

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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BOOK OF MORMON – AN UPDATE

As far back as 1983 I sent some questions to Mormon headquarters in Salt Lake City, U.S.A., and I promised to let readers know the outcome. I was reminded the other day that, so far, I had not kept that promise, so, herewith, is an update.

I have, in the past, written several articles on the Book of Mormon (B. of M.) and have been surprised at the interest engendered, with requests for copies even from complete strangers and as far afield as the Shetland Islands. The questions I have asked the Mormon Church are straightforward and should be easily answered if the B. of M. is a genuine document. I have no quarrel with the nice young men who come to our doors: my objection is to the teaching they bring and the book they promote. I include, herewith a reminder of the questions and the reasons for asking them.

It should be remembered that Mormons say that the Bible can be accepted only insofar as it is correctly translated (and most of us might agree with this,) but the implication in this statement is, of course, that no such problem arises with the B. of M. because *it is correctly translated*. Indeed Mormons claim that the B. of M. is unique and of unparalleled distinction in that it was translated by 'the gift and power of God'; that a miraculous device called the 'Urim and Thummim' was supplied to Joseph Smith by God (and delivered by an angel) in order to perform the super-natural wonder of translating the book from the unknown 'Reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics' into English. Furthermore an angel was sent from God no less than fifteen times to make certain that the B. of M. was properly translated and printed. Joseph Smith himself said that the B. of M. was 'the most correct of any book on earth' and a man would get nearer to God by its precepts than any other book (including the Bible no doubt). It should also be remembered that when Joseph Smith was 'translating' the B. of M. from the letters on the golden plates he first put the magic 'seer stone' into a hat and then put his face in the hat to exclude the light. In the darkness the 'spiritual light' shone and something resembling parchment would appear, and on that the writing. One character at a time would appear and under it was a sub-title in English. Joseph Smith would read this through a curtain to Oliver Cowdery (the principal scribe) who, when he had written the word would repeat it to Joseph Smith to see if it was correct. If it was correct it would disappear and another character with its English interpretation would appear. "Thus", says David Whitmer (one of the 3 witnesses to the B. of M.) as he describes the procedure during the translation, "Thus the B. of M. was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man". It will be seen from all

the above that the B. of M. *should* (according to all the claims for it and 15 visits of the angel) have been infallibly correct in every tiny detail. Indeed it was not so much 'a translation' as it was a **direct revelation**. If indeed it was translated 'by the gift and power of God' we would expect it to be complete and perfect in every detail. This super-natural volume — (result of the miraculous 'Urim and Thummim' sent specially by God) was published in 1830. The edition of today however bears little resemblance to the original edition of 1830 because the Mormon church have had to make **some three thousand alterations** to it (not little things but big things — changes to the sense and wording of sentences, words added, words omitted, phraseology, spelling, grammar and punctuation). Indeed on page 52 alone there have been made over fifty-three changes. The Mormon Church cannot deny this because **they themselves** have seen the errors and **they** have corrected them. Another very important point to remember is that the plates from which Joseph is alleged to have translated the B. of M. were said to have been placed in a hole in the earth some 400 years A.D. and remained there, quite undiscovered, until Joseph Smith was told by the angel where they were and to go and dig them up (just prior to their publication in 1830). Thus the contents of the B. of M. were placed on plates long prior to 400 A.D. and **did not see the light of day** from 400 A.D. until God and Jesus (both together) visited Joseph Smith in 1820, (so the story goes). In view of all this my questions (which I am here abbreviating to save space) were as follows:—

- (1) Why is the B. of M. incomplete? The 1830 edition states in a 'Preface' (omitted from today's version) that 116 pages of Joseph Smith's manuscripts were stolen — notwithstanding the 15 angelic visits to 'make sure it would be properly translated and *published*'. (1) Why did God *fail* in His bid to get the Book properly printed and published? (2) Was there anything of importance on these 116 pages? (3) if 'Yes' how can we do without them? (4) If nothing of importance was on them are there *other* pages in the Book with nothing important on them? (5) Why could J. Smith not repeat them? (6) Why has this 'Preface' been dropped from today's edition?
- (2) Why were golden plates with hieroglyphics necessary if, at the translation, J. Smith had his hat drawn over his face and could not see the plates but had 'subtitles' (each word placed before his eyes in the darkness) in English?
- (3) If the B. of M. is the 'most correct book on earth' and by verbal inspiration direct to J. Smith 'by the gift and power of God' (not forgetting the 15 angelic visits) how is it that the Mormons have found it necessary to make over 3,000 corrections to errors in the Book. Is God's '*power*' as weak as all this suggests? Was God's angel completely incompetent?
- (4) The Book of Mormon (Chap. 9: 32-34) gives an explanation as to why the text on the gold plates was in 'Reformed Egyptian' (whatever that was) and why another language such as Hebrew was not used and states, "But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that **none other people knoweth our language**; therefore he hath prepared means of interpretation thereof". In view of the fact that "**None other people knoweth our language**" (Reformed Egyptian) why:—
 - (a) Why did J. Smith allow Martin Harris to take copies of the translation of plates to experts in languages when *he knew* they could not possibly translate the so called 'reformed Egyptian' since it was a language 'None other people knew,' and since only J. Smith with the magical 'Urim & Thummim' could decipher it.

- (b) Mormons claim that one of these language experts, Professor Anthon, declared that these said copies shown him by Martin Harris were true and genuine. J. Smith said, 'Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, moreso than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian.' (The same Professor denied that he had said any such thing — rather the reverse). Please explain how the Professor could have said the translation was genuine if 'Reformed Egyptian' was a completely unknown language needing a 'Urim & Thummim' for its decipherment?
- (5) The B. of M. came direct from 'golden Plates' contained in a language called 'Reformed Egyptian' (exclusively understood by the Nephites) and these plates did not see the light of day from 400 A.D. to 1820. Yet when translated they contain large chunks of the King James Version (indeed 27,000 words from the K.J.V.) For example Mosiah 14 is a direct copy from Isaiah 53 in the King James Version (**including the words in italics — interpolated by the 1611 translators**). Please explain this apparent absurdity? How could words written in 1611 get on to plates secreted in the earth in 400 A.D. (**long before the English language had even been formed**)? Translators of the K.J.V. placed the word 'easily' in 1 Cor. 13:5 without any justification — i.e. "love is not *easily* provoked." The Revised Version and the American Standard Version omit the word 'easily' because it ought not to be there. The writer of the B. of M. was obviously unaware of this for Moroni Cap. 7:45 quotes the K.J.V. and includes the word 'easily'. Does not this prove that the writer of the B. of M. copied straight from his copy of the K.J.V.?
- (6) On June 1st, 1978, the Presidency and Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church voted to permit *black people* to hold office in the Mormon Church. Some say that this was due to public pressure. Prior to that time Mormons taught that "*one drop*" of negro blood was sufficient to bring a person under curse and bar him from the Priesthood." Indeed, did not Brigham Young say, "... **the first Presidency, the Twelve, the High Council, the Bishoprick, and all the Elders Of Israel, suppose we summon them to appear here, and here declare that it is right to mingle our seed with the black race of Cain, that they should come in with us, and be partakers of all the blessings God has given us. On that very day, and from the hour we should do so, the Priesthood is taken away from this Church and kingdom, and God leaves us to our fate. The moment we consent to mingle with seed of Cain, the Church must go to destruction — we should receive the curse which has been placed upon the seed of Cain, and never more be numbered with the children of Adam who are heirs to the Priesthood until that curse be removed.**" Now that Mormons are 'mingling their seed with the cursed black race of Cain' will the predictions of Prophet Brigham Young come to pass i.e. that '**from that very hour**' the Priesthood will be taken from the Mormon Church and the church must go to destruction? Or was the Prophet mistaken?

The above is the gist of the questions I sent to the Mission President in Edinburgh on 24th April, 1983. I received no reply and 2 months later I wrote to ask if he would, at least, tell me if he had received my letter. On 2nd July 1983 I received an apology for not replying and another apology for having lost my letter but offering to call and answer the questions verbally. On 6th July, 1983 I re-sent the questions declining the offer of a personal visit and **asked specifically for a written reply**. I wanted not the opinion of some of their young men (I have had these many times) but I wanted a fairly authoritative answer from the Mormon Church. On 7th July, 1983 two young men arrived on my door-step, quite unannounced, at 8 p.m., to verbally answer my questions. I declined to agree to this but invited them in; they said my questions would not be answered in writing as 'I might later take them out of context', but they would

be happy to explain them verbally. I replied that when they were gone I would have no record of what they had said, but they explained that I could take notes. I replied that perhaps I conceivably might take their *verbal* statements 'out of context' and that later they might dispute my notes. I then asked them to send me a letter explaining why they could not give me answers in writing. At least I would then have a tangible record of their refusal. This request they also refused. I asked if there was anyone in the Mormon Church who would answer my questions and they said that the President in Utah might (but he is such a busy man). After some difficulty I obtained from them the President's address in Salt Lake City and duly sent my questions to the President. He sent me his good wishes but said the questions could best be answered **verbally** and would arrange for someone in Edinburgh to call. I sent the President my thanks but insisted upon a written reply (I had already had verbal chats) and suggested that there were many scholarly men in Utah who could surely answer these simple questions. I added that if I was forced to accept a verbal explanation I would insist upon my being allowed to tape it on a tape-recorder. The reply was very brief (two lines) – the President would instruct the Edinburgh Mormon Mission "to handle my letter, regarding questions on the B. of M.". I heard no more from anyone.

Some weeks ago I wrote again to the Edinburgh Mission, reminding them of all the circumstances, and asking, again, for a written response, but have had no reply. I reminded them that it is **they** who try to interest **us** in the B. of M. and go to the length of sending out many missionaries into every locality urging us to examine the claims of the B. of M. One will find that when the Mormon missionaries are pressed they will admit verbally the many gross errors and absurdities in the B. of M. but are very unlikely to do so in writing. This is why I am insisting upon a written response to my questions.

If readers have a visit from these young men try them with these questions, and note the reply, on tape if possible.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

GOSPEL ARCHERY

"He was a mighty hunter before the Lord." Genesis 10:9

"How few Christian people have ever learned the lesson of which I read at the beginning of this service, how that the Lord Jesus Christ at the well went from talking about a cup of water to the most practical religious truths, which won the woman's soul for God! Jesus in the wilderness was breaking bread to the people. I think it was good bread; it was very light bread, and the yeast had done its work thoroughly. Christ, after he had broken the bread, said to the people: "Beware of the yeast, or of the leaven of the Pharisees." So natural a transition it was; and how easily they all understood Him! But how few Christian people there are who understand how to fasten the truths of God and religion on the souls of men."

BE VERY SURE OF YOUR WEAPON

"The archers of olden times studied their art. They were very precise in the matter. The old books gave special directions as to how an archer should go, and as to what an archer should do ... But how clumsy we are about religious work. How little skill and care we exercise. How often our arrows miss the mark ... if you want to be effectual in doing good, you must be very sure of your weapon ... It is the arrow of the Gospel; it is a sharp arrow; it is a straight arrow; it is feathered from the wing of the dove of God's Spirit; it flies from a bow made out of the wood of the cross ... Paul knew how to bring the notch of that arrow on the bowstring, and its whir was

heard through the Corinthian theatres, and through the court-room, until the knees of Felix knocked together."

SHARPER THAN A TWO-EDGED SWORD

"In the armoury of the Earl of Pembroke, there are old corselets which show that the arrow of the English used to go through the breastplate, through the body of the warrior, and out through the back-plate. What a symbol of that Gospel which is sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and body, and of the joints and marrow! ... I want you to feel that you bear in your hand a weapon, compared with which the lightning has no speed, and avalanches have no heft, and the thunderbolts of heaven have no power; it is the arrow of the omnipotent Gospel. Take careful aim. Pull; the arrow clear back until the head strikes the bow! Then let it fly! And may the slain of the Lord be many!"

T. De Witt Talmage.

HE RESTORETH MY SOUL

"David lost his nearness to God. He did wrong. He became unhappy. His burden of guilt became too heavy to bear. Then he repented. God Heard, forgave, and restored. He became a new man. The human mind is like the human body. It can be wounded. Sorrow is a wound. It cuts deeply, but sorrow is a clean wound, and will heal unless something gets into the wound, such as bitterness, self-pity, or resentment. Wrong is also a wound. When I violate my standards I wound my mind, and it is an unclean wound. Time will not heal that wound. Gradually, a sense of guilt can destroy a life and make it "only a shell." There is only one physician who can heal. The Fifty-first Psalm is the prayer David prayed. "He restoreth my soul" can have another meaning. Moffat translates it to read, "He revives life in me." Like a watch, the human spirit can just run down. We lose our drive and push. We become less willing to attempt the difficult. We are crusaders no longer ... The Bible tells that God made the first man "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). And God has the power and the willingness to breathe a new breath of life into one who has lost."

Charles L. Allen.

LIVE FOR TODAY

"God is in every tomorrow, therefore I live for today,
Certain of finding at sunrise, guidance and strength for the way.
Power for each moment of weakness, hope for each moment of pain,
Comfort for every sorrow, sunshine and joy after rain."

T.W. No.23.

THY FAITHFUL FRIEND

"When trouble sweeps the path and fears arise; when all ahead looks dark, lift up thine eyes. Thy heavenly Father sees the hidden way; and though 'tis night to thee, To Him 'tis day. Be still; the morning comes, the night will end; trust thou in Christ, thy Light, thy Faithful Friend."

T.W. No.35.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

APOSTOLIC PREACHING

When we view the phenomenal results that followed the labours of the Apostles and their co-workers, and compare them with the small measure of fruit that is gathered by us, we might well ask ourselves the question, what is the cause of this vast difference? It is true we are insignificant in comparison with them, they had powers that we possess not; special means were used to bring speaker and hearer together, as in the case of Philip and the eunuch, Ananias and Saul, and Peter and Cornelius; but, while these

things may partly account for the greater success of their day, yet they cannot make us satisfied with the comparison. Are we using all the resources at our command for winning souls, and building up the Church? Are we following, so far as the limited powers of our day allow, the apostolic methods of preaching the Gospel? A brief consideration of the subject of apostolic preaching may enable us to answer these questions.

In the early part of the record of the post-resurrection labours of the Apostles is the following passage, "And daily, in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." (Acts V 42). Here we learn three things about their preaching — (1) they preached *daily*, (2) they preached *in the temple and in every house*, and (3) they preached Jesus *the* Christ, or, as the Revisers give it, Jesus as the Christ.

1. They preached daily. The pronoun here, as in the previous verse, evidently refers to the Apostles, but it will not be difficult to show that, although the daily preaching is predicted of the Apostles only in this place, it was by no means restricted to them. When the multitude of the Christians were scattered abroad owing to the persecution that arose about Stephen, they (not a few of them) went everywhere preaching the Word. They were all at it, and always at it.

This *daily* preaching presents a striking contrast to the one-day-a-week, or Sunday preaching that generally prevails now. In many places, having given to the few who gather in the meeting house, or who listen in the open-air, their Sunday meal, Christians rest content, with a feeling of having discharged their responsibility till Sunday comes round again. But in the early days of the Christian era, the salvation of souls was too momentous a matter to be left to one day a week; every day the heralds went forth, and the glad tidings of salvation through the blood of the Lamb sounded in the ears of the unsaved.

In order to preach daily, it is not necessary to gather a company together and deliver a discourse occupying a half, or three quarters of an hour. No, the good news can be made known as we walk along the street, while travelling in the railway carriage, in the house of an acquaintance, in fact, in a thousand and one different ways. Some will say that such "conversational preaching" is not easy to them. But what of that? Shall we give up in despair because it is not *easy*? "Twas not *easy* for Christ to make Himself of no reputation, to come into the world to be despised and rejected of men, and to suffer the death of the cross, but praise God! He did it, and hence we live. Let us study how to turn our conversation to eternal things, that it may minister grace to the hearers. Remember the Apostles preached daily.

The inspired historian has not left us in doubt respecting the places where the preaching was done — in the temple and in every house. It is common now-a-days to have a fixed time for commencing the meeting; the doors of the meeting house are thrown open, if the people come in, well and good, if not, then it cannot be helped. But it *can*. At any rate, when we have opened our doors we have not done all that can be done to reach the people. The Apostles went to the temple, where there was a likelihood of obtaining a hearing from the numbers of Jews who gathered at the hour of prayer (Acts iii.), etc., but they were not content with that. In addition, they went to every house. The Revised Version says they preached "at home." The phrase (*kar' oikou*, lit. by, or according to house) translated "every house," occurs three times in the Acts of Apostles (ii. 46; v. 42; viii. 3). In the second chapter, it is translated "from house to house" (A.V.), and in the eighth chapter, where it speaks of Paul entering into houses to arrest the Christians, it is rendered "every house." The obvious meaning is "house by house," or "from house to house." The Apostles, then, went from one house to another spreading the glad tidings, and why should not we? There is a simple way in which this can be done, that is by the systematic distribution of

tracts. Brother and sister alike can engage in this work. No one can plead inability unless he be unable to walk. May there be a closer walk in the footsteps of the Apostles in telling the Gospel from house to house.

But after all it may be possible to work very earnestly in declaring a so-called Gospel, and yet through not keeping the right theme before us all may end in failure. "They ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ," says the writer. Men threatened and persecuted them, but they held steadfastly to their theme. Compromise with Jewish priests or heathen philosophers was impossible, for Jesus was to them the Christ, the Anointed One, *the King*. His law was supreme. "We must obey God rather than men," was their motto in preaching and in practice. In this age of compromise, let us preach Jesus as the Christ, and observe the laws of our rightful Ruler.

If we all do our part in preaching daily, in preaching wherever opportunity is found, and in heralding Jesus as Messiah, large numerical results may, or may not follow; but we will have acted the part of faithful watchmen. The warning note will have been sounded, our glorious plea will be better known, and we shall have delivered our souls. But if we are not putting forth our best efforts a fearful responsibility rests on us.

Alb. Brown.

LESSONS FROM THE MONUMENTS

STORY OF JOSEPH CONFIRMED

It is now well settled by Egyptologist that the Pharaoh who befriended Joseph was the last of the kings called Hykos, conquerors of Egypt who came from Asia. At El-Kab there is a very ancient tomb, the owner of which was one Baba, who lived, according to the evidence of the inscriptions in his tomb, about the same time. The following extract from the inscription is given by Dr. Brugsch:

"I loved my father; I honoured my mother; my brothers and sisters loved me. I went out of the door of my house with a benevolent heart; I stood there with refreshing hand; splendid were my preparations which I collected for the festal day. Mild was my heart, free from violent anger. The gods bestowed upon me abundant prosperity on earth. The city wished me health and a life full of enjoyment. I punished the evil-doers. The children who stood before me in the town during the days which I fulfilled were — great and small — sixty; just as many beds were provided for them; just as many chairs; just as many tables. They all consumed one hundred and twenty ephas of durra; the milk of three cows, fifty-two goats and nine she asses, a hin of balsam and two jars of oil.

My words may seem a jest to a gainsayer. But I call the god Mentu to witness that what I say is true. I had all this prepared in my house; in addition I put cream in the store-chamber and beer in the cellar in a more than sufficient number of hin-measures.

I collected corn as a friend of the harvest god. I was watchful at the time of sowing. And when the famine arose, lasting many years, I distributed corn to the city each year of the famine."

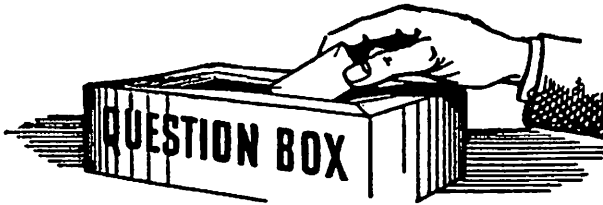
On this Dr. Brugsch remarks:

Not the smallest doubt can be raised as to whether the last words of the inscription relate to a historic fact or not. However strongly we may be inclined to recognize a general way of speaking in the narrative of Ameni (our readers will recollect the story of Ameni), where years of famine are spoken of, just as strongly does the context of the present statement compel us to refer this record of "a famine lasting many years" to an epoch historically defined. Now, since famines succeeding one another are of the greatest rarity in Egypt, and Baba lived and worked under the native king, Sequen-Ra Taa III., in the ancient city of El-Kab, about the same time during which Joseph

exercised his office under the Hykos kings, there remains for a satisfactory conclusion but one fair inference — that the “many years of famine” in the days of Baba must correspond to the seven years’ famine under Joseph’s Pharaoh, who was one of the shepherd kings. — *“Egypt Under the Pharaohs,”* 120, 122.

Brugsch furnishes other evidence for the truth of his conclusion, found in the agreement of the narrative of Genesis with what is now known of places and of the habits and titles of the time. In this way the contemporary records of the Egyptians are gradually coming to light, after an entombment of thousands of years, to tell the same story, so far as they speak, that the Hebrew records have related through all the intervening generations. Who can fail to see in this the hand of Him who caused the latter records to be made, and who will not allow them to be discredited?

From: “Biblical Criticism” by J. W. McGarvey. 1896.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Could you please tell me what the Church’s teaching is on marriage and divorce?”

I wouldn’t be so bold to even hazard a guess as to what the Church’s teaching or practice is relative to marriage, divorce, or remarriage, but I can certainly tell you what the Bible teaches. You may say to me, “Well, isn’t what the Church teaches and practices the same as what the Bible teaches”? If I could answer that question in the affirmative then I would be a very happy man indeed. You see, each Community (local assembly) of Christians is autonomous, and consequently has the right to administer its own affairs. It also has **taken upon itself** the right to **interpret** the Scriptures as it sees fit, and therein lies the problem of non-uniformity in teaching and practice. So what I shall attempt in answer to this question is to point you toward the main biblical teaching, and to make such comment as may seem appropriate to what we shall consider. This question is a very vexed one, and has given rise to much heart-searching and not a little personal bias, so the reader must study my comments alongside those of other people.

The Current Situation

The overall picture is grim. Statistical evidence points to the fact that in the U.K. one in every three marriages breaks up; in the U.S.A. the figure is in the region of one in every two marriages. There is also an alarming increase in the number of one-parent families.

From a Christian standpoint it is disturbing to note that less marriages are taking place in church, and significantly more in Registrar Offices. This is surely indicative of the fact that marriage has become secularised and, if many people had their way, would be made obsolete in modern society. Small wonder that the divorce rate is escalating alarmingly. In a world which seems to have rejected God and Christian values, the degeneration of marriage is being aligned with such social ills as violence, indiscipline, disrespect of people and property, and a degree of selfishness which is difficult to understand. Is it not the selfishness of individuals, even in the marriage bond, to demand and expect **all their own way**? Is it not selfishness which prompts parents to use children as emotional footballs when their own marital relationship is in tatters? We should stop being ‘nice’ to people and tell them bluntly that if they want stability in their lives, and healthy relationships, then they should turn to God

and listen to and do what **He** says. Furthermore, if it should be that **Christians** have to seek separation and divorce then I would say unhesitatingly that somewhere along the line, one or other or both of them have wandered away from the God-given path of success in marriage. Some may disagree, but I would say that if **Christians** cannot make marriage work, then we are in a very parlous state indeed. Let us, then, be guided by what the Bible teaches.

The O.T. Teaching

Even though marriage is not defined in the Bible, Gen. 2:24 gives us a clear directive as to what God had in mind. The verse reads, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh". As with all good Scriptural exegesis, we need to analyse this statement in order to understand its meaning.

In the first place we notice that a person has to **leave** one relationship and enter another "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother". It may very well be that the force of this teaching has not been fully appreciated, particularly by parents whose children have married. The perceptive observer of some marriages may conclude that one or other of the partners to the marriage has never really left the former parents, or has never been allowed to. We all know the jokes about mothers-in-law, but the end result of some marriages due to the effect of parental interference is not funny at all.

Secondly, the verse continues, "and shall cleave unto his wife". The word 'cleave' needs special mention. The Hebrew word DABAQ and the Greek word KOLLAO both have the idea of 'adhering to' or 'cementing together'; this further implies the idea of an indissoluble bond. Therefore, the inferential reasoning is that a person is **not** to cleave to father and mother, but is to cleave to his wife.

Thirdly, the verse concludes, "and they shall be one flesh". The becoming 'one flesh' means the consummation of the marriage in sexual union, each partner being mutually supportive of the other, and the relationship normally crowned with the gift of children. This close bond is emphasised by Paul in his letter to Ephesus when he says, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church" (Eph. 5:28,29). In this passage of Scripture the Apostle brackets the relationship of husband and wife with the greatest relationship that man can enter into, i.e., the relationship with God and Christ through the Church.

The Teaching Of Jesus

The main thrust of the Lord's teaching is to be found in Matthew 19: 3-12, and Mark 10: 2-12. In Matt. 19:3 the record states that the Pharisees tempted Jesus with the question, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for any cause". The phrase 'any cause' obviously referred to the Rabbinical school of thought which said that a man could put away his wife for such things as not keeping the home properly, spoiling food, being quarrelsome, and other such trivial things. This school of thought appealed to a passage of Scripture to be found in Deuteronomy which says, "When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, etc, ... (Deut. 24: 1-4). This passage, however, is dealing with the specific case of a man who divorces his wife, the wife then marries another man, and this man either **dislikes** her and divorces her, or dies, then the first man is not permitted to remarry her after she has been **defiled**. It seems fairly evident that the phrases 'some indecency' and 'dislikes her' were interpreted by the said Rabbinical school as granting the right to divorce for almost any reason, hence the question of the Pharisees to Jesus.

Jesus, however, did not fall into the trap and His answer was explicit, revealing as it does the mind of God regarding marriage. We can perhaps summarise His answer like this:

1. It was God who made man (generic) male and female; it wasn't by chance they became so.
2. He repeats the teaching of Gen. 2:24.
3. He affirms that in the new relationship of marriage it is God that joins together, and man has not the right to put asunder what God has joined.
4. On divorce, He said, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so". This indicates that the mind of God was for the married state to be **permanent**.
5. The sole ground for divorce with consequent remarriage was fornication. So we can see; the teaching of Jesus was clear and unambiguous.

Paul's Teaching

This is to be found in Rom. 7:1-3; and 1 Cor. 7. Please note that in Rom. 7:1, Paul is speaking about the **principle** of law, not the Mosaic Law. Both Jew and Gentile would know this.

Much confusion has been caused by the content of 1 Cor. 7; vv.10 and 12. In verse 10 we read, "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord". In verse 12 we have, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord". Some have twisted these Scriptures to emphasise a so-called difference, as they say, between a Divine command of the Lord, and the **personal opinion** of the Apostle; such a distinction is quite wrong. What Paul means is that in some instances he was able to refer to a direct command of the Lord; in other instances there was no such direct command, but when he, Paul, gave his judgment, it was the **Divinely inspired** word of an Apostle of the Lord, just as authoritative as the direct word of the Lord. What, then, did Paul teach?

1. He prohibits divorce, just as the Lord does, and endorses the permanency of marriage. In Rom. 7:2 we read, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth".
2. He states in verse 11 of 1 Cor. 7 that if a wife separates from her husband she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. Divorce is not specifically mentioned here so the separation must be for some other reason. She cannot remarry.
3. He calls upon the unbelieving wife or husband **not** to leave the believing partner. If, however, they decide to leave, then let them leave. A brother or sister is 'not bound' in such circumstances, presumably 'not bound' to the marriage itself.

We must understand, of course, that the problem relating to unbelieving wives and husbands was a new one and was the result of work among the Gentiles, so we can understand why Jesus made no comment on such matters; Jesus was concerned primarily with the sanctity and permanence of marriage, and the problem of divorce.

Further Considerations

I believe I am well aware of the agony which must ensue when a person is married to someone who is unfaithful, or cruel, or both. It is natural to want to get away from such a relationship, and many, including Christians, have done just that. I am often amazed, though, how God keeps on loving His wayward and recalcitrant children when He not only sees their actions but knows their thoughts also. I am thankful that **He** never seeks to separate Himself from us, no matter how much pain and sorrow we cause Him; this is the God-way, and this is what He seeks to teach us.

The world needs to return to the ways of God. Man has had his fling, and what an unholy mess he has made of things! But then, it was always so; as the Bible points out, "It is not in man to direct his own steps", and the sooner the world realises this, the better.

There are other aspects of this important question which I have not been able to comment on because of lack of space, but perhaps these could form the basis of other questions if anyone cares to ask them.

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

THE MOTHER HUBBARD SYNDROME

Another sermon worth recording is taken from an American journal and is as follows:—

The following exhibits the method upon which the average “parson” constructs his delectable discourses. —

“Brethren, the words of my text are —
“ ‘Old Mother Hubbard, she went to the cupboard,
 To get her poor dog a bone;
But when she got there, the cupboard was bare,
 And so the poor dog got none.”

“These beautiful words, dear friends, carry with them a solemn lesson. I propose this evening to analyse their meaning, and to attempt to apply it, lofty as it may be, to our everyday life.

‘Old Mother Hubbard, she went to the cupboard, to get Her poor dog a bone.’

“Mother Hubbard, you see was old; there being no mention of others, we presume that she was alone; a widow — a friendless, old solitary widow. Yet did she despair? Did she sit down and weep, or read a novel, or wring her hands? No! she went to the cupboard. And here observe that she went to the cupboard. She did not hop, or skip, or run, or jump, or use any other peripatetic artifice; she solely and merely went to the cupboard.

“We have seen that she was old and lonely, and we now further see that she was poor. For mark, the words are ‘the cupboard’; not ‘one of the cupboards’, or ‘the right-hand cupboard’, or ‘the left-hand cupboard’, or the one above, or the one below, or the one under the floor, but just the cupboard — the one humble little cupboard the poor widow possessed. And why did she go to the cupboard? Was it to bring forth golden goblets, or glittering precious stones, or costly apparel, or feasts or any other attributes of wealth? It was to get her poor dog a bone! Not only was the widow poor, but her dog, the sole prop of her age, was poor too. We can imagine the scene. The poor dog crouching in the corner, looking wistfully at the solitary cupboard, and the widow going to that cupboard — in hope, in expectation, maybe — to open it, although we are not distinctly told that it was not half open or ajar — to open it for that poor dog.

“ ‘But when she got there the cupboard was bare,
 And so the poor dog got none.’

“When she got there! You see, dear brethren, what perseverance is. You see the beauty of persistence in doing right. She got there. There were no turnings and twistings, no slippings and slidings, no leaning to the right or falterings to the left. With glorious simplicity we are told she got there.

“And how was her noble effort rewarded?

“‘The cupboard was bare!’ It was bare. There were to be found neither apples nor oranges, nor cheesecakes, nor penny buns, nor gingerbread, nor nuts, nor lucifers. The cupboard was bare! There was but one, only one solitary cupboard in the whole of that cottage, and that one, the sole hope of the widow and the glorious loadstar of the poor dog, was bare! Had there been a leg of mutton, a loin of lamb, a fillet of veal, even an ice from Gunter’s the case would have been different, the incident would have been otherwise. But it was bare, my brethren, bare as a bald head, bare as an infant born without a caul.

Many of you will probably say; with all the pride of wordly sophistry, "The widow, no doubt, went out and bought a dog biscuit." Ah; no! Far removed from these earthly ideas, those mundane desires, poor Mother Hubbard, the widow whom many thoughtless worldlings would dispise, in that she only owned one cupboard, perceived — or I might even say saw — at once the relentless logic of the situation, and yeilded to it with all the heroism of that nature which had enabled her without deviation to reach the barren cupboard. She did not attempt, like the stiff-necked scoffers of this generation, to war against the inevitable; she did not try, like the so-called men of science, to explain what she did not understand. She did nothing. "The poor dog had none!" And then at this point our information ceases. But do we not know sufficient? Are we not cognisant of enough?

"Who would dare to pierce the veil that shrouds the ulterior fate of old Mother Hubbard, her poor dog, the cupboard, or the bone that was not there? Must we imagine her still standing at the open cupboard door, depict to ourselves the dog still dropping his disappointed tail upon the floor, the sought-for bone still remaining somewhere else?"

Ah, no, my dear brethren, we are not so permitted to attempt to read the future. Suffice it for us to glean from this beautiful story its many lessons; suffice it for us to apply them, to study them as far as in us lies, and, bearing in mind the natural frailty of our nature, to avoid being widows; to shun the patronymic of Hubbard; to have, if our means afford it, more than one cupboard in the house; and to keep stores in them all. And, oh? dear friends, keeping in recollection what we have learned this day, let us avoid keeping dogs that are fond of bones.

From: "East Lothian Anecdotes".
(Have you heard sermons like that?)
(Do you give sermons like that?)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

April 3	Joshua 1	2 Peter 1
April 10	Jer. 6:9-21	2 Peter 2
April 17	Deut. 7, 1-11	2 Peter 3
April 24	Proverbs 2	Eph. 1:1-14

Peter's Second Epistle

AUTHOR: Apostle Peter.

DATE: c. A.D. 64-70.

TO WHOM WRITTEN: "... to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (1:1). Perhaps the first epistle was addressed to the same saints (1:1).

PURPOSE: to warn against corrupt teachers and scoffers.

KEY TEXT: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance ..." (3:1).

False Teachers

What did Peter say of them? For example, they distorted the scriptures (3:16); they brought disrepute upon the way of truth (2:2); they were covetous (2:3); they were exploiters of their fellow-men (2: 14,15); they were like brute beasts and were dominated by their lusts (2: 10,12,18); they had eyes full of adultery (2:14); their lives were given over to revelry (2:13); they were deluded and they deluded others (2:14,18); they were worse than those who never knew the right (2:20-22).

These men might well have been Gnostics. The Gnostics believed that only spirit was good and all matter was essentially evil. It did not matter what was done with the body. "Let the body sin to its heart's content!" was their cry. Obviously, their teaching was opposed to everything that Christianity stood for. It was evil and it was destructive. No wonder Peter had to warn the saints!

Myopia

Peter wrote: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue knowledge, etc." (1:5). The term "add" is an interesting one. It is from the Greek verb *epichoregeo* and means, literally, to supply or to minister. Albert Barnes has written: "There is in the Greek word an allusion to a chorus-leader among the Greeks, and the sense is well expressed by Doddridge: 'Be careful to accompany that belief with all the lovely train of attendant graces.' Or, in other words, 'Let faith lead on as at the head of the choir or the graces, and let all the others follow in the order.'"

Peter went on to say: "But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his sins" (1:9). "Cannot see afar off" is the Greek verb *muopazo*, hence our English word *myopia* (short-sightedness). It is found nowhere else in the N. T. Scriptures. W.E. Vine wrote of it: "This does not contradict the preceding word 'blind', it qualifies it; he of whom it is true is blind in that he cannot discern spiritual things, he is near-sighted in that he is occupied in regarding worldly affairs." His words are particularly poignant to me because I myself am seriously myopic. I pray God it will never affect me spiritually.

Peter — The Eyewitness

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables (myths) when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (1:16). I accept the testimony of Peter and his fellow apostles about Jesus. It is an account most certainly with "the ring of truth" about it. As far as I am concerned, that goes for the whole Bible as well. As one writer put it:

"Whence, but from heaven,
Could men unskilled in arts,
In several ages born, in several parts,
Weave such agreeing truths?
Or how or why should they conspire
To cheat us with a lie?"

The Flood

To Peter, the universal deluge mentioned in the book of Genesis had been a reality (2: 5; 3: 5-6). It was seen as God's judgement upon a wicked world. W. Carl Ketcherside is his book **The Death of the Custodian** wrote: "History is a record of the footprints of God in the life of humanity. The two most outstanding events of divine interposition in the affairs of the world were the flood and the incarnation. Of such transcendent significance was the first that it stands as a constant rebuke to those sceptics who deny the possibility of a termination of the present world order, based upon a false assumption of continuity in the natural realm since creation." Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb in their great book **The Genesis Flood** wrote: "Now the one event which Peter sets forth as having brought about a transformation, not of the earth only but also of the very heavens, is the Flood! ... It was the Flood to which Peter appealed as his final and incontrovertible answer to those who chose to remain in wilful ignorance of the fact that God had at one time in the past demonstrated His holy wrath and omnipotence by subjecting 'all things' to an overwhelming cosmic catastrophe that was on an absolute par with the final day of judgment, in which God will yet consume the earth with fire and will cause the very elements to dissolve with fervent heat" (2 Peter 3:10).

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

AUTHOR: apostle Paul.

DATE: c. A.D. 60, during Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

TO WHOM WRITTEN: "... the saints who are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus ..." (1:1). Paul himself had founded the church in c. A.D. 54 (See Acts 18: 19-21; ch. 19; and 20: 17-35.)

PURPOSE: to emphasise the unity of the church, especially between Jew and Gentile believers.

KEY WORD: "Together."

Paul's letter to the Ephesians

EPHESUS: a city with a long history. It probably dated to the 12th C. B.C. By Roman times it was one of the greatest sea ports of the world. Its political importance was seen in its title — "The Supreme Metropolis of Asia". It was also a religious centre. Here was the great temple of Artemis or Diana of the Ephesians — 425 ft. long, 220 ft. wide and 60 ft. high (four times greater than the Parthenon in Athens). It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Worship of Diana was associated with frenzy, hysteria, superstition and immorality.

EPISTLE: Albert Barnes wrote: "Perhaps nowhere is there a better illustration of the power of that doctrine to elevate the soul and fill it with grand conceptions of the character of God, and to excite grateful emotions, than in this epistle". James McKnight commented: "No real christian can read the doctrinal part of the epistle without being impressed and roused by it, as by the sound of a trumpet". William Barclay called it "The Queen of the epistles" and Hugh Grotius said that "it equals its sublimity of ideas with words more sublime than any human language ever possessed."

The letter should be read in conjunction with the second one which is found in Revelation 2: 1-7.

Unity

We read: " ... having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him" (1: 9,10). William Barclay translated this passage thus: "This happened because He made known to us the once hidden but now revealed secret of His will, for so it was His good pleasure to do. The secret was a purpose which He formed in His own mind before time began, so that the periods of time should be controlled and

administered until they reached their full development, a development in which all things, in heaven and upon earth, are gathered into one in Jesus Christ."

Friends, when Jesus Christ came into this world He came to unite all (Jew and Gentile) in Him. Then, there were divisions everywhere, but through Jesus unity was now possible. That for Paul was the mystery (secret) of God.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has a vital part in bringing about unity. Here He is described as the "earnest of our inheritance ..." (1:14). "Earnest" is the Greek word *arrabon* and in New Testament times meant the first instalment which was the pledge and guarantee that the rest would follow in due time. So the Holy Spirit is the Divine pledge for the Christian of all future blessedness, particularly of his eternal inheritance.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

COMING EVENTS

New Cumnock: The church here intends, God willing, to hold a short gospel MISSION on 3rd, 4th and 5th May, 1988, in the Town Hall, at 7 p.m. each evening. Speakers: Andrew Sharp (Newtongrange) Dean English (Livingstone). Please support us with your presence: if not, by your prayers.

Also on Saturday, 7th May our SOCIAL in the Town Hall (4 p.m.). Speakers: Graeme Pearson (Dunfermline) Roy Renshaw (Cardiff).

A warm welcome awaits you. Items for the programme welcomed. All communications to:— Harry McGinn, 6 West Park Drive, New Cumnock, Ayrshire.

SOCIAL

Tranent Social (D.V) on 19th March (Sat.) at 4 p.m. in Loch Centre (as before) Speakers: John Morgan (Hindley) Graeme Pearson (Motherwell) Chairman not appointed meantime.

BREVITIES

By taking revenge a man is but equal to his enemy, but in passing it over he is his superior.

Gratitude is the music of the heart, when its cords are swept with kindness.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions: Life, however short, is made still shorter by the waste of time.

What more of us need is to need less.

Opportunities should never be lost: they can hardly ever be regained.

All honest doubt will yield before the proofs of a fact or a truth: and so there is no excuse for doubting, where we have the means of knowing.

A MATTER OF TIME

The story is told of three demons who were sitting in a coalbin in hell discussing ways to undermine the faith of a man about to make a decision to follow Jesus Christ. The first demon said, "I know what I'll do. I'll go up there and tell him there is no God." The others shook their heads. "He won't accept that," they said. "He knows there's a God; he talked with him this morning." The second demon spoke up. "I'll fix him," he said. "I'll reassure him by telling him there is no hell." The others shook their heads again. "He's knows there's a hell," they said. "He's been there." Then the third demon said, "I know what will work. I'll just go up there and tell him there's no hurry." The others clapped. "That will do it," they said.

Hugh Jones.

Some men are not outwardly bad—but they are not inwardly good either.

The stars are beautiful only to those who look up and appreciate them. So with the gift of God.

ARE YOU WILLING TO TRY THESE?

To close your book of complaints and open your book of praise?

To believe others are as sincere as you, and to treat them with respect?

To ignore what life owes you and to think about what you owe to your life?

To stop looking for friendship and to start being friendly?

To be content with those things you have and to stop wishing for what you have not?

WHAT WAS IT?

A lady approached a business man and asked for a donation towards a church building.

"Yes, I'll give \$100.00 to the building," replied the business man, "if you'll erect a sign over the door saying 'This is the church of Christ.'"

"Oh, no, we couldn't do that," answered the lady, "because it's not a church of Christ."

"Very well," said the business man, "I'll still give the \$100.00 if you'll put up the sign saying, 'This is not a church of Christ.'"

"Oh, no sir, you know we couldn't do that, because it is a church of Christ."

I wonder what kind of a church it was?

Selected

The sorrow of knowing that there is evil in the best of us is far out-balanced by the thought and joy of discovering that there is good in the worst of us.

—*Belvedere Church Bulletin.*

One cool judgment is worth a thousand hasty councils. The thing to do is to supply light and not heat.

TREASURER'S REPORT

We are pleased to print a short report and statement about our financial position. Some brethren feel that a Financial Statement lowers the tone of a religious magazine, but there are many religious magazines and organisations which never show how the money is being spent. I prefer to print the occasional short statement showing how the money is spent so that you can judge for yourself and respond as you think necessary.

The Statement shows that we spent £271:05 more than our Income during 1987. Even so we are encouraged by the results. We were concerned at the beginning of last year that we would not be able to afford to print 12 issues. Thanks to your support we were able to do it and are therefore encouraged.

If, however, we wish to continue printing 12 issues we shall obviously have to raise our Income and reduce our costs. There is not much scope for reducing costs as the government sets the postal charges, and our printer was chosen on the basis of cost, quality and delivery. We did raise the subscription (U.K.) to £6 in June, 1987, and that should cover the 12 issues this year. Incidentally, our previous rise in subscription rates was back in January, 1984. All work is done voluntarily and free.

We thank all our subscribers, both at home and overseas for your support. We thank you, too, for all your letters of encouragement. I cannot reply to them all but it is grand to get them. Thanks also, to those who send a little bit extra: be assured it is greatly appreciated.

BALANCE FOR 1987

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Bank Balance 1/1/87	717.51	Printing (12 issues)	3086.00
Subscriptions	2321.05	Reading Cards	39.98
Gifts	828.61	Postage	<u>340.00</u>
Bank Interest	45.27		3465.98
		Bank (Current A/C)	439.59
		Bank (Deposit A/C)	<u>6.87</u>
			446.46
Total	<u>3912.44</u>		<u>3912.44</u>

Audited by J. McLuckie 14/1/88

JOHN KNELLER (Treasurer).

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