

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN

THE windows "of Heaven" as a biblical term is surely one of great charm and beauty and evocative of all the goodness and bounty of God. It occurs a few times in the old testament and when one thinks of heaven having windows one can only suppose that the purpose of the windows is that God may pour His blessings through the windows upon the place beneath. Mark you, the citizens of 'Old' Edinburgh, about a hundred years ago were always wary about the kinds of things which came pouring out of windows. The Edinburgh housewives and servants had the rather nasty habit of throwing all manner of rubbish out of their windows into the streets. Slop pails were also emptied in this way, no matter how many floors the block of tenement houses had, and passers-by had to be on their guard and listening for the awrning cry of "Gardy loo" which had to be given by the person throwing the rubbish - "Gardy loo" being a corruption of the French *gare de l'eau* (beware of the water). However God is quite unlike man; His ways are not mans' ways and He does not throw refuse from the windows of heaven. It is true, just the same, that the very first reference to the "windows of Heaven" in the scriptures is in Gen. 7:11 where we read that when God destroyed the world by the flood He opened the windows of heaven and poured down the rains. With this exception, however, the term "Windows of Heaven" generally suggests God liberally casting His blessings down upon the earth in unuasully great measures. We so very often forget that heaven has windows. There is an interesting insight into the phrase in 2 Kings 7 where Elisha, in the midst of the great famine which was afflicting Samaria at the time, prophesied that there would be incredible plenty throughout the land the following day; This prophesy was made, let it be remembered, when food was so scarce due to the siege that an ass's head and dove's dung sold for a fortune and women boiled and ate children (chap.6). On hearing the prophesy the man on whose arm the king leaned said, "Behold if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? and Elisha assured him that he would see it come to pass the next day. The circumstances are fascinating and well worth reading. The king's companion reckoned that the prediction made by Elisha could come to pass *only if God were to have windows in heaven* - not knowing, apparently, that God already had such windows.

While it is true that some Old Testament characters such as Daniel, Joseph and Solomon enjoyed a super-abundance of the benefits of God yet it is also a fact that God empties out the windows of heaven upon all and sundry. His blessings have a 'blanket' application upon the good and the bad alike. Jesus taught that we should emulate God in this when He said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that

despitefully use you, and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust; For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? (Matt. 5:44-46). God it seems scatters His blessings from heaven's windows and they fall where they may, reminiscent of the technique of the sower in the parable. The seed, as we know, falls into all kinds of ground and most of it seems to be wasted yet this is how it must be – God's declared intention is, that whosoever will may come. The sower in the parable had a bag of seed at his waist and, using both hands, scattered seed to his left and to his right letting it fall where it may. This is the 'broadcast' method of sowing seed and is still used in many lands today. During the agrarian revolution in this country when men like 'Turnips' Townsend introduced root crops and Robert Bakewell laid the foundations of modern stockbreeding Jethro Tull introduced his machine for sowing seeds in drills and rows, thus saving the amount of seed required and sowing it more evenly in good ground. Certainly much of the seed scattered in the 'broadcast' fashion was wasted but this is not the concern of the sower and he must continue to sow the seed of the gospel in all and any directions. We must not adopt the view that it is a waste of time to sow in such and such a place, or to such and such a kind of person, for how often are we surprised at the seed taking root in the most unlikely places and people? Notwithstanding the accurate observations of Jethro Tull we must trust in the wisdom of God and do as he does with His gifts through the windows of heaven and scatter them in all directions; to the bad and the good alike.

Good deeds and acts of charity can never be wasted no matter how unthankful or ungrateful the recipient be. Time spent upon preaching the incorruptible seed of the gospel can never be wasted no matter how deaf the ears upon which it falls – every man must be *given the opportunity* of hearing the word of God albeit it may finally be rejected. Indeed the greatest of heaven's gifts, in the person of God's only Son, came not to a chosen few, and came not to a choice circle of the righteous, but came to call sinners to repentance. May it be we shall never fall into the frame of mind which regards ourselves as being righteous and other men as sinners. We are but sinners saved by the grace of God. Any merit which we each may have in the eyes of God has been bestowed by God and not earned by us. The best of men are men at best.

May it be then brethren that we shall endeavour to be like God in the way suggested by Jesus (referred to earlier: Matt. 5:44 - 46) "*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust...*" Let our good deeds and kindnesses be like the blessings of God, which pour from the windows of heaven, that they may fall where they will and be bestowed upon *all men*. May we also never share the scepticism of the king's companion who, in the face of the prophesy of Elisha, could only conceive of it happening if God could make windows in heaven.

"...prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. 3:10).
EDITOR

RECONCILIATION

RECONCILIATION – one word and yet an important New Testament theme – easy to understand but so full of meaning. Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be RECONCILED to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift'. For every age this is the true spirit of communion in the Church.. To receive God's blessing there must be unity and harmony between brethren both individual and as a congregation. 'By this', said Jesus, 'Shall all men know ye are My disciples because ye have LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER'. There is a way for man to be reconciled to God. Paul wrote to the Church of Rome, 'For if, when we were enemies, we were RECONCILED to God by the death of His Son, much more, being RECONCILED, we shall be saved by His life'.

RECONCILIATION necessitates action from 'both sides'. Reverently we can say that God has done all that He can to win back the people He created and loves. We can have fellowship again by way of the cross of suffering, where Jesus stood in our stead; BUT - we must accept - we must BELIEVE. Paul tells us the result of our acceptance and belief - 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath RECONCILED us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of RECONCILIATION'.

'RECONCILED' - not only on the Lord's Day but *every day* and the new life carries with it new responsibilities for God has given us the 'MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION'. 'We are ambassadors for Christ', wrote Paul, including himself with all the members at Corinth and he would include all who have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. AMBASSADORS, chosen to represent Jesus where ever we live, by the use of our talents and the power of our example. There were three crosses on the Hill of Calvary. On one side the 'Cross of Rejection' - 'And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us'. On the other side the 'Cross of Repentance' - 'But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. Lord Jesus' he asked, 'Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom'. Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise'.

'The Cross Of Reconciliation'

By the grace of God, we can be RECONCILED through the love and sacrifice of Jesus, who died but ROSE AGAIN.

AMEN

F.R.W. KIMBERLEY.

IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

"Saviour, lead me, lest I stray,
Gently lead me all the way;
I am safe when by Thy side,
I would in Thy love abide.

Lead me, Lead me,
Saviour, lead me lest I stray;
Gently down the stream of time,
Lead me, Saviour, all the way."

Perfect Guidance—"He Leadeth me in the Paths of Righteousness For His Name's sake" Psalm 23:3

"And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them" John 10:4.

"He Leadeth Me"

HE was a wise man who said: "Self Knowledge is the beginning of Self Correction. Self Correction can only come through Self Discipline. Self Discipline leads to Self Surrender. The secret of victorious living can only come by our utter obedience to the will of our heavenly Father. We are not our own, we have been bought with a price, and the cost of our redemption was the precious blood of His only begotten Son. May I invite you to come with me for a few moments to the place called Calvary, and in quiet meditation assess the value of that supreme sacrifice.

"O Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head!
Our load was laid on Thee;
Thou stoodest in the sinner's stead,
Didst bear all ill for me.
A victim led, Thy blood was shed!
Now there's no load for me."

He has invested in a life, your life, my life, yet, there are times when we withhold from Him our complete obedience. A. T. Pierson said: "I found when I was studying law that there was a law of reserved rights. For instance, suppose I should sell ten thousand acres of land, and should reserve one acre in the centre. I would have a right to go over those nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine acres to get to mine. One trouble with us is that we reserve a room in our heart which belongs to Satan, and he knows it and uses his right of way". Let us be on our guard, and remember Paul's warning in his letter to the Ephesians "Our wrestling is not against

flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places". Ephesians 6:12 (R.V.) Writing to the brethren at Corinth, speaking of our arch-enemy he said: "We are not ignorant of his devices". 2 Corinthians 2:11 (R.V.) We need to "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" Ephesians 6:11. A mother, whose little daughter was continually falling out of bed, asked her, "Why are you always falling out of bed?" She replied, "Guess it's because I stay too near the edge". I wonder how many of us stay too near the edge? Travelling by car from the Lake District on one occasion, I asked a gentleman the way out of Kendal from that point, he listened, tried to explain, and then decided to lead me on to the right road in his car. He was our guide.

"He Leadeth Me"

Depend upon it He will not lead us down any unnecessary road, if we unreservedly place our confidence in Him, our deepest needs will be met and we shall be abundantly satisfied. Of course, the road at times will be difficult, it may mean sorrow, tears, pain, disappointment, but we need to remember He has never promised us an easy religion, but it will certainly help if we keep in mind that God is in, or can be in, "our tomorrows".

"And when He putteth forth His own sheep, HE GOETH BEFORE THEM".

"Down in the valley with my Saviour I would go,
Where the flowers are blooming and the sweet waters flow,
Everywhere He leads me I would follow, follow on,
Walking in His footsteps till the crown be won.
Follow! Follow! I would follow Jesus!
Anywhere, everywhere, I would follow on!
Follow! Follow! I would follow Jesus!
Everywhere He leads me I would follow on".

"He Leadeth Me in The Paths of Righteousness"

We can say that some of the secret and the hidden things of our Heavenly Father have been opened and revealed in His most precious word. If it is our earnest desire to be led by our Lord Jesus Christ into the paths of righteousness, we must turn to that priceless volume, and search for the signposts, which will guide us in the right direction. Signposts leading us to the WAY, the TRUTH, the LIFE, finding the one who can reveal some of the secrets of the Lord in all fulness. Some words that Paul wrote to his son in the faith Timothy, may help us: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

"Stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God". 1 Samuel 9:27

"The seed is the word of God". Luke 8:11

Let us take a little precious seed from Psalm 119 (RSV)

"How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to thy word." Verse 9

"With my whole heart I seek thee;

let me not wander from thy commandments!" Verse 10

"I have laid up thy word in my heart,

that I might not sin against thee". Verse 11

"I will meditate on thy precepts,

and fix my eyes on thy ways". Verse 15

"Open my eyes, that I may behold

wondrous things out of thy law". Verse 18

"Make me understand the way of thy precepts,

and I will meditate on thy wondrous works". Verse 27

"Give me understanding, that I may keep thy law and observe it with my whole heart".	Verse 34
"Let thy steadfast love come to me, O Lord, thy salvation according to thy promise".	Verse 41
"Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day".	Verse 97
"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path".	Verse 105
"Keep steady my steps according to thy promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me".	Verse 133

Paul said: "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope"

Romans 15:4 (RSV)

The Lord Jesus leads us in the paths of righteousness by His life and His words, He said "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'."

Matthew 4:4 (RSV)

Peter said: "You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

1 Peter 1:23 (RSV)

"Upon the Word I stand, that cannot die;
Christ seals it in my hand, He cannot lie.
The Word that failing never Abideth ever".

Let us come to this word, with a spirit of humility, seeking to know the will of the Lord Jesus, the one who possessed the secret of victorious living, and whose desire is "that the man of God may be perfect."

"For His Name's Sake"

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever, And the four beasts said A-men. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever" Revelation 5:11-14 (A.V.).

Do I need to say more? yes, of course I do:—

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground"
Exodus 3:5.

This month's exercise:— Read over each day the verses quoted from Psalm 119, and learn by heart Matthew chapter 4 verse 4.

And may the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN.

TEACHING THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

THE Bible says little about the special problem of mental handicap, but since those who suffer from this condition never really grow out of childhood, much of the teaching about children may perhaps apply to them.

Often they have excellent childlike qualities and wish to do what is right as far as they understand it, while they also suffer from childish traits such as an undisguised liking for treats. Their abilities vary, and some can learn to read. Many are happily unaware of their

disabilities, while others will blame their slowness on illness or lack of schooling; either way, they are fairly confident of their own powers.

They are very pleased to be treated as equals by normal men and women and perhaps this explains the attraction of a friendly religious meeting. Being creatures of habit, once having become used to going to such a meeting, they will be very likely to continue and soon learn an appropriate set of words and actions, although only dimly understanding the reasons behind them. Sunday school lessons would actually benefit them more, but when grown up they naturally like to be with adults.

Visiting speakers sometimes assume that a mentally handicapped person is simply nervous and will greatly improve in reading, for instance, with a little practice; but unfortunately this is not the case, and it is very hurtful to have to explain afterwards to a person who has been much praised that he is not fluent enough for the public platform, to which his ambitions have suddenly soared. For this reason it is better not to over encourage the handicapped and to be careful in persuading them to obey the gospel, for some respond much more readily than the average visitor, and it is then a problem for the church to decide if they really understand what they are doing. Their guardians may object to their being baptised on the same grounds.

The presence of handicapped people at meetings calls not only for a great deal of patience from members, but also for understanding from visitors, and this latter point can be a great difficulty. However, we believe that Jesus would have received and healed those with this affliction, and we should at least try to be kind to them if they come our way.

The situation is not entirely unrewarding, for a mentally handicapped brother who died recently, in his sixties, made it his responsibility every Sunday for over ten years to collect the church's books and return them to a cupboard, sometimes even returning early from a holiday in order to perform this small service. No doubt this would count for a great deal in the eyes of his Lord.

(Miss) R. M. Payne, Reading.

LOGIC FROM THE PSALMS

"WHEREWITHAL shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9) contains both a question and the answer to it. In the twentieth century the question is seldom asked; therefore, the answer is seldom sought,

Years ago on the bald prairies of Saskatchewan when the sun shone fiercely and the winds blew harshly, hot and dry, from the south-west, life was hard there, and lack of physical cleanliness might easily have been excused for lack of water if for nothing else. Quite often differences arose between a pioneer mother and her young son regarding this matter of cleanliness. Her standards had been set in a different part of the world, and no excuse would she accept for dirt on the neck of her first-born. "Wash", was the order. "But I have washed" was the plaintive reply. "Water, soap, and elbow grease work wonders," continued the mother with conviction. But the son continued defensively. "That darkness you see is not dirt; it's sunburn and windburn". Nevertheless Mother was having none of this sort of talk: "Look, son, into this mirror and tell me what you see". Finally, his defences weakening, son admitted a little sheepishly, "Well, it does look a little dark, doesn't it". And mother having the last word said with assurance, "Now, a bit of this cleanser on a washcloth, some scrubbing, and we shall see a difference". Whatever had caused the darkness of the neck and related areas disappeared as the cleansing continued with vigour, leaving the healthy skin beneath it pleasantly pink.

What is the point of this dialogue between a mother and son? It is simply this: son did not recognize the dirt until he saw it reflected in the mirror. The application of the proper cleanser produced results plainly to be seen, and furthermore what they could see could also be seen by others. If there are no standards of cleanliness, there is no concern in the mind of the unclean. Nevertheless, around the world of mankind the great riddle persists: Men "know what is good, but do what is bad" (Socrates). But do men know what is good? The Bible is a mirror in which men may see themselves if they will but look. In the sixth chapter of Isaiah we have a

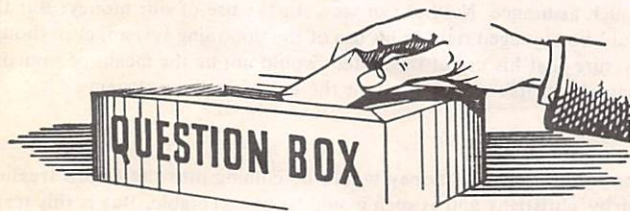
record of the prophet in a vision seeing the Lord sitting in a position of authority, a sight which caused him to declare that he was undone because of his uncleanness personally and because of the situation in which he found himself: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts". But there was a cleansing, a purging made possible by the Lord of glory. So it was with the patriarch Job (Job 42:5): "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eyes seeth thee. Therefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes".

There is no salvation for any man, young or old, until he can see himself as God sees him. The apostle Paul speaks a universal truth when in writing to the church at Rome he says, "...we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one..." How clearly is this shown in the record of Luke 18:10-14. When we have looked with unveiled eyes in God's mirror, the Bible, we will agree with the apostle John as he has written in the first epistle: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us".

Those who first became Christians were cut to the heart by the knowledge of sins committed personally and by those in the society in which they lived. Exhorted to repent and to be baptised, they rejoiced in obedience. Past sins were wiped from the record of their lives as they humbly bowed to God's will. They were led to understand, too, that cleansing once effected would not eliminate the need for constant cleansing, for salvation is conditional: "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin". To the church at Colosse Paul wrote: "...yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel..."

The prairie boy appeared before guests cleansed and wholesome. So will faithful Christians in that great day: "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained..."

(Written for the 'S.S.' by Bro. Earl B. Severson. Canada)



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Is it right for a church to take advantage of banking facilities or to use some other method. Similarly, is it right for an individual christian to place his money in the bank?"

THE points implicit in this question, although not directly stated, are:

- 1) the uses to which the bank may put the money entrusted to it, and
- 2) the disposition of any interest which may accrue from banking transactions.

I think it might be best to use the question and answer technique in trying to reach some conclusion on this matter, and that is the technique I shall adopt.

What is a Bank?

A bank is an establishment for custody of money, which it pays out on customer's order. It is usually a very safe place to keep money, and in view of the fact that the customer can be repaid his money at any time it would seem to be a sensible arrangement for the treasurer of a church to use this facility. The most common alternative would be to use a private safe in the home or office, but the security arrangements for such would be inadequate when compared with those available in a bank.

What would a bank manager do with our money?

Together with other customers money, the bank, through its several agencies, would put our money to use, e.g. by investment in good security concerns, and by loans to individuals, businesses, governments, etc., who would pay the bank interest on money lent to them. In this way the bank would gain assets.

It is at this point where some christians see danger. They argue that money which has been given to promote the Lord's work could conceivably be used to promote anti-christian activities, such as loans to provide weapons of war, loans to breweries and such establishments. This is a viewpoint which is sincerely held; how consistent it is when related to other things remains to be seen.

How do we discriminate?

We need to discriminate both in the receipt and disposal of our money. It seems to me that this discrimination is necessary if we are to be consistent in all matters relating to our money.

Having said that, I wonder how discriminating we can really be. As christians, we say that everything we have belongs to the Lord, indeed, we go further and say that we ourselves belong to the Lord. If this is so, then everything in which we engage ourselves should be carefully scrutinised. For example, are we buying a house? If so, then we are using our financial resources to pay mortgage and interest to the building Society, is it unreasonable to assume that such money would be re-invested in things like armaments, tobacco, beer, etc.? Are we paying for anything on hire-purchase? If so, then the finance house to whom we pay will no doubt be making similar investments. The point I am making is that it is practically impossible to ensure that the sources from which we get our finance are pure, and that the organisations to which we dispose of our money are engaged in what we would term pure ends.

I recall that during the last war many faithful christians were conscientious objectors; they chose to work on the land rather than bear arms. But could they be absolutely sure that the produce from the land did not, in some way, sustain the war effort? I think we must conclude that they could have no such assurance. Neither can we with the use of our money. But the conscientious objector would be adjudged right in his use of the prevailing system, even though he could not be absolutely sure that his use of the system would not be the means of someone being killed. Perhaps the same principle would apply in the use of banking systems.

What about interest?

The objection regarding interest is that money would be coming into the Lord's treasury which had not been given by christians and as such would be unacceptable. But is this really true? Or is it merely the fact that the money was given by the Lord's children in the first place and that what has accrued from that is still theoretically the fruit of that initial giving?

Supposing the church used some of its money to buy some commodity, say, priced at £3. When the money was handed over, the retailer handed back £1 as discount. If the retailer was not a christian would we put that discount into the Lord's treasury? This sort of situation could be repeated in several ways and it is extremely difficult to say what is a pure source and what isn't. If money comes from another county or assembly to support the Lord's work in our locality, how do we know that the method of raising that money would be a method that we would necessarily agree with?

What's wrong with interest, anyway?

You will, no doubt, recall the incident of the slothful steward. He was afraid of what his master would say if he did anything wrong so he buried the money and gave it back to the master on his return. The master said to him, "Wicked man! Lazy slave! Since you knew I would demand your profit, you should have at least put my money into the bank so I could have some interest" (Matt. 25:26,27. The Living Bible).

It seems to me that the Lord is telling us to use our resources to the maximum benefit, without the use of abstruse arguments which we can seldom agree on anyway.

What are the alternatives?

- 1 We can tell the treasurer to keep the money in his home. If we do that then we are increasing the probability of his home being burgled with possible detrimental consequences both for the church and the treasurer's family.
- 2 We can tell the bank we don't want interest, but this would not reduce the objections to the uses to which the bank may put the money we deposit.
- 3 We can reduce the necessity for banking money at all by using the money week by week as it is contributed. This would have the dual merit of not having to deposit money anywhere, and of putting the Lord's money to the earliest possible use so that results might be achieved as soon as possible. This idea could work if the money was used wisely in a planned situation.

What shall we say, then?

Personally, I think that individuals and churches should, for security reasons alone, use the facilities offered by banks. We certainly cannot dictate to the bank just how our money is used; I think that must be left to the people there. As regards interest, I reckon that the source of the interest, i.e., the money laid by from the saints, is pure and therefore it can be used for the Lord's work.

If, however, some Christians have a conscience on this then that conscience should be respected and the necessary steps taken to ensure that no offence is given.

(This feature depends upon questions being sent in. Please send all questions to brother Alf Marsden, 66 Mitchell Street, Newtown, Wigan, Lancs).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JULY 1975

6—Zech. 13	Luke 24:13-35
13—Hosea 6	Luke 24:36-53
20—Numbers 12	1 Thess. 1:1 to 2:6
27—Psalm 19	1 Thess. 2:9-20

CONCLUSION OF A WONDERFUL STORY

THIS month we conclude our readings of Luke's gospel. We suggest a special prayer of thanks to God for this good man, and praise for his work under divine direction. The charm of the first chapters is matched by that of the last. Luke strikes us as having a particular sympathy for the women, and, while I may be mistaken, I suggest personal contact with them while Paul was held at Caesarea for two years

(Acts 24:27). Why should Luke not have been a frequent visitor at the house where Rhoda got the surprise of her life (Acts 12:13) — Mark's mother's home? Surely if the mother of Jesus lived that long she would be at least a visitor there as well, not to mention Mary Magdalene also — but here our thoughts run wild! The Holy Spirit Himself presided over Luke's long and patient work of investigation (Luke 1:3). He works through our human capacities and circumstances.

One of the most moving narratives in the gospel is the account of the walk towards Emmaus. We try to put ourselves in the place of those two disciples. It is hard to realise what they had passed through in those three days. Mark gives a graphic picture — "they all mourned and wept" Mark 16:10. What agony of mind they suffered is indicated in their words to the "stranger". "We hoped that it was He Who should redeem Israel" (24:21).

Their love and adoration of Jesus made it impossible to them that He should be overcome by the rulers. They had witnessed his powers and been utterly overcome with amazement at what He could do. Miracle after miracle had been performed before their very eyes. His love and compassion was wonderful beyond thought. But they had witnessed His complete submission to horrible cruelties, fearful humiliation and completely unjust condemnation. He had gone the way of all flesh and that in the most disgraceful way. He could not be that one Who would redeem Israel! His predictions of what happened had fallen on deaf minds, perhaps not unnaturally.

"Their eyes were holden" so that their minds might be enlightened the better. Sometimes one sense has to be out of action to enable others to work better. So we close our eyes in prayer, and silence helps meditation. While the "stranger" explained the scriptures they came alive to them - "their hearts burned". This seems to have been the Saviour's great work while He showed Himself to the disciples during the forty days. He was to make them understand that the "disaster" they had witnessed was the fulfilment of a divine purpose - a purpose they were to share and propagate (Luke 24:44 and Acts 1:3). Their remaining hopes of material benefit for Israel as a nation were put aside and in their place the spiritual blessings of repentance and remission of sins became their theme with universal application. It did require a further miraculous intervention to impress Jewish minds with the fact that "to the Gentiles also God hath granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18), and the appointment of another apostle "out of due time" finally to get this truth fully published and appreciated (Acts 9:15).

When these disciples grasped the fact that Jesus was there with them, they forgot everything else and hastened back to give the wonderful news to the others like the Samaritan woman who forgot the water (John 4:28). But it was to find the facts known and the Saviour manifesting Himself to those who loved Him. Mourning was turned into joy and faith renewed. The shame of the cross resulted in ascent into heaven, and they were to share in the work of redemption for which power was promised. Great joy filled their hearts issuing in thanksgiving and praise to God.

The Earliest Letters

We do not know how soon the gospels were written and circulated. We do know the two letters to the Christians at Thessalonica were written about 53 A.D. This would be about 23 years after Jesus ascended into heaven and about 2 years after the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35). Their contents show that they were written while he was at Corinth. We need therefore to read Acts 17 where we have the account of Paul, Silas and Timothy entering the town and preaching the gospel. Thessalonica was a very important city, and the big city of Salonica still stands on the same site. It was a busy centre for both trade and administration so that news of happenings there would spread around rapidly. No doubt this is why the missionaries chose to make a special effort there. As in all the world's busy centres, the Jews were there. Their numbers justified a place of worship, and this provided a means of preaching the gospel effectively. There was the basis of belief in the one true God, and the word of God which enlightens the souls of men. Intelligent heathen folk, tired of idolatry found satisfaction in something so much higher and better. The gospel here found listeners and especially among Gentiles already interested in God, won the hearts and minds of some. Jewish prejudices however led to great opposition and such serious rioting that Paul and Silas had to be sent away. The authorities could not however find real guilt to punish anyone, but persecution against the new religion remained severe. Naturally Paul longed to help his converts, and the letters assure us that a great work was begun and continued. We gather that enemies tried to blacken the characters of the preachers in their absence, accusing them of wrong motives. In chapter 2 this is refuted.

It was a very happy Paul who was able to commend the church for faithfulness under stress. His anxiety for their welfare made him send Timothy specially to get news of their condition. He made efforts twice to return and share their troubles, but Satan hindered (2:18 & 3:1&2). He begins the first letter with thanksgiving as in all his letters except that to the Galatians, and his expressions of joy in their standing firm are very striking. They are his joy and crown of glory (2:19&20). It would seem that special power had been manifested during the preaching (1:5) but it is

the spiritual power manifested in the changed lives that cause such rejoicing. The news of this manifestation of divine power was being circulated in the whole neighbourhood and far and wide in the provinces, and among the other churches, encouraging all other converts to stand fast. There is a striking reference to the three abiding things — faith, love and hope — indicating their separate and yet combined functions. Faith working in changed attitudes, love working in toil for the good of others, and hope manifested in patient endurance of wrong or evil treatment. These are “in the sight of God” but also give assurance of God’s approval in the sight of men. R. B. SCOTT.

NEW WORDS FOR A LONG METRE TUNE

Christ Liveth In Me. L.M. Galations 2:20

If Jesus Christ abide in me,
Then I will prove it every day,
By every action I perform,
By every word I think or say.

If Jesus Christ abide in me,
Then I will show His love for all,
Help for the needy, cheer the sad,
And raising up all who may fall.

If Jesus Christ abide in me,
Then everyone is sure to know;
And look, and learn, and understand,
And only Jesus, Master know.

If Jesus Christ abide in me,
Then I must die, and he must live
In me, so that all I may do,
To Him will all the honour give.

O! Jesus Christ dwell thou in me,
That self may die, and thus declare,
That Jesus Christ, God’s only Son,
Lives on in me, residing there.

TOM KEMP

THANK you God for little things
that often come our way
The things we take for granted
But don’t mention when we pray
The unexpected courtesy, the thoughtful,
Kindly deed

A hand reached out to help us
in time of sudden need
Oh make us more aware, dear God
Of little things and daily graces
That come to us with sweet surprise
From never dreamed of places.

“LOVE YOUR ENEMIES...”

Ye have enemies, for who can live on this earth without them? Take heed to yourselves; love them. In no way can thy enemy so hurt thee by his violence as thou dost hurt thyself if thou love him not. And let it not seem to you impossible to love him. Believe first that it can be done, and pray that the will of God may be done in you. For what good can thy neighbor’s ill do to thee? If he had no ill, he would not even be thine enemy. Wish him well, then, that he may end his ill, and he will be thine enemy no longer. For it is not the human nature in him that is at enmity with thee, but his sin... let thy prayer be against the malice of thine enemy, that it may die, and he may live. For if thine enemy were dead, thou hast lost, it might seem, an enemy, yet has thou not found a friend. But if his malice die, thou hast at once lost an enemy and found a friend”. Selected.

He knew the Book from A to Z
His mind had mastered every part;
A fine achievement — but alas!
It never got into his heart.

He who has no money is poor, but he who has nothing but money is even poorer!

Every Christian should use his Bible as a full-length mirror, with this motto before him: “Before you go out and tell everyone that you represent Christ and the church, look yourself over and see whether or not you do”.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Newtongrange, Midlothian: The church here rejoices that another young man, Malcolm McKean, obeyed the Master in baptism on the 9th April in our meeting place. Malcolm is at present working at Moray House College of Education after having studied at a Canadian University.

He has been meeting with us for some weeks at Newtongrange and is an earnest enquirer for the Truth. We pray that Jesus will bless him abundantly and that Malcolm will be a true worker and soldier for his Elder Brother at all times. JOE CURRIE

A FURTHER APPRECIATION

To the late James Black, Ulverston, I must add my testimony to the faithfulness of our late brother James Black. He and his family came to Kentish Town in August 1945 and were transferred to Ulverston in March 1957. During all that time our brother served the Lord consistently in the teaching and preaching the gospel. He took part also in the business of the church, acting with the oversight for several years. He also took part in the open air work we carried on for some considerable time, and opened his home to Bible studies, which led to additions to membership. The family was completely regular in attendance at all meetings. They were greatly missed when they removed to Ulverston, and occasional visits have been much enjoyed. It is our joy now to have our sister, his widow, in membership.— to whom, to all his family here in London, and to all his relatives we extend our warmest sympathy.

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

R.B. SCOTT

THANKS

Sister Longmuir and family of the church in Motherwell would like, through the columns of 'S.S.', to thank all members and friends in the district for the cards and letters of sympathy received in their recent bereavement.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Newtongrange, Midlothian: The new secretary of the church for the next year is brother J. H. Currie and all communications for the church should be sent to his home at the following address — "Caladh Na Sith", Pendreich Grove, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian.

COMING EVENTS

Blackburn, Mill Hill, New Wellington Street.

SPECIAL MISSION

October 25th — November 2nd 1975

Brother L. Daniels (Bristol) the speaker.

Further details to follow.

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