

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS

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* **THE MERCIES OF GOD RECALLED AND TRUST EXPRESSED** *

* "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord *
* never ceases, His mercies never come to an end: they are new every morning; *
* great is Thy faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion' says my soul, 'therefore I *
* will hope in Him'." (Lamentations 3:21-24) *

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**GOD BLESS THY YEAR:
THY COMING IN, THY GOING OUT,
THY REST, THY TRAVELLING ABOUT,
THE ROUGH, THE SMOOTH,
THE BRIGHT, THE DREAR:
GOD BLESS THY YEAR.**

GOOD PEOPLE

EVERY now and again as we endeavour to preach the gospel we have to deal with the question of the "Thief on the Cross" — there are always those who want to be saved like the thief. Likewise we are sometimes perplexed by those who point out to us the occasionally really good person, much like God asked Satan to consider His good servant Job. The public at large find it reasonable to believe that patently evil persons need Christ but find it much more difficult to accept that the genuinely good people need to be saved. I am sure that by the very law of averages there must be a small percentage (a very small percentage) of the world's population inherently good, if not inherently good then good by any standard — nature's own gentle-people. We all know, and or have known, a few who could come into this category. Their exemplary life and generosity of spirit may well eclipse some of the finest of church members. The comparison might even be embarrassing. Such good people are to be found in the world and in the denominational bodies as well. What does the New Testament say on the matter?

Jesus encountered some such individuals. In Matt. 8 Jesus marvelled at the Roman Centurion (not Cornelius) and said that He had not seen such faith, not even amongst the Jews (chosen people of God). In fact when Jesus marvelled at His own people it was at their unbelief (Mark 6:6). In Mark 10:17 Jesus encountered a really good man who had zealously kept God's laws from his youth upwards and for this, we are told, Jesus looked at him and loved him. This young man had come running to Jesus and kneeled before Him and had asked Him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life." A good question from a very good man. The first thing Jesus did, we may notice, before He dealt with the question was to deal with the matter of 'good people'. Jesus said unto him, "Why callest me good? there is none good but one, that is God." Thus in our discussion of 'good people' we have discovered at once a very important lesson from the lips of our Lord Himself, that there is no such thing. God alone is good. (When we remember that Jesus refused to be called 'good' we must be surprised that men allow others to address them as 'Reverend'.) Good as the young man was Jesus said that he lacked one thing — and that one thing certainly put to the test the enduring goodness of the young man. Good men and women will always lack one thing, or another. Certainly all good men lack one thing if they have not obeyed the gospel — this is illustrated very clearly for us in the case of Cornelius.

Of all the good people we know could any compare with Cornelius? He was not a Jew (that is, from amongst the chosen of God) nor was he from some religious establishment. He was what was usually regarded as a 'heathen man' from Italy and his occupation was of all things — a soldier. One wonders how he could have retained personal integrity in the army. He was more than a soldier — he was an officer in charge of probably a hundred men. Here was a man who was pious, devout, who feared and respected God, who was moral, kind, honest, upright, benevolent, generous, a man of prayer and a man of good works. His good works, we are told, came up before God as a memorial — imagine that. Most ordinary folks would say that such a man had no need of repentance or reformation — that in fact Cornelius was better than most followers of Christ. Yet God sent an angel to him to tell him to send for a preacher of the gospel. It is perhaps ironical that the preacher (apostle Peter) had to be given a vision from God to persuade him to go and preach to Cornelius. And so, good and all as Cornelius was, he had not heard or obeyed the gospel of Christ — he had not entered the Kingdom of God in the way prescribed by Christ. This incident teaches us several very vital lessons not least of which is the fact that it is not enough to be a good man, or an exceedingly good man — one must come to the feet of Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord — one must hear the gospel and obey the gospel — one must be born again of water and the Spirit. Surely the case of Cornelius is the quite definitive one, when dealing with the matter of 'good people.'

If a 'good character' or a 'charitable lifestyle' was a passport to heaven then perhaps the following assumptions might be correct:-

- 1 **It was unnecessary for Christ to have come into the world.** But Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:17)
- 2 **We could be saved apart from Christ.** But without Christ we can do nothing Jesus said, "I am the vine ye are the branches, he that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5)
- 3 **We could be saved apart from His name.** "Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)
- 4 **We could be saved apart from the blood of Christ.** But we have redemption through Christ's blood. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. 1:7)
- 5 **We could be saved apart from Christ's death.** But Christ died precisely for our sins.

- "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." (1st Cor. 15:3)
- 6 **We could be justified without the resurrection of Jesus.** But Christ was raised for our justification. "... who was delivered for our offences and was raised for our justification." (Rom. 4:25)
- 7 **We could please God without faith.** "But without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb 11:6)
- 8 **We could be saved yet ignore God's word.** "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)
- 9 **We could enter eternal life without any rebirth.** "Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God."
- 10 **We could be saved without remission of sins.** "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38).

These are but a few random implications of the theory that the extremely good people in this world place themselves outwith and above the New Testament scriptures. Many more will occur to readers. Christ nor the apostles, although they encountered as many good people as we do, drew no distinction between the sons of men but enclosed them altogether in the statement that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" and that there are none righteous no, not one. The gospel is God's power unto the salvation of everyone, with no exclusions mentioned, and Peter said, (as quoted above) "Repent and be baptised every one of you, (or all of you)". There is none good but one, that is God.

Editor.

GLEANINGS

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

OUR THEME — DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT TOMORROW

OUR TEXT:- "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day." Matthew 6:34 (RSV).

Thomas Carlyle:- "Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand."

Dr. Osler:- "The load of tomorrow, added to that of yesterday, carried today, makes the strongest falter."

Dale Carnegie:- Mr. Sulzberger told me that he was never able to banish his worries and find peace until he had adopted as his motto five words from a church hymn: *One step enough for me.*

Lead, kindly Light . . .

Keep thou my feet: I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step enough for me.

Robert Louis Stevenson:- "Anyone can carry his burden, however hard, until nightfall, anyone can do his work, however hard, for one day. Anyone can live sweetly, patiently, lovingly, purely, till the sun goes down. And this is all that life really means."

SOMEONE HAS SAID:- "Every day is a new life to a wise man."

"Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself! One day's trouble is enough for one day." Matthew 6:34 (J.B.P.).

"All your anxiety, all your care, bring to the mercy seat, leave it there. Never a burden He cannot bear, never a friend like Jesus."

John Newton:- "We increase our burdens by carrying yesterday's stick over again and adding tomorrow's burden before we bear it."

W. Riley:- "Moreover the Book in his pocket seemed to suggest that it was unprofitable to worry."

"Seeing things before they come is meeting trouble half way."

"It isn't oft its so dark but what you can see where to put your next foot and if you can't its time to stand still and wait for a bit, chance you run your head against a wall."

George Muller:- "The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith; and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety."

F. W. Robertson:- "It is not hardships that are the wearing work of life. It is anxiety of heart and mind; it is the fretting, carking cares of deep solicitude — one sorrow, one deep, corroding anxiety, will wear deeper furrows in the cheek and brow than ten campaigns can do. One day's suspense will exhaust more, and leave the cheek paler, than a week's fasting."

Edward Everett Hale:- "Never bear more than one kind of trouble at once." In giving a young friend this advice, he added: "Some people bear all three kinds — all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have."

C. Macdonald:- "No man ever sank under the burden of the day. It is when tomorrow's burden is added that the weight is more than a man can bear . . . God begs us to leave the future to Him."

Samuel Rutherford:- "Venture through the thick of all things after Christ, and lose not your Master, Christ, in the throng of this great market. Let Christ know how heavy, and how many a stone-weight you and your cares, burdens, crosses, and sins are. Let Him bear all."

Wise Words:- "Go as far as you can see, and then see how far you can go."

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

CHRIST OR BARABBAS?

THE CUSTOM of delivering a prisoner to his liberty upon the day of the Passover was intended, no doubt, as an act of grace on the part of the Roman authorities towards the Jews. Since, on that great day the Jews, themselves, were delivered from the bondage of Egypt, it was probably thought that it was fitting that a prisoner should be released on that day. There was, however, no warrant in the Jewish scriptures for such an occurrence. The practice must have had an injurious affect on those who administered public justice — the very idea that a hardened criminal should go Scot free.

Pilate must have looked upon the event as a wonderful opportunity of securing the release of Christ and yet keeping the friendship and goodwill of the Jews. Thus the invitation came with great expectation from Pilate when he asked them who should be released -- this innocent man Christ, or this dastardly criminal Barabbas.

We know very little of Barabbas. His name in the Hebrew merely signifies 'His father's son' — 'Bar' meaning 'son'. (Peter is called 'Simon Barjonas' i.e. son of Jonas). The other part of the name 'abbas' being the word from which we derive filial aspirations 'ABBA FATHER'. Barabbas then, was 'son of his father' and must have perplexed his father many times. He was a criminal of the lowest order, being guilty of felony, sedition and murder — a sorry combination of crimes. The wretch is brought from prison and stands side-by-side with Christ.

When Pilate appealed to the crowd and invited them to choose the prisoner to be released, understandably he expected that they would choose the good man, against whom no man could bring any accusation. The Jews evidently had so soon forgotten the wonders and signs Jesus had performed in their midst. He had healed the lame, the blind, the lepers, He had cast out demons from their sons and daughters, He had fed the thousands. When the bloodthirsty mob called out, "Not this man, but Barabbas" Pilate could but stand amazed. "For which of His good works do you conspire to kill him?" asks Pilate but the people called the more, in a frenzy, "Let him be crucified, Let him be crucified." And to this cry was added another, "Away with him, Away with him, it is not fit that he should live."

Over the centuries since then, when men are given the choice, they invariably choose Barabbas. We have in the first Chapter of Romans the apostle Paul's graphic description of the state of society throughout Rome and its dominions. The Roman rulers brought terrible punitive measures down upon the heads of those who would follow Christ but relished the company and conversation of Sodomites, adulterers, thieves and murderers. A little later when the world in parts became nominally Christian and the great anti-Christ emerged in all its blasphemous glory — the people preferred papal domination to the freedom in Christ. The worship of saints, places, images, angels, relics, was preferred to the worship of Christ, and still is. The spiritual darkness of the centuries which followed almost extinguished the flickering flame of New Testament truth but a few struggled to keep it alive. In recent centuries the darkness brightened somewhat with the emergence of 'protestantism' but it has merely been a change of Satan's tactics for again the gospel has been subdued by denominationalism. Today when given the choice between Christ and the system of denominationalism the people clamour for the latter.

Churchianity has now replaced Christianity. Christ's gospel is not so much with-held, it is just ignored. Christ is not now persecuted — He is merely winked at.

The responsibility is, more than ever, upon all those who would follow Christ to reach the world with the truth. Nothing must stand in the way. Barabbas is still around in some form or another. Satan still presents him to us as an option. He may be dressed up as 'popularity' or 'ease' or 'wealth' or 'worldly wisdom' or 'forward thinking' or 'progress' or 'modern method' or 'expediency', but his purpose is the same.

When presented with a straight choice between Christ and Barabbas have you ever chosen Barabbas? Think about it.

W. S. BRADLEY, Ilkeston.

QUOTES — ON ASPIRATION

By aspiring to a similitude of God in goodness or love, neither man nor angel ever transgressed, or shall transgress.

Sir Francis Bacon.

Selfishness is the only real atheism: aspiration the only real religion.

Israel Zangwill

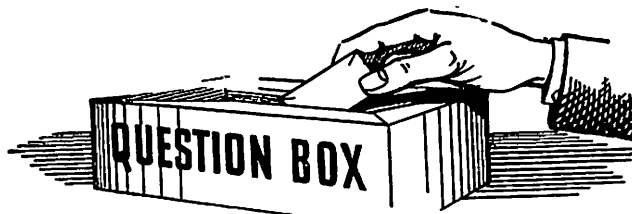
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp

Or what's a Heaven for?

Robert Browning.

It is not for man to rest in absolute contentment — He is born to hopes and aspirations as the sparks fly upwards, unless he has brutified his nature and quenched the spirit of immortality which is his portion.

Robert Southby.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Recently I have been studying Paul’s teaching in Romans and Galatians concerning the law and transgressions. In particular, the scriptures in ROM.4:15 and GAL.3:19 prompt the question: ‘how can it be that there is no transgression when there is no law, if the law was added because of transgressions. Can you please comment?’”

THIS question sets us delving into the deep and fundamental truths of God. It takes us right back into history and brings us face to face with God’s dealings with Abraham and Moses. It brings us forward from that time to the beginnings of Christian history, and because of man’s misunderstanding of the teaching it impinges on the present also. In order to answer the question we shall need to consider the time from Adam to Moses; the covenant promise to Abraham; the establishment of the law of Moses; and the import of the teaching in Paul’s Roman and Galatian letters. And even when we have finished our inquiry we may have to echo the words of Peter in respect of Paul’s letters “. . . in which are some things hard to be understood” (2 PET.3:16). Nevertheless, we must always strive to understand what God is saying to us, and I feel sure that He will bless this study.

Adam to Moses

It is quite evident that sin was in the world before the Mosaic law. We are told about the advent of sin into the world but nothing about sin prior to that. Adam violated an express command of God, and as Paul says, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. (For until the law sin was in the world . . .)” (ROM.5:12, 13): So sin *entered* the world as the result of disobedience to a direct command of God, but Paul goes on, “Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come” (ROM.5:14). Now we have the scene. Adam transgressed. This transgression opened the floodgate of sin and brought terrible consequences upon the human race. Sin and death followed all; even those whose sins did not resemble the sin of Adam. How, then, did others sin who did not disobey direct commands of God as Adam did?

I think Paul supplies the answer to the Jewish critics of his day. In his reasoned argument he says, “For as many as have sinned without law (in ignorance of the Mosaic, or any other law) shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law” (ROM.2:12). This seems to be a very far-reaching statement. What Paul seems to be saying is that the heathen who sin will be lost, not because they do not have the Mosaic law, but because they do not keep *the law which they have*. In explanation of this, he goes on, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves” (2:14). So Paul says that the natural law, modified by some knowledge of God in the conscience, could at some points agree with the Mosaic law; when this happens, and they do right, they become “a law unto themselves”. But the conscience would not be right *all the time*, otherwise there would have been no need for a Saviour, hence Paul, “For if righteousness come by the law (any law), then Christ is dead in vain” (GAL.2:21). Indeed, Paul shows the variableness of conscience, “Which show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile *accusing* or else *excusing* one another” (ROM.2:15). Conscience is exercised as a faculty when man passes judgment on his own actions; it acts according to the light it has.

So here, between Adam and Moses, we have a picture of sinful man exercising his conscience in the government of his conduct; sometimes he agrees with and sometimes he transgresses a law which does not exist but which is in the mind of God. At this point he doesn't know how sinful his sin is, and how deep his transgressions are. He is waiting for God to speak directly again.

The Covenant promise to Abraham

The certainty of justification by faith is attested to by Paul in spite of the bitter opposition of the Jews. His arguments are both cogent and precise. He states quite categorically that the gospel was preached to Abraham, "And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (GAL.3:8). Now the essence of the gospel is Christ, and Christ was the seed, promised to Abraham through which all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Abraham believed this promise, and his faith was "put to his account" as righteousness.

The Mosaic law could not supersede or alter the promise in any way, no matter how fervently the Jews might argue. Paul explains, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (GAL.3:16, 17).

So now we have a situation where sin and death have passed to all men. During this period God makes a covenant with Abraham which rests in faith and not on the works of the law. The Mosaic law cannot change the covenant, so we must now turn our attention to the question, "Why was the law added?"

The Mosaic law

Seventh Day Adventists, and others, make a distinction between the "law of Moses" and what they term the "law of God". They teach that the law of God is the Ten Commandments and still in force today. They agree that the law of Moses was done away, but they argue that the Ten Commandments were not the law of Moses. But what does Paul teach? "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in the newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law said, Thou shalt not covet"? (ROM.7:6, 7). Now in what law was the command, "Thou shalt not covet"? In the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, of course. Paul says, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held . . ." So the law of Moses is dead; the law which is dead is the Decalogue; the Decalogue is the law of Moses. I would rather believe Paul than the Adventists, wouldn't you?

The Decalogue represented the O.T. system as defined to Moses. The old system was abrogated in Christ, that salvation might be by faith and not by the works of the law.

Why the Mosaic law?

After Paul had stated that the inheritance was by promise to Abraham, and not by the law, he asks the question, "Wherefore serveth the law" (GAL.3:19). Having posed the question, he supplies the answer, "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained in the hand of a mediator." In the phrase, "It was added because of transgressions," I think we understand that Paul is not saying that the law created transgressions, but rather that the law made it easier to perceive and find out the extent of the transgression so that man could understand how exceedingly sinful his sin ac-

tually was. For example, a man might have stolen from his neighbour before the law came, and probably thought very little of it; but when the law came and said, "Thou shalt not steal," and, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours wife and goods," then he would see the extreme wrong in that which he had taken for granted. (Read also Romans ch.7).

Furthermore, Paul teaches that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (GAL.3:24). The word for schoolmaster is PAIDAGOGOS, and means literally "a tutor." The slave employed by the better class Greek and Roman families to take charge of a boy from about six to sixteen years of age, was known as the paedagogue. The paedagogue watched the boy's behaviour when he was at home and attended him when he went from home to school. He never *taught* the boy anything, but kept watch over him. Paul teaches that the law was the paedagogue that kept watch over people till they came to Christ. When Christ came, the paedagogue was dismissed. The child was now in the school of the Master. The fatal mistake that the Jews made was in thinking that the law taught them the way to salvation; that is why they were so meticulous in keeping it. But the law never taught anything of that nature; it kept watch over people till the seed should come, which was Christ. If Paul had meant that the law was the teacher to bring people to Christ, then he would have had introduced an idea which was totally foreign to his argument. The covenant with Abraham was by promise, that it might be by faith.

In view of what we have said, Paul's argument in Romans 4:14, 15, becomes somewhat clearer. He teaches that if legalists are heirs of the Messianic promise to Abraham, then faith is meaningless, and the promise idle (v14). He goes on to say that the law only worked wrath, the wrath being apparent, of course, when there was disobedience to the commandment. Paul further argues that a non-existent law cannot be violated, so when there was no law, responsibility for violation of it could not be placed. However, we have seen that sin and transgression *did* occur *before* the law was given; what the law did was to make the transgression palpable.

The study of the law and justification by faith, particularly in the Roman and Galatian letters is fascinating and I would commend it to everyone. I thank the questioner for bringing this into focus.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY 1979

4—Psalm 41	John 18:1-18
11—1 Kings 21, 1-19	John 18:19-40
18—Genesis 37, 12-36	John 19:1-16
25—Psalm 22	John 19:17-37

GETHSEMANE

The word means "oil press" and relates to the olive trees then and now characteristic of the place whether the traditional site is right or not. We feel sure that "resorted thither" means that when Jesus had visited Jerusalem on many previous occasions the garden was a place where He chose to retire with His disciples. We suppose each of the three Feasts of

the Jews had brought Jesus to the city during (as well as before) His ministry of at least three years. He would be teaching and healing around Temple and city, and His disciples with Him. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us the details of the agony of our Saviour, John more details of the arrest. It would seem that Judas knowing the place went in advance of the mob and kissed Jesus before they had come close. He then stood back and with them was overawed by the brave and open claim of Jesus. To us it seems strange that so large a company, and so armed to meet violence, should have been brought to take one person with eleven followers but perhaps we have overlooked the impression of supernatural power which Jesus must have inspired in Judas as well as in others. On several occasions Jesus had passed through the crowd unharmed and unopposed. Nevertheless it seems childish to think that

He Who calmed the storm and quelled the demons could be overcome by material arms. Jesus at this crisis was thinking of His disciples, and saved Peter from the consequences of his brave but foolish effort. We must however credit Peter with a brave spirit at that moment. Alas so soon it was replaced by cowardice and denial. The other sword was not used (Luke 22, 38). In any case they were much worse than useless, and always are when used by followers of Jesus. We note the references to fulfilment in this month's readings (18:4, 8, 11, 14, 32:19, 24, 28, 36).

Denial

We are sure that Peter was completely honest when he made his offer to die with Jesus, and this he seems to have decided when he drew his sword (18, 10). The other disciples likewise in that moment of crisis gave up their loyalty. Did the rebuke to Peter discourage them? The forces against them were overwhelming anyway, and their leader almost forbade resistance. So at least Peter and John followed at a distance and remained vitally interested. How could it be otherwise? But the circumstances overwhelmed them. Who would dare to say if in those circumstances he would have acted any more courageously? "Let him who thinketh . . ." But now the Leader they loved and respected was left apparently helpless in the hands of unscrupulous and wicked men. He was being treated with contempt and violence. Their hopes had been of physical, material conquest, and in spite of Jesus's constant warning had not been changed. The One Who had moved the multitude at will was in the court before the Authorities accused of the crime of blasphemy by those who held supreme office under Moses' law. To stand with Him now was to court the same contempt. Peter stood around with those who were against Jesus now He was "taken", whatever they were before. The tide of public opinion had turned against Jesus. He did not satisfy their ambitions for *their Messiah*. So Peter thus surrounded and almost recognised is questioned, first at the door and then in the hall, warming himself at the fire lit by some in the conspiracy, sharing in the shameful evil treatment now meted out to Jesus. We wonder how Peter could have forgotten his Master's warning but whether he did or not his first denial was followed by two more,

each one more vehement than the one before. But he was watching "the accused" at a distance, the court being open to the hall, and "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter". Mark tells us there was after the first denial a cock's crowing but finally when all the cocks started their crowing a glance from the Lord brought the terrible nature of Peter's sin home to his heart. His failure was not the deliberate plotting of Judas but the failure of wisdom and courage on the spur of the moment. We read of Judas's repentance "when he saw that he was condemned" (Matt. 27, 3-10; Acts 1, 18 & 19), but of Peter's restoration (John 20, 3: 21, 7 . . . : Mark 16, 7: I Cor. 15, 5)

Condemnations

Jesus was taken first to Annas, the power behind the High Priest, his son-in-law. Here his treatment was like that of a condemned man, a shameful exhibition (18, 19-24). Likewise before Caiaphas, and finally the whole council, the Sanhedrin. Here the shameful treatment continued in unrestrained physical violence, and those guilty of it were careful not to be ceremonially unclean by entering the gentile Praetorium. How much value is there is ceremonial — none at all unless it is matched by inward reverence and purity. Observance of the Lord's Supper is worse than valueless unless matched by the condition of the heart, and much better not observed than observed in a perfunctory way. Churches of Christ have a liability to this on account of insistence rightly upon the weekly observance. While condemning the guiltless the Priestly Rulers insisted on an outward and relatively unimportant ceremonial. They had also gathered false witnesses but found no proof. No answer was necessary as they contradicted themselves. Thus the High Priest himself and the assembly were judge and jury. The crowning act of injustice and unbelief brought the verdict. Pilate was faced with a problem he did not want, and tried to put it on to Herod without success. This only led to more and worse brutality, and even his appeal to any humanity they had, excited still harsher demands (19, 5). He did at least pass a verdict of "innocent" three times, and made very clear to the Jews that it was not his will to crucify Jesus. He said to Jesus "I have power to release thee, and to crucify thee." Then we answer "Why did you deliver Him unto them?" The Romans had a reputation

for justice. Largely their empire was built upon it, but here we see its weakness — in Pilate! However the Jews had a hold upon him and pressed the claim. If Jesus were a King, He was a rival to Caesar. How would Pilate justify himself before the Emperor, or if he defied the Jews and brought rebellion and discontent? He might well ask "What is Truth?" He failed to be true to his own conscience. We bow our heads in humble worship of Jesus as we view "what He endured for us." It was indeed superhuman endurance that bore the trials.

Crucifixion

We know from history that this was a common punishment in that dark and heathen world. Consideration of the details sickens a person with any sense of humanity and decency. We are thankful that the holy influence of the Lord Jesus has made a vast difference in the general sense of humane treatment which prevails today. There are parts of the world now however where refined methods of torture are being daily applied. It is only where that holy influence has really taken hold that love forbids the application of any form of torture. Those who shared in this supreme act of wickedness brought upon themselves and their nation a most terrible holocaust of suffering in A.D.70, and today anti-semitism follows it up. Here is a deep mystery that only a sacrifice so terrible can bring about forgiveness of sin.

The Son of God was crucified. "Him Who knew no sin God made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God IN HIM" (2 Cor. 5, 21).

"O come and mourn with me awhile,
O come ye to the Saviour's side,
O come together let us mourn,
Jesus our Lord is crucified."

R. B. Scott.

MEASURING SUCCESS

David King

WE REMARK then: . . . That success cannot be determined by numbers, as its main feature; that complete adherence to aim and purpose is the more important element. Could a membership of 10,000 be increased

to 800,000 in six months, upon conditions of enlarged facilities for the influx of the world, the flesh and the devil, acceptance of the conditions would not be success, but failure and ruin, as in the time of Constantine and on to the consummation of Popery.

. . . To "Hold the Fort" is a first essential; preserving, intact, every element of the Faith and worship of the Church of Christ, and leaving the question of numerical success to Him, yet still, not satisfied with any measure of progress attained, so long as a larger attainment is possible for us, and sacrificing whatever is merely our own, in order to reach it; but refusing to surrender a single item of His, even to convert a continent. — "*Buy the truth and sell it not,*" even though the proffered price be multiplied success.

. . . Shall we make greater advance in the time to come than in the past? If not, we shall not soon become numerically great. We may, nevertheless, be great morally and spiritually if we will. We cannot, at our best even, always command numbers; we can command personal character. That is an individual question and a living issue. Communities and even nations have, at times, been stricken with apathy, after early successes — a fatal blight. But history has not yet recorded, that earnest resolute souls have ever lived for nought and in vain. Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven! In proportion as we are earnest, Christlike and loyal to the Divine standards, God will not fail to mark our success. We may not even see it ourselves now, but we shall see it all, in His time.

*God knows the way, He holds the key,
He guides us with unerring hand;
Sometime with tearless eyes we'll see;
Yes there, up there, we'll understand.*

YEARBOOK (1892) p.72-73

YOU ARE A MINISTER

William Walker

IN THE church today we have come to think of only one man in a congregation as being the minister, instead of realizing that every Christian is in reality a minister. The ministry is not something done TO the church, but something done BY the church.

Those who seek to follow in the steps of Jesus would do well to heed His statement: "The son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Too many of the sons of God today come to be ministered unto, rather than to minister. The result is that saints are no longer participants in the arena but spectators in the grandstand.

Because of this attitude, we are enrolling students who never intend to graduate, enlisting soldiers who never intend to fight, registering racers who never intend to run. Our motto has become, "Here he is, Lord send him." The Ship of Zion is no longer manned by a volunteer crew working for the sheer love of the Captain, but is steered by a pilot and an assistant pilot while the remainder are paying passengers who are along for the ride.

It is astounding how much dead timber and dead weight there is in the average congregation. Dead timber produces no fruit and dead weight must be dragged along. Somewhere along the way we have missed the very essence of the Christian concept and the result is that we have the greatest accumulation of unused talent and the richest deposit of untouched ability of any group of people on earth. If we are going to be honest in our plea for restoration, it is time that we began to revolutionize our thinking so that every soldier will don the armour and every child of God will be active in ministering. Let us cease being spectators and "get where the action is."

— Selected.

were to have been brother Tom McC. (Junr.) from Dalmellington and brother Mark Plain (Senr.) from Tranent but brother McGinn was snowbound as were other members from that area. Brother James R. Gardiner was chairman. Question and discussion time was lively as usual and an enjoyable time was had. The next meeting will (D.V.) be at Motherwell.

KENTISH TOWN — We rejoice to record the baptism of Kim Kirkham on Lord's Day, November 5th. At an early age she has found satisfaction in obeying her Saviour.

R.B.S.

Peterhead, Scotland:

We have just ended a great mission with our Bro Perry B. Cotham. It resulted in one being immersed into the kingdom. She is Isobel Slessor. Isobel is deaf. She is the friend of Bro and Sis McLean who too are deaf. Working with the deaf has been a great experience for us here in the church. It can open up a whole new field.

Through working with the deaf we have also come into contact with Dawson Morrison. He is a delight to be with. He is always smiling. Though being totally deaf he understands every word you say to him. Last night the 3rd of December after the gospel service Dawson made it known to us that he wanted baptism.

We pray that you will rejoice with us over these two new souls.

The church here sends its love to all the brethren.

W. M. Strachan (Secretary).

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

MUTUAL BENEFIT MEETING

The quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting of churches in the Slamannan District took place at Haddington on Saturday, 2nd December. The subject on this occasion was "Marks of the true church" and the speakers

OBITUARY

PETERHEAD, SCOTLAND. — On Sunday the 12th November, 1978 our beloved sister Chrissie Milne passed away. She was 70 years old. To everyone who knew her she was Auntie Chrissie. She will be greatly missed but she has left a testimony behind her.

ARTICLES

A good number of brethren throughout the country have kindly agreed to write at least one article per annum for the "S.S." and this augers very well for the future quality of the contents of the paper. Some have asked regarding the length, etc. of the intended articles and this information I am happy to supply.

Articles should ideally, but not necessarily be typewritten, and if handwritten should be as legible as possible (to save me typing them) and written preferably on one side of the paper only with a margin down the left-hand side of the page. The length of the article will, of course, be determined by the subject-matter but generally one of 700-1,000 words would be fine (i.e. a page or page-and-a-half of the present "S.S." size of page. The article is better to be slightly short than long and if the nature of the subject-matter demands the longer type of article then the writer would be best to make it into two shorter articles (i.e. Part 1 and 2, or even 3). I am still in the process of contacting brethren in this connection but would wish to thank all those good brethren who have already responded and come to the rescue. I am very pleased and so will all our readers be.

Editor.

The Church and its Mission

"He that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30)

WE plead for the original apostolic gospel and its positive institutions. If the great apostles Peter and Paul—the former to the Jews and the latter to the Gentiles—announced the true gospel of the grace of God, shall we hesitate a moment on the propriety and the necessity, divinely imposed upon us, of preaching the same gospel which they preached, and in advocating the same institutions which they established, under the plenary inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit? Can we improve upon their institutions and enactments?

EVANGELIST WANTED

The Slamannan District Churches of Christ require an evangelist and all brethren interested should apply in writing to the District Secretary, Hugh Davidson, 21 Glen Lyon, St. Leonards, East Kilbride, G74 2JJ.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Tom Nisbet's address now is:- 61 Meetinghouse Drive, Tranent, East Lothian. Telephone No. 612054.

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