

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## THE TWO STICKS

Last month I tried to show that the Bible, when completed, was God's *final revelation* to man, that it was all-sufficient to the saving of the world and that God Himself states (within the pages of the New Testament) that there would be no purpose or need for any further revelations. It follows therefore that any documents claiming to be latter-day revelations from God are, per se, fraudulent. The Book of Mormon is, of course, a classic example of this and one might well ask how Mormons can possibly expect the general public to receive further revelation while the Bible remains universally regarded as complete and authoritative? How can the existence of the B. of M. possibly be justified? How do the Mormons go about the task of justifying it? (By the way, it is not my purpose to bore readers stiff with references to the Mormon Church and this will be the final article on the subject for the present.) It is perhaps not generally known that the Mormon church has a vast hierarchy of officers wielding authority over tiers of other officers - indeed they closely rival the Roman Catholic Church in this respect. Time would fail us to describe the men who exercise strict rule over the Mormon Church but they include three 'Presiding High Priests' (after the order of Melchizedek, if you please); a Quorum of Twelve Apostles; Bishops; High Priests; Committees of Seventy and Seventy times Seventy; Elders; Patriarchs; Evangelists; Priests; Deacons; Teachers; Helps; Governments; General Boards; Stake Organisations; Ward Organisations; Other Officers 'as required'. Clearly the New Testament does not sanction such a priesthood of 'officers', and authority must be obtained elsewhere - hence the need for the Book of Mormon. This is why when Mormons visit our homes the very first priority is to convince us of the need for, and the authenticity of, the B. of M. How do they go about it? They explain to us about 'The Two Sticks' of Ezekiel's prophecy (Chap. 37) and try and prove that the B. of M. is, in effect, the fulfilment of that prophecy.

### The Prophecy

"The word of the Lord came unto me saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write thee upon it, *For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions*: then take another stick and write upon it, *For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions*: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand." (Ezek. 37:15-17).

*This then is the prophecy which is the Mormon anchor-bolt in justifying the coming of the B. of M. Readers may be thinking that it would take vast quantities of very vivid imagination to see the B. of M. in that statement of Ezekiel's and surely few could disagree. Mormon reasoning is that since ancient scrolls were rolled on wooden 'sticks' Ezekiel must be referring to two scrolls (or Books) and that when Ezekiel joined the two sticks he was, in effect, predicting that the B. of M. is to be regarded as much the word of God as is the Bible. How will such a fanciful claim stand up to closer inspection?*

(1) First of all, there is absolutely no justification for assuming that 'stick' in the prophecy has any connection, in any shape or form, with scrolls or books. As a matter of interest the word 'scroll' is used only once in the O.T. and once in the N.T. In the former case it refers to the heavens being gathered together (Isaiah 34:4) and in the latter case to the heavens being dispersed (Rev. 6:14). The Hebrew word from which the word 'sticks' comes is 'ets' and it appears in the O.T. some 300 times. A few times it is translated 'sticks' but elsewhere appears as 'Tree'; 'stalks'; 'plank'; 'gallows'; 'helve'; 'staff'; 'stock'; 'timber'; 'wood'. One can readily see from this that 'ets' has a connotation in the realms of wood or timber and is light-years away from any connection with the Hebrew word for books - 'sephar'. When Elijah was sent to the widow-woman for food she explained that she was so poor that she had but a handful of meal in a barrel; and a little oil in a cruse, 'And behold, I am gathering *two sticks*, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.' (1 Kings 17:12). 'Sticks' here is from the same word 'ets' but surely no-one supposes (not even the Mormons) that the widow was referring to scrolls or books. Nor do we suppose that the man found breaking the sabbath, by "gathering sticks" (again from 'ets'), was in any way construed to be portending the emergence of some new book. Indeed in Numbers 17 we read of Moses instructing a representative of each of the twelve tribes of Israel to write their names on twelve rods (or sticks) and to place the rods in the tabernacle. One of the sticks would flourish, and would bud, indicating that God had made His choice amongst the twelve. Again surely no-one would be silly enough as to suggest that this writing on the rods had any connection with scrolls or books.

(2) Secondly, and unfortunately for the Mormons, Ezekiel himself explains exactly what he means by merging the 'two sticks'. Indeed God's purpose in instructing Ezekiel to go through the procedure of writing on the sticks was that He might provoke enquiry by onlookers. Unfortunately for the mormons we are not left to make our own assumptions on the matter but are given Ezekiel's own explanation of his actions. And what is Ezekiel's explanation? - it follows hard on the heels of the prophecy (in v. 18-23) — "And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these. Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God...Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more *two nations*, neither shall they be divided into *two kingdoms* any more at all." Thus, we have God's own explanation of the lesson. The sticks therefore do not represent scrolls or books but NATIONS. After the reign of Solomon, the original kingdom was divided into two parts with Israel (basically ten tribes) in the north, and Judah (two tribes) to the south. God is saying through Ezekiel that the day was coming when the two kingdoms, or nations, would be reunited again. Thus the two sticks, with the names of the two kingdoms written thereon, were used as a visual-aid in communicating the lesson - "...they shall be

no more *two nations*, neither shall they be divided into *two kingdoms* any more at all." (v. 22). Two Nations is surely a far cry from two books - and even a small child can see that the two sticks of Ezek. 7 has no connection whatever with books. There is not even a remote connection between the sticks and books, much less with the B. of M. This merely illustrates how 'hard-pushed' the Mormons are to find the slightest support in the word of God for sanction for latter-day revelations. If perchance any reader should receive a visit from the mannerly young Mormon 'Elders' and they get around to giving you the 'Two Sticks' routine insist that they 'read on' to verse 22 of Ezek. 37 (for they shall be inclined to stop reading at v. 19). Once they have read v. 22 they will find it slightly embarrassing to talk about *scrolls* in place of *nations*.

### Pray About It?

In his book "A Marvellous Work And A Wonder" Le Grand Richards, Presiding Bishop and Apostle of the Mormon Church in 1954, says, "It is a regrettable thing that the world moves so slowly in the acceptance of truth. With such a marvellous book in our midst, the companion volume of scripture the Lord commanded Ezekiel to write, (the stick of Joseph) which he declared he would join to the stick of Judah, (our present Bible) why is the world so unwilling to accept it?" Not waiting for a reply, Mr. Le Grand Richards goes on to express the hope that many would read this 'companion volume' to the bible and would put to the test *the Lord's promise*. The 'promise of the Lord' to which he refers is as follows, "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the Power of the Holy Ghost." This 'promise of the Lord' looks like a quotation from scripture, of course, but isn't, it is a quotation from the B. of M. (Moroni 10:4). Thus we have the B. of M. being used to prove itself. Those who look upon those words in Moroni as a 'promise of the Lord' do not seem to appreciate that if the B. of M. is fraudulent then so is the promise. And yet hundreds of thousands of intelligent Mormons are apparently duped by the not so subtle illogicality of such reasoning. Notice that *the Bible* does not contain any such promise - such a 'promise' is to be found only in the B. of M. Surely this is a matter of the cart being put before the horse. 'The promise' has no strength unless the authenticity of the B. of M. can be proved, and paradoxically, if the authenticity of the B. of M. can be proved then the promise is no longer required and is irrelevant. If, on the other hand, the B. of M. can be proved false, 'the promise' is consequently also false. The Lord is not so foolish as to make any such promise. When Mormons are asked *how* the Holy Spirit 'manifests the truth of it' to those, who in prayer, ask if the B. of M. is true, we find that there is some difficulty and mystery about exactly *how* this is done. They usually smile tolerantly, give a little cough, try and summon a profound facial expression and then explain that after their prayer they receive a warm glow in the chest. Most of us would reach for the indigestion tablets in such a situation, but here we have otherwise intelligent people trying to tell us that this is how God tells the world that the B. of M. is true. If anyone does not receive the 'warm glow in the chest' then the explanation must be that (in accordance with the limitations of the promise) they are not 'asking sincerely', or that they have not 'real intent', or that they have not sufficient 'faith in Christ'. These are the 'escape hatches' in a promise which, while particular in other things, conveniently omits to tell the prayerful devotees exactly *how* the Holy Spirit will indicate that the B. of M. is true. Thus even if you don't get the warm glow it does *not* mean that the B. of M. is false, it just means that you are not sincere enough. It is really a 'heads I win tails

you lose' situation which serves the Mormon's well, for even after the B. of M. has been *proved* to be a fraudulent book, Mormon's will glibly reply, "Ah, but it can't be, because God has revealed to me that it is true." "We walk", says the apostle Paul, "By faith and not by sight". (2 Cor. 5:7) The same apostle says that, 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' (Rom. 10:17). Faith comes by the function of *hearing*, not by seeing, and certainly not by feelings. The changeless God did not ask us to pray in order that He might prove to us (with a warm glow) that the Bible is true; that Christ is His Son; that Jesus rose from the dead; that Jesus is now at God's right hand; that He sent His Holy Spirit into the world: etc. etc. All of these things we must believe *by faith* (about which the N.T. has a lot to say) and such faith comes *by hearing* the word of God. The B. of M. may 'promise' what it likes, but God never promised any warm glow in the chest as testimony to the authenticity and integrity of His eternal truths. Surely nothing is more unreliable than human 'feelings' but thanks be to God that His truths are plain, committed to print and accessible to all.

If therefore, you should have a visit from Mormon missionaries and be given the 'Two Sticks' routine, insist that your visitors read on to verse 22 (of Ezek. 37) whereupon their most important prop for the B. of M. will collapse before their very eyes. If, as an alternative, they ask you to pray for God's confirmation of the B. of M. I suggest that you remind them that this 'promise' is not from God, but is merely a quotation from the B. of M. itself, (and just as worthless) and that we walk by faith and not by feelings. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. But there were false prophets also amongst the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (2 Peter 1:19-2:1). EDITOR

## GLEANINGS

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

### HE BROUGHT ME

"He brought me into the banqueting house and His banner over me was love."

Song of Solomon 2:4

"Our only safety is at His side. Amidst these high privileges there may lurk a peril, as in Paradise itself the serpent crept. Hagar, lifted in her master's favour, despised those about her; and the pride of her position drove her into the wilderness. We need His presence rightly to accept His bounties; His grace and love alone can fit us to receive His gifts. So easily may we turn our high privilege into a spiritual conceit - of all conceits the most loathsome. Let us make so much of Him that we make nothing of ourselves. He - He - it is all He - He brought me. Of Him, through Him, in Him alone is it that I do come to take so high a place as to sit at the table of my Lord. The hot-house needs sometimes a screen from the very heat of the sun. So let me hide myself beneath the banner of His love."

Mark Guy Pearse.

**"I WILL GIVE THEE REST"**

"There are two possible sorts of rest. One is rest after toil, the lying down of the weary, at the end of the march, on the morrow of the battle, on the summit of the hill. The other is rest in toil, the internal and deep repose and liberty of a spirit which has found a hidden refuge and retreat, where feeling is calm and disengaged, while the march, the battle, the climb, are still in full course."

Handley Moule

**VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST**

"My strength is made perfect in (thy) weakness", says the Risen One to His suffering servant. The pronoun "My" does not come in some of the manuscripts, but the sense of the passage requires it as clearly as the glory of noonday requires the sun. To make the statement impersonal is to sap away the quintessence of it. It is "My strength" - the strength of Jesus, which is to find its opportunity in Paul's weakness. "My strength" - not so much that solitary might which belongs to Christ by original right as the Son of God, as, rather, that saving strength which He Himself acquired when, in the days of His flesh, He lived and laboured and suffered and struggled and bled to become our Saviour. That strength - the sympathetic Saviour's strength, which itself reached perfection through suffering, is infused into the heart and life of the believer. He who has victoriously undergone all our human experience shares His victory with us. Christian experience does not run on the battery system - a being charged and then gradually running down, and then being recharged and running down again. It goes on the electric circuit principle - continuous current through continuous contact. Christ does not strengthen us by a periodic succession of miracles, but by a continuous communication of Himself to us through the Holy Spirit. Thus are we enabled to say: "I can do (or bear) all things through Christ Who strengthened me."

**THE STRENGTH OF CHRIST**

"It is thus that the strength of Christ finds its opportunity in our weakness. When we are self-sufficient there is no scope for the imparted strength of Christ; but when some such agony as Paul's plunges us into the consciousness of utter destitution, and we fling ourselves in helpless prostration at the feet of Christ, then, in our very extremity, Christ finds His opportunity. His strength then has its perfect work within us; and upon the ruins of our shattered self-sufficiency we rise to new life and victory in Christ! It was thus that Paul himself learned the secret of strength in weakness. It was thus that bewildering repulse was turned into riotous triumph, and the apostle pressed forward singing, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong"."

J. Sidlow Baxter.

**I WISH THEE GLADNESS**

"I wish thee gladness! - gladness, strong, uplifting;  
A true, sweet gladness with each fresh-born day;  
A gladness which, while land-marks all are shifting,  
Remaineth firm; to ne'er be swept away.

I wish thee gladness! - gladness deep, abiding;  
Which comes when eyes of faith behold the Lord.  
The gladness of a prayful heart-confiding,  
And daily dwelling on God's precious Word.

I Wish thee gladness! - quiet, but yet telling;  
 A gladness which will mark both tone and face;  
 A gentle gladness, fount-like, inward swelling,  
 And overflowing into streams of grace.

I wish thee gladness! Yes, through all life's sorrow;  
 The gladness which, supreme, o'er all can rise;  
 A gladness which, however dark life' morrow,  
 Doth have its springs beyond earth's clouded skies!"

J. Danson Smith.

Selected by Leonard Morgan

## BECOMING ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD

(Part 3)

IN the last issue of "THE STANDARD" we examined the biblical basis of the doctrine of total depravity and concluded that it was without scriptural support. The texts usually cited to prove the belief do not teach it and, if considered in context, some of them teach the opposite. In addition to its lack of divine support, the doctrine violates two basic and clearly-taught principles of God's relationship with mankind. One is the innocence of children. The other is that God holds man accountable only for what he does, not what others do.

But if children are not accountable and adults are, then there must be a point in between when individuals become accountable for their actions. This "age of accountability" is a frequently-discussed topic in religious circles. Is there such an age that is the same for everyone? If not, how does one know when he has reached it? What are the factors that go into making one mature enough that he is accountable to God for his behaviour? These questions, and others, are important facets of the subject.

As a preface for what is to come, we should acknowledge at the outset, what most Christians know already, namely that the scriptures do not give a specific age of accountability. Young people do not become responsible to God on a particular birthday. That does not mean, however, that God-fearing young men and women are without guidance on the matter. The scriptures lay down principles from which clear conclusions can be drawn. The purpose of this article is to explain those principles and to prove them by the word of God.

The first principle is that ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SINS DEPENDS ON THE ABILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO MAKE MORAL CHOICES. This is a fundamental fact of God's dealings with man. He has never demanded what his subjects were not capable of delivering. The choice that God, through Joshua, gave the Children of Israel is a good example. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

The point of this example is that the people had the ability to make the choice that God demanded. They knew the gods Joshua was talking about. They had control over their hands and feet. They could take their sacrifices and lay them at the feet of idol gods, or on the altar of Jehovah at the tabernacle. That type of behavioral freedom is implied in accountability.

A second principle is that **ABILITY TO MAKE MORAL CHOICES DEPENDS ON KNOWLEDGE**. One can not make choices that he does not know he has. This principle is implied in the first sin. Adam and Eve knew they were not supposed to eat of the tree of knowledge (Gen. 2:17). Because that was the only thing God had told them not to do, that was the only choice they had, and the only way they could sin at that point. But when they ate, their "eyes were opened" and they "knew good from evil". Then they had many choices and thus could sin in numerous ways.

An even more comprehensive example of this type is described in Numbers Chapter 14. Here the spies had just returned from their fact-finding trip into Caanan. Ten of the twelve spies rebelled against God's instructions and said, "Don't go, we can not take the land." Only Caleb and Joshua sided with God and said "Go, it is a good land and we can take it with God's help." The people's choices were clear. They could side with the two and God, or with the ten and the enemies of God.

Most of you will remember the story. The people sided with the ten, refused to go over and possess the land, and murmured against God. Numbers 14:3 says "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron." Notice that "all" the Israelites disobeyed God, but those under twenty years of age at the time were not punished for their disobedience (Num. 14:29). Deuteronomy 1:39 explains why these young ones were not called to account. "Moreover your little ones, ...which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither". Accountability was solidly linked to knowledge of good and evil, and knowledge, in turn, was clearly connected to age. Isaiah said there is a time "before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good..." (7:15). These and other examples in the Bible show that God does not hold children accountable for their choices before they are mature enough to possess the knowledge necessary to make those choices.

Notice, however, that **ACCOUNTABILITY DOES NOT DEPEND ON THE PRESENCE OF KNOWLEDGE, BUT ON THE INDIVIDUAL'S ABILITY TO KNOW**. Peter spoke of persons who were "willingly ignorant" (2 Peter 3:5), and Jesus accused some of closing their eyes so they would not learn (Matt. 13:15). These writers indicated that such people will be judged as if they had knowledge, because they could have, if they had chosen.

Although there are individual variations, children are not capable of reasoning in a moral way before about age 12, a fact on which most authorities agree. Prior to that time, they know that mom and dad consider some things right and others wrong. They are aware that they are permitted to do certain things and will get punished for others. But they are "behaviorally conditioned", rather than morally convicted, and they do not usually understand the reasons behind the rules. They are not really capable of giving allegiance to a higher law. There are noticeable changes in young people's attitudes and behavior at about this age that signal their development of a moral conscience. They change the type of games they play and become more interested in those that are played for a purpose, have complicated rules and so on. They are also quick to notice when other people have broken the rules.

It is interesting to reflect on the fact that Jesus was twelve years old at the time his parents took that well-known trip to Jerusalem and left him behind when they started for home. They found Jesus disputing with the "doctors and lawyers," answering questions that baffled even these learned men (Lk. 2:41-51). Obviously, Jesus "knew" his father's will at this point in his life, and was

personally ready to be "about his father's business." Yet, when his mother commanded him, he returned with them to Nazareth and was subject to them for several more years. We know that the Lord did not sin in delaying the fulfillment of his mission, for he "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22).

I believe, of course, that it was God's will that Jesus not start his personal ministry at the tender age of twelve. One can not imagine the Jews of that day tolerating a twelve year old child doing and saying the things that Jesus did. This incident is a case of God providentially using a devout mother to bring about what He wanted.

The story about Jesus illustrates another fact that is perhaps more relevant to this study, viz. that PARENTS HAVE A PART IN CHILDREN'S ACCOUNTABILITY. I do not mean that parents simply decide when children will become accountable and that is all there is to it. If Jesus' mother had objected to his leaving home to start his ministry at age thirty, I am convinced he would have quietly kissed her goodbye and proceeded with his work. During his ministry he said "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me (Matt. 10:35-37).

There comes a time when, even if their parents object, young people must give their first obedience to the Lord. In order to do this, A PERSONAL MATURITY THAT ALLOWS ONE TO TAKE CONTROL OF HIS LIFE IN ALL SITUATIONS IS REQUIRED. It will be instructive here to reflect back on the incident with the Israelites discussed above. In that murmuring crowd, I feel certain there were at least a few wise and devout 16 or 18 year olds who knew in their hearts that what their fathers were doing was wrong. But such rebellious fathers as those would not have taken kindly to their sons opposing them. How old would a son have to be before he could reasonably be expected to stand up for the right in defiance of his father? That type of decision requires more than just an intellectual knowledge of right and wrong. It demands great personal maturity to risk cutting oneself off from his family. Apparently God thought that twenty one years of age was an appropriate minimum age to expect this type of accountability.

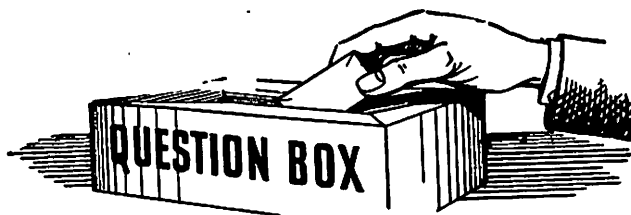
In sharp contrast to the case above, the Lord appeared to the prophet Samuel with an important and grave message when Samuel was still a "child". We do not know Samuel's exact age - Josephus says 12 years - but the context indicates he was not yet physically grown. But Samuel's parents, particularly his mother, had dedicated him to the Lord when he was only a few years of age.

From the foregoing examples we can see that the age of responsibility varies with the circumstances under which a young person lives. An important part of those circumstances is the support, or lack of it, the child receives from his parents. It seems quite likely that a young person who has had the teaching and encouragement of his parents would be expected to be a Christian earlier than one who must learn on his own and obey in spite of his family. The ages of 12 and 20 crop up frequently and seem to be suggestive as boundaries. But in any case, an individual must be mature enough to assume control of his life so that he can willingly offer his service to Jehovah.

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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"In Luke 9:49 John informs Jesus that he had forbidden a man from casting out devils because he followed not the disciples and Jesus. Jesus said, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us"**

- (1) Does this not contradict Luke 11:23?
- (2) Does this mean that there are men preaching the Gospel today who do God's will albeit they are not with us (Churches of Christ)?"

Obviously, the key to (1) lies in the degree of agreement between the statements made by both John and Jesus. Does John's "he followeth not with us" mean the same as Jesus' "He that it not with me?" I think we must work from the premise that Jesus *would not* contradict Himself, and so progressing from that fact we must examine each situation separately in order to understand the context in which each statement was made.

#### **The Statement of John**

When we read from the Gospels we are immediately struck by the realisation that on some occasions Jesus was frustrated by the attitude of His disciples towards some of the truths He was trying to teach. On such occasions He sometimes felt it necessary to rebuke them for their lack of understanding. So we take the point that the disciples were not infallible in their interpretation of events, nor were their reactions always in harmony with the main thrust of the mission and teaching of the Saviour.

In the particular passage under consideration, Luke 9:49, we see in the context that Jesus had to respond to the possessiveness of the disciples. They were reasoning among themselves who should be greatest (v46). This was after the revelation of Jesus to them of His own future humiliation, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men" (9:44). This statement the disciples didn't understand. How could they understand the humiliation of Christ at the hands of men when their own possessiveness was leading them into aspirations of greatness and glory which had nothing whatever to do with the mission of Jesus? Later on, they wanted to command fire from heaven to consume a village of the Samaritans because they would not receive Jesus, but He rebuked them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (9:51-56).

This spirit of possessiveness I believe to be the key to the words of the Lord in 9:50. They ought to have understood that the casting out of demons was not the sole prerogative of themselves, nor even of Jesus Himself, as He pointed out to those who tempted Him, "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do *your* sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges" (11:19). You will recall that Jesus sent out the seventy and gave them special powers. They returned jubilant saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name

(10:17). Jesus then bestowed other powers on them, but rather significantly He said to them, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven". So what the Lord is emphasising is that they should rejoice in salvation, not in power and position.

Mark records the same incident and probably gives a little more light. He records the same words of John to Jesus (Mark 9:38) and then goes on to record Jesus as saying, "Forbid him not: there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" (vv39-41). Jesus here seems to be saying that *anyone* who worked a miracle in His name, whether a follower or not, would find it extremely difficult to malign the name of Jesus in so doing. We must understand that the point at issue was the casting out of *demons*, and Jesus saw that whether *He* did it, or His disciples, or anyone using His name, it was indicating to the world the conquest of evil by the power of the Lord. In *that* sense Jesus knew that His name would not be misused.

### The Statement by Jesus

"He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Luke 11:23). The context here indicates to me the contrast between two kingdoms; the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light. The verdict of some of the people, after Jesus had cast out a demon from a dumb man, was "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils" (11:14,15). Jesus takes up this argument and demonstrates just how ridiculous their observations were. Mark, in his record, puts the point quite simply and leaves it for the people to answer, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand" (Mark 3:23,24).

Both Mark and Luke make it plain that Jesus saw His mission as the heralding in of the Kingdom of God. The real point so far as Jesus was concerned had a twofold application: in the casting out of demons by Jesus, the people must see 'the finger of God', and they must also see in Him the stronger power which can overcome the strong man of sin (Luke 11:20-23). By His reference to the 'finger of God', Jesus is evidently referring back to Exodus 8:17-19. When the magicians of Pharaoh saw the plague of gnats, which they themselves could not produce, they said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God". But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said". Jesus seems to be saying to the people of His day that they were as imperceptive as Pharaoh in not realising the power of God as demonstrated by Jesus. As regards the binding of the strong man of sin, Satan, Jesus is indicating to the people that it is *He* who will accomplish this, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (11:20). There can be no compromise in attributing ultimate evil to ultimate Goodness, and so Jesus says, "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (11:23).

Are the two passages of scripture, then, contradictory as the questioner asks? I think not. Rather, I believe them to be complementary. In Luke 9:49 Jesus is saying that His name can never be misused by anyone when the power of that name indicates the conquest of evil. In 11:23 He is indicating to the people the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of God over the kingdom of Satan, and stressing to the ones who will see and hear that this victory will be achieved in Himself.

All, then, who come into that Kingdom will be *for* Him, but those who choose to remain in the Kingdom of Satan will be against Him. What common ground does darkness have with light?

### Those not with us

The questioner asks further, "Are there men preaching the Gospel today, who do God's will albeit they are not with us (i.e., not in the Church of Christ)". Who can define the membership boundaries of the Church of Christ? There may be communities of Christians *of whom we are unaware* who practice and teach from the word as we do; ostensibly, they would be 'with us'. On the other hand, there are undoubtedly some who only partially speak the truth. Take, for example, the statement, "Jesus is the Son of God"; nothing would alter *that* truth no matter who stated it. So we could have, as we do, men preaching truth interspersed with error. The truth they spoke would still be truth, but if the error they taught kept people out of the Kingdom of God then they would be against us, and against Christ. Truth will always be truth irrespective of who preaches it, believes it, or disbelieves it; similarly with error.

You will notice that I have refrained from saying anything about the doing of God's will. I suppose that if the preacher when preaching, did God's will, then he would proclaim nothing but the truth. As we remarked earlier, the uncompromising reply of Jesus was very necessary on this occasion because the preaching of error can never be consistent with the pure nature of the teaching of Jesus regarding the Kingdom of God.

Of course, there will always be preachers of any religious group who, referring themselves to the supreme authority, God's Word, will inevitably speak *some* truth from it; to that extent, and *that extent alone*, they will be truthful. It is a fact which we must acknowledge that the Word of God has free course in the world; anyone can preach and teach from it. But like the Bereans of old, we must search the scriptures in order to see if the things spoken are true. If they are not, then they must be rejected. If such preachers persist in proclaiming things for which there is no scriptural warrant, even though they may say some things for which *there is*, then they are in error, and in no way can we say that they are for God, Christ, or the Gospel.

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

## WHAT KIND OF GIVER AM I?

If I give nothing, I have cast my vote in favour of closing my church.  
If I give only a little, I am telling the world that the Gospel means little,  
and that I am not the sort of person who keeps my promises.

If I give grudgingly, I shall find no joy, nor receive the blessing of the Lord.  
If I say, 'I give more than others', I have forgotten that Jesus gave His ALL for me.

### BUT

If I give proportionately then I will be honouring my promises to God and my commitment to Him.

If I give regularly and systematically, I make it easier for the Church to plan in advance.

If I give sacrificially, I testify that Christ and His Church are of first importance in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the world.

NOW, WHAT KIND OF GIVER AM I?

# SCRIPTURE READINGS

NOVEMBER 1983

- 6—Hosea 6            Luke 24:36-53  
 13—Isaiah 6           Revelation 1  
 20—Ezek. 11:1-13    Revelation 2:1-17  
 27—Ezek. 2 to 3:11   Revelation 2:18-29

## UNIQUE SCRIPTURE

IN an endeavour to present up-to-date translation/paraphrase of "Revelation of John", J.B. Phillips found the original Greek writing strangely different to that used in all the other writings of the New Testament. When we come to read and study it we likewise recognise it as unique. The whole New Testament is a revelation given to enlighten us. The light is unique. Without it - and the Old Testament of course - what could mankind really know of its CREATOR? Plain truth for all practical purposes is here but finite minds cannot grasp infinite truth or foretell the future. Someone has said "Jesus is latent in the Old Testament, and patent in the New". He could not be apprehended until revelation brought Him to us, so He remained a mystery until then. "The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" are still in a measure hidden from us in the symbolic language of this final "REVELATION". Nevertheless both history and consummation are presented in it. By divine instruction John recorded his vision, so suitable concluding the NEW COVENANT revelation - "all things that pertain unto life and godliness", "the faith once and for all delivered to the saints" (2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3). May the public reading of this book be a stimulation to love, good works and patient endurance of suffering, as it was to the saints of old in circumstances comparable only to the communistic torments and war torn regions of the present world. May we

"remember them that are in bonds". Their faithfulness guarantees their victory.

## Supreme and Eternal Glory

The greatest physical glory is the sun. To stare it out means to be blinded. So it was no wonder that John with the vision of "the Son of man" fell at His feet as one dead. However John was granted this vision and was able to record it for us. Spiritual glory has to be in earthly presentations. We cannot draw it but in our minds we picture it. We know what it is by darkness and shadow. So the appearance of Jesus was snow for brightness, a flame for piercing sight, shining brass for activity, and gold for great riches. There have been doubts of "John". Which John? has been asked. My thought is to bypass this and assume it is John "the beloved disciple". That is reasonable and cannot do us or him any harm! He had been with Him in the flesh, what could be more fitting but his further witness of the WORD which was "in the beginning" (1 John 1:1-3). He has the divine command to write this record, whose language bears the neglect of usual grammatic forms unlike his other writings, gospel and letters. He was "in the spirit on the Lord's Day", confined, banished upon a small island, certainly separated from fellow-christians, and faced with extraordinary and surely terrifying sights and sounds. Reliable tradition locates him at Ephesus in his latest years and the seven churches would be known to him with that town as a centre point. The vision of Jesus in glory was a contrast to the earthly contact, but John was no stranger to the purity, holiness and supreme majesty of the Saviour. Many a time he must have preached of the judgement to come and the returning in glory of the lowly prophet of Nazareth with the innumerable host of mighty angels to execute justice on behalf of His suffering people. He is here then seen

as holding the churches in His hands and walking amidst them as lampstands in the heavenly temple — thinking of the seven-branched golden lampstand in the Holy Place of the old covenant, close to God's presence, the Shekinah. His messages show Him to be as it were inspecting the brightness of the Lamps. He sees every church of His surely today in that way, and we need to bow before the Master's criticisms and encouragements, understanding why we have the privilege of viewing ourselves in the "searching sight" of the eyes "as a flame of fire". Well may we mourn for division, lukewarmness, wrong teachings, lax discipline and indifference surrounding us, keeping our eyes humbly upon ourselves, lest we become like the Scribes and Pharises, being critical of others and blind to our own faults.

### Ephesus

We have more information about this church than others for we may read Paul's message in Acts 20, his letter, and finally the message in our present chapter. What a striking commendation does she receive to encourage the continuance in well-doing. Here is an example, which we have noted in Paul's writings — the will to see the better things first. It is seen also in the instructions to fathers (Col. 3:21). Hatred of doctrines which made light of sexual sin characterised this church also, and yet something so serious was wrong that the Spirit threatened to extinguish her light unless the lost LOVE is restored. Obviously her correctness in many things as suggested so plainly in Paul's panegyric on love can go side by side with failure in the essential ingredient. Will the reminder of past mutual affection in the church, or outgoing "love of our neighbours" bring home, and to repentance the hearts that have been relaxing? A right hatred of evil can develop bitterness of soul. As in all

the letters to the churches there is individual encouragement and promise of reward. The attentive listener may truly listen regardless of the assembly.

### Smyrna

Brief indeed is the message here. Tribulation, poverty and severe opposition is promised. The Christians will suffer imprisonment and death. Safety in the worst evil is assured, and the crown for faithfulness, eternal life.

### Pergamum

The title 'Satan's seat' indicates a place where he has special eminence, and therefore where to be a Christian was a position of personal danger. So it had evidently been and Antipas had suffered death for his confession of faith. It would be easier in those circumstances to be very quiet about that faith, but members had stood fast. The spirits of Balaam and the Nicolaitans however were present, and would bring ruin on the cause by their evil influences towards laxity in moral behaviour and subtle teachings concerning the holiness of life required by true teachers in the church. There must be a purging from these if divine blessing and continuance were to be experienced. The word which saves can also defeat and destroy the enemies of truth. The faithful will receive spiritual food to sustain them, and an emblem of purity and honour.

### Thyatira

We have again first the commendation, but there is a dark picture indeed of evil within the church. We must bear in mind the dreadful immorality of the heathen world, where marriage was a mere formality and sexual intercourse indiscriminate, the "done thing". So the comparative morality of the Jewish religion and the purity demanded by Christ involved every convert in something against society in general without compromise. What a task this can be in such conditions only those

who experience it, can know. Looseness in this matter has overtaken much of "western civilization", producing strains not realised before. In Thyatira apparently one woman in particular was seducing the membership into compromise with sin. The eating of meat offered to idols is sin to the christian even though in certain circumstances it is permitted (1 Cor. 10: 25-33). We can almost hear the suggestion "everybody does it, but you know better, so why not?" Reward for faithfulness is victory through the gospel, and the glory of the Lord.

### **Inexhaustible Treasure**

We feel we have only touched upon the opening portions of REVELATION, which we read this month. Both John's introduction of himself, and the visions continuing throughout the book deserve close and earnest study. We may indeed find ourselves puzzled and unsatisfied with our own understanding of the instructions, records and promises. They will bear fruit in our christian walk if we take care to accept them as from our Saviour, Comforter and Guide. To give an idea of extent of study, the well-known commentator Wm. Barclay occupies 115 pages of his "Daily Study Bible" to the portion on which my humble "comments" have been made. I trust my effort may stimulate our readers to thought, word and action.

R. B. SCOTT

## **BELIEF : (14)**

### **Repentance**

In 1 Corinthians chapter five Paul reprimands the church at Corinth for not excommunicating a member who had been found guilty of a grievous moral sin which was bringing the church into open disgrace. However, he later commends them for having obeyed his instructions and asks them to restore the erring one, as he has been sufficiently punished for his misdeeds (2 Corinthians 2:4-11).

Later he says, "Now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance, for ye were made sorry after a godly manner; for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be regretted, but the sorrow of the world bringeth death" (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

### **Repentance follows godly sorrow**

The words just quoted show that the repentance followed their sorrow or remorse for their conduct. This sorrow, moreover, was godly. Paul was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. By condoning the wrongdoing the Corinthians had, in effect, been sinning against God. This godly sorrow made them realise that they would have to do something about it. What did they do about it? They obeyed the apostle's instructions to excommunicate the guilty one. In other words, they repented.

### **Repentance involves a change of mind or will**

In articles 3, 4 and 10 we showed that the Greek word translated repentance (viz. *metanoia*) actually means a change of mind. The Corinthian brethren, therefore, changed their minds. They directed their minds or wills to obeying Paul's instructions. They did this by doing what the apostle told them to do. Since the erring brother was subsequently restored to the fellowship of the church we can assume that he too repented of his misdeeds and gave up his sin. Otherwise we may be sure that he would not have been restored.

### **Repentance leads to obedience**

True repentance therefore must lead to obedience to God's commands. These may be given by God himself, or through his Son, or by the apostles of Christ. That repentance must lead to obedience was clearly in Paul's mind when he wrote, "To this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things" (2 Corinthians 2:9).

In other words obedience and that alone was the proof of their confidence in him, and so in Christ, as Paul was speaking as an ambassador of Christ. This he shows when he says, "If I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sake I forgave it, in the person of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:10).

#### Repentance leads to forgiveness

We see therefore that godly sorrow worketh not only a change of mind, but also that, as a direct result it leads through *obedience* to forgiveness of sins. But in 2 Corinthians 7:10 the apostle says that sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. It therefore follows that *forgiveness of sins* must come *between* repentance and salvation.

#### Repentance and remission of sins

Our Lord's last words to his apostles were that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). We would expect therefore, in view of what has been proved above, that when the apostles put the Lord's commission into practice it would involve some form of obedience on the part of the sinner; that this obedience would come after repentance, but before the forgiveness of sins. Is this so? This will be investigated in our next article.

#### Exercises in belief

Deuteronomy 11:26-27; 13:4; 1 Samuel 15:22; Jeremiah 7:23-24; 26:13; 38:20; Acts 5:29-32; Hebrews 5:8-9; Romans 1:1-5

W. BROWN

(To be continued)

## INFLUENCE

IF the Christian is to be the salt of the earth, he must have a certain antiseptic influence on life. We all know that there are certain people in whose company it is easy to be good; and that also there are certain people in whose company it is easy for

standards to be relaxed. There are certain people in whose presence a soiled story would be readily told, and there are other people to whom no one would dream of telling such a tale. The Christian must be the cleansing antiseptic in any society in which he happens to be; he must be the person who by his presence defeats corruption and makes it easier for others to be good.

WILLIAM BARCLAY in  
"The Daily Study Bible."

A MESSAGE from God is always meant to be passed on. His word to me must always be my word for Him to others. Of what use is it spending time alone with God, hearing Him speak, if we are not prepared to pass on His message to our fellowmen who have had no such blessed experience.

## OBITUARY

Beulah Road, Birkby-in-Ashfield: It is with deep regret that we have to announce the passing of our dear sister Edna Bullimore. Our sister passed away suddenly on the 18th August having previously undergone a successful operation. We are all saddened by her passing and our sympathy goes out to her husband Sam and the family. Edna had been a Christian for 50 years and was of a cheerful disposition and was loved by us all. We are certain she has gone to the reward of all faithful followers of our dear Lord Jesus and will hear that "Well done" in that day when all will be made plain.

A service was held in the meeting-room and later at Mansfield crematorium on the 22nd August, the writer officiating at both services.

Tom Woodhouse (Sec.)

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Kirkcaldy, Scotland:** During our recent campaign 24 brethren visited many of the 17,000 in the town, resulting in 64 Bible Studies being conducted or arranged. As a result of this work, 5 souls have been added to the Lord's church. They are - Mima Marshall; Christine Tobin; Ann Wilson; Elizabeth Swan and Daniel Cepok. We are thankful for the efforts of the many brethren who contributed to this work. Please pray that this effort will continue to reap a harvest in the future. Robt. Hughes (Sec)

**Slamannan District:** A goodly number of brethren met at Dennyloanhead on Saturday 10th September, for our Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting, to discuss the subject "What is the Millennium, and How are We to Understand it?" with particular reference to Chap. 20 of Revelation.

The speakers were Bros. J. Sinclair, Senr., Tranent, and Ian Davidson, Motherwell, and Bro. Andrew Scobie was in the chair. In the addresses given and in the discussions which followed many thoughtful points were raised

and discussed, leading all to have a better and clearer understanding of the subject. Tea was provided by our Dennyloanhead brethren and we again thank them for their hospitality.

We shall next meet (D.V.) at Reddingmuirhead, by invitation of our Wallacestone brethren, on Sat. 3rd December, at 4 p.m. when the subject for discussion will be "Is There Any Scripture To Justify The Use of Leavened Bread At The Lord's Table"? The speakers will be Bro. Mark Plain Snr., Tranent, and Bro. L. Purcell, Motherwell. The Chairman will be Bro. Joe Malcolm, Dennyloanhead.

H. Davidson.

## A BIRTH

On September 9th at Kettering, to Maimie and Jim Sinclair, a daughter, Hannah Margaret.

PRAYER is the giving out of love, in communion with the love of God, towards those for whom we pray. But if there is no love in us for those for whom we are saying prayers, there will be no true prayer. Yet, where there is very little love, prayer can increase it, and by expressing in our prayer the very little love, we shall come to feel more love.

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