

# *The* **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

---

Vol. 62 No. 3

MARCH 1993

---

## TRUE RELIGION

The subject of last month's article was 'Worship': this month I offer a few remarks on 'Religion'. This morning, on the radio, we were hearing of how, down in Lancashire, the mother of a 4 year old child, as a joke, presented a painting, executed by her little girl, for exhibition in a large city gallery. The painting received 'rave-revues' by the art critics, was catalogued and chosen to hang in the very prestigious exhibition, alongside the masters. This does not surprise me at all. Indeed, one of the last jobs I did as an employee, prior to retiral, was to call at a large Edinburgh Art Gallery to re-negotiate their rent. As I entered the premises I could see that an exhibition of 'modern art' was in full swing.

I was asked by an attendant if I had paid for a ticket and I assured him that I was glad that I was there on business and wouldn't need a ticket. In my humble view the artists should have been paying the public to look at such stuff. I know that beauty is in the eye of the beholder but in this exhibition there was no beauty to behold. There were about five huge 'pictures' all fairly similar — they were entirely white with one or two small black blotches thereon. There was one canvas entirely covered in red paint except for one yellow stripe down the middle. There was another canvas eight feet high and one inch (yes, one inch) broad, which was framed, believe it or not, and was entirely red (like a ribbon). Finally there was a canvas ten feet square which was entirely painted with matt black paint, including the frame, rather like a school blackboard. The gentleman who was showing me round the gallery asked me what I thought the artist was trying to say in the entirely black picture. I said that I thought that the artist was trying to tell the viewers what fools they were. I should perhaps add that security in the gallery during the exhibition was extremely tight, a bit like Fort Knox, because that little handful of 'paintings' was worth two million pounds.

As I stood there in the gallery watching the paying public filing past these offerings of modern art, clutching their catalogues, and gazing wide-eyed for endless minutes at the 'blackboard' canvas I could not help reflecting upon the complete gullibility of the human animal, in spite of his pretence of sophisticated intelligence and intellect. One of the gallery attendants, who confided to me that he thought the exhibition 'a load of rubbish', told me that many visitors spent a long time studying a red-painted knob on the wall (for setting off a fire alarm) thinking that it was part of the exhibition.

Not many hard bitten Scots paid to see these wonders, the visitors were mainly from abroad who had come to the annual Edinburgh Festival of Music, Art and Drama.

As I reflected upon the gullibility of man in matters of art it seemed a short step to think of his equal gullibility in the much more important matter of religion. Think of how easily gulled men and women are in the matter of religion. Think of what we will accept in the matter of religion. There is perhaps some excuse for us being 'conned' in the world of art, where there are no established rules and where, once a man has an established reputation as a painter he can, thereafter, 'get away with anything'. In the realm of 'art' we can have our likes and dislikes, differing tastes and preferences, varying ideas of what constitutes 'art' and it would seem that in the present state of the religious world similar options are open to all. "Whatever turns you on" as they say. New religions are springing up almost every day, in the east and west, from astrology to Zen, from witchcraft to 'Jesus-freaks', from spiritualism to satanism, from religious psychiatry to transcendental meditation. Most of us have heard of, or come in contact with, Hari Krishna, Scientology, 'Children of God,' 'The Jesus Movement', Black Muslims, Zen Buddhists, Bahai' World Faith, 'Divine Light Mission', the Sun Myung Moon or 'Moonies', and yet these form only a drop in the bucket. The true God, the God of heaven and earth, was regarded, many years ago, by the men of Athens, as the 'Unknown God'. Alas, God is just as unknown today. Certainly many in the world seem 'turned on to religion' but it's the religion of the charlatan, the drug 'pusher', the 'weirdo', the 'drop-out', the fortune-seeker and the Indian Guru. It has little to do with God, the Maker of heaven and earth.

### THE UNKNOWN GOD

True religion can be based ONLY upon the true God.

Solomon said: '**There is nothing new under the sun**' and the world has seen all manner of strange religions before. For instance, in the apostle Paul's day, a Roman satirist said that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man. On Paul's first visit to Athens he was appalled at the complete paganism and idolatry which prevailed. The Athenians lived on learned lectures and flourished on a diet of speculation, argument and discussion, strange religions thrived and all manner of gods and devotees. It is both instructive and interesting to read (in Acts 17) of how Paul went about the task of addressing the elite of intellectual unbelievers in Athens and trying to reach them with his God, the true and living God.

Paul's speech, we note, began with a compliment, "**Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are more religious than others. For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar to the UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship him I declare unto you.**" Paul had, of course, a difficult task before him because his audience played with ideas as children play with marbles and doubtless regarded him as just another professional peddler of new ideas. Nor could Paul refer such an audience to the scriptures. What he did do, however, was something we can all do in similar circumstances; he, by a series of telling comparisons, presented the true God in striking contrast to the puny gods of the Greeks. Paul here tries to build on what slender common ground there was by telling the Athenians how religious they already were — so religious in fact that they were searching for the unknown God. This showed that even 'devout pagans' are partly religious and have secret altars of their own. Clearly Paul wanted to win the Greeks rather than take them by force and so he urged them not to waste their precious capacity for religion on unworthy ends and on small gods. If they were going to have a god they should choose the real God — if they wanted a religion they should want the true religion.

Paul's opening assertion in his speech that his God, "**made the worlds and all things therein**" was clearly to show the inconsequentiality of all other gods and their complete irrelevance. Even as the Athenians reeled from such a contemplation Paul

followed with another, equally shattering, that his God is **“Lord of heaven and earth”** and therefore there is little need or likelihood of Him dwelling in **man-made temples**; even the beautiful marble temples which abounded in Greece. Such a God clearly transcended Neptune, the so-called God of the sea, and Jupiter the god of the sky. Nor, said Paul, could his God be worshipped with men’s hands (as though He needed anything) indeed it is God who gives to men life, breath and everything else — (a striking contrast to the deaf and mute gods of the Greeks.) Pagans used to place food before their gods, whereas it is God who feeds man — quite a difference. Paul then went on to describe how God had made **“all nations of men”** brothers and of one blood, to dwell peaceably on the face of the earth and that God **“determined the times previously appointed”** and defined the **bounds of man’s habitations**. This demolished the idea that pagan gods protected home and nation and showed that national boundaries, instead of being regulated by the gods, were under the complete control of Paul’s God, the true God. Paul then reveals that the **eternal purpose of God** in all these things is to induce men (God’s creation) to seek after God. Although at first, in seeking God, **we may grope around like blind men**, yet Paul assures all that God is not too hard to find, since **in Him we live and move and have our being**. It is at this point that Paul quotes one of Greece’s own poets as saying that **“man is the offspring of God”** and, in agreeing with the sentiment, Paul adds that if men are the offspring of God we should not be so foolish as to imagine that God can be made of metal (gold or silver) or be carved from stone.

Drawing all the threads of his arguments together the apostle stresses the moral responsibility we have to the true God, in that we are His offspring. Thus says Paul, God has winked at our ignorance and foolishness in the past but now calls upon us to repent for He has appointed a day of reckoning with His wayward creature; man. **Here Paul introduces Jesus**, not yet by name, nor yet as a loving Saviour, but as **man’s universal Judge**, and presents, as proof that Jesus will be Judge, the fact that God raised Him from the dead. As the Athenians were traditionally fairly well convinced that there was no future state many mocked the mention of the resurrection and apparently the meeting broke up at this point. Paul’s time had not been wasted, however, for we read that some believed and followed him.

#### PURE RELIGION

The word “Religion”, I am told, describes the divine system of binding man back to God (re — means “back, again” and ligio means “to bind”.) Although a vast subject, ‘religion’ receives scant attention in the Bible: the word never appearing in the O.T. and only five times in the N.T. Only Paul and James refer to “Religion”; the former referring each time to “the Jews religion”, and the latter using the word only three times in two verses, where he is essentially drawing a distinction between the outward ceremonial aspects of religious worship, and the inner religious responses of the human breast. In short, a contrast between the external trappings of religion, the personal inconsistencies of its devotees (or otherwise), and the fruits of that religion (good works or otherwise). James says, **“If any man among you seem to be religious”** but fails to control his tongue, and deceives his own heart, **“This man’s religion is vain”**. **PURE RELIGION and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”** (1:26,27).

Evidently it is not enough to have found the true God, and the true religion, because, as James envisages, there is a distinct possibility that our own contribution to the true religion might be vain: **“This man’s religion is vain.”** I suppose we often look askance at the excesses and seemingly pointless rituals of some of the eastern cults and religions, and consider it all as vanity, but miss the sobering thought from James (i.e. worshippers of the true God should, more than any others, address the question of how truly ‘religious’ they can prove themselves to be. James’s mention

of PURE (and undefiled) religion presupposes other unattractive and unacceptable kinds. He assures us that (quite apart from necessary gatherings to worship) **pure religion is characterised by good works** (e.g. assisting orphans and widows in their affliction) and **keeping oneself unspotted or unblemished by the world**. Otherwise our religion is vain.

There is hope for those who seek after God, even although they may presently see Him as the 'Unknown God'. False religions change only in terminology and deity, and Paul's discourse on Mars' Hill, Athens, 2,000 years ago is as adequate an answer today to all followers of strange doctrines as it was when given. The true God transcends all and any others. He is the God of Creation, awesome but friendly and He gives to the world Hope. The cults don't offer hope — rather they assist men in becoming reconciled to despair. The cults end in a not-so-spiritual cul-de-sac but God gives meaning and purpose to life. Men seem gullible in the galleries of art and are certainly vulnerable in the maze of modern religions. There are those who are blindly feeling after God. May we, like Paul, be able to point them in the right direction.

EDITOR.

## GLEANINGS

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

### CALLED OUT

**"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9 (R.V.)**

### I COULD NOT DO WITHOUT THEE

"I could not do without Thee !

No other friend can read

The spirit's strange deep longings,

Interpreting its need.

No human heart could enter

Each dim recess of mine,

And soothe and hush and calm it,

O blessed Lord, but Thine !"

G. H. HOLMES (BULWELL)

### STRENGTHENING CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"Again, the exercising ourselves in things spiritual is a sure means of strengthening Christian Character. Each time we exercise our faith in God and fully trust Him our faith in God is increased. Every good act paves the way for greater good; every assertion of love increases our capacity to love. As we exercise ourselves in self-control we become more self-controlled; and so with every grace and virtue and every trait of Christian character, the more they are manifested in the life the greater is the development and the brighter they shine.

### THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Now the expression, in the life, of the principles and truths of the Gospel is an evidence that the work of grace begun in the soul is progressing, and it is only by the exhibition of these things that it can be truly said that we are growing in grace. The soul that lives by the Spirit, walks by the Spirit, and is led by the Spirit, will certainly shew forth or bear fruit of the Spirit. The beautiful cluster of fruit described by the Apostle Paul will be borne by every one in whose soul Christ dwells. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance. The life giving forth such fruit is truly adorned with a divine beauty and gracefulness.

### A LIFE FULL OF LOVE

Who can estimate the influence of such a life? A life full of love, intense toward God and burning toward humanity; a life radiant with joy and true happiness, possessing that peace which passes understanding; being patient in the bearing of injuries for Jesus' sake, and shewing a kind and beneficent disposition to others; proving faithful in every charge of life, and exhibiting a calm spirit under provocation, exercising self-control. The influence of such a life is far-reaching, and is bound to be felt.

### GREATER HEIGHTS BEFORE US

The standard placed before the Christian is very high, but by the grace of God we should ever be striving to attain to it. Yet, whatever height of Christian excellence we may reach, there are still greater heights before us; and so we go on from faith to faith, from strength to strength, from glory unto glory, until the heights of perfection shall be attained in Jesus Christ in the eternal kingdom.

### GROWTH IN GRACE

I submit to you therefore, brethren, these suggestions as means to this most desirable end: growth in grace:—

**Firstly**, a living and growing faith in God, as the foundation of Christian character, and the source of all Christian excellence.

**Secondly**, that the Spiritual life be sustained by the wholesome food of God's Word, making that book our close companion in life, reading and meditating upon some portion daily, with a constant application of its principles to the life.

**Thirdly**, that we live in the sunshine of the divine presence, communicating with God by prayer, that the life may be blended with God, and to avoid the atmosphere of worldliness.

**Fourthly**, to exercise ourselves unto Godliness and use all our ransomed powers in the service of God, consecrating spirit, soul, and body unto Him.

### LIVING GODLY LIVES IN A SINFUL WORLD

A constant application of these rules will help us to illustrate the practicability of living Godly lives in a sinful world. While in the world it is possible for us to become heavenly-minded, to grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus, and to exhibit a life refined and made beautiful by the grace of God in the soul.

### ONWARD AND UPWARD

Let me exhort you therefore, brethren, to move onward and upward — never turning back — with your eye fixed on the eternal reward. To-day is a day of battle, but the glorious dawn of the eternal day will come when glory shall crown what grace has begun, and all the redeemed shall be ushered into the presence of the Eternal God.

“Bible Advocate” 1903.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

## PREACHING “OUT OF SEASON”

All who endeavour to win souls are distressed by the religious disinterest of our generation. The majority seem to be concerned only with the world and temporal things. They want to eat, drink and play while giving no thought to judgement and eternity.

This condition is not new. It existed, for example, in ancient Corinth where Paul went preaching. He describes the situation: “*For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness*” (1 Cor. 1:22-33).

What did Paul do in Corinth? His approach is surely an example for us.

### No other incentives

Paul did not offer other incentives. He might have done so. He had miraculous gifts which announced a great “healing service” or a “Holy Ghost Revival” where signs they were seeking would be performed. Paul was also quite well educated in the

wisdom which the Gentiles so highly valued. He could have announced a lecture on "The Judeo-Christian Ethic" or on "The Philosophical Assumptions of Moses" and some would have come to hear. Paul might well have defended such an approach on the ground that, once he had them there he could teach them a little about Jesus or, at least enrol them in a correspondence course.

Is this not the justification for many activities in which churches are involved these days? We have seen printed announcements from the Lord's people offering recreation, entertainment, coffee and doughnuts, magic shows, secular music performances and various other treats for those who would attend some gathering. When we ask for scriptural authority for the church's involvement in such things, the answer usually is: "We can make contact in this way and teach them about Jesus."

Paul recalled his work in Corinth in these words: "*For I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified*" (1 Cor. 2:2). The church of our Lord **must** be recognised for its proclamation of Christ crucified, not for its social programmes. Recreation, secular education and entertainment are no part of its assigned work. Involvement in such things not only violates its charter, but also detracts from its sacred and holy mission.

#### No human adornment

Paul did not attempt to "dress up" the gospel with his own personality to make it more palatable to secular minded people. Some who will reject the approach already described, yet believe the gospel can be glamourised by human presentation. They want the most eloquent speakers possible — men with dynamic personalities — men with "charisma." They like to have those to do the preaching whose educational attainments or whose achievements in business or even on the stage will attract even the worldly minded. We once saw a full page advertisement of a campaign featuring a large picture of the speaker and listing in bold type his credentials: "Educator, Lecturer, Author, TV personality, World Traveller and Promoter." We have also heard the suggestion that the gospel can best be preached by a large and well-trained choir.

In contrast Paul wrote: "*And when I came to you, brethren I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God ... And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God*" (1 Cor. 2:1, 3-5).

Out there amongst the masses there are still a few who are interested in the simple undisguised "preaching of the cross." These are the only ones who can be saved anyway. Others may be briefly drawn by our devices; they may even be brought into the church as "wood, hay and stubble" (1 Cor. 3:12), but they will not be saved as long as they disdain the cross. Instead of taxing our ingenuity and exhausting our finances in trying to attract the secular minded, we need to use our resources and opportunities to preach the simple gospel to the largest number of people in the simplest manner possible. In this way we can hope to preach "*to all who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*" (1 Cor. 1:24).

S. Hall.

---

Everything looks yellow to the jaundiced eye.

Pope.

A bigot is a man who stole the livery of the court of heaven to serve the Devil in.

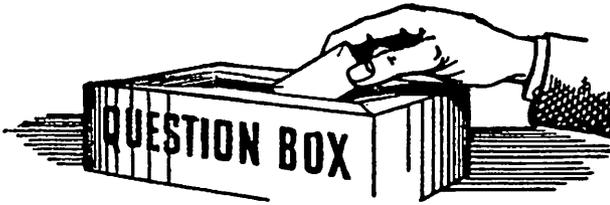
Pollock.

To follow foolish precedents and wink with both our eyes is easier than to think.

Cowper.

The superstition in which we were brought up loses its power over us, even after we understand it.

Lessing.




---

Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

---

**“If God can forgive sinners, why did he not just forgive Uzza instead of killing him when he tried to steady the ark of the covenant from falling from the cart?”**

The sister who put this question finds it difficult to understand why an instinctive act of love and concern on the part of Uzza for the ark of the covenant should have provoked God to exercise such a summary act of fatal retribution. Surely, she reasons, God would understand what had motivated Uzza to touch and hold the ark, and could have forgiven him as He forgives sinners when they repent and are obedient to Him. Well, I suppose there is no gainsaying that; God could have acted in the way our sister suggests, but He didn't, and therefore we must conclude that He had a very good reason for acting as He did.

The incident is recorded in 1 Chron. 13, and we should turn our attention to that scripture for a moment. There we see that our questioner is in exalted company, for it is recorded that even David did not quite understand. In v11 we read, **“And David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza.”** David, we are told, was afraid of God that day; so much so, in fact, that he would not take the ark into the city, but left it in the house of one Obed-edom, a Gittite. It remained there for three months, and during that time, we are told, **“the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.”**

#### The Nature Of God

We must remember — and I cannot reiterate this too often — that we are not speaking of a god, but we are speaking about the God of the universe. Isaiah exhorts the people to forsake their wicked ways and to seek the pardon of God, for, concerning God, he says, **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”** Isa. 55. This statement comes in the midst of an important Messianic prophecy.

The revelation of God has come through acts, words, prophecies, etc., and latterly His self-expression in the Incarnation. What we know of God He has told us, and it is wrong for us to dilute His Omnipotent Will by the paucity of our understanding; there are enough people doing that today without we Christians joining the silly chorus. His ways will always be greater than anything we can conceive of, but sadly some people don't like to acknowledge that fact, and so in their finite egoism they try to bring God down to their level. That in itself is an indisputable act of rebellion, but it is not new; throughout the ages people have responded in the same way toward God, and they have suffered punishment because of that; perhaps one day we shall learn the lesson that God acts, and has always acted, in the way that He does because He is God. We should not elevate our thoughts above His, but we should prostrate our minds to His will.

#### The Presence Of God

To come into the presence of God is an act of such astounding privilege that it can only be possible by divine fiat. Shortly before God spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai He gave these instructions, **“Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death. There shall not an**

hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live.” Ex. 19:12, 13. The important point to remember here is that God was to come down upon Mount Sinai, therefore, because of God’s presence upon the mount, even the **mount itself** was not to be touched by the people. God spelled out quite precisely what would happen if His instructions were disregarded; whether it was man or beast, that which touched should not live.

Turning now to the ark of the covenant, we find in Ex. 25: 10-22 that precise instructions were given by God regarding its construction. Over and upon the ark was to be the mercy seat made of pure gold, each end of the mercy seat should be made into cherubims, whose wings were to cover the mercy seat, and who were to face each other across the mercy seat. In the ark was to be placed the testimony that God would give Moses (the Tables of Stone), and from above the mercy seat and between the two cherubims, God would come to commune with Moses. Therefore, the presence of God would make the ark an extremely important feature in the life of the nation. Just how important is illustrated in 1 Sam. 4. The record here says that Israel went out to do battle with the Philistines; they were smitten that day and lost four thousand men. The Elders response was to bring the ark of the covenant from Shiloh. When the ark was brought into the camp the people shouted with a great shout. The Philistines heard the shout, and understood that the ark of the Lord was come into the Israelite camp. **Their** response was quite significant; they were afraid and said, **“God is come into the camp.”** It is also very significant, I believe, to understand the reaction of Eli when he heard the news that his two sons, Phineas and Hophni, had been killed and that the ark had been lost to the Philistines. It would seem from the record in 1 Sam. 4 that it was not the news of his sons’ demise that caused Eli to fall from his seat and break his neck, but rather significantly, the scripture says, **“And it came to pass, when he (the messenger) made mention of the ark of God, that he (Eli) fell from off the seat backward . . .”**

Now, perhaps, we might begin to understand why Uzza was killed. In Num. 4 are recorded various duties concerning the dismantling and transporting of the tabernacle when the camp moved forward. The duties of Aaron and his sons are explicit, and then in v15 it is recorded that when Aaron and his sons had finished covering the sanctuary and all the vessels of the sanctuary, that **“the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.”** It is quite obvious that God determined who should touch and handle the holy things, especially the ark and the mercy seat where God communed with Moses. It is equally obvious that the ark had a central place in the life of the people, as pointed out previously; unfortunately they forgot the significance of God’s presence with them except when they were threatened and needed His help. What has changed in the 20th century?

We see, then, that God designated who should tread Sinai and who should handle His most holy things. God makes unalterable decrees; His counsel is immutable; Uzza acted in direct contradiction to God’s decree, therefore he had to die. That is what God had said. It was not a question of forgiveness.

#### **‘Let’s Get It Right’**

I mentioned earlier that when God smote Uzza, David was afraid and left the ark at the house of Obed-omen. 1 Chron. 15 records that David, probably on reflection, **“prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent”** (v1). He then went on, **“None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever”** (v2). He then assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites, and apportioned duties concerning the transporting of the ark. He then addressed the priests and the chief Levites in these words, **“Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that**

I have prepared for it" (v12). Then crucially, in my opinion, he said, "For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order" (v13). It seems to me that what David is saying is this: "Well this time, let's get it right and do it the way God wants it done, and then there will be no mishaps." The clear message is that not only does God want things **done**, He wants them done **His way**. The nation of Israel, and people all down the ages to the present day, have at times forgotten that important directive; they have paid for their mistake, and will continue to pay until 'they get it right.'

The Church of Christ — perhaps in an arrogant way — has always prided itself in 'getting it right', but we must never forget that punitive and retributive measures are God's province and His alone. We must always remember that 'getting it right' has many facets; we must preach and teach clearly and uncompromisingly, but that does not mean arrogantly and without love; preaching the truth in love remains an indispensable scriptural principle. Every man has the right to his own point of view; some are right, some are wrong. What we have to do is to exercise our minds to **learn the right**, and **then** to preach and teach it. It is not in our province to tell people that they are wrong; that only erects barriers. Let us seek the truth, with tears if necessary, but rest assured that when we have 'got it right', **the truth** will expose the error. The rest we must leave with God; and even though we were created in His image, it is well for us to remember that we are **the created** and not the creator.

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

## HAPPINESS

Happiness is a difficult thing to define. The pleasant smile, the cheerful song, the hilarious fun all indicate the presence of happiness. But is it real?

The smile may hide a secret sorrow, the song may be there to drown misery that fills the heart. The fun may be no more than a counterfeit of genuine joy.

It has been said that the majority of the fun-giving clowns of circus life, are indeed sad men at heart.

However, all the attributes of happiness are a good thing in themselves. After all, who would counterfeit such a thing, if it be of no value. The scriptures tell us that we should not seek happiness where it cannot be found; i.e. the world.

Ask a rich man, if it is in material riches; the politician if it be in politics; the student, if it be in learning; the worldly man if it be in his wisdom. If all be honest, they will reply that there is nothing completely satisfying in these things. You will remember that the wise king Solomon wrote, of a man in his unregenerate state, that: "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it, the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing, Eccl. 1:8.

It must be noted God did not create man to be unhappy. Adam and Eve were made without sin, in God's image. Perfectly happy in intimate fellowship, that is, until they fell into the trap set for them by Satan, who, it seems envied them the condition of innocence, from which he had fallen.

Misery, unhappiness stems from sin. Sin creates misery, unhappiness in all its associations. But praise the Lord, God, as we know, has made a way back to himself through Christ Jesus.

Without close fellowship with God, real happiness cannot be found. The great Augustine said that man is restless, and can find no rest until he finds God. How true this statement is. Jesus made the way back to God for sinners, in living for them; dying for them; and rising again from the dead for them. Jesus made the statement regarding the way, "I am the Way the Truth and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." (John 14:6). Jesus is the secret of happiness.

The depth of happiness we experience is related to the closeness of walk we have in Christ Jesus. The closer we are, the happier we shall be. It then depends on the individual's experience in Christ. It is God's wish that all should be happy. How happy are you? Are we missing out? If so, a closer walk with Jesus is the answer.

Perhaps we have only enough religion to make us miserable.

Andrew P. Sharp, Newtongrange.

## THE DENOMINATIONS

### 11 — THE MORAVIAN CHURCH

The Moravian Church, sometimes known as 'The Unity of the Brethren' (*unitas Fratrum*) is the oldest Protestant Church. It began in 1457 with the work of the Bohemian martyr, John Huss. After initial success it was for some time under a cloud and practically disappeared, but was renewed in 1772 at Herrnhut, Saxony, by Count Zinzendorf. It was the first among Protestant Churches to produce a hymn book. This appeared in the Bohemian (Czech) language in 1505 and contained versions of Latin hymns, together with many original compositions. Both in its earlier and later form the Moravian Church has contributed much to hymnology. In this country there are (1961) 40 churches, with 2,807 members. It is best known for its zeal in Missionary work, there being something like 154,000 baptized Christians on its Mission Stations in East and South Africa, Labrador, Alaska, Central and South America, West Indies, and India. Its contribution per head to Missionary work is far above that of any other community. It has also had great influence on other bodies, especially on Methodism.

#### *Organisation and Worship*

The Church is Episcopal in government and each province is governed by a Synod in which there is lay representation. It cherishes its ancient traditions, but is thoroughly evangelical. Its theological College is situated in Manchester, where its Ministry is trained. Its worship is liturgical with an admixture of extemporary elements and perhaps the most simple of all liturgical churches. The fullest services are those of Morning and Evening Prayer, in each of which a full liturgy is provided. Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons are all ordained by the same rite with change of words appropriate to the specific office. The Bishop is the minister of ordination. Infant and Believers' Baptism are both provided for, and Confirmation follows; but the minister of Confirmation may be a Presbyter. The Lord's Supper has its own rite, but it is left very much to the Minister's discretion and little in the way of liturgy is provided for it. The liturgy provides only for the Words of Institution and the words, "Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ's body was given for you, and feed upon him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving." From the hymns provided for the Lord's Supper it would appear that a deeper mystical meaning is read into the service than would appear from the Liturgy. Services are also provided for marriage and burial and a special Litany to be said on Easter and Whitsunday mornings and the first Sunday in Advent.

#### *Its Evangelical Character*

The Moravian Church appeals mainly to people of some culture and most Moravians are people of quiet disposition, with a deep evangelical experience of religion, and given to good works. They possess the virtues of extreme evangelicalism without most of its defects. No credal tests are imposed on the members, but it is assumed that each will have an experience of the saving work of Christ. Creeds are not in use either in the Baptismal service or the Lord's Supper. Moravians recognise the essential unity of the Church beneath all divergencies of experience. A main feature is the intimate fellowship of its members one with another. The extreme evangelism is seen in the fact that Baptism seems to be little other than the consecration and dedication of the child and its entrance into the community. It appears to have no relationship

to the remission of sins as in the Anglican rite. It appears also in the fact that whilst Episcopal Succession is valued it is not considered of the *esse* of the Church. Moravians would have no difficulty in recognising non-episcopal Ministries. It is further seen in the subjective nature of many of the hymns sung and the generally subjective character of worship differing strangely from the character of worship as found in 17th and 18th century Reformed Churches and as represented in the hymns of Isaac Watts, but not from the Protestantism of the nineteenth century.

W. Robinson.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

April 4	Isaiah:42:1-17	Matt. 12:1-21
April 11	Ecclesiastes 12	Matt. 12:22-37
April 18	Jonah 3	Matt. 12:38-50
April 25	Isaiah 6	Matt. 13:1-23

### THE SABBATH

The word **Sabbath** means rest. In Exodus we read: **“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy”** (20:8-11, N.I.V.).

The Jewish Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday. “The day is ushered in when the housewife lights candles before sunset. An important part of the evening prayer is **Lechan Dodi** (‘Come, my friend, to meet the bride’), in which the Sabbath is likened to a new bride” (Dictionary of Judaism). This is interesting, because I recall a visit to a Conservative Jewish synagogue in Jerusalem when hundreds of us turned at one point to face the main door to welcome the Sabbath bride. At the close of the meeting we all shook hands and wished one another a **shalom sabbath** (a peaceful sabbath).

Jesus challenged the Pharisees on their views on the Sabbath. He, of course, had every right to do so because **“the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day”** (12:8). The Pharisees were guilty of legalism, bigotry and fault-finding. They had missed the whole point of the Sabbath because they had elevated it far above the well-being of man. No wonder that Jesus told them that it was **“lawful to do well on the sabbath days”** (12:12). He also said once: **“The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath”** (Mark 2:27).

### BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is a personality of the Godhead or Godhood. In the Authorised Version He is often given the title “Holy Ghost”. There was nothing wrong with the term “ghost” in 1611 as it was synonymous with the word guest. However, it is not used today for obvious reasons.

The word “blasphemy” is a transliteration of a Greek word **blasphemia**, which “is practically confined to speech defamatory of the Divine Majesty” (W.E. Vine). But what precisely was “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?” (12:31). From the context of Jesus’ words, it was to deliberately attribute to Satan the power by which Jesus performed His miracles, against all evidence and for the purpose of deflecting the hearts of humble men and women from faith in Him” (W. Carl Ketcherside). A key verse on this subject is found in Mark 3:30. where we read: “

... because they said He has an unclean spirit". Jesus said: "And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaks against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (12:32). But why? The simplest answer is that God has placed it outside the pale of Divine forgiveness. It is beyond the limit set for grace.

Can people commit the unpardonable sin today? Yes, I think it is possible. After all, Jesus talked of "the world to come" and this refers to the Messianic age of which we are a part. This sin is as unforgiveable now as it was when Jesus said it.

#### THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH

Jonah was an outstanding prophet of the Old Testament. As far as Jesus was concerned, he was a historical figure, and that is good enough for me. What an impact Jonah made upon the citizens of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire! They repented at his preaching, for it was a message of coming judgment by the true God of heaven.

Jesus said: "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (12: 39-40). Dear reader, I do not know if you have ever thought about this, but if Jesus was in the tomb for three days and three nights, how could He possibly have died and be buried on the Friday (Good Friday)? The answer to this "problem", I believe, is clearly revealed in a debate.

In 1870 the great David King debated with the sceptic Charles Bradlaugh on the subject: "Is Christianity of Divine Origin?" The question of the exact fulfilment of the sign of the prophet Jonah arose. Bradlaugh said: "He (King) told you that he does believe that Jesus was three days and nights in the grave; that

it is not true, as the Bible says, that He was buried on Friday night. Well I think it is, and I'll refer you again to Mark 15:42,43 — 'And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, who also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus'. The Jewish Sabbath is, and always has been, Saturday, so that the day before the Sabbath was Friday, and it was on the eve of that day that Joseph craved for the body of Jesus ... It must have been far advanced in the Friday evening before Joseph of Arimathea buried the body of Jesus ... then I ask Mr. King, where are his three days and three nights? King replied: "Mr. Bradlaugh said that He was put into the grave on Friday night, and as he turned to the Book I was waiting to hear him read something about Friday, but of course he did not. I heard him read something about the Sabbath and I heard him infer that the day before the Sabbath was Friday. He said it must be so, because the Sabbath was Saturday ... But I deny that that Sabbath must have been a Saturday and that is where the whole question hangs. Why do I say so? Because in connection with the Passover (and it was at this period Christ was crucified), there were other Sabbaths than the seventh-day Sabbath. Turn back to the law of the Passover as originally given and you will find not merely one, but more than one Sabbath, and it is quite possible that the Saviour may have been in the grave not only two Sabbaths, but even three, that is, three days in succession may have been Sabbaths ... Mr. Bradlaugh will have to prove that the particular Sabbath mentioned was a Seventh-day Sabbath, and not a high day, or special Sabbath appertaining to the Passover week".

#### THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Jesus was a master teacher. He drew upon daily life for His illustrative material and He pointed people to sublime truths by use of those things with which

they were all familiar. We read: “Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; He did not say anything to them without using a parable” (Matthew 13:34, N.I.V.). But Matthew reveals (13: 11-17) something interesting about parables. “To those whose eyes were open, whose ears were alert and whose minds were receptive, the parables were luminous, revealing ‘the mystery of the kingdom of God’. To the others, however, they remained riddles ...” (F.F. Bruce).

The Parable of the Sower was clearly explained to the disciples by Jesus (13: 18-23). The seed represented “the word of the kingdom” (13:19). This ties in with a statement by the apostle Peter: “... being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). Thanks be to God for His wonderful word!

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

## QUOTES ON RELIGION

“Men will wrangle for religion, write for it, fight for it, die for it, anything but live for it.”

C. C. Colton.

“We Jews have a secret weapon in our struggle with the Arabs — we have no place to go.”

Golda Meir.

“Mystic: a person who is puzzled by the obvious, but who understands the non-existent.”

E. Hubbard.

“The various modes of religion which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true: by the philosopher as equally false: and by the Magistrate as equally useful.”

Edward Gibbon.

“Religion is a way of walking, not talking.”

W. R. Inge.

“The worst moment for the atheist is when he is really thankful, and has nobody to thank.”

Dante G. Rossetti.

“An atheist is a man who has no invisible means of support.”

Fulton Sheen.

“Atheism is rather on the lip than on the heart of man.”

Francis Bacon.

“You have not converted a man because you have silenced him.”

John Morley.

“A gentle Quaker, hearing a noise in his house one night, got up and discovered a burglar at work. He went and got his gun, came back and stood quietly in the doorway. ‘Friend’, he said, ‘I would do thee no harm for the world, but thou standest where I am about to shoot.’”

James Hines.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

In submitting this Balance Sheet for 1992 I want to draw your attention to the exceptional bank balance that was carried over into 1993. This was due to two gifts totalling £1300 over and above those that we regularly receive each year. These gifts in boosting our funds should enable us to hold our subscription rates through this year. We are indebted to you all for your generous support.

Reading Cards have been printed for 1993 and distributed to the churches. There are a few spare cards left if you require more. The invoice for the cards was received in January and is not therefore included in this balance sheet.

Could I again remind you to check the address label on your magazine wrapper. The top line of the label includes the date (month/year) when your subscription is due. Remember to make your cheques payable to 'THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD' rather than to me when renewing.

Thanks for your letters and the good wishes and encouragement you send to us and also for your ongoing support.

### BALANCE SHEET FOR 1992

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Bank Account 1/1/92	560.65	Printing	3624.00
		Postage	651.94
Bank Interest	160.03	Sundries	46.76
Subscriptions	2389.96		<hr/> 4322.70
Gifts	2568.88	Bank Account 1/1/93	1356.82
	<hr/> 5679.52		<hr/> 5679.52

J. K. Kneller (Treasurer)

I have examined the books, receipts, etc., and find them to be correct and in good order.

J. H. Currie (Auditor) 4th February, 1993.

## UPDATE ON NIGERIAN APPEAL

We are still receiving 2 or 3 letters every week asking for assistance, mostly for Bibles and tracts.

So far we have sent 226 new Bibles and 17 second-hand ones along with thousands of tracts, books and Christian magazines donated by various churches or individuals. Other people have asked for names and addresses and are sending copies of the Scripture Standard, correspondence courses or other Christian literature.

From the letters we are receiving the churches in Nigeria are growing at a fantastic rate. A Christian in Edo State baptised 27 people last year and established a new congregation in December. He is hoping to start another 2 churches in other villages. They are very short of Bibles and study aids.

Another person has become a Christian after reading the tracts prepared for Muslims by Allan Ashurst and Steven Masood. He says, in his days of zeal without knowledge he led many people astray but has now started the Lord's Church with his family and would like material to help, on Church doctrine, the life of Christ and Bible study aids.

Yet another letter states, "I have to inform you that this is a village that has no idea of God, apart from the few who are Seventh Day Adventists. The villagers believe in the tradition of their forefathers. I am the founder of the church in Goya started on 3rd May 1992 and members need reading materials to support themselves. Please, your effort is badly needed to assist us grow spiritually in faith and the knowledge of heaven.

We are totally out of funds and if you feel you would like to help, your

donations would be greatly appreciated, either Bibles, tracts, magazines, in fact anything connected with the Church (new or second hand) or financial aid. Cheques should be made payable to "Church of Christ Bramhall Green" (we've moved from Stretford) and sent to me at the address below.

I have been asked by most of the recipients to pass on their thanks to the people involved. One man writes "We are really encouraged by this kind gesture", and another "Thanks to all who have helped us and we thank God who has provided for us His grace and love to work in His vineyard."

Margery I. Purcell,  
3 Dale Avenue,  
Bramhall,  
Stockport  
Cheshire  
SK7 2JP

## GHANA APPEAL

The work in Ghana continues in Ghana enthusiastically. We have just received some photographs from the church in Angu showing the progress of the building of their meeting place. We can see the roof trusses being manhandled into place by the members themselves. The church committee wrote to inform us that they are short of funds for the iron sheeting for the roof and we have sent some of the Appeal funds to pay for this. The entire work has been carried out by church members except for the work of a mason when needed. The parcels of clothes and spectacles given in October have now arrived. Thank you IMB for £50 received on 22nd January, 1993 (receipt No. 412). Please continue to support this work as there are greater needs than the present funds permit.

Donations to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline. Fife KY12 0DU. Cheques should be made out to Graeme Pearson "Ghana Appeal".

## OBITUARY

**Wallacestone:** It is with deep regret that the Church at Wallacestone records the death of Sister Beatrice Marshall at the age of 85 years.

Baptized on the 25th February 1964, by the late Bro. David Dougal, she remained faithful to her Lord, and her quiet and dignified presence will be sadly missed.

James Grant,  
Secretary.

**Pittenweem:** Brother Jimmy Hughes aged 86 years who was fascinated by the sheer size of God's creation was found in a coma on Sunday 17th January having suffered a stroke during the night. He died in Victoria Infirmary at 8 p.m. on 22nd January still in a coma. He was an East Coast Fisherman all his working days continuing even into his seventies. Jimmy will always be fondly remembered by all in the Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline congregations. He had a childlike faith in God loving to talk about his Saviour and he was always rejoicing in the Lord. We thank the Lord for the example of faithfulness and the sincerity found in Jimmy. Even as he began to show signs of frailty, he continued once a month to travel about 40 miles by bus to visit the congregation in Dunfermline, changing buses twice. He was a very close friend of Brother Jim Davidson. He will be a great loss to the church but we rejoice that he has gone to be with the Lord which is far better.

Graeme Pearson.

## COMING EVENTS

**Tranent:** Social to be held (DV) on Saturday, 13th March, 1993 in Lochside

Centre, Tranent at 4.00 p.m.

Please make a note of the date

Speakers to be announced later

(This is Tranent Church's 100 years anniversary.)

**Kirkcaldy:** Annual Social is scheduled for 17th April, 1993.

God willing

Speaker: M. Gaunt

## I WONDER

I wonder what makes some children of God think they would enjoy themselves in Heaven, spending eternity with God, the Lord Jesus, and the redeemed of all ages when it appears they do not enjoy spending an hour or two with Him and His brethren on the Lord's Day in worship.

I wonder how some members think the voice of our Lord will sound so sweet at the judgement when His voice through His written word holds no interest for them at all.

I wonder how people think they can expect to escape the wrath of God in the day of judgement, when they live lives of indifference, neglect, disobedience and sin during this worldly sojourn.

I wonder how people expect to reap that which was not sown, or how they expect to harvest life while sowing death or how they can lay-up heavenly treasures but never make any deposits, or how they can expect to grow spiritually but never engage in spiritual exercises.

H. SPURLOCK.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### "Let your light shine"

Life's like a shop window, so why not display

Those things that give pleasure to folks by the way?

Christianity is to save us; we are not to save Christianity. God can take care of His own; He does not need that His own should take care of Him. Our business is not to defend the truth but to use it; not to maintain the Gospel but to proclaim it; not preserve Christianity but to trust ourselves to its preserving power. (Lyman Abbot).

Nobody seems to know who wrote this poem, but I found it well worth pondering:

Men don't believe in the devil now

As their fathers used to do;

They reject one creed because its old,

And another because it's new.

They may say the Devil has never lived;

They may say the Devil has gone;

But simple folk would like to know —

Who carries the business on?

Doubtful amusements are like doubtful eggs — so likely to be bad that it is safer to leave them alone.

Holy life will produce the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns — they simply shine.

---

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER YEAR — POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH ..... £ 7.00

CANADA & U.S.A. .... \$13.00

AIR MAIL please add £2.00 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

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

Telephone: Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian, Scotland EH37 5PT. Telephone: Ford 320 527

---

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by  
Lothian Printers, 109 High Street, Dunbar, East Lothian. EH42 1ES. Tel: (0368) 63785