

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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THE TWO COVENANTS

When Bill Clinton was given the Democratic Party's presidential nomination last July, in New York, amidst the usual euphoric reception and uproar from supporters, he gave what has been described as the greatest speech of his political career. The event was relayed on British T.V. and viewers heard, near the end of the speech, Mr. Clinton's promise that, if elected, he would seek an early opportunity to enter into a "Covenant" with the American people. "Covenant" is, I suppose, a rather old-fashioned word and when Mr. Clinton used it, his huge and emotionally charged audience were very noticeably taken aback by it, and there was a stunned silence for a few moments before the ecstatic cheering resumed. Mr. Clinton went on to describe what he meant by the word; i.e. that the proposed covenant would involve any future government of not only giving good conditions to the people but expecting, in return, a contribution of social awareness and co-operation from every individual in the nation. As I say, the word "Covenant" seemed to me to be an odd choice for a current political speech, and one would have expected him to have used words more up-to-date, like contract, compact, agreement or partnership. There is nothing whatsoever wrong with the word Covenant, of course; it just sounds a bit legalistic (Deed & Covenant), and a bit Biblical. Yes, the word is very Biblical and the first covenant between God and man appears at the very dawn of time (Gen. 2). Bill Clinton's reference to this word suggested to me that it might be of interest to have a quick glance at Covenants and Covenant-making in Bible times.

Probably the best-known Covenant in the Bible is the one made between God and His Creation, just after the great flood. "And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I behold, I will establish My COVENANT with you and with your seed after you. And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you: from all that go out of the ark." Here was a covenant that God made not only with man, but with fowl, cattle and indeed every living creature: made entirely at the behest of God's own grace: no conditions being required of man or beast. The animal kingdom is quite unaware of God's solemn undertaking on their behalf, embodied in this covenant, and so are most men. Often-times Tokens were given, or exchanged, at the making of covenants and the above covenant was no exception. "God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for A TOKEN of a covenant between Me and the earth ... And I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh: and the waters shall no more

become a flood to destroy all flesh" Gen. 9:13-17). Men, and the animal world, are beneficiaries of this early covenant today and every day.

Covenants Between God and Man, and Man and Man

"Covenant" is from Old French, and also from the Latin: *convenire*; "to agree". In the O.T. it is from the Hebrew *Berith* the root word of which means "to cut". It is interesting to note that in the LXX (Septuagint) the translators preferred to translate *Berith* into Greek *diatheke*, meaning 'Appointment', rather than *suntheke*, meaning "Contract". Why the root word for *Berith* should mean "to cut" is probably explained by the following.

The following three steps were usual in the making of covenants. (1) The terms were hammered out. (2) these terms were sworn to in some way. (3) the parties to the covenant walked between the severed pieces of slaughtered animals, apparently invoking upon themselves a like fate to the animals, should they violate their contract. From this kind of practice may have sprung up the phrase in common currency at that time, "**God do so unto me, and more also**": the phrase surviving long after the ceremony was obsolete. The terms eventually agreed between the parties in any covenant clearly depends upon the parties being on an equal footing. If they were on a largely equal basis, they would have an equal say in the formulation of the terms of any eventual arrangement. Under the old feudal system, where the participants were anything but on an equal footing, the wording of such agreements referred to the "superior" and the "inferior". At the end of a war (such as World War 1 and 11) the victors sit down with the vanquished to agree the terms of the surrender, where obviously those surrendering are in no position to dictate the conditions of the contract. This point is fairly self-evident in compacts between men and men, but it is also worth remembering when we consider covenants between God and man. God does not depend upon man for anything whatsoever, and indeed does not need man. Man, on the other hand, depends upon God: for God is the Great Provider and Sustainer. In dealing with God's covenants with man we remember, therefore, that God is never motivated by need or self-interest, but solely by His love for man and by His gracious benefaction.

The Hebrew word *Berith* is used of covenants in the O. T. irrespective of whether between God and man, or between man and man. For instance in the oath and covenant between Isaac and Abimelech. Isaac said to Abimelech and his friends, "**Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? And they said, We certainly saw that the Lord was with thee and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make A COVENANT with thee. That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done thee nothing but good And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.**" (Gen. 26:27-30). I don't know if the present practice of extravagant parties, wining and dining to celebrate the signing of big contracts dates back to Isaac, but he certainly appears to have sealed his covenant with feasting and rejoicing. There are many similar examples in the O.T. of covenants between men and men (as between equals). In the case of the covenant between Laban and Jacob, a cairn of stones was produced as a tangible token of the agreement. Laban said, "**Now therefore Come now, Let us make A COVENANT, I and thou, and let it be a witness between thou and me. And Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, gather stones: and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap. And Laban said, This heap is a witness between thee and me this day ... The Lord watch between thee and me when we are absent from one another.**" (Gen. 31:44-49).

Old Covenants

The most important covenant God made with man in the O.T. must surely be the one He made with Abraham. In Gen. 15 we read, "**In the same day, the Lord made A COVENANT with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land from**

the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates." This chapter also refers to the "cutting"; the cutting of carcasses (splitting them into two) and the passing of the parties between the two halves; in this case (v.9) the carcasses of "an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove and a young pigeon." This would seem to confirm that Berith is a word with roots meaning "to cut". And Jeremiah also seems to allude to this when he denounces covenant-breakers, and writes, "And I (God) will give the men that have transgressed My covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, **WHEN THEY CUT THE CALF IN TWAIN, AND PASSED BETWEEN THE PARTS THEREOF**, the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs and the priests, and all the people of the land **WHICH PASSED BETWEEN THE PARTS OF THE CALF**, I will give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life." (Jer. 34:18). I suppose the cutting of the carcasses performed the same function as the heap of rocks built by Jacob. We further learn that this covenant made between God and Abraham was to be confirmed by a token: serving the same function as the rainbow (a reminder). The token in this case was circumcision. "Every man child among you shall be circumcised ... and it shall be **A TOKEN OF THE COVENANT** betwixt Me and you." (Gen. 17:11).

Some 430 years later, God entered into another very important covenant: this time with Moses, and the Children of Israel, at Mount Sinai: a covenant referred to spasmodically throughout the O.T. and N.T. (after the giving of the law) as the 'Old Covenant'. Moses wrote "all the words of the Lord" (Ex. 24:4) and this was described as "The Book of the Covenant" (v.7) and later, the original tablets of stone were deposited in "The Ark of the Covenant". In this connection the sabbath was given "and the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, as **A PERPETUAL COVENANT**. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever". (Ex. 31:16).

Then there was the "Royal Covenant" between God and David. (2 Sam. 7:12-17 and Ps. 89:28). Also the renewal of the covenant between God and Israel at Shechem, Joshua, on this occasion being the intermediary. "And the people said unto Joshua, **The Lord our God will we serve and His voice will we obey. So Joshua made A COVENANT with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.**" Apparently Joshua considered it not enough to record these events in words but, like Jacob, resorted to something more tangible and obvious – a huge rock. "And Joshua said, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." (Josh. 24:24-27).

The New Covenant

When Paul spoke of the Jews he could honestly describe them as "My kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption; and the glory; and **THE COVENANTS**; and the giving of the law; and the services of God; and the promises..." (Rom. 9:4). The Jews had had it all: the adoption, the glory, the law, the service of God, the promises and the Covenants. When, however, Paul describes the Gentiles he says, "Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh ... that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, the **STRANGERS FROM THE COVENANTS OF PROMISE, having no hope and without God in the world.**" (Eph.2:12). The Gentiles were aliens and strangers to God's covenants and promises, without God and hope. All that was to change in due time, not as an afterthought of God's but in the fulness of time, predicted some 630 years earlier by the prophet Jeremiah. "**Behold the days come, saith the**

Lord, that I will make A NEW COVENANT with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they brake, although I was an husband to them saith the Lord. But this shall be the COVENANT that I shall make with the House of Israel; after those days saith the Lord I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts: and will be their God and they shall be My people ... for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more.” (Jer. 31:31-34). This well-known prophecy came to fruition in Paul’s day and so he talks of just two covenants “the old” and “the new”. He did this often, and in Gal. 4:24 uses the allegory of Abraham’s two sons to justify it. One son (Ishmael) was by a bondmaid whereas the other (Isaac) was by a freewoman, “**which things are an allegory; for these are THE TWO COVENANTS; the one from Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.**” And so the “old covenant” is represented by Agar, the bondwoman, given at Sinai, and also represented by physical Jerusalem; but the “new covenant” is represented by Sarah, the freewoman, represented by the heavenly Jerusalem: the covenant of Christ and the gospel. (How the pre-millennialists can read that and still seek entry into literal Jerusalem is a puzzle). Paul confirms his “two covenant” belief when extolling the virtues of Christ, he says, “**He (Christ) is the mediator of A BETTER COVENANT, which was established upon better promises; for if that FIRST COVENANT had been faultless then should no place have been sought for THE SECOND. For finding fault with them (the Jews) He (God) saith, “Behold the days come saith the Lord when I will make A NEW COVENANT with the House of Israel ...”** (Paul continues to complete the whole quotation from Jer. 31 – just previously mentioned) and says at v.13 “**In that he (Jeremiah) saith ‘A New Covenant’ he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.**” (Heb. 8).

Here in Heb. 8 Paul (if he was author of Hebrews) talks of only two covenants: old and new. He says the old has decayed and vanished away, and that the new is the one predicted by the prophets: quoting Jeremiah quite specifically (and indeed verbatim). In Heb. 9 the same writer draws contrasts between the two, and says, “**Then verily the FIRST COVENANT had also ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary**”. In v.15 he refers to Christ as “**mediator of the new testament**” (and that word “testament” should be “covenant” as in the R.V.) and goes on to say (v.18) that “**Neither the FIRST COVENANT was dedicated without blood**” and describes how Moses “**when he had spoken all the precepts to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the Book and all the people, Saying, this is the blood of THE COVENANT which God hath enjoined upon you.**” Paul continues and declares that, likewise, THE NEW COVENANT has also been ratified with blood; not, however, with the blood of bulls and goats, but with the precious blood of Christ; “**Neither by the blood of goats or calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifyeth to the purifying of the flesh. HOW MUCH MORE shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.**” (Heb. 9: 12-14). And thus the New Covenant was, like the old, ratified with blood and in the closing verses of the Hebrew letter, in the “apostolic benediction” Paul prays “**Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of THE EVERLASTING COVENANT, make you perfect in every good work to do His will.**”

And this harmonizes with the words of Jesus at the institution of the Lord's Table, when He took the cup and said, "**For this is My blood of the NEW COVENANT, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.**" (Matt.26:28).

Thus, this New Covenant is the **final** covenant with man: Jew and Gentile alike. Jew and Gentile must be saved by the gospel of Christ, or not at all. Paul's "**heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved**". Yet Paul knew that they must be saved under the NEW COVENANT, the gospel era, or not at all. There will be no THIRD COVENANT to save Israel in the manner expected by pre-millennialists. There are no late contingency plans by God to save the Jews who rejected, and still reject, Christ. If there was such a plan Paul need never have shown such great vexation and concern over his kinsmen in the flesh, or fretted over the future of his fellow Jews.

Conclusion

Regardless, therefore, of the many Covenants made in the O.T., and I have mentioned only a few of the more important of them, none compare with the present one, through Christ, for He "**is the Mediator of A BETTER COVENANT established upon better promises**". I am sure that we do not ever fully appreciate how greatly honoured and privileged we are to have a part in this New and final Covenant with God. We probably regard with disgust the ways in which the Jews continually broke their Covenant with Jehovah, and so, perhaps we should spare a thought for ourselves, and reflect upon our own performance in the Kingdom of God, and how we ourselves measure up to the great favour and blessing bestowed upon us. If Mr. Clinton ever comes to power it will be interesting to see if his "Covenant" ever sees the light of day, and human nature being what it is, how many will be prepared to subscribe to it.

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.)

MASTER

"Jesus, Master, wilt Thou use
One who loves Thee more than all?
As Thou wilt! I would not choose:
Only let me hear Thy call.
Jesus, let me always be
In Thy service glad and free."

WE QUOTE — F.C. DAY

"Having become a member of the Church of Christ, you will want to do what He requires, and will reject all such deviations from the perfect pattern given by the Lord, and preserved to us by the Spirit through the Apostles' writings, with which we must all become more and better acquainted, so that progress, or growth, which is essential if life is to be maintained at all, may be constant, until we attain to the full-grown man in Christ Jesus.

WE QUOTE — J. GRINSTEAD

"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men, even as we do towards you."

"We all need to have upon us the distinguishing mark of discipleship, '**By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.**' That love — the love of Christ — which passeth knowledge, filling our hearts and minds, will

destroy every wrong feeling, every petty jealousy, every vulgar ambition, and bind us closely together in one great and glorious communion and service. That love, the love of Christ, to a perishing, ruined world, will constrain us to do all in our power to

‘Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying,

To snatch them in pity from sin and the grave.’

In the time of the Crusaders men made enormous sacrifices that they might be enabled to go and rescue the Holy Sepulchre. But that which will give joy to the heart of Jesus and make our own lives worth living, will be to engage, with renewed consecration and devotion, in the work of saving souls from death. Then out of weakness we shall be made strong; waxing valiant in fight, we shall turn to flight the armies of the aliens: and turning many to righteousness, we shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, for ever and ever.”

WE QUOTE – GILBERT Y. TICKLE THE GRACE OF OUR LORD

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

2 Corinthians 8:9.

“Notice first, the certainty of the Apostle, “Ye know”. Not “Once upon a time ye were told,” not “Somewhere ye have heard or read the story of God’s love,” but in clarion tones “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yes, they knew the power of the Gospel ... “And such were some of you,” redeemed and purified they were living miracles of Christ’s power to save, and they knew His grace. That grace is the same to-day, and the need of to-day is the same certainty which the Apostle proclaimed; “Brethren, such were some of us,” is as true to-day as then, and you and I stand to-day as monuments of mercy. We know the grace, let us never be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.”

YE KNOW THE GRACE

“Ye know the grace! Somehow when I read this word it seems too small to convey the meaning of all that follows. Generally speaking, “grace” appears a large, round, full word. Favour, and love, and blessing, and power gather in its sound. When we repeat, “By the grace of God I am what I am,” how big the word seems then; as we think of the past, with its sin and sorrow, of the present, with its peace and joy, and the future, with its hope of eternal life, “grace” makes us stand up like men amongst our fellows. It is a glorious word. Then what tenderness there is in the sentence, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” How full “grace” seems there. It is like rest at eventide, and like gentle dew upon the thirsty ground, a benediction to our weary hearts. But here it seems a little, thankless word, like a goblet – golden, it is true – a goblet to drain an ocean of love.”

HE WAS RICH; HE BECAME POOR

“Dean Alford suggests beneficence, but this is smaller still. We may have beneficence without sacrifice . . . I have seen “humiliation” given as the word. It was that and much more — and utter and absolute self-renunciation. When I read the context, and consider something of what it means, I feel no word in our own, or any other tongue, is large enough or strong enough or tender enough to carry the thoughts that came crowding into my heart, and it must stand in the Spirit’s utterance, **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ** . . . He was rich; He became poor; through His poverty He makes many rich. He was rich.”

(B.A. 1896).

**WE QUOTE – H. ELLIOT TICKLE
FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH**

“The law was given by Moses – grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”(John 1.17) “And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory – glory as of the only begotten of the Father – full of grace and truth.”(John 1.14). If we grasp and believe these truths, as did the writer to the Hebrews and the beloved Apostle, then the facts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, fall into their due place as to importance and sequence as parts of the great whole – the out-shining of God’s redeeming love to mankind. The grace of God appeared in the person of the Babe of Bethlehem! Well might the angel host pour forth their glorious anthem: “**Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, to men of good will.**” The grace of God appeared in the life of the lowly Nazarene, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth – that life which has become the pattern life for all heaven-aspiring souls.” (B.A.1896).

Selected by Leonard Morgan

**SON OF EXHORTATION
(BARNABAS)**

While describing the efforts of Barnabas at Antioch, Luke says of the man Barnabas, “**he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.**” (Acts 11:24). Barnabas is one of the few men in the Bible described in such a manner. It would be well for us to consider some of the characteristics of this good man.

A Christian

At what time Barnabas became a Christian is not certain; he was, we know, a member of the church when the first reference was made to him in Acts 4.

One of the first lessons that may be learned from him is the importance of being a Christian. Obeying the gospel of Christ is our greatest responsibility (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Barnabas, in his obedience to the gospel, put “first things first.”

As demonstrated in his life, being as Christian involves activity. Like Barnabas, the faithful Christian will seek to *grow* in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:18), to *walk* in newness of life (Rom. 6: 3-4), and to *work* in the vineyard of the Lord (1 Cor. 3:9).

Liberal Giver

In the first mention of Barnabas, we are told that he, “**having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.**” (Acts 4:37). He was, and is, an example of liberal giving (2 Cor. 9:7).

Distribution was being made to the needy. In his giving to help them. Barnabas used his goods unselfishly. He was not highminded, nor did he have his hope set on the uncertainty of riches; he did “**good,**” was “**rich in good works,**” and was “**ready to distribute.**” (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17-18).

There is quite a contrast between Barnabas and the rich man, called a fool, in Luke 12:13-21. The “rich fool” thought only of himself; he did not think of using his goods as a means of service to man or God. As is true of the cheerful giver, however, Barnabas looked beyond his own selfish interests and gave to advance that which is most valuable.

Barnabas, as did the Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:5), first gave his own self to the Lord. The liberal giver first gives *himself*. He then, like Barnabas, gives of his *time, material goods, ability, and influence.*

A Genuine Brother

The life of Barnabas demonstrates brotherly love. He stood by Paul, in Acts 9:26-27, when others were hesitant to do so. When Paul came to Jerusalem, “**Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen**

the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he preached boldly in the name of Jesus."

Later, Barnabas defended John Mark (Acts 15:36-40). As plans were being made by Paul and Barnabas to return to the churches established on their first missionary tour, Paul did not think it was good to take Mark, who had withdrawn from them at Pamphylia on the first trip. A contention arose, dividing Barnabas and Paul in their work; Paul took Silas, whereas Barnabas took Mark. In later years Paul spoke affectionately of Mark (2 Tim. 4:11); undoubtedly Mark was helped to be more steadfast and dependable through the efforts of Barnabas.

In Barnabas we see an example of loving **"one another from the heart fervently,"** of being **"tenderly affectioned to one another."** (1 Pet. 1:22; Rom. 12:10).

Faithful Teacher

Through the teaching of Barnabas at Antioch, **"much people was added unto the Lord."** (Acts 11:24). He was sent to Antioch by the church in Jerusalem. As he taught, he continually encouraged **"them all, that with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord."** (Acts 11:23). He was joined in his work by Paul, and **"for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people."** (Acts 11:26).

One cannot be an effective teacher if he does not practise what he preaches (Rom. 2:21). The success of Barnabas as a teacher must have been partially due to his worthy conduct, his being a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.

Soul Winner

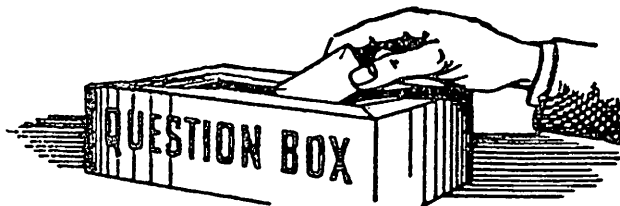
The entire life of Barnabas manifests his desire to reach souls with the gospel. In addition to his work at Jerusalem and Antioch we are informed of two extended tours made by him specifically to reach the lost with the gospel.

He went with Paul on the "first missionary journey." In their efforts, they **"Hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."** (Acts 15:25-26). Several congregations were established as a result of their labours. Later, Barnabas and Mark visited many of these congregations.

In his work, Barnabas exemplified the great commission – going to all parts of the earth to preach the gospel.

As we look upon the life of this great man of the first century, may we be encouraged in the twentieth century to imitate his faith and good works – in our giving, in brotherly love, in teaching, and in spreading the gospel.

H.C. Alexander.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I read in Heb. 11:5 concerning Enoch, where the scripture says, 'For before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God'. If God can be 'pleased', is He then subject to the same emotions as we humans?"

This is one of those questions which inherently expresses great profundity together with naivety: profundity because it takes us into the realms of metaphysics when considering the nature of God, and naivety because it seems to indicate a lack of appreciation of what God has already demonstrated. Consequently, we shall need to

say something about the nature of God, and then try to understand how these so-called emotions fit into His nature.

The Nature of God

The Apostle John says, **“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”**. John 1:18. A further revelation is given by Jesus Himself when he spoke with the woman at the Well of Sychar, **“God is Spirit”** (not ‘a Spirit’ as in A.V. — no indefinite article in the Greek). In addition to the above, the God/Moses encounter at the scene of the burning bush is quite revealing. After Moses had tried to make his excuses for not returning to Egypt, he finally said to God, **“when they (the children of Israel) shall say to me ‘What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you”** (Ex.3:13,14).

It is as well to pause here while we consider the implications of this name I AM. In Rom. 16:26 Paul refers to God as **‘the everlasting God’** The word ‘everlasting’ should in fact be translated ‘eternal’ because the Greek word AIONIOS refers to someone who is in the nature endless, so the ‘eternal God’ is by nature endless. He was the Great I AM in the day of Moses; if He spoke to us today He would still be the Great I AM; and if the earth should last for a further million years He would remain the Great I AM. He is the God of Causation and yet He Himself is Uncaused. He reigns over the Universe as its Lord and Creator; the illimitable tracts of space are His domain; there is nothing that man could conceive of which would not be His. Paul, when writing to Timothy says God, **“Who only has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion”** 1 Tim. 6:16.

So in this brief and cursory (but scriptural) look at God, what have we arrived at? (a) Jesus, His Son, has declared and revealed Him (b) No mortal has seen Him or can see Him (c) By nature God is Spirit (d) By existence He is Eternal (e) By omnipotence and power He is Lord and Sovereign of the Universe. We can further say that His dwelling place is Heaven, and in some way from there He has to communicate His Will, intentions, and His Essential Being so that we mortals can understand the essence of His nature. This is not an easy task, and only a God such as ours could do it.

His Personality

Personality, strictly speaking, means being a person and having a personal existence or identity. As human beings we identify a person who, in substance and observable outline, is similar to ourselves; it is extremely difficult for our minds to conceive of Spirit having ‘form’. Paul, however, when he wrote his letter to Phillipis says, **“Who being in the form of God, ... made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant”** (Phil. 2:6,7); the word ‘form’, in each case, is the Greek word MORPHE. Therefore, the phrase ‘form of God’ is literally MORPHE THEOU and means the nature or essence of Deity which subsists in both God and His Christ. It is quite evident from scripture that Jesus existed with God before the foundation of the world; He existed on earth in manifested mode as a man; and He now exists in splendid glory at the right hand of God in Heaven. While He exists, no matter in what mode He may be manifested, the nature and essence of Deity is inseparable from Him. Because Jesus exists as a Person, and if He was in the ‘form of God’, then it is surely logical to understand that God, even though Spirit, exists in ‘form’ as a Person. All the O.T. writers and prophets would testify to that, and all the N.T. writers have testified to the manifestation on earth of His Christ, both in human form as a man, and in nature and essence as Deity. It is then but a step for us to understand that the Eternal Spirit, the Holy, the Third Person of the Godhead, can be manifested

in the hearts and minds of men, displaying the same nature and essence of Deity. So we can summarise this section by saying that the three comprising the Godhead; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, are separate Persons, but **inseparable in the nature and essence of Deity.**

The Emotions

We now need to examine the main thrust of the question, but in view of my comments up to this point perhaps we should re-phrase the question and ask, “Are the emotions of Deity the same as human emotions?”

I believe all Christians should have indelibly printed on their minds **GOD IS GOOD**; believing that, we can never attribute to God anything which is dubious or evil, either in intent or action. Everything He does is **GOOD** for those who will receive it; it is His nature, and He cannot change; so far as the Christian is concerned, his every belief, hope, thought, action, **must** stem from that premise. Therefore, we must **also** believe that every so-called **emotion** which we attribute to God – such as wrath, anger, displeasure, punishment – must also be expressions of His overall Goodness, as **must** love, compassion, forbearance, patience.

The Goodness of God will always try to reproduce in His Creation His own Goodness, because that is what He has **Willed** from the beginning. To do that, He must not only lay out all the blessings which will accrue from doing His Will, but He must also present, clearly and unambiguously, what will be the result of **neglecting His Will**: as the God of all Creation He acts in a perfectly reasonable and responsible way when He does that; **He must act in accordance with His nature.** So when Paul says, “**But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation**” (Rom. 2:8), we would look at the **natural** emotions of wrath and indignation and possibly attribute them to God as a vengeful outburst, when in actual fact they are **Divine** reactions in a spiritual sense to what God is by nature, and they are brought about by the Divine abhorrence of evil. We can then understand that it is not God acting in a capricious way in whims of anger and fury and punishing recalcitrant children in a similar way to a schoolmaster punishing errant school-children, but rather that it is man **punishing himself** because of his non-adherence to the Will of God which is doing nothing but seek his good. This very fact, of course, makes it absolutely imperative for Christians to get out and teach the Will of God to as many people as can be reached; that is an extension in us of what God has always attempted to do through His faithful servants, and as we are **responsible** for that, so we shall be held **accountable.**

Most of man’s pleasures are sensuous by nature, as distinct from the Divine pleasure. We may occasionally indulge ourselves in aesthetic pleasures – such as viewing the beauty of nature or listening to music – but in our media-dominated society these occasions are becoming increasingly rare. Jesus spoke to His disciples on one occasion and taught against worldly carefulness, and said, “**Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom**” (Luke 12:32). When will we understand that God’s ‘good pleasure’ is embodied in His gracious Will for mankind? He doesn’t want to give us the trivia that the world gives; He wants to give us a **kingdom.** Do you doubt this, brother, sister, friend? His Divine nature is such that He **delights** in giving; how different this attitude is from a world which thinks or says, “What’s in it for me, before even raising a finger to help. Surely we cannot be unaware that in order to destroy the power of sin He had to respond to the requirements of His own nature and **sacrifice Himself** in the Person of Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary. Yes, I’m talking about the Great I AM, the Creator of the Universe. The awe-inspiring impact of this ought to drive us out of our worldly reverie and make us face grim reality. It means that sin is so abhorrent to the Divine Nature that anyone not cleansed from it will perish with it. The Divine Nature deeply loves the sinner,

but will reject him because of the sin attached to him. Do you understand that, dear reader? The most perplexing thought, however, is that it is love that does it, because God is love.

Faith in God is not about singing hymns and attending Meetings, important though these are, but it is trying to understand Him. People think of God as displaying human emotions because that is all our finite minds can grasp, but I am convinced there is more to it than that, as I have tried in my imperfect way to explain.

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

THE DENOMINATIONS

6. – THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

The Congregational Churches comprise the oldest of the Free Churches in England and Wales. Their rise can be traced back to the earliest years of the seventeenth century, if not into the late years of the sixteenth. They are the earliest ‘separatists’ and should be carefully distinguished from Puritans in general, many of whom were not ‘separatists.’ They arose out of the National Church on the very ground of separatism. Their first leaders, such as John Hooper, Richard Fitz, and Robert Browne were Church of England clergymen. They set themselves for “reformation without tarrying for anie.” Originally they were known as ‘Independents,’ and is still possible to find country Churches labelled ‘Independent Chapel.’ In the seventeenth century some found refuge in the Netherlands and some in New England. They thus became the backbone of New England colonization. After the Restoration in 1660 they suffered hardship and persecution, and were for over two centuries shut out of university education, and for over a century deprived of many civil liberties. But, led by men like Richard Baxter and John Owen in the seventeenth century, and by Isaac Watts in the eighteenth, they fought a valiant fight, built and maintained their own Academies, where education was at a higher level than in the Universities, and prospered in spite of persecution.

Church and State

The first thing that ‘Independent’ means, then, is not that each congregation is independent of every other, but that the Church is to be independent of the civil authority. This does not mean that Christianity has nothing to do with civil, political and social behaviour, for Congregationalists throughout three centuries have had a strong influence on the political and economic development of our country. What it does mean is that there is to be a clear distinction between the Church and the nation; that the civil authority has no jurisdiction within the Church; and that the Church as such is not a political body and does not take political action. This great principle is stated clearly in the Savoy Declaration of 1658, which is a standard of Congregational polity and doctrine, a classic often unremembered by Congregationalists of to-day.

The Gathered Church

The second thing that the word ‘Congregationalist’ stands for is the doctrine of the ‘gathered Church,’ that is that the Church, the people of God, in any one area, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is capable of managing its own affairs, of electing its own Minister or Ministers, of proclaiming the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. Such a ‘gathered Church’ is one in which the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed and the Sacraments duly administered. The ‘Church Meeting’ is therefore an important thing. It is the family of God gathered together in His Name, for His worship, committed to His Word, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is unfortunate that the words ‘Independent’ and ‘Congregationalist’ have been taken to refer to the absolute independence of one congregation from another. That is not

their original import and no part of true Congregationalism, which envisages the closest co-operation of congregations which are committed to the same Gospel. What organisations shall be brought into being for such co-operation is a matter of expediency.

Doctrine and Practice.

Congregationalists object to credal standards as conditions of Church membership. In their history, therefore, there has been a good deal of liberty in the field of theology and they have manifested both liberal and orthodox tendencies. The great hymns of Isaac Watts express the orthodoxy which prevailed in the eighteenth century as Dale expresses it for the nineteenth. To-day the names of Micklem, Dodd, Whale, Cave and Lovell Cocks are significant for the recovery of the same tendency. Worship is in the main of the Free Church type, but Service Books have more recently come into use in a number of Churches and the Congregational Union has published such a book of its own. The Lord's Supper is usually administered monthly as a short service after either the morning or evening service. Each Church selects its own Minister or Pastor, and Deacons are elected to assist him. Smaller Churches have no minister and both lay preaching and lay administration of the Sacraments is in operation.

Baptism

On the question of Baptism, Congregationalists practise infant Baptism, but many regard it as no more than dedication, and in some cases it may be neglected altogether. Many have found it difficult to assert the claims made for Baptism in the New Testament of a rite relating to infants. On the other hand there has been a revival amongst present-day theologians of the fuller doctrine in connection with the rite, and is being given added importance, not without embarrassment. But full Church membership comes later. There is no service of Confirmation as in the Church of England, but there is something analogous when the adolescent or adult is received into the Church at a 'Church Meeting'. Congregational Churches are welded together in areas, counties, etc., and nationally in the Congregational Union, which has no legislative functions. The membership figure of churches in the Congregational Union of England and Wales (1962) was 211,329. Recently, however, Moderators have been appointed in larger areas and their functions are not unlike those of Diocesan Bishops, though they have nothing like their powers. Even their Missionary Society (the L.M.S.) and their Theological Colleges are independent of any control from the Union or the Assembly.

W. Robinson.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nov. 1	2 Sam. 22:31-35	Rom. 15:1-13
Nov. 8	Isa. 52:	Rom. 15:14-33
Nov. 15	Psa. 132 & 133	Rom. 16:1-16
Nov. 22	Josh. 1:	Rom. 16:17-27
Nov. 29	Isa. 7:1-17	Matt. 1:1-2 and 16-25

DISTRIBUTION TO THE POOR

One of the reasons Paul wrote this epistle was to ask them to pray for him in his distributing the collected funds for

the needy saints in Judea (15:30-32). He was obviously concerned that many of the converts of Judaism might be indisposed to receiving an offering made by Gentiles. Here it is described as "my service" (15:31). The Greek term is **diakonia** and is one of nine Greek words the apostle used to describe this collection. (See 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:4,20; 9:1,5,12,13; Acts 24:17.)

ROMANS CHAPTER 16

I have counted thirty-five names in this chapter and I thank God that He

has revealed all of them to us. It brings home to the reader that the church is a family — a family in Christ Jesus. The women mentioned are Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis and Julia.

Phoebe (meaning “pure” or “radiant as the moon”) was a servant of the congregation at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth. She was an unselfish, liberal helper of the saints, conspicuous for the works of charity and hospitality. Priscilla (“worthy” or “venerable”) was the wife of Aquila and they are always mentioned together (Acts 18:2, 18:26; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19). In other words, they were a husband and wife team for the Lord. It is interesting that Priscilla is mentioned first here, which is unusual but probably indicates that she was the stronger partner. Herbert Lockyer has written: “Paul, ever conscious of his indebtedness to inconspicuous persons, paid just tribute to Aquila and Priscilla . . . How much we owe to the quiet and useful lives of the world’s Aquilas and Priscillas as well as its more conspicuous saints, we shall never know this side of heaven!”

Mary (“bitter”) is one of six Mary’s mentioned in the N.T. Scriptures, and this Mary is best described as the Mary of Rome. Paul said of her: “. . . **who bestowed much labour on us**” (16:6). How she laboured energetically for Paul and his co-workers we are not told. “Evidently she had a capacity peculiar to herself for lightening the apostle’s heavy load and furthered thereby the cause of the Lord” (Herbert Lockyer).

Tryphena and Typhosa (“dainty” and “delicate”) were probably twin sisters in the flesh, as well as sisters in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote of them: “. . . **who labour in the Lord**” (16:12). It is as if he were saying: “You two may be called Dainty and Delicate, but you belie your names by working like Trojans for the sake of Christ.”

Persis (“one who takes by storm”) was a sister “**who laboured much in the Lord**” (16:12). Paul described her as “**the beloved Persis**” which showed his deep affection for her.

Julia (“having curly hair”) was perhaps the wife or sister of Philologus with whose name she is coupled (16:15). She could well have been a member of the Imperial Court and, therefore, among the saints to be found in Caesars’s household.

MATTHEW’S GOSPEL RECORD

AUTHOR: Matthew, also known as Levi. He was one of the twelve apostles (Mark 2:14). He was a publican or tax-gatherer by profession (Matthew 10:3).

TO WHOM ADDRESSED: primarily to the Jews. “This view is confirmed by the fact that there are about sixty references to the Jewish prophecies and about forty quotations from the Old Testament” (The New Chain - Reference Bible).

KEY WORDS: fulfilled (in reference to the O.T. prophecies fulfilled in Christ) and kingdom and Kingdom of heaven).

PURPOSE: to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the Kingly Messiah of Jewish prophecy.

COMMENT: “The occupation of toll, or tax-collector, required accurate business habits, and gave an opportunity for wide knowledge of human nature. The calling would fit one for writing a Gospel, such as the Christians ascribe to Matthew, since the writing usually needful in making custom reports would call for a mastery of two languages, Aramaic and Greek. No one could collect taxes in Galilee without a knowledge of the vernacular of the people, which was western Aramaic. Equally necessary would be some knowledge of the Greek language in making reports of taxes to Roman officials. It is fair, to assume from the accounts, that Matthew had a knowledge of both languages and was qualified as a bilingualist to write them.” (E.

W. Rice).

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

There are two genealogical tables detailed for us in the N.T. Scriptures — one in **Matthew 1** and the second in **Luke 3**. The former begins with Abraham and ends with Joseph, the husband of Mary, and the latter commences with Joseph, the supposed father of Jesus (3:23), and ends with Adam “**the son of God**” (3:38).

We should note that from Abraham to David the two lists are practically identical, but from David to Joseph the lists diverge. **Matthew** traces the line through David’s son Solomon and the successive kings of Judah as far as Jehoiachin, whereas **Luke** traces it through Nathan another son of David by Bathsheeba. F.F. Bruce has commented: “In Matthew Jehoiachin is followed by Shealtiel and his son Zerubabel and these two names appear also in Luke (3:27), but after this momentary convergence there is no further agreement between the lists until we reach Joseph . . . It is accordingly been held by several commentators that the Lucan genealogy traces Jesus’ lineage actually, though not explicitly, through Mary, His mother . . . The Lucan list enumerates twenty or twenty one generations between David and the Babylonian Exile and as many between the Exile and Jesus, whereas the Matthaean list enumerates only fourteen for each of these periods. But several generations are demonstrably omitted from the Matthaean list in the period from David to the Exile, and others may be omitted in the later period . . . The main purpose of the two lists is to establish Jesus’ claim to be the son of God and more generally to emphasize his solidarity with mankind and his close relation with all that had gone before.”

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Mary was a virgin when her first child was conceived in her. She was the subject of prophecy. We read: “**Behold, a**

virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). So all true Christians believe, as the record has revealed, that Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and that which was conceived in her was conceived of this personality of the Godhood. This made Jesus, her firstborn, uniquely the son of God.

Joseph, of course, was deeply disturbed when he discovered she was pregnant, but the angel explained it all to him (1:19-21) and he went along with God’s plan. The child was to be called Jesus, which is the Greek name for the Hebrew name Joshua and means “salvation”. Jesus was to bring salvation to all mankind.

The virgin birth seems to be a problem to a lot of folks today, but one wonders why. It was very easy for God to intervene and fertilise the ovum within Mary. Yes, it was a miracle, but to God something well within His power. Those who have difficulties with this action really have difficulties with the being and power of the Almighty. I would address to them the title of a book by J. B. Phillips: “Your God is Too Small!”

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

(Eph. 5:15-21)

We are exhorted by the Apostle Paul to take note of the awareness and presence of God on our lives. It would seem that in many, spiritual enthusiasm is lacking. We are not, of course, expected to become religious fanatics. Nevertheless we are expected to show healthy enthusiasm toward the Spirit: “Be not foolish-but understand” Eph. 5:17.

Today, many tend to strangle the Spirit that lies within us; we keep Him locked up in a corner of our heart, thus limiting His guidance. To be filled with the Spirit, should be, the aim of every

Christian. There are, at least, three conditions for being filled with the Spirit.

1. To be filled with the Spirit, one must have a deep faith.
2. To be filled with the Spirit, one must fervently pray.
3. To be filled with the Spirit, one must be obedient.

It is well known in the physical sense, that if we are out of sorts, we are not 100% fit. Something is amiss. We do not function properly. A tonic is needed, and that makes sense. In things Spiritual, it is the same. If out of sorts we miss out on that 100%. But praise the Lord, there is a tonic to remedy this; The Holy Spirit. If we wish, we may indeed drink freely at the well of abundance for up-lift.

To be filled with the Spirit, we must have real, deep, sincere faith. Have we assessed our faith recently? Are we below that 100% mark? Does our faith need nourishment? To experience the fullness of the Spirit we must let Him have free course through our entire

being. To be filled with the Spirit, we must pray regularly. In Scripture we are exhorted time and time again about the importance of humble prayer. A weak prayer life causes the Christian to be low in faith and lack fullness of the Spirit. Take time to be holy. Prayer surpasses all.

To be filled with the Spirit, one must be obedient. If ambassadors for Christ, we must be in complete harmony with God's will. It is only when we are obedient to God's commands that the Spirit can truly fill us. God uses only clean instruments in His work.

Not by might, Nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. (Zec.4:6).

If we would do God's work, in God's world, in God's way, for God's glory, we must do it in the power that comes in, and through the Holy Spirit. The power is available: God Cares.

Dear reader are you in good Spirit? is the good Spirit in you? My prayer is that it is.

Andrew P. Sharpe,
Newtongrange.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District : The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place in the Meetinghouse at Dennyloanhead on Saturday, 5th September, at 2.30 p.m. The Chairman was brother Peter Sneddon, Dennyloanhead, and the speakers were Ian Davidson, Motherwell, and James R. Gardiner, Haddington. The subject was "How are we led by the Holy Spirit, and in what way does the Spirit influence the life of the Christian?"

Bro. Gardiner dealt with the first part of the question and Bro. Davidson, the latter. Each speaker, was as usual, allowed fifteen minutes in which to introduce the subject and thereafter an hour of open discussion amongst all those in the Hall ensued. As always many points were raised, and many that

we might not think of, were brought up. All in all, a very profitable time was spent not only in discussion but in fellowship and conversation: indeed no one after the meeting seemed to want to depart or go home. The tea, sandwiches, scones etc., which followed the discussion was also very enjoyable. God willing, our next Meeting will be at Tranent, on 5th December, 1992, at 2.30 p.m. when the subject will be "In view of Matt. 19:9 to what 'age' does the reaching of this scripture refer." This question of divorce has come up before and we look forward to a lively discussion. The Chairman will be Mark Plain, Tranent, and the speakers will be Harry McGinn, New Cummnock, and James Sinclair, Tranent.

Harry McGinn (Sec.).

COMING EVENTS

ANNUAL SOCIAL

The Annual Social at Newtongrange will take place (D.V.) on Saturday, 10th October, 1992 in the Meetinghouse at 4.00 p.m. Speakers: Bro. Harry McGinn (New Cummock) Bro. John Kneller (Tranent).

We look forward to a rich time of fellowship with the churches of our Lord.

Joe Currie (Secretary).

We invite you to the
121st ANNIVERSARY MEETING
 at Hope Chapel, Prince of Wales Road,
 Kentish Town, on Saturday, 3rd
 October, 1992 for Mutual Fellowship
 and Encouragement.

Afternoon Session 3.00 p.m.

Evening Meeting 6.30 p.m.

Speaker: Ian Davidson of Motherwell

Tea 4.45 p.m.

Also speaking on Lord's Day

GHANA APPEAL

In the past month there has been much correspondence with the Brethren in Ghana. The church at Angu sent some photographs of their progress in the building of their Meeting place. They are now ready to construct a roof. For size, shape and appearance it is similar to the Meeting place at Motherwell. I have requested the estimated cost to roof this building. Meantime the building funds could do with some money to meet this cost.

The present funds will be used to purchase more Bible Correspondence courses which are being used very effectively. The Brethren keep very good records of those who are participating in these studies. There have been a few requests for more tracts and Bibles. Many Brethren have expressed their thanks for the support the readers of The Scripture Standard continue to give this corner of His vineyard.

Further contributions to continue the work of evangelising will be much appreciated. Contributions should be sent to: Mr. Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel.:0383 728624.

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