

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE UNTRANSLATED WORD

Our churches are sometimes accused of having too much to say about baptism, and this is, perhaps, because other churches say far too little about it, and, even then, give false teaching on the subject. As this is the first time, in this paper, that I have written on the subject the accusation certainly cannot be aimed at the "Scripture Standard" with any justification. Indeed I write upon it only because the topic has come up at our weekly Bible-Study meeting at Haddington. Of recent weeks we have been discussing music in the worship (instrumental music in particular) and currently we are dealing with the various aspects of baptism. A local clergyman (minister of Church of Scotland) has accepted our invitation to attend and is presenting the mainstream-church point of view. We have had to take issue with him on his assertion that baptism means "any application of water; by immersion, pouring or sprinkling". Our clergyman friend also insists that while baptism may have meant immersion in classical Greek it does not have such a meaning in New Testament Greek.

CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM

It may be helpful to younger members, or indeed to anyone who does not already know, how it is that there is, apparently, room for varying points of view on the meaning of this word '**baptism**'. Does God's word not tell us exactly what baptism involves? Are we left to our own discretion in the matter?

David King, in his excellent little booklet (of 1891) on the question, reminds us that the problem can be traced back to the translation of the King James Version (K.IV), and even before that. Bro. King points out that although the Greek **baptizo** (verb; to baptise) and the Greek **baptisma** (noun: baptism) occur some 126 times in the N.T. they have never been translated into the proper English words (which would be **immerse** and **immersion**, respectively). If the translators of the KJV (and the translators of previous versions, like the Bishop's Bible) had been allowed to translate the Greek properly and had rightly employed the word **immersion** in these versions then we, today, would not find it necessary to argue about 'the various modes of baptism'. The translators were too honest to translate the Greek words incorrectly, and translate them by 'pour' or 'sprinkle', so they left them alone and declined to translate them. They did, however, 'doctor' 'baptizo' a little just to make it look like an English word. They changed the 'o' into an 'e' and came up with the word '**baptise**' (and baptism). Thus, instead of translating the word they merely anglicised it (made the Greek look rather English). And so they preserved their personal integrity as scholars, probably quite unaware of the terrible legacy handed down to succeeding generations saddled with endless arguments as to the true meaning of the term.

We might think that the translators were not really very honest by doing this thing, but we must remember that they were not entirely free agents when they translating the KJV. They laboured under the patronage of King James I and in (when they started the work) were given elaborate rules to observe. The two i rules (for our present purposes) were (1) They had to follow closely to (the pre> version) The Bishop's Bible and make as few changes as possible; and (2) All ecclesiastical words' had to be retained and the example quoted was that they i not change 'Church' to 'congregation.' Thus 'baptise' would be regarded as an ecclesiastical word and was, therefore, retained untranslated. (There seems, < today, to be a conspiracy of silence with regard to Bible Translations and a g reluctance to 'rock the boat' as far as settled opinion goes on these matters. I nc that even with the Revised Version (of 1881) the Preface states that the transla were "to introduce as few alterations as possible ... our task was revision, not re-tr rlation". Consequently, even in the Revised Version, 'baptism', the transliterated sion of 'baptizo', survives until this day. One exception is "The Authentic New Te ment" (by H.J. Schonfield) and he employs 'immerse' and 'immersion' all the through, and in his Preface states that his purpose was **not** to employ in his transla "familiar ecclesiastical words where they could be avoided".)

Why then were the translators of the KJV circumscribed by the rules laid d(by their reigning monarch? And why were these honest men not allowed to as their scholarship with regards to 'baptizo', but rather forced to fudge the issue? It because the main-stream churches practiced sprinkling, and pouring, as baptism they wanted to continue such practices. If a full and true translation of 'bapt: (immerse) had been allowed it would, of course, in one fell swoop, have decla these practices unscriptural and brought them to an end. King James I, the Bish< and all the other Church Leaders realised this quite readily and so would not all this dangerous word to be translated. The word was left intact, albeit made to lc slightly 'English', so that the then present, and later, generations could make it m< whatever they wanted it to mean.

THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

Notwithstanding this problem with the untranslated word, it is still quite possib from incidents and attendant circumstances involved with the baptism of converts N.T. times, to show that 'baptise' means to dip, immerse or plunge the candidate ir water. For instance, we know (from Matt. 3:5,6) that John The Baptist immers candidates **in** the river Jordan. When Jesus, Himself, was baptised we read that "**1** went up straightway out of the water". To have a little water sprinkled on the bn does not necessitate two grown men to wade waist-deep into the water, but **it necessary** if one of them is to be immersed. Indeed no man, in his right mind, wou wade waist-deep into a fast-flowing river unless it was really necessary. John w baptising in Aenon, near to Salim, "because there was **much water** there". If Jol had been sprinkling his subjects, or pouring a palmful of water upon them, a fe pailfuls of water would have sufficed for thousands of such 'baptisms', but he partic larly went to a certain part of the river where there was "**much water**". Are there ai clergymen around us who insist upon wading waist-deep into the local river to sprink a few drops on the head of the baby they carry in their arms? Are there? In Acts 8: we again encounter two men wading into a pool of water that baptism may take plao when doubtless there was sufficient water in the chariot for a 'sprinkling' to have bee carried out. If Philip had intimated to the eunuch that he intended sprinkling a fe drops of water upon him is it likely that they would have been looking out for a po(or pond in a desert so that the baptism could take place. "See, here is water," sai the eunuch (here is sufficient water), "What doth hinder me to be baptised." Th analogy used by Paul (in Rom. 6) only serves to reinforce the view that baptism is

watery grave where the candidate leaves behind the 'old man' with all his sins and evil past, and rises to walk in a newness of life. Paul says, "we are buried with Him (Christ) **by baptism**" and surely this would have been a bizarre figure-of-speech if 'sprinkling' had been baptism. But, through baptism we are "planted together" in the likeness of His death, and shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection: rising to walk in newness of life. (v.5). Paul repeats exactly these same sentiments in Col. 2:12, and likens baptism to a burial and a rising again: something only possible if baptism is immersion. It is sometimes argued that the baptism of the Israelites (mentioned in I Cor. 10:2) could not have involved immersion (whereas the Egyptians who followed them were indeed immersed and all perished). What happened to these Israelites is quite in accord with the meaning of baptism in that they were entirely covered over, or engulfed, by the sea walled-up on each side and the cloud above their heads. In like manner those baptised **in** the Holy Spirit were engulfed in it, overwhelmed by it, and eventually they were 'filled' with it.

There is also the strong testimony of the **Greek Lexicons**. Every Greek lexicographer of any note gives as the meaning of 'baptize' to dip, immerse, plunge, engulf or overwhelm. Space here does not permit the mention of them, but there are dozens who fall into this category, and there are **none** that I know of who would give 'sprinkling' or 'pouring' as even secondary meanings of 'baptizo'.

EVIDENCE OF THE SEPTUAGINT

Although the translators of the KJV were not allowed to translate 'baptizo' for the political reasons described above, the 72 scholars who produced the Septuagint had no such qualms.

The Septuagint was the earliest translation of the O.T. from the Hebrew into the Greek language and was so-named because some 70 scholars (LXX) were commissioned to do this work; actually there were 72 (6 from each of the tribes of Israel). These men were summoned to the work, from Jerusalem to Alexandria, by King Ptolemy Philadelphus (who died 247 B.C.). The reason for wanting the OT in the Greek was that the numbers of Greek-speaking Jews had increased greatly everywhere in general, and in Egypt, Asia and Palestine in particular. The language of the Septuagint was the common or Hellenic Greek and answers the criticism that the definition of "baptizo" in Classical Greek differed from N.T. Greek. The testimony the Septuagint offers is, therefore, decisive as to the meaning of 'baptizo' in the N.T. — both using the same Greek diction. How, then, is this word used in the Septuagint? There are some 13 cases of it and each time it is rendered 'dip' or 'dipped'. A classic example **is** in the well-known incident involving the cure of the leper Naaman. In 2nd Kings 5:14 we read "And Naaman went down and baptised himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God". The word in this passage is baptizo and can there be any doubt as to how the translators construed it — but to immerse? Even the translators of the KJV so understood it for they render it "dipped himself", and so it has appeared in the KJV for about the last 400 years. The Hebrew word in the O.T. was **taval** which Stokius in his Hebrew Dictionary defines as "to dip, dip in, immerse, submerge, baptize." Not a mention here of sprinkling or pouring. It is interesting in Naaman's case that he was also told to "wash and be clean" and this illustrates the difference between dip and wash. 'Wash' involved the word **luo**, not baptizo. And so the Septuagint is a very powerful tool in discovering the true meaning of the Greek **baptizo**, and perhaps we should make more of it.

Finally, I would again mention Bro. David King's interesting booklet on this subject, and refer to a quote he makes from a study made by President Shannon, Professor of Ancient Languages, University of Georgia. The professor compiled a table of passages where the words 'Dip', 'Pour', 'Sprinkle' and wash appeared in the English Bible with the corresponding terms used in the Greek of the N.T. and

the Septuagint Version of the O.T. '**Dip**' appeared in 21 passages and in each case bapto or baptizo was found in the Greek. '**Sprinkle**' he found in 27 passages but never was bapto or baptizo used in the Greek. Usually the Greek **raino**, or rantizo, was used. '**Pour**' he found in 119 cases but **never** was bapto or baptizo used. In most cases some form of the Greek **cheo** was used. '**Wash**' he found 32 times in the Bible, but again, bapto or baptizo was **never** used but invariably the Greek **nipto** (exception was Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38 where baptizo was used and dip was intended). Thus, after closely examining an incredible number (199) of passages using dip, sprinkle, pour and wash the professor found that these words are **never** used interchangeably and by no stretch of the imagination can it **ever** be said that baptize means to sprinkle, pour or wash. The professor concludes, "History does not furnish a more visionary idea, or one more opposed to sober reason, and to the well established reputation and accuracy of the Greek language, than that it should, **or could**, express dip, pour, sprinkle, wash, and wet or moisten, **by one word**. Even the English does not do this, much less the Greek, which, as we have just seen, is vastly more accurate and choice in its use of terms. In short baptize never means anything else than dip, except when used figuratively; and even then **dip** is the basis of the figure. If this truth is not **indisputable**, then indeed, it ne^er can be proved that there is a single word in any language which possesses a definite signification."

I hope I have been able to show that, quite apart from the non-translation of baptizo by the makers of our Bibles, it is still possible to demonstrate the only and true meaning of this important word and that there exists **no evidence whatever** indicative of it having a variety of definitions. For those interested in a more exhaustive study I would suggest that the works of Josephus abound in the use of the word baptize and indicate, each time, that he understood the word to mean only an immersion. Josephus was a contemporary of Jesus (born only 37 years later) and, because he wrote in very contemporary Greek (Hellenistic Greek), his writings, like the Septuagint, bear strong testimony to the N.T. meaning of baptism (being neither sprinkling or pouring but a dipping under the surface of the water); e.g. Jewish Ant B 15»Ch. 3:3; B 9 Ch. 10:2; B 10 Ch. 9:4 etc. etc.

No, I do not think our churches say too much about this subject: probably we do not say enough. Perhaps the fact that the translators of the Authorised Version **were not allowed** to translate the word, and succeeding generations of Version-makers **have refused** to translate the word, speaks for itself and says it all.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

I SHALL BE SATISFIED

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness." — Psalm 17:15

"What wonderful words of life are these. How triumphantly, and how confidently the Psalmist speaks. "I will," "I shall," there is not the slightest expression of doubt or peradventure. The verse has about it all the freedom and confidence of New Testament teaching. It is one of the few statements found in the Old Testament, which point forward to resurrection and future glory; and in my judgment one of the clearest of the few.

A GOLDEN CASKET

It is a golden casket containing the precious gems of resurrection, vision, resemblance, satisfaction, and these appear in proper order. The two, vision and resemblance, involve all the rest. They form the consummation of the believer's bliss.

The hill-top of his most ardent hopes and expectations. They are linked inseparably together, the one cannot exist without the other.

WHY IT WOULD BE HELL ITSELF

If there be no vision there can be no resemblance, the vision of God without likeness to God would be miserable indeed. Imagine oneself placed in heaven's glory, beholding God in all His beauty and perfection, as manifested in the person of the Saviour, and yet no likeness to God, no oneness of mind with Him, no affinity with Him; why it would be hell itself.

THEN SUPPOSE THE CONTRARY

Then suppose the contrary, that we are conformed to the image of God, possessing a divine nature, spiritual perception, and yet do not see God, there would be no satisfaction in that, but the reverse, for there would be the strong desire, the earnest craving, and yet no object of gratification. Such a condition would but aggravate our misery, and produce intense and incessant dissatisfaction

"AS FOR ME"

The Psalmist draws a contrast between himself and others. In the 14th verse he speaks of "men of the world," whose portion is in "this life" and who are satisfied with the present, whose hopes and expectations are bounded by this life's horizon. But he says "as for me," it is vastly different. "As for me," my inmost desire is, to see thy face and be made like thee. Nothing short of this will satisfy me. Herein is the radical difference (between) the saint and the sinner. The latter seeks satisfaction anjj gratification in worldly things. The former can be satisfied with nothing short of beholding the face of the Lord and becoming like Him

THE REAL TEST OF TRUE GODLINESS

While the world is asking who will show us any good? the saints say "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." And while "men of the world have their portion in this life," the believer says "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." This is the real test of true godliness, not pious phrases, nor sanctimonious actions, nor merely good desires. But an earnest burning, intense and incessant desire to be like God.

BEHOLD HIS FACE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

This desire is begun to be realised here and grows stronger and stronger, as we come to know more of the Lord and His ways but will not find its completion until the resurrection morn, for then, and not till then shall believers behold His face in righteousness and not till then will they awake in His likeness."

Bartley Ellis.

GOD'S WILL

"It is God's will that I should cast, My care on Him each day.
He also asks me not to cast, my confidence away.
But oh! how stupidly I act, when taken unawares,
I cast away my confidence, and carry all my cares."

C.G

LIGHT - LOVE - FRAGRANCE

"To give light and love and fragrance in this desert world enriches rather than impoverishes the giver."

Leonard Sheldrake.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

WHICH ARE YOU?

In 1 Cor. 2:14 Paul refers to the Natural Man; in the next verse to the Spiritual Man and in the first verse of the next chapter to the Carnal Man. Now, so far as I am aware, these are inclusive classes: there is no other class of persons. Each of us belongs to one or the other of these three, and I pray that we may be led during the progress of this study to discover very definitely to which of these we belong. First let us touch upon the subject doctrinally, then experimentally, then illustratively and last typically, calling your attention to passages first at the end of Scripture and moving backward towards its commencement.

For a moment let us look at the matter doctrinally. What is meant by the **Natural Man**, the **Carnal Man**, and the **Spiritual Man**? What are the characteristics of these men respectively? To summarize at once: the Natural man is unsaved, unconverted not born again. The Carnal Man is a saved man but he is not surrendered to the will of God. His affections are not set on things above. The Spiritual man is a saved man in right relation to God and going places.

The Natural Man

Now look at the Natural Man. Notice that there are three things said about Him: He receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; he will not have them, he rejects them; they are foolishness unto him, he rejects them because he sees no value in them. In the next place, and mark this word, he is incapable of understanding spiritual and divine things. He cannot know them because they are spritually discerned. Are we not foolish then to try to make the Natural Man understand the deep spiritual things of God. He has nothing to see them with. You can pick up a piece of seaweed, on the sea shore and look at it and see nothing but seaweed, yet it is teeming with life. Put is under a microscope and you will at once see that it is densely populated. Why could you not see it before? Because it was not discernable to the naked eye. The Natural Man cannot see or understand and know spiritual things because they are spiritually discerned. There must be sight and the soul's eye must be adjusted to the instrument by means of which all the glories of God stand unfolded to our vrsion. That is why the mission of Paul was described as "to open their eyes." How? By the preaching of the gospel. The Natural Man cannot know the things of God? Why? Because he is dead and a dead man cannot see. There is but one instrument to remove his blindness and that instrument is the gospel. The sinner is spoken of under various figures in God's Word. He is a rebel against God, He is a leper foul with disease, he is a lost sheep, but the figure of death is the strongest - he is dead in trespasses and sins. Yet if there be one in that condition his case is not hopeless for as a result of hearing and obeying the gospel the dead in sin may become dead to sin and alive to God with keen vision and good appetite for the things of God.

The Carnal Man

Now let us look at the Carnal Man. He has life and has vision. In the letter of our text Paul is addressing the church at Corinth, and will you notice in chapter 3 verse 3 what he said characterized them: among them there was envy instead of love, strife instead of peace, discord and faction instead of unity. The condition of the church is reflected through the entire epistle. Read it and see.

The Carnal Man is one whose state does not correspond with his standing, one who is not in the sight of men what he is in the person of Christ before God. There is life in the Carnal Man but no right growth. The apostle in speaking of great and exalted things says of Melchizedek, "**We have many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing, for when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk and not strong meat. Meat belongeth**

to the mature, to those who by reason of the exercise of their spiritual senses have come to discern between good and evil."

There are three stages in the Christian life. There is the stage at which the christian is fed, the stage at which he feeds himself and the stage at which he feeds others. The carnal man hardly ever gets to the stage where he feeds himself and never does he get to the place where he can feed others. He stands in perpetual need of being fed by others. The Carnal Man lives in God but does not walk with God. Paul says, "To be carnally minded is death." The Carnal Man may be highly gifted as the Corinthians were, for they came behind in no gift, but lacking in grace. We must distinguish between gifts and grace. The Carnal Man is a spiritual babe at a time when he should not be. There is nothing more lovely than babyhood at its time and in its season. And by the same token, there is nothing more disgusting than a grown up baby. It is the babies who are deceived by the winds of false doctrine. It is the babies who lie open to all error - all the diseases that threaten and attack the soul.

The Spiritual Man

Now let us look at the Spiritual Man. I think we can describe him in a sentence. He is a man who is becoming what he is. If you will study the New Testament in the light of that description, you will find it a most fruitful study. For every spiritual man is saved and yet he is instructed to **"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."** Every child of God is sanctified and yet the Word says, **"By the which will through the offering of the body of Christ, we were sanctified. By one offering He has perfected forever them who are being sanctified."** Again we are saints and because we are saints we have to become holy even as He is holy. Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened. Ye are unleavened, therefore become unleavened by purging out all that is evil from the life.

The Spiritual Man is a man who is daily becoming down here on earth in the sight of men, what he completely is already before God in the Person of Jesus Christ. That is the whole philosophy of the Christian life as I understand it. That is not true of the Natural Man because he is making no progress.

Well, so much for the matter doctrinally — Now experimentally. If you will turn at your leisure to Romans 7: 7-13 you will find a picture of the Natural Man. Sin is disclosed and discovered by the law, by the revealed will of God which is righteous, just, holy and true. **"I had not known sin except the law had said Thou shalt not."** Then from the 14th verse to the end of the chapter you see a picture of the Carnal Man. In those twelve verses you get the words I, my and me upwards of forty times and no mention whatever of the Spirit of God. In chapter eight there is a picture of the Spiritual Man with upwards of twenty references to the Spirit. The Spiritual Man is presented as in all the purpose of God, all things working for his good.

Illustratively

Now look at the matter illustratively. In John 11: 41-44 and 12:2. First we see Lazarus dead. That is the Natural Man. Jesus said, Lazarus come forth and he that was dead came forth. Life was by the quickening Word. Now Lazarus is an illustration of the Carnal Man for he stands bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and with napkin about his head. He could not witness for God; his head was tied up; He could not walk with God; his feet were bound together; he could not work for God; his arms were tied. Yet he was alive. Carnality paralyzes Christian service.

In the beginning of John 12 we find Lazarus sitting at the table with Jesus. Jesus had said loose him and let him go. His grave bandages were taken away and he was set gloriously free. Then we have a picture of his enjoying fellowship with his Lord at the table. Martha, his sister, waits on them. There is Service. Lazarus sat and talked with Jesus. There is fellowship. Mary anointed the Master's feet. There is worship. A beautiful picture of the Christian life in its fulness and perfection.

Typically

Now let us look at our subject typically. We will go back to the books of Exodi and Joshua. There we find ancient Israel in three places: First of all in Egypt, the in the wilderness, then in Canaan's goodly land. In Egypt Israel is typical of the Natur Man, in the wilderness of the Carnal Man, and Canaan of the Spiritual Man. Egy: is a type of the powers of darkness, and Israel there is a type of the soul in darknes bound, in slavery, in misery, in despair, lashed by the lash of the taskmaster and wi the glorious blessing that God had purposed for them all undreamed of and unrealize But when we come to Israel in the wilderness we find a **redeemed people**. They hj been sheltered by the Passover blood and had been baptized unto Moses in the cloi and sea. They were also a **separated people**. They had been translated from Pharoah kingdom into a Kingdom over which God ruled. But they were not an **obedient peopl** They provoked God and wasted 38 years outside the circle of the Divine will. The were marking time and most of them never got into the Canaan. A good picture t the Carnal Man. But look at them in the land. Through the bed of the Jordan ar up into the land they came, following the Divine counsel and obeying the Divine wil In the land they were aggressive: they immediately set about the conquest of the foes. They put a wedge right in the centre of the land and thus separated the tribe North and South, and then they went south and north and conquered. If our spiritu life is to be worth anything to us or to others or to God, it must be an aggressive lif Why are we called soldiers? and why are we equipped for battle if not to fight? Ne to be in ceaseless conflict with evil within, and without, is to become stagnant in 01 spiritual life, and we will experience defeat at every turn of the way. God who h; made us to be victors must grieve as He sees us brought down for lack of faith an obedience to His blessed will. The Israelites were an aggressive people. They were victorious people. We have a revelation of the Captian of the Lord of hosts, the fir revelation of God as a soldier carrying them into the place of His promise and int the inheritance of their rest. That also has its antitype in Ephesians where we are tol that we are seated in heavenly places with Christ and we are promised victory - w are to come off more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Christians are th only people engaged in a warfare which promises victory and eternal rewards fc distinguished service. Now each of us belongs to one of these three classes. We at either Natural, Carnal or Spiritual; dead as Lazarus was, or alive and bound han and foot, or enjoying fellowship with our Lord: In Egypt, in the wilderness, or in th goodly land which?

E.G. Rocklif



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Would you please explain Acts 3 verse 19. I do not understand what the phrase "time of refreshing" means."

The Context

One of the first rules of interpretation is that the passage of Scripture under consideration should be explained in its context. Luke has recorded the dramatic events of Pentecost (Acts 2), the consternation of the people when they realised the enormity of their crime, and the inspired declaration by Peter concerning salvation

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD

We can readily understand that these were momentous days, and that Jerusalem would be in a ferment of speculation. Three thousand souls had been saved on the first day of the Gospel message being preached, and the Lord was adding to that number daily by the continued preaching of the Gospel.

We must also think about the state of mind of the Apostles. They were not only conscious of the Lord working **in** them, but they were experiencing in a wonderful and practical way how He was working **through** them. The words were coming out of their mouths without any conscious thought on their part, but in such a clear and unambiguous way that no one could misunderstand the message. And now, even before their very eyes, a man who had been lame from birth was leaping and dancing and praising God; the people had rushed across to Solomon's Porch and had stared in awe both at the man and the Apostles, Peter and John. The new, spirit-filled Peter was not likely to let an opportunity such as that pass by, and so he began to preach to them. What did he preach? Well, dear reader, what would **you** have preached under the circumstances? He preached the Gospel, of course, and it is with this in mind that we have to approach the question. If we say, as we do, that Acts 2:38 contains the essentials for salvation as laid down by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, then we shall need to compare Acts 3:19 with **that** Scripture in order to see if they are in agreement with each other. In the process, it will do us no harm at all to say something about each element.

Prelude to Repentance

• What Peter says from vv 12-18 is a much-needed lesson for each one of us in clarity, brevity and accuracy and is certainly a model for every Gospel preacher. Let us see how his message develops:

- (a) He identifies his listeners — "Ye men of Israel".
- (b) He states the source of the power they have seen — "not us, but God and Jesus".
- (c) He pinpoints where the blame really lies — "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you".
- (d) He elevates the name of Jesus and calls for faith in Him.
- (e) He tells them they are ignorant of the Will of God expressed through the prophets.
- (f) He shows them that in spite of everything, God **will** fulfill all that He said.

Peter then, as on the Day of Pentecost, tells his listeners what they have to do in order to alleviate the guilt which their action had brought about.

Repentance

Peter has already shown that faith in Christ is a necessary prerequisite for those who would call on His name (v. 16); he then calls on them to repent, "Repent ye, therefore". As we no doubt know, the word 'therefore' relates to what has been said previously, so the call for repentance is inevitably tied to what Peter's listeners had **done** to Jesus.

Sometimes we take too simple a view of repentance. It is not just being "sorry" for what we have done, nor should it be motivated by fear of ultimate reprisals against us. It is true that "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10), but something more than sorrow is needed if we want to move toward salvation.

It is Jesus Himself who teaches us what repentance really is. He tells the parable of a man who had two sons. He said to the first that he should go to work in the vineyard, but the son said "I will not" but afterward he repented and went (Matt. 21:27-31). True repentance, according to Jesus, is when a sinner will say "I will **not** sin again, and I **will** do all that God requires of me".

Be Converted

Conversion means 'to change a person or thing into something else'. In the Christian sense it means 'turning' **from** sin, and "turning" **to** God. James says, "lie

who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, an shall cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). How is this done? Paul says, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). How do I convert sinner? By bringing him **into** Christ Jesus. How does he get 'into' Christ Jesus? By obedience to the Gospel. Where do I find the Gospel? In the Word of God, the Bible Paul tells us that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). Peter makes an important declaration about God's Word, "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). James also tells us that we should "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

We are converted when we turn from sin to God. The **act** of conversion is the act of obedience to God through Christ. Paul in his Roman letter says, "But God be thanked, that ye **were** the servants of sin, but ye have **obeyed** from the heart that **form** of doctrine (the Gospel) which was delivered you. Being **then** (when they had obeyed) made free from sin, ye **became** (they weren't before) the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6: 17,18. The words in brackets are mine). The act of obedience is Baptism (immersion in water).

Not a lot need be said about the 'blotting out' of sin; the phrase is almost self-explanatory. To 'blot out' means 'to wipe away, wash out, smear over completely'. Hence, metaphorically, in the case of sin it means to remove, wipe out, obliterate: from God's point of view, to be remembered no more.

Times of Refreshing

The verb 'to refresh' means to impart fresh vigour, reanimate; it also has the idea of obtaining relief. In Cor. 16:17, 18, Paul says that he was glad of the coming of Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaicus, "for they have refreshed my spirit and yours". In 2 Cor. 7:13 Paul speaks about "the spirit of Titus being refreshed by you all".

As a Christian I may well ask myself the question, "Well, when **am** I reanimated, revitalised and reinvigorated? Surely the answer must be when **I** have obeyed the Gospel and become the recipient of the Holy Spirit. **He** refreshes my soul. **He** brings the life of the Godhead into **my** life so that I may understand, through the Word, the new life given by God. **He** is the one who brings the balm to my soul when it has been relieved of sin. How precious to us is this great gift of God.

Comparison

When we compare Acts 2:38 with Acts 3:19 we realise that they are both saying the same things. Both passages call for repentance on the part of the believer. In Acts 3:19 we have 'be converted' in place of 'be baptised', but who can be converted **without** being baptised? One says 'for the remission of sins', the other says 'sins blotted out'. And finally we have an explanation of what the gift of the Holy Spirit means in Acts 2:38; it is the 'time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord'.

After Peter's first recorded sermon in Acts 2:38 three thousand souls were saved; after his second recorded sermon in Acts 3:19 five thousand souls were saved. Would anyone have the courage to suggest that Peter preached a **different** sermon on the second occasion than he did on the first. Surely that would be stretching credibility to the limit when the observed result of the preaching was so patently the same. No, he followed his Master's instructions completely when he said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16: 15, 16). Long may the Holy Spirit refresh the lives of all Christians.

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

WHAT GOD COULD HAVE DONE

We are constantly impressed with the limitless, immeasurable power of our God! His awesome power is summed up in Jeremiah 32:17, where we read, "Nothing is too hard for thee". Why should mortals wonder at the miracles of God? It was God who set the laws of nature into motion in the first place - it is no great thing for Him to use them, or to stop them!

One thing we note about the ability of God is this: when He uses His power for the benefit of mankind, He calls upon men to co-operate with Him. He will do so, and then He expects men by faith to meet Him.

Let us look at some examples from the Old Testament. Consider first the parting of the Red Sea. God had the power to part the waters alone. It was His power alone that He did the work. God did choose, however, to call upon the faith and effort of man in co-operation with Him. As you know, the waters parted only when Moses held out the rod over the sea. Further, when the Israelites were in battle it was the

terrible power of God that enabled them to defeat the enemy. God did not need the efforts of Israel's soldiers to cause the victory. He could have routed the enemy while the army of Israel sat idly in their tents. However, God called upon the faith of men to complete His purposes. Once, you will remember, the soldiers of Israel could only win so long as Moses' hands were held aloft. You see again how that God's limitless power was used only in conjunction with man's faith and effort. It is not what God could have done without man that mattered, but rather, what He did with men of faith. Even in the New Testament

this same concept is evident. Think what God could have done! He could have overpowered the whole world at the establishment of the church and compelled all men to become Christians. Instead, however, He elected to use the agency of men preaching the gospel to the lost and dying world. He determined to put the power in the Word. Even in the giving of that Word, He could have done

more and simply dropped His message from the heavens, complete and intact. He chose rather, to inspire godly men to write down and distribute His soul-saving scriptures. Again we see that it is not so important what God could have done without the help of men, but what He chose to do with men!

So it continues to be with us in the twentieth century! God will use and is using men and women of faith to do His work. Let us learn how this is true. Consider the growth of the church. God could with one stroke "convert" the world, He has the power to do so! But He does not wish to force His will upon men, so the power is in the Word, and God desires to use Christians to spread that Word. Having heard the Word, men and women of the world are free to accept it or reject it - and enjoy or suffer the consequences. The same is true regarding the faithfulness

and service of those that choose to accept the Lord. God has the power to make us all as robots, without a will of our own, and compel us to attend all worship services, do personal work and all the rest.

God has chosen, however, to inform us of our responsibility and then allow us to make the decision.

As we face our personal daily problems, we know what God could do — He has the power to shape events so that we would have no problems in this life. This is the provision He promises in Heaven, but not on earth. He has promised to help us over all rough places, however. "With every temptation, God will provide a way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13), the Bible promises. He has promised comfort and solace to the sorrowing, and strength to the weak and heavy-laden. Power that can be ours! "I can do all things through Christ", said Paul (Phil. 4:13). "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

Let us not be so much concerned about what God could do, if He wanted to, but rather be happy in the knowledge that what He has promised is enough!

R.L. Miller.

THE HUMAN TOUCH

There are some things which simply cannot be done wholesale. Effective evangelism is one of them. Let television, radio, and Bible correspondence courses do what they will, there remains the need for individual human contact and effort. "Follow-up" we call it, or "personal work". We recognize the necessity if respondents to these mass»media programs are to become Christians and not merely "contacts".

The human touch is a necessity in so many things in life, in the church, and in the home. We need always to be aware lest it be crowded out by technology, or made inadequate, by overwhelming numbers. Call it sharing, or fellowship, or service. The need for it is as deep as the need for food. There is nothing in human experience which can substitute for genuine, warm, and the simple relatedness of one human being to another. Those who lack it, as J.L. Liebman says with clear vision in his inspiring book. **Peace of Mind**, are "lonely children lost and naked in a world that has never woven a garment of love for them".

Christian men and women have within themselves truths to communicate, skills to contribute, songs to sing which demand expression. Countless other men and women have a desperate need for just such blessings. When our contribution fills a need in someone's life, even for a fleeting minute, it adds to the world's happiness, and just might lead him a little closer to his Saviour.

But the greatest blessing in caring and sharing comes back to us. Whatever gift we may possess in the way of talents or joy or property is enhanced, often without limit, by sharing it with others. Our richest experiences come when we are acting with others to achieve some common goal. If, by chance, our life in the church seems tame and dull, candor compels us to confess that it is because we are so wrapped up in our own narrow interests that we resist when others try to take us into their lives. Je^us' instructions to the rich but unhappy young ruler to "sell whatever thou hast and give it to the poor" was not directed to the welfare of the poor but to the soul of the young man.

No one who desires the good life can live buttoned-up. We have an inborn urge to give, to share, to enrich, to add the personal touch. The giving need not be of material things: they are not needed nearly so much in our frenzied culture as are the intangibles. Merely giving credit or saying a kind word is good. If we hug our impulses to ourselves, denying what we should dearly love to give, then we not only deprive our friends of something that would enrich their lives, but we reject for ourselves the greatest boon of all — the approval of the Saviour who said, "If ye do it to the least of one of these little ones, ye do it unto me."

Whatever we do, we should be heartily in earnest in doing it. Then we shall find a sense of rebirth, of controlling our own destiny. It is not expected of us that we do alone all that needs to be done. "According to one's power" was a favourite saying of Socrates, and it is a saying of great substance. Longfellow put it his way: "Give what you have. To someone it may be better than you dare to think." Our Lord blessed the widow's mite.

Let us do everything we can to support all efforts for spreading the Good News. Let us practice benevolence. Let us do all the good we can, especially to those of the household of faith. But let us remember that in the end, the work done by the individual Christian, giving, with his Saviour's help, the human touch, may be that which makes this life easier for some one to bear, and better prepares him for the life to come.

R.D. Merritt.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec. 4	Mai. 2:17to3:12	Mark 1:1-20
Dec. 11	Lev. 14:1-20	Mark 1:21-45
Dec. 18	Psalm 51	Mark 2:1-22
Dec. 25	1 Sam. 21	Mark 2:23 - 3:12

Mark's Gospel Record

Author: John Mark

(Yohanan, Hebrew; Marcus, Roman)

Mark, of course, was not an apostle. He was a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) and son of Mary, a pious woman of Jerusalem, at whose house the apostles and first Christians often assembled (Acts 12:12). He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5). However, he was separated for a time from the great apostle (Acts 13:13; 15:37-39). He subsequently accompanied Timothy to Rome at the express desire of Paul (2 Timothy 4:11). From Rome he sent salutations to Philemon (24) and the church at Colossae (Colossians 4:10).

The apostle Peter mentioned Mark in his first epistle (5:13). Many commentators are of the view that John Mark was an aide-de-camp to the apostle Peter and that he wrote his gospel record under Peter's eye and with his approbation. F. F. Bruce has written: "Mark the evangelist has left an imperishable legacy to all succeeding generations. And, as a member of three interesting circles in the early church, he provides an important link between Barnabas, Peter and Paul."

DATE and PLACE: Unknown, although it was probably the earliest of the gospel records. A date between 55 and 65 AD has been suggested.

"There is a strong early tradition that John Mark wrote it in Rome, setting down Jesus' story as he had heard it direct from the apostle Peter. This would certainly account for the gospel's extraordinary vividness." (*Lion Handbook of the Bible*).

PURPOSE: To show that Jesus Christ is the Son Of God (1:1). Simplicity and

conciseness are its characteristics. Mark concentrates on the marvellous things Jesus did and the places He went to. It is bustling with life.

KEY WORDS: "straightway" and "immediately".

TO WHOM WRITTEN: Principally Gentile Christians. Mark often explains Jewish customs so he obviously had non-Jewish readers in mind.

Miracles

We read in this portion of scripture of a number of our Lord's miracles. That the Son of God could perform such wonderful deeds is no surprise to me. It would have been a surprise if it had been otherwise. Peter said to his fellow Jews on the day of Pentecost: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders and signs (terms which describe the same thing), which God did by Him in the midst of you as you yourselves also know. . . ." (Acts 2:22). Jesus went about doing good — healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, making the deaf to hear, etc. What is staggering to me is that the Jews did not see Him for what he really was — the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. It is a tragic story, the most tragic in history.

John The Baptist

He came as a forerunner of the Messiah. His coming was prophesied (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1). Jesus later honoured him (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:24-28). His characteristics were self-denial (Matthew 3:4); courage (Matthew 3:7; 14:4); obedience (Matthew 3:15); powerful preacher (Mark 1:5); humility (Mark 1:7; John 1:19-23); holiness (Mark 6:20); burning zeal (John 5:35); did no miracle (John 10:41); suffered martyrdom (Matthew 14:10).

John said of Jesus on one occasion: "behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). These words should be read in conjunction with the following passages — John 3:28-36; 5:33; 10:41.

The Baptism Of Jesus

Why was Jesus baptized? He Himself gave the answer: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Albert Barnes has commented: "Jesus had no sin. But he was about to enter on his great work. It was proper that he should be set apart by His forerunner, and show His connection with him, and give His approbation to what John had done. He submitted to the ordinance of baptism, also, in order that occasion might be taken at the commencement of His work, for God publicly to declare his approbation of Him and His solemn appointment to the office of the Messiah."

Four Apostles Called

Simon, Andrew, James and John were fishermen by profession. But Jesus chose them for greater work — "to become fishers of men" (1:17). Fishermen are generally hard-working, courageous, patient and tenacious. These qualities would have held them in good stead in their new labours for the Master. William Barclay has written: "Jesus chose his staff with wisdom. He chose men who had learned the lessons of life not in an academy or in a seminary, but in the business of living. He chose men whom life had already moulded for his his purposes. He chose them first to be with Him, then to be sent out as ambassadors to men." Alexander Campbell said: "What school more favourable to qualify men for such an office, than the fisherman's life? Men whose ears and whose eyes are accustomed to the open air, by night and day; to the roaring of the billows, and who are constantly observing the face of nature, are the most likely to possess those senses in the greatest perfection. And, ridicule the idea who may, I will contend that good eyes and good ears were first-rate qualifications in an apostle — a defect in either would have made them perfectly incompetent to the duties of the office."

A Leper Healed

Flavius Josephus has written: "Lepers were treated as if they were dead

men." E. Masterman has commented: "No other disease reduces a human being for so many years to so hideous a wreck." Another commentator has said: "There never has been any disease which so separated a man from his fellow-men as leprosy did."

Believe it or not, but leprosy is still found in many parts of the world. I understand that annually there are two million reported cases, although actual numbers could exceed ten million. The Scottish Catholic paper I read still advertises for funds to fight this dreaded disease in Asia, Africa and Central and South America.

Jesus could heal this leper, but remember he can cleanse today the countless millions affected by a far worse disease — the leprosy of sin. Dear reader, have you been to the Great Physician for the cure?

Jesus and the Forgiveness of Sins

We read: "When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy. Son, your sins be forgiven you. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts. Why fletes this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only (2:5-7)?" It does not seem to have entered their heads that the man before them was indeed Jehovah in the flesh. The healing of the man should have proved it beyond doubt to all of them. Certainly, the miracle had a profound effect. The record says: "And immediately he arose, took up the bed and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We never saw it on this fashion." (2:12).

What I find amazing is the fact that despite all the miracles that Jesus did, so many of the witnesses in the end rejected Him. I guess it is true to say that there is none so blind as he who will not see.

The Sabbath

The commandment read: "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). By Jesus' day, the sab-

bath was hedged around with literally thousands of petty rules and regulations. The Talmudic Rabbis had listed thirty-nine major categories of prohibited work, and four of these were reaping, winnowing, threshing and preparing a meal. To the Pharisees, the disciples by their action had technically broken all these four rules and were, therefore, law-breakers. Jesus' response to this accusation was to give the example of foavid (1 Samuel 21:1-6), who, along with others, ate the shewbread normally forbidden to them. Human need had taken precedence on this occasion even over Divine law. This was as it should be as "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." (2:27).

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Iiverston: Rejoice with us over the **Daptism** of two young souls: Carol and Kathryn Holden, daughters of Roger and Sandra Holden on Sunday 28th August, 1988. These were the first baptisms in our new building. May God bless these two young ladies as they devote their lives to Him.

John Stanton, Secretary.

Reading: The church recently donated a sum of £900 to purchase an item of flood monitoring equipment for a children's ward in the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

A gravel extraction company working near the Thames at Reading recently discovered a lead baptismal tank dating from the Roman period, about 300-400 A.D. When restored, this will be on show in Reading Museum. It is cylindrical, measuring about 30 inches in diameter and 20 inches deep. It is interesting to speculate whether, by kneeling down, a person of average size could be immersed in such a tank, or whether churches had moved away from the practice at that date.

After the interesting reference to the Gnostics in the September *Scripture*

Readings, readers may be interested to know that they still exist. A Gnostic meeting was recently advertised in this town, with references to doctrines identical with those in your article. We sent a tract to the advertisers, and a gentleman of Indian appearance duly attended our service for two weeks running, since when no more has been heard of the sect. (Miss) R. M. Payne,

1 Kenilworth Ave., Reading, RD3 3DL

BOOKS WANTED

The following publications urgently required:—

- (1) Bristol Tune Book
- (2) Sankey's Sacred Songs & Selections
- (3) Christian Hymnary Tune Book

Information, with prices, to David Ferguson, 2D Keir Hardie Drive, Mayfield, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 5QX. Tel 031 654 2012.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

It has been suggested to me that there is a need, and a desire, for a Church Directory to be up-dated and listing 'Old Path' congregations in Britain. Visitors from abroad are, apparently, not always sure of where to find congregations suitable, especially visitors from the U.S.A.

I shall be pleased to receive the reaction of readers to this proposal.

Editor.

TRACT - "What The Artist Left Out"

In the last report regarding the above, two months ago, the fund stood at £110. Two months later I am happy to report that due to the generosity of churches and individuals, some of whom want no acknowledgement, the fund now stands at £510.75. This is a marvellous response but still leaves us about £308 short of the cost of 40,000 copies (although it would be even better if we could stretch to 50,000 copies) and so if churches, or individuals, who have not yet contributed could see their way to help just a little we might indeed get there. Give it another thought, please.

Editor.

PURE IN HEART

"Blessed are the pure in heart ..."

(Matthew 5:8). Jesus pronounces spiritual happiness upon those whose minds, motives and principles are pure. Purity of thought and of motive is necessary before our life can truly be right. Jesus affirmed that evil deeds proceed from evil thoughts. "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander" (Matthew 15:19).

Purity of heart is essential, but let's face it, our hearts cannot be pure if we are continually pouring into our minds that which is impure. **It does matter what we see and what we read!** We need to be more selective in respect to books, magazines, and television shows — if we want to please God, that is! " ... whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8).

This beatitude also challenges us to look at our motives. It is possible to put up a "front", to look good to others, but to be impure in motive. Such was true of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23: 27,28). A very good deed can come from other than a good motive! Jesus challenges us to ask, "Why am I

doing what I am doing?" Compz Corinthians 13: 1-3.

"... for they shall see God." 1 are two ways in which this promise c apply. 1. In one sense the pure in 1 "see" or "experience" God here now, every day. They are utterly sin< and so have no reason to fear His sence. This leaves them free, thei enjoy the evidences of God in His < tion, in daily blessings, in His Word, in the gift of Christ. The promis there: "If a man loves me, he will 1 my word, and my Father will love 1 and we will come to him and make home with him" (John 14:23). On other hand, the one who knows tha deeds and motives are impure does want the presence of God, and so : even try to deny the very existenc God (cf. John 3:20).

2. After Jesus comes, in the next; the pure come into the presence of King in an even greater sense. In 1 Holy City "they shall see his face" as Himself is with them (Revelation 2 22:4). As nothing unclean can enter 1 city, purity is absolutely essential (Re lation 21:27; Hebrews 12:14). •

Are our motives pure, our thouj; clean, an honest seeker for truth ; holiness?

W. N. H;

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