

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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SELF DETERMINATION

Politicians tell us that the British have been living lives much too 'institutionalised', with far too much dependence upon the State, and that the time has come for far more enterprise from the **individual** : with the formation of small firms and privatisation. Far be it from me to comment on this political view but certainly there seems to be, in the spiritual realm, a drop in the membership of 'institutionalised religion', and a movement away from the State Church to smaller and more enterprising evangelical groups. Church membership, traditionally and denominationally, has been 'nationalised' for a very long time and this new society of free-thinkers would seem to be a healthy development. After all: our relationship with God is entirely personal to ourselves, and on Judgment Day we shall stand or fall, **as individuals**, and will not be able to blame the State, the church, or parents, or clergy for any of our shortcomings on that Day. The apostle Peter says to everybody, "**Save yourselves from this wicked generation.**" We can't be saved by proxy, or on the merits of some friend or relative. As Paul says "**So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.**" (Rom. 14:12).

SELF-ESTEEM

We live in a selfish environment. We must all find our way in life; do the best we can and fulfil our responsibilities (to employers and families etc.). Paul says that if a man provides not for his own he is worse than an infidel, and if a man will not work neither should he eat. This is an individual responsibility. All others, in the world, are pursuing similar goals and there is a tendency for the weak and timid to be trampled underfoot. It is a very selfish world. However, many do reach a point in the human 'rat-race' when they realise that there is more to life than personal advancement, and that man was not designed to live by bread alone. Man is God's offspring and eventually he feels his insufficiency without his Maker and eventually he acknowledges that true contentment involves peace with God. Indeed the men who have achieved all earthly ambitions are amongst the first to reach disillusionment with self-seeking. Struck by the apparent futility of money-making (for there are no pockets in shrouds) many a millionaire has exclaimed with Solomon, 'Vanity of Vanities: all is vanity,' and turned his talents to charitable works. We need self-enlightenment.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

There comes a crisis-point in every busy life (such as the death of a loved one) when close introspection takes place. We begin to ponder, like Solomon, the point and purpose of it all. Where have we come from: why are we here, and where are we bound? Each person, at some time or other, will come to such watersheds in life and are almost certainly bound to come to the wrong conclusions unless they consult

the proper source of guidance in such matters: the Bible. If we have trouble with the car, or washing machine, we reach for the maker's Instruction Manual. Likewise, in the perplexing puzzles and problems of life, the true answers are to be found only in the Maker's Handbook. And so, any self-assessment must be made in the light of God's word. The poet Burns longed for the ability for man to see himself as others saw him, but conceded the unlikelihood. Obviously there is a way in which we view ourselves; a way in which others see us: and a light in which God perceives us: and all three may radically differ. The farmer who had to erect new barns to contain his new-found wealth saw himself as supremely successful with an extremely rosy future, but God saw him very differently and said, "Thou fool". Any meaningful self-assessment must begin with the premise that no matter who we are, what we are, where we are, we are all **sinners** in God's sight and need reconciliation to our Maker. All current activity and future plans must stop until that condition is rectified, and until we **wash away our sins in the waters of baptism** and rise to walk in newness of life. Thereafter, all proposals for life must be structured around Christ, as our Saviour, and His will must be paramount. We each must come to this point in life.

SELF-ABASEMENT

Accurate self-assessment will lead to self-abasement. The disconcerting discovery that we are not as good as we supposed may lead, initially, to the impulse of self-justification. This is not new. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. Cain, Saul, Aaron and the Pharisees all sought to blame others for their own inadequacies. Jesus encountered many such, and once gave a parable to **"certain that trusted in themselves that they were righteous"** (Luke 18:9). With God nothing is impossible, yet God says He cannot exalt those who exalt themselves, but He can do something for the truly humble. Only those who strike rock-bottom, and can admit their entire spiritual bankruptcy, can resolve, with the Prodigal Son, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee". Only those whose quality of self-abasement matches that of the Publican, can cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner". When Peter accused the Jews (Acts 2) of having murdered their Messiah, they had no thoughts of contesting the charge but cried out in anguish, "What shall we do". A straight question got a straight answer from Peter. He commanded them to "Repent and be baptised", **every one of them**, for the remission of **their sins**, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Each had to decide to do this, as an individual. It couldn't, and can't, be done by proxy.

SELF-DENIAL

Those who have chosen to follow Christ have chosen not a rosy path but a stony. I suppose a great deal depends upon the century and country in which we were born. Some have had to face lions in the Colosseum, and some the Spanish Inquisition, but even under normal conditions the Christian life is supposed to be one of service and self-sacrifice. This is not a popular theme. Jesus, Himself, said, **"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me"**. And Jesus, Himself, set the standard in this self-denial, that He looks for in others. Jesus was **"He who, His own self, bare our sins, in His own body, on the tree."** "His own self" and "His own body" surely emphasise this theme of individuality. Christ's self-sacrifice was uniquely His own. No one could help Him in it: not even God. Indeed God's own self-denial is evident, **"For God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all"**. We are no longer our own: we have been bought at a price.

Paul calls upon all to give "our reasonable service": that which will be acceptable to God. And what was the extent of that reasonable service? That we present ourselves (our bodies) as **living sacrifices** on the altar of service and activity, not conformed to the world but transformed, by the renewal of our minds (Rom. 12:1). And so each individual has to decide for himself, or herself, the degree of any self-sacrifice offered

to God, for, as the hymnwriter expressed it, "Only he who bears the cross can ever hope to wear the crown". As individuals, do we live lives of self-denial, or self-indulgence? We control this entirely by ourselves.

SELF-EXAMINATION

"But let a man examine himself", said Paul (1 Cor. 11:28) in the context of his approach to the Lord's Table, but the exhortation is worthy of more general application. Self-examination combats self-deception: which is very real and greatly widespread. Evidently man is quick and ready to believe what he wants to believe: and there are always those willing to tell us what we want to hear. James reminds us how easy it is for us to "deceive our own hearts" (1:16) and Paul mentions some who would not only deceive others but just as readily deceive themselves (2 Tim. 3:13). Paul exhorted "Every man among you" not to "think of himself more highly than he ought" but to think soberly and honestly (Rom. 12:3). To the fickle Corinthians Paul rehearsed all the shortcomings of the Israelites as an example to profit by, and concluded with the warning, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth beware, lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:12). And amongst Paul's final words to these same Corinthians he urged, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." (2 Cor. 13:5). Strong words indeed and not for the squeamish. We much prefer to examine others; and catalogue their deficiencies but this is not what the apostle had in mind. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith".

CONCLUSION: SELF-EXPRESSION

Not being automatons or robots, we are entirely free agents and responsible for what we do, or fail to do. Certainly, as Paul once observed, there is a continual war amongst our members and quite often we end up doing things we ought not to do, and vice versa. Even Paul, himself, was always conscious that having preached to others, he himself might be a castaway. Self-expression (i.e. what we actually do, or fail to do) seems the only real, true and accurate measure of our commitment to Christ.

Judas conspired to take 30 pieces of silver for Jesus: Demas left the church (having preferred this evil world) Alexander and Hymenaeus made shipwreck of their faith. At Christ's trial they all forsook him and fled, and similarly at Paul's trial no man stood with him. These men all voted with their feet. They are not judged by their words but by their actions.

It is said that what we put in the Treasury bag on a Sunday accurately expresses what we really think of the Lord and His work. It is said that attendances at Bible Studies reflects what the church truly thinks of God and His word. It is probably true that our attitude to the Lord's Table, and how we observe it, is the real comment on how we regard the Lord's death, and His memory. These are the things which correctly measure the pulse and temperature of the church, and tell us whether it is hot, cold or just luke-warm. In the industrial realm of today the workers endure the hackneyed rhetoric and meaningless Union jargon, but just occasionally they get up and vote with their feet. In the church there can also be hackneyed rhetoric and even jargon, but the real votes for God are cast with the feet. We all have free-expression and make our own, individual, contribution to the Lord's work. Our feet either take us to the Lord's work, and the meetings, or take us in the opposite direction. Jesus depends on us, each and every one of us.

We are His hands, feet, eyes mouth and mind. Some complain that the church isn't doing much: but we can't blame 'the church': we are the church, all as individuals.

God calls upon all men to a point of self-assessment and self-abasement; to acknowledge their sins and their need of a Saviour.. Those who profess a love for Christ: and claim discipleship, must constantly review that claim and that love by self-examination and self-sacrifice. These we must do entirely by ourselves: there

can be no proxy or substitute. As Paul says, in these wonderful closing verses, we must work out our very own salvation.

“Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Do all things without murmurings and disputings that ye may be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world. Holding forth the words of life.” (Phil. 2:12-16). There is really no such thing as “institutionalised” Christianity: men and women can only be true disciples of Christ by their own personal commitment, efforts and labours.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

RENEWED DAY BY DAY

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” (2 Cor. 4:16).

HIS BEAUTY AND HIS LOVELINESS

“Living in a God-rejecting world, up against all the hard problems and facts of life, surrounded by the poisonous atmosphere of sin in the world, the apostasy in Christendom, the great purpose of the Holy Spirit’s fullness is that the Lord might find in you and me an agency through which He may express Himself; the beauties of the Lord Jesus, His glorious fragrance, emanating from us day by day, moment by moment, wherever we are, that others may know that the Lord Jesus is living within us. Thus He finds a means whereby He may show forth His beauty and His loveliness. “Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.”

Reginald Wallis.

THE CHANGED LIFE

“Foundations which have to bear the weight of an eternal life must be surely laid. Character is to wear for ever; who will wonder or grudge that it cannot be developed in a day?” To await the growing of a soul, nevertheless, is an almost Divine act of faith. How pardonable, surely, the impatience of deformity with itself, of a consciously despicable character standing before Christ wondering, yearning, hungering to be like that. Yet must one trust the process fearlessly and without misgiving. “The Lord the Spirit” will do His part. The tempting expedient is, in haste for abrupt or visible progress, to try some method less spiritual, or to defeat the end by watching for effects instead of keeping the eye on the Cause. The creation of a new heart, the renewing of a right spirit, is an omnipotent work of God. Leave it to the Creator. “He which hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto that day.”

WHEREFORE, PUT ON CHRIST

“No man, nevertheless, who feels the worth and solemnity of what is at stake will be careless as to his progress. To become like Christ is the only thing in the world worth caring for, the thing before which every ambition of man is folly, and all lower achievement vain.”

“Those only who make this quest the supreme desire and passion of their lives can even begin to hope to reach it.”

“The image of Christ that is forming within us – that is life’s one charge. Let every project stand aside for that. “Till Christ be formed” no man’s work is finished, no religion crowned, no life has fulfilled its end. Is the infinite task begun? When, how, are we different? Time cannot change men. Death cannot change men. Christ can. Wherefore, put on Christ.”

Henry Drummond.

WE QUOTE — F. C. DAY

“An aged brother, long since called to rest, recounting the experience of his conversion many years earlier, used to tell us that when he came up out of the water, a ‘new creature in Christ Jesus,’ he just could not contain his feelings of gratitude, but burst forth into singing as he ascended the baptistry steps with the water streaming down his face. New life in Christ, begun with praise and thankfulness! And it is not without significance that the very first word of the Psalter is ‘Blessed,’ ‘Happy,’ as the Hebrew word is often translated.”

WE NEED TO BE FED

“I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord.”

Ezekiel 34:15

“We need to be fed. Even when we are born again we are only babes in Christ. We have quality of life; we lack quantity. How are we going to gain the abundance? It is largely a matter of diet. “I will feed my flock.” We are to be fed into maturity by the bread of life.”

J. H. Jowett.

BREAD OF HEAVEN

Bread of heaven, on Thee we feed,
For Thy flesh is meat indeed;
Ever may our souls be fed
With this true and living bread!
Day by day with strength supplied,
Through the life of Him who died.

J. Conder.

THE RENEWED LIFE

“We are not of this world, if we are Christians; we belong to the kingdom of heaven. It is very easy for us, being in the world, to become of it, to let our lives grow like the world. But this is not the way to make ourselves a living sacrifice to God.” “It is not conformity that we want,” says Dr. Bushnell; “it is not being able to beat the world in its own way; but it is to stand apart and above it, and to produce the impression of a holy and separate life. This only is safety and success.” Instead, then, of conforming to the world, taking the world’s colour, our duty is to seek to be transformed into the heavenly life. The word “transformed” means to be transfigured, that is, to become bright and shining in our life. The secret of it is given in the words, “the renewing of your minds.” The candle is to be lighted within our hearts, that its beams may shine out through our life, making it glow.

J. R. Miller.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

THE POOR

At this very moment there are 500 million people starving and 1,000 million men, women and children undernourished, in the world.

The reason for this, is because they are poor. **Famine** does not affect the rich even in poor countries, for they simply pay more for their food.

There are 750 million people in the world in this situation. The problem is getting worse every single day. There is enough food in the world but the rich will not share it.

Are you aware that half of all the grain grown in the world is fed to the animals in the rich countries. The rich eat meat which means that in addition to all the grass, hay and other food involved, it takes seven pounds of grain to produce ONE pound of meat purchased in a supermarket.

No matter what we earn we are among the rich of this world.

The livestock in rich countries are eating as much grain as do all the people who live in India and China, which is in excess of 1,400 million people.

I found it disturbing to discover that social scientists have concluded that people who claim to be deeply religious are no more concerned about the poor than those who have no religious commitment.

While this survey is no doubt true, I do believe that while we may have neglected the Bible's teaching on the poor, there is no reason for this trend to continue.

Christ demands everything of His followers, commitment is meant to be total. What then should be the attitude of His followers towards the poor?

The Old Testament

Let us begin in the Old Testament. The poor are mentioned 157 times.

God said to His people in Deuteronomy ch. 15 v 17:

"For the poor shall never cease out of the land, therefore, I command thee saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land."

The Psalmist said, in Psalm 41 v 1, **"Blessed is he that considereth the poor."**

In Proverbs 19 v 17 we read, **"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord."**

Here is a beautiful thought. The keyword is lendeth. What a person lends they expect to receive back.

Solomon gives us a wholesome thought in that what we can give to the poor is not gone forever.

Also, it is **not** the poor, to whom we give benefit: who will repay the loan it will be the Lord who will repay. Jesus taught the same in Luke 14, verses 12-14

For my last Old Testament example I would like to direct your thoughts to the city of Sodom. It is a commonly held view that Sodom was destroyed because of sexual perversity.

But that is a one-sided recollection of what the Bible says. Ezekiel informs us of one important reason why God destroyed Sodom and that was because she stubbornly refused to share with the poor.

In Ezekiel 16, verses 49-50 we read,

"Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen." NIV.

Now this text does not accuse Sodom of **oppressing** the poor, it simply accuses it of being **unconcerned** and not helping the poor.

Is our affluence distorting our interpretation of the Scriptures? If you deny this, then ask yourself when you last gave to the poor or fed the poor or even last thought about the poor?

Since God cares so much for the poor it is hardly surprising that He wants His people to do the same.

The New Testament

Turning to the New Testament we find the same teaching.

The christian who pays attention to the teaching of Jesus in Luke 14 verses 12-14 is the exception and certainly not the rule. There we read,

"When you give a dinner or supper, invite neither your friends, nor your brothers, nor your kinsmen, nor your rich neighbours, lest they invite you in return, and you will be repaid".

But when you entertain, invite the beggars, the crippled, the maimed, and the blind. You will be blessed (because they cannot repay you), for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

How many times in the past year have you invited someone to your home for a

meal? What % of these occasions were for the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind?

Do we really take Jesus seriously?

Two chapters farther on we read about the rich man and Lazarus.

Lazarus was a beggar, the term beggar in the original indicates deep poverty.

To make matters worse; this pathetic figure was full of sores, which no doubt were aggravated further by the dogs who licked his sores.

Lazarus was not fed from the crumbs of the rich man's table for the Bible says he DESIRED to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.

Jesus did not say the rich man exploited Lazarus, He showed that the rich man had no concern for the sick beggar at his gate.

The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. Do we not fall into this category?

No matter what our income is if we compare ourselves with the average family among our billion hungry neighbours, each of us here today is rich.

The average poor, hungry family in the world consists of the following:—

One shabby change of clothes, a few blankets, one table and one chair.

Only the breadwinner in the family will have a pair of shoes. Tonight the family will share 3 onions and a dish of dried beans. The nearest clinic is a 10 mile walk.

The average cash hoard held by a family for use in an emergency is £2. In many countries women have to walk about 7 miles to obtain a jug of water and, incidentally, 80% of our world's disease is caused by polluted water.

If you have found any of these facts hard to believe I beg you to write to Christian Aid or Tear Fund and they will supply you with pages of facts guaranteed to make you feel uncomfortable.

Quite frankly I would like to forget such facts and figures because they remind me that I am neglecting my duty as a christian to the poor.

It is so easy for us in this country. We hear the gospel, we believe it, repent and are baptized for the remission of our sins. The Lord adds us to His church.

We feed upon His Word daily and grow in grace, knowledge and truth. We become active members and before we know it our weeks and months are booked up in preparation and delivery for either preaching, teaching, serving or Sunday-school work.

But what about the poor? What % of our time do we devote to them?

Have we allowed our economic self interest to distort our interpretation of the Bible?

The Bible clearly teaches that to neglect the poor is sin.

For an example let us look at Matthew chapter 25.

We are all familiar with the passage where Jesus tells us about the final judgement when He will separate the sheep from the goats.

To the sheep He will say, "Come, blessed ones of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you received me; naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me."

Then the righteous will reply to Him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and we fed you, or thirsty ... or a stranger ... or naked ... or sick ... or in prison.?"

The King will reply to them, "Indeed I assure you, when you served one of the least of these my brothers, you served me."

Then He will say to the ones on His left hand.

"Depart from me, accursed ones, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his agents."

"I was hungry, yet you did not feed me; I was thirsty, yet you did not give me to drink;

I was a stranger, yet you did not receive me; naked, yet you did not clothe me; sick and in prison, yet you did not visit me."

Then they will reply, **"Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, or a stranger or naked, or sick or in prison, and we did not serve you?"**

Then He will answer them, saying, **"Truly I assure you, in so far as you did not serve one of the least of these my brothers, you did not serve me."**

These will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life. (Verses 34-46.)

Now let us note a very important point from this clear teaching of our Lord. The punishment of the wicked related by Jesus in this scene was because they had neglected to do the righteous deeds the sheep had done.

Nothing is said about their wickedness, they are not accused of being notorious murderers and outlaws but simply had neglected to do that which they had the opportunity to do.

They failed to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty. They failed to lodge strangers, clothe the naked; minister to the sick or encourage those in prison in the name of Christ.

The teaching is clear, even though we may have missed the point because of our lifestyle. Those who fail to aid the poor and the oppressed (whether they are believers or not) are simply NOT the people of God.

The warning is repeated in 1 John 3 verses 17 and 18, **"Whoever has this world's possessions, and sees his brother in need, and closes his heart to him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or in speech, but in deed and in truth."**

In James 2 verses 14-17 we also read,

"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but he does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister needs clothes, or lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give to them the things necessary for the body, what good is it?

In this same way, unless faith has works, it is dead by itself."

The Bible is very plain on this subject. If we fail to aid the needy we do not have God's love.

I think most of us at one time or another have criticized people who try to earn Salvation by works only and they neglect the terms of Salvation.

We, in the church of Christ, are very strong on the terms of Salvation but perhaps we are neglecting other aspects of the doctrine of Christ concerning the poor.

I would not like to be misunderstood on this point. I know the churches of Christ give to the poor. But are we giving enough?

Are we aware of the consequences of neglecting the poor? I have never heard an address on this subject in my 14½ years, in the church.

I am well aware that we will always have poor people, Jesus said so, but that is no excuse for neglecting them.

I know there are real problems in sending money, clothes, food and vitamins to the Third World because politics, corruption and greed often intercept the parcels we send.

Perhaps we should adopt the New Testament approach and send people to deliver the aid to the poor. It's less of a hazard today than it was 2,000 years ago.

Another problem we need to address is our own lifestyles. We actually believe we can just barely get along on the money we earn.

We don't realize that we are part of an incredible 'rat race.'

When we receive a pay rise of £100 per year, we convince ourselves we **need** about that much more to live comfortably.

How can we escape this delusion? How will we respond to the desperate plight of the world's poor?

Is the unbelieving world giving more to the poor than the church? 3 days after Comic Relief day they had collected in excess of 10 million pounds. I believe the figure is now 21 million pounds.

I wonder if the universal church equalled that amount?

Every day 10,000 people die because they simply do not have food.

Did Jesus not teach in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not hoard up for yourselves treasures on the earth."

Do we obey Jesus on this point?

Should Christians not **live simply** in order that others may **simply live**?

Why are we so unconcerned, so slow to care? Is it perhaps because we have many things in common with the rich young ruler?

When he asked Jesus how to obtain eternal life, Jesus told him to sell all his goods and give them to the poor. We are usually told that his idol was his riches. That is undoubtedly true but we must not miss the fact that wealth and possessions are the most common idols in our country today.

Would Jesus not say if He were here physically today, "Truly I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man, especially in the 20th century, to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

We have become trapped in unprecedented material luxury. Advertising constantly convinces us that we need one unnecessary luxury after another.

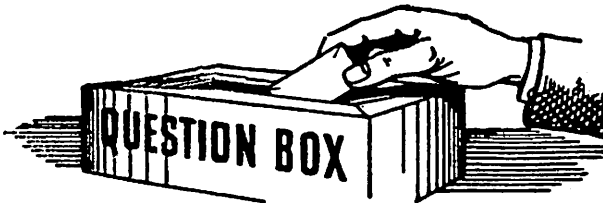
Only by God's grace and with great effort can we escape the shower of luxuries which have almost suffocated our christian compassion.

The only point I wish to make, and I hope no-one will ever forget, is "We must not neglect the poor."

Finally, I would like everyone to think about my final question in light of the Scriptures.

Is the church really the church if it neglects the poor?

Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

Phil. 2:10 talks about "Things under the earth". "What are these things?"

This part of the Philippian letter is so important and soul-elevating that I feel obliged, in answering the question, to say something about the thoughts expressed in the context.

The Incarnate Christ

In Roman mythology particularly we read about the gods taking human and sometimes animal form and coming down to earth, but here Paul tells us quite specifically that the God of Heaven sent His Son, Jesus Christ, down to earth to live in human form. In His preincarnate state He was in 'the form of God', i.e., He possessed all the attributes of God; this is a clear expression by Paul of the deity of Christ. The scripture says that 'He emptied Himself' but it would seem not of His deity; He was Son of God and Son of Man. He was, says Paul, 'made in the likeness of men' and this was a real likeness, not a phantom human form as the Gnostics held. We realise that He had to leave the environment of glory and limit Himself to time and space

when He came to earth, but it is extremely difficult for me to believe that the same limitations applied to knowledge and conduct. He was 'made in the likeness of sinful flesh', but here it behoves us to restrain our thinking somewhat. We understand that every human being in the flesh was, and is, and will be a sinner; the propensity to sin is always there, but Jesus was in the flesh but **without** sin; this must have been the case else He could not have been the Saviour. Another phrase which Paul uses is 'being found in fashion as a man! W. E. Vine draws out the meaning of the three expressions, 'form of God', (MORPHE); 'likeness of men' (HOMOIOMA); and 'in fashion' (SCHEMA), and suggests that 'form of God' indicates what Jesus was in Himself as regards God, and 'in fashion as a man' indicates what He was in the eyes of men. Paul finds great wonder when he considers the voluntary humiliation of Christ, and urges such humility to the Christians at Philippi.

The Post-Incarnate Christ

We now come to a most interesting part of Paul's letter. Jesus has subjected Himself to that most despised of deaths, as a common criminal on the accursed cross. Paul envisages the return of Jesus to Heaven and says, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name". The Greek word used here is HUPERUSOO (HUPER, above or beyond; HUPSOO, height), and this gives us the idea that Jesus was lifted beyond the glory which He had before His incarnation.

We now have to ask ourselves the question, "What higher place could Jesus have than He had before"? Well, the name which was to be above every name was obviously His earthly name of Jesus, and equally obviously, what He took **back** to Heaven which He did not have before He **left** Heaven was His experience of humanity. Jesus was the only Person of the Godhead who had actually had the experience of living on earth clothed in human form, and this is what He took back with Him to Heaven, and that is why He was highly exalted. Jesus knew well enough that He had to be crucified in order to achieve our salvation, but the actual **experience** of having nails driven into His feet and wrists, and feeling the excruciating pain, was not something which Deity was accustomed to.

A similar idea is presented to us by the Writer of the Hebrew letter when he says, "Though he were a Son (the indefinite article should be left out here; there is only one Son of God), yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). Now it is very difficult for me to believe that Jesus did not know what obedience was in His pre-incarnate state; what is being said here is that Jesus had not **experienced** obedience in the **human** state. What Jesus **learned** was the suffering associated with obedience in the flesh; this idea, I suggest, is of considerable importance to we Christians when we sometimes have to suffer for our obedience to Christ.

The Cosmic Lordship

I use this heading confidently because of the revelation given by Paul of the universal application of the Lordship of Christ; in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Many Christians refer to Jesus as Messiah, Saviour, Priest and King, but somehow the title 'Lord' seems, for some reason, to have fallen into disuse. Perhaps it is because 'Lordship' suggests control of our lives by someone else, in this case, Christ, and in these so-called enlightened days control of our lives is anathema to most people. The Bible, however, has no such inhibitions. Paul in his first letter to Corinth states, "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many). But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Cor. 8:5,6). He had seen the multitude of idols worshipped by many people, but he denied that these idols had any reality in existing gods; as a matter of fact he says, "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered

in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Cor. 10:19,20). We today should echo the dismissive condemnation made by Paul in respect of the worship of gods other than the True God, and his insistence that no one is worthy to exercise lordship over our lives other than the True Lord, Jesus Christ.

Under The Earth

We must now consider what Paul means when he uses the phrase 'under the earth'. In general when we use this phrase we mean somewhere under the surface of the earth; a cave, a mine, a grave, a subterranean passage, etc. Some commentators have said that this is a Homeric expression and means quite simply 'the subterranean place of the dead'.

However, there is another explanation which needs some consideration. In the eastern Mediterranean regions, particularly in Asia Minor, the worship of so-called fertility gods still persisted, even into Roman times. The most notable city was Ephesus where the goddess Diana was worshipped (so named by the Romans; earlier referred to as Artemis by the Greeks). It was a custom by the Romans to acknowledge the local gods wherever they went. It must be remembered that the purpose of the worship of fertility gods was so that the blood from sacrificed animals would fertilise the natural earth. Consequently, when the Roman Empire spread to Persia they encountered another fertility god called Mithras; they readily acknowledged this god and the ownership of him became popular; particularly among the Roman soldiery.

The legend associated with this god is quite interesting. Mithras was evidently, according to the legend, born in a cave. One day he went out of the cave into the forest, encountered a wild bull, took it back into the cave and slew it; the shedding of its blood spawned all living creatures. The interesting point is that the Mithraic temples were usually underground and the worship of this god was, of course, carried out in these underground temples (as were the sacrifices). Pictorial representation of this god is always accompanied by a dog, a snake, and a scorpion; the signs of the zodiac were also present. The sacrificed animal was a bull. (Star-gazers beware of the signs of the zodiac). Mithraism became so popular in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. that it rivalled Christianity in popularity. It flourished until Constantine, after which it decreased quite rapidly.

In view of what Paul taught with regard to the worship of gods that were no gods, it is reasonable to think that he would have these fertility cults in mind, and that he would wish to make the point quite forcibly that not only was Jesus Lord in Heaven and on earth, but also in respect of all the subterranean regions as well.

The truly great thought in all of this is that all of these cults are merely history now, but Jesus is still acknowledged throughout the world, and He is still Lord of Heaven, earth, and all things under the earth. It will ever remain so.

(All questions, to Alf Marsden,

20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan WN3 6ES.)

WHY?

When people go to a football game, they want a seat on the fifty yard line.

When they go to a basketball game, they want a seat at mid-court.

When they attend a play they want a seat about midway in the auditorium.

When they go to a boxing or wrestling match they want a ring-side seat.

When they go to a circus parade, they want to stand in the front line.

BUT — when they go to Church everyone wants a back seat.

Why — *Selected.*

SCRIPTURE READINGS

July 2	Num. 9:1-14	Mark 14:12-26
July 9	Job 19:1-18	Mark 14:27-42
July 16	Psa. 41	Mark 14:43-52
July 23	Psa. 35:1-17	Mark 14:53-72
July 30	2 Chron. 24:15-25	Mark 15:1-20

The Lord's Supper

Gilbert Young Tickle (1819-1888) was a great hymn writer in the Church of Christ. Five of his hymns come under the heading of **The Lord's Table**, in the Church of Christ Hymn Book. The following is a very small sample of his lovely sentiments:-

Jesus, our great High Priest, our Sacrifice

Our Passover, rich Gift of love divine,
With Thee we would into the holiest rise,
Communing with Thee in the bread and wine.

O what a feast ineffable is this!
Thy table spread with more than angels' food —

Angels the highest never taste the bliss,
The dear communion of Thy flesh and blood.

Dear Lord! What memories crowd
Around the sacred cup!
The upper room, Gethsemane, —
Thy foes, — Thy lifting up.

I believe the Lord's Supper should be commemorated by all saints on the first day of every week, as the Lord has directed. Basically, the church has to do two things in the world — preach the gospel of Jesus and remember Him in His own appointed way around the humble board. Alexander Campbell has written: "Upon the loaf and upon the cup of the Lord, in letters which speak not to the eye, but to the heart of every disciple, is inscribed, 'When this you see, remember me'. Indeed, the Lord says to each disciple, when he receives the symbols into his hand, 'This is my body broken for you. This is my blood shed for you ...' In receiving it the disciple says, 'Lord, I believe it. My life sprung

from Thy suffering; my joy from Thy sorrows; and my hope of glory everlasting from Thy humiliation and abasement even in death ...' Every time the disciples assemble around the Lord's table, they are furnished with a new argument also against sin, as well as with a new proof of the love of God. It is as well intended to crucify the world in our hearts, as to quicken us to God, and to diffuse his love within us."

Personally, I could never willingly absent myself from the Lord's table on the first day of the week. I would even adjust holidays (and have often done so) to enable me to be with a congregation for the memorial feast. It cost Jesus everything to institute the Lord's supper. Any costs to me, therefore, which result in keeping the feast, are as nothing in comparison. I am reminded at this point of the words of the Hebrew writer: "**And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching**" (10:24-25).

Gethsemane and Betrayal

Jesus suffered great agony in the garden of Gethsemane. He prayed earnestly to His Father that, if it were possible, He might remove the cup (of suffering) from Him (14:36). He went on to say: "**Nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt**" (36). Peter, James and John obviously did not understand how critical a period it was for the Master as He found them asleep on three occasions — "for their eyes were heavy" (14:40). Our Lord knew all that lay before Him. "**Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come: behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners**" (14:41). I think this foreknowledge meant a greater trial for Him.

Judas was the one who betrayed Him. He singled the Master out with a kiss (14:45). We should note that "a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes

and the elders" (43), came to arrest Him.

A blow was struck by one of the disciples (47). John tells us that it was Peter (John 18:10). Matthew in his gospel reveals Jesus as saying: **"Put up again your sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Do you not think that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels"** (26:52-53)? Luke says that Jesus immediately healed this man of his injury (22:51).

Seven of the saddest words in the Bible are found in this chapter of Mark: **"And they (the disciples) all forsook Him and fled"** (50). Their nerve cracked. They could not face it. They were terrified that they too would share the same fate as the Master.

We read: **And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his body: and the young men laid hold on Him: and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked"** (51-52). Who was this? The incident is not related by any other of the evangelists, which has led many commentators to suggest that the young man was Mark himself. C. E. Graham Swift has written: "No good reason can be shown for the recording of the incident unless it is based on personal reminiscence". William Barclay has commented: "We may take it as fairly certain that Mark put in these two verses because they were about himself. He could never forget that night." I note that the great biblical scholar Alfred Edersheim concurs with these statements.

Jesus Before The Sanhedrin

The Sanhedrin was the national council of the Jews. F. F. Bruce has written: "In the New Testament the Sanhedrin is variously called the 'council', the 'body of elders' and the 'senate'; at other times it is denoted in terms of its component elements - e.g. 'the chief priests and the Pharisees' (Matthew 21:45; John 7:32), 'the chief priests and elders and scribes' (Mark 14:53), 'the chief priests and scribes' (Luke 22:2), 'the chief

priests and elders' (Acts 4:23), 'the chief priests and all the council' (Acts 22:30), 'the rulers and elders and scribes' (Acts 4:5)."

The trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin was a total injustice. The council in its proceedings broke all its own laws. They were intent on destroying the man of Nazareth and nothing, not even the standing regulations, was to get in the way. William Barclay has written this of the incident: "At last the High Priest took the matter into his own hands. When he did, he asked the very kind of question that the law completely forbade. He asked a leading question. It was forbidden to ask questions by answering which the person on trial might incriminate himself. No man could be asked to condemn himself, but that was the very question the High Priest asked. Bluntly he asked Jesus if he was the Messiah. Clearly Jesus felt that it was time that the whole wretched business was ended. Without hesitation He answered that He was. Here was a charge of blasphemy, insult against God. The Sanhedrin had what it wanted, a charge which merited the death penalty, and they were savagely content."

Peter denied his Lord before this council. Later he confessed Jesus as Lord and Christ before the same body (Acts 4:5-22). By then he was a changed man.

Jesus Before Pilate

What an encounter! A representative of the son of the gods (a title of the Emperor) meets the true Son of God. Pilate asked Jesus plainly: **"Are you the King of the Jews?"** And He answered: **"Thou sayest it"** (15:2, A.V.). Goodspeed translates it as "Yes", Moffat as "Certainly" and Montgomery as "It is as you say." Jesus went on to tell Pilate: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice" (John 18:37).

Barabbas is mentioned. He was an insurrectionist, guilty of sedition and

murder (Luke 23:19,25). He in the end was released and Jesus the sinless one was crucified. Pilate condemned Jesus because he wished "to content the people" (15:15). Justice never entered into it. Cowardice in the face of the Jewish mob was what it was all about. One wonders if the whole business later preyed on Pilate. Eusebius, the church historian, presented a report of Greek historians that in the end he was forced to commit suicide during the reign of the Emperor Gaius (AD 37-41). So he went the same way as Judas: both tragic figures in history. But Jesus reigns supreme!

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Wigan (Longshoot): Once more we have cause to rejoice at the winning of a soul for the Lord. On Thursday, May 4th David Pickering was added to the Lord's Body in baptism. David has been a regular attender at the meetings since his marriage to Wendy (formerly Layland) 18 months ago, and we are pleased that the power of the Gospel has been demonstrated once more. We thank God for David's decision and pray that he will be helped to grow in grace and knowledge of God's word.

D. Melling.

Hindley : On Saturday, April 22nd, we had a special visit from Bro. Ian Davidson from Motherwell congregation in order to speak to us on "The Church and the Bible" illustrated by slides. We were ably supported by friends and members from near and far approximately 60 being present.

We are deeply grateful to Ian for making the journey here and back to Scotland in one day, particularly for the interest aroused. We were deeply concerned to hear that his father who was to have accompanied him had been hospitalised and we sincerely pray that all will go well with him and he shall be

able to return home soon. Our very best thanks go to Ian and all who came to the meeting.

May God's richest blessing rest upon the effort.

Tom Kemp.

Dunfermline : It was with great joy that the church witnessed the immersion of Cheryl Best who acknowledged her Lord in baptism on Tuesday, 26th April, 1989. We extend our thanks to our brethren in Kirkcaldy for the use of their meeting place and baptistry for such a joyous occasion. We rejoice at Cheryl's decision to follow her Master and pray that she will find true peace and happiness in Jesus.

G. Pearson.

Slamannan District : The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place on Saturday, 13th May at the Town House, New Cummnock, when a goodly gathering discussed the subject "What does the Bible say about vegetarianism: and our treatment of animals?" Mark Plain Snr. was in the chair and the speakers were to be Jack Nisbet, Haddington and Hugh Davidson, Motherwell. Both were indisposed due to ill-health and the speaker was James Moncrieff, Haddington. An interesting discussion followed and, as usual, a great deal more emerged from the subject than was anticipated. The next meeting (D.V.) will be on 9th September at Dennyloanhead when the subject will be "What kind of bodies will Christ's followers have when He returns." Chairman, Joe Malcolm: speakers David Chalmers, Dalmellington and Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline.

H. Davidson.

Haddington : Our Saturday evening Gospel Meeting was held on 6th May when a large attendance heard a wonderful gospel address from Bro. Jack Parker from Wigan. We thank those who supported us, and who have been supporting us over the last three such meetings, especially some who came a considerable distance. Jack served the church here on Sunday and we are grate-

ful to him, and to Dorothy for making the trip and for the fellowship we all enjoyed. As usual we had tea and chat after the preaching and this was greatly appreciated by all and very pleasant. The last in the series will be on 20th May with Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline, doing the preaching.

Ruth Nisbet.

AN APPEAL

Dear Brethren : We have been counting our resources and need assistance. We need financial help for :-

(i) Transporting members from far distances to the assembly. This is a fast growing area. (ii) A large tent for meetings. (iii) Clothing, Literature, Stationery. Many in new houses and those in shacks need gospel preached to them. (iv) Finance for full-time preachers as cost of living very high now. We hope our request will be admired.

Phineas Nkosi,
Church of Christ,
P.O. Box 218,

Guguletu, Cape Town, R.S.A. 7750.

APPEAL FOR WORK IN AFRICA

Dear Brethren,

I have recently been wrestling with the problem of helping our poor brothers and sisters in Christ in Africa.

It has saddened me to hear reports of what has happened to some of the aid sent by congregations of churches of Christ. The only positive way of ensuring we are helping those who need help, to my mind, is to send someone to Africa to assess the situation and report on it.

I would like to send a brother and sister in Christ to a small geographical, predetermined area in Africa where there are at least, two assemblies of the church of Christ following the Old Paths.

The brother and sister I have in mind are well known, loved and respected in Scotland. They both have a burning desire to serve the Lord and instantly agreed to carry out the proposed

task. They are Sister Ann and Brother Bill Cook (Father and daughter).

The proposed task is to :-

- 1) Assess the needs of spreading the Gospel message.
- 2) Assess how we can help out financially.
- 3) Assess the condition of their health and report on how we can assist.
- 4) Enquire into their long-term strategy to see if we can assist.
- 5) Obtain names and addresses of those most in need, set up a nominal bank account for them to enable money to be sent to them via Inter-bank process.
- 6) Photograph the situation to use in a slide projector on returning, to enlighten the brotherhood as to the present situation.

To make this assessment may take 2 - 4 weeks and is estimated to cost between £1500 and £2000. The cheapest flight from London is £900 (for two). Car Hire is £23 per day, excluding insurance.

Brethren, if you can help financially in this project I will promise, on return from Africa, to send you a copy of Brother and Sister Cook's report. If I cannot raise enough money I will return what was sent to me.

This is intended to be a single appeal simply to assess the situation and report on it. Anyone particularly wishing to be involved in a long-term support of the poor and needy in the church in Africa should indicate before the trip is made as this will influence the number of addresses to be collected.

Brethren, we know that there are many of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are desperately in need of help, let us make the effort to find out who and where they are.

What we do for one of the least of these our brethren we do for Christ

Graeme Pearson,
13 Fairways, Dunfermline,
Fife KY12 0DU
Tel: 0383 728624

THOUGHTS ON PSALM

TEXT – verse 4 of this Psalm:-

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple”.

It is always good to analyse these Bible texts. It is what is done medically. If we wish to know what is contained in a substance, we send it to an Analyst. We will now proceed to analyse our text!

You will notice that David said he wished for only **ONE** thing. He could have had *anything* he desired because he was the King and was living in a palace! From this verse we see David’s mind was set on higher things than mere material ones – worshipping the Lord, which was wonderful.

What did David ask (desire) of the Lord and then *seek* after? He had a noble ambition and sought the pearl of great price. We read that “he wished to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life”. Now, this was not just some passing whim, but he wanted to serve God *continually* all his days, in order to:-

- 1. “Behold the beauty of the Lord” – to worship the Lord acceptably; to offer him his thanks for all his goodness, and to remember all his benefits towards him. On another occasion you will recall that David said: “I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psalm 84: 10).
- 2. “To enquire of his temple”. When anyone *enquires*, he always *does* something about it. (If one wishes to know how to get to a certain place, one asks questions of those who know, and then carries out the directions.)

Accordingly, we should all pray for guidance in the SPIRITUAL life that we may find it, and also pray that we may be kept faithful in His church all *our* days, in order to live lives pleasing to God. (It is interesting to note that when Jesus was young and went up to Jerusalem with his parents, he was found in the temple enquiring of the doctors: hearing them and asking them questions).

We are not asked to shut ourselves away in a convent or monastery, but to live always in the abiding presence of God.

Harold Baines.
(Sent in by Sister Payne, Reading.)

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