

# *The* **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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## THE GREAT SEARCH

THE other evening we had the pleasure of a visit from brother and sister Henrikson, their son and his wife, from Oregon, U.S.A. and the conversation at one point touched on the social services we have in Great Britain. We pointed out, that in our view, British Social Services were far too sophisticated and far too much was done for the public at large. I heard recently of someone (on social security) who was sent to Spain for a holiday (at the tax-payers' expense) because the social worker thought that that person looked as though he could do with a holiday. Our worst prisons have central heating and colour T.V. When one comes to think about it the former independent spirit of the general public has been slowly eroded away over the past fifty years and the average citizen now believes that it is the government's job to clothe him, feed him and even entertain him. I'm old enough to remember how it all started - The Beveridge Plan - National Assistance and Insurance - The National Health Service. The concept is wonderful and the services, until lately, have been marvellous too but now the men who dream up the facilities are going much too far. Thus whereas at one time man had to wonder where his next meal was coming from, and had to work for his bread, is now catered for from the cradle to the grave - from pre-natal orange juice for mothers-to-be to pensions in old age, and even funeral grants if required.

Man, nevertheless, is still discontented with his lot, and whereas his necessity to search for food and shelter has lately gone, he has now more time to spend in the pursuit of other things. Man is still restless and ever searching. Man will probably never be content. Man still searches for power and positions of influence amongst his fellowmen. He is still searching for popularity and to be thought well of by his fellowmen. Many men are searching for wealth for fame and fortune, and many don't care how they get it. Some having experienced the 'rat race', are searching for peace and contentment. Some are searching for adventure; some for knowledge. Some are searching for they know not what; Some, disillusioned with the pleasures and pastimes of this world, might even be searching for more lasting things, such as spiritual things, even God. Many of those who search for they know not what - are in all probability searching for God. Searchers after truth perhaps don't know it and certainly might not acknowledge it, but they are really searching after God. Consider for a moment those searching after God.

Firstly, we may consider it paradoxical that we have to search for God when God is not far from any one of us. God sent Jesus into the world to seek man (to seek and to save). When the apostle Paul went to Athens he found that the people there were, in many cases, really

Perhaps when we fail to find God, or entry to the kingdom of heaven, it is because we have been looking in the wrong place or in the wrong manner. With some it is a kind of intellectual "blind man" buff". They seek for God, for instance in transcendental meditation (and there is nothing wrong with meditation) or they seek for God in nature (and commune with the 'great outdoors' - usually on a Sunday). Some say they are searching for God in art, or in music, or drama, poetry etc. etc. Will God be found there? Certainly the heavens declare the glory of God and the created world is full of the wonderful evidences of God's handiwork, but surely the revealed mind and will of God is contained, and only contained, in His word - in the holy scriptures. When Paul spoke of the things of God to the Bereans they searched the scriptures daily to see whither these things were so. Some are searching the 'denominations' for God, but surely it is not a question of searching the churches, but searching the scriptures. Searching in the wrong place is just as bad as searching in the right place but in the wrong manner, or with the wrong attitude. Some search as if hoping not to find - the soldier searching for mines with the mine-detector is diligently searching but hoping that he does not find, just like the doctor who is searching for evidence of cancer cells is hoping that he does not find it. The rich young ruler came running to Jesus to find out how to gain eternal life, but when he was told he walked away sad. Is that not very similar to the many today, who come running to know the truth but walk away sadly when they hear it? Obviously they look for a truth which is more in keeping with their own personal requirement - and so they are searching in the wrong frame of mind.

searching for God (the true God) albeit they had many Gods. He found, did he not, amongst the many monuments to their deities a stone erected to "THE UNKNOWN GOD". When Paul addressed them he said, "He, therefore, whom you ignorantly worship, Him will I declare unto you. He giveth to all life and breath and all things, and has made of one blood, all men, and hath determined beforehand the bounds of their habitations" and has decreed that man "Should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from any one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:27). God, unfortunately is very much the 'Unknown God' of the world today, two thousand years later. They who would find God and the Kingdom of Heaven must search. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness", and when He was asked, "Are there few that will be saved", He replied, "Strive (Struggle & fight) to enter in at the strait gate for many I say unto you will seek to enter in and shall not be able". (Luke 13:23). 'Seek' and 'Strive' are two very active words. Moses was seen to be 'Striving' with the Egyptian and that concerned a struggle to the death. Jesus says that a man will have to exert himself somewhat to enter the kingdom of heaven.

There are different ways of searching. Some unemployed are technically searching for a job but not very enthusiastically, Paul in Heb. 11:6 says that God is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him". 'Diligent' is a very energetic word and the dictionary defines it as "Careful; industrious; assiduous; hardworking; laboriously zealous". Are we diligently seeking God? In Luke 15 Jesus spoke a parable to illustrate just how diligently God was seeking for us, sinners to repentance. "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it". When she finds it she calls her friends and rejoices - "Likewise there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth". Do we search as diligently for God as we would for a lost sum of money? Consider the pan-handler seeking for gold dust in the pan, how diligent he is. Consider the diligent inspection one would make before buying a second-hand car. Consider the diligent search the police make when looking for fingerprints or a murder weapon. Consider an accountant looking for a mistake in a column or a lawyer searching for a loophole in the law - how diligent they are. Or an astronomer through the telescope or a doctor looking through the microscope how meticulously diligent in search are they. Herod diligently searched for the baby Jesus (Matt 2) and we know the lengths to which he went in the process. In the light of these illustrations of the meaning of word, are we really seeking with all diligence the God of heaven? God said, "Ye shall seek em and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

Some are hiding from God. Some are waiting for God to come to them (and enter their hearts etc.) Some are searching for God. Are we truly searching diligently for Him. Do we really strive to enter in at the strait gate? "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and all thy soul". (Deut. 4:9). EDITOR

## THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

"NOW therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God... (Ephesians 2:19).

### What is it?

It is a remarkable fact that nowhere in history had any revelation been made about "the household of God" until the year A.D.64, when these words were used to describe the Christians at Ephesus

It is true that Paul had described the Christians of Galatia in A.D.58 as "the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). "Faith simply means "Belief", and so, by using this expression, Paul puts these believers of Christians into one community or family; but later use of the words "household of God" so enlarged the meaning of the former expression that it is difficult for the human mind to understand its full significance or the wonder of its implications.

We may be sure, however, that it must have been a great honour to be included in such a household, to be made a member of God's family, to be able to have God as their Father, and to be looked upon by God as his children.

### Additional meanings

The New Testament describes this valuable relationship in different ways. Galatians 3:26 describes Christians as "children of God"; 1 Peter 2:9-10 as "the people of God". Elsewhere they are described variously as brethren, saints, sheep, flocks, disciples, ecclesia (incorrectly translated "church" in the New Testament), chosen, and of course Christians (Acts 11:26).

Ephesians 2:19 describes the Lord's people as citizens and, since citizens are members of a kingdom, so the "household of God" is often described as the "kingdom of God". Indeed all these expressions are more or less the same, being used to describe the many different aspects and relationships in the household or kingdom of God of which these Christians were members.

### Its Habitation – Present

Strange to relate, the kingdom or house-hold of God is a family without any permanent habitation in which to live, and that is because its permanent home is not here, but in heaven. That is largely the meaning of Jesus' words, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

### Its Habitation – Future

That this is so is clearly proved by the prophetic utterances of Hebrews 11:10-16 and 13:14 – "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come". Jesus himself prophesied this when he said to his disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

That such a place has now been prepared may be inferred from the very use of such language as "the household of God", since it is unthinkable that God would not have prepared a habitation for his own household. This is promised to all true followers of the Christ in the words of Peter: ". . . thus shall be richly supplied unto you an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord" (2 Peter 1:11). In using the word "kingdom" here Peter is speaking of the heavenly kingdom or home and not of its people. This is a distinction which must be observed in the study of the Scriptures, if confusion is to be avoided.

### Its Existence – Now

Notice the assurance of the writer in Hebrews 12:28 – “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have the grace whereby we may serve. God acceptably with godly fear”. This shows clearly that this heavenly abode now exists. It is the wonderful heritage of all true believers and followers of the King of that kingdom, namely Jesus the Christ, God’s beloved Son.

### Its Origin

All things have a beginning, and we may justifiably ask when such a kingdom or household of God came into being. In other words, how and when did men and women become members of the family or household of God.

Obviously it had not come into being during Jesus’ sojourn on earth. That it was very near however, is shown by his words: “The kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). He also made it quite clear, on another occasion that it was to come during the lifetime of some of those listening to him, Moreover it was to come with power. (Mark 9:1).

### When?

Nor had it come into being during the forty days after Jesus had risen from the grave until his ascension into heaven. This is shown by Acts 1:3 where we read that Jesus gave his disciples instructions concerning the kingdom which was shortly to come (See also Luke 24:45-49). Acts 1:8 and 2:1-14 shows clearly that the advent of the kingdom was introduced by his apostles through their spokesman Peter and that by a display of divine power which not only introduced the kingdom but also proved abundantly that its design and ownership was God’s hence the term “household of God”.

### How

The remainder of Acts 2 shows just as clearly how those whom Peter addressed, of every colour and race, became members of the household of God. Note how closely the conditions of entry into that community in Acts 2:38 follow our Lord’s own command in Matthew 28:19-20 Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:45-49, and the wonderful prophecy of these conditions in John 3:1-23, especially verses 5-6, 12 and 16.

Note also in Acts 2:47 that as a result of their belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, followed by repentance and immersion for the remission of sins and the receipt of the Holy Spirit, the Lord added to his ecclesia (or chosen) daily such as should be saved.

### Who?

Since ‘ecclesia’ or “chosen” was the original name by which the people or household of God, or Christians, were known, it follows that in Acts 2 we have no less than a solemn account of how man and women enter the kingdom of God. The three thousand who accepted Peter’s instructions on how to enter, gladly received his word and were immersed (verse 41).

But this privilege was surely not confined to the three thousand souls. Verse 39 extends the promise to all whom the Lord calls, and since the Lord calls all who listen to his voice as contained in these divine instructions, it follows that whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and puts such belief into practice likewise becomes a member of his kingdom or of the household of God.

### You?

If you, dear reader, have not complied with these instructions of the Good Shepherd (John 10:27-29), but wish to become a member of his fold or household, ponder deeply on these words. They are not a reflection of your own opinions but of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. Seek therefore in these scriptures of truth, and you will see “whether these things be so”.

W. BROWN, Dunfermline.

# ASK

"Blessed be God, our God!  
Who gave for us His well-beloved Son;  
His gift of gifts, all other gifts in one;  
Blessed be God, our God!"

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us". Ephesians 3:20.

ASK ..... WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God". 2 Thess. 3:5.

There is a saying "He does not love who does not shew love". W.E. Vine dealing with the word LOVE in his book Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, deals with the words AGAPAO, and PHILEO, and in the section headed AGAPAO, besides other quotations, he writes:- "Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1 John 4:9,10; But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that as, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects, Rom. 5:8. It was an exercise of the Divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself, Deut. 7:7,8. "In respect of agapao as used of God, it expresses the deep and constant love and interest of a perfect Being, towards entirely unworthy objects, producing and fostering a reverential love in them towards the Giver, and a practical love towards those who are partakers of the same, and a desire to help others to seek the Giver".

W.E. Vine reminds us that God's love is seen in the gift of His Son:- "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins". 1 John 4:9,10. Well might Peter Mackenzie say :- "When God loves, He loves a world. When He gives, He gives His Son." God loves the unlovely, the unworthy, the heavy burdened, those who have fallen by the way-side, sinful men and women. He sees us at our worst, and loves us with His best. He does not love the sin - but He does love the sinner.

J. H. Jowett wrote :- "The biggest thing with which the mind can cope is the infinite love of God; and all our sanctified powers, and all the ministries of holy fellowship, and all the explorations of eternity will never reach a limit in its unsearchable wealth. The biggest thing you and I will ever know is the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. There will always be "a region beyond", and for the already wondering eyes there will always be a new surprise: "The height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and to know the love of God, which passeth knowledge".

ASK ..... WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God".

"The love of God, which passeth knowledge"

"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground". Luke 22:42-44.

"The love of God, which passeth knowledge"

"And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, Master, and kissed him". Mark 14:43-45.

"The love of God, which passeth knowledge"

"And they laid their hands on him, and took him" Mark 14:46.

**“The love of God, which passeth knowledge”**

“And they all forsook him, and fled”. Mark 14:50.

**“The love of God, which passeth knowledge”**

“Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?” Matt. 26: 67-68.

**“The love of God, which passeth knowledge”**

“Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him”. Matthew 27:26-31.

**“The love of God, which passeth knowledge”**

“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left” Luke 23:33.

**“The love of God, which passeth knowledge”**

“They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. Matthew 27:34. “And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots”. Matthew 27:35. “And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God”. Matthew 27:39-43.

**“The love of God, which passeth knowledge”**

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, la'ma sabach' thani? that is to say. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Matthew 27:45-46

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows.....

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.....

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities:

the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.....

the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.....

for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

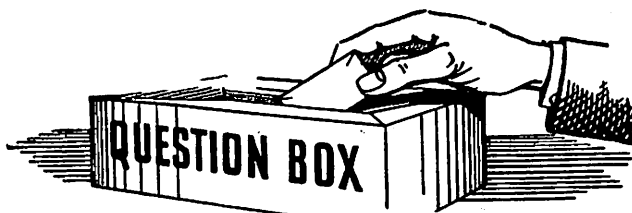
Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.....” Isaiah 53:3-8, 10.

**“The love of God, which passeth knowledge”**

God the Creator of the heaven and the earth...all-powerful...able to do... looking down from His dwelling-place in heaven, saw His ONLY BEGOTTEN SON...despised...rejected... scorned...crowned...spit upon... crucified... and He the Father who was “able to do” seemingly did nothing. THE INACTIVITY OF GOD? Why? Why? Why? I will tell you why? GOD SO LOVED THAT HE GAVE...HIS MOST INDESCRIBIBLE GIFT...FOR YOU – FOR ME... FOR THE SIN OF THE WHOLE WORLD’ Remember please that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” 2 Corinthians 5:19. Seemingly inactive, but yet active in His inactivity.

"Crucified! Crucified! And nailed upon the tree!  
With pierced hands and feet and side! For you! For me!"

ASK.....WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God".  
And may the Lord's richest blessing be your portion. LEONARD MORGAN




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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"It is a known fact that since the introduction of television, there has been a horrifying upsurge of crime, vandalism, and lustful atrociousness. Innocent minds are being corrupted. Can a child of God be justified in possessing and paying money (HAGGAI 2:8) for a thing of such evil influence?"

IT is always difficult to try to interpret correctly what is in a questioners mind when a question is asked, and this particular question poses the same difficulty to the one who is called upon to answer it. Which is the most important part of the question to the questioner? Is it that innocent minds are being corrupted? Is it that television is an evil influence? Or is it that christians should not spend their money on possessing such an instrument? In order to satisfy the questioner I intend to deal with the three points I have raised.

I know that the subject of television in the home is a thorny problem with many christians and, I might add, with many non-christians. The arguments have raged back and forth, for and against. What I propose to do is to state the case for and against as objectively as I possibly can, and then leave it to the reader to form his or her opinion as to whether they feel justified in abstaining or participating. I certainly feel that I cannot legislate for anyone else on so emotive a subject.

#### The influence of television

No one would deny that images in the form of pictures transferred to the mind via the eyes comprise a very substantial influence. The television receiver, which is a fairly sophisticated piece of electrical/electronic equipment, is the medium whereby those images are brought into our homes from diverse transmission locations. A variety of producers are engaged on producing programmes which are supposed to cater for all spectrums of society and shades of opinion. The television authorities have watchdogs and censors whose function it is to see that the viewing public is not abused or outraged by what appears on our screens. This, in a nutshell, is a crude appreciation of the television scene, but we must not forget that the same sort of thing has been with us for a considerable period of time in the motion picture industry; the main difference today is that the screen has now been transferred from the cinema to our living rooms and lounges.

Therefore, we can see that the television receiver itself is intrinsically neither evil or good the real influence is wielded by script-writers, producers, directors, actors, and censors, and let us say at once that their combined influences are devastatingly great, and potentially frightening. Television is a mass medium, and when one thinks what could happen if its total control fell into the hands of unscrupulous men and women, then only the questioner but indeed all of us should be most concerned. Its propaganda value is almost unlimited and it comes as no surprise that leaders of totalitarian states have used it to great effect to indictinate their citizens: I think I am right in saying that in some such circumstances the receivers are provided by the State, and a not-too-surprising feature has been that they have not been fitted with control knobs.

### Influences – good and evil

I think we all understand that good and evil influences can come from many sources. God is the fount of all good influence; Satan is the fount of all evil influence. You and I can transmit good and evil influences just as a television transmitter can; the contrast is not one of capability, but one of degree. Our influences are in our immediate locality; television, on the other hand, can reach millions of people at any one time.

When are the things portrayed on television which the christian would class as evil? Well certainly pornography, violence, sexual licence, crime, alcoholism, foul communications, and all such things. To the christian these are like putrefying sores, the discharge from which can permeate the mind and pollute it. But we must never forget that evil practised on a large scale can bring its own revulsion. It is reported that when Group Captain Cheshire saw the evil which was unleashed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki he determined that he could no longer be part of a system which produced it, and we all know that the revulsion led him to spread good influences in the form of the Cheshire Homes. I well remember as a lad seeing a relative of mine often the worse for drink. I remember vividly that my revulsion was so complete that I determined there and then that alcoholic drink would not be for me. I agree that there is a serious dislocation of the human spirit in society today and that this is to some extent reflected on our television screens, but I also see some signs that a certain revulsion against this is taking place, however slowly, and this gives me some hope.

But we must remember that the medium of television is not the dispenser of evil only. It is the magic carpet whereon we can behold the majesty and grandeur of God's creation. It reveals mans strivings to express himself in architectural design and beauty towards his Creator. It brings into our very rooms many of the places trodden by the feet of our precious Saviour and his disciples, and the perceptions and remembrances of Him are sharpened as we view. By it we are shown the illimitable tracts of space, the wonders of the heavens, and we are filled with awe and wonder at the might and creative power of our God. We are alerted to the needs of our fellow human beings in many parts of the world and we can take steps to give what help we can. Yes, the influences of television are there, both good and evil; as they are, of course, in speech, in books, in newspapers, in radio programmes, in groups of people, and, sad to relate, even in some communities of so-called christians. How do we correctly measure how many people are turned away from, or turned to evil as a result of these? I wish I knew. The only thing that we can say with certainty is that these are now part of the structure of our living and the christian must contend with them as best he can within the disciplines of his christian faith.

### What of the innocent minds?

Individual minds respond to the same stimulus in different ways. As we all well know, an exhortation or a gospel message will grip some members of a congregation while leaving others 'cold'. Similarly, some people will re-live in their own lives contrived situations which they may see on television, while others can just view it with complete detachment and perhaps even amusement. It depends to a very large extent on the individuals concerned. Having said that, I accept the scriptural injunction that those who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of those who are weak, and if it is an infirmity of some to be influenced by the things which they may see and hear on television then those who are strong are called upon to do something to help; it is the nature of the help which presents the difficulty.

What advice should we give in order to help minds which are highly susceptible to pictorial stimulus? Should the christian banish the television receiver from his home completely? Some would undoubtedly say yes, and I can sympathise with their point of view; but this has been tried before, and the children of such homes, who would fall into the highly susceptible category, have simply viewed television programmes in other peoples homes. If this happens, then the objective is being defeated.

Others would argue for discrimination and control, "Choose the wholesome programmes you want to watch", they say, "And use the control switch to switch off the unwholesome ones". This sounds fine in theory, but doesn't always work out in practice. Someone in the



family 'just wants to see what happens next', and before you are aware of it, several things which you hadn't intended to be seen have been seen. And so it goes on.

There is yet another viewpoint which argues as follows, "Let them view anything, then take that which is unwholesome and teach from that standpoint so that you can illustrate to the viewer what the evil is within it, and how it can be avoided". Again, there is more than a grain of commonsense in that argument, but we would need to be well organised and disciplined families before we could embark on a teaching and training programme like that.

Another argument, which is held to be a most telling one by those who propose it, is that the christian life should be so full of service to the Master that there is no time, and ultimately no inclination, to spend time viewing things which at their best are transitory and unproductive, and at their worst, soul-destroying.

Having set the scene, I trust that the questioner and the reader will bear with me if I leave the question there, and deal with the utilisation of God's resources, and attempt to draw some fundamental conclusions, in the next issue of the S.S.

(All questions please to Alf Marsden, 377 Billings Road, Highfield, Wigan Lancs.)

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

### OCTOBER 1978

1—Genesis 22	John 8:31-59
8—2 Kings 4:38-44	John 9:1-34
15—Ezekiel 34:1-16	John 9:35 to 10:21
22—Leviticus 24:10-23	John 10:22-42
29—Ruth 1	John 11:1-18

### WHOSE CHILDREN?

MOST of those who listened to Jesus were Abraham's children by birth. The Samaritans claimed this privilege also, and Jesus did speak to people of other races. Some of His listeners we can understand were humble or wise enough to "believe on Him". This phrase involves more than a mere acceptance of His words, but a point is missed in the A.V. where the same phrase is used wrongly in 8:31. In the original it is "believed Him" - assented to what He said. This does seem to mean conviction that His words were correct but how far is it acceptance of His person? It is pathetic to realise what a short distance their faith took them, and Jesus evidently perceived this for He made His condition for consequent blessing - "If ye abide in My word". They must not only accept part of what they heard and saw as evidence of His Messiahship but continue with Him further. Up to the end of the chapter (8) we see His claims increased and accentuated. He saw them tied to materialistic ideas - to descent

from Abraham as giving a right to special consideration from God. They were slaves to earthly ambitions, from which they could only be released by acceptance of Him and His teaching. The love and compassion characterising Jesus were not in their make-up. Disagreement with any of His teaching made them hate Him. They could not find any fault in Him at all. The challenge "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" had no answer. They were up against the perfect man. They were shown their own sinfulness and could not bear it. He claims to be the Son who can free the slaves. He further claims to be the Giver of eternal life (8:51). This they regard as blasphemy, which indeed it was IF NOT TRUE. The culminating claim is equality with God - "Before Abraham was I AM" (8:58). What was in their hearts was then to occupy their hands. They were not at that moment Murderers - therefore children of the devil. Is this the acid test of God for our eternal destiny? Indeed "all have sinned", and forgiveness depends upon our forgiveness of others. Let us search our hearts!

### The Man-Born Blind

There are specially striking lessons in this incident. We are immediately faced with the fact stated so clearly by Jesus that the purpose of the affliction endured by this baby, child become man and his parents was that it should bring glory to God. He and his parents endured the affliction because Jesus was to pass by on the Sabbath - and see it - and act upon it. The use of spittle in healing was apparently well known. Jesus used it on two other occasions (Mark 7:33; 8:23), on both cases priva-

tely. It was the means Jesus used on those occasions as on this one with the difference that the man born blind had to believe and obey, take his part in the miracle. We seem justified in thinking that this took place towards the end of the ministry. It was in Jerusalem possibly close to the feast of the Tabernacles before the final Passover at which He was crucified. He was facing bitter opposition with murderous intention, and this SIGN was such a public demonstration of divine power that His enemies were determined to play it down to the uttermost. They were compelled to attempt to blacken the character of Jesus by asserting demonic power to the healed man. The "magic" of Moses was put against the demonstrated power of Jesus. The honesty and logic of the "unlearned and ignorant" man totally defeated them. The Pharisees who prided themselves on their loyalty to Moses in obeying the traditions of the elders found themselves against the one "altogether born in sin" because truth was on his side. There had been abundance of evidence of all kinds to prove the righteousness of Jesus, and His power. We cannot but wonder whether they were really blind to the facts, or had they determined from the first to deny Jesus and once set upon that course were no longer under their own control — the devil had put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. Had he not also put it into the hearts of the Rulers (pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees) to destroy the Son of God. Whose children had they become, and could not repent?

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Innumerable works of art and literary efforts have been inspired by this lovely picture. The first picture drawn by Jesus is of the shepherd coming to the door of the fold and calling His own sheep by name. The force is partially lost to western minds by our different methods of dealing with our sheep. That has been often explained however, and the allegory can be quite vividly understood. The Judean hill country was a wide area of pasture land. The sheep wandered over a wide area without fences or hedges and intersected by streams and valleys. Choice of pasture and watchful care over a flock were very full time occupations, and there were constant dangers from robbers and wild beasts. We remember that in the course of his duties David slew both a lion and a bear. Conditions had not changed much

since David's time so that those who listened got a vivid picture. The conditions of that time in Palestine were actually very bad. Rebellious Jews went about in bands murdering and robbing. The Roman rule was harsh and in some ways ineffective. Some shepherds would be paid employees and not too careful. Others would be dedicated men looking after their own, and exercising tender care, such as pictured by Isaiah (40:11), and other Old Testament writers have the reference to God as the shepherd of His people exercising watchful care over them. Jesus then calls Himself the door of the sheep, thus changing the metaphor, and claiming His unique position as the mediator through whom man has access to God. (Eph. 2:18; Heb. 10:20). The reference to those coming before Him is of course to false leaders, not to the prophets ceasing with Malachi and John Baptist. Quite numerous men of this kind arose about His time and more still up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The metaphor becomes clearer when He Himself is the Good Shepherd, and there is an emphasis upon His personal and individual relationship with every sheep. Oh! that we may more fully realise this and experience the joy of fellowship in Him. Finally Jesus has in view the spread of His gospel throughout the worlds to every race and clime. So far Israel has been God's flock, but universal adoption and a union into one flock is promised. The division into many flocks with different leaders and names is NOT in view, but a universal body covered by "The Lord knoweth them that are His" and "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

### Reactions

The teaching we are considering of course made the division among the listeners. Quite numbers must have been deeply impressed. The knowledge they had of the Old Testament teachings helped to convince that Jesus "spoke with authority" and had "power". To acknowledge this required courage in face of "authorities", but acknowledged it was. Those authorities were disturbed and faced Jesus with an accusation of not making Himself clear (10:24). Yet they had taken up stones to stone Him for blasphemy, proving their unbelief of His plain claims. How obvious is the comment of those who were to be His sheep (? and see 10:27 & 28) "These are not the words" and "Can a devil?" — the teaching and the signs. Some did believe

but they were in a minority of cowardice (12: 42 & 43). Continuous acknowledgement of Jesus in public and private is not easy. Let us not be too hard on them lest we condemn ourselves. R. B. SCOTT

#### HYMNS AND HYMN BOOKS

We note that the hymn books published by the Church of Christ, Wigan, have all been sold. This book contained 435 hymns only and caused disappointment by omission of many well-loved hymns in the 1908 book of 1036 hymns—an excellent collection, not yet equalled or eclipsed. The reduction in number of hymns was quite unavoidable, and the praise due to the brethren who compiled it remains unsung, alas! However some churches have adopted the "Christian Hymnary" which is a good collection (with reservation on doctrinal grounds), and has an excellent Tune Book. It seems unlikely in the present situation of the "Association Churches" that these latter books will be reprinted, and stocks are naturally reserved for churches in the Association.

The writer feels it a distinct disaster that books with printed music should be adopted. We know those who read music enjoy and perhaps need the music, but the effect of printing hymns in this way is to reduce or even remove the real purpose and object of singing. The words are so mixed up with notes, etc., that they come second. Worship is not the noise we make but the thoughts and words we offer to God. We need primarily to understand what we are thinking and saying.

If these thoughts find an echo in other hearts can we get together and plan to make a move back to the better books of earlier days and more natural singing. R. B. SCOTT.

#### SIN'S CONSEQUENCES

Sages of old contended that no sin was ever committed whose consequences rested on the head of the sinner alone; that no man could do ill and his fellows not suffer.

One of them illustrated it thus:- "A vessel sailing from Joppa carried a passenger, who, beneath his berth, cut a hole through the ship's side. When the men of the watch expostulated with him, 'What doest thou, O miserable man?' the offender calmly replied 'What matters it to you? The hole I have made lies under my own berth'. The ancient parable is worthy of the utmost consideration. No man

perishes alone in his iniquity; no man can guess the full consequences of his transgression. Spurgeon

#### QUOTES — on Adversity

Adversity is the diamond dust Heaven polishes its jewels with. Robt. Leighton

Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity of the New, which carryeth greater benediction and the clearer revelation of God's favour. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; adversity not without many comforts and hopes

Sir Francis Bacon.

He that can heroically endure adversity will bear prosperity with equal greatness of soul; for the mind that cannot be dejected by the former is not likely to be transported by the latter. Henry Fielding

Adversities do not make a man either weak or strong, but they reveal what he is. Faith Forsythe

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Buckie, Scotland:** It was with joy that we met together on Saturday evening July 15th, to witness the baptism of Maimie Strachan, daughter of brother and sister William Strachan, and granddaughter of the late brother George Reid. We rejoice indeed and pray that God will abundantly bless our young sister, that she will be kept by that power to live to His praise. John Geddes.

## OBITUARY

**Tranent, Scotland:** The church at Tranent was saddened at the passing of our sister Elizabeth Hogg, on the 4th July, aged 81 years.

Sister Hogg was immersed into her Lord at the age of 14 years, and has been a faithful servant of Jesus ever since. She has been an example of faith to all.

We pray that the Lord will comfort and sustain sister Hogg's family at this time remembering that if we die with the Lord we shall on that Great Day live with Him.

John Colgan, Sec.

## COMING EVENTS

**Kentish Town: 107th ANNIVERSARY** at Hope Chapel. Saturday 30th September, 1978  
 3 p.m. Thanksgiving & Devotional  
 5 p.m. Tea  
 6 p.m. Evening Meeting  
**VISITORS WELCOME**

## AN APPEAL

Tottlebank 1669 - Ulverston 1979: Recently Christians from many parts of this land, and others from overseas, have had the privilege of visiting Tottlebank (now a Baptist Church) where stalwarts of the faith established the church in 1669.

## Have we lost our Vision?

Well, about six miles away, here in Ulverston our tiny congregation (at one time reduced to four members) consisting of nine members, is aiming to convert the 17th Century building (formerly stables) we acquired in Feb., 1977. We thank God that, through the generosity of our brethren as well as by the efforts of our own members, the building was purchased outright and the legal charges met. Now the plans for the proposed alterations have been passed by the local authority and we need money for carrying out the work. To date we have accumulated a balance of £1,400 from contributions and gifts but we expect the work will eventually cost us in the region of £15,000.

We hope to undertake some of the work ourselves. Possibly half of the structure can be developed for our immediate needs, and the rest renovated at a later date.

Can we do it? We will try.

If you have been unable to help us in the past, and can do so now we shall appreciate your gift, however small. Those who have not the financial means to help us can uphold us with their prayers. Brother Crosthwaite, who lived here and worked here for some time shared his ministry with many. We trust that you will share with us in our longing for what the church here has lacked for many years - a decent place in which to meet and work, any-time. (Good rented accommodation is just not available).

## Convert a Building - Convert Ulverston?

The ground here is hard but, with God's help, and YOURS, we will strive to do it.

**HELP TO MAKE IT HAPPEN**, (Gifts should be sent to Miss Mary Cox, 24 Newton Street, Ulverston, Cumbria).

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The address of Tony Tyson, secretary of the church at Blackburn is now:- 152 Ormskirk Road, Upholland, Skelmersdale, WN8 0AF.

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 Tel. No. Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

**EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER**, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.