

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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LORD, HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF

Few of us can be unaware of the case of Louise Woodward, the British 'au pair' girl, on trial in a USA court, for the alleged murder of a small boy who was in her care. The jury have just found her guilty but there seems to be some confusion as to what the penalty will be. It is recorded in this morning's edition of the "Daily Mail" that the father of Louise, (reported to be a committed Christian, says that the recent court trial has "severely tested his faith", and, that "if anything happens to Louise, and this charade (the trial) carries on for much longer, I can't continue to believe that a fair God exists." And so, once again, God might get the blame for a perceived injustice. While having a great deal of sympathy for the parents of Louise, and indeed for everyone concerned in the case, it is disappointing to hear that Mr. Woodward's faith in God may depend upon the outcome of a court trial.

Criminal courts, after all, are not renowned as places which always impart justice, much less fairness, and miscarriages of justice are quite commonplace. Much can go wrong during a trial. The case might be badly presented; the witnesses might prevaricate; jury members might be gullible or prejudiced; the judge might be having a bad time with his ulcer or arthritis. Any or all of those things could happen. Indeed there have been an alarming number of miscarriages of justice in this country recently; police witnesses and juries attracting considerable notoriety. In short, it would seem quite possible for any person, in the USA or in this country, to receive a verdict in court which could be perceived to be most unfair, due entirely to human frailty, God having had no part in it whatsoever. Mr. Woodward will, quite naturally, be suffering greatly from anxiety and stress at this difficult time, but surely he must know that God can't be blamed for what may appear to be a bad, or unpopular, decision from a court of law.

Even Christ's own apostles fell victim to some very bad court decisions, where the question of "fairness" was not given much priority, but the apostles did not seem to link this circumstance with a non-existent God, but rather sang God's praises, even in the prison. And, after all, Jesus Himself had a travesty of a trial, and after a lifetime of doing good, was crucified between two thieves.

FAITH

"Faith" is such a small word yet it divides the world's population into two vast segments: believers and unbelievers: i.e. those who truly believe in God and those who don't. "Faith in Christ" creates a further great division amongst the believers, and differentiates between those who not only believe in God but also accept that God has a Son, Christ Jesus; and those who don't. Jews and Moslems, by and large, believe in God but don't believe in Jesus Christ. In John 14:1 Jesus said to the Jews, ". . . Ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

There are countless millions who live and die as complete unbelievers, in a faithless condition (without faith in Jesus Christ). Doubtless many believers will be condemned on Judgement Day **but the unbeliever is condemned already** (John 3:18) "**because he hath not believed in the only begotten Son of God**". When Jesus was here in person He referred to a 'faithless generation' in His own time and there have been many such generations since, and I suppose many still to come. Thus it is vitally important to spread the testimony concerning Jesus to as many as we can, so that all may have the opportunity to have faith in Him. This is how faith comes: by hearing and believing the facts and testimony concerning Christ. If there is no testimony there certainly can never be faith.

HOW FAITH COMES

There is no great theological mystery about faith, as some would have us believe, or that faith is something bestowed miraculously on some while it passes others by. God is no respecter of persons and does not give messages to some while withholding them from others. From time to time we hear of 'testimonies' which describe blinding lights, visions at night and whisperings in the ear. Indeed a friend of mine, in the Faith Mission used to tell me that he got special messages from God and for a while I was impressed. I later discovered, however, that these 'messages' came to him by means of his shutting his eyes, opening his Bible suddenly and placing his finger somewhere on the page. He then opened his eyes and read the passage under his finger. So much for special 'messages' from God. In actual fact the N.T. is quite clear about how faith will come to us, and Paul (in Rom. 10:17), says "**Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**". In the previous verses he asks, "**How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?**?" Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, did not seem to know anything about flashing lights, visions or whisperings in the ear. Faith comes by hearing the testimony of God's witnesses concerning Christ as contained in God's word. This faith is essentially the same as the faith we exhibit in any thing else. Faith is simply **belief, trust and confidence** and it can apply to anything. We might have faith in a person (the Germans had a strong but misplaced faith in Hitler); we might have faith in a politician (if we are naive enough); we might have faith in our medical adviser: we might have faith in our teacher; faith, in each case, being the same. It is **the object** of our faith that makes the difference. Alexander Campbell in his "*Christian System*" has a wonderful chapter on this subject and describes the **Measure, Quality, and Power** of faith and shows that it is **the object** of our faith that qualifies all the rest and is determined by the reputation of the source. We have faith, for instance, in a promissory note from the Bank of England but we might not have any faith in an I.O.U. from the scrap-merchant in the next street. We would have more faith (trust) in a man who had risked his life to save us than we would in someone who had tried to ruin us. It is also true that we might believe certain facts equally strongly (faith) but the effects of that belief upon us might differ. We might believe equally strongly that Caesar was assassinated as we would believe that Jesus was crucified but **the effects** upon us of these two events would differ. **The object** of our faith also regulates the **degree and quality** of our faith, and as Brother Campbell says, it takes less faith to believe that a 95-year-old man, recently very sick, has died than it takes to believe that another man has lived to the ripe old age of 140 years. The testimony has to be stronger in the latter case as does **the confirmation** of testimony. Thus the testimony concerning Jesus Christ is exhaustive, flawless, comprehensive and quite incontrovertable. We notice too that God also confirmed the testimony (with wonders, divers miracles and signs of following.) Supernatural events required

supernatural confirmation. The Gospel according to John contains a great deal about faith and ends by John saying, "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 ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name". (John 20:30). These things were written that we might believe. To disbelieve them is to make God a liar. (1 John 5:10).

FAITH IS OUR STARTING POINT

Faith, where it exists, stems from our first real encounter with the claims of Jesus. Paul, in this 11th Chapter of the Hebrews, reminds us (v.5) that Enoch didn't die, but was translated directly into heaven, because He pleased God so much, and that without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore, if we desire to please God we must have faith "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Thus if we come to God it must be upon that solid basis; that we believe in God (and Christ) and have confidence in His promises. This, then is faith and is the starting place for any fellowship with Christ. The apostle Peter exhorts that we should, with great diligence, add to our faith such things as virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. But we must start with faith.

Once conscious of having faith in Christ, what then? If our faith is real, and of the required intensity, it will prompt us to change our way of life (to repentance) and to urge us to obey Christ in the new birth (baptism) and to be immersed for the remission of our sins, and to rise to walk in newness of life (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6). Once we have such a faith can we lose it? Can it wane? Can it be increased? Can we measure its strength or weakness? These are all questions which should concern us and, keeping in mind that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen" (R.V.), I think we can learn about faith by looking at some of the remarks made on the subject by Jesus and His apostles. For instance, Jesus once referred to the disciples as "Ye of little faith" whereas Stephen was a man "full of faith." Jesus reckoned the faith of a certain Roman Centurion (Gentile) was greater than any He had encountered amongst the people of God (the Jews). Paul talks to Timothy about 'faith unfeigned' and about those who would "cast off their first faith," and he also mentions the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus whose false teaching would "overthrow the faith of some." Paul also talks of some who were "weak in the faith" and of some who, although poor in material things, were "rich in faith." When Jesus cured the two blind men He touched their eyes saying, "according to your faith be it unto you" and their eyes were opened. By contrast when Jesus' own disciples were frightened by the storm He asked them, "Where is your faith?" Paul hoped for "an increase" in the faith of the Corinthians, and prayed that he might be able "to perfect that which was lacking" in the faith of the Thessalonians. With reference to the latter, he later, in his second epistle to these Thessalonians, thanked God that their faith "grew exceedingly" and their love abounded to one another. Thus our faith can be little or it can be lacking; it can be great or it can be cast off; it can be overthrown or it can be increased; it can grow or wither. Faith, it seems, varies on strength and quality in the person and is not something which is inevitable but is something which can be increased "exceedingly" if we work on it. It depends on us. What then is the litmus test of our personal faith? How do we know if our faith is doughty or dwarfish; mighty or miniscule? How can we tell?

EVEN THE DEMONS BELIEVE

It seems we are indebted to James for the answer, for James warns us that our faith may not only be diminished but may actually be dead; dead as a corpse. James (Chap.

2:18) addresses those who may think that faith and works are two completely separate and distinct virtues, of equal worth, and that a person is at liberty to choose one or the other as it pleases. He shows that this constitutes a complete misunderstanding of the position, and that the two (faith and works) are inseparably linked. It is not a question of "Thou hast faith and I have works," but "I will show my faith by my works." Thus our 'works' (or lack of them) is the true measure of our faith. i.e. no works - no faith. Faith is not, of course, only a question of us believing certain facts but includes 'assurance' or confidence, or trust, in the author of our faith. If that confidence is really present it will prompt us to carry out Christ's will (works). After all, says Jesus, "the devils believe." If we believe in Jesus we share that belief with many others, including the demons. The thing which separates us from the demons is the fact that we allow our faith to work by love. Our love for Christ induces us to allow our faith to have expression in deeds for Him. But James goes farther and says that unless our faith culminates in good works it is not true faith at all (or is deceased faith, which is the same thing). "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead, being alone." James then quotes the case of Abraham as a classic case of where the actions (works) of Abraham provided proof of his extremely formidable faith. The trust in God that Abraham had, extended even to his preparedness to slay his only son, for whom, he had already waited so long and patiently. Paul (in Heb. Chap. 11) refers also to Abraham when he quotes extensively from that great Hall of Fame in the O.T. of all those many 'worthies', 'immortalised' in the chapter by virtue of the actions their faith made them take. Some have suggested that Paul and James were not in agreement on the subject of faith but surely this is nonsense and Paul merely complemented James in that he said works without faith (in Christ) would not justify; whereas James taught that faith (in Christ) without actions (works) would not justify. Faith is really an N.T. theme (for the word hardly ever appears in the O.T.) and refers specifically to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless these men of faith of the O.T., catalogued in Heb. 11, are offered to us as excellent examples to follow. Paul, here, describes them as a 'great cloud of witnesses' looking down upon us and 'cheering us on' in the great arena of life, applauding our successes and saddened by our failures. "Wherefore", says Paul, "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith and although we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (these men of great faith) yet we must "look unto Jesus" as the ultimate example of faith and works towards God. As Moses was faithful in all his house so was Jesus entirely "faithful to Him that appointed Him." How healthy is our faith?

O For a faith that will not shrink
 Though pressed by many a foe,
 That will not tremble on the brink
 Of poverty or woe.

EDITOR.

(Just prior to going to press, the Judge in the Louise Woodward trial has overturned the verdict of the Jury and, "moved by his conscience" has reduced the conviction for murder (with a 15 year prison sentence) to manslaughter. He has also decided to free Louise from jail. This verdict, which has "astounded the world" and has been described as "miraculous" by the family and friends of Louise, will obviously come as a great relief to Mr. Woodward and will hopefully put his faith in God back on track.)

MAN IN THE BIBLE

The Bible is the result of both human and divine activity. More than one Bible reader has been embarrassed by the activities of people described in Scripture. Somehow they think that because the Bible is the most spiritual of books it therefore should record the lives of perfect men who are models of human behaviour. Anything less than that would be below the dignity of a spiritual book.

This is not a new problem for Bible readers. The early Christian writers also faced this incongruity and their comments on Scripture were often evidences of their prejudices. Instead of commenting on the actual morality of the persons they turned instead to allegorization. The result was a marvel of fantasy rather than a study and explanation of Scripture.

JUDGING THE POTTER

"But", you say, "even God in the Old Testament is not as ideal as he ought to be." The God of the Bible is not the ivory-tower God of the Greek philosophers. Rather God is an intensely personal Being, one who is alive, fearsome, active and sometimes unpredictable. Otherwise He would be just the "read-out" of our fallible, finite human programming. The Bible message tells what God has done - not what we think God ought to have done. The Scripture passes judgement on us when we hasten to "judge the Potter", criticizing His actions as if we ourselves were God! Shall the pot say to the Potter, "Why hast thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:20).

ONLY ONE IS PORTRAYED AS PERFECT

The Bible does not set forth men as the examples of perfect behaviour. Indeed, the Bible contains only one ideal human example! Neither Moses nor David, nor even Paul, are said to be above reproach. The human race is not much advanced today beyond the moral activities of Lot's daughters (Gen. 19:30-38). If you read current novels or watch Television or Cinema you are fully aware of that!

One important thing to keep in mind while reading the Old Testament is that the individual is measured by his effect on the clan. The individualist is a modern entity rather than an ancient "left-over". The behaviour of the individual was judged by the effect he had on his circle of society, rather than on his intention or motivation in the action. The community was absolute, the individual was subordinate. Whereas we might think a thing to be heroic, or terrible, the community evaluated the action as it related to itself. Occasionally the individual did break out of the mould, and often the "break" brought more violence that would have otherwise been demonstrated if directed by the clan. Religion provided a motive to break out of the ordinary, and occasionally the individual did brutal things in the name of God or in his zeal for God (see the activity of Jehu in 2 Kings 10:18-27).

A FRANK PICTURE OF HUMANITY

The Bible is not above truthfulness. It frankly portrays humanity in weakness. The fact that it does says to us that God is interested in men of flesh and blood, passion and sinfulness. God is a Father who deals with wayward children. We can see ourselves in those people. We wrestle with the same forces that lined up against them: Joseph dealt with the hatred of his brothers; Moses grew angry with Israel and struck the rock; Samson was the strongman with feet of clay; Rahab was the prostitute with faith in Israel's God; Abigail was the attractive and quick witted wife of a brute.

DAVID - THE BEST AND THE WORST

Standing above and below all of them is David, uniting in one person the best and the worst in morality and spirituality. What is David's charm? Is it his triumphs or his failures? Is it the beauty of his repentance or the innocency of his background? Do you

marvel at the depths to which he fell or the heights to which his love for God led him? Few who went before him gave any hint of the character of the Messiah - but David, sins notwithstanding, more completely prefigured the Christ than all others. At once he was sensitive to God, trusting in His promises, peace-loving and heroic, plus sensual, rebellious, warlike and cowardly. His family life is not to be held up as "Christian behaviour". His slaughter of the Philistines is not what we are to "meditate upon day and night". Certainly his activity with Bathsheba is shameful. But that is where the paradox is struck. He is so entirely human and mundane, yet so godly and spiritual is his eager and importunate clamouring for salvation and forgiveness from the very depths of his soul.

There would be not another person like him again who stood so near to the two basic patterns of man: the evil man who is so easily twisted and moulded into a sinner, and the saint who struggles on so courageously after the bitter experiences of the "flesh" have won for a time. Christ is called "Son of David" (Matt. 21:15). That is shocking, isn't it? The spiritual reader does not need to be reminded that Christ is the side which is closest to God - close to God because of the bitter and sad experiences which David learned "by suffering as a son" and "learning obedience by the things he suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

IS GOD TESTING US

This may not solve the dilemma created in the mind of the reader of Scripture when Biblical persons are described as less than ideal humanity. God may have used them in order to "try" us: in order to test us to see if we are aware of the inconsistencies and lack of perfection which they exhibited. Perhaps it was intended that we be just a bit "confused" or "disappointed" in our reading. Perhaps we are to react more than "just a bit" - perhaps we ought to react violently and out-spokenly because the Bible has created within us a strong morality that will not permit such things to go unchallenged. Whether or not that is the motive for such examples to be included in Scripture, if such is our reaction we have learned to be more "spiritual and godly" and the training we have received is surely a gift from God.

We have given long consideration to the matter of Biblical example and how it is to be used as guidelines where no direct command has been given. We have not been trained to use Old Testament examples as our guidelines, and that is probably a good move. Surely if we do not use them as "approved examples" for our conduct, we can deal with them more objectively, and refrain from the urge to defend what is not worthy conduct. We are taught to "**Think on things lovely, pure, just, honourable, or good report . . .**" (Phil. 4:8), and to make our lives over into those patterns. When we see what is less than perfect and ideal, let us recognize it as such - and call it by its first name, rather than feeling that we must justify it. God cannot be glorified by what is not perfect and good in motive, yet we hope that our own imperfections in motive and action are seen by Him with mercy that triumphs over judgement.

P. PENNINGTON.

GOD'S STRATEGY FOR HIS PEOPLE

The desire of Christians to see the Church succeed is only matched by their ingenuity in devising new programmes for Church growth. And surely, Christ expects His people to be imaginative in responding to the special opportunities and features of each age (Mt. 10:16). At the same time there must be a concern for the persistent tendency to replace the wisdom of God with the strategies of human thinking.

History documents two extremes in religious development: the **cult** and the **hierarchy**. The objective of the **cult** is to subject, control, and manipulate its people.

Mind control is the method leaving the communicant a mindless follower of the cult leader's commands. The objective of the **hierarchy** is to subject, regulate, and dominate its people. Assumed authority and claims of special grace are advanced as a means of keeping the people under. What these two opposites have in common is centralized control and human power.

It must be understood that God's strategy for his people focuses on **individual effort** and divine strength.

Paul states the goal of the Church in developing its people - maturity for each Christian. **"We proclaim him (Christ), admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ."** (Col. 1:28). The word "perfect" is translated "mature" (NIV) in Ephesians 4:13, and maturity is defined as "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

THE INDIVIDUAL

Setting men free in the liberty of Christ is the true goal of each congregation, elder, evangelist, and Bible teacher. The subjugation of each Christian to an earthly religious authority is not in God's plan. No man is to stand between the Christian and his God other than the Lord Jesus Christ (I Tim. 2:5). God has made his people a kingdom and priests, and only Christ is king (Rev. 1:6; Lk. 23:3).

The passage from infancy to adulthood requires changing relationships between the parent and the child - from total dependence to whole independence. There is also a changing relationship between the Christian and his teachers as he moves from spiritual infancy to maturity in Christ. The mature Christian while respectful of his elders and responsive to his brothers, is at the same time competent to move out into a dangerous world, resist temptation, discern between right and wrong, handle accurately God's word, and effectively share the good news of redemption in Christ to the converting of others.

Could it be that the presence in many congregations of numbers of docile but ineffectual Christians reflects the failure to clearly define the goal - "to present each man mature in Christ"?

It is God's strategy that **each Christian** is to be a participant in the work of the kingdom. The teaching gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11 are provided **"to prepare God's people for works of ministry (service)"**. The picture is of all Christians ministering, rather than that of Christians grouping together to employ one or a few ministers to accomplish the work of the kingdom. The Church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:23). This is taken by many to imply that "corporate", (i.e. group, organized), work is the only proper work of the Church. And organized efforts place a premium upon able leadership and supportive followers. Whereas, Paul in talking about body growth is accomplished, **"as each part does its work"** (Eph. 4:16). He introduces the section where he talks about the teaching gifts of Christ by stating, **"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."** (Eph. 4:7).

Elsewhere, speaking of the body, Paul stresses the importance of the **individual "member"**: **"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."** (I Cor. 12:12,27). **"Just as each one of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us."** (Rom. 12:4-6a).

USING OUR GIFTS

It is a mistake to relegate works accomplished by Christians individually to a secondary position to those accomplished in an organized programme, and to identify

the latter only as "Church work". It is wrong to identify the Church as existing only when it is assembled (Acts 14:27). The Church is working when individual Christians scattering to their homes, their work places, on their travels, and in their innumerable individual contracts with people, willingly, ably, and quickly share their faith. Men and women are not called by Christ to gather into buildings, but into a spiritual kingdom that is prepared to go out into the world and do battle with the enemy.

The vision must be gained of multiplied disciples - lives, talents, gifts, opportunities all sanctified to the glory of Christ - fanning out in the many worlds represented by the spheres of their individual influence, infiltrating even into "Caesar's household", extending the exposure of the Church's front-line combatants many times over.

The tragedy of national recession is the waste of energies and productive skills because of under-employment or unemployment. The tragedy of a church limited to a few "church programmes" of human devising is the under-employment of the Christian work force.

Confidence must be established that the Christian when he functions individually is performing as importantly as when he serves collectively in a team effort.

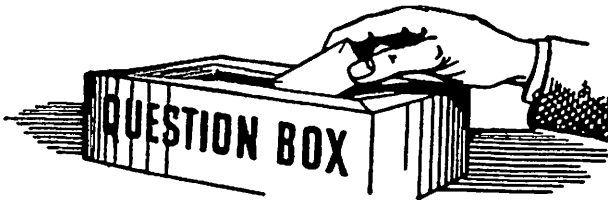
Motivation for the Christian to be "ready always and everywhere" to speak a good word for his Master should not come by more sermons designed to whip up guilt feelings, or to enlist more workers for the latest band-wagon project. but by teaching that deepens the Christian's awareness of the grace of God through the crucified, resurrected, enthroned Christ which floods his life and which holds the hope of the world.

SOURCE OF POWER

Ample power is available for each Christian to pursue the special work that God assigns him - this is the gift of His Spirit (Eph. 4:14-21).

This is not an appeal for rugged individualism, nor for Christians to serve in splendid isolation. Rather, it is to call attention to the fact that the first century Church grew not through "projects, programmes, and organized efforts" but because, "those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went." (Acts 8:4). The one who "grows up in all things into him who is the Head, that is, Christ," will surely support the whole body as it "grows and builds itself up in love." (Eph. 4:15,16).

G. ELLIS.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

*"Can you basically tell me what happened in the so-called
Inter-testamental Period?"*

I am truly grateful for the insertion in the question, of that word 'basically'! It is, as most will agree, a vastly over-worked and frequently superfluously used word these days, but it is entirely appropriate and truly welcome in a question relating to the approximately 400 year period of Bible history which falls between Malachi and Matthew; in other words, in that inter-testamental period to which our questioner refers.

This is the period of Jewish history which is greatly illuminated by a study of the book of Daniel, that fascinating book which introduce us to prophecies relating to

world history following the fall of the Babylonian Empire to an alliance of the Medes and Persians.

A few 'basic' details will be useful here.

Although Darius the Mede reigned after the fall of Babylon and the death of Belshazzar (Dan. 5:30), it was the Persians who became the stronger partner in that Medo-Persian alliance (11:2), with the Medes gradually fading into the background.

Daniel 11 then predicts the conflict which history developed between the Persians and the rapidly rising Macedonian, or Greek Empire, of which Alexander the Great was the central figure.

After the early death of Alexander at the age of 33, in the year 323 BC, his empire was broken up into four parts, and, as predicted in Dan. 11:4, the power went, not to his family, but to his many generals who fought among themselves for control of what Alexander had created.

Eventually, two of these rulers remained to face each other. They were Ptolemy, descibed by Daniel as "king of the South" which was Egypt; and Syria, the Kingdom of the North, which was ruled by the Seleucid dynasty, whose kings took the name 'Antiochus' and whom Daniel calls "the king of the North".

Remember, however, that these kingdoms are called "North" and "South" only in relation to Palestine, since this scripture is concerned specifically with the history of Palestine and the Jews.

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

At first, Judea became part of the kingdom of Ptolemy of Egypt, and, as you will readily see from a map of the Middle East, because of their geographical situation, caught, as they were, between these two warring kingdoms, in the subsequent conflict between Egypt and Syria, the Jews were unfortunately over-run, first by the army of the Syrian ruler, Antiochus, as he made his way south to attack Egypt, and then by Egypt, as Ptolemy struck back.

This spasmodic conflict is described in ch.11, from v.5., and when there was no actual warfare, a state of cold hostility existed between the two kingdoms which continued for just about as long as they both existed.

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

The most notorious of these Syrian rulers was named Antiochus 4th, whose reign covered the period 175 to 163 BC, and who, in 169 BC, took to calling himself "Antiochus Epiphanes". His use of the word "Epiphanes" reveals the man's outrageous opinion of himself. In fact, the full title which he assumed was '*Theos Epiphanies*' - '*God Manifest*', because he thought that he was the incarnation of Zeus. The people, however, called him 'Antiochus Epimanes' - a play on words which means 'Antiochus the Madman'. He is referred to in Dan. vv.21-25.

THE ROMAN INFLUENCE

Antiochus eventually managed to enter Egypt, but his triumph was short-lived, because the Romans, who were the emerging power of the age, arrived in Egypt by sea and ordered him to leave. There is a wonderful story which relates that when Antiochus asked Laenas, the Roman legate, how quickly he must make up his mind about leaving, the Roman, unsheathed his sword, drew a circle around Antiochus and told him, in effect, "Before you step out of this circle!" This is predicted in v.30.

THE SLAUGHTER IN JERUSALEM

The Jews, back in Palestine, meanwhile, had heard a report which said that Antiochus was dead and were joyfully celebrating his decease, so, on his way home to Syria, Antiochus, still fuming at the dismissive treatment received at the hands of the Romans, vented his rage on the Jews and the city of Jerusalem, (which he had already

captured on two occasions). He was vicious in his vengeance, inflicting punishment on them by sending an army of 22,000, led by Apollonius, one of his generals, with orders to destroy Jerusalem. Apollonius delayed his attack on the city until the day of the Sabbath when he knew the people would be in their synagogues. When he eventually launched his attack not a man was spared. It is reported that the streets ran with blood.

The Syrians then plundered the city and set it on fire. Furthermore, they deliberately defiled the Temple by scattering 'Swine's-flesh soup' throughout the holy place. And, as if this were not enough, Antiochus offered a sow on the holy altar and erected an altar to Jupiter in the temple courtyard.

THE MACCABEAN PERIOD. 167-164 BC

It was against this man that the family of the Maccabees raised a rebellion which, led by the great Judas Maccabeas, whom history knows as 'Judas the Hammer', eventually secured freedom for the Jews. (Ch. 12; vv. 6-7).

The period during which the Jews suffered under the cruel Syrian oppression, for which Antiochus 4th was responsible, lasted for three and a half years, or 42 months, or 1260 days (12:6-7). This period which, the book of DANIEL, is expressed as 'time, two times and half a time'. Prophetically, 'time' equals one year, 'times' represents two years, and 'half a time' represents six months, making a total of three and a half years.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MODERN JUDAISM

The persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, as predicted by Daniel, and their deliverance through the resistance of the Maccabees, is still celebrated by the Jews as one of the greatest events in their history, whilst Antiochus Epiphanes is still regarded as the very embodiment of the evil one.

At the end of that period, Judas Maccabeas cleansed and re-dedicated the Temple and the Jewish celebration of the Feast of Light, or "Hanukkah", is said to date from that event.

In Jewish history this period is remembered as a time of very real and severe persecution, when the Gentiles oppressed the people of God, but a period which was ended by a great deliverance.

ALLUSIONS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

It is interesting to notice, also, that in the book of Revelation, this period is used symbolically of a period of persecution or suffering endured by God's new people, the Church, and, again, it represents a period which ends with their vindication and the defeat of their oppressor. As in Daniel, this period is expressed in terms either of 'days' or 'months' or 'years' or 'times', expressions which occur a total of 5 times.

For Example:

1. In Rev. 11:2, we read that the Holy City would be trampled i.e., violently overrun - by the Gentiles for *42 months*, which is three and a half years, or 1260 days, and this is - a clear allusion to Antiochus' persecution of Jerusalem.
2. The same chapter, v.3, mentions *1260 days*, and notice the reference to "sackcloth", the emblem of grief and mourning.
3. Verse 9 speaks of "*three days and a half*", after which God's Witnesses rise again.
4. In ch.12:6 the Church, represented as a radiant woman, is driven into the wilderness by Satan (the Dragon, ch.20:2), where she is nourished by God for *1260 days*.

It is clear that these verses refer to the same period of time, viewed from different angles and which represents a distinct period of oppression suffered by God's people. But, like that time in Jewish inter-testamental history, it is a *limited* period, because God will bring about His people's ultimate deliverance, and, at the same time, the end of the one responsible for their oppression. (Rev. 20:10).

Much more could be said, but the space is not available.

There are, of course, many books which deal in detail with the period and events we have just sketched. May I suggest that a book which is both readable and comprehensive enough to satisfy the majority of students of this period is "Israel and the Nations", by F.F. Bruce, first published in 1963, but still available.

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

“EVERYBODY’S DOING IT”

One of the most frequently used excuses for engaging in questionable conduct is, "Everyone else is doing it. Why shouldn't I?" Young people are not the only ones that ask this question. Those in the older generation sometimes use it to try to justify cheating the government, beating an insurance company, stealing from an employer, or committing some other sin.

Nearly every teenager has said at some time or other something to this effect, "Aw, Mum, why can't I? Everyone else at school is doing it. I will be the only odd ball in the crowd." In some matters of custom this statement may largely be true. And wise parents will allow their children to fit into wholesome company. But if a thing is wrong or *even tends towards sin*, the excuse "Everybody is doing it" is not logical or valid.

Right and wrong cannot be decided by majority vote. When Adam was chided by God for his sin, he could have said truthfully, "Well, everyone else (Eve) was doing it!" But that would not have made it right.

Had Noah done what "everyone" was doing, he and his family would have been destroyed with that generation.

A majority of Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. A majority of the Israelites rebelled against God and Moses in the wilderness. A majority transgressed God's laws in the days of the prophets. The faithful often were referred to as a "remnant" of the nation. And it was a majority - a unanimous mob - that crucified Jesus Christ. If you had been there, would you have "got in on" what everybody else was doing?

If one lived in an area where most people were cannibals, would that justify cannibalism? If one were in a heathen culture, would that warrant heathenism? The Biblical fact that everybody has sinned does not excuse sin. Every moral issue must be decided by principle, not by vote nor deed. True morality must be based on God's Word.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil," 1 Thess. 5:20-21. Even if everyone else in the world should do wrong, God still wants YOU to do right. But the simple fact is that everyone else IS NOT doing wrong. Many fine young people do not smoke and do not intend to start. Millions of young people know that drinking alcohol is sinful and foolish. Many refuse to gamble, to cheat, or to swear. Thousands do not dance because they do not want to be tempted or to lead others into temptation. Millions of wise teenagers flatly disapprove of narcotics, immodest apparel, reckless driving, and other ridiculous behaviour. It always has been so.

The young Joseph was faithful to God when far from home and under trying circumstances. Daniel overcame temptation and hardship when others were yielding to sin. Esther bravely pleaded for her people, the Jews, when other were trying to destroy them. The list of godly young people in the Bible is long, and there are many today who place truth and righteousness above pleasure and popularity.

God knows that there is much sin in the world. There has been since the earliest generations of humanity. Therefore the Lord always has demanded a certain separateness of His people. He called Abraham away from his background and family

in order to develop the Jewish nation out of his descendants. He called the Jews out of Egypt to live in their own land separate from pagans and infidels.

CALLED OUT FROM THE WORLD

Christ has called his disciples out of worldliness into righteousness. The word "Church" is translated from a Greek word that literally means "called out." Christians are *in* the world, but we are not to be *of* the world. This means that if all of the world sins, we are not to follow the world. We are to follow Christ (1 Peter 2:9-10; Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 3:1-11).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

Are you willing to stand up for Jesus even if others do not? Are you brave enough to be a Christian, even if the crowd is determined to do wrong? Are you mature enough to bear a cross of loneliness and rejection if need be in order to live as Christ would have you to? Being right is a thousand times more important than being in "the majority."

Christ called on his disciples to enter the narrow gate and to travel the difficult way that leads to heaven. Other ways are easier and more pleasurable, but they lead to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14). Christ did not promise ease or pleasure. He calls for self-denial and dedication. Christianity is not for sissies - those too cowardly to buck the crowd. It is for those who are man enough and woman enough to do right and to trust God to see them through.

Can you meet the challenge - even if "everybody else" is doing otherwise?

O. COSGROVE.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jan. 4	Exodus 14:15-31	1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Jan. 11	Psalms 24	1 Corinthians 10:14-33
Jan. 18	Genesis 2:8-25	1 Corinthians 11:1-16
Jan. 25	Exodus 12:1-17	1 Corinthians 11:17-34

WARNINGS FROM ISRAEL'S HISTORY

The history of the Israelites, at times, makes disturbing reading. Here was a people that should have known better, but yet failed God again and again. Paul refers to some of the sad and sinful incidents - perishing in the desert (Numbers 26:65); indulging in pagan revelry (Exodus 32:6); committing sexual immorality with pagans (Numbers 25:1-9); grumbling against God and being

killed by snakes (Numbers 21:4-6); murmuring against God and being killed by a destroying angel (Numbers 14).

Paul also wrote: **"For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ"** (10:1-4, N.I.V.). Reference should be made to Exodus 13:21; 14:9-31; 17:6; Numbers 20:1-11. "They were immersed into Moses - not *into* the cloud and *into* the sea, but in the cloud and in the sea. To be immersed *into* Moses is one thing, and in the sea is another . . . Those

immersed into Moses assumed Moses as their lawgiver, guide and protector and risked everything upon his authority, wisdom, power and goodness" (Alexander Campbell). There was a rabbinical legend that a rock travelled with the Jews throughout their forty years wanderings in the wilderness and it supplied them with water as they required it. "Paul does not endorse this material fancy, but affirms that Christ accompanied his people as a spiritual source of refreshment throughout this period" (F. F. Bruce).

What happened to the Israelites gives warning for us in Christ. Temptations will also come our way in our pilgrimage on earth, but we can overcome them, not in our own strength, but in the strength of the Master. The hymn-writer put it this way:

*Yield not to temptation, for yielding
is sin,*

*Each victory will help you some
other to win;*

*Fight manfully onward, dark pas-
sions subdue,*

*Look ever to Jesus, He will carry
you through.*

*Ask the Saviour to help you,
Comfort, Strengthen and keep you;
He is willing to aid you,
He will carry you through.*

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Paul speaks in detail of the Lord's Supper in this section (11:17-34). He also addresses himself to idol feasts and the Supper (10:14-22). Paul, of course, was not present when Jesus instituted this feast of love on the dark betrayal night. However, God revealed unto him exactly what took place in the upper room. The Corinthians needed guidance on the subject because they were much divided over it. His teaching is clear, plain and simple. We are left to ponder just how much effect he had on them, not only on this matter, but also on everything else that divided them.

Why is it, dear brethren, that there

has been more division in the Churches of Christ over the Lord's Supper than any other matter? What should have united us the most has divided us the most. Personally, I believe the too numerous schisms reveal a lot about us as a people. We have divided over whether the bread which represents His body shall be leavened or unleavened; whether it should be prepared with oil or some other ingredient; whether it should be passed whole; whether it should be made of wheat or some other grain. We have been rent asunder over whether the fruit of the vine should be fermented or not; whether it should be passed in one container, several or many. Let me share with you a statement by the late W. Carl Ketcherside who, I know, was a controversial figure in the Church. I still think he should be heard. "the One who died in agony for my sins has bound me to eat the bread and drink the cup in memory of Him until He comes. When I sit down at the table with the saints, I shall not scrutinize or examine the bread to see if it is leavened or unleavened, or made with oil or not. I am not told to examine the bread. I am told to examine myself that my motive in participating be without reproach. I shall not concern myself with how it is broken and how it is passed. I am told to eat the bread and thus share in His death. Regardless of the grain from which the flour was made, whether there is yeast in it or not, it is bread, sanctified by the giving of thanks to its purpose and I shall seek to discern the Lord's body, rather than trying to discern what my brethren are thinking".

Personally, I am quite convinced in my own mind that, at the time of the institution of the Supper, Jesus took one unleavened loaf and one cup containing the fruit of the vine. I also believe He broke the loaf before He passed it to his disciples - symbolic of His body once whole then broken or wounded for us. The congregation I have attended all my

life (in Motherwell) has on the table each Sunday a single loaf (leavened) and a single cup. The loaf is broken before it is passed to the congregation. We all partake from that broken loaf and that single cup. I have visited many congregations where things are done differently. In every place I have recognised the people as my brothers and sisters in Christ. I know that many of my brethren have strong scruples over the Lord's Supper and how it should be kept. I would not expect them to violate their conscience on this matter. Equally, I do not look for their imposing strongly-held views upon me. Travelling widely has helped me to be more tolerant in this area - perhaps more tolerant than some people would like. God will be my judge.

WOMEN'S PLACE IN THE CHURCH

I have studied this subject until the cows come home. For example, I once spent a whole year on it before delivering three weekly talks in the summer of 1989 at my home congregation. I examined in great detail every relevant Biblical passage as well as reading around fifty books on the topic. I think I was more confused at the end than at the beginning!

I see our Baptist friends have recently drawn a line at women "ministers". The Presbyterians, of course, have had women in the ordained ministry for years now. Many other churches have followed suit. Of course, the Church of Christ has always had women ministers. We believe that every disciple is a minister and every child of God is a priest.

This passage speaks of women in the Church praying and prophesying (11:5). I take it that this was done when the Church met. But these words do not appear to tie in with what Paul later wrote in this epistle: "**Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak . . .**"

(14:34), We shall consider this apparent discrepancy next month. But what of the subject of head-covering? Is it relevant today? On my trip to the United States in 1993 I observed that sisters in the congregations I visited paid no heed to the practice (unlike the Old-Paths congregations in the U.K.). One practice I did not come across was that of brothers covering their heads in the public worship. If it is acceptable today for sisters to be uncovered, why is it not acceptable for brothers to be covered?

I think this is an interesting question. The veil in Paul's day signified submission of the woman to man's authority. Personally, I believe it still possesses that significance today.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who was David's first wife?
2. What did the Lord provide to ease Jonah's discomfort?
3. Which king of Israel had the shortest reign?
4. What kind of nuts grew on Aaron's staff?
5. What was the sixth plague sent upon the Egyptians?
6. What is Pisgah?
7. With what island is Titus associated?
8. How long had Lazarus been dead when Jesus raised him?
9. What did Felix hope Paul would offer him?
10. Where was the wedding at which Jesus turned water into wine?

EDNA MARSDEN - AN APPRECIATION

It is with deep sadness that we learned of the passing of Edna on September 25th, 1997 after a fall and a brief period in hospital.

This loss has been felt deeply by her family and friends, coming so soon after the death of Alf, her husband of 50 years. It was with much joy we had all celebrated their Golden Wedding in February.

The congregation at Longshoot have been bereft of a couple who throughout their married life have worked faithfully for the Lord.

In Edna's younger days her energy knew no bounds! She was diligent both in the home and in the Church and was always there when anyone needed a helping hand. Many of us can testify to her bounteous giving and hospitality. She had a deep compassion for those less fortunate than herself. Sadly in later life, sickness took its toll, and she was unable to do all these humble tasks that came so naturally and were so important to her. Her family were her joy and support.

The Edna we all knew was a jolly, gregarious person and it was with sorrow we saw her frailty towards the end. However, she still kept her beautiful smile and whenever asked how she was would reply, "I'm alright".

The funeral took place at Longshoot and Graham Gorton, a long time friend, conducted the service of thanksgiving for the life of Edna, with members of the family paying tribute. Many brethren and friends filled the meeting place to capacity and with many young people present, it was indeed a moving testimony to her life.

DOROTHY PARKER.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kentish Town, London: We had the joy of witnessing the baptism of Andrew Hudson, on October 5th and Lilian Onah on November 9th. We pray that they will continue faithfully in their new life in Christ.

DOROTHY PROUD (Sec.)

NO RESPONSE SO FAR

Readers may recall that I undertook to send the article "Bowling To The Inevitable" in the August issue, to Bishop Holloway, Primus of the Episcopalian Church of Scotland, inviting his comments, but as readers may, or may not, be surprised to learn, I have not, so far, had any response or reply from him. Readers may have noticed in yesterday's papers that Richard Harries, the Bishop of Oxford, has called for the age of consent for gay sex to be reduced to 16 years but has been reprimanded by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who said that homosexuality ". . . runs against Christian teaching and our understanding of natural law."

ED.

APPEAL FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The situation in Papua New Guinea is getting more serious day by day. The relief funds have been used up and Toby Huff has gone to the U.S.A. to try and raise funds for medical supplies and food. The drought has spread to other areas and the Highlands have been without rain since last June. My daughter and son-in-law, Andy and Catherine Scott, spent over a week in the Waira Valley at the end of October, and were devastated by the conditions there. The people are still receiving some food by plane each week, but Catherine said that the children look thin and gaunt and need to get protein. Presently the food sent in consists of rice and noodles. Toby made arrangements for other things to be sent, but they will have to be paid for when he returns.

£799 has been sent recently from Scotland and I have £430 in hand ready to send from the British brethren but we really need much more. Many of our brethren, in other areas of PNG, also need our help. In spite of all this, the

Church in the Waira Valley continues to grow, both spiritually and numerically, and all three congregations are meeting faithfully. Four men were baptised during the Scott's visit and several restored.

Please will you help our brethren in PNG in their great need, and make your cheques out to Toby Huff, P.O. Box 409, Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. *Thank You.*

RUTH B. COLES.

GHANA VISIT - REPORT

We arrived safely in Ghana on Tuesday, 4th November. A number of brethren met us at the airport and made us very welcome. We spent the remainder of the evening discussing our plans with them.

Today we have visited 8 congregations and encouraged the brethren to be faithful in Christ Jesus. We received a very warm welcome at Dunkwa as the first overseas visitors to the congregation. They are quite isolated and were really pleased we took the time to visit. They are cocoa farmers and gave us honey and fruit to speed our journey. Sadly, the leader of the congregation had died as the result of a farming accident less than a month before our visit.

Dunkwa and the next congregation we visited, Sekyere Hemang, were very

pleased with the medical book "Where There is no Doctor" that we had sent out to them. On their own initiative they had sent a member on a Red Cross course for community health care. The sister from Sekyere Hemang was preparing to open a drugs dispensary in the village, which we thought to be very good.

As I write we are meeting congregations in the Kumasi area but will give a full report, D.V., on our return to the U.K. on November 29th.

Anyone wishing to assist in this work please send your donations to - Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU, Scotland. Make Cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal". *Thank You.*

JOHN KNELLER.

- 10. Cana (John 2:1).
- 9. A bribe (Acts 24:26).
- 8. Four days (John 11:17).
- 7. Crete (Titus 1:5).
- 6. A mountain (Numbers 21:20).
- 5. Bolts (Exodus 9:11).
- 4. Almonds (Numbers 17:8).
- 3. Zimri (1 Kings 16:15).
- 2. A Gourd (Jonah 4:6).
- 1. Michal (1 Samuel 18:27).

ANSWERS

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