

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS

1983

May this year, for all our readers, be one of real spiritual
progress; then it will be a truly happy one. To this end,
let us do and give

OUR BEST FOR GOD, WHO GAVE HIS BEST FOR US.

THE EVANGELIST

AS one of the two speakers at the Mutual Benefit Meeting at Motherwell, on 4th December last, it occurred to me that I might present in this article the substance of the material I presented at that meeting, on 'Evangelists'. There is a school of thought that 'New Testament' evangelists have gone, and that today we are ALL evangelists. It is very true that every member of the church has a duty (non-transferable) to preach the gospel to every creature, and that he/she has a similar duty to preach, at the very least, to members of their own family. Indeed when persecution came upon the early church at Jerusalem *all* the members (except the apostles) were scattered abroad and "went everywhere preaching the word". However, notwithstanding the fact that "every member went everywhere preaching the word" we still had, in the church, members known as 'Evangelists'. Indeed was not Philip one of those who were scattered abroad, who (albeit he had just been ordained a 'deacon') went everywhere preaching and was later known as Philip 'the EVANGELIST'. It is not therefore strictly true to say that '*nowadays*' every member of the church is expected to be an 'evangelist' (i.e. preach the gospel). It was *just as true* in New Testament times, and nothing has changed in that respect. Also; even while ALL the members of the church in Jerusalem "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:1-4) Paul could, at the same time say in connection with the church, "And he gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and

some, *evangelists*: and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..." (Eph. 4:11). Thus, although THEN as NOW *all* members of the church were to preach to every creature, God still had, in the church 'evangelists'. I suppose some, in Paul's day, could have said, "Why do we need evangelists - surely every member is obligated to be an evangelist?". What would have been Paul's reply? Paul didn't seem to agree that *all members* were evangelists because he specifically instructed *Timothy* to do the work of an evangelist. Luke didn't seem to appreciate that all members were evangelists because he referred to Philip as 'the' evangelist (Acts 21:8).

The term 'Evangelist' occurs only thrice, as such, and is derived from 'evangelism' - a 'bringer of good tidings'. It is found in Eph. 4:11 (which has already been quoted); Acts 21:8 "Philip the evangelist": and in 2 Tim 4:5 "do the work of an evangelist". The apostles, were of course, the first evangelists, by obvious necessity, and Jerusalem was the first church planted by them. Indeed at the outset they had oversight in every department and were the first elders and deacons as well. However as the membership increased evangelists, pastors and teachers took over their respective tasks in the various congregations. I have never been able to understand how some brethren can go through the list of officers in the early church and say that Apostles and prophets have gone, evangelists have gone, but elders and deacons alone remain. Certainly apostles have gone. As one of the qualifications of apostles was that of being an actual eyewitness of our Lord's resurrection - then we can safely assume that there are no apostles today based on that reason alone. Equally there are no 'prophets' in the church today - the need and purpose of prophecy has passed. But who would be foolish enough to say that the need and purpose of evangelists has gone. If the church needs elders and deacons today, (and it certainly does) then it just as certainly needs evangelists today. As long as there are *congregations* we shall require elders and deacons — as long as there are *sinner*s we shall need evangelists. Some churches 'get by' without elders and deacons but the church is incomplete without them, and would function better with them. The church will 'get by' without evangelists but will grow much more readily with them. Evangelists should be out breaking up new ground. If we don't have evangelists we have nobody out there breaking up new ground. Are some brethren saying that that is how it should be? The people who sit in India or Africa, in darkness, will wait a long time to meet a 'bringer of good tidings' if we believe that evangelists died off together with apostles and prophets. Surely there is nothing remotely mysterious about the office of the early evangelist that would lead us into thinking that they have long gone? It is true that they were (at least some were) supernaturally gifted, and like Philip, were able to amaze the people with miracles. In this however, they were no different from elders and deacons, for they were also given spiritual gifts. Take away the gifts and we still have elders and deacons. Take away the gifts and we still have evangelists. On this point Alexander Campbell (The Christian System p. 85) says, "Superficial readers have, therefore, sometimes concluded that, inasmuch as bishops, deacons, and especially evangelists, frequently possessed these manifestations of the Holy Spirit, with the ceasing of those gifts the offices themselves also expired. This is a great mistake." How true. Why should we think that because the manifestations of the Spirit have gone that the offices have gone also? And why should we add to this inconsistency by believing that the office of elder and deacon survive without the gifts, but the office of evangelist does not. David King, referring to the necessity of super-natural gifts in the early days of the church, says, "...all that

the elders, evangelists and teachers were thus qualified to accomplish *they could have attained in process of time by the exercise of powers natural to man*, whereas time, application and natural ability could never make apostles or prophets without super-natural endowment." We hear some glibly say "Oh we can't have evangelists today like we had in N.T. times". Why can't we? The only difference is obviously that evangelists today will not be able to perform miracles - but the function of 'evangelist' remains the same — a 'bringer of good tidings'. The work is the same - the responsibility is the same. By the same token we can just as readily say, "Oh we can't have elders and deacons like they had in N.T. times". If we mean that they do not have super-natural powers today, then we are right - but the function, duties and responsibilities are the same. It is just as meaningless to say "Oh we can't have *churches* today like they had in N.T. times". The *supernatural* gifts have gone, brethren, *that is all* that has changed. The *natural* gifts remain and some men are doubtless gifted NATURALLY for the task of evangelist, elder or deacon. Indeed the qualifications outlined in the N.T. for elders, deacons and evangelists are ALL *natural* qualities and gifts. The 'performance of miracles' is not, to my knowledge, one of the qualifications. Surely we are not going to fall into the 'mistake' warned of by brother A. Campbell that because gifts have gone offices have gone with them. What is to prevent a congregation, which has the necessary financial resources, from appointing one (or more) gifted male members of the congregation (able to clearly and persuasively preach the gospel) as *evangelists* and sending them to take the glad tidings to places and people who have not heretofore received it - whether it be India, Africa, Mexico, Europe, Russia, or wherever. 'The man in the street' would call such men 'missionaries' but we would rightly call them 'Evangelists'. I am aware, of course, there are churches already doing this and some have been doing it for years. Such men would be 'Evangelists' as described in the N.T. (minus the power to do miracles, of course).

My simple view of the New Testament church is that it practices mutual ministry (as taught in the epistles) and that it is under the general supervision of elders, with help from deacons. Elders and deacons are 'located' to a congregation, by the very nature of their responsibility. By contrast, it is the evangelists who are not 'located' but who must 'go' and take the glad news to regions beyond the scope of the local congregation. How else is 'new ground' to be opened up. It is true that Philip was originally appointed a deacon (Acts 6) but when the persecution came and the church was scattered Philip did not 'locate' with a congregation but went into samaria and many places thereafter, taking with him the glad tidings. For an 'evangelist' to remain in a congregation after the appointment of elders and deacons must surely be a contradiction of terms and interests, and ends up with evangelists preaching to the converted. The usual method of dealing with this contradiction of terms ('static evangelist') is to employ a little bit of term-switching and substitute 'the preacher' (or 'the minister') for 'the evangelist'. We may switch all the terms we like but the incongruity will remain. When an evangelist breaks new ground and plants a congregation he should remain and teach that congregation until it is completely organised. Obviously until men in the congregation are able to be elders or deacons the evangelist will require to exercise the oversight of that congregation. "But", says David King, "the evangelist who seeks to retain charge in these departments - who neglects to bring brethren forward so that the oversight which he possesses may be transferred to them, is injurious to the church and unfaithful to the Lord. He who seeks to make his presence a necessity and to settle down as the One Man over the church subverts the order of the Lord's house". (Memoirs of D, King p. 277)

The qualifications of an evangelist, although not formalised like those for elders and deacons, are easily ascertained by discovering the kind of man Timothy was - and Timothy was an evangelist. He was "well reported of amongst the brethren" (Acts 16:2); "nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine" (1 Tim 4:6); blameless (1 Tim 6:14); diligent (2 Tim 4:2); of good behaviour (1 Tim 3:15); gentle, apt to teach, patient, meek (2 Tim 2:24); morally pure and charitable (1 Tim 4:12). Similarly it is easily possible to ascertain from the two letters to evangelists exactly what the WORK of the Evangelist is to be. It is not only that of preaching, praying, baptising, forming congregations, but also of **SETTING IN ORDER THINGS THAT ARE WANTING** in congregations and **ORDAINING ELDERS**. "For this very cause" Timothy was left in Ephesus and Titus was left in Crete. Elders are not necessary to the *being* of a church but very necessary to the *wellbeing* of a church and so Titus was instructed to ordain elders in every city. Perhaps if Paul were in Britain today he would regard many congregations as incomplete and send evangelists to "set in order the things that are wanting". Obviously Titus was dealing with churches which did not have elders. Had they had elders his intervention would have been quite unnecessary - since the duty of the elders is to pastor and feed the flock. My space has dwindled and I had much more to say, but may I close by saying that there is nothing in the N.T. to stop a congregation from sending an evangelist out into the world to preach and plant churches. Church members should be responsible for preaching to those within its own locality, but the evangelist should *go out* and 'break new ground' either at home or abroad. "How shall they hear without a preacher: And how shall they preach except they be sent" (Rom 10:14). Lack of funds may be a *practical* reason for not sending evangelists out, but there are no scriptural reasons for not doing so.

EDITOR

PATIENT BUT HOPEFUL

As we enter into another year it may seem to some as though the promises of our Lord, after nearly two thousand years, are not going to be fulfilled, and they may even be thinking, like the scoffers, and saying "Where is the promise of His coming." Such thinking, however, though up to a point understandable, would be a complete travesty of faith. This waiting is in fact one of the greatest assets of our faith. It teaches us many great lessons, one of which is patience, "patience unto the coming of the Lord". This is a quote from the epistle of James 5:7-8 and stated fully reads, "Be patient therefore, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh". In these words the Holy Spirit is applying the operations of nature to supply us with spiritual food or instruction, and when we consider that God is the Architect of nature, also Author of the Bible, this is not at all surprising. I suggest then, that we go to nature for a time and see if we can learn somewhat to improve or encourage to patience.

What does the scripture say? "The husbandman waiteth..." and let us think of the husbandman as the farmer. He waits with a reasonable hope for the fruits of his labour and the fruits of the earth. He waits "with long patience" for the early and latter rains, and he expects the harvest because he has prepared the soil and sown the seed. If he had not he could only look for weeds to grow. It would be like those foolish people who would comfort themselves with the hope in the end of good things to come whilst neglecting the opportunity of sowing good things in

the present time. Some would shrug and say "all will be well in the end", but why should they expect any change which is contrary to the whole concept of God's providence. It is written "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption". Salvation is a blessing reserved for those who sow to the Spirit and only such shall reap eternal life. Note that the husbandman waits with *long* patience, and so our waiting must have this kind of patience also. It may be that you are a sufferer from some long illness or crippling disability, but I would remind you that there are sweet fruits to be derived therefrom *if borne with patience*. The scriptures say — "Not for the present seemeth it to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby", we need to have long patience for those peaceable fruits and we shall be greatly rewarded if we are exercised by the discipline which suffering brings, and may we be refined by passing through these trials, and like Job, our patient endurance will bring great rewards. So let your waiting be with your lamps trimmed and your lights burning, as good and willing servants of your Lord Jesus Christ.

Then you may be a worker for the Lord, as we all ought to be, as such we are watching and waiting for results in the bringing of souls to Christ, and though reliant upon the power of the gospel, it can also be a product of faithful living, of patient teaching and of prayer. So let us patiently work for genuine and lasting conversions. Let our waiting be with infinite patience even as the farmer waits for his reward. From start to finish he has nothing but outlay until he sells his crop, except that he may get much satisfaction and even pleasure from his hard labours. But in the end when he recovers all with interest, he has his reward. Certainly in the interval he has had much worry and even doubts to overcome, plus perhaps the criticisms of his fellow farmers. Is this not so with those who are Christians in this world? The farmer's outlay was, in the main, time and effort. What did Paul recommend to Timothy? "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). To study (and this word in the Greek conveys the meaning "to agonise") requires time and effort and if one applies oneself to such, he will find much satisfaction and pleasure in the work he has to do, and hopefully, will in time be richly rewarded by an ingathering of souls. But then we need as much patience *in working* as we do *in suffering*. If our work is in preaching the gospel, publicly or otherwise, we must not expect to see immediate results in all cases, although such may occasionally happen, but in most instances we must, like the farmer, wait for the harvest to mature. The word of truth, like the farmer's seed, takes time to mature, but first it must find good soil, which is an open mind and an honest heart. Therefore, do not give up trying after the first attempt, but go again seven times, nay go again seventy times seven, and when you do succeed, the long wait will seem but just a short span and the rewards beyond measure. Impatience on the other hand sours the temper and only frustrates and holds back the effort. Let us therefore, learn to wait in a right spirit, prayerful and submissive to the will of God, learn to labour and to wait, and be not doubtful of His will.

Then again brethren, like the farmer, we sometimes have to bear with criticism from our fellow-Christians, for the pure motive of any man who serves well, is so very often misrepresented. How often do we find that the one who does least is most critical of the worker. Perhaps his motto is "the less you do, the less you will be open to criticism". But brethren, we must not look for the approbation of men, for what is it really worth, especially if it is not genuine. Our Lord said we

must not do our work to be seen of men, but to do all, that we may receive the approbation of God. Rather let us look for our reward in the hereafter, let us wait with long patience for our harvest, which in the end will be reward beyond our greatest expectations. What more encouragement to patience do we need than the anticipation of our Lord's words "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of your Lord". Even now these written words are encouragement enough, but Oh the joy of hearing His own voice say "Well done thou good and faithful servant" This will be like nectar to our souls.

When that day comes may it be recorded of you that you were patient in affliction and resigned to the will of God, always ready to depart with Christ, which is far better.

Finally I would say to anyone who is not in Christ Jesus, who has not yet obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ, you have nothing to wait for with patience except a dread of judgement. For the unrepentant sinner there is nothing but a fearful looking for Judgement, for the scriptures say "... it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement". (Hebrews 9:27) (It must be an awful thing to go through life, perhaps a life of drudgery or of much suffering, and then go into Eternity with the wrath of God abiding on you for ever and ever. Even if you have a healthy and wealthy life here on earth what does it avail if in the end you are driven from the presence of the Lord forever? If therefore, you are not in Christ Jesus, may you be persuaded to believe in Him and obey Him, to become one of His, on His terms and on His terms only. Avail yourselves of the blood of Christ for therein is pardon and salvation.

JOHN McLUCKIE, Haddington

GLEANINGS

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

GENTLEMEN

"Before you begin to teach others, is it not desirable that you should know something yourselves? "We believe and therefore speak," has been the device of the true ministers of the Church from apostolic times to our own. Judging from many sermons which are preached in our day, there are ministers who have taken a new motto — "We disbelieve and therefore speak". But what results can come from a ministry which is almost wholly critical and destructive? What nobleness of moral character can it build up? What moral strength can it inspire? What ardour can it kindle? What lofty hopes can it confirm? What broken heart can it bind up? To what weariness can it give rest? What defence can it offer to the tempted? What relief from the consciousness of guilt to the penitent? What guidance to the soul that is athirst for the living God? Have you anything to tell men that will make heaven seem nearer to earth than it ever was before, that will compel them to feel the tragic grandeur of human life and the infinite contrast between righteousness and sin? Have you anything to tell them which will save them from the bitterness of despair in their worst sorrows, and which will keep them calm and enable them to exercise self-restraint in their greatest successes and triumphs? Have you anything to tell them that, in the fiercest heat of youthful passion, under the severest strain of business and professional anxiety, and when the cold selfishness of old age is creeping upon them, will enable them to master the world, the flesh, and the devil? You are to be ministers of Christ — have you anything to say that ought to make the authority of Christ more awful

and august to the conscience and the will, and the mercy of Christ more tender to the heart, of every man that listens to you?"... R.W. DALE

Someone Has Said

"Eloquence must be attractive". "The virtue of books is to be readable, and of orators to be interesting". EMERSON

We Quote — George Dawson

"When I speak I make up my mind that the people shall listen to me: if they don't listen, it doesn't matter what you say".

The Call To Battle

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil". Ephesians 6:10-11

"There is nothing that is more urgently important for all who claim the name of Christian, than to grasp and to understand the teaching of this particular section of Scripture. I say those 'who claim the name of Christian', because the Apostle's words are obviously addressed to Christian people, and to christian people only. They have no message for those who are not Christians; indeed nobody else can understand them. The world today ridicules this kind of statement. It does not believe in a spiritual realm at all. It is even doubtful about the being of God; it has no faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; still less, therefore, does it believe that there are 'principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness even in high (or in heavenly) places'. Such words are meaningless to the world; it has no appreciation of their value and importance.

But to the Christian the statement is not only full of significance, it is also full of help and of real encouragement; and, let me repeat, there is surely no theme that is more urgently important to all Christians at the present time than just this. I refer, of course, to the whole state of life, the whole state of the world, and to all the difficulty of living, and especially living the Christian life in these confused times in which we find ourselves. Not that I suggest that life has ever been easy in this world for the Christian. It was not so for the early Christians. And today, in some respects, the problem is more acute and more urgent, perhaps, than it has ever been. There was a time, until comparatively recently, when at least a man's home was more or less shut off from the world; but now the world comes into the home in many different ways, not only with the newspapers but with the television and the wireless and other media. Thus the fight of faith becomes particularly difficult and strenuous for the Christian at such a time; and in addition to all this there is the general strain of the times and the anxiety of the hour.

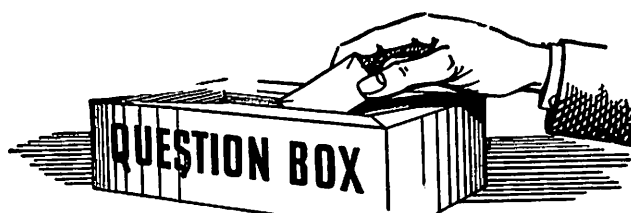
D.M. LLOYD-JONES

Selected by LEONARD MORGAN

MISCELLANEA

Christianity is the only religion that abounds in song. Atheism is songless, agnosticism has nothing to sing about, but Judaism said "O come and let us sing unto the Lord." When Christ came the angels greeted His birth with praise, and since then Christian song has gained in fulness and strengthened each century.

Reinhold Niebuhr ably sets out the "milk and water" ideas of Christianity, God, man and redemption, so common today, in the following words: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross."



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“WOULD you acknowledge that Christianity has to date failed in this world?”

Success or failure may be the result of some arbitrary decision by someone, or it may be because of someone’s subjective assessment; examinations are a case in point. Regarding examinations, a person is said to have succeeded if he/she achieves a pass mark of, say, 45%. If the candidate just makes the 45% he/she is reckoned to be successful even though there is a failure rate of 55%. So we see that success and failure are not as clear-cut as we might imagine, indeed, they seem to be inextricably mixed in most situations. It is with this basic thought in mind that we must approach our question if we are to answer it in realistic terms.

The Gospel

So far as the Gospel is concerned, I would take it that success is attributed to it if someone obeys it. If we are realistic then we must conclude that the Gospel is for *all*, “Whosoever will may come”, but our realism, based on experience, must also make us aware that *not all will* come. Furthermore, the words of the Lord are unmistakable when we apply them, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

The paradox of the Word is that the same Message which brings life, also condemns. As Paul put it when he wrote to Corinth, “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor 2:15-16). Therefore, our elementary reasoning leads us to believe that when the Gospel is believed and obeyed it produces life and is consequently looked upon as being successful; if its non-acceptance produces death, then the desire of God is frustrated, (i.e. God desires that none should perish), and it is consequently looked upon as a failure. This seeming paradoxical dualism confuses many people and so they continue to live their lives in an apathetical limbo, not wanting to actively *disbelieve*, but not daring to believe. A profoundly sorry state of affairs, and one which, I am sure, *every* Christian should be seeking to rectify by preaching the Word in season and out of season.

The Christian Life

When we begin to analyse the lives of those who *have* responded to the Gospel, the so-called successful ones, we are confronted with the same perplexing picture. The Christian is the recipient of the gracious in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit in his life, and how do we measure *His* success or failure as the motivating Agent? Do we measure success by the number of *meetings* which the individual Christian attends; or is it by his eloquence and persuasiveness in preaching; or is it by the amount he gives into the treasury; or by his serious demeanour and his

rejection of 'worldly' pursuits; or is it a combination of *all* these things plus others? How *do* we arrive at the point when we can say that the individual is living a *successful* Christian life? The only thing we *can* say with any certainty is that it will not be the fault of the Holy Spirit for non-success; His power is illimitable; it is *we* who limit His power, and this throws up the equally perplexing question as to how successful was our *conversion* to Christ in the first instance.

The Church

It would be an interesting exercise to find out how far the Church has been instrumental in promoting Christ and His gospel to the world. The Kerygmatic function of the Church is one that we cannot escape. Time, effort, and money have been expended over the years in discussing how best to promote the Gospel of Christ. Unfortunately, the performance has never somehow matched the discussion, and purely from a cost-effective angle the amount of money spent on evangelism would seem not to have had an adequate return numerically, i.e. souls saved for Christ. I know there are some who will argue that all the money in the world could not be valued against the saving of one soul but that does not indicate with any objectivity the success or failure of Gospel promotion as some see it.

In order to illustrate this point let us look at a little statistical evidence. In the Churches of Christ Year Book of 1887 it is recorded that the number of Churches of Christ in the British Isles was 135 with a combined membership of some 8500. In the recent Directory of Churches issued with the Christian Worker there was some 68 listed Churches with a combined membership of some 2100. Add to this total some Churches which are not listed in the Directory and I think we would find it difficult to muster 2500 members. These figures would seem to indicate that there has not been a successful *holding operation*, let alone a consistent growth.

I am aware that many reasons could be adduced for this. Internecine struggles within the Church; erosion of parental and family influence; changes in the way modern society views religion; lack of commitment, etc., but the plain fact of the matter is that while there has been a steady *increase* in *resources*, there has been a corresponding *decrease* in observable *results*. Some would argue that because we can find Churches of Christ *at all* in the 20th century constitutes success, but all the indicators point to the fact that the Church, which Christ bought so dearly with His life, has in many ways failed Him. It is rather strange to relate that the most striking successes in recent years from evangelism have been achieved in the so-called Third World rather than in the more affluent Western societies; has the solid rock of Christ been replaced in our lives by the shifting sands of materialism?

Society

The world has never been the same since Calvary. Since then, nations and societies have lived in the shadow of the Cross of Christ. All peoples have been forced to take a decision concerning Christ because the eternal destiny of the soul is inherent in the Gospel. It is true to say that many millions of people have chosen to reject Christ; others have pushed Him to one side in the forlorn hope that everything will turn out right in the end, without any commitment on their part; and there are yet others who try to push Him into the dim recesses of the mind by living lives of frenzied pleasure and drunken debauchery. Such is the scene that God looks down upon.

At the same time, the citadel of Christianity has been under constant attack by Atheists, Materialists, Evolutionists, and the repeated onslaughts of the Higher Critics; all of these attacks from without have been easily repulsed. It is the attack from *within* the Citadel which has proved most damaging. The words of Paul to the elders from the Church at Ephesus have proved to be truly prophetic, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of *your own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). Down the ages Christianity has been its own worst enemy, but it has survived even this internal strife, though it has been sorely mauled in the process.

Has Christianity, then, been of any use at all to society? Well, yes it has. Practically all of the laws of this land have been based on the Christian ethic, and whatever remains of a caring society must surely have had its roots in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. Unhappily, some of that success is now being eroded, and so-called 'do-gooders' are now looked upon with scorn and derision, as if they were the enemies of society rather than its helpers. But there has been enough evidence to show that even where the Gospel has not been personally appropriated, Christianity has done enough to demonstrate that its inherent goodness has been beneficial even at society level.

Well, success or failure? Perhaps a mixture of both. But of one thing I am sure; the 'deposit' of God remains with what is left of the true Church of Christ, and it is *that* Church which is the catalyst in a sin-torn world. When Nehemiah looked at the destroyed walls of Jerusalem his heart must have sunk within him, but he and the people began to rebuild because 'the people had a mind to work'. God grant that His 'earthen vessels' might demonstrate for Him that success which has always been inherent in everything which He has done.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY 1983

6	Psalm 51	Luke 7:36-50
13	Isaiah 55	Luke 8:1-21
20	Psa. 107:23-43	Luke 8:22-39
27	Isaiah 38	Luke 8:40-56

WOMEN

Luke's gospel has been described as the Gospel of Women. Again, we must remember that in those days in Palestine a woman's place was a lowly one.

In this portion of scripture we read of a sinful woman who anointed Jesus in the house of a Pharisee. Her action exposed the discourteousness of this host. Jesus said of her: "For she loved

much". Jesus said to her: "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." These are words to bring to the attention of anyone who rejects the divinity of Jesus. Who indeed can forgive sins but God? Jesus was EMMANUEL, God with us.

We also read here of women who provided for Jesus from their substance. They were Mary called Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, Susanna, and many others. William Barclay has pointed out: "In this list of women we have a group whose help was practical. Being women, they would not be allowed to preach; but they gave the gifts they had..... It is not always the person in the foreground who is doing the greatest work. Many a man who occupies a public position could not sustain it for one week without the

help of the home behind him! There is no gift which cannot be used in the service of Christ. Many of the greatest servants are in the background unseen but essential to his cause."

We further read in these verses of a woman who was healed of a bloody issue. She had suffered this for twelve years - the age, incidentally, of Jairus' daughter. Her touching the border of Jesus' garment was different. It was a touch of faith. Notice that! One can be in the crowd surrounding Jesus and never really touch him, never really receive his power. To obtain his blessings, one must come to him in faith.

Parables

Jesus was a master teacher. One of his favourite methods of teaching was by parables. In fact, the scripture says: "Without a parable he did not speak to them" (Matthew 13:34). The English word parable is from a Greek word which means "to throw alongside". Thus, a parable is an illustration thrown alongside a truth in order to explain it. Someone once said: "A pound of illustration is worth a ton of explanation".

Jesus never spoke in a vacuum. Drawing upon the daily life of his hearers for illustrative material, he pointed them to sublime truths by use of these things with which they were all familiar. Some of the parables were drawn from established customs related to marriage and other events. Other parables were related to occupations in ancient Palestine such as farming, fishing and husbandry. Still others had to do with daily household tasks such as baking of bread or grinding at the mill.

I often wonder what kind of "earthly stories with heavenly meanings" Jesus would use if he were amongst us today? for example, unto what would he liken the kingdom of God? a satellite in orbit? A probe into

outer space? An astronaut on the moon? We can but wonder!

The Parable of the Sower

W.E. Vine has pointed out two dangers to be avoided in seeking to interpret the parables in scripture - that of ignoring the important features, and that of trying to make all the details mean something. However, in this particular parable Jesus himself gives us a clear interpretation. For example, He said: "The seed is the word of God". Without the word there could be no conversion to God. The Apostle Peter once wrote to his fellow Christians thus: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides for ever" (1 Peter 1:22-23). Surely these words endorse Jesus' statement.

In 1843 Alexander Campbell debated with Presbyterian Nathan L. Rice on a number of subjects, one of which was *the influence of the Holy Spirit*. Campbell proposed and affirmed that: "In conversion and sanctification, the Spirit of God operates on persons only through the word of truth". Rice, of course, denied that. The fourteen arguments developed by Campbell on this theme make profitable reading. His tenth argument "consisted of those scriptures which show that whatever is ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation, is also ascribed to the *Word*; and in what is ascribed to the *Word*, is also ascribed to the *Spirit*. The gentleman has not found a single exception to it. Are persons said to be enlightened, quickened, converted, sanctified, regenerated, comforted, etc., by the *Word*? They are also in some other scriptures said to be so by the *Spirit*; and vice versa. This agent and instrument were so inseparably connected in the minds of the apostles

and prophets, that they could not conceive of the one without the other, in any operation or effect connected with the salvation of man."

The Calming of the Storm

Jesus has supreme authority in the natural realm and the supernatural realm. The former power was displayed in the stilling of the storm; the latter in the casting out of the legion of demons.

The Motherwell choir used to sing that great hymn:

Master, the tempest is raging!
The billows are tossing High!
The sky is o'er-shadowed with
blackness,

No shelter or help is nigh.

"Carest Thou not that we perish?"

How canst Thou lie asleep,
When each moment is madly so
threat'ning
A grave in the angry deep?

The winds and the waves shall obey
Thy will;

Peace, be still! peace, be still!
Whether the wrath of the storm-
tossed sea,

Or demons, or men, or whatever it
be,

No water can swallow the ship where
lies

The Master of ocean, and earth, and
skies:

They all shall sweetly obey Thy will;
Peace, be still! Peace, be still!

The second and third verses go on to reveal that the man who calmed the troubled sea can also calm the troubled breast. The winds and the waves could not help but obey Him. Men and women, however, are of the rational realm and they have the freedom to serve Jesus or not. The tragedy is that so few heed His invitation: "Come unto Me; and I will give you rest." And we, in Christ, know that His is a rest or peace "which passes all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

The Demons and the Deep

In the article for December's readings, we learned that the demons were the fallen angels who were cast out of heaven with their leader Satan. The apostle Peter has written: "For if God spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment...." (2 Peter 2:4). Some translations have "chains of darkness" as "pits of darkness", "dark dungeons", "caverns of darkness". These phrases are probably more accurate than "chains of darkness" and better describe "the deep" (verse 31 chapter 8) which is the Greek word *Abussos*. (Hence our English word abyss).

"Cast down to hell" is the Greek verb *Tartaroo* and signifies to consign to Tartarus. The verb is found nowhere else in the New Testament scriptures. It also describes the place where the fallen angels are confined. Tartarus is, interestingly, mentioned in Greek and Roman mythology. In the book *The Myths Of Greek And Rome*, the author H. A. Guerber reveals that Tartarus was "the abyss under the earth," "the prison house of the Lower World" and even "the gulf into which the four infernal rivers flowed". But Tartarus is not a myth, it is a reality; and that is where the fallen angels are today. There they await the judgment of God and the certainty of being cast into everlasting fire "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

How is it then that we read of demons inhabiting a man and then entering into a herd of swine? I would suggest again that some were released in New Testament times to show the sovereignty of Jesus. I know that their habitation on earth was the bodies of certain individuals. I do not know of the conditions that led to demon possession.

The Raising of Jairus' Daughter

Jairus showed great faith in Jesus, and his faith was rewarded in the end. His beloved daughter was raised from the dead despite the incredulity of the relatives and friends. Many today are like those who "laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead". They think that death is final. They reject any possibility of one being resurrected from the grave. Little do they realise the power of God. The scripture says: "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15).

Jesus is the great conqueror of death. "I am he who lives and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of death" (Revelation 1:18). "I am the resurrection, and the life. He who believes in me, even though he dies, he shall live" (John 11:25). Only in Jesus can one face death. Death to the Christian is not a going away, rather it is a coming home. "For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23). So wrote the apostle Paul.

This same Jesus who brought Jairus' daughter to life can also resurrect the sinner from the death in trespasses and sins. The spirit gives life (verse 55 chapter 8). His Spirit gives eternal life. That's the Spirit!

Ian Davidson, Motherwell.

BELIEF (5)

The Safety Factor

AS we have seen, the reason why more people believe in trains than in aeroplanes is because they believe that trains are safer. The same factor operates with regard to persons. We believe in, and so trust some persons more than others, because we believe it is safer to do so. Thus our faith, or belief in persons varies, according to

their character, just as it varies according to the character or nature of things.

If persons or things have a bad or injurious character, we cease to believe in them, and believe only about them. For example, we believe in good men, but only about evil men. We believe in medicine, but only about poison. It depends upon the good that men or things can do to us. In other words, it depends upon the element or factor of safety, in so far as that personally affects each one of us.

Summary

We have seen that to believe is to be firmly persuaded of and so to trust in; that it applies to both persons and things; that there are two aspects of belief, namely, believing about or believing in; that the latter depends upon a community of interest between the believer and the person or thing believed in; and that this depends upon the factor of safety involved, which in turn varies with the character of the person or thing concerned.

There is one further factor, however, upon which belief depends, and that is the existence of the person or thing believed in.

The Factor of Existence

We cannot believe in non-existent persons or things, although we can believe about persons who have ceased to exist, for example Nero, Napoleon, Alexander the Great and others.

On the other hand, we can believe in existing persons, such as the Prime Minister. This depends however, on whether or not there exists a community of interest between him and us. In other words, it depends on whether our ideas coincide with his, and so some doubt or disbelieve. Usually however, belief in persons depends more upon the closeness of our relationship to such persons in our daily life.

Jesus

Now all these aspects of belief are true of Jesus, especially the factor of existence. "He lives! He lives!" This was the astounding theme underlying the lives of all the apostles and early disciples. This was the great fact proclaimed by Peter on the Day of Pentecost: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses".

This is the great, central fact of the Scriptures. Do you believe it? It is easy to believe about that wonderful event, but it is a vastly different thing believing in it, with all that it implies. This involves not only what led up to it, but (most important of all) what proceeds from it.

In order to believe in the resurrection of the living Christ we must do something about it. Just as in the case of persons or things, we must enter into relationship with these persons or things. That and that alone shows what is the quality of our faith, belief or trust.

Fellowship

That is the relationship or fellowship behind John's statement in 1 John 1:1-3. It is almost as if he could not find words adequate to express his joy at the wonderful fact that Jesus was alive for evermore — and that his followers can share in that life. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us). That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things

write we unto you that your joy may be full".

Koinonia

It is difficult adequately to express the full meaning of *koinonia*—the Greek word translated "fellowship". Unlike ordinary human relationships, that between our Lord and his disciples has a fulness of communion and trust and love which far surpasses the best of human friendships. It embraces all that we have said about the true meaning of believing in him. It implies full persuasion that our Lord lives and reigns for evermore, and is able to do for us far more than we can ever ask or think. This leads to complete trust in him, and willing obedience to him in all that he requires.

In our next article, we shall try to develop further the full significance of this fellowship with the Christ. Meanwhile, here are further

Exercises in Belief

1 Peter 1:8-9; James 1:21; Hebrews 7:25; 3:12-14; 1:1-3; 2:1-3; John 5:20-24; 6:27-39; 14; 10:23-24; Hebrews 11:6.

W. BROWN

CHANGE OF MEETING TIMES

Beulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield: The church here has decided to change the times of our Sunday School and Breaking of Bread meetings, which from the 5th December will be as follows:

Sunday School commences at 10 a.m.
Breaking of Bread follows at 11 a.m.
Gospel meeting as usual at 6 p.m.

Tom Woodhouse

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Cape Town, R.S.A.: "Once again its both a joy and a privilege for me to write and tell you, that "News at the moment is with the Bokmakierie

congregation I am labouring with, that at our "Special Gospel Meeting" which I conducted there on the 21st November 1982, 10.30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Well at the evening service with over 80 present, which were our members, visitors and some members of the other local congregations were able to witness two ladies coming forward to express their desire to give their lives to Christ, and were baptized the same evening.

The one lady was the married daughter of one of our elderly sisters, and the other young lady was the granddaughter.

While we are aware of others, who are considering to become obedient to the gospel, we are praying and ask you to share, that I shall be privileged to send "that good news". Our attendance remain fairly commendable, sunday a.m. (p.m. is a bit less) we do not have less than 35, 34, at times 40. Cottage meetings and weekly Bible Study, is also very good, especially in the fact that visitors are so faithful to attend at all services.

So that up to date, since offering my services to them April 1979, to November 1982, we have witnessed 20 baptisms, as follows:- 5 in 1979; 3 in 1980; 8 in 1981; and 4 in 1982, all we can say to God and His word be the Glory. And in closing, to all that share in the "S.S." may the "innumerable joys and blessing we enjoyed through God's grace and power, might be ours to share, Lord willing, during the year of 1983". And God bless you one and all, in your endeavours, wherever you may be labouring, pray for us as we pray for you"! end of news item.

T. W. HARTLE

Dennyloanhead, Scotland: The church here held another Saturday night Gospel Meeting, November 27th. On this occasion our speaker was brother John Dodsley, from Kirkby-in-Ashfield. Brother John preached the

gospel very clearly and plainly, stressing the importance of sitting at Jesus' feet and acknowledging His authority. The meeting was well attended, both by non-members and visiting brethren. We hope and pray that the Word preached may find an abiding and resting place in the hearts of those who heard it. "To God be the glory — great things He hath done." Brother Dodsley also served the church the following Lord's Day, morning and evening. We thank our good brother for his services to the church here and for all those who supported us on this occasion. It was also a joy to see bro. Fred Longden, also from Beaulah Road, and to share this wonderful time in the fellowship in Christ Jesus.

Joseph M. Malcolm (Sec)

Manchester: We rejoice with the angels over the addition to the Lord's Church of Devshi Hirani who was baptised into Christ on Saturday the 20th of November at Albert St., Newtown, Wigan. We are grateful to the Brethren at Albert St. for their hospitality and to brethren from other congregations who at short notice came to witness the baptism.

Brother Hirani was a hindu who had been considering the claims of the gospel for several years. Recently he came into contact with Brother/Masih at his work and learned from him more of the way of the Lord.

Please pray for these brethren in Oldham particularly because they are in the midst of hostility. We praise our Lord that His crucification and resurrection is achieving so much in such an apparently difficult area. Even now the fields are white unto harvest.

Yours on Behalf of the Church in our Home.

A. Ashurst.

Newtongrange, Scotland: It is with great pleasure the church at Newtongrange, announce yet another addition to the kingdom. A dear lady from the Women's Class who has been

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coming to the Gospel meetings, decided, to put on her Lord in baptism. Sister Isabella White was baptised on the Lord's day of the 28th November 1982. We thank God for the continued power of the gospel word and pray that our sister will be abundantly blessed.

Andrew P. Sharp (Sec).

Although you were denied the ability to preach or teach from the platform, in the way you read the scriptures, and in the sincerity of your prayers, you have exhorted us. Your strength of character, your loyalty to Jesus and His word, and your gentle loving disposition shall ever be your memorial.

May, your dear wife Dorothy, and family, and all you loved and held dear, find consolation in the Lord Jesus, and may we all look forward to that brighter day when our Lord shall return and we shall be changed into His perfect likeness.

Tom Kemp.

OBITUARY

Hindley: Brother Sam Whitton fell asleep in Jesus on Tuesday November 23rd. Bro. John Breakell, a life long friend, conducted the funeral service on Friday the 26th, in the meeting house which was well filled with members and friends, a fitting testimony to the high esteem with which our brother was regarded.

Dear Sam, it has been good to know you. To feel the firm warm handshake, and the smile of welcome that accompanied it.

You suffered much, yet you endured as seeing Him who is invisible. You have loved the Lord for many years, and it was always your desire to meet and worship with your brethren. Though often in great pain, it was only on rare occasions that you failed to do this.

Stonehaven, Scotland: We regret to record the passing of the wife of brother W. Brown, formerly of Dunfermline. His wife Elizabeth passed from this life on Lord's Day 17th October last after some years of illness latterly requiring constant attention. She was baptised on Lord's Day 13th July 1947. Bro. M. Gaunt, Peterhead, with some of the brethren from Peterhead and Aberdeen, carried out the funeral service at Hazelhead Crematorium, Aberdeen, on 20th October last. May the Lord bless and uphold all those that mourn, and uplift them by His grace and presence.

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