

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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YE THAT ARE STRONG

Newspapers these last few weeks have been regularly reporting the many sackings and resignations of men in high office, and otherwise, who have been found wanting, and not up to the job. This has included politicians, railway executives, surgeons, prison governors, BBC controllers, retail managers, etc. etc. What's left of the Tory Party are, at this very minute, trying to choose a new leader. They believe that their failure at the last election was due to inadequate leadership: i.e. William Hague was the weak link, and must be replaced. Even the present Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has become so aware of the weaker performers in his own cabinet and has just announced a "reshuffle": i.e. replaced the weak with the strong. It is a common fact, is it not, that no matter how substantial the chain, each link varies in strength, and the chain is, in effect, no stronger than its weakest link. In the Nationalised Industries; the Civil Service; in big Corporations; in Limited Companies; the Armed Services etc.; where great reliance is placed in the scalar chains of command, weak links must be discovered and replaced. Any person not fitted for the post they hold is ruthlessly replaced. This is generally true although no doubt we can all mention exceptions to the rule. Life is becoming more and more a 'Survival of the fittest'. It seems our society is less caring - the strong can survive but the weak 'go to the wall'. It is not uncommon to hear of, even professional people, opting out of 'the rat race' and retiring to the simple life in the tranquillity of The Outer Hebrides. Thus in the cold hard world of politics, or big business, the rule is the same as the one which operates in the animal world, *only the fittest will survive*. **In the Church it is not so** (or should not be so). God acknowledges that, in the Church, some members will be stronger than others, and, that some conversely, will be the weaker links of the chain. Some members will have a stronger conviction than others; a deeper faith than others; a more ardent love than others; a greater sense of responsibility than others; a keener intelligence than others; wider natural ability than others; greater opportunities than others; a greater knowledge than others; a more placid nature than others; more considerate and thoughtful than others; less selfish than others. If God acknowledges this state of affairs, so must we. We must make allowances for these differences, in coming to conclusions, and in passing judgement upon others. Indeed, the apostle Paul goes farther and instructs us not only to make *allowances* for the weak **but to support them**. Not only will the Church contain 'the weak' but would also manifest 'the unruly' and also 'the feeble-minded'. Paul exhorted the Church at Thessalonica, inter alia, to "**warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men**". (1 Thess. 5:14).

FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

I suppose it is natural enough, when we begin to think about it, that there will be all temperaments in the Church. After all, the Church is the *family of God* and in every family we have children, all precious, but all very different. In some families some are sickly at birth and struggle through the remainder of their lives, some spend a lot of time in hospital, some are asthmatic; some are anaemic; some can run and wrestle; some must take notes to school excusing them from any robust activity. I suppose a few of these natural traits must have their counterpart, to some degree, in the spiritual world, and that in the family of God we will have the strong and active and we will have the weakly and sickly - even the occasional 'black sheep' in the family. What is our attitude to the weak - is it one of impatience (assuming that we do not classify ourselves as amongst the weak)? Do we feel that there should be no such thing as weak and feeble Christians? Do we feel that (apart from *physical* weakness) there should be no such thing as *spiritual* weakness - that the scriptures are the same for everybody and that there are no real excuses for weakness or ignorance? Doubtless in many cases our ignorance is due to lack of study (requiring a diet of baby's milk rather than of strong meat) but there must be some who have difficulty in learning anything (let alone, the scriptures). If, we ourselves are enthusiastic, and zealous, and well informed, should not we try to understand why others are not so, and make the necessary allowances? Our quotation (1 Thess. 5:14) comes from a chapter containing over a dozen different exhortations and includes this wonderful acknowledgement that in the Church, especially a young congregation like Thessalonica, we shall have the unruly, the feeble-minded and the weak. 'Unruly' is a word, the sense of which envisages soldiers breaking ranks and becoming disorderly, insubordinate and neglectful. *The Church should admonish and warn* all such, says Paul. 'The feeble-minded' includes all those who seem perpetually bewildered by all that is going on around them, fearful, easily downcast and disheartened. Such, says Paul, *should be comforted*. 'The weak' (of whatever circumstance such weakness should be composed) should receive support and patience. Indeed, we should be *patient* (forbearing) *toward all men*. Truly Paul mentions 'the weak' on more than one occasion and includes in the term all those labouring under lowly circumstances, the sickly and feeble, and for such he, personally, laboured with his hands that he might have the means to give help. To the elders at Ephesus he said; "I have showed you all things how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord, how He said, It is more blessed to give than receive" (Acts 20:35).

SUPPORT THE WEAK

In view of Paul's exhortation we can safely assume that there will always be weak members as well as strong ones. 'Weakness' is, of course, a relative term and we all might be stronger than we think, or weaker. He that thinks he stands should always beware, lest he fall. We are certainly safe in saying that few of us have ever seen a congregation that did not have its share of weak members. Can there be congregations with more weak members than strong ones - is it possible? The letters to the seven churches (in the Rev.) seems to infer that some congregations, thought to be strong, were very weak indeed. **What are the manifestations of weakness? Absenteeism** at the Lord's table? **Disinterest** in meetings for Bible Study? **Niggardly giving** towards the Lord's work - small collections? Old in membership but a **novice in knowledge?** **Lack of enthusiasm** for missionary work, or indeed for any project to be pursued by the Church? **Lack of support** of our regular gospel meetings? **Little regard** for the

difficulties of others or of visiting the sick? **Careless approach** to God's word and coming to meetings without a Bible, or bringing it but never opening it. **Giving preference** to earthly appointments and personal friends rather than to gatherings of the Church? **Reluctance** to be involved in serving the Church in any way (as Secretary or Treasurer, Doorkeeper etc.)? **Seldom** being in our places when needed? **Too preoccupied** with ourselves, and our plans, to care or to know about the problems our brethren have? These are just a very few of the pointers which give a rough guide to ourselves, and to others, the state of our spiritual health. There is also the evidence of how we conduct our affairs *outwith the Church*, as to whether we are a credit to the Lord, or an embarrassment. There are also those in the Church who might be termed 'lapsed' members, who have not been in fellowship for some years. How should we regard them and what caused them to discontinue with us? Could they be termed the weakest of all? Did they grow weary in well-doing - did they grow cold from inactivity - were they treated insensibly by other members? Certainly the cinder that falls from the fire soon grows cold in isolation, and it is sad to reflect that if all lapsed members were to return current memberships would double or treble themselves in number. Some readers may feel that these 'evidences of weakness' mentioned above are not the result of weakness at all, but merely the symptoms of laziness, disinterest and carelessness, and I would be the first to admit that the distinction is sometimes difficult to draw. When, indeed, is our indifferent performance due to lack of native ability, or want of real effort? Who can say; and I suppose we must give everyone the benefit of any doubt on the matter, and help them in their weakness (whatever that weakness might be). I always see the Christian journey as a '**Great Trek**' (something like the streams of refugees we see regularly on T.V.) with some on foot; some pushing hand-carts containing all their worldly goods; some struggling along on crutches; some even being carried on a stretcher by friends; some bearing great burdens on their heads; the better-off nosing their way through the crowds in a large car; some carrying others on their backs; some well dressed; some in rags; some in great old-age; others very young and all helping one-another along, giving drinks to those who have fainted by the roadside; bandaging the sores of the wounded and comforting the frightened cries of the women and children. Then there are the lonely stragglers. It was surely with such a scenario in mind that the apostle Paul urged "**We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good, to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself, But, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on Me.**" (Rom. 15:1). Jesus is referred to here as our **Great Exemplar** in that He bore the infirmities of the weak. He did not seek out His own comfort and enjoyment but was always to be found where the need was greatest; amongst suffering, reproach and shame.

THE LAW OF CHRIST

Picturing the Christian journey as a form of 'Great Trek' we can see that some Church members have a much easier journey than others. Some are in fairly large, and comparatively wealthy, congregations and have a relatively care-free passage. Others are in small congregations (sometimes of two) and struggle to keep the flag of Christ flying in their community. Then there are isolated members, and members married to non-Christian partners who have problems others know nothing about. Within the congregation there are members who have been severely treated by life, either by physical disability or by personal circumstances, who require the help and support of

others. I can never forget out late sister Jones, at Haddington, baptised in her old-age and who had had eleven children none of whom survived her. Think of the blows that she had sustained in life? All other members should try to help and uphold those who have a difficult journey. We should all rally to help carry the load, or bear the burden, for others. This is the law of Jesus. Paul said, "**Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ**" (Gal. 6:2). It is said that the truly happy people are those who bring comfort and a little joy to others. That quote from Gal. 6 is part of a larger statement where Paul not only recommends the support of the weak but also *the restoration of those who go astray*. He says, "**Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.**" This wonderful 'law of Christ' was distinguishable from Moses' law, or any other law, by this unique feature that *brotherly-kindness* was always to prevail - completely regardless of the circumstances. We must help with the burdens of all others. This responsibility is not for some duly appointed committee (?) but for each and every one of us. Yes! we are our brother's keeper. We fulfil the law of Christ by bearing the burdens of others.

CONCLUSION

There is a school of thought which *exhibits great impatience* with the 'weaker' brethren and reckons that if they 'lapse' from the Church they must not have been genuine members in the first place. Some serious reflection on this point of view will demonstrate how foolish it is, and that it is possible for even the 'strongest' member to fall from grace. *Even Paul always entertained the possibility of him, having preached to others, himself becoming a castaway*. There is another point of view which avers that we 'are better off' without some members. Sometimes we hear that one brother has 'given up' trying to rationalise the behaviour and attitude of another brother. We have all doubtless had that feeling, but if we want Christ to be very patient with us, obviously we must, in turn, be very patient with every-one else. "So-and-so goes to Socials but avoids Bible Studies." "So-and-so only comes to the meeting if I go and fetch him". "So-and-so never seems to seek the company of other members, I can't understand it". "So-and-so never says a word in our Business Meeting". "So-and-so always comes late in case he gets a job to do". "We would be as well without so-and-so for all the help they give". These are but a few samples of what is occasionally heard, but surely we can never be "better off" without any member. All are children of God and precious in His sight. **All members of God's great family may differ widely in all kinds of ways, but each is precious to our Heavenly Father, and He mourns the loss of any one of them.** The duty of the Church is to warn the unruly; comfort the feeble-minded, sustain the weak, and be patient toward all men. Indeed Paul said that he would abstain from meat rather than that a weaker brother should fall, and this attitude pervaded Paul's entire life generally. To the weak he became as the weak that he might gain the weak. (1 Cor. 9:22).

It is a hard world in which we live, (and life is much harder in some other countries than it is in this one), but the general rule is that only the fittest will ultimately survive. Thanks be to God that such a rule, or law, does not operate in the kingdom of God, but that the Law of Christ operates there. That Law declares, "**Bear ye one another's burdens.**" *Support the weak*. The smouldering embers of faith and love may be fanned into a flame, but if we stamp on them they perish for ever. Let us sustain the weak with whatever it takes; with patience, understanding, forbearance, sympathy, longsuffering, encouragement and brotherly-love.

INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Few religious people deny the reality of the new birth. To be sure, a majority of them have warped ideas of the new birth, ranging from a mystical experience to self-consciousness; but few of them outwardly deny it. On the other hand, it is extremely easy to find among these people who profess to believe in the reality of the new birth a large number who deny the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Others accept the fact that the Scriptures *were* the inspired word of God, but contend that we do not possess the inspired word of God today because we do not have the original documents. Others contend that only the Greek is inspired and no translation can be called the inspired word of God. Is it possible to have a new birth without having the verbally inspired word of God?

Christ taught, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Later, in John 6:63, he said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Peter enforces this in 1 Peter 1:22-23: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto an unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible through the word of God, which liveth and abideth." (Please note carefully the emphasis upon the word.)

Now let us consider the teachings of these combined passages. Christ declares that in order for one to gain entrance into the kingdom of God he must experience the new birth which consists of the elements of water and spirit. He later expounds upon this thought and clarifies it by saying, "It is the Spirit that giveth life . . . the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and they are life." Peter's statement further clarifies the function of the word in the new birth by pointing out that the word is the incorruptible seed by which we are spiritually begotten. In baptism, we experience the coming forth of water (Rom. 6:1-11).

If we do not possess the verbally inspired word of God today, we do not possess the truth, the incorruptible seed, which is necessary to the spiritual birth. If we do not possess the inspired word of God today, we do not possess the words which are spirit and life. If the Bible which we possess today is not God's divinely inspired word, it is sterile. Sterile seed produces no life.

Peter affirms in 1 Peter 1:23 that "the word of God liveth and abideth forever." It was alive (liveth) and would continue to live forever. Only a limited faith and faulty vision would affirm that we must have the original manuscripts of the original writers in order to have an inspired New Testament. When Christ and the apostles quoted from the Old Testament, they did not have access to the original documents penned by Moses and the prophets and often quoted from the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The early Church used the Septuagint which drew criticism from unbelieving Jews. One passage of dispute was Isaiah 7:14. The Jews contended that the Septuagint's translation of the Hebrew *almah* into the Greek *parthenos*, which indisputably means virgin, was inaccurate and should be "young woman." (Modern scholarship, so-called, is really ancient unbelief). When Matthew penned his gospel, he either quoted from the Septuagint or used his own inspired translation and chose the Greek word *parthenos*. Is the Septuagint's *parthenos* any less inspired than Matthew's?

SYMBOLISM AND REALITY

Words are symbols which stand for a reality. For example, the letters w-a-t-e-r stand for an element of creation composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen and

chemically delineated as H₂O. In Greek the letters are transliterated h-u-d-o-r. Neither the symbols H₂O, water nor *hudor* are water. The next time you get thirsty, cut the word "water" or "hudor" out of this article and try drinking it! But all three symbols represent, to those who know their meaning, the same element. Translators are not divinely guided today, but when they accurately translate the words of one language into those of another, neither the truth nor the inspiration is lost. A translation ceases to be truth or inspired only when the reality behind the symbol in the original language is lost. All religious truth is inspired or it is not the truth (see John 16:13). We are not born of the letters w-a-t-e-r and s-p-i-r-i-t, but of the realities they convey.

The word translated "inspiration" means "God breathed." In other words, God breathed his word into the instruments of revelation. It was not just some vague idea that he gave, but the very words themselves which God intended to convey to them. **"But we received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth but which the spirit teacheth, combining *spiritual things* with *spiritual words*"** (1 Cor. 2:12,13). The "spiritual things" are the realities, and the words symbolises them. The words which the writers used were words taught by the Spirit or breathed in by God.

THE WORD PRESERVED

It would seem as foolish to affirm that we must have the original documents penned by men and breathed in by God as it would affirm that we must have the original breath which God breathed into Adam in order to have the breath of life in us. Although the original breath was extinguished at the death of Adam, through the power of God, the breath of life continues to give life to the flesh. And likewise, although the original documents which were inspired of God have long since disappeared, God through his power sustained his word which quickens the souls of men.

God did not create Adam and breathe into him the breath of life just to let it vanish at Adam's death. Neither did he breathe into the apostles the breath of spiritual life to let it disappear at their death. We may not know how God has preserved his word for us - do we fully understand how he has preserved the breath of life? - but by faith we accept the fact that if God loved us enough to reveal his will to us and give his Son to die for us, he loves us enough to preserve his word for us so that we might take advantage of that death.

To ensure that we have the word of God and not a mutated seed, it may be wise to compare translations or study from the original languages, but let us never allow our faith to be so small as to demand the original autographs of the original writers on the original documents before we accept them. After all, how would we be sure that they were the original autographs? Our faith must not be in the integrity of man so much as in the integrity of God. Either we must deny the reality of the new birth and consequently salvation, or we must accept the fact that the New Testament is divinely inspired and divinely preserved by God.

D. CAMPBELL.

STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL

"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:16). Paul keenly realised his responsibility in being God's steward. Listening to him again: **"For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward: but if not of mine own will, I have a**

stewardship entrusted to me." (1 Cor. 9:17). In studying the labours of Paul we learn the office of a steward of the gospel requires much. A brief study of the apostle's missionary tours will teach us what is meant to be a faithful steward of the gospel.

Faithful stewards are ready to preach the word in season and out of season. When under difficulty, Paul preached the gospel. Any child of God, who lives godly and who teaches His word rightly, is a faithful steward. It seems that Paul was trying to teach the Corinthian brethren that he was a steward or possessor instead of being a chief, a head, or a ruler. Instead of his being a king and having many working under him, he was spiritually chained to the Lord Jesus Christ and was ready to serve when commanded from on high.

As worldly stewards manage estates under the direction of their officers; as they provide for the household of their chiefs, so God's stewards should be obedient to the Bible, under a king superior to all other kings, and to see that God's family is fed on the Bread of Life, and to see the world hears the gospel. God has entrusted us with much, but his way is easily understood. The word "depart" will be on the lips of our heavenly Master too and for those stewards who are found unfaithful. God's goods must not be wasted. An incorruptible crown awaits every one who is found faithful in that day when the sheep and goats shall be separated; in that day when the wheat and tares shall cease from growing together. **"That a man be found faithful"** refers to Christians.

BE YE FAITHFUL

A greater manifestation of love than that of Christ's for lost souls, the world has never seen. As stewards, should we not love lost men enough to carry the gospel to them? How many congregations fully realise the seriousness of stewardship? How many individual members are interested enough and willing, to support the gospel? A keen sense of responsibility is developed in the study of the stewardship of the gospel. At once the steward should recognise that God is his owner and that he is only a possessor. Besides, he must go further in that he must confess and acknowledge that God owns him. This acknowledgement is essential in that you invite others to be Christian stewards. For the mother is greatly delighted to receive from her child an acknowledgement and a recognition of her love. God smiles upon that steward who recognises and proclaims the love of God to a lost world. Angels are made to rejoice when one of God's stewards leads a man to repentance.

Faithfulness is one of the fruits of the Spirit, says Paul. The unjust stewards will hear the sad word "depart" at the day of judgement. God our owner, has a right to direct how the thing he owns shall be used. He has told and directed us how to preach the gospel. Denominations claim to preach the word, but not the way the owner has commanded. After all authority had been given to him, Jesus instructed the apostles to preach the gospel, and he did not leave them to guess as to how to preach it. Many claim to be God's stewards, and yet fail to preach the word in its purity and simplicity. Some will preach faith and repentance firmly and strongly, but will leave off preaching baptism, which is the act that places one into Christ. Such is an evidence of unfaithfulness.

BE YE BUSY

Christian stewards are in God's family and therefore, they will tell others how to enter therein. To be faithful is a grand and glorious thing. It takes work to be faithful. The word "do" is found in God's library many times. The Christian religion requires a doing. God's talents in stewards are buried when nothing is done. Doing nothing is a bad occupation; it brings a reward of sadness and punishment. He who does nothing is deceived. Diabolus pays death eternal to those who participate in the wages of sin all

their lives. What can an unfaithful steward promise himself? God has done the best he could do with the material with which he has to work.

Stewards should see a greater vision for Christ and be true to the trust given them. The commandment, "**Go ye into all the world,**" is as powerful and as binding today as it was in the First Century. Missionary work is to be done. If we cannot preach like Peter, Paul and John we can tell of the love of Jesus. Of course we cannot speak with the tongues of angels, but we can teach the truth and give of our means in support of the gospel, and therefore cause many to be led to Christ.

*Take my love; my Lord I pour,
At thy feet its treasure store:
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee"*

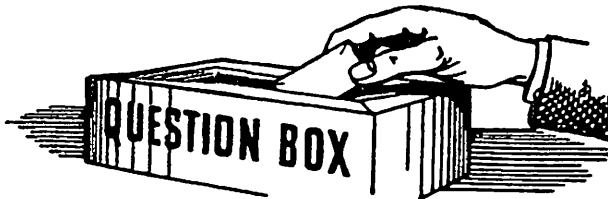
To sing this song with the spirit and understanding makes one to realize the correct interpretation of Isaiah's words to Jehovah, "**Here am I; send me,**" and will make that one to see the contents of God's expression, "**Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"**

The life of a steward swiftly passes. When kings, queens and officers of this world command, we sometimes do not have to obey; but when God calls, by death, we must go, whether we are prepared or not. Whereas, stewards must not forget the commandment and requirement "**that a man be found faithful,**" and that this requirement is to all stewards of God. It is a wonderful and sweet consolation to think and to know that God's faithful stewards have an inheritance to that kingdom eternal. Will it not be sweet and musical, in that great day, to hear the melodious voice say to the faithful, "**Well done, good and faithful servant?"**

*"Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise."*

At the great and final judgement, we must give an account of our stewardship. "May we strive and labour to sit under that tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and whose branches bear twelve courses of fruit."

J. TRAYLOR.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Visits to various congregations reveals that they do not always use the same hymn book - (which some of them call 'the song-book,' after the American fashion) Does it matter which book we use? And does it matter which hymns - or songs - we sing in our worship?"

Continued from last month . . .

A Divine Command

In Col. 3:16 and Eph 5:19 we find a command to sing, stated in almost identical language. For instance, in the Ephesian letter, Paul writes of, "*addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart*". If we seek a passage of scripture, which tells us *what* we should sing, this verse is surely sufficient.

Here, we read of three kinds of praise, '*psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*'.

1. The word 'PSALMS' immediately reminds us of the five books, which, in the Old Testament, contain a total of 150 psalms and which constituted the 'hymn-book' of God's ancient people.

Not only did the Lord Himself sing from these psalms on the night of His betrayal, but, long before a Christian hymnbook or even a Christian hymn existed, the early believers used them in their worship.

We still use them today. I doubt if there is a hymnbook used by any so-called 'Christian' denomination anywhere in the world that does not contain some of the Old Testament psalms in one form or another. Just look at the index in the book that you use and count the number of psalms you find listed!

I once took the trouble to check '*Great Songs of the Church*', and found that it contains 61 psalms, and 125 hymns that are based on the psalms. And I suggest that any hymnbook would be the poorer without them.

2. 'HYMNS'. The word 'hymn' comes to us from the Greek 'humnos', and has to do with any expression of sung praise addressed directly to God. No need for further explanation, I think.

3. And then we have 'SPIRITUAL SONGS', where the word 'song' is our rendering of the word '*ode*'. Now, any song may be described as an ode, but we see that, in this verse, the word '*pneumatikais*' is used, and it qualifies the word 'songs'. To be acceptable in worship, the songs must be '*spiritual songs*'. This is stated so plainly because not every 'song' is suitable for use in worship. Do not forget that, even in New Testament times, people sang popular songs at feasts and other secular celebrations, and such songs were no more suitable for use in the worship of God, than are the songs that are sung at pop-concerts or football matches in these days.

Many of the popular songs of Paul's time were very far from spiritual, and Christians could not sing them, either in the worship or at any other time, because the standard of morality and conduct they represented was unacceptable to followers of the Lord Jesus.

(Has anything changed in the world of 'pop-music'?)

Pay attention to both Words and Music

The verse in Ephesians ch. 5 emphasizes '*singing*'. But what is '*singing*'? Well, the dictionary defines it as '*vocal melody*'. In fact, '*singing*' consists of two essential elements; words and music.

Words alone do not produce singing. *Words* alone may produce poetry.

Music alone does not produce singing. *Music*, strictly speaking, consists of a series of tonal sounds. Therefore, to have '*singing*' we need both appropriate words *and* music.

This is why it is important to pay attention to both. I am not suggesting that our praise should become a professional musical performance, designed to impress people, but I do believe that we need to *think* very seriously about our worship.

Heb. 13:15 urges us to offer to God continually a '*sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which acknowledge His name*'.

Finally, think of HOW we sing.

The scriptures teach us that, we are to '*sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord*' and that we are to '*teach and admonish one another*' in our singing.

If this means anything at all, it means that Christians, assembled for worship, are commanded to *SING!*

God *expects* us to sing.

Of course, we all recognize that there may be exceptional circumstances that make it impossible for a person to sing. But, if you ever stand before a congregation during the singing of a hymn, you would almost certainly observe that there are members of the congregation who appear not to have any interest in singing the praise of God.

You may see them chewing gum, rolling a sweet around their mouths, or gazing about them, and maybe even carrying on a conversation. But they do not sing!

Let us remember that singing is an act of worship, and, as such, is just as important, in our worship, as prayer or the sharing of the Lord's Supper.

I doubt if anyone who claims to be Christian, would consider letting the emblem of the Lord's body and blood pass him by, when His Sacrifice is being remembered. I cannot therefore, understand how Christians can remain silent and fail to join in the praise, when the Church is speaking to God in song.

Maybe they think that God does not notice! Or that He does not care! Or perhaps they suppose that He does not miss their voice anyway!

But He *does* notice, and He *does* miss their praise, and He *does* care.

He hears when we sing and knows when we are silent.

Excuses!

I have already acknowledged that circumstances may arise which make it impossible for one to sing. But sometimes excuses are offered which are just not valid. For example:

"I can't sing!"

Are we to take it that God has given us a command, which we cannot obey? In any case, who is to be the judge of the quality of our singing? Do we sing to please ourselves? Or other people - our brethren, perhaps? Or do we sing to please God?

"But I sing in my heart!"

Excellent! And I hope that we all sing in our hearts. But this alone does not meet the requirements of the command. Eph. 5:19 tells us to,

1. *'Make melody in your hearts to the Lord'*. But it also tells us to,

2. *'Address one another'*. Our brethren must *hear* us, if we are to teach and admonish in the way the verse states.

3. *'Sing'*! If we are not singing, we are not obeying.

And just imagine what it would be like, if the entire congregation decided just to *'sing in the heart'*!

The ability to sing the praise of God is one of the blessings which reveals that a human being is distinct and different from every other creature living on Earth.

Think of it! Our singing combines a sense of melody and metre with intelligent, meaningful words, and this ability is something, which no scientist would ever seriously suggest has ever been demonstrated in any other living being.

"What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit and I will pray with my mind also. I will sing with my spirit and I will sing with my mind also". 1 Cor. 14:15.

(Questions to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way,
Houston, Renfrewshire, PA6 7NZ, Scotland)

FULFILLED

The religious world in general seems to feel that men live under the Ten Commandments today. Even some preachers of the gospel are heard to say and write, that nine of the ten are brought over into the New Covenant. Jesus stated: **"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I**

say unto to you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished" (Matt. 5:17,18,ASV).

A crucial word in this Scripture is "till" (or "until"). Jesus was saying that he had come to fulfil the law and the prophets, which he did, but until the fulfilment should be accomplished not one thing could be changed. When the law had been fulfilled, then the time limit marked by the word "till" would have been reached and that which was fulfilled could no longer be in effect. This is exactly what Paul said when he stated, **"Having blotted out the bond written in ordinance that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 3:14).** Blotted out - nailed to the cross - taken away - the entire law given to the Israelites through Moses. Nothing is said anywhere in the Scriptures about part of the law being brought over into the new - it was all taken away.

Paul, explaining to the Galatians that they should no longer observe the Mosaical covenant, stated the promise (of salvation) is through faith in Christ Jesus. **"But before faith came, we (the Israelites) were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. So that the law is our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor" (Gal. 3:23-25).**

CHRIST, NOT MOSES

In further clarification of this theme, note the words of Jesus, **"Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement: but I say unto you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgement . . ." (Matt. 5:21,22).** Thus Jesus referred directly to the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) by quoting one of them, and then said **"But I say unto you . . ."** In verses 27, 28 he quoted another of the Ten Commandments and again stated, **"But I say unto you . . ."** Thus one may clearly understand that we are not under the Ten Commandments, or any part of the Law of Moses, but are to live by what Jesus said.

Principles of conduct most assuredly are there - our relationship with God and with men are both involved in the teaching of Christ, but the Decalogue had to do with outward, overt acts, and Jesus gave a "law", or described the true Christian life in terms which reach into the innermost parts of one's being, and is thus greater and deeper than was the law given through Moses.

There certainly is no objection to the memorization of the Ten Commandments, or any other part of the Bible, but the teaching that Christians are under these Ten Commandments, or any other part of this, or any other part of the law of Moses, is erroneous.

To have salvation one must do what Jesus said in becoming a Christian and then follow the principles of conduct which *he* laid down in order to have eternal life.

L. E. ELLIS.

John James (Jack) Parker ***An Appreciation***

The Christians at Longshoot, Wigan and many brethren in the UK and abroad, have that familiar mix of emotion at the passing of Bro. Jack Parker, on June 29th, 2001, aged 75. We rejoice because a faithful servant of the Lord has gone to his reward in heaven, where he laid up many treasures during his life, and yet we miss his presence, his example, his love of Jesus and his friendship.

Jack spent his early years as a Christian, after his immersion in his early teens, in the Longshoot assembly, then for a number of years after his marriage to Dorothy he worked with the former Albert Street assembly, and latterly returned to Longshoot some years prior to the amalgamation of the 2 assemblies. He has served on the oversight of both assemblies and has been an excellent preacher and teacher, Sunday School teacher and Superintendent. Many are the lives that have been touched and influenced by Jack. Although he has lived all his life in Wigan, apart from his time in the Forces, he has travelled widely to preach and teach, especially in Scotland, which he grew to love dearly.

He has been a stalwart defender of faith and teaching which is firmly based in the Scriptures, and in his later years he devoted much study to the Old Testament, which he loved greatly, and he enjoyed sharing his understanding of the faith and practices of the Jews which he related so meaningfully to the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jack was a traditionalist, serious concerning his faith and the Church, and yet with a wonderful sense of humour, a love of gardening and music, and a deep devotion to his family, whom we commend to the brethren for your prayers.

His loving wife Dorothy, and his 4 children, Ian, Isobel, Roger and Debbie, have all been a great comfort and support to him in the last few years as his health has deteriorated, and particularly in the last 2 months when he was seriously ill, mostly in the Intensive Care Unit at Wigan Infirmary. His end, when it came, was peaceful, and he died looking forward to his eternal life with his Lord.

Perhaps the greatest testament to the man, and his true legacy, is the continuing strength of faith of all his children, and which is now evident also in his grandchildren as they come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. Dorothy and Jack have truly raised their family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and his influence will remain through them for years to come.

Interment took place at Gidlow Cemetery, Wigan, on Thursday July 5th, followed by a service of thanksgiving for, and celebration of, our brother's life and work, which was led by Bro. Douglas Melling. It was attended by well over 100 brethren, family and friends, and was a truly moving yet joyous and momentous occasion.

Please pray for Dorothy, the family, and all who mourn his passing, Dorothy and the family would like to express their heartfelt thanks for all the cards, prayers, calls and visits which have been a source of great comfort and support.

Blest are those who die in the Lord.

ANDREW MARSDEN.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Oct. 7	Isaiah 13:1-13	Matthew 24:23-35
Oct. 14	Genesis 7	Matthew 24:36-51
Oct. 21	Daniel 1	Matthew 25:1-30
Oct. 28	Psalms 37:1-18	Matthew 25:31-46

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is never out of the news, It is a city with a long history. It has seen

many troubled times and Jesus foretold the worse time of all when it was besieged and destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The Master said: "**For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be**" (24:21). Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us about this event and, indeed, many of the events leading up to the disaster. Alexander Campbell has commented: "I need not detail the awful

accomplishment of this prediction. Josephus has done this in awful colours. Tacitus, too, relates some of the circumstances. Every word of the prediction was exactly fulfilled, even to the ploughing up of the foundations of the temple".

E. M. Zerr details some of the troubles of the people of Jerusalem at the time of the Roman war. "Many died as they were burying others. There was no lamentation as the famine confounded all natural passions. A stupefying silence and awe overcame them. Some had swallowed their money and then had their bodies ripped open by robbers. Some searched the sewers and manure piles for food, and ate hay, old shoes and leather. A mother roasted and ate her son; bloodshed was so great as to quench fire in the house". Jesus said: **"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"** (24:22). Josephus tells us that 97,000 Jews were taken captive and 1,100,000 died. However, the disciples of Jesus escaped capture and death by heeding the Master's warning and fleeing when the opportunity arose.

Jesus also warned of false messiahs and false prophets, who could perform lying wonders (24:24). They were out to deceive. Here is the work of Satan - the greatest of all counterfeiters. he should never be under-estimated. His work of deception goes on (I was watching a television programme the other night in which the Rev. Moon was described by his followers as the messiah.) The saints of God must be on their guard at all times!

Jesus used Eastern language to get over His message. His words and phrases might appear slightly strange to us today, but not to the people of the first century A.D. Words like "the sun

shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heavens shall be shaken" (29) speak of calamity in a very vivid way. Jesus also spoke of "the sign of the Son of man in heaven" (30). Alexander Campbell has pointed out that there were "prodigies and signs which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, (such as the flaming sword hanging over the city, and the fiery coronet pointing down upon it for a year; the light that shone upon the temple and the altar as if it had been noonday; the opening of the great and heavy gate of the temple without hands; the voice heard from the most holy place, *Let us depart from hence*; the admonition of Jesus, the son of Ananias, crying for seven years together, *woe, woe, woe*; the vision of contending armies in the air, and of entrenchments thrown up against a city there represented; the terrible thunderings and lightnings, and the dreadful earthquakes which everyone considered as portending some approaching evil.) All which, by the singular providence of God, are recorded by Josephus".

Verse 31 reads: **"And HE shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"**. James Macknight believed that the "angels" were the ministers of the gospel and "a great sound of a trumpet" had reference to their powerful preaching of the gospel. He refers us to Isaiah 58:1, Jeremiah 6:17 and Ezekiel 33: 3-6 in proof of this interpretation.

We read: **"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"** (34). To me, these words of Jesus clearly reveal that all the foregoing verses in Matthew 24 deal with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish economy. We

also read: "But of that day and hour knows know man, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (36). Of what day and hour does Jesus speak? Again, I believe these words have to do with the destruction of Jerusalem. "Jesus declared that He could not make them know the day and the hour of His coming to destroy Jerusalem, not because He was ignorant of the event, but because the Father, as governor of the world, has put the times and the seasons in His own power, Acts 1:7" (Macknight). Jesus then went on to speak about the people in the days of Noah. Dear reader, I put three questions to you. What does "took them all away" in verse 39 mean? What does "taken" in verse 40 mean? What does "taken" in verse 41 mean? (Please read Luke 17 in conjunction with this passage.)

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Wedding traditions in the days of Jesus were far different from ours today. Most commentators are of the view that the "ten virgins" were all maidens. However, they could well have been males. What is the lesson of the parable? "Scope: Necessity of all the followers of Christ being ever watchful and ready for His coming; whether providential or personal" (Robert Milligan). We must be like the five wise virgins and not like the five who were foolish. We must all keep awake and be ever prepared. Continuous vigilance is the key.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

"Scope: Christ will hold all men personally responsible for whatever talents He has committed to their charge" (Milligan). Each of us has, at least, one talent. "There are not so many five-talent or two-talent people going about; the work of the kingdom of God is done mainly by those who have one talent - and use it" (F.F. Bruce). Of course, no one is responsible for talents

he or she has not been given. However, the disciple's task is to identify the God-given talent or talents and to use them for the benefit of all in the kingdom of God. Talents bring responsibility and opportunity. There is no room for unprofitable servants in the Master's kingdom. It is true that not all are equal in talent; but all can be equal in effort. Let us all then resolve to work harder for the Master. After all, He gave His all for us.

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

The society in which Jesus ministered was basically an agrarian one. The separation of the sheep and goats would be understood by all. The final judgement day will result in a division between the righteous and the wicked. The end is either "everlasting punishment" or "life eternal" (25:46). In other words, it is either hell or heaven.

I know a lot of people who think that works do not matter in judgement. From what I read in this chapter (31-46), they could not be more wrong. I must emphasise that these are the words of Jesus Himself - the Judge of all. Please note His criterion for welcome or departure on the last day - service to others. This should make us all think about our life in Christ and about what is important in our work for the Master. The debates on irrelevant issues should appear absurd in the light of what Jesus says here.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. What Psalm ends every verse with the words: "for His mercy endures for ever?"
2. How were Nadab and Abihu killed?
3. Who had three friends called Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar?
4. Who was the son of Amoz?
5. Who was the father of Jonathan,

Ishvi and Malkishua?

6. Who destroyed the bronze snake made by Moses?
7. Where did Paul preach until midnight?
8. Who was the wife of Felix?
9. How long did Paul teach in Corinth?
10. Where was Paul when he wrote the Philemon letter?

EVANGELIST WANTED

The Slamannan District of Churches require an evangelist and all interested brethren should apply in writing to the District Secretary:-

Harry McGinn,
6 Westpark Drive,
New Cumnock,
Strathclyde
KA18 4LJ.

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD:

Special Weekend:

Saturday 15th Sept. - 7pm

Sunday 16th Sept. - 10am, 11am, 6pm.

Speaker: G. Gorton

Special Weekend:

Saturday 29th Sept. - 7pm

Sunday 30th Sept. - 10am, 11am, 6pm.

Speaker: F. Worgan

Special Weekend:

Saturday 6th Oct. - 7pm

Sunday 7th Oct. - 10am, 11am, 6pm.

Speaker: D. Langdon (Glenrothes)

A warm welcome awaits all.

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Kentish Town Anniversary Meeting

will, God willing, take place on:-

Saturday 6th October, 2001

Afternoon 3pm & Evening 6pm

Tea at 4.45pm

*Speaker: John Morgan
(also Speaker on Sunday).*

All welcome.

ANNUAL SOCIAL

Newtongrange

Saturday, 13th October - 4pm

Speaker: Ian Davidson

All welcome.

Special Saturday Night Meeting

At KIRKBY IN ASHFIELD

With Bro. Frank Worgan

27th October, 2001

at 7.00pm

Special Saturday Night Meeting

At KIRKBY IN ASHFIELD

With Bro. Ernest Makin

16th March, 2002

at 7.00pm

KIRKCALDY LADIES DAY

18th May, 2002

(Details later).

The Green Hut, Kings Road,

Stretford, Manchester.

*An Invite to Special Meetings
to be held on*

SATURDAY, 13th OCTOBER, 2001

Subject: What does it mean to be free?

Speaker: Graham Gorton 6.00pm

Light refreshments: 6.45pm

Questions and Discussion: 7.15pm

Enquires ring Allan Ashurst

0161 865 4242

GHANA APPEAL

The benefits to the Lord's Church through donations have been encouraging and our thanks go out again to donors who have made this possible. We pray that urgent cases will continue to be

met. As we've mentioned before, disease in tropical climates is prevalent and a considerable number of cases have recently been reported to us. Although good medical attention is available it is through your donations that so many have been able to receive this. Sadly, even with hospital treatment, some do not survive and since our last report, the Church has assisted towards funeral expenses in one such case. The emotional trauma is often compounded by the destitute circumstances this can bring to bereaved families.

Here again, the Church helps in extreme cases and a contribution towards these costs would bring comfort and relief where it is most needed.

We have just heard of another congregation having completed their meeting place. Could we make a contribution towards the cost of light for their evening meetings?

Those wishing to help in this work please make cheques payable to Dennyloanhead (Church of Christ) Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer Mrs. Janet. W. Macdonald, 12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB
Tel: 01324 562480.

KEEPER OF THE LIGHT

The keeper of the lighthouse does not launch any ships, it is true, but he keeps many a good ship from going to wreck. The light shines farther than the keeper can see, and brightest when he cannot see at all. Two things he must remember - to keep the light burning, and never to get between the light and darkness he is set to lighten.

So it is with a Christian. The light must be kept burning. However, this is not our greatest difficulty. It is our constant task to keep our own selfish ego in check lest we magnify our abilities and goodness we hide the light and the cross instead of hiding behind them.

- 10. In prison (Philemon 1:1).
- 9. 18 months (Acts 18:11).
- 8. Drusilla (Acts 24:24).
- 7. Troas (Acts 20:6,9).
- 6. King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1,4).
- 5. Saul (1 Samuel 14:49).
- 4. Isaiah (Isaiah 1:1).
- 3. Job (Job 2:11).
- 2. By fire (Leviticus 10:2).
- 1. Psalm 136.

ANSWERS

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JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian. EH32 0NY.

E-mail: john@kkneller.freesevice.co.uk

Telephone: (01875) 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 70 Avon Street, Motherwell, Lanarkshire, Scotland. ML1 3AB. Telephone: (01698) 264064