, just as we, no doubt, wonder what He thinks as He watches us, today, as we cast into His Treasury.

CAN WE ROB GOD?

Paul instructed (1 Cor. 16:2) that on the first day of the week (presumably when the Church was gathered together) every member of the Church should lay by them in store as God had prospered, that there should be no gatherings when he came. This collection was a special one '**for the poor saints**' but nevertheless the principle and the practice is a worthy one. Such a plan (contributing on the first day of the week) should, therefore, be regarded as the Lord's way of raising money for carrying on His work. We have no

authority for gathering money by any other method. Thus, for this particular emergency ('the poor saints in Jerusalem') the brethren were not to save up money in their homes, but each first day of the week were to pool their resources in a common fund so that when Paul arrived the money would be available, and the need for a sudden and hasty collection be obviated. And so if the Church contributes systematically, each first day of the week, the treasury will grow and any cause or crisis will be catered for without special collections. This seems to be the intention of these instructions given by Paul, augmented a little later in his second epistle (chaps. 8 and 9). Doubtless the Christians were wondering **who** was required to give, and **how much** they were expected to give. They wondered, no doubt if they would be asked to tithe, and give a tenth as Israel of old. Paul, I think, answers those questions when he says that **'every one of you'** (each brother and sister) should contribute (not the husband contributing on behalf of his wife) and the extent of their giving was to be regulated, not by some set percentage (as a tenth) but **'as God has prospered'** each one. This could mean that we would give **less** than a tenth or **more** than a tenth - depending on how much we considered God had prospered us. It is possible to rob God, of course, and many of us might be indignant at the mere suggestion, but the possibility is ever present. The Jews were highly indignant when God suggested that they had robbed Him and challenged God to prove His words and show exactly where and when they had ever robbed Him. The answer - **"In tithes and offerings"** (Mal. 3:8). It is truly frightening to think that we may be robbing God in our giving and offerings. There are other facets of giving, of course, not mentioned in 1 Cor. 16:2, such as the giving of **our time** and **our talents** to the service of the Lord. Paul says that he was completely confident in the generosity of the church at Corinth and that they would respond liberally to the appeal 'for the poor saints' but reminds them (2 Cor. 9:5) of the **broad general principle** that **"he which soweth sparingly will reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully will reap bountifully"**. Bearing this rule firmly in mind, Paul urges that **"everyman"** should contribute **"as he purposed in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."** When we read this our minds go back to Ex. 35 **"whosoever be of a willing mind"** and clearly illustrates that **our attitude** when we give is of a vital significance. It's not just a question of God **preferring** a cheerful giver, but God **loveth** a cheerful giver. Paul (in the previous verse) expresses the hope that their contributions to their poorer brethren will be a matter of **'bounty'** and not one of **'extortion'** and perhaps there hangs the difference. We can either be *bountiful* in our giving to the Lord or merely *dutiful*. We can either take pleasure in it, or it can be a matter of having it extorted from us.

GIVING CHEERFULLY

We can surely understand why God likes a cheerful giver. None of us, I suppose, would like to receive a gift from someone which was clearly grudging. None of us would like to receive a favour given merely out of **necessity** - we would rather do without it. Likewise God does not twist arms or hold pistols to heads, but delights in the ready service given freely with joy and true enthusiasm. He deplores (and probably disregards) the gift which has to be squeezed from tight fingers and sweaty palm. (It is true that money does not come to us easily and we must look after it - the fool and his money are soon parted, and we must not be foolish - but surely we cannot put money to any better use than to give it back to the Lord, and employ it in His purposes.) Thus from Paul's words to the Corinthians we see:-

1. God deplores those who give only because **the necessity** is placed upon them, and that it is **expected** of them. It is a **matter of trust** between us and our God and only we ourselves can estimate **how much** God has prospered us. Fortunately God does not say He will prosper us in accordance with the level of our giving, but the other way around. Giving to the Lord should be considered a **privilege** and if we see it that way, our giving will be transformed (not only of money but of time and effort.) Thayer defines 'grudgingly' as 'sorrow, pain and grief' (i.e. **ek lupes** - 'out of grief.'). If, at any time, what we are asked to do for the Lord, or give to the Lord, gives us '**pain, sorrow or grief**' then we can be sure that we are acting 'grudgingly'. Some say that we should "give until it hurts" (and we know what they mean) but it would not seem scriptural, would it? If it hurts us, we give **ek lupes** - grudgingly.

2. God loves a cheerful giver. Many, if not all, gifts are entirely **deprived of any value** if they are not given freely, gracefully and cheerfully. There are things 'that money cannot buy' in this world and sometimes gifts can be 'as cold as charity' if not given in the right spirit. It is not always enough 'to write a cheque' to extricate us from our obligations. There is more to 'giving' than just giving, and gifts of money can mean much, or very little. Some would say, "What does it matter, as long as we get the money"? yet it greatly matters if principle is absent and especially if love is missing. "**Thy money perish with thee**" said Peter to Simon, and so money is not the 'be all, and end all' - it cannot buy everything. After all God can doubtless accomplish His purposes without us, and without our gifts, but He solicits our bounty and loves cheerful givers. Cheerful givers are a mighty power and have built many meeting-houses, sent many evangelists, spread the word into distant lands and relieved dire distress. *God Himself is, after all, a very cheerful giver.* There is nothing sour, grudging and mean about His bounty to us, unworthy of it as we are. God sends His rain and sunshine upon the just and the unjust and God gave us His all in the person of His only begotten Son. We do not have to twist God's arm or prise His fingers apart - who is more bountiful to us, than God?

MORE BLESSED TO GIVE

Giving is actually very good for us. The giving up of material possessions, in the proper spirit for the good of others, will enhance our spiritual development and enrich our lives. This is doubtless why parents encourage their small children to share their toys and eschew a selfish spirit. Paul quotes Jesus as saying, "**It is more blessed to give than to receive**" (Acts 20:35) and although these words cannot be traced in any of the gospels Jesus uttered them, nevertheless. Our Lord's teaching was always radical and while nine out of ten of 'the man in the street' would urge the reverse - with a little reflection, our Lord is right, again. The early Church (indeed the very first congregation - at Jerusalem) had a great sense of generosity and brotherhood, and we read "**the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.**" This is surely one of the most attractive attributes of the Church, that each and every member will rally to the help and assistance of all others, should the need arise. Thus the Church at Corinth and throughout Galatia came readily to the assistance of all '**the poor saints.**' It was tangible "**proof of their love**" (2 Cor. 8:24) and in the circumstances was more blessed to give than to receive.

We live in a prosperous land (relatively speaking) and we spend much not only upon our basic needs, but upon creature comfort, pleasures and even upon pastimes and

hobbies, Let us also reflect upon the state of the 'Lord's House' and ensure that funds are available for its wellbeing - not only to save it from neglect and decay, but to extend its borders. May it be that the Church will not languish and die in any quarter through indifference or tight-fistedness. Let us give not only of our money but let us give of our time, and let us give of our energies, and our talents to the furtherance of the gospel and the increase of the Church; and let us do it all most joyfully for God loveth the cheerful giver. "Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold and silver, and brass." (Ex. 35:5).

"Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread,

For giving is living," the angel said

"And must I be giving again and again?"

"Oh, no," said the angel piercing me through;

"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."

EDITOR

ANOINTING WITH OIL (Part 1)

(A Study of James 5:13:20)

In order to correctly understand these passages we must first come to realize that what Paul said in 1st Cor. 13:9-10 is REAL and that it WAS TRUE. (you might well say; but of course).

Let me put it another way, Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, revealed and emphasised that what is contained in any one single book of the New Testament (whether it be what we call the four gospels, or the letters to the churches or the book of Acts) each is only a PART of the whole of what the Holy Spirit wanted us to know.

No book of the New Testament is to be studied by itself, to the exclusion of the others, and certainly no set of verses, nor any single verse should be considered in this way.

Study passages "IN CONTEXT". Most scholars that I have read do not emphasize fully what "context" means, and restrict it to a few verses preceeding, and a few verses following a verse under consideration. But my dictionary (*Websters*) has this to say about context: (1) to weave together - the parts of a sentence, paragraph, discourse etc. that occur just before and after a specified word or passage and determine it's exact meaning: as, it is unfair to quote this remark out of its context - (so far so good, and this is about as far as anyone goes) BUT if we read further the dictionary continues on saying: (2) the whole situation, background, or environment relevant to some happening or personality.

We are therefore obligated to determine not only the BACKGROUND of some of the terminology, but also from what perspective the words themselves, and what they imply, are to be viewed.

James 5 vs. 13 - This verse addresses itself to matters of hardship and suffering. (the Englishman's Greek New Testament - which compares six Greek scholars) renders this as "does anyone among you suffer hardships?" (all six agree) It does not even imply physical "sickness".

vs. 14 - This verse continues on regarding the same subject yet many stumble over the word here translated "sick". (*astheneo*)

If we trace this Greek word we will find that it is to "be feeble" (in any sense) but as we go further into its full meaning as revealed by its root we find (*asthenema*) - a scruple of conscience.

vs. 15 - The word in this sentence which has been translated "sick" is NOT the same word that is used in vs. 14. Here the Greek word is *kamno* - a prime verb meaning to "toil" to tire or faint, sicken, be wearied. This is the only place in all of the New Testament that this Greek word is used. This is significant as further study will show. (a modern usage of the intent of this would be to say: "I am sick and tired of your constant bickering etc.") The word "*astheneo*" is used no less than 12 times and in each case the meaning can easily be traced through the context in which it is used, and in many of these the context requires that we understand it as a physical sickness, but in some it reveals a sickness of a relapse of understanding or lack of faith. i.e.:

1st Cor, 11:29-30, vs. 30 - The K.J.V. renders this as : For **this cause** many (are) weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

The N.I.V. says: "weak" and "sick".

The Englishman's Greek New Testament: "weak" and "infirm".

As we look at this passage we must note that the "cause" of this infirmity or "sickness" was something that could not possibly result in the physical "sickness" of anyone. They were eating and drinking in "an unworthy manner" and not "discerning" (K.J.V.) or recognizing (N.I.V.) the "Lord's body".

The spiritual nature of this "sickness" is clearly revealed, in as much as it was said to have led to "many" falling "asleep".

"fallen asleep" is a phrase meaning "death" but "death can be both physical and / or spiritual."

Physical "death" - 1st Cor. 15:18 - reads (in the context of physical death): "Then those who have "fallen asleep" in Christ are lost" - N.I.V.

Spiritual "death" - Ephs. 2:1 - reads (in the context of spiritual death): "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins."

We have dealt with one determining factor related to the "context" and there are at least five others which are as follows:

(1) vs. 14 - We must make note of *the person* who activates the elders - it is the one who is "sick" - if you are physically "sick" - you would not have to call the elders to come - they are obligated to come without notice. If however you are having a struggle with matters of conscience it would not be physically noticeable and it would be up to you to call for the elders. (a small point but one well worth consideration).

(2) vs. 15 - Still dealing with this word "sick" - All in one complete thought we have - "prayer offered in faith" "sick" person made well "Lord will raise him up" and "if he has sinned he will be forgiven."

The "sickness" is something that is not obvious - a scruple of conscience.

The "sick" person has to call for the elders (read Ps. 141:5 N.I.V. or K.J.V.).

The elders pray - believing (offered in faith) that their prayers - which incidentally will deal with the problem which the "sick" brother has told them he has - (we are told to confess our sins and our faults - to one another - 1st John 1:9) will encourage and restore the weak brother to the faith. Note well the last part of this thought - IF he has sinned - by many this has been taken to mean that the "sickness" that is being dealt with is "physical" and that somehow this is tied to some sin that the brother has committed. Nothing could be further from the truth - faults and sins confessed to one another are to

relieve one's conscience and to show in repentance the helplessness of the situation and to place the burden upon Jesus Christ who is faithful and will forgive us our sins. This person who has scruples of conscience may or may not have sinned, but if he has, then by his frank and honest discussion of his problems with the elders, he will reveal whether sin has been committed, and if it has, then through their prayers for him it will be forgiven and he will be restored to spiritual health.

(3) vs. 19 - The thought is continued here concerning "error" - (K.J.V.) or "wander from the truth" (N.I.V.) as part of the context in which we must understand "the prayer of faith" - vs. 15 - and its power to "heal".

(4) vs. 16 - Here again it is clearly demonstrated that the "healing" is directly connected to sin and not to physical sickness.

(5) vs. 16 - "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (K.J.V.)
 "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (N.I.V.)

The E.G.N.T. renders this as: "the operative supplication of a righteous man prevails much."

It is, of course, of prime importance to note the emphasis on the power of prayer or its effectiveness, but also not that included in this passage is the thought of an "operative" prayer. A prayer offered in such a way as to affect the hearers as well as to effect the purpose of prayer itself. The elders in this case are to pray using words that will calm and assure the one being prayed for that they appreciate and understand the anguish and pain of conscience he is suffering and that they convey that to the Lord, who of course does not need any instruction or elaboration of the problem, but knows what is needed before they ask (Matt. 6:8).

An *operative prayer*, one that deals directly with the subject that has been revealed, very specifically with whatever has troubled the brother.

(To be continued)

George Sillman,
 P.O. Box 327, Chilliwack,
 B.C. Canada V2P 6J4.

(The article "Anointing With Oil" of the November issue has obviously caused some interest. A regular reader in Canada, George Sillman, has sent for our consideration, a study of the subject he made some considerable time ago: Part 1 of which appears in this February issue. Unfortunately after a lapse of 4 months readers may have lost the thread of what Bro. Smith said. I have also had a letter from another regular reader, Bro. Ivor Carey in Bristol, who makes some good points and, on the question of whether the sickness was physical or spiritual, says "Surely this instruction of James to members of the Lord's body is quite clear for any who might be physically sick: they were to call for the elders to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. If this was a spiritual sickness (of sins committed) then EVERY member of the Church would have to call on the elders, and constantly, for 1 John 1:8 says, 'If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.' " He also says, "Verses 14-15 show clearly that the sickness is physical, not spiritual, for in v.15 the word 'IF' indicates it: i.e. 'IF' the sick person hath committed sins they shall be forgiven him. This 'IF' would not have been necessary if spiritual sickness had been referred to." Brother Carey also deplored the fact that Bro. Smith should have been referred to as "Mr." and rightly urged that a difference of our understanding of James 5 should not put us out of the brotherhood. I thank all those for the interest shown.)

Ed.

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

David was assessing the men from the different tribes that had come to his defence against Saul. He told of the number from each tribe that would stand with him, and what they could contribute to his cause. In 1 Chronicles 12:32 he said: **"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred: and all their brethren were at their commandment."** What a tribute to these men. They understood the times and knew what to do about them. How God approves of such men today.

In Luke 19:41-44, Jesus admonished the people of Jerusalem to recognize the time of their visitation, speaking of those signs that would come before the destruction of that city. Then in Matthew 16:1-4, Jesus told the leaders among the Jews that they were good at forecasting the weather, but were poor discerners of the signs of the times. What are some of our times and what should we be doing about them?

The times require of us a bold and unflinching maintenance of the divine authority of the Bible. These are the times when authority in general has been ignored. The authority of the Bible is under attack more than I can remember. These are the times when absolutes are being called relative. Many even in the Church of Christ are giving up the absolutes the Bible teaches. But, mankind is still answerable to their Creator (Eccl. 12:13-14). All men, everywhere, will give an account of the deeds done in the body, good or bad. We are going to be judged by the Word.

The times required at our hands distinct and decided views of doctrine for the Bible. Men, even members of the Church, are playing down doctrine. They are saying "all doctrine" is of men. They are preaching that it doesn't make any difference what you believe. The scripture says there is a true doctrine and a false doctrine. Timothy was sent to Ephesus by Paul to see that no other doctrine be taught. Later he wrote to this same preacher that if there were those that were preaching otherwise, he and the Church are to withdraw themselves from them. Yes, doctrine makes all the difference.

POWERFUL ENEMY

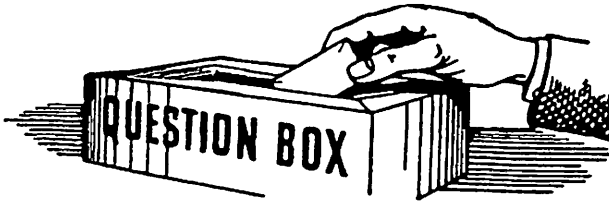
The times require of us an awakened and livelier sense of error and evil in this world. Paul wanted the Ephesians to know whom their battle was with. It wasn't with other men. It was with Satan himself and those demons he used. Their battle was with "spiritual wickedness in high places." These were depraved spirits in the lower heavens. Powerful forces! Paul wrote to Timothy that he needed to be on the watch for the "seducing spirits" and "doctrines" of devils. Paul warned the Church at Corinth that there were "ministers of Satan" in their midst and they took on the appearance of angels of light. False doctrine is not the origin of men, but of the devil.

The times require of us a higher standard of personal holiness and an increased attention to practical Christianity. Religion is worthless if it doesn't affect everyday life. Peter called for the Christians to whom he was writing to live a holy life. Then in 2 Peter 3:9-15 he reasons with them to live such a life in view of judgement to come. We must show a clear line between Christianity and the world. Our life-style must be different. We must live godly lives.

The times require of us more regular and steady perseverance in those things that are good for our souls; mainly, Bible study, prayer and meditation. These things don't come without purpose. We must determine to make time in our days to study, meditate on what we have studied and spend time in prayer communicating with a caring Father.

How are you reading the signs of the times? What are you doing about them?

K. MARSHALL



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"So many different versions of the Bible are being introduced into our services these days. Should it be accepted for the Scriptures on Sunday mornings to be read from three different versions, according to the reader's choice?"

A sister, who has been a reader and student of God's Word for a great many years, has posed this question. As you see, she draws attention to a situation which may also have given concern to other brethren.

AN 'INSPIRED' ENGLISH TRANSLATION?

Before offering a reply, I must first comment on an expression in her letter which, I feel, needs a little clarification. Our sister refers to *"the only Bible I know as God's inspired word"*.

Now, I wonder if the 'Bible' to which she refers is the one we know as 'King James Version', or 'The Authorised Version'? From other information found in her letter I strongly suspect that it is. And, if I may be permitted a personal note, as one of the 'older generation' I can report that, over sixty years ago, when the Lord added me to His Church, the use of no other version would have been contemplated in most of our worship-services. Even the use of the 'English Revised Version' would have been something of a rarity! I can, therefore, well understand this sister's feelings.

If, then, I have correctly assessed the situation, this may be an opportunity to say something about that expression in her letter to which I have just referred, namely, *"the only Bible I know as God's inspired Word"*. I do hope that it does not imply that we should regard the 'A.V.' or 'K.J.V.' as a *divinely inspired translation* of the ancient scriptures, because that it most certainly is not.

In fact, both titles, 'The King James Version', and 'The Authorised Version' are extremely vague and tend to leave a quite misleading impression. After all, King James himself played no part whatever in the translation of the scriptures which bears his name. Acting on a proposal put forward by a certain John Reynolds, during the Hampton Court Conference held in 1604, King James merely 'authorised' - (hence the name) - the preparation of a translation of the Bible that was intended to replace the several versions already in use. These were translations such as 'The Geneva Bible'; 'The Bishops' Bible', and those produced by individual translators such as Miles Coverdale and William Tyndale. It would appear that, over three hundred and fifty years ago, there was no English translation which pleased everyone!

By the time the 'Authorised Version' was ready in 1611 at least fifty-four scholars had worked to produce the translation which continues to occupy an honoured place in the affections of English-speaking believers, which no subsequent version has achieved and which it will always retain.

But it must be understood that, as beautiful as the language of the 'Authorised Version' undoubtedly is - (and I speak as one whose 'memory work' was all done with that version very many years ago) - its translators were *not* divinely inspired and therefore we need to guard against thinking of the 'A.V.' as the 'divinely inspired translation'. The simple fact is that no 'divinely inspired' English version of the last of

the scriptures exists, because the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ceased with the death of the last of the apostles of Christ. Thus, whilst we believe that the original documents were written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, the same cannot be said for either the groups of scholars, or the individuals, who offer to the world their own new translations.

WHICH VERSION IN OUR WORSHIP?

As to the matter of the version to be used for the public reading of the scriptures during our Lord's Day morning worship, we cannot lay down a hard and fast rule, because this is something for which we have no 'thus saith the Lord'. In other words, we may not make a law where the Lord has not made a law. Each congregation must decide for itself, on the basis of expediency, - (that is, helpfulness) - the practice it will adopt. Leaders have the responsibility of exercising sanctified common sense and wisdom in seeking to ensure that the Lord's Day morning reading of the Word amounts to something more than a time-filling tradition in the service and is, instead, a spiritual exercise in worship which blesses the congregation.

IS IT EXPEDIENT?

I therefore ask this question; It is wisdom for the public-reader to use a (modern) version of the scriptures with which the majority of the worshippers are totally unfamiliar; to which very few - if any - have access, and which uses language and expressions that often resemble nothing in the Bibles with which the brethren are attempting to follow the reading?

I suggest that the inevitable consequence of such a practice is not only that most in the assembly derive little benefit from the reading, but that they are left unsettled and unsatisfied.

There are, we know, some sound arguments for the use of translations of the Word of God in more modern language. We all realise that there are obsolete words and expressions in the 'Authorised Version' which occasionally obscure the meaning of the scriptures and which require explanation, and that later versions make use of more up-to-date textual knowledge. But if, after the matter has been given proper consideration, the leaders of a congregation decide to allow the Lord's Day morning reading to be taken from a modern version of the scriptures which is less familiar than the 'A.V.', would it not be wise to have copies of the alternative version available, so that brethren may follow the reading intelligently when the reader announces, in the now-so-familiar words, "*I shall be reading from the . . . Version*"?

AIM FOR CONSISTENCY AND CONTINUITY IN THE READING

This, I suggest, might be one way of solving the problem, although I must confess that my personal preference would be to aim for consistency and continuity in the reading, achieved when everyone regularly uses the same version. In the course of personal Bible study an individual is at liberty to consult as many versions and translations as may be available to him. But public worship is another matter, and the needs and wishes of the congregation should be uppermost in the hearts and minds of those responsible for the good order of the service.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SCRIPTURE READING

It is regrettable that, important as the public reading of the Word of God is, it would seem that very few congregations give serious consideration to the question as to which version or versions they will use in their worship. The frequent outcome is that the use of a variety of different versions, often of widely differing linguistic and textual quality, results in the absence, not only of continuity, but also of consistency in the Lord's Day morning readings. And this, to the detriment of the worshippers.

Whilst we rightly insist on offering to God such acts of worship as the scriptures (Acts 2:42 and Acts 20:7, etc.) reveal to have been the practice of the New Testament Church, let us take care that we pay as much attention to the content of those acts, as we do their form.

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

THE OCCULT

The word "occult" means "that which is not revealed, that which is secret" (Webster's Dictionary). Occultism, as we know it today, is the practice of delving into the unknown . . . those things which are secret . . . through various mediums. Following is a partial listing of the many forms of occultism:

<i>Satan worship</i>	<i>Black Mass</i>	<i>Ouija Boards</i>	<i>Spiritualism</i>
<i>Table Tipping</i>	<i>Levitiation</i>	<i>Tarot Cards</i>	<i>Clairvoyance</i>
<i>Black Arts</i>	<i>Pendulum Healing</i>	<i>Psychic Portraits</i>	<i>Dream analysis</i>
<i>Yoga Meditation</i>	<i>Reincarnation</i>	<i>Devil's Pentagram</i>	<i>White Magic</i>
<i>Scientology</i>	<i>Numerology</i>	<i>Astral Projection</i>	<i>Fortune Telling</i>
<i>Materialization</i>	<i>Astrology</i>	<i>Horoscopes</i>	<i>Sorcery</i>
<i>Divination</i>	<i>I Ching</i>	<i>Kabala</i>	<i>Seances</i>
<i>Talismana</i>	<i>Fetishes</i>	<i>Pornography</i>	<i>Exorcism</i>
<i>Palmistry</i>	<i>Tea Leaves</i>	<i>Phrenology</i>	<i>The Great Seal</i>
<i>Automatic Writing</i>	<i>Extra Sensory Perception (ESP)</i>	<i>Alchemy</i>	
<i>Good Luck Charms</i>	<i>Clairaudience</i>	<i>Transcendental Meditation (TM)</i>	
<i>Witchcraft</i>	<i>etc.</i>		

The Holy Spirit caused Moses to write, "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). It doesn't take a genius to understand that 1. there are some secret things which belong only to God and they are none of our business, and 2, God has revealed everything men need to know in his Word and these things are revealed that we might know God's will and be saved (see 2 Tim. 3:16,17). Man has always had a desire to enter into God's realm, but God strictly forbids it.

RISE IN POPULARITY

In modern times we have witnessed an explosion of interest in these weird, far-out mystic religions. The interest does not seem to be subsiding; if anything, it continues to grow. New cults continue to spring up on a regular basis. In the 1960's we saw the Church of Satan (actual Satan worshippers) establish itself. In that same decade Dr. Timothy Leary founded the drug culture. Early in the 1960's drugs and the occult became intimately entwined.

In the early 1970's there was a big furore over exorcism. The book, *The Exorcist*, was a national best seller and later became one of the most popular movies ever made. There was a great renewal of interest in astrology - the absurd idea that our fate is written in the stars - and this has become the all-time popular form of occultism. I remember reading about a newspaper in a small Texas town that forgot to publish the astrological forecast in one of the evening editions. The paper had no sooner hit the front porches than the editor began receiving calls from his irate readers. They complained that without their forecast it would be impossible for them to plan the day's activities. Occultism grows apace.

NOT HARMLESS

The thing that really concerns me most is the apathy most Christians have about these things . . . as though they are harmless. They are not harmless. They are the

devil's tools. Through them he keeps people from trusting solely in God! They affect your life. They affect your children.

When seeking the truth in God's word we soon discover that all occult practices are condemned. Anyone who goes to a medium or mystic for spiritual guidance is rejecting the counsel of God. Anyone involved in the occult fads of today is no different from the Israelites who pretended to serve only God, but in their private lives observed the occult religions of the Canaanites.

Anyone involved in the occult today is simply not trusting in Jesus as he should. Paul wrote, **"And ye are complete in him . . ."** (Col. 2:10a). If we are **"complete in him"** then we need nothing else. When we surrendered to Christ in baptism, he made us new and clean and able to trust only in Him (see Col. 2:9-12; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:1-6). In Colossians 3:4 Paul wrote, **"When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."** If Christ is your life . . . your everything . . . then why would you want to consult the occult world for guidance or help? You don't need an astrology charting to tell you how to live and use your time. All of your decisions are made with Christ. When a Christian involves himself with occult practices he has insulted our Lord.

A REJECTION OF GOD

Stop and ask yourself, "Why all the interest in the occult today?" Obviously, it is because men are not satisfied with only what the word of God reveals . . . they want more. Paul, however, has assured us that everything God wants us to know is found in the scriptures (1 Cor. 2:9-13). Peter said God has given us **"all things that pertain unto life and godliness"** (2 Peter 1:3). And remember, the **"secret things"** belong to God and the **"things which are revealed"** belong to us (Duet. 29:29).

When people enter the world of the occult they have forsaken their faith in God. When Israel forsook God for the occult, and later turned back to him for help because their enemies had them surrounded, this is what God told them: **"Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee"** (Isa. 47:13). When we are really in trouble and in need of spiritual guidance, we turn to God - not the occult world. But God wants us to rely on him all the time. The Old Testament sage said, **"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths"** (Prov. 3:6).

Finally, is there a clear-cut passage of scripture that spells out God's feelings about men practising the occult? Yes, a very clear and strong statement came from God through Moses:

"When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire (human sacrifice), or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer (consulting with the dead). For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect (entirely obedient) with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearken unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee to do so" (Duet. 18:9-14).

If occult practices were abominable to God during the Old Testament days, than you can rest assured they are an abomination to him today.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

March 1	Psalm 16	1 Corinthians 15:1-19
March 8	Isaiah 22:1-13	1 Corinthians 15:20-34
March 15	Hosea 13	1 Corinthians 15:35-58
March 22	Duet. 15:1-11	1 Corinthians 16
March 29	1 Kings 8:52-61	2 Corinthians 1:1-20

RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

Jesus' triumph over the grave has inspired many hymn writers. For example, Dr. Robert Lowry wrote:

*Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives for ever with His saints to reign:*

He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Dying on the cross proved Jesus was the Son of man; rising from the dead proved Jesus was the Son of God. The resurrection is one of the seven great facts of the gospel: the birth of Jesus; the life of Jesus; the death of Jesus; the burial of Jesus; the resurrection of Jesus; the ascension of Jesus; the coronation of Jesus; and the glorification of Jesus. I accept all these facts wholeheartedly and without a quibble. I have studied for years the evidences of Christianity and found them all to be reasonable, valid and convincing. I have proved to myself that Christianity is a Divine, benevolent, and positive institution: and I am fully aware that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the capital item in the apostolic testimony and the fact on which the whole religion and the hopes of Christianity depend and terminate.

I like what Paul wrote: ". . . and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto thus present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And

last of all He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time" (15:5-7). He went on to point out that if Christ was not raised the Christian message is empty and there is no content to faith (15:14); if Christ was not raised the apostles are liars (15:15); if Christ was not raised those who died in Him are gone: they have perished (15:18); if Christ was not raised all hope is limited to this life and we are miserable above all men (15:19).

Two big questions are: "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (15:35). It is important to note that the terms Paul goes on to use (for example, incorruption and immortality,) have reference to *the body* and not the soul. The truth is that "**we shall all be changed**" (15:51). "**And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly**" (15:49). It is quite staggering to think that one day we shall see God as He really is and reign with Him for ever in eternal glory. J.W. McGarvey has written: "Our earthly body, when planted in death, will indeed bring forth after its kind, but God, in the fullness of His power and grace, shall cause it to lay aside its terrestrial glory, and assume the celestial. The nature of the change thus effected is illustrated by four contrasts, the corruption, dishonour, weakness and animal nature of the terrestrial body being laid aside for the incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual body of the celestial world".

Verse 29 of chapter 15 reads: "**Else what shall they do who are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptised for the dead?**" The Mormons are the only group to believe that baptism can be performed by the living for the dead. Their practice is as a result of mis-interpreting this verse. It, of course, should be carefully read within its context. I believe Paul here is referring to a dead Christ. What would be the point of being

baptised into Christ, if He is dead? The Hebrew writer said: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment . . ." (Hebrew 9:27), so it is very clear that there is no "second chance" for sinners. The Book of Mormon is actually in agreement with Hebrews, if I have read it aright.

SOME NAMES AND PLACES

We have some interesting names and places mentioned in the last chapter of I Corinthians. *Galatia* was a Roman province in Asia Minor. Within its boundaries were the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe - towns which Paul evangelised on his first missionary journey. Paul, of course, once wrote an epistle to the congregations of Galatia, which is part of the canon of Scripture. *Macedonia* was another Roman province, which embraced the northern part of modern Greece. Philippi was one of the colonies of the province. *Ephesus* was the most important city in the Roman province of Asia, which is also mentioned by Paul. *Asia* was on the west coast of what we now call Asiatic Turkey. Paul wrote an outstanding letter to the Ephesian brethren, which has been rightly called "The Queen of the Epistles". Ephesus is now uninhabited. *Achaia* was a province in Southern Greece. Indeed Corinth was the capital and the residence of the proconsul.

Timothy was Paul's great co-worker and son in the faith. No one was closer to Paul than Timothy. Paul addressed two letters to the young man. *Apollos* was from Alexandria in Egypt. He was "an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24). It was Aquila and Priscilla who led him to a better understanding of God's will and purpose. *Aquila* and *Priscilla* were, of course, a husband and wife team for the Lord. They were totally devoted to Paul and played a notable part in Paul's missionary enterprise. *Stephanas Fortunatus* and *Achaicus* could well have been ex-slaves. No doubt they carried

the Corinthians' letter and returned with I Corinthians.

2 CORINTHIANS

AUTHOR: apostle Paul.

DATE: probably about A.D. 58, not long after the first epistle.

PLACE: a town in Macedonia (the Roman province in northern Greece).

BACKGROUND: ". . . while still at Ephesus, Paul wrote I Corinthians (I Corinthians 16:8). Soon afterward the great riot occurred, in which Paul nearly lost his life (Acts 19). Leaving Ephesus, he went into Macedonia, on his way to Corinth. While in Macedonia . . . after long waiting to hear from Corinth, he met Titus, returning from Corinth with the word that Paul's letter had accomplished much good (2 Corinthians 7:6); but that there was still some of the leaders in the Corinthian church who were denying that Paul was a genuine apostle. Then it was that Paul wrote this letter, and sent it on ahead by Titus (8:6,17), expecting soon himself to reach Corinth" (Halley's Bible Handbook).

COMMENT: This epistle is perhaps the most intensely personal of all Paul's letters. "He dwells largely upon his own ministry. He opens his heart and discloses his motives, his spiritual passion, and his tender love of the Church" (Thompson's Chain Reference Bible).

MAIN THEME: the vindication of his apostleship.

ENCOURAGEMENT AGAINST TROUBLE

Paul knew what it was like to live under pressure. Trials and troubles came his way frequently. He endured everything one could think of for the Master. His response was steadfast endurance (Greek, *hupomone*). God comforted him in his sufferings. We should note that the root of comfort is the Latin *fortis*, which means brave. "Christian comfort is the comfort which brings courage and enables a man to cope with all that life can do to him" (Barclay). I like what

Paul wrote to the Romans: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with glory that shall be revealed in us" (8:18). Paul has long since gone to his deserved rest in the glory world. Jesus had shown him the way. The Lord Himself had known what it was like to endure persecution, affliction, and pain. ". . . for I am in no doubt that Jesus Christ has the best and most helpful answer to the problem of any suffering that may come to us. Not that He will explain everything to us. That probably would not help a great deal anyway. But He will share our suffering with us and assist us to battle through it" (James Martin).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who gave names to every living creature?
2. Who gave Moses good advice about dividing responsibility?
3. Who received Hebron for an inheritance?
4. Give the battle cry of Gideon's men.
5. Whom did David name as his successor?
6. Who was Nehemiah's brother?
7. Name the city of Timothy.
8. Judas looked after this.
9. He was a lawyer in Paul's acquaintance.
10. Who was the orator who was the Jew's spokesman against Paul, before Felix?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

BUCKIE: The baptism of Linda Geddes, into our Lord Jesus Christ, took place at Buckie on 10th December, 1997. Please pray for our sister, that she

may be able to lead her family and friends to know the truth of salvation.

Our Gospel Mission with the Hard-ying students commences at Buckie on Monday 1st June, 1998, and is to run for two weeks.

OBITUARY

DENNYLOANHEAD: The Church here regret to announce the passing from this life of Sister Margaret Scobbie aged 88, on the 5th January 1998 at Falkirk Royal Infirmary.

Sister Margaret was a well loved and respected member of the Church and her passing came as a shock to many who knew and loved her. She was baptized into Christ many years ago at Redding-muirhead near Wallacestone at the age of 13. Throughout the years that followed she has been a faithful and respected Christian, she was always cheerful and was always present at the Church meetings, especially on the Lord's Day morning.

She has kept the faith - run the race - finished the course and now rests from her labours. We extend our sympathy and love to the family at this time of sorrow, we sorrow not as those that have no hope, for her hope and our hope are in Christ Jesus, The Lord of Life and Glory - Our Saviour.

G. SCOBIE, (Sec).

COMING EVENTS

**KIRKCALDY
LADIES DAY**

on Saturday, 18th April, 1998

**BUCKIE SOCIAL
SATURDAY, 2nd MAY, 1998**
at 3.30pm

Speaker: Bro. J. Nisbet
All Welcome

NEW SECRETARY

The new secretary for the Church at Dennyloanhead is Graeme Scobbie, 2 Bonnyfield Road, Bonnybridge, FK4 1DR.

IF IN THE AREA

Sister Jenny Murray is a semi-isolated member of the Church and breaks bread each Sunday where possible with Bro. Brian Hawley, when he is in the area, but obviously would welcome any other members to join her.

Our sister also misses conversation and discussion on scriptural matters and, again would welcome letters from any Church members. Her address is 41A Horsemarket, Kelso, TD5 7AA. Tel: No. (01573) 225368.

GHANA APPEAL

John and I returned from Ghana on 29th Nov. This article was meant to appear in the January *Scripture Standard* but was lost in the post. This was a spiritually uplifting trip in which we travelled 2,850 miles and visited thirty two congregations. Our purpose was to encourage the brethren and visit the remote churches fitting solar panels where there is no electricity. There were many signs of improvement in Ghana with the building of new roads and an increase in traffic. The Church continues to grow and we met many new active members. Four Church meeting places are now completed and no longer need assistance. I came home with a few lists of needs. The first list is glasses. Please keep your old glasses for Ghana they are greatly appreciated. The 200 pairs we took were used up before our trip was completed. The second list was compiled because of the

growth of the Church. We gave every family in the Church last year a copy of "Where there is no Doctor" we need another 75 copies. The third list is for special Bibles (Twi, Ewe and a Brail Old Testament). Any Church wishing to see the slides taken during this trip please contact me. The brethren in Ghana gave me a present to show to the Churches in Britain. It is a wooden map of Ghana with each region in a different wood. Across the map the brethren painted this message "We are grateful". Cheques should be made payable to Graeme Pearson (Ghana appeal) and sent to: Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, Scotland. KY12 ODU. Tel: 01383 728624.

PS Thank you IMB for £100 received 8th Jan. 98 (receipt No. 930).

ANSWERS

- 1. Adam (Genesis 2:19-20).
- 2. His father-in-law, Jethro (Exodus 18:13-27)
- 3. Caleb (Joshua 14:13).
- 4. The sword of the Lord and of Gideon (Judges 7:20)
- 5. Solomon (1 Chronicles 23:1).
- 6. Hanani (Nehemiah 7:2).
- 7. Lystra (Acts 16:1).
- 8. The bag (of money) (John 13:29).
- 9. Zenas (Titus 3:13).
- 10. Tertullus (Acts 24:1).

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY— POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

UNITED KINGDOM.....	£9.00	
OVERSEAS BY SURFACE MAIL.....	£10.00	(\$16.00US or \$20.00Can)
OVERSEAS BY AIR MAIL.....	£14.00	(\$22.00US or \$28.00Can)

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian. EH32 0NY.

Telephone: (01875) 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 70 Avon Street, Motherwell, Lanarkshire, Scotland. ML1 3AB. Telephone: (01698) 264064