

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## THE EPIDEMIC AND THE ANTIDOTE

Most of us, I'm sure, have a soft spot for the people of India. The Indians are a fine race, hard working for scant rewards, and yet apparently cheerful in the face of all the hardships they have to bear. It was, therefore, extremely sad to hear, this week, of the many deaths from *pneumonic plague*. Early newspaper reports said that over one hundred people had already died; outbreaks of the plague already affecting three towns in the western State of Gujarat had occurred, and four hundred and sixty persons were infected. There were also, at least, ninety cases of *bubonic plague* confirmed in Maharashtra, near Bombay. Every car and lorry entering Bombay is being sprayed with DDT or fumigated with gas to kill the rat fleas, which carry the plague. Seven doctors and four nurses working in a hospital in Surat have developed the plague symptoms, and in this same hospital one hundred and ten plague patients have discharged themselves because they want to return to their families; thus jeopardizing the efforts being made to contain the disease. The two main strains of this plague are the bubonic and pneumonic, the former of which causes buboes (large swellings of the lymph glands in the groin) and which gives the disease its name. Rat fleas spread the disease and it is no help to kill the rats; the fleas merely seek a new host (preferably a human): thus they try to kill the fleas first, and then the rats. The pneumonic plague, as the name suggests, affects the lungs and is spread by bacilli on the breath or saliva, and passed by coughing and sneezing (as recalled in the nursery rhyme *a Ring O' Roses*).

This plague has tormented the long-suffering people of India many times, and caused about 4 million deaths around 1900 AD. Nearly every country including Scotland, has had bouts of it and indeed all of Europe was devastated by 25 million deaths during The Black Death (1349-50 AD). The Great Plague of London (1665) also killed vast numbers, with all kinds of social and economic ramifications. The plague usually thrives in the wake of some human disaster; e.g. it reached epidemic proportions in the mid-sixties in South Viet-Nam, and is currently, in this outbreak in India, following the worst floods in Surat for 20 years. Dr. V. Tailor of the Civil Hospital in Bombay says that the plague bacteria could haunt the city for years to come, because the bacilli remain fertile in the soil when bodies are buried and not burned.

Readers may be wondering about the relevance of these little items of information, and I only mention them as an introduction to what follows regarding the instructions given in the Bible to the Jews, in dealing with plagues, bacteria and epidemics, and how, *by reason of the Bible*, the Jews were light-years ahead of all other nations in regard to public health. These plagues were around in O.T. times. Bubonic plague has been identified on an Egyptian Mummy: Hippocrates (400 B.C.) gives a medical description of it, and Josephus mentions it.

### THE BIBLE – AHEAD OF ITS TIME

In the world at large, in O.T. times, *any measures* for public health must have been extremely elementary; just as it is, **even today**, virtually unknown in most primitive tribes (eg. the Amazon) and a cause of profound despair by visiting missionaries, doctors or Health Officers. Is it not surprising, therefore, that in a book like the Bible, which is alleged to be backward and unscientific, there should be any sanitary code at all, much less a very advanced and comprehensive manual for public health? In his *Manual of Tropical Medicine*, A. Castellani says "No one can fail to be impressed with the careful hygienic precautions of the Mosaic period. The extremely stringent quarantine rules very likely did a great deal of good," and F.H. Garrison in his standard work on the history of medicine quotes Neuberger as saying, "The Chief glory of Biblical medicine lies in the institution of social hygiene *as a science*." I am informed that any modern Medical Officer of Health would insist upon (1) public cleanliness and the abatement of nuisances: (2) a pure and wholesome water supply: (3) Disposal of sewage: (4) Uncontaminated food: (5) Control of infectious diseases. All these fundamental requirements are based upon the fact **that bacteria are everywhere** (in the earth, in the water, in the atmosphere, in our bodies, on our bodies, on animals, on every exposed surface, on our food: indeed are everywhere). Bacteria are absolutely essential to the functioning of the world: many are helpful to man but some are deadly dangerous (and so even in the world of bacteria we have good and evil). The Jews knew nothing about the existence of bacteria (how could they?) and yet all the instructions of a hygienic nature given to them in the Bible *had bacteria in mind*. Surely this fact should stimulate our minds into an acknowledgement that the Bible is from God, for only God, at that time, knew anything about the existence of germs and virulent infection.

For example, Lev. 11 describes circumstances in which water contaminated with dead animals should not be drunk and vessels cleansed. Vessels of clay badly contaminated could not be re-used and had to be broken, while metal vessels were to be sterilised in fire. When Elisha was in Jericho he was asked by the elders to purify a spring suspected of causing an epidemic of disease. He cast salt into the spring and said "**Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land**" (2 Kings 2). Fevers, like typhoid and cholera are, of course, carried by water. Sewage disposal was also practised by the Jews, and even in army manoeuvres a place "outwith the camp" was provided and every man was responsible for carrying a spade and burying all human waste. (Deut. 23:12). The Talmud tells us that inside large towns and cities all rubbish heaps and dunghills were forbidden and no dead body might remain overnight. Fires were kept burning continuously in the valley of Hinnom as a public incinerator. All this was, and still is, the best way to combat fly-borne infections. One can't help contrasting this situation with that which obtained not so very long ago in Edinburgh, when all kinds of fouled water and kitchen rubbish were tipped out of tenement windows to the shout of "Gardyloo", where it lay in stinking heaps in the streets below: there being no system for refuse removal.

### ISOLATION AND CLEANSING

The Bible also specified the beasts, birds and fish that ought not to be eaten by the Jews. The "clean edible beasts were required to not only chew the cud but also have a cloven hoof, and although the distinction between clean and unclean had a religious content and is not always easy to understand, we all, today, eat more or less the same animals as directed in the Bible. Although we now eat the pig and the rabbit we must handle them carefully for they are still unclean feeders and harbour many types of fleck and worm. Animals dying of natural causes could not be eaten (Deut 14:21) for obviously they may have died of a disease, nor could wounded animals. Blood could not be consumed (Lev. 17:10) but must be drained away from a slaughtered

animal. Apart from any religious reason for this, blood does carry a great variety of bacteria. The Jews were also punctilious in dealing with the dead, and quick decent burials were the norm. Those who had to handle corpses had to remain "unclean" for seven days and stay in isolation outwith the camps washing themselves and their clothes regularly before returning. This is not necessary today because death from dangerous infections can quickly be identified, but obviously in O.T. times could not be.

The Mosaic code for dealing with infection and infectious diseases was also thousands of years before its time. The Book of Leviticus, and elsewhere, describes the condition of "clean" and "unclean" and gives varying periods of time for the isolation of victims of disease and uncleanness. "Unclean" often referred to those with suppurating sores or wounds (but also included all manner of other things such as sexual relations and child-birth). Hands had to be washed many times as had the body, and all clothing and bedding. Isolation was also observed in cases which were infectious and particularly with reference to leprosy. If a person was confirmed as having leprosy he had to live outwith the camp and have no physical contact with anyone else. If the disease left him he had to be certified clear of the disease, by a trained Jewish priest before being allowed back into society. This, of course, seems obvious to us today but was not obvious in O.T. times and when *other nations did not know to isolate lepers*. Josephus says that other nations did not separate their lepers, and certainly it seems that Naaman did not have any restrictions of movement (2 Kings 5). Also the Mosaic code of chastity and sexual morality was a great assistance to public health and resisted the spread of venereal disease.

#### HOW COULD MOSES HAVE KNOWN

Again I suggest that these advance and effective public health measures carried out by the Jews, as enjoined upon them by the Bible, surely confirms to us that God is the author of the Bible. How else can it be explained? How could the Jews know about bacilli or how germs were transmitted? God, who through Moses gave all these directives to the Jews, could not very well explain to them what microbes were, but could recommend rules of hygiene which would offset any danger from them. We flatter ourselves that we are a very wise and sophisticated nation and yet it's difficult to believe that elementary health services, such as a piped water supply, drainage sewerage and waste disposal *were virtually unknown* less than a century ago, and that the first Public Health Act was only in 1875. Yet, over 4,000 years ago the Jews, albeit unwittingly, were already observing the basic rules of sanitation and public health. How could they possibly know about bacteria? The first person to see bacteria was Anton Van Leeuwenhoek, in 1683, on a fairly primitive microscope, although microscopes had been slowly evolving from 1610. Previously bacilli had not been known to exist. Even at that, bacteria were not in any way studied systematically until 1870 by Robert Koch. And it was not until 1865 that the British surgeon Joseph Lister came to the conclusion that it was infection in wounds that was causing the death of his patients, and that the infection was caused by germs. It was only then that hands and wounds were washed, that bedding was cleansed, and any crude rules of hospital hygiene were observed. Previously most surgeons and nurses wore dirty old clothes because they got in such a mess at amputations, etc. And yet the Bible, a book so often ridiculed, recommended all those measures thousands of years ago.

We have "isolation" wards in hospitals today and other places of quarantine for infectious diseases. The periods of "isolation" in the O.T. for "uncleanness" would, today, be described as "quarantine". Indeed the word quarantine comes from the Old French *quarantaine*, meaning 40 days. It was noticed in Europe in the 14th century that the Jews seemed to escape lightly from plague and pestilence while others were dying in vast numbers, and it was rightly concluded that this might be due to the Jewish religious practices requiring washings, isolations and strict avoidance of contamination from dead bodies. Thus the Jewish rule of 40 days isolation for "uncleanness"

(Lev. 12) was copied by many Europeans and the English word "quarantine" produced. At one time an incoming ship's crew and cargo was detained for fully 40 days in ports-of-arrival if suspected of carrying any infectious disease. This period is much shorter now, if indeed required, because of modern techniques of bacilli identification and effective methods of disinfection.

### DEFILEMENT IS WORSE THAN DISEASE

Useful and beneficial as these rules (for washing and isolation) were in controlling illness and disease, the Jews "went overboard" in the matter as they often did (and still do) and through The Traditions of the Elders they added a great collection of *unauthorised* washings to their Mosaic regime. These additional washings had not been commanded by Moses but had grown, like a canker, upon the Jewish religion, and, if anything, had assumed more importance than Moses. Jesus had many confrontations with the Pharisees on this issue. A good example is in Mark Chap. 7 when Jesus was challenged on the question as to why His disciples did not seem to wash their hands before eating. We read, "And when they (the Pharisees) saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the Elders. And when they come from the market except they wash they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brassen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees asked Him, why walk not thy disciples to the tradition of the Elders but eat bread with unwashed hands." Jesus answered: "Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men. For, laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men as the washing of cups and pots and many other such like things ye do. And He said unto them. 'Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition;" Jesus then invited a large crowd to hear Him say, "There is nothing from outwith a man that entering in to him can defile him, but the things that come out of him, those are they that defile a man." When later pressed by the disciples to explain His words, Jesus pointed out that man's food enters the stomach, not the heart, and food simply passes straight through the body: thus food cannot defile a man. That which **does defile** a man is what enters his heart and is acted upon by the man; i.e. that which *emerges* from the human heart. Jesus said, "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth a man. For, from within, out of the hearts of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within and defile a man." I'm sure Jesus and His disciples kept themselves well washed and groomed, and didn't eat with dirty hands, The washings insisted upon by the Pharisees were not for hygienic purposes but were part of the great body of *ritual washings* insisted upon by the Traditions of the Elders. The commandments of God were laid aside that men's traditions might be kept. Jesus had certainly no intention of allowing His disciples to observe any of the ritual hand-washings ordained by the Elders. We notice also that Jesus was not talking about **disease** but **defilement**. Disease might come through the stomach but defilement comes from the heart. To Jesus there was no point to having clean hands with, at the same time, a defiled heart. Washing is important but there are some things even more important.

### CONCLUSION

The rapid advance of medical science, over the last 50 years or so, means most epidemics can eventually be brought under control. Thus do we hope and pray that before there are any additional deaths in India the plague will be brought to a halt. While we rightly congratulate ourselves on our successes over *disease*, progress has not been matched by our victories over the things which *defile*: i.e. the things referred to by Christ. Such things still defile the human race and even a casual glance at any

newspaper, any day of the week, will quickly confirm the fact that crime and sin are rampant. Like the world of the ante-deluvians, **“the earth is full of violence”** and today we are steadily sinking in a morass of murder, immorality, robbery, rape, greed, drug-addiction, cruelty, indifference and selfishness. Man has mastered many diseases but not the defilements. Our physicians can X-ray the skull but know little of the human mind. Our doctors can write prescriptions for the distempers of the body, but can do little for the human condition: the crime and sin. Once again the Bible is the only book which holds the prescription for the human condition: and once again isolations and washings play an essential part. Man must resolve to isolate himself from all evil doings, and evil companionships (not “walking in the counsel of the ungodly”). In short, man must resolve to repent of his past ways; and eschew evil. This can be done with the help, and under the control, of Jesus Himself. Past sins must not only be regretted but must be washed away through the blood of Christ and by the holy ordinance of baptism: **“the washing of regeneration”** (Tit. 3:5). At the apostle Paul’s own conversion he was instructed, by God’s messenger, to **“Arise”** (after three days of remorse and prayer) **“and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”** (Acts 22:16). And the same Paul, much later in his apostolic career, could remind the Christians at Corinth of *the defilements* to which they, themselves, had been subject (fornication, idolatry, adultery, effeminacy, theft, covetousness, extortion, drunkenness and homosexuality) but could add, triumphantly, **“And such were some of you, BUT YE ARE WASHED, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God.”** (1 Cor. 6:11). And so no matter how deeply we may be steeped and stained in sin, we can be washed, cleansed, sanctified, justified and able to **“rise to walk in newness of life”** (Rom. 6:4). Praise be to God.

The plague in India just now is certainly a deadly epidemic, but sin in the world is an even deadlier epidemic. The former affects the body, which is bad enough, but the latter destroys the soul. Clearly, we must be cleansed from the plague of sin. What can we do about it? The apostle Peter answered *that same question* 2,000 years ago and the remedy has never changed. He said, **“Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”** (Acts 2:38). That’s what we can do about it: but what will we do about it?

EDITOR

## GLEANINGS

*“Let her glean even among the sheaves.”* (Ruth 2:15)

**“WHOM HAVING NOT SEEN, YE LOVE”** 1 Peter 1:8

**WE QUOTE – ARTHUR T. PIERSON**

“How strangely humane was He; how benign and merciful; how marvellously penetrating, seeking the beautiful amid the ugly, and finding what is attractive amid what is repulsive; detecting the germ of the saint in the chief of sinners, the outcast woman and the hated publican! Like the benignity of Nature, that uses her elemental forces to bring beauty out of deformity until the clay crystallises into the blue sapphire, the barren sands into the burning opal, the defiling soot into the radiant diamond, the foul water into snowflakes and ice-crystals that rival the most exquisite gems for beauty of form and richness of lustre; so He, with a divine condescension that makes even the lowliest great, beams upon poor, corrupt, defiled, human nature, until a beauty develops that furnishes gems for the very crown of heaven’s King – gems lustrous as stars! . . .

### SELF DENIAL

The Christ of the Bible stands alone in His sublime law of self-renunciation. At the very gate of the new life we are met by this motto: "**Deny thyself!**" . . . This precious Book tells us of one who resigned the throne and crown of heaven, exchanged the radiant robe of the universal King for the garment of a servant, descended to earth, condescended to human want and woe and wickedness, lay in a lowly cradle in a cattle stall at Bethlehem, and hung upon a cross of shame on Calvary, that even those who crucified Him might be forgiven.

Can you span the chasm between the throne of a universe and that cross? a crown of stars and a crown of thorns? the worship of the host of heaven and the mockery of an insulting mob? When you can bridge that gulf, you may know something of the divine grandeur of such self-sacrifice. Whence such a conception of heroism? There is nothing like it in history, not even in fable; poets and philosophers have not approached it; the highest unselfishness is selfish beside it. Could it be the invention of impostors, or the wild dream of deluded fanatics? Is there any supposition that meets the case save this – that it was first a divine fact, expressing and exemplifying the divine idea?

### TRUE BEAUTY

When we endeavour to picture Him to ourselves, no beauty of face, form, figure, can do justice to His perfection. Put the "brow of Jupiter on the form of Apollo" and you have not approached the beauty with which imagination invests His person. Give Him "Luther's electrical smile, opening the window in a great soul," and you have nothing yet to express the divine charm of His winning grace, which, notwithstanding His majesty, drew little children to His arms. Give Him the wisdom of Solomon and the profundings of Aristotle, and the originality of Bacon; and all this cannot explain the words of Him who, by the confession of enemies, spake as never man spake, and who, in dealing with truths the most sublime, never forgot to be simple, even in the forms of His illustrations!

### MIRACLE OF THE AGES

There is the ideal of manhood, in mind as well as body. What thoughts, inspiring what words and works! What sublime conceptions, convincing argument, wise counsel, powerful persuasion, perfect illustration, grand discrimination!

What a heart – so pure, so noble! Was ever love so charming in its favour, its sincerity, constancy, generosity, unselfishness? – nothing but a look of gentle reproach for the disciple who denied Him, no word of bitterness even for the apostle, who with a kiss, betrayed Him. He left all ideals behind, in His reality. We think no more of the Roman notion of heroic virtue, the Greek notion of culture, the Italian idea of beauty; in the presence of Jesus, all these fade, as stars grow pale at morning.

'How, then', says Dr. Porter, 'can it be explained that forth from that generation came the loftiest and the loveliest, the simplest, yet the most complete ideal of a master, friend, example, Saviour of human kind, that the world has ever conceived; an ideal that, since it was furnished to man in the record, has never been altered except for the worse; a picture that no genius can retouch except to mar; a gem that no polisher can try to cut, except to break it; able to guide the oldest and to soothe the youngest of mankind; to add lustre to our brightest joys, and to dispel our darkest fears? Whether realised in fact or regarded only as an ideal, the conception of Jesus is the greatest miracle of the ages!'

This humble Nazarene taught the race a new law of progress, viz.: Self-oblivion. And since that cross was set upon Calvary, every grand step of advance for the race has been "from scaffold to scaffold, and from stake to stake." He led the way in helping men to live, by Himself dying, and the ideas He embodied have been ever since "fighting their way against the original selfishness of human nature."

### PRECIOUS NAME

When we study the marvellous history of those thirty-three years, we stand in presence of the most significant period of all history, folding in its bosom the most precious facts ever cherished in the heart of man. The existence of Jesus Christ is the pivot upon which turn the history and destiny of the world, This one man, born in poverty and bred in obscurity; without rank, wealth, culture, or fame; who could call no spot home, and no great man His friend; who was hated by the influential men of church and state, and died as a criminal, by their united verdict; even whose tomb was the loan of charity, to save His body from being flung over the walls to the accursed fires of Topeth – this one man somehow sways the world! . . .

Millions of believers offer Him the myrrh of their penitence for sin, the frankincense of their prayers and praise, the gold of their costliest offerings of gratitude and service; and even the profane swearer rounds his oath with the precious name of Jesus, while no other name is spoken with such reverence by the pure and good!

### STANDING SUPREME

What shall I do with Jesus? However, I may account for His existence or explain His character and career; whatever I may think of His being born of a virgin, and begotten of the Holy Ghost – whatever I think of His words and works, as divine or human, He is Himself the miracle of history! Science and philosophy vainly try to account for Him or interpret Him. He stands absolutely alone in history; in teaching, in example, in character, an exception, a marvel. He is Himself the evidence of Christianity. As Bishop Clark says, “He authenticates Himself.” “The most natural solution of His life is the supernatural. The truths which He uttered were not truths which He had learned, He was the truth!

It is therefore no marvel that the Word of God is full of this wonderful personage.”

Selected by LEONARD MORGAN

## THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER

“Know the truth, live in the truth, die in the truth – for some wonderful day, or some awful day, you will be judged by the truth” is a terribly serious thought. But **“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”** (John 8:32) raises questions among people just as it did in the long ago (v. 33). To announce that Christ is the truth bearer yet provokes the answer of countless Pilates, **“What is truth?”** (John 18;37,38). Is there really such a thing as fixed standard of truth? Can environmentally “programmed” people ever really discover and accept truth?

Rather than wandering around in that maze of endless questions, let’s establish from God’s word a few great fundamentals that need to be ground into the conscience of every one of us.

### TRUTH IS TRUTH

**Number One:** *Truth does not depend for its truthfulness upon anybody’s believing it.* We have no difficulty in understanding this as we think about scientific truth. Scientists of a given time have argued vigorously and have reached opposite conclusions about some specific, but continuing research eventually settled the matter conclusively. In any given disagreement, one may have been right and one may have been wrong, BUT “the truth” did not depend on someone’s believing correctly, nor was it kept from being “truth” because someone misunderstood or disbelieved. Actually it doesn’t make any difference to truth whether or not anybody understands, but it does make a difference to you and me in view of our bringing ourselves into harmony with that truth.

Let’s think about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

**“And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”** (Gen. 2:16,17).

Did that depend for its truthfulness upon this man and his wife believing it? Oh no. It was truth whether or not they believed. It wouldn't be made truth because they disbelieved it. The serpent's "reasonable" explanation couldn't change that (Gen. 3:1-5). It didn't make any difference to truth whether or not they believed it, but it made a tremendous difference to Adam and Eve when they were misdirected.

Think about Noah and his family. The time for destruction of sinful mankind had come: **"Behold I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is in the earth shall die"** (Gen. 6:17). Really, now? Had Noah, the preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), tried to bring his neighbours to repentance during the 120 years after Jehovah's first announcement of the impending destruction? What reaction was there to the mammoth ark being constructed on dry land? What faith was there? What disbelief and scorn? But let's never forget that the deluge came not because Noah believed it would BUT because God said it would. Noah's faith didn't make it happen; rather, his faith had him ready when it did happen. All the disbelief and ridicule of the world's population didn't keep it from happening. Truth didn't depend for its truthfulness upon anybody's believing it!

Think about the resurrection of Jesus. **"From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, that He must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up"** (Matt. 16:21). Following His death, His burial and the sealing of the tomb, the disbelievers must have thought that this "blasphemer's" efforts were finally ended. Ah, their disbelief didn't keep Him in the tomb. Surely there must have been those of His discipleship who believed He would be raised up on the third day – the widow of Nain, Jairus, Lazarus, and perhaps many others – but their faith wasn't what brought Him forth from the tomb. Truth does not depend for its truthfulness upon somebody's believing it. Let's imbed that in our conscience.

### TRUTH IS UNCHANGEABLE

**Number Two: Truth cannot be changed.** This is another fundamental of Christian thought and dedication. And before you object by saying, "Oh, but I know teachings in the Bible that have been changed by religious leaders," let's have a look at what is really meant by our saying "Truth cannot be changed." Change from the gospel results in a perverted gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

Read very carefully the apostle Paul's words, 1 Timothy 4:1,2. **"But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, given heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies . . ."** Notice **"fall away from the faith."** "The faith wouldn't change: people would fall away from it. In this sense we can insist that the faith cannot be changed. Change is away from the faith.

Watch again:

**"Preach the word . . . For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables"** (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Did the sound doctrine change? Oh, no; the people turned away from it. Truth stayed exactly where it had been, what it had been.

Again:

**My brethren, "If any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins"** (James 5:19,20).

Truth wasn't changed; some of the brethren erred from the truth. Here is the concept of truth unchanged and unchangeable.

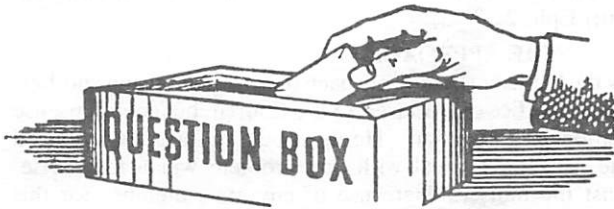


## WHAT IF I FALL SHORT ?

Are you asking, "How near do I have to be to the truth in order to be accepted of the Lord? How far away can I be before I am no longer considered one of His? We leave that up to the Lord. We must. Lessons relating to opportunities, capacities, and disposition of heart and mind, however, do not change the fact that there is revealed truth, that truth does not depend for its truthfulness upon our believing it, that truth is unchangeable, that we are called upon to accept it and adhere strictly to it. It is ours to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

It doesn't make any difference to *truth* whether or not we accept it, but it makes all the difference to *us* – for time and eternity – whether or not we live and die in it.

C. ROGERS




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"By what authority does one person baptise another. How should a person approach the baptising of another. Why was Paul glad that he had baptised no one except Crispus and Gaius (1 Cor. 1:13-15)?"**

The questioner also asks the authority for a form of words such as "I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, and so that you might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"? This, obviously, is a three-part question and needs to be answered as such.

The first thing we ought to mention to those who may be seeking the truth is that the verb **'to baptise'** means "to plunge, to dip, to immerse." Therefore, we are not envisaging an Anglican vicar or a R.C. priest sprinkling water on the forehead of a new-born child, but a baptiser standing in a suitable amount of water in which he can *immerse* a youth or an adult who has confessed faith in Christ. So we want to know by what authority he does this, and for the form of words he may use.

The whole of the doctrine of Christianity is contained in a book we call the Bible, consequently, if the Book as such is authoritative, then we can be reasonably sure that the teaching it contains is also authoritative. If the Managing Director of a firm gives instructions to the workforce and then authenticates such instructions by signature, then all the recipients know that the authority stands behind the instruction which is given. So it is with the Christ of God, Jesus of Nazareth. Standing behind the instructions which Jesus gave is the authority of God Himself. Jesus made that clear to the hearers of His day – **"ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world."** John 8:23. Again in v.26, **"I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him"**(God). He re-emphasises this in v.28, **". . . But as my Father hath taught Me, I speak these things"**. In addition, the whole of the O.T. bears witness in prophecy that Jesus, was to be the long-promised Messiah. Archaeologists have proved much of the Biblical record true, and the history of the Christian religion, along with countless millions who have placed their faith in God and His Christ, testifies to the authority which people have seen in the revelation of God contained in the Bible. As if this were not enough, Jesus said to His Apostles, **"But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given to you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but**

the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" Matt. 10:19,20. The authority for the N.T. scriptures, and consequently for the instructions of Jesus, is based on God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Apostles.

In Matt.28:18,19 the recorded words of Jesus are, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." the word for power is the Greek word EXOUSIA, and denotes the *authority* of one whose will and commands must be obeyed by others. This authority was given to the Apostles, and it is quite clear that they used it (see Acts 2:38,39; read also Acts 3). Since Christ is the Head of the Church and since the Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, the Lord Himself being the chief corner-stone, then the writer sees nothing improper in the authority of Christ being at work in the Church, and consequently any one who baptises in the Church may use the form of words as contained in the question. (See 1 Peter 2:1-10;) Eph. 2:19-22).

### THE APPROACH

The questioner asks how the baptiser should approach the act of baptising another. Well, there is no specific scriptural office of 'baptiser' in the Church, but commonsense dictates that certain qualifications are necessary. He must be a mature, experienced male Christian, who has the capacity to deal with any problem which may arise. Therefore, I would be against the indiscriminate use of any male member for this important task; my natural inclination would be to use the same brother who proved that he could handle the task adequately. I would see nothing wrong in training a substitute who could take over if necessary. Preferably, I would think that the leaders of the assembly would have ascertained if the one to be baptised had any acute physical or medical problem which might cause a problem in the water; such information should be passed to the baptiser so that he could act upon it. We must always remember that though there may be zeal on the part of the candidate, other members of the family might not be so accommodating and, indeed, may show scepticism or downright hostility to the whole operation. We might in extremis, be open to legal proceedings if steps have not been taken against such an eventuality.

So how should the baptiser approach baptism. I would suggest with all due care and attention to detail; with dignity, because it is a dignified occasion, or should be; with the sense that he is undertaking an important role in the Church, without considering himself to be more important than any other Christian; always with joy, because although it is a dignified occasion, it is also one of extreme joy in seeing the sacrifice of Christ bear fruit in some life; with thankfulness, because he and the community of Christians have a new brother or sister.

### THE CORINTHIAN EXPERIENCE

Paul is not dismissive of the importance of baptism, but he makes the point quite clearly that he was not a baptiser, "For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel" 1 Cor. 1:17. However, he says that he baptised Crispus and Gaius, and also the household of Stephanus; he didn't know of any others. He gives his reason, "Lest any should say I had baptised in mine own name" vv.14-17. It seems to be quite evident that Paul is trying to quell the 'party' spirit, particularly at Corinth.

Isn't it amazing how some people can, by the force of their personality, impose themselves on others. Take the people mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:12. Paul was a great preacher and teacher; Peter was volatile and dynamic; while Apollos was both eloquent and erudite. It seems also that a 'Christ party' had been formed, probably to off-set the effect of the others. This has been so all down the ages, and I'm quite sure that readers will have seen it in the present day. I have seen some speakers who try to emulate the mannerisms and speech of brothers who have achieved success in platform work. If the 'party spirit' cannot be seen blazoned across the Church, one cannot be

sure that it is dead. Brethren and friends, we should not allow this to happen; the party spirit should not rear its ugly head.

Furthermore, have you ever considered the unique position in which a baptiser in the Church is placed? Can we begin to understand the varied emotions of a candidate for immersion? Nervousness, joy, elation, anticipation. The waiting is over; the decision has been made; the crucial moment has arrived. The old life is ended and a new life is about to begin. He or she feels the strong, supportive arms of the baptiser as the burial in water symbolises the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord, and as sin is swept away by the identification with Him in the beautiful ordinance of baptism. As one emerges from the water, the strong, supportive arms are still there, as if heralding the dawn of a new life in Christ. Is it any wonder that the baptiser is honoured in the minds of some; after all, wasn't he the vehicle of transition from the old to the new? But as Paul knew full well, such an attitude can detract from the efficacy of the One who paid the supreme sacrifice. Yes Paul was glad that his name should not be seen above the name which is above every name, the name of his Lord and Master Jesus, the Christ of God. That is why, I believe, he was glad he had not baptised many people. The name of the baptiser can be forgotten, but the name of the One in whom we are baptised must live on in our hearts, and be communicated to as many as we can reach. For His name's sake.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden,  
20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan. WN3 6ES).

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE PASSOVER

We are indebted to the writer of the article appearing in the October issue under this heading. To all in search of truth, information which throws further light on a subject which is fraught with difficulty, must always be welcome, although some of the points he raises have already been noted and considered. There are nine paragraphs in the letter and for reference on occasion, the notation P (paragraph) and L (line/s) will be used.

**There are certain focal points in the study around which all else must revolve.**

These are:-

- (i) that the death and burial of Christ occurred in the afternoon of the day of Preparation for the weekly Sabbath. (Jn. 19:31) hence, if the Sabbath fell on the 15th, day of the month, his burial took place on the 14th, day of the month.
- (ii) The entire sequence of events from the Lord's sitting down with His disciples to eat the Passover to His burial took place in the space of a single day. The Passover feast therefore occurred just after sunset at the end of the 13th day, and continued into the hours of darkness to follow (Jn. 13:30).

There is yet another such point to be considered. The writer has sought to establish his deductions with Scriptural evidence. That is good and commendable. But it follows from this that the arrangements for the Passover are therefore BY DIVINE APPOINTMENT, and are NOT matters of OPTION, but of LAW. Jesus said, "**One jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the LAW, till all be fulfilled.**" (Matt 5:18). He therefore lived and died UNDER THE LAW, and was subject to its every requirement. He was therefore obliged IN COMMON WITH ALL JEWS, not only to keep the Passover feast, but to do it AT THE TIME APPOINTED. This conclusion is inescapable.

The second reason why this was imperative is that the Lord and His disciples were under close scrutiny by the Jews, and failure to observe the Passover at the appointed time would have been grounds for accusation when He appeared before the Sanhedrin. On that occasion in a travesty of a trial, he stood LEGALLY and

MORALLY blameless. There is therefore no way they could have kept the Passover a day early as some have assumed.

### WHICH DAY AND WHICH NIGHT?

The case presented in the November 1993 issue was based on the conviction that the seven days of the FEAST of Unleavened Bread commenced the day AFTER the Passover, and that all associated incidents must fit this pattern, allowing where appropriate for the common use of terms and language.

This agrees with statement of the historian Josephus which has been cited, "The Feast of Unleavened Bread SUCCEEDS that of the Passover, and falls on the 15th day of the month, and continues seven days." The Passover therefore occurs on the 14th day of the month, and the first day of unleavened bread coincides with the Passover. This accords with the original instructions in Exodus 12:6, "And ye shall keep it up (the lamb) until the 14th day of the month (Abib) and the whole congregation shall kill it IN THE EVENING" (which has been explained as meaning – between the evenings) which means that the lamb was to be slain in the AFTERNOON of the previous day, because the instruction in Exod. 12:8 is that, "They shall eat the flesh IN THAT NIGHT." If this was to refer to the night at the END of the 14th day, then the Passover would be eaten on the 15th day, which is impossible. The reference must therefore be to the night following the 13th day of the month, which is then termed, "The first day of unleavened bread."

We can only assume that it is so called because of its proximity to the actual first day of unleavened bread, and is therefore closely associated with it. This explains the apparent discrepancy to the pattern of events in Mk. 14:12, "And the first day of unleavened bread, WHEN THEY KILLED THE PASSOVER, His disciples said to Him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the Passover?"

It was on the evening of the 13th day so described, and therefore at the beginning of the 14th day, that Jesus and His disciples gathered in the upper room to keep the feast of the Passover. It could hardly be supposed that after the disciples made that enquiry on the 13th day, and then went to find that upper room and made the final preparations for the feast, that they would THEN sit down AT THE BEGINNING of that same day to eat the Passover. The evening referred to was that naturally occurring at the END of the 13th day. "When the evening COMETH" i.e. at the commencement of the 14th day after sunset at the end of the daylight hours of the 13th day. The suggestion from Cor. 1 5:7 that Jesus was crucified at the same time as the lambs were slain is impossible. The lambs were slain on the 13th day, and Christ was slain on the 14th day of the month. This suggestion I think is the main objective of this epistle, but it is contrary to the evidence of the gospel records.

The reason why the Jews would not enter Pilate's judgement hall, "Lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover," can still be accounted for by the fact that the entire eight days are referred to as the Passover. If any Jew during that period were to be defiled, he would take no further part in these festivities, and this is what these Jews sought to avoid. It has already been shown that they had already eaten the paschal lamb the night before this incident, for that was legally binding under the law.

### NOT AN EASY QUESTION

It is regretted that this letter has been marred by certain inaccuracies and inconsistencies, with which we shall now deal:-

P2. L1. The writer states here, "All the KEY events in our Lord's life relate to Jewish festivals. And from this he concludes,

P2. L5-6. Either the TIMING of the feasts are the same, or the TIMING of the death of our Lord and the lambs were the same."

This is a typical example of "begging the question." The accuracy of the latter statement, is wholly dependent upon the proof of the former. But since no such proof has been submitted, this remains an unfounded assumption.

Apart from all that transpired at the time of the crucifixion, I would suggest that the KEY events in the Lord's life could be enumerated as: His birth, His baptism by John and subsequent anointment with the Holy Spirit; I would include the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount; the Transfiguration; and I would also include His Ascension.

I doubt if anyone could couple any of these with Jewish festivals. Without such evidence, this is a fallacy. As it has already been shown the Lord's death and that of the lambs cannot be synonymous in point of time. Finally note the discrepancy, P4. L5-6, citing Josephus "The feast of the Unleavened Bread SUCCEEDS that of the Passover, and falls on the 15th day of the month." From that statement it follows that the Passover fell on the 14th. But the writer also states, P5. L4-5, "The Jews eat the Passover on NISAN the 15th. Until the discrepancy is resolved this part of the study is futile.

It must be noted that commentators are far from agreed on this issue, and that this subject is not easy to organise in terms of the chronology of these events. Even the best of scholars can make mistakes in sorting out all that is entailed.

I write in the hope that these comments will be of help to those who are seeking the truth, and will be the more firmly established in the faith as a result.

JOHN WOOD,

19 Venturefair Ave., Dunfermline.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec 4	1 Sam. 28:3-20	Acts 16:16-40
Dec 11	Isaiah 1:	Acts 17:1-15
Dec 18	Isaiah 40:12-31	Acts 17:16-34
Dec 25	Psalm 86:	Acts 18:1-18

### PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON

Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison at Philippi, although innocent. The story is very familiar to all. At midnight they **"prayed and sang praises to God: and the prisoners heard them"** (16:25). The faith of these men at a time of great affliction and oppression is an example to us all. God responded to their prayers by sending a great earthquake, which resulted in their being loosed from their bands (16:26).

The subsequent conversion of the jailor is a story that moves the heart. He would certainly have killed himself in the false knowledge that all prisoners under his charge had escaped. This step would have avoided his superiors punishing him by death – the penalty for failing to secure the prison. But Paul cried out to him: **"Do yourself no harm:**

**for we are all here"** (16:28). The jailor went on to ask that famous question: **"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"** (16:30). In response they said: **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house"** (16:31). It is a pity that when some people consider the conversion of the Philippian jailor they stop at verse 31 and do not read on. (Personally, I have attended a number of religious meetings where this has happened because what follows in the text does not suit their sermon outline or fit their general teaching.) We read **"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord and to all that were in the house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and he was baptised, he and all his straight-way"** (16:32-3).

To me it is clear: in apostolic times baptism followed immediately on confession of faith in Jesus. As one commentator has put it: "Faith in Christ and baptism were, indeed, not so much two distinct experiences as parts of one whole."

### THESSALONICA

We also read of Paul and Silas in Thessalonica. This city was ninety miles from Philippi and was the largest in Macedonia. Cassander, king of Macedonia, founded the city in 315 B.C. and named it after his wife, who was daughter of Philip II and half-sister of Alexander the Great. Later the Romans divided Macedonia into four districts in 167 B.C. and Thessalonica was the capital of the second district. When Macedonia became a province in 146 B.C. Thessalonica became the seat of provincial administration. From 42 B.C. it enjoyed the status of a free city, governed by its own politarchs (attested in inscriptions belonging to Thessalonica itself): The great highway – the Via Egnatia – ran through the city north-west to south-east. To sum-up – Thessalonica in Paul's day was a strategic, commercial and military centre – an important place to have a congregation of Christ.

### ATHENS

Athens was the capital of philosophy in the ancient world. Alexander Brown has written: "Athens had been 'the eye of Greece'. It was the seat of learning, philosophy, refinement, poetry, art, sculpture and religion: but it was the hot-bed of infamy. In fame it was long past its meridian when Paul visited it. There was then little grandeur remaining except its sculpture. Even that had been marred. Athens was in "old age decrepitude, made loathsome by its festering sores of unblushing immorality."

Paul encountered in Athens the philosophers known as Stoics and Epicureans. The Stoics took their name from the Stoa Poikile, the portico in Athens where Zeno of Citium (325-263 B.C.) first taught their characteristic doctrines. The Epicurean school of philosophy was founded by Epicurus, who was born in 341 B.C. on the island of Samos. Suffice to say here that both Stoicism and Epicureanism were based on man's wisdom and, therefore not in accordance with God's wisdom. For example, the Stoics were either agnostic or indifferent

about whether man is immortal and the Epicureans did not believe in immortality at all. The latter considered the idea of a resurrection as ridiculous. Edwin Yamauchi has pointed out: "An Epicurean epitaph reads: 'I was not, I was, I am not, I do not care'. Crude Epicureans drew the logical conclusion, expressed in another epitaph: 'Eat, drink, play, come hither.' This is close to the phrase quoted by the apostle Paul, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'"

Paul's address in Athens was an outstanding one. He preached unto them the "unknown God," the creator of all things and the one in whom we "live and move and have our being" (17:28). He also preached the necessity of repentance and the certainty of universal judgement based upon the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. (If Jesus has not risen from the dead then man need not fear a judgement by Him.) The ten major points in this address should be carefully noted and emphasised at this present time. Paul's words are as relevant today as they were two thousand years ago. To me it is interesting to note that Paul made little impact in Athens. (For example, we do not read of a congregation being established there.) The citizens were so engrossed in their worldly wisdom that they could not grasp God's wisdom.

### CORINTH

Corinth in Paul's day was the capital of pornography. It was a city of Greece at the western end of the isthmus between central Greece and Peloponnesus. From the late fourth century B.C. to 196 B.C. Corinth was held mainly by Macedonians. It was then liberated and joined the Achaean League. 146 B.C. it was razed to the ground by Mummius, the ruffian Roman leader and its inhabitants sold into slavery. One hundred years later, the city was rebuilt by Julius Caesar. Later Augustus made it the capital of the new province of Achaia. C.K. Barrett has written: "New Corinth was a cosmopolitan city. The immoral reputation of old Corinth (words derived

from the name Corinth seem to have been used in the Old Comedy with the meanings *to practise fornication, whoremonger, and the like*) may not be simply carried across a century; it cannot however be said that the new foundation went out of its way to redeem its past. In Paul's day, Corinth was probably little better and little worse than any other sea port and commercial centre of the age."

Corinth was dominated by the Acrocorinth, a hill that rose five hundred feet above the city. On this eminence was located the temple and statue of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and fertility, "who not only dominated much of the social and religious life of the city, but whose worship tended to foster and popularise immorality among both citizens and travellers" (Thompson Chain Reference Bible).

It was wonderful to read: ". . . and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptised" (18:8). Despite receiving much opposition in the city, Paul took encouragement from words of comfort by God and, in consequence, remained there eighteen months in his capacity as a teacher of the word of God (18:9-11).

Paul, of course, later wrote famous epistles to the Church at Corinth. The first is probably better known than the second, which is a pity, I think because the second is one of the most personal of all Paul's letters. The first reveals deep divisions within the Corinthian congregation, which make our problems today look like a picnic in comparison. Paul loved the saints there and strove to keep them on the narrow road that leads to God's right hand. Many of them will thank him, I am sure, on that great day for bringing the gospel to them for keeping them right with God.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

So live that when people speak evil of you, no one will believe it.

Many folks think that what a Church has is for somebody else.

### TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who died because he touched the ark of God?
2. Name the parents of Absalom
3. The Israelites celebrated the Year of Jubilee every ..... years
4. Where did Timothy come from?
5. Which N.T. epistle was addressed to Gaius?
6. Which book follows Haggai?
7. Where in the Bible do we read: "There will be showers of blessing?"
8. Who was Moses' wife?
9. The curtains of the tabernacle were made out of what material?
10. Who was Elizabeth's husband?

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Sister Frances Wilson  
with Niall and Graeme  
now reside at :

3 Moray Park Lane,  
Culloden,  
Inverness. IV1 2RJ.  
Tel.: (0463) 794393.

Also at this time our thoughts and prayers are with Sister Frances who underwent an operation on Thursday, 6th October. May God grant her a speedy recovery.

GRACE SNEDDON.

### NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Dunfermline, Scotland:** The Church here again rejoices and gives praise to God at the immersion of George Kerr in his 80th year on Tuesday 4th October. We hope and pray that George will be granted the opportunity to serve the Lord. We again thank the brethren in Kirkcaldy for the use of their meeting-house and baptistry.

GRAEME PEARSON.

# GHANA APPEAL

In the past month there has been a marked increase in the donations received from congregations for the work in Ghana bringing the total received to date to £49,501.46. Once again we thank all who are assisting in this work and making this work possible. We thank those who have collected glasses and clothes for Ghana as well as the congregations who have made up parcels and sent these out themselves. The aid is appreciated and the Church continues to grow. Only this week I received photographs of the baptisms of two Pentecostals and one Roman Catholic.

In the past month we have sent £1150 to Ghana basically for medical aid and the completion of church building. If any congregation have any spare tracts (no matter how few) we would be happy to send these to Ghana to assist them in their work. It has been a busy time recently for me, but hopefully within the next few weeks I will try to produce another UPDATE sheet on the extent of the work and send these out to those who have assisted in this work in the past year.

**GRAEME PEARSON,**  
13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife.  
Tel.: 0383 728624.

Recipe for a better tomorrow: Give the best you have today.

Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible, and achieves the impossible.

It's hard to remove the beam from our own eye if our hands are full of stones.

We defend our friends in the same proportion that we love them.

Dishonesty is a forsaking of permanent for temporary advantages.

Some people try to serve the devil in such a way as not to offend God.

To banish, imprison, plunder, starve, hang, and burn men for religion is not the gospel of Christ, but the policy of the devil. Christ never used force or violence but once, and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, not to drive them in.

1. Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:6,7)
2. David and Maacah (2 Samuel 3:3)
3. Fifty (Leviticus 25:10)
4. Lysra (Acts 16:1)
5. 3 John (verse 1)
6. Zechariah
7. Ezekiel 34:26
8. Zipporah (Exodus 2:21)
9. Linen (Exodus 26:1)
10. Zechariah (Luke 1:5)

**ANSWERS**

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