

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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OUR ADVOCATE

Our hearts bleed for the people of Yugoslavia. The carnage in Bosnia continues unabated and now seems specifically directed at the civilian population. Only today we read of snipers in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo deliberately shooting and killing small children in an old 'bus fleeing from the beleaguered city. Even later, at the funeral of these small children, soldiers were still quite prepared to rain down shells upon the funeral procession and send shrapnel amongst the little girls with their posies of flowers covering behind the gravestones. This, not isolated incident, reflects, perhaps, more than anything else, the new depths in horror and degradation to which the warring factions have sunk. This, and the hideous atrocities reported as coming from all sides in the conflict, says something about the extent and magnitude of the extremely bitter hatred, which, having smouldered for years amongst the parties, has now burst into life and become an all-consuming cauldron of fire. The whole world looks on in horrified disbelief that in the 1990's men can behave in such a depraved and merciless fashion, and each day records some further act of bestiality and inhumanity. Politicians of all colours, and in every land, call for an end to the pointless slaughter. Each warring faction pleads complete innocence and accuses the others of intimidation and naked aggression: even expressing an apparent willingness to negotiate a cease-fire. The whole world by now must be completely cynical about this alleged desire for a cease-fire, having by this time watched several dozen of them not survive for more than a few hours.

It seems fairly clear by now that the war is being fed and energized by the sheer force of hatred between the combatants, a hatred kept in check for many years by a Communist regime but now released to find its full expression, and to appear upon everyone's TV screen. It seems unlikely that the conflict will end until all sides have satiated themselves in the blood and gore of their enemies, or have run out of ammunition, whichever is the sooner. What can be done to save the innocent women, children and the elderly? The war shows that very little, in fact, can be done when men are determined to get at the throats of a hated adversary. **Arbitration** seems the only answer. Someone needs to step between the antagonists; listen independently to their causes and bring them together (or knock their heads together as some might suggest). This, of course, has already been tried and again we have lost count of the many attempts to mediate by the Americans; the British (Lord Carrington has made several attempts) and even the French President has gone there. As I say, hatred at the

moment is feeding the war but once that diminishes an arbiter will need to be found to reconcile the parties. Common sense must yet prevail.

A DAYSMAN (OR UMPIRE)

Arbitration is nothing new of course and has been going on for as long as man has been on the earth — it has been called by differing names but arbitration just the same. Britain has a long history of arbitrating between smaller nations and preventing wars between them. The best description of the arbiter would probably be ‘the man in between’ or the ‘middleman,’ and describes a situation where two persons (or two countries or two corporate bodies) having reached an impasse call in a third party to act as umpire, or impartial judge, to settle the dispute, Countless disputes are settled in this way and there are recognised arbiters in every sphere of political, business and commercial life, and there are some employed on a full-time basis in this capacity. They range from Marriage-Guidance Counsellors to Cabinet Ministers.

Moses was mediator between Israel and God and this was brought about by the fact that when, at the outset, God spoke directly to the people they were terrified by His awesome voice and pleaded with Moses that he might intercede between God and them. Man’s problem has always been in his communication with God, and although men now enjoy direct access to God through prayer it was not always so, nor as easy. Even now we still require an advocate with the Father and we still have a Mediator between God and man. We have all sinned and our sins have separated us from God. God has not suddenly become weak or deaf, but our sins have alienated God from us. God so transcends all his creatures that man may despair of ever being able to talk to God. There is such a gulf between the super-natural and the natural; between the Spirit and the flesh; between Deity and humanity that man wonders how he can ever communicate with God — especially with his constant feeling of guilt for his sins. Religion (binding back to God) encourages the hope that humanity can contact God and that the wide gulf between the two can actually be bridged in reconciliation with Deity, and the need for a mediator in man’s transactions with God has been recorded for us, mainly in the scriptures. Job, for instance, lamented the **absence** of any mediator, or umpire, who might take his case before God, when he was bereft of any help or support from his friends, or even his wife. Job was confident that if God knew the facts, God would vindicate Job — but there was no one to arbitrate (Job 9:33). Job said, referring to God, **“For He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgement. Neither is there any daysman (umpire) betwixt us, that might lay his hands upon us both.”**

This incidentally is the only reference, as such in the O.T. to a mediator, although in the N.T. Moses is referred to as being mediator under the Old Covenant. The word for arbiter in the N.T. is **mesites** which is translated mediator and literally means ‘the man who stands in the middle’ or ‘the go-between’ and is mentioned thus six times, four of which refer directly to Jesus and two to Moses. Although Moses is pre-eminent in the O.T. as ‘the man in the middle,’ the idea of God dealing with man through the interposition of another has a leading place throughout scripture. Intercessory prayer was a strong form of mediation (although this is now the privilege of all) and well known examples are **Abraham’s intercession for Sodom** (Gen. 18:23) **Moses for Israel** (Ex. 32:30) **Samuel for Israel** (1st Sam. 7:8) and **Jeremiah singles out Moses and Samuel as chief representatives of this form of prayer** (Jer. 15:1). John (in Chap. 17) preserves the great intercessory prayer of Jesus (our Mediator) at the last Passover supper, and **intercession** is declared to be the chief exercise of Christ’s mediatorial function in Heaven (Rom. 8:34, Heb. 7:25). Men also filled the mediatorial function with reference to the making of sacrifice to God (usually priests). Priests were also mediators as custodians of God’s revealed will, just as the prophets became increasingly prominent

as mediators of new revelations of God's will. Kings were also mediators, as were the heads of families and tribes, in the Patriarchal Age.

UNIQUE QUALIFICATIONS OF CHRIST, AS MEDIATOR

Not just anybody could be a mediator between God and man and any mediator had, firstly, to have some quality which endeared itself to God, and secondly, to be endowed with some special charismatic quality amongst men. He had to be able to **relate in both directions**. Moses apparently had an abundance of all the courage, strength of character, wisdom and patience for just such a task — and he was faithful in all his house. In many ways Moses typified the present mediator between man and God — Jesus Christ. Jesus is mediator because of His qualities, His deeds and His faithfulness to the Father. Indeed each time Jesus is described, in the N.T. as mediator, the statement is linked with a reference to his qualifications to be such, e.g. in 1st Tim. 2:5 Paul says, **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”** And so, notwithstanding all the mediators who may have gone before, there is now but one mediator between God and men. If therefore the Pope or any others should claim that function, we may safely conclude that they are gravely mistaken. The merits of Jesus as mediator lie in all directions. He was prophet, priest and king. As a priest he not only prescribed the sacrifice but supplied Himself, that all-atoning sacrifice. Whereas the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all unrighteousness. Christ, the greatest of prophets since time began gave God's final revelation to man. God certainly had at sundry times and in various manners spoken in times past to the fathers by His many prophets but hath in these last times spoken unto us by His Son. No further prophets will be required for no further revelation will be forthcoming. The Levite priests had to be constantly replaced because of the death of each generation, but Jesus has an everlasting priesthood, being not subject to death. By His own atoning sacrifice he ended all previous sacrificing and His type of sacrifice is required but once (just as often as the faith was delivered to the saints — once.) Jesus knew Himself to be greater than all previous prophets (Mark 8:27) and knew Himself to be a greater preacher than Jonah (Matt. 12:41) and knew Himself to be wiser than Solomon (Matt 12:42) and transcended not only all mortals but angels as well (Heb. 1:5). His kingdom is greater than any temple, even Solomon's, and He is the mediator of a greater and better covenant established upon better promises (Heb. 8:6).

In the world of commerce and business if one party defaults in a contract then the covenant contract is null and void. A distinctive feature of the first covenant, is that although Israel continually defaulted in their obligations to God, God did not rescind the contract. This is why, apart from other reasons, that the first covenant or the law was added: because of transgressions. This point is, I think, made by Paul in Gal. 3:19-20 where he extols the virtues of the second covenant over the first and says that the second covenant was not contingent upon the services of some mediator, such as Moses, for God had no mediator when He spoke to Abraham and promised the second covenant (Gen. 12). Paul is, of course, trying to convince his fellow Jews that the Mosaic law was but temporary and secondary and had in fact passed away, having been replaced by the second and final covenant **of which Christ is mediator**. He goes on to say that this second covenant was a promise given to Abraham (whereas the law through Moses did not arrive on the scene until 430 years later.) **“Wherefore then serveth the law?”** (to what purpose was the law of Moses?) — it was added because of transgressions, just until the seed (Christ) should come, the seed (singular) mentioned in that promise to Abraham. The law was therefore added because of transgres-

sions, possibly to curb them and certainly to identify and quantify them. Thus the contrast is drawn between law and promise and the New Covenant is one of promise — the law was merely our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

We are, dealing, therefore, with a much better covenant based upon much better promises with a much better mediator between God and man. Jesus alone knew the Father, and can reveal Him to others and He therefore surpasses all others in revelation. As an agent in reconciliation He himself provided the sacrifice, and having immortality He can communicate to men the new life which He possesses, and men will reach God only through their incorporation into Him. He truly is the Way, the Truth and the Life and through Him only, can we come to the Father (John 14:6). What a Saviour. What a mediator.

CONCLUSION

In summing up, we can safely say that arbitration is a well established fact of everyday living and covers every facet of life: from the highest political sphere (United Nations) to the most everyday personal relationship (Marriage Guidance Council). This is true irrespective of country or clime, and the counterpart in an African hamlet, of, say, the Marriage Guidance Council, would be the village Headman. And what mother does not have continually to arbitrate in the squabbles (petty or otherwise) amongst family members?

The Bible records God's sanction and approval of the interposition of a third party, or 'man between', in God's relationships with man, and we have seen that Moses was not the first mediator and certainly not the last. Some may still be puzzled as to why a mediator should be required at all, but surely we must acknowledge the vast gulf which lies between a sinful man and a holy God, and that this almost unbridgeable gap could be spanned only by a very special intermediary. The very notion of a mediator implies mediation and the need for it. Jesus, by combining in Himself the divine and the human nature, is uniquely able to represent man to God, and God to man. Space allows us only to scratch at the surface of this subject, and permits only a mere mention of the fact that Jesus was not only an intermediary between God and man, but between man and man: and was the means of bringing reconciliation to Gentile and Jew. Paul says (Eup. 2: 13-16), that only Christ managed to "**break down the middle wall of partition**" (the impasse) between Jew and Gentile "**for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and, that He might reconcile both unto God in one body (the church) by the cross.**"

When John said, "**And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father**" he was, of course, referring to the fact that Christ, as our advocate (or Barrister, in England) pleads our cause with God. 'Advocate' appears only once in the KJV (and in some versions is 'Comforter') but comes from the Greek word *paraclete* and was used by the Greeks themselves to note an advocate in court; as one coming to our aid and defence. The great danger for men today, is a failure to recognise Christ as intermediary between them and God, and to refuse to acknowledge Him as such. "**No man cometh to the Father but by Me**" said Jesus. And as we saw earlier, there is only ONE mediator between God and man.

If we renounce Christ as our Mediator now, we shall not only be without a "go between" during the remainder of our lifetime, but without an Advocate on Judgement Day, and we will be in the condition of which Job despaired: "**Without a Daysman (or Umpire) betwixt us and God,**" and none to take our part or fight our cause.

EDITOR.

'Degrees,' he said, 'do not show the knowledge of a person. Often a man without one has more sense than a man with one.'

GLEANINGS

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

CALLED OUT

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9 (R.V.)

MASTER

"Lord, Thou needest not, I know,
Service such as I can bring:
Yet I long to prove and show
Full allegiance to my King.
Thou an honour art to me,
Let me be a praise to Thee."

WE QUOTE — F.C. DAY

"The fact that the institution of the feast is given us four times, is surely not without significance. Like the four-lined Whip of the British Parliament, which is ignored by any member at his peril, so here we have the most important thing the Christian has to attend to in the meetings of the Church, and which he dare not ignore when he can possibly observe it. On the first day of the week the disciples met to break bread. David King writes: 'There is precisely the same authority for the observance of the Lord's Supper as for observing the Lord's Day at all, and it is never observed after the manner of the Lord's appointment when the Lord's Table is omitted. Of the early Christians be it noted they **'continued steadfastly in the breaking of the bread.'**"

FOLLOWING THE LORD'S EXAMPLE

"The meal is a simple one, but of profound significance. It consists of bread: one whole complete loaf, and a cup containing fruit of the vine. Following the Lord's example at the institution of the feast — alternatively spoken of as the 'breaking of bread' or 'the Lord's supper' — thanks are expressed for the bread, usually in a few, well-chosen words of direct gratitude. The loaf is broken by the brother presiding over the gathering and handed round by servers to all those who are inside the Church. If any be present who are not in Christ's Church, they may observe the order of the worship of the Lord's House, but may not participate, it having no significance for them. It is the Lord's Table and He alone invites to it."

IT IS A FEEDING UPON CHRIST

"Those who have rejected the gracious invitation and have refused their obedience to Him, the only Saviour, have no part nor lot in the matter. It is a physical participation in the one whole complete loaf that is apparent, but what is much more significant, as the Apostle points out, it is a spiritual participation in the one whole complete perfect Life. It is a feeding upon Christ: and it seems this can best be accomplished by attention being directed on each occasion, to some one particular aspect of the Saviour's life, that all thoughts may be centred upon that one special focal point, and the earnest desire for emulation be begotten within the breast of each participant. Thus should we feed upon Christ, and thus should we grow more like Him every time we meet, to 'do this in remembrance' of Him."

THE LORD LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL

"After all have partaken during a period of reverent silence, thanks are then expressed for the cup, and our thoughts are turned from the complete, perfect life to the death of sacrifice, when He voluntarily poured out His life's blood that we might be redeemed. This is surely the only thought that should predominate when, after thanks, the cup is passed from one to another, and all have communion with each other, being thus reminded of the great price paid for our soul's salvation, when He

was numbered with the transgressors and the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 'He was bruised for our iniquity, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.' Do we wonder the Apostle exhorts: 'But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.'"

ITS SIMPLE BEAUTY

"One might have expected that such a simple feast, instituted with such clearness, would have remained in all its simple beauty, but no; man has dared to attempt its improvement, until there is no semblance of the feast the Saviour instituted, in the night in which He was betrayed."

THE SILENCE OF LOVE

"Rest in (margin 'Be silent to') the Lord." Psalm 37:7

An invalid was left alone one evening for a little while. After many days of acute pain there was a lull. "Now," she thought, "I shall be able to pray a little." But she was too wearied and exhausted for this; feeling that utter weakness of mind and body which cannot be realised without actual experience, when the very lips shrink from the exertion of a whisper, and it seems too much effort of thought to shape even unspoken words. Only one whisper came: "Lord Jesus, I am so tired!" She prayed no more; she could not frame even a petition that, as she could not speak to Him, He would speak to her.

But the Lord Jesus knew all the rest; He knew how she had waited for and wanted the sweet conscious communion with Him, the literal talking to Him and telling Him all that was in her heart. And He knew that, although a quiet and comparatively painless hour had come, she was "so tired" that she could not think.

Very tenderly did He, who knows how to speak a word in season to the weary, choose a message in reply to that little whisper. "Be silent to the Lord!" It came like a mother's "hush" to one whom his mother comforteth.

It was quite enough, as every Spirit-given word is; and the acquiescent silence was filled with perfect peace. Only real friends understand silence. With a passing guest or ceremonial acquaintance you feel under an obligation to talk; you make effort to entertain them as a matter of courtesy, you may be tired or weak, but no matter, you feel you must exert yourself."

Frances Ridley Havergal.
Selected by Leonard Morgan.

THE ELECTION OF GOD

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." (1 Thess. 1:4) makes the doctrine of election a certainty, but is it the doctrine taught to the poet Robbie Burns who wrote as follows:?

"O Thou, who in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha as it pleases best Thysel,
Sends ane to heaven, and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory.
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done afore Thee."

Surely the doctrine implied in the verse dishonours man and libels God!

The Bible doctrine of election harmonizes with all truth expressed in His word: "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him. Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel

to every creature. Whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

Unconditional Election

The study of this doctrine is simplified by dividing it into (1) Unconditional Election and (2) Conditional Election. Under the first let us consider (a) that CYRUS was unconditionally elected, **not to salvation**, but to be the conqueror of Belshazzar, the destroyer of the Babylonian Kingdom, and to be the restorer of Jerusalem. Long before he was born Jehovah called him by name, and appointed his work, which in due time he performed. (Isa. 44:28, 45:1-4) (b) PHARAOH was unconditionally elected, **but not to salvation**. "For this cause have I raised thee up for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth! If there be those who insist that he was raised to an unenviable position, let them be reminded that Paul distinctly tells us that the question of honourable use depends upon ourselves. (2 Tim. 2:20-21). If God be accused of hardening Pharaoh's heart, let it be said distinctly that Pharaoh hardened his own heart by rejecting the message sent to him. (Exodus 8:1, 29-32). It is not hard to see why it is said, "The sun that hardens the clay melts the wax." Surely it is a difference in the material! (c) JACOB was unconditionally elected, and the election was made before he was born. (Rom. 9:11). But to what was he elected . . . surely **not to personal salvation**. Let us notice: (1st) that it was a national election . . ." . . . and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." (Gen. 25:23). Therefore, it is plainly stated for all time that these two children were regarded as representatives of two nations, **and only thus was Jacob elected**. (2nd) This statement is corroborated by the fact that as individuals the elder never served the younger. Read the beautiful story of the reconciliation of Esau and Jacob and weep over the fact that two representative nations face each other today armed to the teeth and ready to fight each other in a war that might involve the world in a holocaust! When and how then was the prophecy fulfilled? Some seven hundred years after it was made it was fulfilled as recorded in 2 Samuel 8:14, ". . . Throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants." (3rd) Had the election been to personal salvation, then all the offspring of Jacob must have been saved however bad; and all the offspring of Esau would have been lost, however good. But it is recorded that Jesus said to some of Jacob's offspring, ". . . if ye believe not that I am He, you shall surely die in your sins."

Conditional Election

And now to the second: **CONDITIONAL SALVATION**. The term **conditional** must imply the election of those who comply with **specified conditions**. "God has visited the nations to take out of them a people for his name." This election is presented in the New Testament in two different ways, the ideal and the actual, which must not be confused. Let us read Eph. 1:3-4. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or things) in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in Love." The word "**world**" here is KOSMOS, the material world. Therefore, before man had existence this election took place. We have the matter presented here as it was present to the mind of the Almighty. He calls those things which are not, as though they were; so sure is He that upon which He has set His heart shall be brought about. There is no need for God to experiment, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning," "Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Now is there anything in the Bible which will help us to settle this problem? Turn to Romans 16:7 and read, "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and fellow prisoners who are of note among the Apostles; who also were in Christ before me." Now, if all the elect were

actually in Christ before the foundation of the world was laid, how could some of Paul's kinsmen be in Christ before he was? God sees the end from the beginning and therefore speaks of plans as if already accomplished. He determines that those thus redeemed and reconciled shall be those brought into Christ. Can anything be plainer than 2 Thes. 2:13-14, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to **salvation** through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: where unto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Can anything be plainer? We are called by the gospel; by our belief of the truth and sanctification of the Spirit, we are chosen or elected: not merely to some position of usefulness and honour: but to **salvation**. We choose to be elected. We can readily see how some of Paul's kinsmen could be in Christ before he was. "Knowing brethren beloved your election of God," is in full agreement with 1 Peter 1:1-2. The gospel is God's elective agency. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." This is our way to salvation. His resurrection makes possible our deliverance from the grave. "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." But those already in Christ must accept the warning of the apostle "to make their calling and election sure." There are those who teach that once saved there is no chance of falling. However, the apostle Peter warns us with a little word "if" that having escaped the corruption of the world we must **add to our faith**; and **if** we do these things we shall never fail: (read 2 Peter 1:1-11).

Earl B. Severson,
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Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I was interested in a recent debate on TV concerning the media advertising of Christianity. Does the Church here have any position on this question?"

The marketing of Christianity: What an interesting prospect! Yes, I also heard a TV debate on this subject fairly recently, but as I understand it, the communications people in various religious bodies, e.g. Anglican, R.C., Methodist, etc., have been examining this idea for some time now; some are for it, some against. As you probably know, the media promotion of Christianity has been a fact of life in the U.S.A. for a long time now, and there seems to be a law — as unalterable as the law of Medes and Persians — that what happens in America will inevitably be imported into Britain. I make this comment without any personal bias; it just seems to be an indisputable fact.

But the questioner asks, "Does the Church here have any position on this question?" (I take 'here' to mean in the U.K.). It seems to me that congregational autonomy in churches in the U.K. is so inviolate that there is no corporate 'position' on anything, except perhaps baptism. Whether or not that is how it should be is not the subject of this question, but I can understand what the questioner means when he/she uses the word 'position'. That being the case, we shall look at the question primarily from the standpoint of its practicalities, and if there are any doctrinal off-shoots we will look at those also.

A Marketable Commodity?

Please forgive me for referring to Christianity as a 'commodity', but I am afraid that many people will see it like that if it is advertised on TV alongside other commodities.

A market, as we all know, is a place where goods and services are sold and bought (perhaps in this context we can look upon Christianity as a 'service' to people). The 'sale' of that which is offered depends almost exclusively on the **demand**. It is at this point that Christians find the greatest difficulty in the purveying of that which they offer. At present, it is true to say that the **demand** for Christianity is very low indeed. There is a vast difference between what we think is good for people, and what **they** think they require. It is said, with a certain degree of truth, that millions of people enter a church on three occasions only: when they are christened; when they are married; and when they die; and even these three occasions are being eroded quite rapidly. So even though we **know** that Christianity is an essential 'commodity' for the present and future well-being of the people, we are faced with the indisputable evidence that the near-absence of demand makes it extremely difficult to view it as a marketable commodity. That is the dilemma.

An important aspect designed to encourage demand is 'packaging'. People will go for things which are well packaged and reject the same thing even though it is of equal quality — if it is not. But how do you package Christianity and the Gospel? We have all seen how, for example, it is done in the U.S.A. The vast organisational machine; the emotional preparation of the audience; the charismatic build-up of the evangelist and his aides; his contrived, dramatic appearance at the right psychological moment giving him an almost god-like quality; the near-hysteria engendered in the audience by the whole experience; the postal selling of prayers to people who may be experiencing deep and troubling situations. Is that how we could do it here? Is that the way we would want to do it? It certainly isn't the way I would want to do it. I would hate to see my Father and my Lord seconded, as it were, to the 'media circus'. If that is bringing Christianity 'up-to-date' then I would prefer to preach and teach the Gospel as Paul did so effectively so long ago. Some may say that this is a 'head in the sand' attitude, but if we want to play the media game then it is **they** who lay down the ground rules, not we; unless, of course, Christians happen to **own** the TV station.

Competitive Demand

A 'substitute' is a service or good which can be replaced by another. In a market economy, if two goods are substitutes for each other, then they are in Competitive Demand, e.g., electricity and gas; regarding religious faith we might also say Christianity and Islam. We have said, however, that the **demand** from the public for Christianity is at a very low level, and this is compounded by the competition **within** so-called Christendom for the hearts and minds of people. Therefore, if a media competition for air-time were to ensue, then the groups with the greater financial resources and expertise, i.e. Anglican, R.C. etc., would seem to have a very distinct advantage, say, over the Church of Christ, U.K. The situation would be exacerbated so far as we were concerned because of the fact that the above-mentioned groups are looked upon as the **traditional** churches in the U.K., and consequently many millions of people have given varying degrees of allegiance to these groups in the past. This fact is emphasised by the producers of religious radio broadcasts; we seldom, if ever, hear speakers from, say, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc. Efforts have been made to induce such programmers to use speakers from the Church of Christ but the only response up to now can be summed up in the words of the song from the Mikado *We've got 'em on the list*.

Then, of course, there is the cost. So far as TV commercials are concerned, these can be astronomical. At a time when costs are soaring, churches are finding it difficult to deal with weekly expenses, let alone to take on projects the results of which may not be cost-efficient. Some may say that we should give more in order to put new projects in hand, but rational people will only give if they can see that the value of what they give will, in the recipients hands, exceed that which it would in their own. There is, however, an altruistic reason for giving, and that is "that it makes us feel good," but as regards results which may at the best be nebulous, I feel that altruism must be tempered by realism relevant to the import of the question in hand. There is, I understand, a scheme being mooted by the Skelmersdale church to "Page the Oracle" in respect of information for correspondence courses; the cost seems to be in the region of £2000 plus; perhaps the monitoring of this scheme will provide useful data for future projects of a similar nature.

What Should We Do?

As regards media presentation of the Gospel I believe, as I have said, that we do not have the resources necessary to promote successfully. Furthermore, there are many appeals circulating the churches for other things which ostensibly would be used for promoting the Gospel. And what about support for full-time workers, and the ever-present need for financial and ancillary aid for needy saints?

My personal observation, for what it is worth, is that assemblies are not working to their full potential in the geographic areas in which they are located. I have yet to find a better way of convincing people than by talking with them, not to them, in a face-to-face situation. There is no technological aid which can be substitute for genuine, personal concern. If there were, then I believe God would have spared His Christ the ignominy of the Cross. Let us, by all means, constantly look for better methods of interesting people in the Gospel, but in the meantime not neglect tried and trusted methods.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,
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THE DENOMINATIONS

5. — THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Luther was the first of the Reformers to make a definite break with Rome. On All Saints Day, 1517, he pinned his ninety-five theses to the Church door at Wittenberg, where he was Professor of Theology, challenging to debate on the corrupt sale of Indulgences. It was a bold move and was to have far-reaching consequences. As a result of this challenging action the great Lutheran Churches came into being. A further result was the impetus given to other Reformers, such as Zwingli, Bucer and Calvin, as well as potent influences which Luther exercised in this country, more especially on Anglicanism and later on Methodism. Luther's translation of the Bible into German was to do for Germany what the Authorised Version has done for the British people. What a committee achieved here, one man achieved for Germany and the German language. At the time Luther began his work, Germany was not a compact nation as she is to-day. She was a federation of independent States, each with its own prince or ruler. This was fortunate for Luther, for he was able immediately to gain the support of certain powerful Princes who were ready enough to resist the political power of the Papacy, whether or not they understood the doctrinal questions involved.

Influences at Work.

Many influences went to the making of Luther's revolt. He had been a pious Augustinian monk and had had the opportunity of close study of the works of Augustine, who was the first of the primitive Fathers to grasp the deep significance of the Pauline understanding of Christ. Both Paul and Augustine had experienced violent

conversions, and Luther followed in their footsteps in this respect. Just as Paul had struggled with the 'works of the law,' so Luther struggles with 'works of merit' and found in them no satisfaction. There had also been at work in Luther deep mystical influences. He had studied the works of Tauler. Again, he had first-hand acquaintance with the corruption of the Roman Curia. But the final influence was the large scale introduction of the sale of Indulgences, inaugurated by the Pope to bring money into the coffers of Rome. Luther's revolt was in the first place a *moral* revolt rather than a *theological* one. It involved a theological revolt and an ecclesiastical break, because he was forced to deny the mediaeval doctrine of salvation by works. His fundamental principle was salvation by *faith alone*, complete reliance on the saving work of Christ, a doctrine which has become the central core of Evangelicalism. His mystical outlook also caused him to break with the *legalistic* and *abstract* Scholasticism which prevailed and to introduce a warmer and more *personal* note into Christianity. He was a *religious genius* rather than a *theologian*, though he possessed theological ability, but not of the order of that of Calvin.

Its Distribution.

Lutheranism is by no means so ecumenical as Calvinism. It has appealed in the main to Germanic-speaking and to Scandinavian peoples. It captured large parts of Germany, but not the whole. Many parts retained their allegiance to Rome and others later became Calvinist. But, until recent times, it was the established Church of Germany and established in a way that we know nothing about. Of all systems, Roman or Reformed, the Lutheran is the most subservient to the State. Even Church dues were collected by the Church State Department just as Income Tax is collected in this country. In Denmark, Norway, and Sweden almost the whole Church-going population belongs to the Lutheran Church. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Finland also have Lutheran Churches larger or smaller. From Europe it has been transplanted to U.S.A., where considerable Lutheran Churches exist. In this country it is only represented in London and several of the larger ports, except at a time like this, when there are many Lutheran refugees in the country.

Organisation.

It is mainly presbyterian in constitution, but in countries like Norway, Sweden and Denmark it is episcopal, though holding no doctrine of Episcopal Succession. In Sweden, where the Reformation was practically complete, succession was maintained, but the Swedish Church does not, as does the Roman Church and as do certain Anglo-Catholics, claim that non-episcopal Ministries are invalid. The true succession for all Lutherans is one of pure doctrine and the right administration of the Sacraments, and not one which depends on a true succession of ordination from Apostolic times. 'High Church Lutheran' does not mean what 'High Church Anglican' means. The latter has reference to matters relating to Ministry and Sacraments; the former to matters of purity of doctrine in the sense of theological definition. In Germany and U.S.A. the Lutheran Church has not escaped division, but it has been division over matters of pure doctrine. At the present moment two of the larger Lutheran bodies in America are planning union, and the war in Germany has done much to unite separated Lutheran Churches.

Church and State.

How does Lutheranism differ from Calvinism? It differs in several ways. In the first place, it is more mystical and more pietistic, while at the same time less puritan. In this country Pietism and Puritanism generally go together, and it is difficult for British people to think of a Pietist who is not a Puritan. That is why the German situation is so baffling to many people, for in Germany deep pietism may go hand in hand with a life which could by no means be described as puritan. Then there is the

profound difference in the relationship of State to Church. For the Lutheran, both Church and State belong to the Divine 'orders,' but the two 'orders' are on parallel planes which never meet. The Christian man has, therefore, a kind of double personality. He is a citizen of the Church and owes obedience to God, and he is a citizen of the State and owes obedience to the magistrate. This is quite different from Calvin's understanding, which in its absolute form makes the State subservient to the 'rule of the saints.' That is why social and political reforms in the past three hundred years have mainly been advanced by those peoples who have drawn their inspiration from Calvin. That is also why the Church in Germany, in the same period, has been more subservient to the State than in any other Western country, and it explains why Hitler was able to proceed with his obnoxious legislation without much protest from large sections of the Lutheran Church.

Confessionalism.

The Lutheran Churches are definitely credal, most of them adhering to the Confession of Augsburg, but during the nineteenth century, especially in Germany, they developed a strong liberal attitude. Perhaps no Church, apart from the Roman, has produced such a wealth of scholarship as the Lutheran. But, in spite of this liberal and extreme radical attitude, it is still true that succession with them is succession of right doctrine, and the Nazi situation has revived a definite Confessional attitude.

Rites and Ceremonies.

Lutherans acknowledge two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But they regard other rites as the 'holy action' of the Church, and most Lutherans have retained Confirmation. Private Confession is also retained, but it is voluntary and quite occasional, though it is usually practised immediately before Confirmation. Baptism is of infants and by affusion. Lay Baptism is allowed. The Eucharist is celebrated infrequently and a Pastor or 'priest' is the proper celebrant, though lay celebration is practised amongst certain groups of pietists. In Sweden the chief service every Sunday morning is 'High Mass,' though it is not a full celebration with the elements of bread and wine there. The ancient vestments are also in use in that country and in Norway. Luther retained the doctrine of the 'real presence,' though he denied transubstantiation, substituting for it a doctrine which has been roughly described as 'consubstantiation.' He also retained the Cross as the Christian symbol, and 'lights' are not infrequent in Lutheran Churches. He was a musician of some merit, as well as a poet. He developed the custom of singing harmonised hymns which had begun to grow up two centuries earlier, wrote a number of hymns and hymn tunes himself, and considerably improved the music of the Church. He still, however, continued to sing the Psalms in their prose version to the old plain-song melodies, and did not, as did Calvin, adopt a metrical version of the Psalms. In most Lutheran Churches, therefore, the austere plain-song mingles with harmonised metrical tunes.

The Word of God.

As in Calvinist Churches preaching is all-important. The delivery of the Word of God is the significant act of worship. All sacramental action is closely related to the delivery of the Word of God, and with Lutherans, as with Calvinists, the celebration of the Lord's Supper as a semi private devotional act apart from the delivery of the Word of God would be unthinkable. Even the 'high' doctrine of the Presence which Luther held is made to depend on faith in the Word of God. In his *Small Catechism* the question is asked, "How can bodily eating and drinking produce such great effects?" and the answer is given, "The eating and drinking, indeed do not produce them, but the words which stand here, 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins'. These words are, besides the bodily eating and drinking, the chief thing in the sacrament, and he who believes these words has that which they set forth and declare, namely, the remission of sins."

W. Robinson.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Oct. 4	Isa. 59	Rom. 11:22-36
Oct. 11	Prov. 25:11-28	Rom. 12
Oct. 18	Lev. 19:1-18	Rom. 13
Oct. 25	Isa. 45:14-25	Rom. 14

Romans Chapter 12

This chapter speaks of the true worship; the differing gifts of the members of the body of Christ; the Christian life in every-day action; and the Christian and his fellow men.

True worship consists of surrendering oneself to God. It is giving one's eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, hands and feet to God and doing so voluntarily as an act of commitment. As one writer put it: "It entails also the devoting one's bodily desires, feelings, passions and sensations to God, holding nothing back." True worship is, therefore, not something which is transacted in a church meeting once or twice a week, but extends far beyond this to every activity of life. I understand that every orthodox Jew sees his whole life as an act of worship to God. So should every Christian.

The Church as the body of Christ was one of Paul's favourite metaphors. He saw every saint as a member of that body. Their work or various functions are then detailed.

There was **prophesying**. This had to do not only with foretelling, but also with forthtelling or telling forth the word of God. Remember in those days there was no complete written revelation from God.

There was **ministering**. Another word for ministering is serving. It embraces every form or act of service. It describes feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, helping the sick, etc. Sadly, it is a word that has been distorted in our age.

There was **teaching**. Teaching is in-

structing, from the root 'struct', literally to pile. A teacher's task is to pile up facts so that his students can grow in knowledge of the subject. Explaining has a lot to do with teaching as well.

There was **exhortation**. This has to do with giving encouragement, stimulating others to get on with the task. One writer has commented: "Real exhortation aims not so much at dangling a man over the flames of hell as spurring him on to the joy of life in Christ."

There was **giving**. The original Greek word **haplotes** speaks both of simplicity and generosity. It certainly is a gift to come to the aid of another without making him feel unworthy or in debt.

There was **ruling**. A better word, perhaps, is leading, and remember that this is best done by example. The word in this context has nothing to do with threatening or coercing.

There was **showing mercy**. Mercy is from the Greek **eleos** and refers to an open and outward manifestation of pity. W.E. Vine wrote: "It assumes a need on the part of him who receives it and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it."

On the concluding verses of this portion one commentator has remarked: "The injunctions in this section to deep, unaffected and practical love are particularly reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount. Mutual love, sympathy and honour within the brotherhood of believers are to be expected, but something more is enjoined here — love and forgiveness to those outside the fellowship, and not least to those who persecute them and wish them ill."

For example, Paul wrote: "**Be fervent in spirit**" (12:11), which means "Keep your spirit at boiling point." We recall the Laodiceans who were neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, and therefore God had to spit them out of His mouth (Revelation 3:15-16).

"**Rejoice in hope**" (12:12). I always

recall a statement by a Christian prisoner of war of the Japanese. Someone said to him: "Well, I suppose with you it was a matter of where there is life there is hope." He replied "No, you have it round the wrong way. It was down to where there was hope there was life."

"Be faithful in prayer" (12:12 N.I.V.). Jesus was a man of prayer and His followers should be too. We must remember that prayer is not a means of conquest. Prayer is the co-operation of our effort with the grace of God.

"Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate" (12:16). A mark of a true Christian is humility. Jesus, of course, is our supreme example because we read in the Philippian letter: **"And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross"** (2:8).

Submission to the Authorities

Paul wrote: **"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."** (13:1,2). A lot has been said and written about the Christian's relationship with the state.

Generally, Christians do not give problems to local or national governments. It is they who make every endeavour to live at peace with all men (12:18), and that includes those in authority. Christians should be good citizens not only of the kingdom of God, but also of the earthly kingdom of which they are a part. F.F. Bruce has written: "Paul places the whole question on the highest plane. God is the fount of all authority, and those who exercise authority on earth do so by delegation from him; therefore to disobey them is to disobey God. Human government is a divine ordinance, and the powers of coercion and commendation which it exer-

cises have been entrusted to it by God, for the repression of crime and the encouragement of righteousness. Christians of all people, then, ought to obey the laws, pay their taxes and respect the authorities — not because it will be the worse for them if they do not, but because this is the one way of serving God."

A big question is: what happens when the decrees of civil government conflict with the commandments of God? Peter gives us the answer: **"We must obey God rather than men"** (Acts 5:29). But as has been pointed out: Christians will voice their 'No' to Ceasar's unauthorised demands the more effectively if they have shown themselves ready to say 'Yes' to his authorised demands.

The early Christians, of course, withstood ten major persecutions from the Roman authorities, but what is interesting is that men such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian later in this terrible period still guided the saints in similar terms to Paul's.

Respect for Scruples

Paul was an apostle of the free Spirit. He saw himself completely emancipated in Christ Jesus from all sorts of un-Christian inhibitions and taboos. But he knew that all the saints were not like him and that some required to be treated gently on various subjects. He addressed himself to two particularly tricky problems — food and special days. (It is no surprise to read of these given their importance in Judaism.) Paul wrote: **"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby your brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak. Have you faith? have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who condemns not himself in that thing which he allows. And he that doubts is damned if he eat, because he eats not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin"** (14:21-23). One commentator has written: "He reminds them that knowledge is not everything: the claims of love have to be considered. Paul himself was prepared to

forgo his liberty if, by insisting on it, he would set a harmful example to a fellow-Christian with a weaker conscience. If a Christian, who thought the eating of idol-meat was wrong, was encouraged by the example of his more robust brother to eat some, the resultant damage to his conscience would be debited to the other's lack of charity and consideration".

What comes out of this for me is that Paul was a sensitive, understanding, thoughtful and loving Christian. The Church needs more like him today.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

THE LORD SAID TO THOMAS

Thomas is often called "the Doubter", although all the disciples were slow to believe what they were taught. When the other disciples told Thomas of the resurrection, he declared that he would not believe in it unless he could both see and touch the Lord for himself. The opportunity soon presented itself: the Lord appeared again and invited Thomas to come and examine his wounds, quoting his own words back to him. Thomas being immediately convinced by the evidence of his own eyes and acknowledging the fact, the Lord then said to him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Why should those believers who had not actually seen the risen Lord for themselves be specially blessed? Presumably because it is easy to believe in anything we have seen with our own eyes, but harder to credit what we have not had the good fortune to behold in person. It requires more faith, and therefore will receive more blessing.

Many people today seek after signs and wonders: they follow those who claim to speak in tongues, heal the sick or cast out devils, or they derive self-importance from alleged special calls or experiences. Those who believe that miracles ceased soon after the beginning of the Christian era, they regard as very

lacking in faith, hardly to be reckoned among the saved.

Actually they are in the same case as Thomas. They want to see something with their own eyes and hear something with their own ears. They cannot accept the written testimony of the New Testament without some extra confirmation. What is this in reality but a lack of faith? The Scriptures have been preserved all down the centuries and made available to them, but this is not enough: they tell people to pray for gifts or revelations in addition, which is more than any Christian has a right to ask of God. It is only too easy to be led astray by false teachers down this road.

The relevant scripture is John 20:29 and the two following verses make it clear that the blessing promised by the Lord is for those who have enough faith to believe in him on the basis of the written account.

(Miss) R.M. Payne,
1 Kenilworth Avenue,
Reading.

OBITUARY

Longshoot, Wigan: We are sad to report the passing of sister Anne Birchall – Auntie Annie, as she was affectionately known to so many, had been a member of the Church in Wigan for many years, having been associated with the congregations at Longshoot (formerly Jackson's Square) and Skelmersdale.

Her death came as a shock, as she was taken into hospital on Friday, 19th June suffering from abdominal pains, and passed away during the night of Sunday, 21st June.

We praise God for her active participation in the work of the Church. Her strength was her warm-hearted hospitality, and all were made welcome in her and her late husband Tom's house. Tribute to this characteristic and to her willingness to offer help in all situations was paid by Bro. Albert Winstanley who conducted her funeral service.

We commend all those who mourn her passing, especially her daughter Anne and son-in-law Brian, to the comfort to be found in the Lord. We are glad that because of her faith in her Lord we need not mourn her passing as those without hope, but in the sure knowledge of the resurrection to everlasting life in His presence.

D. Melling

COMING EVENTS

ANNUAL SOCIAL

The Annual Social at Newtongrange will take place (D.V.) on Saturday 10th October, 1992 in the Meetinghouse.

Speakers: Bro Harry McGinn (New Cumnock) Bro. John Kneller (Tranent).

We look forward to a rich time of fellowship with the churches of our Lord.

Joe Currie (Secretary).

THANKS

While being ill in Law Hospital I want to say how much I appreciated visits from my family; church members; and all friends near and far. I am also very grateful for the many cards and the flowers: and most grateful for the prayers said.

Sister Rosina Longmuir,
Motherwell.

NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER

The new telephone number of Joe Malcolm, Secretary of Dennyloanhead Church is 0324:711373. His address is 86 Kenmore Avenue, Gilston Park, Polmont FK2 0RG.

GHANA APPEAL

The work is going very well in Ghana at the moment. Another two congregations were established in July. Details are sketchy but at VANE-AVATIME there is a congregation of 17 being led by a Mr. Newell Dorleagbenu who is from the recently formed congregation which John Dorwu established at AYIGYA.

The other church is at AFRANCHO which is 15 miles from Kumasi with a membership of 16 and an attendance of 36.

Further contributions to continue the work of evangelising will be much appreciated. Contributions should be sent to: Mr. Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 0DU. Tel.:- 0383 728624.

Thank you Anon for the £10 note received on 17th July, 1992 it was allocated receipt No. 357. Also thanks to "R.B.L." for £50 received.

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