

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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ECONOMICAL WITH THE TRUTH

It was claimed at a fairly recent, well publicised tribunal (over the proposed publication of Secret Service disclosures) that a witness had not lied; he had simply been "economical with the truth". Certainly only parliamentarians could dream up a euphemism like that or draw such a fine distinction. Apart from the cynicism inherent in drawing a line between a straight lie and "being economical with the truth" the phrase does make us think, does it not.?

Witnesses are required, under oath, to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but some might ask, as Pilate did, "What is truth". What is the truth about anything.? Before we can tell the truth we must know what the truth is. How can we tell the whole truth if we do not know it all, or if there are gaps in our knowledge.? In Britain, like the U.S.A., it now seems that the current, and lucrative, national pastime is to sue everybody and anybody. A lady, near here, has just been suing her local hospital (where she gets free treatment) for diagnosing her as having MS (multiple sclerosis) and a year later discovering (and removing) a small benign tumour in her spine which had been causing the problem. Instead of thanking God for her good fortune she has sued the hospital for a vast sum, for her year's distress, and to the amazement of all, the hospital has paid up - settling out of court for an undisclosed sum. Thus doctors don't know, and can't always be expected to know, the truth or the whole truth. On the other hand, doctors may know the truth (the patient has only months to live) and be economical with it. Lawyers, I suppose, quite apart from witnesses, are particularly economical with the truth, and even although they know the guilt of their client they are rarely likely to admit it, but rather fight tooth and nail to show his innocence. Many professional witnesses called to tribunals (and I have been involved at times personally) are required to give only their considered opinions because the truth is virtually impossible to determine e.g. the true value of a site, or property. Court Judges require the qualities of Solomon to get at the truth, especially when expert witnesses (like doctors) give opinions diametrically opposed. They must often ponder, "What is the truth".

Readers will doubtless be able to think of many others who are parsimonious with the truth. The used-car salesman is unlikely to confide in us that the car for sale 'is a clapped-out heap' nor is the Estate Agent likely to mention the dry-rot behind the toilet cistern. It is no accident that the maxim in such purchases is 'buyer beware'. Obviously I am generalising and there will be the occasional exception to the rule. Politicians are always claiming to be speaking the truth but do they? Does President Reagan always tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; or

Mrs. Thatcher: or Mr. Gorbachev? The cynic might wonder if they ever tell the truth. And how about the religious world? Is the Pope likely to reveal the truth about the financial scandals and Mafia-type killings involving high officials in the R.C. Church? This is extremely unlikely when we remember the approach the R.C. Church takes to truth and their 'Mental Reservation' doctrine which allows Catholics to take even solemn oaths and completely disregard them, if in the general interests of the R.C. church. This 'mental reservation' is allowed to Catholics "so that a false statement knowingly made to one who has not a right to the truth will not be a lie." (Cath. Ency. IX, 471). I suppose this makes the used-car salesman look good. Then there were the revelations made, a couple of evenings ago on T.V., where The Scientology Church was portrayed as a money-making racket of gigantic proportions, involving intimidation and physical violence towards present and ex-members. Were the high-ranking officials, when interviewed, being tardy with the truth? It is a distinct possibility.

THE TRUTH

Pilate was not the first, and certainly will not be the last, to be intrigued and perhaps perplexed by this eternal question, which faces each new generation, "What is truth". Obviously Pilate was not even remotely aware that he was, at that very moment, looking upon the very embodiment of truth. Neither was Pilate the first man to fail to recognise the truth when he saw it. This quest for Truth had exercised the best brains of the world and it was the really great subject of enquiry amongst the Greeks. Many schools of philosophers had just as many opinions of the matter and certainly Pilate was not expecting, nor did he wait for, an answer from what appeared to be a miserable and ignorant prisoner. Had he approached Jesus as circumspectly as Nicodemus did, perhaps Jesus would have explained to him the true nature of the Kingdom of God and His unique claim to kingship. Unfortunately Pilate did not wait for enlightenment, nor did he seriously seek for Truth, and thus like many thousands more, then and since, succumbed to spiritual obscurity. The growth and success of the Islamic religion is to be spread, where necessary, by the threat of the sword, but the only force Pilate's prisoner was likely to apply was the power of God's love. What is Truth? In Christ's strong prayer for unity He asked God to "sanctify them (men) through Thy truth: **Thy word** is Truth." This was not restricted to the spoken or written word, for Jesus Himself was **that Word** (the Logos) and John tells us that **The Word** was with God and the Word was God; "full of grace and truth". Thus Jesus could rightly claim, "I am the way, **the truth** and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but through Me". (John 14:6). The Holy Spirit came to guide men **into all truth**: and Jesus said that **the truth** could make all men free. The ceremonies of the Jews (and Gentiles) were just shadows: the life of Jesus, and His teaching, was **the Truth**. He was the fountainhead of all truth: he was truth, root and branch.

The gospel (or teachings) of Jesus became known as '**the truth**'. Paul in his letters to the churches in Galatia talks of '**the truth**' of the gospel 'and asks how the Galatians could be so bewitched that they should not obey **the truth**'. Some 'concerning **the truth**' had erred, and according to Peter, some had purified their souls in obeying '**the truth**'. Indeed the House of God (the church) is "the pillar and ground of **the truth**". (I Tim. 3:15). When Paul was writing to the church at Colosse he could claim that, by that time, **the truth** of the gospel "was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I, Paul, am made a minister". (Col. 1:23) If the truth was preached to "every creature under heaven" God could hardly be accused of being economical with the truth. Surely this was precisely the Lord's intention, when He commissioned the apostles to go into **all the world** and preach the gospel to every creature.

PAUL'S EXAMPLE TO US ALL

The early apostles, likewise, could certainly not be accused of being niggardly with the truth. Paul said that he had 'kept the faith' but he had certainly not kept it to himself, but simply meant that he had lived up to it. With the other apostles and evangelists Paul had spent an entire lifetime in being **liberal** with the truth. Paul had a clear conscience on this matter and could say to the elders at Ephesus, as he made his final good-bye to them, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." Paul realised that it was possible for men to **shun away** from preaching the counsel of God, but he rightly claims that he had not so shunned that responsibility but had declared **the whole** counsel of God. From this, it appears that we could fall down in your duties in two ways: we could shy away from spreading the word, and we could also fail to preach **it all** (i.e. we could omit the unpopular parts). It is an incredible thought that after all that God has done to save the world, and after all the provision God made to give everlasting life, that men should die in ignorance of it. It has been said that every man has a right to hear the gospel: to have at least one opportunity of accepting or rejecting the claims of Christ, and yet it all hinges on us. God has not been economical with the truth but perhaps **we are**.

I suppose a simple test would be to consider the efforts we make in our own locality, to preach the gospel. What efforts do we make to reach (not nations over the seas) but those a few miles up the road? What efforts do we make within the radius of a few miles from our meetinghouses? This must surely be a useful yardstick of our concern. Taking again the example of Paul we read how that God wrought with Paul in word and deed "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power and Spirit of God: so that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." (Rom. 15:19). And Paul adds, in the next verse, that he did not make it easy for himself by going to places where there was already a flourishing church but, "I have strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, 'To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand'." And so Paul concentrated on breaking new ground (and quotes Isaiah 52:15 in support). Although Paul mentions quite casually, that he preached in Jerusalem, and round about Jerusalem, right to Illyricum, we shall see from an atlas that Illyricum corresponds to what we now call Yugoslavia (and all the countries in between include Palestine, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and Albania). A formidable example for us to ponder. "Ah" but some might conceivably say, "Paul was employed in a full-time capacity and had more time than we have." If this were true it would not make Paul's accomplishments any less remarkable, but it is not true. Paul, referring to his own (no doubt knarled) hands could say, "These hands have ministered to my needs." When Paul came to Corinth he joined forces with Priscilla and Aquila, stayed with them and wrought with them, for by their occupation they were tentmakers. However, on the sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue. In I Cor. Chap. 9 after making out a strong case for being supported materially (e.g. the ox should not be muzzled; no-one goes to war at his own charges: he that feeds the flock should eat of the flock, etc.) Paul ends by saying that he had never used these (legitimate) arguments to justify and receive material support. Indeed his 'reward' was his ability to 'glory' that he "might make the gospel of Christ without charge". Yes, he had an obligation to preach ("woe is me if I preach not the gospel") but he had no obligation to accept material support and found his 'reward' in providing it entirely free. The fact that Paul managed to support himself, and cover the ground that he did, makes his achievements all the more astonishing. Paul's attitude, in preaching the word free of charge, comes in great

contrast to some of the 'Fundamentalist' preachers we were hearing about on T.V. recently, where some become exceedingly well off. One lay-preacher, now a millionaire, Zig Zigler, from Dallas, charges 10,000 dollars, **per hour**, for his labours. This seems a little more than "taking the muzzle off the ox," and we can but wonder what Paul would think of it all.

Are we, then, **economical with God's truth**, or do we make great efforts to make it known.? Do we "feel the necessity laid upon us" that Paul felt laid upon him.?

If we feel that the task is too much for us, the load too heavy to bear let us once more consider the example that Paul has left us including all his personal hardships, dangers and privations. "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Thus any excuses, moans or reservations we might have in furthering the Lord's work must surely melt away in the face of that brief rehearsal of the things which Paul did not allow to daunt him from preaching the gospel. Paul paid the highest of prices to bring God's truth to men. Yes, men and women have been 'kept in the dark' in days gone by. Instances of this are wide-ranging: from the Queen of Sheba who declared, "The half was never told me" to the translation of the Bible into a language the common people could not read (by the R.C. church). Tyndale's early editions were also chained (quite literally to the reading desk) and farmers would have given a whole load of hay just for a brief glance at a few verses. How fortunate we are to have complete freedom to disseminate God's truth — let us not fail to give everyone a chance to hear it. Will future generations accuse us (rightly) of having been "economical with the truth"? Will it be said of us that we certainly kept the faith — TO OURSELVES?

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

THE WORDS OF JESUS

"Thou hast the words of eternal life." — John 6:68

"His words are life. — The Master said so Himself, and so did his Apostle (63, 68). They gave life as they were spoken in the ear of death. Those who were in the graves of sensual and sinful indulgence heard Him and came forth; just as those who are in the literal graves of mother earth shall do one day. As the tiny torch of life burns in every seed, so does the life of God Himself tremble in each word of Jesus. "Cast forth thy word," says Carlyle, "into the ever-living, ever-moving universe; it is a seed-germ that can never die; unnoticed to-day, it will be found flourishing, perhaps as a banyan grove, perhaps as an oak-forest, after a thousand years." How true this is of the words of Jesus! Sow them in the scantiest, poorest soil, and leave them; you will be surprised to see the result in the multiform manifestations of holy and useful life. Those who most ponder Christ's words are most conscious of the life that is in them. They are the best witnesses to verify the repeated references of this chapter to the living bread, given for the life of the world, of which, if a man eats, he shall live for ever. Oh that each reader would acquire the precious habit of feeding on these words, till they become in actual enjoyment both spirit and life!"

F. B. Meyer.

TWO MASTERS

“No man can serve two Masters.”

“We are walking in light or in darkness. We are in the narrow or on the broad road. Our life is pre-eminently selfish, or being spent in seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. We are as good trees bringing forth good fruit, or as corrupt bearing corrupt fruit. We may be likened to a foolish man building on sand, or to a wise man who built his house on a rock. By these contrasts our Lord impresses the great impossibility of serving two masters, and though we cannot penetrate into the depths of each other's hearts, be not deceived, God is not mocked, We are making a choice of these two masters, and every opportunity of listening to the Gospel intensifies that choice. When we arrive at years of understanding, and have attained the ability in some measure to judge of the course of life we will take, from that time we stand identified in the service of one of two masters.”

W. Marshall.

FOUR VERSIONS

“A good speaker usually finds when he finishes that there have been four versions of his speech: the one that he prepared, the one that he delivered, the one that the newspapers said that he delivered, and the one that he wishes, on his way home, that he had delivered.”

Dale Carnegie.

AMEN

“The chief wisdom and good of man therefore is, that he realize the clearly revealed certainty that God has established for the present and everlasting salvation of men an eternal Institution, in every item ordered well and sure, and that he submit himself implicitly to its every condition. Thus alone may any one expect for himself the fulfilment of the apostolic petition on behalf of the disciples of Christ, as when writing to the Hebrews, he prayed, ‘The God of peace who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work **to do his will**, working in you **that which is well-pleasing in his sight** through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.’ Amen.”

T. H. Milner.

A NOBLE TESTIMONY

“The testimony of W. E. Gladstone regarding God's Gospel is worthy of being passed on to old and young. He said: “If I am asked what is the remedy for the deeper sorrows of the human heart – what a man should chiefly look to in progress through life as the power that is to sustain him under trials, and enable him, manfully to confront his afflictions – I must point to something which in a well-known hymn is called ‘The Old Old Story,’ told in an old, old Book, and taught with an old, old teaching, which is the greatest and best gift ever given to mankind” T.W.T.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

MY STORY by Jimmy Parr

[A few months ago I received the following account of the early life, and conversion of Jimmy Parr but have not been able to print it until now. I print it with the hope that it may convince us that we should never regard anyone as a ‘hopeless case’. Anyone knowing Jimmy in 1962 might have considered him beyond help. Ed.]

I was born in Wigan on 13th July, 1927. When I was 7 years old my mother died of a cancer. She was a good mother: she never drank spirits and never smoked. She sometimes went to church but I can't remember which denomination. My father never went to church except to marry my mother, and later to marry my step-mother. As

a small child I was like any other: mischievous and stealing apples from the local orchard. I did not know my step-mother all that well and was brought up by an aunt who was very good to me. I left school at 14 years of age and went to work down a pit until I was over 16 years. For some silly reason I had a row with my cousin and went back to stay with my father, who by this time, had left my step-mother and was living with another woman. I had gone into the pits because my father was in the pits and earning £12 per week (which was a lot in 1943). My father was a good worker and spent all his life down the pit (from 12 years old until he retired at 65 years — some 53 years in all).

I soon lost my job in the pit and it was not long before I had my first encounter with the law. I broke into a shop and stole lots of things, for which I got three years' Probation. I did not last long on Probation, however, and broke into a house, and a cafe, at Wigan Park. I was 17 years at the time and was remanded to Liverpool Prison. When first I entered Walton Prison, in Liverpool I wondered what I had got myself into, and I was soon to find out. At the Reception wing I was made to stand to attention, give name and number, remove all my clothes and put on the prison uniform. I was then locked in a cell (the smallest cell I have ever seen, and I have seen a few) which was about 4 feet square and about 6 feet high. I could just about turn around in it because there was a wooden seat at the back of it which took up half the room. A doctor examined me and pronounced me "A1" — i.e. fit for work. While I was awaiting trial I mingled with some of the most violent men in the prison. When I finally reached Court, in October 1944, I had already spent 4 months in prison. I was sentenced to 3 years in a borstal. The food at this time consisted of — Breakfast: 6-ounce cob, a bit of porridge and a cup of tea; Lunch: jacket potatoes and cabbage soup (in same plate) and some rice pudding; Tea: 8-ounce cob and cup of tea; Supper: cup of cocoa. I knew, course, that I had to be punished and was not really complaining. It was all my own fault and I just got what I deserved.

You might think that when I reached Borstal I would have behaved myself but this was just not so. I ran away four times in all and each time was punished. On recapture after my first escape I was put on 'bread and water' for 7 days, cold showers and all my hair cut off — I had a shaved head. The second time I ran away I was given the same 'bread and water' treatment but for 14 days, cold baths and head shaving again. The third time I ran away I was given similar treatment for 21 days. The fourth time I ran away I tried to commit suicide and was certified insane. After being certified I was committed to Calderstone Mental Hospital where I spent seven long years. Conditions in the Mental Hospital were much worse than the prison and the first ward I was in was the Punishment Ward where I was locked in a padded cell for 4 days and was told that if I ever attempted to run away I would be put in the padded cell for over a week with 'loss of priviledges'. When I asked what 'priviledges' I could lose I was struck across the face for being 'naughty' and speaking without permission. I had to work in the Kitchens there for 14 hours per day (from 7 a.m. until 9 p.m.) seven days per week and all I got was a few cigarettes and a bar of chocolate. After 12 months there I was given 10 days 'leave' but lost it because I had written to a girl who lived outwith the hospital. A doctor had read the letter and so I was sent to the Punishment Ward for 4 weeks. After punishment I was sent back to work in the Kitchens.

If any patient managed to escape from this Mental Hospital the staff used to be seriously reprimanded. During 1948 we had a man in charge of us who liked to make us suffer and so I sought an opportunity to escape. I was away for a whole week and when the police caught me I would tell them nothing. However, they learned that I was from Calderstone and sent me back. I was put in a cell for a week, with the usual cold baths and headshaving. I was also made to wear special clothing — all grey in

colour even to the socks. Every night I had to completely undress and was subjected to intimate body searches of the mouth, arm-pits and everywhere else. They humiliated me as much as as possible while making these searches. I was sentenced to 6 months punishment with the complete loss of all 'privileges.' During this time all I was given was extremely hard work and I hated the place and them. Altogether I was to run away three more times from that place: the final time I all but succeeded in committing suicide. I did not go back without a great struggle and I was genuinely sick of life. While the staff were taking me back I managed to break one of my lenses into four pieces (and they were really sharp) and swallowed them. When they realised what I had done they called me all the names they could — I called them names too. When they got me back to the Mental Hospital I was put on a course of cotton-wool sandwiches and two members of staff with me night and day (until the doctor got the glass out of me). I was then taken back to the Punishment Ward, and two members of staff kept a watch over me day and night.

A new doctor came to the hospital and eventually he came to see me. He told me that if I ever wanted to get outside I would have to steer clear of any form of trouble. He was going to put me on trust so that I could go from the kitchens to other wards without any special supervision. He would see me again in six months but in the interim if I let him down I would never be given any other chances. I thanked him and took him at his word. I behaved myself and worked well in the kitchens. In due course, after the six month period, the new doctor sent for me and gave me some mental tests. Two weeks later I was given my discharge papers and told that I could go and that there was nothing the matter with me.

It was not long before I was in trouble with the police again for house-breaking, just four weeks after coming out of Calderstone Hospital. This was in 1954 and I was placed on 2 years Probation. After only three weeks of the Probation I broke into a Boarding House in Blackpool. When I appeared in Blackpool High Court two members of the staff from Calderstone Mental Hospital told the judge that they had been sent to escort me back to the Mental Hospital. The Judge told them that they had made a wasted journey and sentenced me to 9 months imprisonment. This was in 1954 and between then and 1962, when I came into contact with the Churches of Christ, I did another seven prison sentences. I met all the violent and hard men, such as Franky Fraser; McVickers; Hynds; Rubberbones Jones (who could escape from any prison); Kelly from Liverpool who led the Penet Gang until he was hanged for murder. I could add many more names but time would fail us. I was in prisons in Leeds; Manchester; Liverpool; Preston; Lincoln; Leicester; Cardiff; Wormwood Scrubs, London and Featherston.

When I came out of prison in 1962 I returned to Wigan. I tried to con the church of Christ. I went to Jimmy Melling and he invited me to the church in Wigan. There I met many brethren including Allan Ashurst, his wife Greche and his four children. I was living in a 'doss house' in Wigan at the time, which was a big house with a stove in the middle, long tables and long forms round it; little cubicles for sleeping in; all filthy. Young Steven Ashurst came to see me there and went home and told his parents what sort of place I was living in. Allan and Greche came and took me to live with them and that was the turning point of my life. They had nothing but took me in. Not long after, I was baptised into Christ. It did not change me right away — it took quite a while to throw off my old ways. Indeed I was excluded from fellowship for a while because I was not maintaining myself properly. I had, however, lots of help from different brethren: brethren like Allan Ashurst, Jim Melling, Carlton Melling, Leonard Morgan, Roy Renshaw, Tony Tyson, Arthur Hood, Barry Sharp, Ken Miller, Bob Eckman, Albert Winstanley, Tom King, Michael Gaunt, Frank Longdon, John Kneller, the late brother Hardie and many more. I thank them all so very much for,

without their help I would never have got through. Each one helped me when I was a wanderer. Needless to say I owe most to Allan Ashurst and Greche and I love them more than they will ever know. I was from the gutter, like a tramp, aged 34 years but looking more like 65 years. They put me on the right track and I will always be grateful to them. I have still much to learn and a great way yet to go. I am not much good with the bible but I know that this Jesus has given me a great love for 'down and outs' and young people. I've met lots of young people and brought a few to the Ashurst household where they have stayed the week-end. I could say much more but space would not allow but I must not forget to mention the Ashurst children: Carol, Adrien, Steven and Paul. They helped me too and I love them very much.

Yours in Christ,
 Jimmy Parr.



Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

"I am a young Christian and sometimes I have heard other Christians say that a certain issue which has caused some controversy should be made a 'test of fellowship'. Would you please explain what is meant by this?"

I had determined some time ago that I would not negate the effects of the Gospel by re-opening comment on events of the past, if in fact they are in the past. However, conditions of the present are sometimes only explainable by reference to events of the past, and there is some fundamental teaching inherent in this question which ought to be stated.

I suppose a 'test of fellowship' means, in simple terms, whether one Christian or group of Christians would be able, because of doctrinal differences, to have fellowship with another Christian or group of Christians. In so far as I understand the history of the Church, the issues which have resulted in 'tests of fellowship' have been Bible Colleges, instrumental music in worship, women preachers and teachers, head covering, the 'cups' issue etc., and current issues such as marriage and divorce, and the Crossroads movement. There will probably be many more of which I know nothing whatsoever. It is not my intention to comment in depth on any of these controversial issues — perhaps too much has been said already — but to explore the reasoning inherent in the phrase 'test of fellowship', and to leave the reader to work out the effects. When we read that one of the fastest growing religions of the present day is the Islamic religion, then we Christians should ponder why our loving Saviour Jesus, the Christ of God, is coming second best in comparison with those religious leaders who have never **claimed**, nor **could** have claimed, the things which **He** claimed and fulfilled. Could it perhaps be that we, His followers, have nullified His work? Someone has said, and I quote, "Too often in the past 2000 years the worst advertisement for Christianity has been its supporters and advocates". What a tragic thought.

What is the Fellowship?

So far as we can understand it, the fellowship of the saints is rooted in God and His Christ, and sown through the Gospel. John says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). When Paul

wrote to Philippi he remembered with joy “their fellowship in the Gospel” (Phil. 1:4,5). From these two statements alone we ought to be able to see that fellowship with the Father and Son is not an ‘added extra’ for the Christian, but that it is rather the planned Will of God, executed in the Person of His Son, and proclaimed and accepted to the terms of the Gospel. I say this so that we shall understand that a fellowship with a Divine origin and base, in which every Christian who has obeyed the Gospel is a participator, should not be tested by anyone other than by the One who originated it.

This opens up a very important avenue of thought. Who would be brave – or foolish – enough to say that he understands the Will of God to such a degree that he is able to set up a ‘test’ on God’s behalf in order to determine whether or not others should have fellowship, or whether fellowship should be denied? Ah”, someone will say, “but we have the Will of God in His Word, therefore we can make decisions on His behalf according to that Word”. That, of course, would be fine, but who would be bold enough to say that his interpretation of the Word is the only acceptable one, and that others who disagree are, of necessity, wrong? The tragedy here is that ‘wrongness’ is made the ‘test of fellowship’, and those who believe themselves to be ‘right’ withdraw their fellowship from those whom they consider to be ‘wrong’. But what if God hasn’t done this? What if He, in His Infinite Wisdom, still embraces such brethren in His love and fellowship, in error though they may be? We shall then be in the unenviable position of denying fellowship to brethren on grounds which we say is according to His Will, and yet He Himself granting continued fellowship because His revealed Will has been misinterpreted and not abrogated.

Using the ‘cups’ question just as an example, I am told that Communities of Christians in West Africa are being seriously split because of this issue. This is a shame. New converts are being strangled almost at birth if this is the case. Why do we spend so much time debating how to reap the fields which we say are ‘white to harvest’, and at the same time throw a spanner into the works of the harvester in order to wreck it? What effect do we think this has on the growth of the Church and the promotion of the Gospel? It doesn’t make sense; there **must** be a better way.

The Better Way

Please don’t misunderstand me. I would be the first to say that the Apostle’s doctrine should be taught and adhered to at all times because that is one of the functions of the Church that we have to ‘continue in’ (Acts 2:42). But let our reforming zeal be tempered with love and compassion, and let our interpretative skills be beyond reproach.

Two scriptures which have caused much bitterness, and which I personally think have been misapplied, are Rom. 16:17; and Phil. 3:17. In the Roman passage two words are of special note; ‘mark’ means ‘watch out for’; ‘avoid’ means ‘incline from’. What the Apostle seems to be saying here is “now keep an eye on such brethren, and don’t lean their way”. Whatever the problems may be, such as worldiness, weakness, lack of spirituality, clique forming, or such like, just watch the brethren who display these characteristics, don’t give them encouragement, and stabilise the position by teaching and love before things get out of hand. There is no suggestion here of ‘booting’ such out of the community or not meeting with them, but rather of watching that their attitudes are not divisive and negative to the well-being of the whole community. It surely is better to teach the Word than to bludgeon someone with it. It surely is better to encourage than to estrange.

John in his First Epistle says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). It is suggested by some that to walk in the light means

that a person has such a knowledge of God's Will that his mind is illumined to such a degree that he never errs in the doing of His Will; conversely, to walk in darkness means that a person would fail to do God's revealed Will. According to this reasoning, a Christian who withdraws his fellowship from other Christians must believe that he is walking in the light while the erring Christian is walking in darkness. The weakness in this argument, of course, is that it demonstrates yet again a fundamental misunderstanding of the text and the context. John says, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light..." Now in verse 5 John has it that, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all". Therefore, I believe we can say with some certainty that if we say that 'light' as used by John means knowledge of God's Will, and 'darkness' means a lack of knowledge of God's Will, we would be saying that a Christian who walks in the light would have as much knowledge of God's Will as God Himself has. Who among us would make such a claim? But surely Christians who withdraw fellowship from other Christians in the Lord's Body do make such a claim every time they set themselves up as arbiters of God's Will, and denounce some as not being worthy to enjoy the fellowship of others.

I personally have asked a question repeatedly which no one has seen fit to answer; 'Why do we spend so much time and effort in destroying the fellowship rather than building it up? Do we dismiss those children of ours from the family circle because we find them in error? No, we certainly do not, and I would go so far as to say that in some instances we may even have tried to bend the truth in order to minimise their error. God's love is greater than ours. He will never bend the truth, but He will endure the wayward child and lovingly try to lead it back into the fertile pastures. Is it possible for us to do likewise? I am sure that it is. Perhaps we should be a little less alert to 'test' our fellowship and a little more eager to 'test' our love.

(All questions, please, to

Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan, Lancs. WN3 6ES)

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

"THE WANT OF THE AGE"

"Dead in trespasses and sins," the great want of the age is **quicken**ing. The great question is – How shall these dead ones live? How shall the sleep of sin be broken, and the activities, which are now but the phantoms and nightmares of a dream, be made the harmonious and beautiful goings forth of a new and noble life? By having the breath of God breathed into them, in other words, by receiving the Spirit of the living God – the Holy Spirit. Again, How? – How shall they receive the Holy Spirit, unless they know there is a Holy Spirit awaiting their reception, in the way of God's appointment? How shall they know except they hear; and who shall tell them but those who are already in possession?

We have preached the glad tidings. What are the results? Are they satisfactory – is the gathering abundant, in return for the seed sown? If not, why? In enforcing a divine lesson, one of old said, "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." But even the vapour comes not for nought. What then has been the **influence** of our life? Shall it in passing have left to the world as a legacy, the **dew of life**, or the chill **damp of death**?

A greater than James said, "If any man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Do we so love? Is such our companionship? Let us be silent concerning the "Spirit that quickeneth," until we make manifest that we are living in the fellowship of the Father and the Son, by the light ever burning – by the fruit with which our life is

laden. The people of this age require proof of the reality, and worth of that, which we presume to offer them in the name of God — they need to see the volume of Christianity, illustrated by living photographs of Christ.

Behold! O ye saints of the Lord, the glory of your mission and destiny. Open the doors of your hearts, and keep them open; that the Lord may go in and out of His temples, and have pleasure therein.

“Be not conformed to this world” — let not its grossness pollute your life, neither allow its narrow and selfish principles of business and expediency to twist your action into the thousand distortions of a mongrel religion; “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” “Be followers of God as dear children.” “He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.” Be like Christ — “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me” — “who went about doing good.” Let not the niggard be seen in you. Don’t allow any trade trickery, or mean catch-penny policy, to give a colour to your life; neither suffer a grinding acquisitiveness to stamp you with the seal of this gold-loving generation, and bring upon you the curses of the poor. Rather let the God, “who giveth richly and upbraideth not,” be your great ideal — Christ, who shed His blood for you, the pattern of every day.

While we review our past operations in preaching the gospel, and deliberate on plans for the future, let the great subject of church-culture have the consideration, which its imperative necessity and mighty importance demands. When the house is in order, then we may go forth into a wider field with confidence; and that order must consist, not only in the place, and observance, of special ordinances, but in the flow of a pure and unselfish life through the entire membership: when our wives present pictures of pure, honourable, fearless submission to the constituted head, guiding the affairs of the household with wisdom and economy; when our husbands are noble embodiments of faithful, protective, cherishing love; when our children are patterns of obedience, and our fathers carry out a wise and pacific government; when our servants shall be prized for their faithfulness in all things; and our employers known as those who “give unto their servants that which is just and equal;” when “holiness unto the Lord” shall be the motto of every individual and the superscription at the threshold of all our homes; then shall we go forth accredited before men as the advocates of “a return to primitive Christianity.” If we indeed possess, what perishing humanity needs, namely, the living and life-giving Spirit of God, and our own being has been so brought into harmony and unison with the mind of Christ, that our daily walk has become a continuous testimony to the fact, then the power of the head shall go forth from the members in a many-channelled stream of life, along whose course the sounds of penitent prayer and the songs of triumphant faith shall ever arise, to find their echo in the strains of angels, who strike their harps and sing, for the joy in their presence over returning prodigals.

If the foregoing be needful together in the membership, what ought to be the position of overseers, deacons, teachers, exhorters, evangelists, and every other man who is called out to rule, guide, or represent “the Church of the living God — the pillar and ground of the truth.?”

J. Collin.
(Sent in by Leonard Morgan.)

If all our misfortunes were laid in one common heap, whence everyone must take an equal portion, most people would be contented to take their own and depart.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

July 5 Deut. 18,9-22 John 5,14-47
 July 12 1 Kings 4,18-44 John 6, 1-21
 July 19 Exod. 16,9-25 John 6,22-40
 July 26 Jer. 31,27-40 John 6,41-71

The Oneness Of Father And Son

Here we have sentence of death declared as punishment for breaking a rule made by men about the sabbath (5,16). Jesus replies by declaring His action to have been in union with God His Father. There is no compromise. His answer is to claim He is doing His Father's will. They work together because they have the same object and intention. Moreover He will show much more work, revealing more of His will, greater works. The Son claims authority to pass judgment on men, and power to bring them to life, a priceless gift! But the gift is on conditions only. Let us stop and think. What is the life being offered? The almighty God is offering everlasting life to His created work. All have fallen short of His glory, but all are offered the priceless gift. "He that heareth my word and believeth on Him who sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life". Final judgment is brought into view and there is figurative and literal resurrection. Obviously the latter is in vv. 28 & 29 but the quickening refers to spiritual awakening. Reference to graves indicates the final judgment.

WITNESSES IN SUPPORT

These may not be essential, but consideration of them is. The works of Jesus are convincing enough, but John Baptist was an effective and well known witness for the Son's position, and well acknowledged. Numerous scriptures gave witness to Jesus but men failed to know them (38). These witnesses also were denied or neglected, so well was it to remember Moses. See also John 3,33 and 6,27 — God's sealing!

Feeding Five Thousand Hungry And Tired

Every public exhibition of power by Jesus would be effective evidence of His CHRISTHOOD, and the number of these were so many as not to be counted, but two occasions of miraculous feedings still found folk asking for SIGNS. The one under our immediate notice is remarkable in all conscience to convince the most sceptical of critics, and it is clear there was strong conviction on the part of the violent Galileans. I think, without meaning to be in any doubt, that all our readers will be convinced, first of the truthfulness of the accounts, and second, appreciative of what is involved in the power exhibited in the actual work. The labour of Jesus in breaking and handling the loaves and the fishes, and in the distribution of an enormous quantity of substantial food. We can be thinking little on account of just passing the incident off on account of familiarity. It was a stupendous miracle. Another point occurs to me important to remember: the wonder of one man alone facing a violent mob of rough folk used to hard life, remaining calm and so effectively self-possessed to quell the mob and escape to the mountain to pray.

Walking On The Sea

That Jesus should come walking across the angry sea to his discouraged and hard working, rowing, boatmen to encourage and give help to them was natural to Him. They worshipped Him, and were received gladly at Gennesaret from whence they reached the synagogue at Capernaum with the teaching and argument there. What a fright the disciples had with the spectre on the sea, but what a comfort to have Him in the boat with peace and prayer. All experience so essential and valuable for His closest companions. See Matt. 14,16, Mk. 6,49, Luke 6,19.

More Multitudes And More Argument

There was a warm welcome and much crowding at Gennesaret and apparently they moved over finally into the synagogue at Capernaum. Meanwhile the curiosity about Jesus's return from Galilee received very positive teaching about spiritual food and led to further argument about the endeavour to correct the very material attitude. Jesus sought to give them his own teaching of divine understanding. He sought to lead them in truth and righteousness. Some who were concerned especially in the questions raised in relation to the very striking miracle of the loaves and fishes evidently sought a SIGN (once more) because they did not understand or identify Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah. His words seem clear to us to be a claim to be God's special messenger the Messiah, but they could not, or would not, accept His claim. Their hopeless misunderstanding of His claim to be their "king" seems to justify the absolute refusal of a BREAD or POLITICAL king and seemed to remove the possibility of accepting His teaching. He certainly said quite plainly "the food which endureth for ever which the Son of Man has sent". They would not accept that He was the LIVING BREAD. The plain condition that they must "believe on Him Whom He hath sent". They in words seemed to be asking to be told, but could not comprehend what it meant. They could not believe that HE is the bread of God which cometh down from heaven because the LIFE of the SPIRIT is obscured by material fleshy food. Looking both backward and forward we see the communion fittingly portray the body and the blood in the flesh of the Son of MAN, and sharing in both loaf and cup in the ordinance, but here we must realise "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life".

Belief And Unbelief

Lessons being learned and absorbed. Blessed assurance by Peter, "that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" and also blessed assurance Son of MAN, sent and came for US. With deep sorrow and solemn warning "Have not I chosen you twelve."

R.B. Scott.

AS PURCELL SAW IT

In 1835, Archbishop Purcell and Alexander Campbell held a discussion at Cincinnati on the Roman Catholic religion. Commenting on the death of Campbell in 1866, Purcell said: 'In Mr. Campbell's Church the form of worship is very simple as in the days of the apostles. He hoped always to keep it so. Here is where he was mistaken ... As the Church becomes great in numbers, and rich and strong, it loses its original simplicity ... We begin to see changes already in some richer congregations in cities. Are not the advanced congregations already discarding congregational singing, and procuring fine organs and hired choirs? Are they not placing flowers in the pulpits and on their alters? Has not fine stained glass found its way into the lofty windows of their truly Gothic cathedrals? ... The Church is drifting, drifting away from the apostolic simplicity of which its founder dreamed and joined the race all Protestant Churches are making towards something grander and more majestic.'

The Bishop was right. And any deviation from the (divine) pattern (Heb. 8:5) brings disastrous results. The noted Church historian, William Jones says: 'But one wrong step unavoidably leads to another, and the progress of error is always downhill' ... Had the Churches everywhere adhered strictly to the order of Christ's House, as exhibited in the Church of Jerusalem, Antichrist (by which term he refers to the Pope) would never have arisen; but an attempt to improve upon that which divine wisdom had instituted, paved the way, little by

little, for that monstrous mass of corruption which issued in *Babylon the Great*, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, the habitation of devils (demons), and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird' (Rev. 17:5:18:2).

Our task is to remove the human 'improvements' which have worked so disastrously!

(Selected).

SAINTLY HEROES

"Oh love the Lord all ye His saints."
(Ps. 31:23).

It may be noted, the Son of God our Saviour did not come to earth to create heroes. He came to raise up saints. The christian: the church. Heroes are scarce; hardly one in a generation is to be met with. Christ purposed to people the world with saints: alive and not, as our R.C. friends would have, dead a hundred years or more. Heroes dazzle, but saints should edify with their example of virtue. We can do without heroes really, for they are not absolutely necessary. With saints it is different; the world needs them. They are intended to be the salt of the earth. They propagate, in this day and age, the gospel: so essential to world and individual. As long as the Lord tarries, saints are required to put forth the true word of God to the saving of souls. Again we notice that heroes require a broad and lofty stage, where all can see them.

In humble and quiet surroundings the saints display their devotion and love, in simple manner. It may be, that the humble saint displays most in the smallest deed or the simplest task. That word at the door, that smile in the street, that shake of the hand, that welcome at the meeting, the sympathising tear, that letter (or card) in sympathy. These things, so small in themselves, may cumulatively over the years far outweigh some rash and sudden act of one now called a hero. Brother, Sister let us live heroic lives, not perhaps as heroes, but as humble saints. Many saints are

but heroes yet unsung, and there may have been saints who were more than heroes. We all have our problems. We all have our talents. We all have our crosses to bear. Let us continue with courage along life's rugged path looking unto Jesus the author and Finisher of our faith. "The Lord forsaketh not His saints: they are preserved forever." (Ps. 37:28).

A. P. Sharp,
Newtongrange.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dennyloanhead: The recent series of Saturday evening Gospel Meetings have ended and the church here would like to thank all those brethren who supported us in this gospel effort, especially those who came to proclaim the Word. May it grow and have free course in the hearts of those who heard it. To God be all glory and honour.

Joe Malcolm (Sec.)

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting was held at Tranent, on Saturday 9th May when a goodly gathering discussed the question "What is the First Resurrection mentioned in Rev. 20".

John Kneller occupied the chair and the speakers were James Sinclair (Senr.) and Ian Davidson, Motherwell. It was, at the outset, generally acknowledged to be a difficult question and this was confirmed by the end of the meeting. Many interesting points were, made, however, and an enjoyable time was had by all. The next meeting, God willing, will be held at Haddington, on September 12th when the subject will be "What does the Bible say about Homosexuality and what should be our attitude to Aids victims". The Chairman will be Andrew Scobie and the speakers Mark Plain, Tranent, and Harry McGinn, Dalmellington.

Hugh Davidson.

Stretford, Manchester: The church here would like to announce another baptism. On Saturday 11th April, Joanna Barham obeyed the gospel in baptism. Joanna, and her husband John, along with another couple in Prestwich, have been attending an 'Assemblies of God' church. As a result of our Friday evenings Bible Study Joanna has been able to see the wisdom of God as opposed to mans. We pray that this will be the beginning of great things for the Lord at Prestwich. The Bible Study was a direct result of John Clayton's visit last August.

Arthur Barry,
Evangelist.

COMING EVENTS

Buckie Annual Social: The Annual Social, will God willing, take place on Saturday, June 6th at the Meetinghouse, at 2.30 p.m. Speaker: Alvin Gardiner. We invite you to be with us on this occasion. Items will be appreciated.

John Geddes (Sec.)
Tel. No. 0542 33793

DO WE REALLY MEAN WHAT WE SING?

"Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious, and a song of praise is seemly." Psalm: 147:1.

Over the years I have often heard it said that we do not mean what we say in the songs that we use. Recently I came across this unusual comparison someone has made:—

We sing "Heavenly sunshine," and stay away from services when it's too hot.

We sing "Onward Christian soldiers" and have to be drafted for His service.

We sing "Hiding in Thee," and then go and hide from Him.

We sing "Marching to Zion," but fail to march to Bible class and worship services.

We sing "I love to tell the story," but never mention it to anyone year after year.

We sing "Cast thy care on the Lord," and worry ourselves into nervous breakdowns.

We sing "Throw out the lifeline," and content ourselves with throwing out the fishing line.

We sing "Blest be the tie that binds," and then let the slightest offence sever it.

Selected.

MISCELLANY

Spurgeon tells of a poor old woman whom one of the church members visited to bring a little financial help. He got no answer, however, when he knocked at the door. He went to the back door, but all was still.

When he saw the old lady again in the church meeting, he asked her, 'Where were you when I called on you? I came to bring you a gift, but you weren't at home.' 'Oh was that you? I thought it was the landlord to collect the rent.'

So men think that when the gospel comes God wants to collect something from them, and do not understand that He has come to bring them the most precious of all gifts and blessings.

TRACTS AVAILABLE

"Twenty Questions on Churches of Christ".

I have available a substantial stock of the above pamphlet which consists of four sides of informative matter about the Church which may interest seekers after truth.

These were printed for gospel work and can be offered at reasonable prices because of bulk printing in the past.

If any congregation or individual would like a sample, please send a stamped addressed envelope with a request to:—

John Partington, 2 Sandy Lane,
Hindley, Wigan, Lancashire WN2 4DB.

CONSCIENCE

Conscience is like a sundial. During the hours of daylight, and so long as the sun is shining, the dial will have a correct recording of the time; but when the sun is not shining, or when the light comes upon it from a lantern or from the moon at night, its record may be completely inaccurate. So it is with conscience. So long as the light of God's Word shines upon us and directs our decisions the voice of conscience is both correct and helpful; but when it is illuminated by the light of our own imagination, or by the opinions of others, it will not only fail to give the true direction, but it will make the error all the greater because it claims to speak with authority. A fallible guide, who may lead us astray through wrong information, is worse than no guide at all.

THINGS YOU WON'T REGRET

Doing a kind act.
 Keeping your temper under insult.
 Refusing to listen to malicious gossips.
 Not posting that cutting, unkind letter.
 Getting up every time you fall.
 Trying always to better your best.
 Holding to your righteous purpose in spite of opposition.
 Keeping faith with yourself at any cost, and holding fast to your ideals.

GET STARTED

Is there a goal you fain would reach?
 Get started.
 Another reaps while you delay
 Faint hearted.
 The train can carry only those
 Who take it.
 Seek not for opportunity.
 But make it.

We do not leave the garden uncultivated and then expect fine flowers. Nor should we let weeds choke up the unused path to a friend's heart. Friendship is a delicate flower and needs cultivating by thoughtful attention. It is all too common a human failing to neglect doing the little things for others that might mean so much to them.

...*Sunshine Magazine.*

SURE REFUGE

While a small steamboat was crossing a stormy bay, the engine suddenly stopped, and for a few minutes the situation was one of real peril. One elderly woman rushed to the captain anxiously asking if there was any danger. "Madam", was the uncompromising reply, "we must trust in God". "O, sir," wailed the enquirer, "has it come to that?"

A good many of us act as though we felt like that in times of peril. We are willing to trust in almost anything - except God!

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