

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES

By the time you read this the General Election will be over and a new government, for the next 5 years, will have been formed. At the moment, in the last days of the run-up to the election, each political party is gradually becoming more and more strident, shouting down the opposition and making all manner of beguiling (not to say rash) promises to all and sundry. Time, of course, will tell what will become of all these weird and wonderful promises, but if the past is anything to go by, we shall live to be greatly disappointed (if we are foolish enough to believe the promises of politicians). Perhaps it's unfair to single out politicians as being promise breakers; I suppose we have all been guilty of making a promise we have not kept. Certainly in the world of business, and amongst nations, breaches of promise are part of the stock-in-trade. Thus the need for contracts, lawyers, and an ability to understand the 'small print.' But this is not so with God's promises. Paul says, that God's promises, in Christ, are not "Ifs and buts" (Yea or nay) but are Yea, and Yea again. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus and Timotheus was not yea and nay, but in Him was Yea. For all the promises of God in Him are YEA, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (II Cor. 1:17). Truly God's Promises, by contrast with mans', are completely sure and steadfast.

### God's Promise

Solomon could say to the Jewish people, "Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest to His people, according to all he hath promised, *there hath not failed one word* of all His good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses." (1 Kings 8:56). Joshua said, "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; *all came to pass*". God's promises to man began in Old Testament times embodied mainly in statements principally to Abraham and to the early Fathers. Paul continually prayed for his kinsmen in the flesh. "Who are Israelites: to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of law, and the service of God and *the promises....*" (Rom 9:4) Gentiles were, of course, at that time "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from *the covenants of promise....*" (Eph 2:12). But God's promise to Israel derived specially from Abraham. The promises to Abraham were three-fold (a) land — (hence the 'Promised Land') (b) a son and a progeny as numerous as the sand on any seashore, and (c) blessings which would accrue to ALL nations, through the Messiah. These were *'the promises'* to which Paul makes such constant reference. Abraham 'staggered not' at the promises of God, "through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that what God had promised *He was able also to*

perform.” (Rom 4:21). In some of Paul’s references to the promises he makes the point that Christ was the true and complete fulfilment of all God’s promises, viz “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not. And to seeds as of many, but as of one, which was Christ” (Gal 3:16) When God made the promise to bless all nations through Abraham’s *seed* he did not mean ‘children’ or ‘descendants’ but meant ‘seed’ in the singular and in the person of Christ. ALL nations (Jews and Gentiles) were to be thus blessed, and so, in effect, the gospel was being preached in that very promise (given 430 years before the Mosaic law) to Abraham.

#### Better Promises

Thus Paul says in the same Chapter (Gal. 3) “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all the nations be blessed. So then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.” (v 8) and “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.... That the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit* through faith.” (v13, 14). This latter verse not only confirms that the promises made to Abraham have accrued to the gentiles through Christ, but also introduces us to one other momentous promise - the promise of the Holy Spirit. The ‘Spirit’ here represents all the blessings connected with the Christian religion, and includes the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit: and all His influence in renewing the heart, in sanctifying the soul and in comforting the people of God (For He is the Comforter). These influences of the Spirit were obtained by virtue of the sufferings and death of the Saviour and were the sum of all the blessings promised by the prophets. Thus, says Paul, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:29). Is that not truly wonderful? Jesus then, is the consummation of all Jewish hopes and dreams of the past (could they but see it) but Jesus not only fulfills the promises of old but He surpasses them with even better promises. The writer to the Hebrews claims that Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry than Moses and that He is the mediator “of a better covenant which was established upon *better promises*”. (Heb. 8:6). Clearly these better promises come to us through the gospel and indeed *the gospel itself* was an age-old promise as Paul points out (in Rom 1:2) “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God (which he had promised by His prophets in the holy scriptures) concerning His son Jesus Christ our Lord”. Again, in Paul’s speech in the synagogue in Antioch, he said, “And we declare unto you the glad tidings how that the promise which was made unto the fathers God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children in that He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son. This day have I begotten thee.” (Acts 13:32).

#### Great and Precious

The apostle Peter describes these ‘better’ promises as “*great and precious*’. Talking of God’s power and our calling he says, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” These great and precious promises are numberless and some are probably impossible to identify. James ranks the kingdom of God amongst these. He says that God hath chosen the poor of this world, albeit rich in faith, and made them “heirs of *the kingdom* which God hath promised to them that loved him”. (2:5). In the previous chapter the same apostle says, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation for when he is tried, he shall receive the *crown of life*, which the Lord has promised to them that love him”. (1:12) John says, “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even eternal life*.” (1 John 5:25). Paul says this promise of life eternal was made “before the world began but God hath in due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed

unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." (Titus 1:2).

And so the 'great and precious' promise of God, in these latter days, include *the gospel; the kingdom of God; the crown of righteousness (eternal life) the holy Spirit and Jesus Himself*. From those basic promises numberless others are derived and in day-to-day transactions God promises to the faithful the umbrella of His love; His succour in sickness; exaltation to the truly humble; courage to the fearful; abundance to the generous; forgiveness to the penitent; tranquility to the peacemakers; strength to the feeble; final victory to the oppressed; assurance to the perplexed; light for dark days; sufficiency of His grace; protection from dangers seen and unseen; satisfaction to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; rest to all those 'who labour and are heavy laden'; and resurrection to the dead and the slain.

#### Slackness - or Yea and Nay

God's promises are free and are available to all. God is kind, compassionate and most gracious, and all His great and precious promises are based upon His infinite grace. No one prompted God to make them, or could have forced God to make them by arm-twisting or holding a pistol to the head. Many promises made by men have been extracted from them by threats and coercion, but not so with God. Whereas many deserve death and disgrace God gives them Life and Sonship. Nor is God *slack concerning His promises* albeit they are based entirely upon His generosity. The apostle Peter assures us that "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9). In making the point (That God's promises are sure and steadfast) Peter also warns us in this verse that some will perish and will not come to repentance." Thus God's promises are conditional. The crown of life and the kingdom of God mentioned in the quotations from James are, we notice, for those "that love Him", and to those who "endurth temptation and are tried". "Let us therefore", says the writer to Hebrews, "beware lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1), and again, "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36).

We should, perhaps, regard promises as sacred things and treat them with the gravity that God does. To breach them does not show us in very good light and often reflects badly upon the church. In the passage at the beginning of this article (from II Cor. 1:7) Paul hoped that he would not be regarded as one of those 'yea and nay' individuals, whose promises or undertakings might be carried out, but just as surely might *not* be. Concerning promises may we be like our heavenly Father — i.e. not 'yea and nay' but decidedly and most definitely Yea, and YEA again. "For all the promises of God in Him are YEA, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God..."

Alger Fitch in his interesting book "Claiming God's Promises" quotes 'Deacon Jones' as saying "Some folk who sing that song 'Standing on the Promises' are really just sitting on the premises" and that if we are to stand on God's promises, as individuals and congregations, we need to consider again each of the Divine pledges made to us by the Heavenly Father, and consider it as if we were hearing the words for the first time. Quite a thought.

EDITOR

## GLEANINGS

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

### MY PRESENCE

"My presence shall go with thee, and I shall give thee rest." — Exodus 33:14.

This promise was spoken to a disappointed man, a man into whose life there had suddenly come a disheartening disillusionment. The people on whom such high hopes

were set had proved faithless! The tables of the law lay in fragments below the mount! The wrath of God burned against the stiff-necked idolaters! Poor Moses! His disappointment must have been great beyond our knowing. It was to this man, and at this time, that the comforting word was given, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

Am I speaking even now to some disappointed Christian man or woman? You started out with godly intentions and high hopes, but experience has brought disillusionment, denial, unexpected turns of frustration, and now you are disappointed with life? There is an incurable, dull ache in your heart about the way things have transpired? Friend, this promise is specially for you! — "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." God delights to dwell with the disappointed, that their sense of disappointment may be swallowed up in the super-abounding compensation of His heart-satisfying and rest-bringing sympathy and friendship. Disconsolate heart, seek the face of a sympathetic heavenly Father. Ask the fulfilling of His promise. He is with you, and wanting to become so real to you, that disappointment shall be transformed into triumph by His realized presence."

J. Sidlow Baxter

### THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

**"I will arise and go to my father."**

"Thanks to our God, that when the gaudy world has ceased to charm, and when the heart begins to feel its hollowness, all is not lost if penitence and Christ remain to still, to humble, and to soothe the heart that sin has fevered. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." The Jews often made use of this form of speech in order to avoid mentioning the name of God, which they treated with the utmost reverence.

"And he arose, and came to his father." His heart was touched, his mind was made up, so he put his resolution into practice. This was by far the most important step in his whole history. Slighted convictions and broken resolutions are deathbed companions; but all who come to God with a penitent and broken heart will be made welcome. Resolve, and put your resolution into practice at once, to-day, not to-morrow. The way to hell is paved with good resolutions. Misery needs mercy, and mercy's power is as great now as ever."

Peter Mackenzie.

### "WHY WAS NOT THIS OINTMENT SOLD?"

Of these words it has been said that they are perhaps the most vulgar upon record. And if vulgarity consists above everything else of want of feeling, want of insight and fineness of perception; if vulgarity is another name for bad taste, for a kind of bluntness and rudeness and insensibility, then certainly there could be no better or more finished example of it. There is a real and direct relation between our private nature and all the expressions of ourselves; in short, between our morals and our manners. True goodness will always behave itself with seemliness. It may be awkward and ignorant of some conventional requirement; but it will always, even in its awkwardness, show signs of a simple and kind heart ... One who is good at heart has nothing at all to lose by giving himself away. A really good man may not always be able to say the right thing, but he will never say the wrong thing — the wrong thing in the sense of the cruel thing or the bitter thing."

John A. Hutton.

### NOT IN THE CHRISTIAN

"A ship's all right in the sea, so long as the sea is not in the ship."

"A Christian is all right in the world, so long as the world-spirit is not in the Christian."

B.T.I.

**"I CAN DO WHAT I'M TOLD."**

"A little boy entered a shop, in the window of which was shown the familiar card: "Boy wanted." Thinking he was too weak for the work, the gentleman said, "Well, my lad, what can you do?" The boy replied, "I can do what I'm told, sir." This so pleased the shopkeeper that he said, "You'll do, my boy."

T.W.T.

**MORE OF THYSELF**

'Tis what I know of Thee, my Lord and God,  
That fills my soul with peace, my lips with song;  
Thou art my health, my joy, my staff, and rod;  
Leaning on Thee, in weakness I am strong.  
More of Thyself, O show me hour by hour!  
More of Thy glory – O my God and Lord!  
More of Thyself, in all Thy grace and power;  
More of Thy love and truth, Incarnate Word!

H. Bonar.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

**THE WORK AMONGST THE ASIANS**

Dear Brethren,

MAY, 1987.

Greetings in His name. It has been a long time since we sent you a news letter. I apologise for this delay. To catch up with the tide the following report goes right back to July 1986. Please do note that it is not a detailed report of all the work done amongst muslims and by no means covers all aspects of the work of the church here.

*July 1986.*

Due to Brother Clayton and Paul Subhans's meetings we met Javad, a Shia Muslim, who liked to see Khomeini as an answer to all problems. In the last week of July I had a discussion with him about the authenticity and accuracy of the Bible in comparison with the Qur'an. Several meetings followed and in October he had become quite shaken but wanted to study more on his own. We met again in November and this time he wanted me to have a debate with Yusaf Buckas or to reply to Buckas' objections. Without prior warning he phoned me in the last week of November to attend a meeting in Salford University on 30th November, being conducted by Yusaf Buckas (see November).

*August 1986.*

I had a few meetings with several Muslims in Rochdale "Darul Uloom" run by UK Sunni Mission. As usual they attacked the Bible. They claimed that it is changed every ten minutes and that Asian Evangelists are in fact spies, working for the west so as to confuse the Muslims in their religion so that they will not be united in their effort to bring the west into the "straight path of Islam". They could not produce any evidence whatsoever of me being a worker for the Home Office or as a spy or receiving a lot of money for my work from the Zionists or American C.I.A.

Another accusation was that the Bible is a western production and that Christianity is a white man's religion. I had to remind them that Christ was as Muslims also believe, an eastern man and the Bible is an eastern book. Even in the parables of Jesus and in other discussions given in the Bible we clearly see the eastern flavour ...

On the 11th of August in the evening some denominational friends had, without my knowledge, arranged an appointment for me with two English converts to Islam. The discussion was lengthy because other Muslims kept intervening. Some concluded

“You should be tackled by an Allama from Bradford”, and others “We are right where we are and you are right where you are. One day God will decide”. My answer was “Then it will be too late” ...

*September 1986.*

Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal of Manchester Academy ignored our reply to his objections against the Bible and started another series in their monthly magazine about the Gospel of Barnabas. It is not yet completed. I thought of replying to it and asked him if he would be willing to print our reply, he declined and said why not run your own magazine and reply if you can. He has come to know that we don't have that much financial means to run such a task so he is able to play safe.

He has been advertising a forthcoming book “Tahrif Ke yeh Mujrim” claiming that the Bible is not the word of God. I am told that the book is still at the printing press.

*October 1986.*

We decided that support was needed for Brother Allan so that he could help me to put the accumulating research into English, and into reference manual form to make it useful to the whole brotherhood.

A questionnaire was received from Mr. Raza Datto of the “The Society of introducing Jesus of the Qur'an”. This was replied to and from then until now we have been involved in deep written discussions. Whatever the outcome, we will try to print this correspondence, as we think it will be beneficial for those who are interested in this work.

My life story, “Into the Light” was published by Kingsway Publications. I am thankful to the brethren who have made comments and suggestions.

*November 1986.*

An appeal was sent out for the support of Brother Allan. Favourable replies were received. (see February).

On 30th November the Muslim Youth Foundation held a public meeting in Salford University on “Is the Bible the word of God”? A muslim named Javad persuaded the Chairman to allow me to have 30 minutes reply to the arguments raised by Mr. Buckas. When the time came, the opportunity was not given and afterwards we were told that we should hire a hall ourselves and hold such a meeting. So we did. (see January).

*December 1986.*

A busy month for us. Several Muslims on different occasions converged on my house in Oldham. Whenever there is news of the coming of different Moulvi from abroad, some local Muslims get the urge to arrange a meeting between the Moulvi and me. So far only two have had discussions. One was at Glodwick Oldham, with a man from Lucknow India. He was a decent man. The things he did not know he would straight-forwardly admit, “I don't know”. The lay muslims did not like it and many were furious. I had to take his side and point out that nobody, unless he has come across the subject before, could know all the answers.

The other meeting was in Park Road, Oldham at the rear of a shop. The Moulvi, being from a particular popular Islamic sect similar to Pentecostalism in outlook, concentrated on describing the supposed miracles of Muhammad. The interesting thing is that the Qur'an, which is the first authority for a Muslim, does not ascribe to him this kind of power. The Moulvi decided to resort to the Arabic of the Qur'an but was not able to get away with it. I reminded him that the Religious Department of Pakistan had confiscated one of the Urdu translations of the Qur'an because of alleged inaccuracies, and this was an embarrassment to him.

*January 1987.*

The meeting at Salford University on the 11th January, in response to Buckas' meeting. The questions of the integrity of the Bible and the Qur'an were dealt with

by Brother Ashurst and myself, Brother Barry presiding. Questions were answered as time allowed, and all questions submitted were later replied to in writing. The meeting was recorded and cassettes were distributed to interested parties. In response to the meeting, Sam an Egyptian muslim came to us suggesting a debate. We asked him to put his proposals in writing. We are still pursuing it.

*February 1987.*

I had a discussion with a dissident group of the Ahmadiyya sect. It was held in Huddersfield. They wanted to have a public meeting soon after.

Two weeks later they contacted me indirectly through a denominational group to hold a meeting with them the following day, but I already had an appointment in Kentish Town and could not oblige. The situation was explained to them and since then no other appointment has been offered.

In response to our appeal sufficient donations and promises of support had been given by generous brothers, sisters and churches to cover one day a week's income for at least the next twelve months, for brother Ashurst.

Although we had been hoping to raise full time support it was felt that one days help would ensure that at least some useful reference material could be collated and made available. So Brother Allan was encouraged to try and obtain one day a week unpaid leave from his employer. Co-incidentally because Allan refused to do design work for a public bar his boss, half jokingly, in front of all the staff suggested that maybe he should go on a four day week. This provided Allan with the opening he needed to put his request. The boss could hardly refuse and agreed to allow it for twelve months providing the office's work load did not become too great.

So from the beginning of March Brother Allan has been working with me each Monday and we are gradually nibbling into the backlog of material I have accumulated. At the same time he is assisting me with the many queries I get in the post from brother, sisters and muslims in the U.K., the continent, Africa, U.S.A, Australia and Singapore

One day a week is nowhere near enough, but we do thank God for the generosity of brotherhood enabling us to make this start. Very soon we hope to be in a position to make the introductory batch of material available. This would then be supplemented with further material as the work progresses.

*March 1987.*

A group from the Dewsbury Muslim missionary training centre – Darul Uloom, were distributing a leaflet entitled, "What they say about Muhammad", from door to door. The leaflet had quotations by various western authors and statesmen showing how these people praised Muhammad and the religion of Islam.

I invited them in. Six of them came in with their leader whilst the others continued door knocking.

They asked me "Why did you become an apostate?" "What was wrong with Muhammad". I could understand that answering the questions in the way they had been put would be an admission to them that I was an apostate, and if I was to say that this and that was wrong with Muhammad it would raise their anger, and kill the opportunity to enlighten them. So I decided to be positive and said I will tell you why I followed Jesus as my saviour and what was better in his plan of salvation for me. Mostly they listened respectfully whilst I mentioned a few brief things from the Qur'an and the Bible about Jesus and Muhammad comparing the assurance presented in the Bible with the lack of assurance offered in the Qur'an.

In the end they said I was programmed to a certain conclusion and that an Allama from Birmingham named Khalid Alvi was coming to Werneth, he would be able to talk to me. I welcomed the suggestion.

April 1987.

On the evening of the 5th a few of these people (two of them live in the same street where I live) came to see me. They asked me whether I would be willing to have a debate with a Muslim scholar from Muzaffar Garh, Pakistan on the question of the authenticity of the Bible. I agreed but asked them to put it in writing.

They suggested that the meeting should be in the Queen Elizabeth Hall which holds about a thousand people. I told them that since they are making the proposal, they have to bear the expenses.

On the 21st I went to the local Werneth Jamia Mosque to see what was happening about it. There were quite a few Muslims sitting with a visiting Moulvi from Halifax. The lay Muslims took the opportunity to tell the Moulvi about me and this resulted in a lengthy discussion.

At the time I was on the way to buy some vegetables and through this I forgot all about them. After three hours of discussion when I went to the local shop I was told that my wife had already collected them. Trouble!!!

We would like to have been able to report on Muslims being baptised into Christ. It is a difficult but necessary field. We cannot tell how or when it will bear fruit we crave your earnest prayers that the spirit of Christ will prevail in us and in the hearers.

We are grateful for your support and interest whether in prayers or financially. Your fellowship in Christ is beyond value.

The brother and sisters in Manchester send you greetings.

Yours in Christ on behalf of Allan and myself.

Steven Masood,  
119 Edward Street, Oldham, OL9 7SX.




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"I enjoy singing hymns but I am finding that there are some hymns the words of which I cannot truthfully sing. I would like to know your thoughts on this subject because I feel that there must be many more like me?"**

I believe the questioner to be right when he/she says that many Christians find difficulty in singing the words of some hymns. Furthermore, I believe that some close their minds to the words; providing they are singing a pleasing melody. I would say it all hinges on what we believe the purpose of hymn-singing to be. If the purpose is to make a 'joyful noise' unto the Lord then we probably succeed admirably; if, on the other hand, the words we sing are a conscious response to the teaching of the Lord and his Apostles, then the lyric of the hymn or song becomes important. We will look at the general question of hymn-singing, and then we will examine some of the hymns that I personally have difficulty with.

#### **Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs**

In his letter to Ephesus and Colossae Paul mentions the activity we are considering, "... but be filled with the spirit; speaking to yourselves (each other) in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph.5:18:19). In the Colossian passage he says, "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col.3:16). We need to comment briefly about these three elements.



Psalms are defined as 'sacred songs'. 'Sacred' means 'consecrated, dedicated, reserved, to some person or purpose'. Consequently, we find the devout Jews on the night of the celebration of the Passover singing Psalms 113-118 which became known as the 'Hallel of Egypt'. It was praise to Jehovah God for His great mercy in bringing the nation out of their bondage in Egypt.

The psalms express the gratitude of people to God, and their utter reliance upon Him. James says, "Is any merry (cheerful, in good spirits) let him sing psalms" (James 5:12). Some of the Psalms are Messianic; shortly before he left the earth Jesus said, "... all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44).

Hymns are either songs of praise or prayer to God. We now use them as metrical compositions in our services, without instrumental accompaniment. Relative to our question, it may be as well to point out that many of the hymns we sing have been composed by people who may not have great doctrinal affinity with Churches of Christ, hence the difficulty in coming to terms with the thoughts the lyrics express. If you examine the words of some hymns and compare them with, say, the words and sentiments expressed by our late brother G. Y. Tickle in his hymns, then you will see what I mean.

The Greek word for 'song' is ODE, an ode, and in the N.T. it is always used of praise to God or His Christ (See Eph. 5:19; Col:3.16). The word 'ode' may be used for any type of song, religious or otherwise, and this is why the adjective 'spiritual' is used in the passages mentioned. Revelation 15:3 mentions 'the song of Moses and the Lamb', and if we refer to hymn 181 in Great Songs, we shall find the chorus suggesting that we (the saved) shall sing "the song of Moses and the Lamb" when we rest "in that fair and happy land". I know brethren who believe that the Revelation of John has been fulfilled in the past, and so the basis of this hymn, expressing futuristic ideas, would present some difficulty.

#### Other Hymns

The sentiments of hymns are usually based on incidents related to passages of Scripture; one such is the hymn "There were ninety and nine". This hymn opens with the words, "There were ninety and nine that safely lay, in the shelter of the fold". Both Matthew and Luke record this, but neither of them mention a 'fold'; as a matter of fact, Luke records, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost" (Luke 15:4. See also Matt. 18:12,13). Now obviously, we can agree with the sentiments expressed, but it seems to me that the composer is exercising 'poetic licence'. This hymn is a very interesting one to analyse.

Another hymn which I find a little confusing is one by Fanny J. Crosby entitled "Pass Me Not"; it is stated to be based on Psalm 51, although the connection, to my mind, is a little bit loose. The first verse goes, "Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, Hear my Humble cry; While on the other Thou art calling, Do not pass me by". We know, of course, that the 51st Psalm expresses the contrition of David after being rebuked by Nathan over the affair of Bathsheba and her husband. He knows that he has sinned greatly in the despicable use of them both, but we can applaud his truth and perception when he says, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight". Now if this hymn is intended to show the sinner's total degradation and need of salvation consequent upon that sinful state, then I cannot conceive of any situation in which the Lord would pass anybody by. As I sing this song, I get a mental picture of the Lord agonising in the Garden and on the Cross for the whole of humanity, and then being so capricious as to pick out some, and pass others by. Maybe I have misinterpreted the whole thing, but that is the way I feel, rightly or wrongly.

A hymn which has always caused me serious misgivings is the hymn "I come to

the Garden Alone". The words of this hymn conjure up a mental picture of a fairly extensive garden (I haven't the faintest idea which 'garden') in the cool, quiet hours of an early summer morning; dew shimmers on the rose petals and a benign fragrance fills the air. Into this idyllic scene the Lord enters; He tells the one with whom He is walking and talking that He, Jesus, assures him/her of personal salvation. Such is the scene as it is depicted.

This hymn disturbs me because of its non-Gospel overtones. The Gospel states that it is the sinner who, in faith and obedience, moves towards the Saviour: the hymn suggests, to the undiscerning sinner, that the Lord selects **him by choice** without the intervention of the Gospel. If we take the other view that the hymn depicts the **Christian** receiving assurance in the way suggested, then the thought is equally confusing. Assurance comes through the indwelling Holy Spirit and the word (See Rom. 8:14-17).

Some hymns, because of the intensity of the commitment inherent in them, cause difficulty to the singers because they realise that they may be promising something to God that they are not able to fulfil. Two such hymns are, "Take My Life and let it Be", and "I Surrender All". Both of these hymns are perfectly Spiritual, calling as they do for a totality of commitment from us in line with the commitment which Jesus made for us. In the first ecstatic moments of giving ourselves to Christ we have probably felt that we could give **everything** to Him, but in the harsh reality of everyday life we may have faltered from those high ideals; this is perfectly natural, and sometimes we may ask ourselves if the hymns ask more of us than the Lord knows we can achieve. You see, the hymn-writer is a poet, and he occupies the rarified atmosphere of the Muse; maybe in his appreciation of the True God he can scale the Olympian heights; we lesser mortals, who have to grapple with the complexities of practical living, may be conscious of our inability to meet the import of the elevated thoughts. But we may have the Lord on our side, and so we struggle on with His help. Maybe one day we shall be able to sing, "Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold", but in the meantime, perhaps we shall feel that we cannot make such a promise to God in song.

I end on a positive note. A great deal of credit is due to those faithful brethren who select our hymns and compile our hymnbooks. They do strive for purity in our praise to God. A hymn which illustrates this quite well is, "I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace". In Great Songs there are four verses to this hymn; one verse has been left out and that reads, "I know not how this saving faith, to me he did impart; Nor how believing in his word, wrought peace within my heart". If we read Romans 10 we shall see there precisely how saving faith comes. There is no magical process. We know. How do we Know? Because whatever we do is a conscious decision on our part; as Paul put it, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God".

So those are my thoughts on the subject, and I thank the questioner for leading my thoughts in this direction. Christians are, generally speaking, quite discerning, and I feel sure that we shall continue to exercise this discernment in whatever way we try to please God.

(All questions, please, to

Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan Lancs. WN3 6ES)

## ANCHOR OF THE SOUL

What a delightful theme this is to meditate upon, particularly so when we read this passage in the Hewbrew letter chapter 6 verses 19-20; "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest

forever, after the order of Melchisedec.”

Every sailing vessel carries an anchor which is useful for stopping the course or fixing a vessel at sea. In the above passage hope is likened to such an anchor keeping the soul steady in the sea of life. We remember this when we sing that grand chorus –

“We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
steadfast and sure while the billows roll.  
Fastened to the rock which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour’s Love.”

### Drifting

Sometimes an anchor may lose its hold; then the vessel will drift and be imperilled. We are reminded (in Hebrews 2:1) “To give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should drift away from them.” When the ship is drifting, if the anchor is dropped anew, the ship is stayed.

When the soul loses its hold on Jesus, it is driven and tossed hither and thither, “carried about by every wind and doctrine,” by the storms and tempests of life, amid the rock of pride and the quicksand of error. Then the only remedy is repentance and faith in Jesus’ pardoning grace and love, and casting the anchor anew. If the Christian firmly casts his anchor, he will weather every storm and tempest and at last sail joyfully into the heavenly harbour.

### Life’s ‘Ups and Downs’

Let us remember that even a boat at anchor is not free from motion, even if the sea be calm. A sudden swell and the vessel will roll; sometimes causing alarm amongst the passengers. So are all believers, though secure in Jesus, yet jostled by the rolling billows of adversity. They may be troubled on every side, yet not distressed, have fightings within and fears without, yet still enabled by His grace to “fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life.” The cable of **faith**, to which the anchor of **hope** is fastened, is stronger than all human hopes and trust; and keep the soul secure amid all perils, even in death.

I remember reading somewhere a wonderful illustration of this passage we are meditating upon. The following is a rough paraphrase of it.

“In years gone by when a ship was trying to enter harbour, being buffeted by heavy seas, the captain would order out the longboat carrying the ship’s anchor, and the seamen would work hard to get into the harbour. When they were able to do this, they would drop the anchor within the harbour and signal to the ship. The captain would then order his crew to pull on the windlass and the ship would gradually be pulled into the harbour and to safety.” Jesus has entered into Heaven’s harbour and has dropped there the anchor of hope attached to which is the cable of faith. We must all pull on the cable but, one day, these earthly vessels of ours will, we pray, reach that safe anchorage in the heavens. May God, by His grace, help us all to get there.

Hope’s anchor, holding in the stormy strife;  
Is stronger as the days go by;  
We feel the throbbings of immortal life  
Grow stronger as the days go by.”

Tom Kemp, Hindley.

## “CHAT WITH AN OLD-PATHER”

I read with some surprise the comments of brother Joe Nisbet, in the April issue of the ‘Scripture Standard’, under the above heading (regarding the interview between bro. Ian Davidson and the late bro. Tom Nisbet). Brother Joe said, “From these statements (of bro. Tom Nisbet) it might be implied that the school in Corby is involved in modernist teaching in relation to scriptures. Nothing could be further from the truth,

it would be an unjust reflection on the Elders of the Church in Corby and on the whole teaching complement of the school of this inference was not cleared up. No modernist teaching is indulged in, or would be allowed in this school. I trust that the readership of the 'Scripture Standard' will accepted this assurance with the same sincerity in which it is given just for the record."

Brother Joe is entitled to his opinion, but 'just for the record' I have personally, met two Corby School students and talked with them on bible subjects, and in my opinion found them to be what I would describe as 'modernist'. A few years passed between meeting the first and the second student, but during last year (1986) I met the second student and found him much the same as the first one, i.e. as near the truth as some of the denominations they seem to want to copy. With this latter student I brought up the matter of women worshipping with uncovered heads and he said, 'It's a controversial subject'. I replied that it never used to be a controversial subject in this country amongst churches of Christ and that this was just a modern catch-phrase the denominations used about baptism etc.

Amongst churches of Christ in this country this is a 'modernist' doctrine - that sisters can worship with uncovered heads, because "her hair is her covering". (I Cor. 11:15). Surely if this is what verse 15 means then each brother would have to shave off his hair to "uncover his head". The Corby student said to me, "If a woman is going to cover her head then none of her hair should be showing." I replied that my bible says that a woman's head should be covered, but does not say that all her hair should be covered.

One might suppose that these students may have misunderstood their tutors at Corby School but within the last year this writer has also, on two separate occasions, sat in worship with a Corby School teacher (and his wife). On the first occasion the teacher's wife sat in worship with an uncovered head. On the latter occasion the other teacher's wife sat in worship with head covered. Thus I was confused and bewildered at exactly what is taught at Corby School. Perhaps "We can do our own thing" in this as well.

I feel very strongly about this and believe that for teachers of God's word to say, 'That it is a controversial subject' (when the word of God raises no controversy about it) cast doubts upon the authority and integrity of God's inspired word. I have even heard some say, "Well, it's only mentioned once in the scriptures and isn't all that important". Well now, just think of all the things mentioned **once** in the scriptures. Adam and Eve were only told once not to eat from the forbidden tree. Giving to the Lord's treasury is only mentioned once, as such, (in I Cor. 16:2) and so perhaps we should not take it very seriously. If students emerge from any teaching institution in doubt on these important matters it augers ill for the future of the Lord's church. The Lord prayed for unity. The church seems to be divided on 'controversial issues' which have no right to be 'controversial'. Let us reflect on this - **since when** did some of these issues suddenly become controversial in this country? Who has made them 'controversial'?

Dear brethren, we are all members of the church for which Christ died, and as His church we should be subject in all things to Him. It is the duty of every member to make it a Glorious church, without spot, wrinkle or blemish. Let not selfish interest make us mar the purity of the Bride of Christ. There are still some, wittingly or otherwise, who are tearing the church apart, and brethren who should be embracing one-another are being prevented and set at naught. Let all things be done decently and in order; but also in accordance with His word.

Ivor Carey, Bristol.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

|         |                 |               |
|---------|-----------------|---------------|
| Aug. 2  | Ex. 20: 1-17    | John 7: 1-24  |
| Aug. 9  | Isaiah 1: 10-31 | John 7: 25-36 |
| Aug. 16 | Michh 5         | John 7: 37-53 |
| Aug. 23 | Dan. 9: 1-19    | John 8: 1-30  |
| Aug. 30 | Gen. 22         | John 8: 31-59 |

### THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS

Consider carefully some of the things John revealed about Jesus in these two chapters.

His teaching was from God – 7:16, 8:28.

He Himself was from God, and God sent Him – 7:29, 8:42.

No man ever spoke like Him – 7:46.

He is the Light of the World – 8:12.

The Father bore witness of Him – 8:18.

He came from heaven – 8:23.

Belief in Him is a matter of life – 8:24.

He gives true freedom – 8:36.

He is the "I AM" – 8:58.

I want to point out something very important here. John later wrote in his Gospel record: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name. (20: 30-31). The titles "Messiah" and "Son of God" have to be understood as the Jews then used and understood them. The Messiah was the anointed one, and the one in whom all the promises of God would be fulfilled. The Son of God was the one equal with the Father. In other words, He was Immanuel, God with us, Jehovah in the flesh. Brethren, forget about the meaning a lot of cults and sects place upon these titles to-day. What matters is their meaning in New Testament times. May everyone use these titles as God intended.

### Verdicts on Jesus – and the truth

In this portion of Scripture, we have var-

ious verdicts on Jesus. He was a good man (7:12); He was a deceiver (7:12); He had a demon (7:20,8:48); He was the Prophet (7:40); He was a dynamic personality (7:46).

Actually, the word "verdict" is from two latin words which literally mean "to speak the truth". Jesus made a statement on truth in this portion: "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (8:31-32). I notice one or two translations capitalise the word truth. I think they are correct. You see, the truth here, of which Jesus speaks, is Himself. Remember His words to Thomas: "I am the Way, the Truth and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Truth is a person. Truth is Jesus Christ.

One of the best articles Carl Ketcherside ever penned was that entitled **Spiritual Argonauts** in which he outlined his concept of truth. It helped me a lot. He wrote "In the very context in which Jesus says we will know the truth and it will make us free, He explains his statement in these words, 'If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed'. The purpose of the written word is to guide us to the Living World, and inform us to walk in love as He loved us. Jesus is the great liberator. He sets the captive believes in absolute truth because he believes in an infallible God. (Notice, it is a question of faith not merely one of rationalization.)

no longer believe in absolute truth. To many everything is relative, including truth. (Francis Schaeffer has pointed this out in many of his books.) The Christian, however, is different. He believes in absolute truth because he believes in an infallible God. (Notice, it is a question of faith not merely one rationalization.)

### The Devil

If God is Truth, then the devil is Falsehood. "You are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth,

because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie (only a personality can speak), he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (8:44). (Note the context of Jesus' words.)

Here we have a clear insight into the nature of satan. It comes from Jesus Himself. Personally, I think the study of satan is a subject sadly overlooked. (I shall let you into a little secret. I have a plan of special annual studies dating to 1992. The devil is earmarked for 1990 between **The Background of the New Testament** (1989) and **The Evidence of Christianity** (1991). I am looking forward to learning more of the only real enemy I have in this world. I want to know more about his strategies so I can counter them. I want to read more of his defeats so I can take courage from them. I want to learn more about his end (in hell) so I can prize the contrast with Jesus and heaven.)

### Sin

Jesus said to those who had brought the adulterous woman to Him: "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her" (8:7). John went on to reveal: "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last" (8:9). They knew their guilt. But notice what Jesus later asked: "Which of you convicts me of sin? (8:46). He indeed was the guiltless one. He was the sinless one. He was the Son of the Living God.

Sin is **THE** problem of the world. It is of such magnitude that it brought Jesus here. Paul wrote: "Christ Jesus came into this world to save (heal) sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). The tragedy of our modern times is that sin has been watered down to such an extent that many people no longer recognise sin as sin. They have been brain-washed into thinking that sinful behaviour is an acceptable style of life. In reality, of course, it has nothing to do with life, but everything to do with death. Sin separates man from God. It crushes the human spirit. It

leaves man weak, helpless, hopeless and in the dark. It produces fear, great fear. It is slavery, as Paul often describes it. But thanks be to God that Jesus, the Great Emancipator, came to liberate the slaves. True freedom, the freedom from sin, is in Him (8:32). What a message for a ripped-off, mixed-up, messed-up world!

### The Jews in Jesus' day.

Why were so many Jews hostile to Jesus? Why did so many not see Jesus for what he was – their promised Messiah? After all, He had done and said so many wonderful things in their presence (Acts 2:22). Yet, in the end, Jesus' very own people condemned Him as a fraud and an impostor. Incredible! To me, it is one of the greatest tragedies of history.

I recall the words of the Jews at the time of Jesus' trial. Matthew wrote: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see you to it. Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us, and on our children" (27: 24-25). I hardly need tell you, dear reader, what happened subsequently. A few decades on Jerusalem fell and hundreds of thousands perished. This was despite all the warnings, even from Jesus Himself. Truly, there is none so deaf as he who will not hear.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Bokmakierie, R.S.A. :** Once again its both a joy and a privilege for me to send you a news account on behalf of the congregation where I am labouring at Bokmakierie Athlone area: It was at our usual April Special One Day Gospel meeting" held on the 26th April and my theme for the meeting was "HOW WILL YOU BE IDENTIFIED"? the

lessons presented a.m. and p.m. were "Why Is The Gospel Important?" and "Will Your Name Be Found in The Book Of Life"? At the morning service we had almost 50 but in the evening we had 60 visitors and members, some members from one of our local congregations.

However, after the invitation hymn at the evening service a married lady came forward expressing her desire to be baptized, and along with her were 3 young teenage boys, one of them was the son of this lady. And one of the other 2 was a grandson of the lady in whose home we have our cottage meetings and Bible Study weekly.

So to the praise and the Glory of God, our hopeful prayers about those who were thinking to give their lives to Christ, had become one of the A REALITY ON THE 26th April 1987, so that up to date since I had given my services to the congregation in 1979 we have witnessed 36 baptisms. What a joy for a mother and son to join hands together with THAT blessed HOPE of Eternity. I am aware that there are more precious souls thinking about their soul salvation and we are praying that having witnessed those 4 souls turning to the Lord, may have touched their hearts".

T. W. Hartle.

## OBITUARY

**Slamannan:** The Church in Slamannan regrets to announce the death of yet another member and faithful attender, Bro Colin Sneddon Junr. who passed away in tragic circumstances on 18th May 1987 at 44 years of age.

Since becoming a member of the Lord's body in his youth our brother was a regular attender and example to others up until the death of his mother, to whom he was devoted, some four years ago. After her passing he did not seem to be able to cope and his mental faculties deteriorated leading eventually to his death.

During his life he brought a lot of happiness and joy to a lot of people, at work, play and in fellowship with kindred spirits. He always considered his strength to be his ability to communicate with others. His nervous disposition made it extremely difficult for him to exhort the brethren publicly but his example and word fitly spoken in private conversation were nevertheless effective. Our brother used the talent he possessed to good effect.

Our thoughts and sympathies go out at this time to the immediate family and friends he has left behind mourning his passing. The words of Annie Johnson Flint spring to mind at this time in an attempt to find words to express our thoughts:

God hath not promised  
Sun without rain  
Joy without sorrow,  
Peace without pain,  
But God hath promised  
Strength for the day,  
Rest for the labour,  
Light for the way  
Grace for the trials,  
Help from above,  
Unfailing sympathy,  
Undying love

Bro. Colin's favourite hymn which he repeatedly asked the congregation in Slamannan to sing, includes these words:

All that thrills my soul is Jesus  
He is more than life to me

Colin has gone to be with his Lord and may we echo these words:

For ever with the Lord: amen so  
let it be,  
Life from the dead is in that word  
'tis immortality.

John B. Wilson, (Secretary)

## EVANGELIST WANTED (Part-time or full-time)

Greeting to you in the name of our gracious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from His church in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

We are a very young congregation, just over a year old, with four members worshipping regularly on the first day of the week. We hope to be more effective for the Lord in the North East region and that the Lord may add more souls to his church.

We are desperately seeking an evangelist to work here on a full-time basis to tend and 'feed the lambs'. Alternatively, we hope the churches in Scotland and the Midlands could send "faithful men who could teach others also" to teach/preach in Newcastle on a monthly or fortnightly basis for the weekends while we are seeking a full-time evangelist.

We have put a similar advertisement in both the Christian Worker and the Scripture Standard about three months ago but sadly NO ONE responded. We understand that for anyone to make a commitment to serve as a full-time evangelist in a new place requires careful consideration. But for the Churches in Scotland and the Midlands to send someone to Newcastle on a monthly basis would not be asking too much.

We often hear of wonderful responses from the churches for their financial aid but to ask for spiritual aid, everyone seems to be quiet or unable to help. Is the Lord's church dying away

or is their works neither cold or hot? If the labourers are few why is it that there are a few churches where they have more than one full-time evangelist working for a particular congregation?

We are not writing this to put blame on anyone. Maybe the blame is very much on ourselves for not doing enough and lacking in the faith for it is written that "... The prayer of righteous man has great power in its effect." (James 5:16).

Therefore, please support us in your prayers and, if you can help and are interested to work in Newcastle on a full-time be a part-time basis please write to:

The Church of Christ  
29 Grosvenor Place  
Jesmond  
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

**COPIER FOR SALE**

The church at Slamannan has a wet photocopier (AB Dick) and approximately 5,000 sheets of copy paper to sell. Any brother or church interested should contact me at the following address:

24 Owendale Avenue,  
Bellshill, Lanarkshire.  
ML4 1NS  
Tel. No. (0698) 746874  
(John B. Wilson, Sec.)

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