

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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PROGRESS — in the 1980's

The theme of many sermons and exhortations at this time of year are often based upon the habit, in January, of looking back over the old year in retrospect and looking hopefully to the coming year with prospect. This certainly was the basis of the address of at least one of the speakers at the Slamamman Social gathering. What indeed are the real hopes of additional progress amongst the churches in 1980? Given the way we go about things what are our chances of progress — indeed do we deserve to have progress? I notice in the press that the Baptist Churches in Scotland have been claiming a dramatic increase in their numbers over the last few years. Why the apparent lack of progress of the churches of Jesus Christ in Britain? Is it lack of effort, lack of interest or both and do we use the proper technique in our preaching of the gospel?

I was reading, the other evening, about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (The Mormons) and since the printing of the Book of Mormon, in 1830, one segment of the Mormon Church now has some 3,500,000 members and the other segment, at Missouri numbers some 1,000,000. This has been accomplished in only 150 years. From its founding the Mormon Church has been characterised by thriftiness, zeal and a wonderful missionary spirit. Even before World War II it had 2,000 missionaries active all over the world. Today, only 40 years later they have some 18,000 missionaries in the field and make an average of 80,000 'converts' annually.

Their most promising young men and women, between 20-23 years, dedicate two years of their lives solely to full-time missionary work and they, or their parents, meet their own expenses. In this way, every two weeks sees another 70 to 90 young men and women begin two years of full-time missionary work.

The Mormon Church requires their members to tithe in the Old Testament manner and this gives them tremendous financial resources. As far back as the year 1960 they had an annual church budget intake of 20,000,000 dollars. Most of this money is put into 'real estate' which appreciates all the time, but much of it is spent on a vast programme of the building of church buildings and temples. Mormons also have 'fast offerings' from members — i.e. the giving up of two meals on the first Sunday of each month — and this money (about 1,000,000 dollars annually) is given to the poor. I could also quote some things not to the credit of the Mormon Church but these facts quoted are surely staggering and show us what can be done. It is all

the more staggering when one remembers that this vast and highly efficient religious machine is built upon a very fraudulent document (The Book of Mormon) foisted upon the world by Joseph Smith.

There is absolutely no doubt that the Book of Mormon is not what Joseph Smith pretended it to be, but that apart, see the 'progress' made in terms of actual work-rate. Surely members of the "True" church of Christ must hang their heads in shame, or make the usual excuses. The absolutely tremendous strides made by the Mormon Church is obviously due to the fact that they give so liberally to the work, and because they are organised within themselves, and because they are missionary-minded. I am not suggesting that we become Mormons or even that we copy their procedures but they are surely an object lesson in zeal and efficiency for us to consider. It is for this reason only that I mention these facts, obviously I would not be a member of the Mormon Church for all the tea in China, or for none of that tea. Nevertheless we must, on knowing these things, place our performance alongside that of the Mormon Church for some comparison, and I shall of course leave each reader to do that to come to his, or her, own conclusions.

What lessons can we learn from the success of other religious denominations and what interpretation do we place upon the results of others when placed alongside our own performance? Are we alert enough to learn any lessons at all? Are we astute enough to admit our own apparent ineptitudes and gain from it in the future? Time alone will tell, but surely it is high time that we awoke from slumber. It is realised that those who would blow the *clarion call* will be about as popular as the man who blows 'reveille' early on a cold morning to arouse slumberers from warm beds, and that some will resist any attempt to 'rock the boat' (to mix the metaphor) but nevertheless surely an attempt should be made.

Some would advocate that we talk about it, others reckon that enough talking has been done already and that the time is come for action. But what can be done? As each congregation is completely autonomous it follows that any future action must arise within each congregation. This would not shut the door to more than one congregation getting together to see how they could mutually assist one another. This device is not exploited to anything like its full extent and congregations in close proximity could greatly support the efforts in spreading the gospel, one with the other. As far as progress *in the long term* is concerned discussions between neighbouring congregations on a general strategy could be helpful. In each individual congregation the initiative must come from its leaders but all members should take an interest and give as much encouragement for activity as possible.

In the past it has not been unknown for suggestions which involved hard work and action to have 'cold water' applied and some kind of delaying tactic proposed. This is most unfortunate. Leaders cannot implement positive action unless they know that the members are prepared and enthusiastic about carrying it out. I suppose that 'more' is the keyword towards any possible increase in progress in the future. First of all *more* members than at present must take an interest and a share in the work. Very often lack of progress is due to the fact that one or two members are left to shoulder the burden while the others are allowed to lead a very comfortable life-style. Secondly members of the churches should perhaps endeavour to *give a little more* of their financial resources. Too often projects involving the Lord's work cannot proceed because of lack of money. We see how the vast financial resources of the Mormon church allows them to pursue all kinds of evangelistic work. Some of our small and feeble efforts, small as they are cannot get very far because of lack of funds. Tithing is not being advocated here but it would appear that we need more financial resources if we are to mount any great evangelical efforts in the future.

Thirdly it would seem that members require to *care more* for the souls of men. Rarely do we hear expressions from many members of concern for the millions of men and women going to Christless graves, each week, or enquiries regarding how we could save some of them. Fourthly we also require to increase our work-rate for the Lord and *do more* for Him.

Some congregations are struggling enough just to keep going, let alone evangelise the area. Napoleon I think it was who said that Britain was a 'nation of shopkeepers' — but in the church sense we are more a 'nation of housekeepers,' keeping house, that is, for the Lord. 'Keeping house' for the Lord is commendable but surely not enough. The Lord is captain of an army and we are enlisted soldiers in that army and there is nothing militant about keeping house. We need some spiritual storm-troopers and a few evangelical Panzer Divisions if any progress is to be made in the 1980's. This means that we should be up and doing with a few missionary journeys in our own localities. Fifthly, I think that we must give *more thought* to our general strategy in the preaching of the gospel. We can no longer depend upon people flocking to our gospel meetings and so we must needs go to the people.

The Church of Scotland is gradually falling behind drastically in numbers because it depends upon people coming to it. The Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses thrive because they go to the people, and so perhaps we shall have to change our strategy if we are to make future progress. A brother reminded me the other day that we are commanded to "Go into all the world . . ." whereas we expect the world to come to us. Another brother remarked the other day that we traditionally seemed content to 'poach' on the disillusioned members of other religious bodies, without actually going out on our own initiative, and there is probably something of substance in that point of view. Whatever be the case, it would seem that we are likely to be left far behind if we do not have a re-think about how ineffectual are our present methods of reaching the public with the gospel. The gospel has not changed and I believe that we preach it honestly and faithfully (unlike many of the successful denominations) but we are just not reaching the people with it. The question remains — how are we going to reach the millions with the good news? It would seem that our future hopes of progress depends upon how we answer that question, and *more importantly*, what we do about it.

I hope these few remarks will not be the cause of any offence to anyone as obviously I address them to myself as much as to any other person, and my only intention is to try and fan into flame the desire I know to be in the hearts of many brethren to get progress going amongst the churches, in the 1980's. Would any brother like to take any kind of initiative in this matter? — Editor.

“Our Singing in Our Worship”

(Colossians 3: 16; Ephesians 5: 19)

Many do not realise the sacredness of this part of our worship. Their hearts and minds are not wholly given to God. The leader may have given little or no thought in selecting the songs: just a hodge-podge, happen so, first come first sung. To obey and address our Father deserves prayerful consideration. Often the late-comers (tardy) barge in creating a disturbance and forcing a break in another's heart offering to God. Others are in and out of the Rest Room or seeking to influence the heating or cooling of the air, etc: sometimes trying to humor a spoiled child. Thoughtful quiet should be the order of the moment.

The human heart and voice constitute the all-sufficient instrumentation. No man-

invented instrument can make "melody in the heart" or "sing with grace in the heart." They may entertain the ears or enhance the pride of man, but such is not the purpose in worship. Singing meets God's requirements. Churches of Christ in general are in agreement on this though among some is a tendency to cater to the ear melody, seeming to feature (magnify) the tune more than the words. Scriptural conservation should be the order of the day. Otherwise brotherly forbearance must preserve the peace.

That singing is a part of our worship cannot be denied. This meditation is to question our general practice and in love to lead us to "sing with the spirit and the understanding" I Cor. 14:15: to be led by the everlasting word of God rather than the changing fancies of men. Here are some of the instructions:

First: Each individual singer must be qualified. Not just anyone can sing and worship even though the song may be good and in the right place. The individual must be "filled with the Spirit" which also means "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Without this prerequisite our songs may sound wonderful to man's ear but they are not worship to God. Not even man would relish good water and of a dirty dipper. In Matt. 6, also 15, Christ calls such offering hypocritical and vain. Paul in I Cor. 13 compares such to a "sounding brass or tinkling cymbal." A mind dumbed by a Saturday night spree or filled with TV slush, world sports, Martha's cumbers, a family fuss or even worse, an offended brother (Mt. 5:23-24) or worried sleeplessness, can hardly be qualified to worship regardless of the quality of the song or other favorable factors. Get right with God and your fellowman and praises will naturally follow.

Second: Remember that scriptural singing is every person's opportunity to "teach and admonish one another." This may be secondary or perhaps the by-product, but at least, if we sing scripturally we must have a motive or objective — a purpose to accomplish. Doubtless this goes much deeper than the ear. If we fail to love our brother as we love ourselves, we would hardly be trying to teach or admonish, and certainly there would be no praising our God then in song. A positive approach would enliven our singing and show the intensity of our love.

Third: Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs: Psalms are readily available in the Bible though often there is no metre or note. Hymns are odes or songs of praise or adoration, like whispers of love to the beloved, like "My Jesus I love thee, I know thou art mine." Spiritual songs are begotten by the spirit and appealing to the spirit as compared to carnal: of and from the soul which is born of the Spirit: guided by the Spirit: edifying to man: pleasing and praising God.

This sacred trio, the choice of God should also be the choice of worshippers in song. Men are taught and admonished and God is honored. They stand as one and all should have their proper place. Often no word of praise is offered to God — only spiritual songs. Songs can be a plea or a prayer, asking for mercy or giving thanks. Get a lesson from the Psalms of the Bible.

Fourth: Singing most of us do. If we can and don't then we fail in an important part of worship. To listen only is to take the place of God. He is our audience. With love-filled hearts for God and man, we should sing with "grace and melody to the Lord." Without this grace and melody our God of Spirit is not worshipped, our singing is vain — perhaps hypocritical, satisfying to man but no praise to God.

Without a doubt this all must work together to be acceptable worship. Leaders should prayerfully select the songs to meet the occasion and the Lord's pattern. Each Christian, with clean hands and pure hearts and in fullest reverence, should endeavor to follow. Such exactness to many may appear to be unnecessary in singing, but it is true in other matters: as one baptism, one body or church, one faith, one

supper, etc. God's humble people will be only too glad to comply once they learn God's Will. They certainly don't want to make a mockery in worship; worship hypocritically or sin before Him to whom our worship is directed.

Of all creatures our God made, he enables man to sing. The Psalmist (Ps. 105:1-2) expresses the burden of this meditation. He says: "O give thanks unto the Lord: call upon his name: Make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works."

Amen-and-Amen

G. F. Gibbs, Lawrenceburg, Tn. Canada.

GLEANINGS

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

Who are the Great?

"It is not improbable that the noblest human beings are to be found in the least favoured conditions of society, among those whose names are never uttered beyond the narrow circle in which they toil and suffer, who have but "two mites" to give away, who have perhaps not even that, but who "desire to be fed with the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table;" for in this class may be found those who have withstood the severest temptations, who have practised the most arduous duties, who have confided in God under the heaviest trials, who have been most wronged and have forgiven most; and these are the great, the exalted. It matters nothing what the particular duties are to which the individual is called — how minute or obscure in their outward form. Greatness, in God's sight, lies not in the extent of the sphere that is filled, or of the effect which is produced, but altogether in the power of virtue in the soul, in the energy with which God's will is chosen, with which trial is borne, and goodness loved and pursued. — Channing.

Art thou religious?

"Religion does not consist entirely in praying worshipping God; the holy man takes religion into all his concerns. Godliness will make good husbands and wives; good parents and children; good masters and mistresses; good tradesmen, good servants, and good subjects. It does this to the astonishment of all who observe it; and this is the best way people can take to promote the gospel, and make their neighbours like it. Thus the believer becomes a practical preacher, "holding forth the word of life." Our light must shine before men; and then, they seeing our good works will glorify our Father who is in heaven."

Knowledge

Lord Bacon, on the design of knowledge, says: "He who seeks knowledge truly, does not seek a couch wherein to rest a languid spirit; nor a terrace, for a valuable mind and wandering feet to walk up and down with a fair prospect; nor a fort and commanding ground, for strife and contention; nor a shop of for self-interest; but a rich storehouse, for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man."

Christian integrity

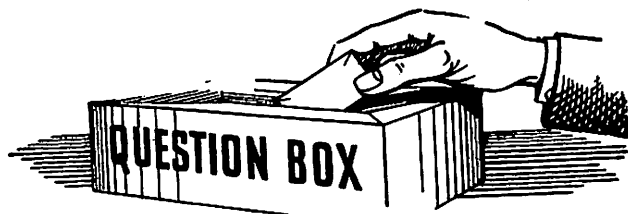
"The gospel requires of all who profess it, perfect integrity: not only the not lying to one another in word, but in deed also; not only the shunning of all evil, but of the appearance of evil also. Christians are denominated the children of the day and of the light. "Let us who are of the day," says the Apostle, "be sober: for we are not of the night or of darkness." They are called children of the day, because they have professed to believe in an everywhere present and allwise God. They profess to believe in the perfection of his moral character, as holy, just, and good; and in their

responsibility to his judgment seat. Because God is everywhere and sees and knows all things — because he is true and requires truth, and will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil — and all Christians have professed to believe this — it is required and expected of them to live and act uprightly. As the darkness and the light — day and night — are both alike to God, they are alike, too, to all the children of God. They are true — they are honest before God and their fellow creatures. They will not do in the dark or in secret, what they would not do openly in the light of day. Or if any do, or would do this, they walk not, or would not walk uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel.”

A fragment

“In God’s Word we behold the excellency of his character; we learn his laws and our duty. In worship we pay homage to God. In almsgiving we pay Him tribute. In the breaking of bread we confess Christ before the world, profess to live in him, and for him; and to look for his coming in glory. In prayer we acknowledge his providence; “and praise is our rent to the great Lord from whom we hold our all.”

Selected by Leonard Morgan from *The Gospel Banner and Biblical Treasury*: containing the writings of Alexander Campbell and Coadjutors in America and Great Britain. 1849.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“It appears that many scientific medical advances cause difficulty to the christian. What is your reaction to ‘test tube babies,’ ‘artificial insemination,’ etc. Do you consider they pose a moral problem to Christians?”

It is necessary for the Christian to study every aspect of life, especially in an age when the cult of materialism and the pursuit of pleasure are eroding the spiritual values whereby we must live. The Biblical concept of man rushing headlong to disaster is more meaningful today than ever it was (the story of the Gaderene swine has been updated to the twentieth century).

The value of human life is also being down-graded; this is perfectly consistent with the ascendancy of materialism. But standards must be maintained, and it is only when man begins to think about his relationship with his Creator that he will begin to see things in their true perspective; it is the absence of God which has created the materialistic void. Therefore, if we must truly realise the value that God places on the human life then we must look at the provisions he has made to initiate and maintain those spiritual values without which man will finally and irrevocably destroy himself.

What is man?

The question is posed in the Bible, “What is man that Thou are mindful of him?” This question returns us to basics and makes us understand what life is all about, and why God is so directly involved in it.

Man was created by God. He was and is God’s highest creation. He is constituted body, soul and spirit, and is therefore a complete creation. What man is doing is to tamper with this Divine arrangement and make himself the final arbiter in the

destiny of God's creation. This he cannot do, because man is so complex and so indivisible in his created constitution that the attempt to tamper, even if initially marked with some success, is finally doomed to failure. Why is this so? In order to answer this we shall have to consider the constitution of created man.

Man has a body; he is flesh and blood. He is part of and responds to, the environment in which he finds himself. In embryo in the mother's womb the child is an extension of the parents who conceived it (I use the word 'child' for that which is in the womb because the Bible says that before Jesus was born, Mary was "with child"). It is part of the natural life cycle. When the child is born he is still environmentally dependant; he has to compete with other parts of the animal kingdom for survival but his Creator has specially endowed him to do this. These special endowments mark him out from the rest of the animal kingdom. We can then say that biologically the divine endowment is special to both God and man, and the cycle of natural procreation is that method which God saw best for His highest creation.

Throughout the ages, man, through and by his spirit, has transcended that part of himself which is associated with the flesh. Even in the carnal state, man has exhibited an indomitable spiritual nature which has belied the gross excesses of his physical nature; he has risen to what God knows he can be. When one considers to what spiritual heights man can rise by the enrichment of the in-dwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, then one can understand how man can embellish and transcend his human, physical nature.

The soul of man is that which can be saved by God to be in a right relationship with Him. The teaching of the Bible is emphatic; "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die." Equally emphatically, the Biblical teaching is that only God can bring to man the renewal which he needs. "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63).

It is this complete constitution of man which is threatened. Scientific technology has been remarkably effective in reshaping man and the pattern of his response to the divine will.

Artificial Insemination

I would not wish to give the impression that I am medically qualified in any way; I am a layman who to a limited extent understands the process and can comment on it in what is hoped to be a reasonable way.

In its simplest form, A.I.D. involves semen from the donor (male) being transferred to the recipient (female) by artificial means (not by normal sex relationship). The technique was designed to assist normally infertile couples to have children. The transfer can be effected immediately, or as in the case with cattle, the material can be deep frozen for use at some future date, maybe years later. With regard to married couples, the donor need not necessarily be the husband.

The moral problems for Christians would seem to be as follows.

1. How do we explain true fatherhood? Genetic fatherhood is not the same as the fatherhood which arises from procreation in the true married state. When the husband is the donor then no special problem would seem to be present, but when the donor is *not* the husband then it would seem to me that the natural arrangement of God through the married state had been nullified.
2. The question of adultery will inevitably be raised. It may very well be that in the strictly *legal* sense adultery has not taken place, but it is unquestionably true that *another man* has been introduced into the married state and the husband will not be the true father of the child. Who can say what this might do to the real intimacy of marriage?

3. The true genetic father of the child may never be known. There is almost universal agreement that complete anonymity of the donor should be maintained. But should the child develop unhealthy attitudes and abnormal behavioural patterns in later life, then this is bound to raise questions and doubts as to identity and stability of donor. The child who was wanted by the infertile married couple could quickly become one of the great army of the unwanted, either by one or both of the partners.

The so-called 'test tube babies'

I think the technical name for this technique is 'embryo transfer.' The technique involves fertilisation *outside* the body, probably under laboratory conditions, hence the term 'test-tube.' If the ingredients for procreation between husband and wife could be fertilised outside the body and then be returned to the wife, perhaps no specific moral problem would exist. But the Christian, and indeed society, is faced with the frightening prospect that one day this technique could become so prevalent that mankind would lose its true natural and spiritual identity. Man would become a 'thing' to be produced in a laboratory. God's creation, and with it the sanctity of human life, would have reached its nadir.

Conclusion

The brief discussion we have had concerning these two scientific techniques indicates that these *do* pose moral problems for the Christian. The true relationship with God is that which preserves the sanctity of life. I do not believe that this relationship has ever engendered the idea that God will at all times give us those things which are always happy and pleasurable. Christians who desperately want children may feel the pain and anguish of infertility in the married state. What our relationship teaches us is that the end must never justify the means, if the means are contrary to His will. That relationship was forged in bitter anguish and pain, but the One who forged it knew that life lived with His Father was infinitely preferable to that which could be manipulated by man. The married state, as given by God, is inviolate; the sanctity of life is paramount because it is God given; the preservation of human values and standards is sacrosanct. Let the Christian examine quite thoroughly what the scientist, geneticist, and others are saying and doing, because whether they realise it or not, in my considered opinion they are trying to replace God, and to change those traditional values of living which have contributed so much to humanity. The dehumanisation of man is a stark possibility!

(All questions to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancashire)

THE TRESPASS OFFERING (Part I)

(Read Lev. 5 & 6 vs 1-7 also Lev. 7 vs 1-7)

We come now to the last five offerings, the trespass offering, which we feel is the great climax to them all. For whereas the others bring us into the sanctuary and into a right relationship with God, this last one, the trespass offering, brings us into a right relationship with each other. Now these five are basic to all the sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament. There are many others, of course, which deserve our attention but these five give us some grounding in the fundamental elements that they represent.

We have already seen that the sin offering is about the kind of people that sin but the trespass offering is about the kind of sins that are committed or omitted, things

which we have done which we ought not to have done and things which we have not done which we ought to have done. The sin offering then, has to do with the guilt of our sin Godward, but the trespass offering has more to do with the injury that sin does when we sin against each other for which we are also answerable to God and need to atone for by making amends. Take, for example, the New Testament story of Zacheous in Luke 19. When salvation came to his house and Zacheous received Christ joyfully, his immediate reaction was, "If I have taken anything from any man falsely, I will restore fourfold." Zacheous was a taxgatherer and abused his position to extract money out of people's pockets, demanding more than they were required to pay and pocketing the difference. It was a very lucrative job and he was detested by his fellow-countrymen for acting for the occupying power and feathering his own nest at the same time. Unscrupulous in his methods, he made himself rich at the expense of others. But now what a difference! Christ had come into his life and when Jesus comes in, He not only forgives our sins but re-adjusts our lives. Being right with God, we seek now to be right with our fellowman. Can you imagine the astonishment of the people as Zacheous offered to repay more than what he had robbed them of? Could he not have borne wonderful testimony to the power of Christ in his life? And that is what the trespass offering is all about. It is forgiveness, restoration and restitution and it is Christ Who makes the difference. And He taught, "If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." This is very practical for it means reconciliation to each other for we can not only trespass in holy things but also in the natural and material. The Psalmist in Psalm 51 gives you both the sin and the trespass offerings. "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned" he said and also prayed, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O Lord." One has to do with our relationship with God; the other with our relationship with man.

And with the trespass offering, confession also had to be made, Lev. 5 v 5. And there is not only a confession but an offering and a putting right of that which we have done wrong against another. James, the very practical man, tells us, 'Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another, that ye may be healed.' And this is not only physical but the healing balm of forgiveness and reconciliation. But this cuts both ways like the two-edged sword. Matthew reminds us of the right order. In chapter 5 'When thou bringest thy gift to the altar and there remembers that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift and first be reconciled to thy brother' that is, it is because of something we have done and offended our brother; he is holding something against us, so we must apologise, confess and be reconciled. On the other hand, chapter 18 speaks of our brother trespassing against us and we must tell him his fault and seek forgiveness and reconciliation. In this we need to examine ourselves, says 1 Cor. 11 v 28 and so eat or offer our gift, if you like, because it includes both. And so it applies, whether it be us or our brother who is guilty of the trespass. There must be confession and absolution towards each other because of our involvement with each other. Not like Cain who could say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" having severed his relationship with his brother by slaying him. We are responsible for each other and this is taught in Lev. 5 in the trespass and its offering. Read carefully verses 1 to 5. See there our involvement with each other. There, it is the pronouncing of an oath, unfulfilled by another, but the person hearing it, if he does not remind him of it, shall bear his iniquity. And the same applies to a person touching the unclean thing. If he is unaware of it and someone else knows, then he is just as guilty and unclean by hiding the fact. And does not the New Testament bear testimony of this? Does not the Apostle speak of warning them that are unruly, of rebuking those that sin that others also may fear? John in his first epistle, chapter 5

v 16 says, 'If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask and he shall give him life, etc. This, of course, is not interfering in other people's affairs but rather expressing our care and concern for each other.

Notice too, how they could trespass in holy things, not fulfilling their obligation to the sanctuary or the priesthood possibly, 'and he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done' not only by offering the ram but adding one fifth of the principle in restitution, Lev. 5 v 16. Go into chapter 6 vs. 1-5 and see there the black list of lies, robbery, deception, swearing falsely, the devious means of keeping that which belongs to another. All this had to be paid back with interest together with the trespass offering. Now is it not remarkable that all these things, the betrayal of trust, the deceit, the lies, the false witnessing, the oath, etc. should all be dealt with by Matthew in his Gospel in relation to the blessed Lord in His trial and execution? Surely this is the Gospel of the trespass offering as we shall see.

When Christ was before the Jewish Sanhedrin, He was put on oath by those who judged Him by their law yet broke every law in their efforts to condemn Him and formulate some charge against Him before Pilate. When all the witnesses had contradicted each other and when all the evidence for the prosecution had broken down, Caiaphas applied the Oath of the Testimony, the most solemn oath of the Constitution, which could only be applied in extreme cases. And it succeeded in drawing from Jesus the very thing they wanted to prove, that He claimed to be the Son of God, which involved kingship and by which they condemned Him before Pilate, "Whosoever maketh himself a King speaketh against Caesar" and Pilate had to yield to their demands. And He became their trespass offering as they sinned against the Truth, by the betrayal of their trust, by their lies and deception and fraud. Let us look at some of these things as they are recorded for us only in the Gospel of Matthew, clearly bringing out the facts of trespass.

Take the disciples first. They all swore to stand by the Lord, come what may. But when it came to the crux of the matter, they all forsook Him and fled, Mat. 26. Peter even denied Him with an oath, with cursing and swearing. See how everything fits into the things mentioned in relation to the trespass offering of Lev. 5 & 6. Keep these in mind and you will see how Matthew fits it all into the picture. Next we think of Judas and his deceit and the betrayal of his trust. And for what? 30 pieces of silver, the mere price of a slave! Possibly, at the back of his mind, he would expect the Lord escaping from them as He had done on other occasions. He knew the Lord's power and that He was capable of delivering Himself if He so wished. But when he saw his plans had misfired and Jesus submitted Himself to them and was led away, he tried to make amends. He fulfilled only part of the trespass offering. He came in confession, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" and tried to make restitution by returning the 30 pieces of silver, but did not bring a sacrifice for his trespass, according to Levitical law. Therefore he found no forgiveness and went out and hanged himself.

And the priests, they shirked their responsibility and misused their office and betrayed their trust. They should have advised Judas what to do in relation to the trespass offering but they didn't because they were hand in glove with the miscarriage of justice as they plotted against an innocent victim. How low they had sunk. For the priest was sanctified by God to be a minister of the sanctuary, to handle holy things, to offer sacrifices, to teach the law. He was supposed to be God's representative to the people and the people's representative before God but they made a mockery of their office and were an insult to God. Little did they realise that in condemning Jesus as they did, they fulfilled the very types of the Levitical offerings.

Pilate, too, shelved his responsibility, by symbolically washing his hands of the whole affair. "I am innocent of the bloods of this just person; see ye to it" he could say; while the nation claimed all responsibility for themselves and future generations by saying, "His blood be on us and on our children". And God has kept them to their word and for centuries they have been hounded from pillar to post. So we owe it to Matthew to give us a description of all these things that centred around the betrayal, the trial and the crucifixion of the blessed Lord, fulfilling all those trespasses described for us in the trespass offering.

(Part II to follow)

John D. Hartburn,
Houghton Le Spring

STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AS HISTORY

THE history of the Old Testament has been divided into six periods: (1) Probation, (2) Preparation, (3) Conquest, (4) Power, (5) Decline, and (6) Servitude. This month we will consider the Probation Period.

1. Probation Period

Probation, according to a *Twentieth Century Dictionary*, is: a preliminary time or condition appointed to allow fitness or unfitness to appear — a time of trial.

This period is covered by the book of Genesis from chapter one through chapter ten. It begins with Adam and closes with Noah.

There are three outstanding events of this period. These are (a) The Fall; (b) Promise of Salvation; and (c) The Flood.

(a) The Fall

'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.' (Gen. 3:6).

So sin entered into the world, and 'all that is in the world, the desire or appetite of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the vainglory of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.' (1 John 2: 16).

(b) Promise of Salvation

'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.'

This first prophesy brought hope into the world, which had fruition or fulfilment 'when the fulness of the time came,' and 'God sent forth his Son, born of a woman [the seed of the woman] born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' (Gal. 4: 4, 5).

(c) The Flood

'In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the floodgates of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.' (Gen. 7: 11, 12).

Only those who obeyed the Word of God as preached by Noah were saved. 'The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, into which few, that is eight souls, were brought safely through water; which also in the antitype doth now save you, even baptism; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the inquiry of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' (1 Peter 3: 20, 21).

From: 'The Young Christian'

SCRIPTURE READINGS

March 2 Daniel 12	1 Peter 1
9 Isaiah 28,1-22	1 Peter 2
16 Psalm 34	1 Peter 3
23 Prov. 11,1-20	1 Peter 4
30 Prov. 3,21-35	1 Peter 5

THREEFOLD ELECTION

Peter's letter is addressed to "the elect," "the chosen people." Without further thought we know he means the members of the church of Christ. He does not write to all such but limits his readers to those who "are scattered throughout" certain provinces of the region now known as Asia Minor. We would assume that he had either visited them or was particularly known to them. Perhaps viewing them and their circumstances from Babylon, they were in need of special encouragement. The word "dispersion" had been applied to the Jews scattered around the world for a long time as indicated in John's gospel (7,35). This is the word used by Peter here. He regards them as not being natives in those places but as temporarily staying there. One translation (T.E.V.) uses the word "refugees," which conveys the idea. It does remain doubtful whether he has Jewish Christians in mind or ALL Christians in those regions. Some parts of the letter indicate the latter, seeing that ALL had their citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3,20). Shall we take it that way? The limitation mentioned above no longer exists! The point of their election however is threefold. The purpose of God the Father was fulfilled in them, the Holy Spirit was the Worker, enabling their holiness, and their purification was accomplished by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. What a comprehensive introduction this is! Calvinists and Antinomians have disagreed about what "election" means but we are satisfied that it was God's design that man should

be granted the citizenship of heaven through the work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit accepted by man through presentation of the gospel message. It is good to know that Peter and Paul had a common interest in these folk who had become "strangers and pilgrims" (2,11: Heb. 11,15) in the world because "called to be saints" (Rom. 1,7:1 Cor. 1,2 . . .). Is not this the position of us all, but to what extent do we realise and practise it? As we carefully read and digest this letter, it will prove to be food for the soul.

THE GLORIOUS FUTURE

Christians in these early days were passing through very difficult times. All kinds of trials (manifold) were their continuous portion. Every day brought home to them their unique position. All their previous links had to be broken if they had been Gentiles, and Jews were in a minority among their own people, receiving from the majority both abuse and separation. Such already were not integrated in Gentile society. This did bring them as Christians very close to one another. They did have a fellowship not known before, and a relationship with God as a new experience. These more than compensated — and still do so of course — for the "manifold temptations" for they become entitled to an inheritance of supreme almost inexpressible value. Its characteristics can hardly be better expressed than in the words of the A.V., or perhaps we may summarise as purity and permanence BUT FUTURE. Something to look forward to as a certainty yet to be won as in a battle, and the means of victory is our faith, trust, confidence "through all the changing scenes of life." Material things ultimately perish but our faith has to be tested — like Abraham's — to prove its true value, and endurance brings joy impossible to experience in any other way. The trust has to be in a crucified Saviour promised in olden times as in the purpose of God, and fulfilled to us as revealed through Peter

and other apostles and prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit.

THE NEW LIFE

The gospel brings us into a new relationship with one another and with God by our initial acceptance of its truth, and our submission to the initial ordinance of being dipped in water, signifying our consciousness of our sinful life, our need of cleansing and our knowledge of need of forgiveness, and receipt of that in the act of obedience. This is the new birth. By the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts and the consequent obedience we begin a new life. We cannot stop at this point, and the whole of the letter we are reading emphasises and enforces the lesson. So often the preaching of the Word brings a soul to decision but it sinks back as illustrated in the parable of the Sower (better "Seed") — the cares of this world, etc. Thus we read "Gird up the loins of your mind." Prepare for mental and of course spiritual conflict. Can we expect our Father to be satisfied with anything less? We are reminded that this Father has bought us at a great price — that the Lord of heaven and earth has made a sacrifice of inexpressibly great cost on account of His love for us, and that demands love from us for one another, and a purity of life issuing in behaviour consistent with worship of a holy God. We no longer think of the world as our place but as ourselves forming a place for God to dwell in. God dwelt with His people in a temple built of stones. This has gone. We are the temple and the priests. Hence every effort is required to bring thought (the mind), word (expression of thought) and action (the body) into harmony with the profession we made when the NEW LIFE began. Peter brings into view first our behaviour with our unbelieving neighbours (2,11), then our attitude to those in authority, following these with individual treatment as slaves or servants, masters, wives and husbands.

In all these relationships our standard is our attitude to God. What was perhaps a most pressing need for those immediately addressed was the acceptance of wrongful persecution. The whole attitude of humankind is deep resentment against any harmful or insulting treatment. Peter perhaps remembers his brave but misguided effort in Gethsemane, and recalls the most wonderful behaviour of our Saviour in the final scenes in the judgement halls and the bearing of OUR sins upon the cross, and presses home the need for the same attitude of humble but firm acceptance of suffering. "The blood of the martyrs" has been the seed of the church. They endured as seeing Him Who is invisible. Shall we humbly pray for those who today are suffering for their faith?

R. B. Scott

QUOTES — on CHARITY

The trouble with charity is that too often charity not only begins at but ends at home.

Anonymous.

He that defers his charity until he is dead is, if a man weighs it rightly, rather liberal of another man's than his.

Sir Francis Bacon.

Be charitable before wealth makes thee covetous, and lose not the glory of the mite.

Sir Thomas Browne.

No sound ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity.

Edmund Burke.

Never to judge rashly; never to interpret the actions of others in an ill sense; but to compassionate their infirmities; bear their burdens; excuse their weaknesses; and to make up for their defects; to hate their imperfection but love them nevertheless — this is the true spirit of charity.

Nicholas Caussin.

NEVER TOO OLD...

Mr. Nehru, Indian Prime Minister, told students in Bombay that 'my real learning began after I left Cambridge,' and that nothing would be lost if the degrees of Master of Arts and Bachelor of Arts were abolished.

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

What you save, you leave behind; what you spend, you have for a while; but what you give away in a worthy cause, or what you do to benefit mankind, you take with you, and the latter is what lives after you.

All the strength and force of man comes from his faith in things unseen. He who believes is strong; he who doubts is weak. Strong convictions precede action. The man strongly possessed of an idea is the master of all who are uncertain or wavering. Clear, deep, living convictions rule the world.— James Freeman Clarke.

ANNIVERSARY

Hindley, Wigan. Our congratulations go to our Brother and Sister Wellings (Olive and Ted), on the occasion of their Golden wedding anniversary, which was reached on January 1st 1980. They have been overwhelmed by the many remembrances which they have received, and it has been a great comfort to them because their anniversary has been marred by the sudden death of their brother-in-law, Bill Clarke.

Our brother worked in the coal mine for over 50 years and bears the scars of that industry, both outwardly and within.

Both are lifelong members of the church; have given hospitality to many brethren, particularly during the Bible School period; have served the church well in the capacity of caretakers; and in many other ways.

We thank God that they have been spared to see this 50th anniversary of their union, and pray that God will bless them both with better health, that they may share happiness and joy, and be brought to further anniversaries. — Sec.

Mill Hill, Blackburn. The Church at Mill Hill, Blackburn, is pleased to report the addition of a young girl, Karen Pilkington. Karen who has attended Camp Heatherbell for several years, was baptised unto her Lord recently. Since Camp this year, Karen and several other teenagers have regularly attended services. Brethren, please pray for the work with these young people.

During the month of February 1980, as part of the joint evangelical effort, the church will be holding a special weekend, at which Bro. Bill Jones from Morley will be the Preacher. Full details will be sent out in due course.

It is with deep sorrow that we report the passing of another of our older members. Sister Nancy Knowles passed away on November 29th aged 80. Due to ill health Sis. Nancy has been unable to attend for some years. When visited she was always cheerful, but very concerned about the well-being of the Church. She regularly sent her contribution for the work.

Sister Knowles was immersed over 60 years ago along with her late husband. It is always sad when a stalwart like Sis. Nancy passes on, but we know she is one of the blessed who have died in the Lord.

We commend her family to the care and keeping of the Lord, and pray that their care for her will reap its reward.

The funeral and committal service were conducted by Bro. Roy Renshaw.

A. Brunton, Sec.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dalmellington, Scotland. The church here once again rejoices over the addition of another soul to our numbers. On 28th December, 1979, young Drew McGinn, son of brother and sister Harry McGinn, was immersed into the blessed name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks for this wonderful event and pray that our young brother will remain ever steadfast to His Lord and that he will become a valuable and trusted servant of His God. To Christ be the praise and glory.

Sec.

Slamannan District, Scotland. The New Year Social took place in the meeting-house at Slamannan, and those attending saw the largest attendance at this event for a long time. Brethren came from churches too numerous to mention, as far afield as Buckie, and from South Carolina in the U.S.A. Inspiring addresses were given by the two speakers; Brother Mark Plain and Tom Nisbet, both from Tranent, and we had exhortations in song from members. The District Choir, under the able leadership of John McCallum, reached the usual high standards and all in all a wonderful time was had. Unfortunately sister Wilson, Newtongrange, took ill and a doctor was called but happily our sister has now recovered. Thanks are due to the church at Slamannan for their well organised hospitality.

Hugh Davidson, Sec.

OBITUARY

Hindley, Wigan. The Brethren will be sorry to learn of the death of Bro. W. H. (Bill) Clarke, at the age of 63 years. He had suffered a very severe heart attack about 3½ years ago and had to take constant care. They had gone to live in the Blackpool area after they had retired from business in Hindley, but

because of the persistent ill health of his wife had removed to Bolton which had proved to be better for her. Unable to continue his employment at Blackpool because of his heart condition, Bill decided to retire.

It was on Thursday morning around 5a.m. that he had a sudden attack which resulted in his death.

Many will have cause to be grateful to both Bill and Alice for the kind hospitality of their home during the Hindley Bible School. Also to Bill for the work he did both in his electrical business, and the work of the Lord which he so willingly rendered, and which was so warmly appreciated.

It has been most distressing, because his death coincided with their 42nd wedding anniversary, his wife's birthday, and the golden wedding anniversary of Olive and Ted Wellings, his wife's sister and brother-in-law.

The service was held in the West Chapel, Overdale Crematorium on New Year's Eve. The chapel was full, a fitting tribute to the service, and friendliness which he had tried to show both in his business and church life.

Our sincere and loving sympathy go to our dear sister Alice at this time of grievous parting, and we know that the God who supplies all our needs through Jesus Christ our Lord, will support and comfort her through the dark days ahead. — Sec.

Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan. We are sad to record the passing of the oldest member of the congregation at Longshoot. Sister Annie Finch passed away peacefully in the early hours of Sunday, November 11th, 1979. She had been associated with the church in Scholes for longer than most people can remember. Due to old age she was not able to attend the meetings during the last few years, but always had the church's work in mind, as was witnessed by her regular contributions to the church's funds. We commend her family to the loving care of the Lord.

D. Melling

COMING EVENTS

Tranent, Scotland: Social to be held on March 1st (D.V.) Speakers W. Mair, Buckie, and Bro. R. Parker, Wigan. Place of meeting to be arranged.

Sec.

EVANGELIST WANTED

The Slamannan District Churches of Christ require an evangelist and all interested brethren should apply in writing to the District Secretary, Hugh Davidson, 21 Glen Lyon, St. Leonard's, East Kilbride, G74 2JJ.

BRIEFS

Do not sacrifice first principles on the altar of expediency.— Lewis Silkin.

Authority makes some people grow: it makes others swell.

A child may be forgiven who is afraid of the dark. The tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.

No change of circumstance can remedy a defect of character.— Emerson.

A man asking for work was informed by the foreman that he hadn't a chance because he was already overstaffed.

The man replied, 'But sure, you can take me on. The bit I'd do wouldn't make any difference.'— Irish News.

AID TO THE STARVING IN KAMPUCHEA

I thank those who have responded to the appeal in the December issue for aid to the starving millions in Kampuchea and have written as far as possible to those who have contributed. I would like as well to thank those whose addresses were not supplied, especially sister C. Wood in the Stirling area. Grateful thanks to you all.

Editor

TRACTS

"Twenty Questions on Churches of Christ." This is a well prepared leaflet: one of the few produced in Britain. Supplies are available from stock at £1.50 per hundred (postage extra). Orders to John Partington, 86 Lord Street, Hindley, Wigan, Lancashire.

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