

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## THE ENGRAFTED WORD

IN Britain men and women queue to give blood donations whereas in many other countries blood will only be given if the donors are paid for it. Prince Charles freely donated a pint of his 'royal' blood the other day, amidst amused speculation as to who would be the lucky, or unlucky, recipient. Watching him on T.V. in the transfusion station made me reflect, again, upon the ingenuity of man. Who would have thought it possible to take blood from one person and give it to another, thereby saving life. Brother Tom Nisbet, my father-in-law, has many interesting memories of the very first blood transfusions when he was in the Medical Corps in Salonika during the first world war. The soldiers had all the obvious fears at the thought of receiving blood from others, and the expected personality changes, but today the business is quite ordinary (apart from the current concern about AIDS). From blood transfusions it is but a short step to think of the great advances in transplant techniques and in the removal of some vital human organ and its replacement by a similar stronger one. This too may be regarded as 'quite ordinary' in ten or twenty years or more. With a desire on the part of the general public to *look* attractive (and not only to *feel* well) we have also seen the emergence of skilful men who can make a fortune in their trade of plastic surgery and skin grafting, reducing waistlines and remodelling noses etc. This of course, has all to do with mans' physical well-being, but what of his spiritual well-being? Does it not seem a great pity that mans' outstanding success in treating the ailments of the human body has not been matched (even remotely) by proportionate improvement *in human behaviour*. Mans' body is one thing: mans' behaviour seems quite another. Social problems based upon human greed and selfishness still abound. Racial hatred and tribal wars have been rampant since time began and get worse rather than better. Nations, it seems can only be kept from one-another's throats by fear of the use of nuclear weapons in retaliation, and, on a personal level, no-one is safe in the streets. Centuries later, the world of today shows little improvement on Sodom and Gomorrah. Surely this is proof positive that "*it is not within man to direct his steps.*" Help must come from *some external source* if man is to reform - such improvement will never come from within himself. History tells us that *even God's own chosen people* were difficult to reform and after centuries of sending prophets into the world God eventually sent down His own Son, whom they slew on a tree. Thus we have a brief glimpse of the magnitude of the problem.

### **Spiritual Surgery versus Spiritual Re-birth.**

Anything man can do God can do better. Man performs medical wonders in the way of grafting, implanting and transplanting but God, in the restitution of the soul

and spirit of man prefers to start from scratch. Make a fresh start. God has not favoured a process of periodic visits to the operating table for futile sessions of remedial or cosmetic surgery but has arranged for a complete re-birth. The world is now truly "the land of beginning again". Man can start again with a clean sheet. Jesus said that such a thing was not only possible but essential "Ye must be born again" (born of water and the spirit). No doubt medics, would love to have such a physical possibility (of being born again) in their armoury of weapons against illhealth but even Nicodemus knew that a man cannot physically be re-born. Jesus explained, however, that "that which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of spirit is spirit" and therefore what cannot be accomplished *in the spirit* and therefore Nicodemus should "Marvel not" at the wonderful possibility of spiritual re-birth. Chapter 6 of Paul's epistle to the Romans explains the 'mechanics' of this rebirth and explains that man must 'die' before he can 'live', and that *in baptism* one is buried with Christ and emerges from that watery grave to walk *in newness of life*. He (or she) has become a *new creature*. Where else can a man 'trade in' a foul and evil soul, blackened with the years of sin, and be presented with a new one, shining clean, and the opportunity of beginning all over again. Amazing but admirable. Surprising but satisfying. Nothing could be more radical yet what could be more rewarding. Beautiful but beneficial. Miraculous and marvellous. And so God does not stick plasters, or poultices, on the sick and ailing souls of men but makes them anew - "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:13). The new birth will never be something fully understood - it is too wonderful even to contemplate and we can but join with the apostle Paul who, on occasions, was so overcome by the profundity of God's doings that he could but utter "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).

#### Double-function of God's Word.

Before we can have a *birth* in the natural world we require a *begettal*; seed must be sown. The rule holds good, it seems, in the spiritual world and the apostle Peter explains that those born again are "born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever" and John adds that we are also 'begotten of God' (1 Jn. 5:1). And so the seed of begettal is the inspired word of God. We find, that God's word is not restricted to the purpose of begettal but is more wide-ranging than that, and is also the means by which the newly born can thrive and grow. Many natural laws operate in the spiritual world and new born babes in the spiritual world must be weaned "on the sincere milk of the word". Indeed this was one of Paul's criticisms of the Christians at Corinth i.e. that he was unable to give them spiritual meat from God's word, but had to keep them on a milky diet seeing they were yet more carnal than spiritual and were "unable to bear" the strong meat of God's word. Again, on the same theme, Paul regretted that those to whom he wrote (in the letter to the Hebrews) *who should have been teachers*, required to be "taught again the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat." Thus the N.T. contains strong meat as well as milk and we must grow to maturity by imbibing the nourishment in God's oracles. The N.T. is not only a volume to *convict the sinner* but also to *guide the saints*.

So far we have been regarding the church as *the family of God*, with members being born spiritually into it, becoming brothers and sisters of the same parentage, children of the same Heavenly Father, but the church is described *in many other ways* in the N.T. and we must be careful not to mix our biblical metaphors. For instance the church is oft referred to as a *Body* and members regarded as the limbs and organs. The church is also a *Kingdom* and the members are subjects of the Great King. Sometimes the church is regarded as a massive *sheepfold* and Jesus as shepherd

of the flock. Sometimes as *the Bride* of Christ; sometimes as *'The Household of God'*; sometimes as *the Temple of God*; sometimes the Lord's vineyard with members as the labourers (or stewards); sometimes as *an army* with Jesus as captain and members as soldiers; sometimes as *a school* with a Great Teacher and earnest pupils. The church is, indeed, like a sparkling gem, cut with many glowing facets.

### The Engrafted Word - and Spiritual Hybrids

Thus far we have noticed the double-edged purpose of God's word - firstly of convicting sinners and, secondly, of guiding and instructing church members. *In the first case* it appears as if the proper employment of God's word is that it should be scattered like seed. This indeed is the description given by Jesus Himself in the parable of the sower. The incorruptible seed of the gospel is broadcast in all directions (wastefully by modern agricultural standards) but everyone must have an opportunity of hearing the good news. As the parable says, only a small percentage of seed will bear fruit and, even then, weeds will choke the progress of many. *In the second case* it seems that the word is not scattered as seed but is engrafted upon us. James says, "Wherefore lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (Chap. 1:21). The apostle Paul (in Rom. 11) also mentions the fact that propagation by grafting was quite commonplace in his day. The scattered seed finds the good ground but once the faithful identify themselves they are engrafted with the word of God and, as James exhorts, they should receive the engrafted word with meekness and it will save their souls. On leaving school at the age of 14 years I was sent to work in a Market Garden for two years and saw grafting being done many times. To the uninitiated it may come as a surprise that nearly all fruit trees are produced by grafting as are vines, shrubs and some rhododendrons. Many fruit trees are naturally susceptible to root disease and insect attack and so small branches (scions) from a mature fruit tree are inserted into the stump of a tree (rootstock) which is not susceptible to root disease. Similarly with roses. Briar is strong-growing and vigorous and thus constitutes a good vehicle for receiving the graft (or bud) of the tea rose. Obviously all growth above the graft is tea-rose and capable of producing beautifully scented blooms - all growth below the graft is tangled root-briar (not only unsightly but which steals all the sustenance from the rose and ultimately destroys it). Anyone having a rose garden knows the problem well and knows that constant vigilance is necessary to prevent the roses from "reverting to nature" and the briar (suckers) from strangling the beautiful blooms. The analogy used by James is not too difficult to understand. Those 'born again' must receive with meekness the engrafted word. The wild and rough nature of 'Natural Man' (strong-growing but fruitless) is the stump of rootstock upon which God grafts His incomparable word. The vigorous energies of the natural man can now be channelled through the branch of God and produce an abundance of every good Fruit (or blooms). Again, all growth stemming from below the point of the graft will be from the 'natural man', and fruitless, but all development from above the graft will be conditioned and sweetened by God's word and will be well-pleasing. All fruitbearing must spring from the pages of God's Holy Word. "Reverting to (human) nature" is a constant danger.

Before passing from this interesting analogy used by James it is interesting to reflect upon the 'grafted hybrids' that can be produced. Hans Winkler, experimenting in 1907, grafted black nightshade on to a tomato plant. Most of the resulting plants were predominantly black nightshade but some had roots which had the characteristics of black nightshade on the one side and the characteristics of a tomato on the other. This phenomenon is called a 'chimaera' (after the mythological monster of that name - part dragon, part goat and part lion). There were many other mythological monsters, of course, such as Pegasus, with part of one animal grafted onto another, and even in the scriptures such creatures are described, especially in Daniel

and the Revelation. If we are not careful, and meticulously guided in our beliefs by the 'engrafted word' we could easily become a 'grafted hybrid' in the religious sense. How many religious hybrids are there in the world? How many doctrinal chimeras? Neither one thing nor the other.

### Gentiles Beware

Jesus said, "I am the vine and ye are the branches" Jesus went on to say, "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He (God) taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring more fruit." 'Purging' a fruitful branch of a vine so that it would be even more fruitful is a highly skilled job of knowing where and how to make incisions in the branch (bleeding the vine). The converse however, that unfruitful branches would be amputated from the vine, was equally true and is something of which should take a careful note, especially as Gentiles. Paul refers to this (Romans 11:7-24) (and whereas he refers to an olive tree rather than a vine it makes no difference to his objective). He says that if the root is holy so are the branches and clearly he refers to the Jews. (Salvation is of the Jews and the gospel is for the Jew first and also for the Greek). But God has broken off some of the *unfruitful branches* (Jews) from this imaginary tree and grafted in branches of *a wild olive tree* (Gentiles). Thus the Gentiles now enjoy the fatness of the olive tree. "But", Paul warns the Gentiles, "Boast not against the branches for thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. And think not that the branches were broken off solely that the Gentiles could be grafted in". NO! it was *because of unbelief* that the natural branches (Jews) were broken off "and if God spared not those natural branches (Jews) take heed that He spare not thee (Gentiles)". This, says Paul, illustrates "the severity and the goodness of God" - on the Jews severity but on the Gentiles, goodness. But, warns the apostle, the process *can easily be put into reverse* and the Jews "If they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted back in; for God is able to graft them in again". Furthermore, if branches from a *wild olive tree* (the Gentiles) should ("contrary to nature" - or sound practice) be grafted into a *good olive tree* how much more seemly and natural would it be to replace the wild olive branches (Gentiles) with the original good olive branches (Jews). And so we have warning that the situation is always under constant review, and that we Gentiles must sustain our favoured position, not by Jewish default, but by virtue of our own merits. God, the faithful Husbandman stands by with the divine secateurs in His hand, and if we (Gentiles) fall after the same manner of unbelief and unfruitfulness as the Jews, we shall assuredly suffer a similar fate.

### Conclusion

Sinful man could not save himself or pull himself out from the pit. Help had to come from some external source. God sent His own Son to save us and by the 'New Birth' allows us to start afresh. We shall not succeed in our own strength or wisdom and so God has grafted on to our vile natures His inspired word. But we must receive "with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." Unsaved sinners must be born again and rise from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life. If this has already been accomplished we must, thereafter, continue in well-doing and be 'fruitful in every good work' knowing that we have 'been saved to serve' and knowing that 'the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine'. We must not 'Return to nature'. The rose must not revert to briar. "Receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls."

## IS CHRIST KING - NOW?

Christadelphians teach that Christ does not yet reign.

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:1-2).

*Is Christ now a King?*

What do the Scriptures say? In the Scriptures we find descriptions of Jesus Christ as King *now*, reigning as absolute sovereign.

(a) When the wise men of the East came to Bethlehem of Judea seeking the baby Jesus, they said, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:2). Thus he is no sooner born into this world than He is recognised as King.

(b) Again soon after beginning His public ministry, Nathaniel addressed Him, "Rabbi! Thou art the Son of God-thou art the King of Israel." Jesus who always corrected error, did not say Nathaniel was wrong, but accepted such ascription of regal dignity. He endorsed what Nathaniel had said by saying "Because I said," etc., "believest thou?" (John 1:49).

(c) When Jesus rode into Jerusalem upon an ass's colt, the multitude of people shouted out, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38). This statement of the kingship of Jesus alarmed the Pharisees, for they said to Jesus, "Master, rebuke thy disciples!" But Jesus said: "I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:39-40).

The writer of the Gospel according to Matthew says, "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee meek, and sitting upon an ass, even a colt, the foal of an ass" (Matt. 21:45).

If we turn to the prophecy which is fulfilled, we find God speaking by the prophet and saying: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold thy King cometh unto thee. He is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9:9).

These Scriptures are so clear. They affirm the coming of one who came, a King. Prophecy and fulfilment indicate the coming of a King and the manner of His coming at His first appearing. When the King comes the second time He will not be "riding upon an ass's colt," but in "the clouds of heaven." Not then in lowliness and meekness, but the day of vengeance will be in His heart, for the year of His redeemed will have come.

*Is Christ Now a King?*

"Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: He shall bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth, and the Isles shall wait for His Law". (Isa. 42:1-4).

This prophecy is said to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This declaration of fulfilment is found recorded in Matt. 12:18-21.

Dr. George Campbell renders this passage: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my Spirit upon Him and He shall give laws to the nations. He will not contend, nor clamour nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets; a bruised reed He shall not break, and a dimly burning taper He will not quench, till He renders His laws victorious; nations also shall trust in His name (verses 18-20).

All the functions of kings, governments, legislatures, and magistrates are summed up in the giving of laws, and carrying them into effect. Isaiah predicted this of Jesus

and Matthew says this was fulfilled in Him.

After His resurrection from among the dead and at a place where He had appointed to meet His apostles, Jesus said: "*All power* is given unto me, in heaven and earth."

After His ascension to heaven and on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit said: "God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ".

When Peter went to the house of the Gentile Cornelius, the Holy Spirit said by him of Jesus "He is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36).

Paul testified to the universal authority of Christ Jesus, saying: "He hath raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all principality and power, and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under His feet." (See Eph. 1:20-23).

"For He must reign until He hath put all things under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).

Jesus has received a name which is above every name, that at the *name* of Jesus, every knee shall bow, "and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" to the glory of God the Father. "Angels and authorities and powers being subject to Him."

We can in view of such testimony with confidence and trust in Him as our King say: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him. And one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Cor. 8:6).

From: 'The Young Christian'.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

He, then, that would interpret the oracles of God to the salvation of his soul, must approach this volume with the humility and docility of a child, and meditate upon it day and night. Like Mary, he must sit at the Master's feet, and listen to the words which fall from his lips. To such a one there is an assurance of understanding a certainty of knowledge, to which the man of letters alone never attained, and which the mere critic never felt.

God wrote that he may be understood.

As there is no divine dictionary, grammar, or special rules of interpretation of the Bible, then that book, to be understood, must be submitted to the common dictionary, grammar, and rules of the language in which it was written; and as a living language is constantly fluctuating, the true and proper meaning of the words and sentences of the Bible must be learned from the acceptance of these words and phrases in the times and countries in which it was written.

The Holy Spirit never makes a mistake, He complements himself not contradicts Himself. Truth always accords with truth. Apparent discrepancies can be harmonised when all the facts are known.

In doubtful cases, always give the preference to that interpretation of a passage, which is most simple, plain and natural.

Ask the questions - who? what? when? where? how? why?

All the difference in religious faith, opinion, and sentiment, amongst those who acknowledge the Bible, are occasioned by false principles of interpretation, or by a misapplication of the true principles.

How shall we always ascertain the meaning of any particular word? If it have but one meaning, testimony or the dictionary decides it at once; but if it have more meanings then the proximate words used in construction with it, usually called the context, together with the design of the speaker or writer, must decide its meaning. Usage and context will generally decide. If these fail, the design of the speaker and parallel passages must be summoned.

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

## GLEANINGS

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

### THE GREAT QUESTION

"Happiness is the great question confronting mankind. The whole world is longing for happiness and it is tragic to observe the ways in which people are seeking it. The vast majority, alas, are doing so in a way that is bound to produce misery. Anything which, by evading the difficulties, merely makes people happy for the time being, is ultimately going to add to their misery and problems. That is where the utter deceitfulness of sin comes in; it is always offering happiness, and it always leads to unhappiness and to final misery and wretchedness. The Sermon on the Mount says, however, that if you really want to be happy, here is the way. This and this alone is the type of person who is truly happy, who is really blessed. This is the sort of person who is to be congratulated."

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

### THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

"We call attention to the fact that the ministry of the church, in the New Testament, is mutual and general; it is a ministry in which the members minister, according to gift or ability, to each other's good, and a ministry in which each and every member is to participate. Thus, in Romans 12, after a call to his readers to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, their reasonable service, Paul appeals to every man of them not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but so to think as to think soberly, according as God had dealt to each man a measure of faith. This sober thought, or, literally, sanity of thought, is the estimate of one's powers for service which is neither too high, urging to do what one has not the ability to do; nor too low, leading one to depreciate his powers and to remain idle, ministered unto, but not ministering. "For," says the apostle, "even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another"."

Lancelot Oliver

### DON'T MENTION THE BRIERS

"It is not only a wise and happy thing to make the best of life and always look on the bright side, for one's own sake, but it is a blessing to others. Fancy a man for ever telling his family how much they cost him! A little sermon on this subject was unconsciously preached by a child one day last year. A man met a little fellow on the road carrying a basket of blackberries, and said to him: "Sammy, where did you get such nice berries?" "Over there, sir, in the briers." "Won't your mother be glad to see you come home with a basketful of such nice, ripe fruit?" "Yes, sir," said Sammy, "she always seems glad when I hold up the berries, but I don't tell her anything about the briers in my feet." The man rode on. Sammy's remarks had given him a lesson, and he resolved that henceforth he would try to hold up the berries and say nothing about the briers."

Selected B.A. 1890

### WORTH REMEMBERING

"The life of Christianity," said Luther, "consists in possessive pronouns." It is one thing to say "Christ is a Saviour," it is quite another thing to say, "He is my Saviour and my Lord." The devil can say the first; the true Christian alone can say the second."

J.C. Ryle

### THE DICTIONARY OF FAITH

"There is many a thing which the world calls disappointment; but there is no such word in the dictionary of faith. What to others are disappointments, are to believers intimations of the will of God."

Newton

### STILL NOT EXHAUSTED

"You never get to the end of Christ's words. There is something in them always, behind. They pass into proverbs; they pass into consolations; but they never pass

away; and after all the use that is made of them they are still not exhausted."

Dean Stanley

### YOU MUST WORK FOR IT

"If you do not wish for Christ's kingdom do not pray for it. But if you do, you must do more than pray for it; you must work for it."

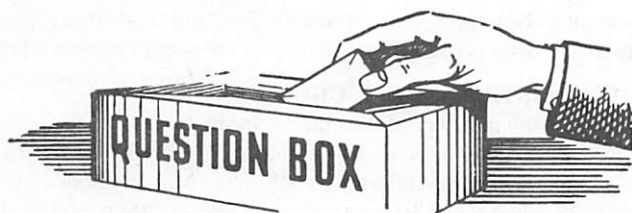
Ruskin

### POSSESSES ALL THINGS

"He who possesses Him to whom all things belong possesseth all things."

Krummacher

SELECTED BY LEONARD MORGAN




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"As a young Christian I have been surprised many times by the seeming reluctance of many old Christians to discuss death. Why should this be if we are a Christian society?"**

This is a question which I am not sure that we, the living, are best qualified to comment upon. To quote R.W. Emerson, "Time is, indeed, the theatre and seat of illusion: nothing is so ductile and elastic". There is no doubt at all in my mind that old age accepts in large measure loss of physical mobility, muscular degeneration, organic malfunction, and such like, but it is also true to say that the skills, experience, and wisdom, accumulated over long years, remain undimmed in many old people, and the propensity of the mind and intellect to do things is limited only by the physical incapacity to actually perform them. Now this 'elasticity' of age transcends time and gives rise to the expression which we frequently hear from old people, "If only I had new legs and arms, I'd show these young ones"; this is the mind leaping back over the years, and perhaps it gives a sense of perpetuity to old age. There is a sense in which old age is mirrored in the faces of the young, and vice versa; there is a rather irreverent expression used by Lancashire people when they see old people trying to imitate the young; they refer to them as 'mutton dressed up as lamb', and when this statement is properly analysed it would seem to be grossly unfair.

Perhaps, also, we should pay attention to the days when the old people of today were children. In those days death from such diseases as tuberculosis, diphtheria, infantile paralysis, and such like, occurred with alarming and frightening frequency when people were distressingly young; to have survived that period and lived on to old age may have had the result of making old people shun the thought of physical mortality. I do, however, agree with the questioner that physical death is a subject which seems to be avoided by Christians, and perhaps a re-examination of our attitudes and beliefs will be helpful.

### "Things which are seen".

The most powerful existence which we know is our physical existence. It is true to say that Christianity brings into our minds and into our calculations a *spiritual* existence, but all the evidence we can see points to the fact that the physical life is a more pervasive force than the spiritual one; I know that this may sound like heresy to the purist, but one can only comment on the evidence which one sees around him.

There are a number of reasons why the physical life should seem to assume



ascendancy over the spiritual. In the first place we can actually *see* and live among our earthly families; they are our progeny and occupy a special place in relationship. We see in our children and in our grand-children the continuity of ourselves. We do for them what we would never do for others; we help them, we make excuses for them, we say to ourselves, "I want to live so that I can see what they make of their lives", and then when grand-children come along the process is repeated in our minds, and so we tend to cling onto life as if we were the final arbiters in *their* destinies and our own. It is any wonder that when the Lord saw this addiction to physical immortality that He said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). The Lord is not saying that we should not love our children, nor is He saying that we should refrain from seeking their good, but what He *is* indicating is that the immortality which man so urgently seeks can be found in no other than Himself; this, I believe, is a lesson we would do well to ponder.

What about that book we were going to write? Down through the years when we have been fully occupied with secular work we have promised ourselves that when we have the time we will collect and collate all of our thoughts and write them down for posterity. Are we so vain and naive to think that if we *did* eventually get around to it that our thoughts would prove to be so epoch-shaking? The gracious words which fell from the lips of the Lord, and the Spirit-inspired words of the Apostles seem to cut little ice with people today, so how do we expect that the task we have set ourselves will prove any more thought-provoking, and furthermore, while we are fighting a futile delaying battle against the inevitability of physical mortality in order to finish the task, we are failing to see the benign light of eternity beckoning to us from the horizon with its promise of true and complete realisation of all that we have said we believe in; Paul puts it like this, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). Let there be no misunderstanding; the hold which physical life has upon us here is both real and powerful, but sometimes I feel that we are so earth-bound that our feeble efforts to discern the heavenly perspective are like those of a bird trying to soar into the heavens without using its wings. It is reported that a friend of Michael Angelo once asked him if his death would fill him with regret at having to leave so great an art, to which Michael Angelo replied, "By no means, for if life be a pleasure, yet since death also is sent by the hand of the same Master, neither should that displease us".

### The Gateway

There are two great facts which the Christian of any intelligence knows; one is that the physical body is mortal, and the second one is that the soul is immortal. Both of these facts emerge from the same Divine source. From these facts the realisation comes that the body is subject to age and decay, the soul is not. It is the immortality of the soul which ensures existence beyond the grave. The teaching of the Bible is that the immortal soul will continue either in the bliss of heaven or in the blighted plains of hell. The Lord testified to these facts when He issued His warning, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). We should, of course, realise that the word 'destroy' as used here by the Lord does *not* mean 'annihilate', so as to put it out of existence. He is, of course, exhorting people to put their immortal souls in the keeping of the Great Protector, Himself, rather than to expose it to the ravages of the Great Destroyer, Satan.

In the Christian context we know that we must die in order to live. The death is to sin, and the new life is in Christ; this is effectual in the rite of Baptism, "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the

dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life". Going on from there the Apostle says, "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.....likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:4-11). This teaching, of course, relates to the spiritual sphere.

However, the mind does not need to be stretched too far in order to reason out how this applies to us while we are yet in the *physical* realm. If the Christian is *now* a new creature in Christ Jesus, and if the immortality of the individual soul is an accomplished fact, which it is, then we can see at once that before we can enter into the prepared glory of God we must first pass through the gateway of physical death. In ancient mythology death was seen as a dark and turbulent river, and I am quite sure that it is viewed in the same way now in the minds of those who have never sought the source of eternal life in Christ. The Christian evangelist has an almost insurmountable problem. How can we offer the concept of endless ages to a present-day society which finds it extremely difficult to dispose of a few hours without some means of external entertainment? Even we Christians must understand that we can only interpret the eternal to ourselves insofar as we are able to submerge ourselves in the Eternal One. Peripheral and intellectual exercises of the mind will never prepare us adequately for contact with the Infinite. The finite mind can only attune itself day by day by losing itself in the Infinite Will, as the hymn-writer says,

"Sweet will of God, still fold me closer,  
Till I am wholly lost in Thee."

As our minds grapple with the concept of the ductility and elasticity of time, and as we realise that death is no respecter of age, perhaps we ought, young and old alike to discuss the effects of the Great Reaper more often.

*(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Hayfield, Wigan, Lancs.)*

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

MAY 1985

5—Daniel 12	Matt. 13:24-43
12—Prov. 3:11-26	Matt. 13:44-58
19—2 Kings 4:38-44	Matt. 14:1-21
26—Joshua 3	Matt. 14:22-36

### PARABLES - UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTABLE

I have a slight defect in hearing at present. Unless the speaker speaks clearly I have often failure to grasp what is said. I picture the great multitude Jesus is addressing. He chooses his place in the boat, pushes off a little way from the shore. The multitude stands or sits on the sloping beach. He speaks clearly so that everyone hears his words as they are all listening. Every word is clear. He speaks wonderful truths about divine reality clothed in words about the sim-

plest everyday things easily understood. The wisest philosophers might discourse for hours in highflown language and bring us no nearer to heavenly truths. He is talking to the MULTITUDE, "All sorts and conditions of men", using illustration readily understood because so "down-to-earth". Here is a crowd engaged largely in some form of agriculture and the hills around are sown with grain, the vine, the birds, the fields, the sea for fish, for trade, the busy community, fighting the weeds, burning the rubbish, garnering the harvest after threshing. Of course He is teaching His disciples and those in the crowd who are thinking of God and goodness and life and death will add to their understanding like the householder increasing his store of earthly and heavenly wisdom as it is expressed in Psalm 78 from the stories of the old times - for instance the story of Balaam - Numbers 23. We have the picture of the ages, the tares and the wheat, the leaven, the priceless treasure, the supreme pearl,

worth more than life. How the tiniest seed and the leaven spread the influence of good - "the word of God that liveth and abideth" - spreading His unseen spirit. In Tanzania 'the Bible sells like hot cakes'. What a privilege the disciples had, with all who heard the voice and saw THE SON OF MAN - (13:37).

#### **NAZARETH ANOTHER OPORTUNITY!**

We assume the original visit at the very first (Luke 4:16-31) brought a wicked rejection. Jesus was teaching and healing all around Galilee and other parts so that He was followed everywhere by crowds. He specifically retired into Galilee upon hearing of John Baptist's arrest but did not return to his native town. He chose to make His home in Capernaum (4:12). Surely all the evidence of His Messiahship had changed the minds of His fellowtownsmen by this time, but it was not so. Their familiarity with His circumstances blinded them to His greatness - was it in fact jealousy of the worst kind? Why was Jesus 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?'

#### **HEROD : A GUILTY CONSCIENCE AND A RASH VOW.**

We wonder why this monarch failed to fulfill His desire to see Jesus during this time of Jesus' popularity. Was he indeed afraid to face another prophet with the blood of John on his hands? He had given his soul to a very wicked woman, and then to a voluptuous girl. For him there was, alas, no going back, and what awful agony of soul must have come when the guilt came home! We have read of the weeping and gnashing of teeth. What terror should fill the soul when conviction comes upon us! Some crimes fill the normal conscience with horror but "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Jesus heard the news and "departed by boat to a desert-place apart". Picture a man's head on a dish!!

#### **FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND-PLUS!**

The news of His movements and the sight of the boat's journey spread like wildfire and crowds from the cities near the north of the lake, left everything they

were doing and hastened after Him and His disciples. They wanted to be with Jesus. His words and His works drew them to Him. His holy compassion magnetised them as it filled His heart. Their physical needs - yes! - but what of their spiritual needs? His holy hands dispensed tons of satisfying bread and fish for their immediate bodily needs. Shall we ever realise how great a wonder this was? Neither the people nor the disciples retained the wonder for long. It is too great for us too - "Imagination's utmost stretch in wonder dies away". Our faith remains not as strong as it should be as that of the disciples who very shortly after thought Jesus was bothered about a supply of bread connected with the leaven of the Pharisees. (6:6). That after a second just as wonderful sign. Readers do please READ with this 15:29-39, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-21. It will repay you to comprehend the stupendous SIGN. What a power Jesus manifested in restraining the false urge to overwhelming political ambitions of the populace for a worldly Messiah. It was the power of a blameless life sustained by perfect trust in God's ("MY FATHER") will ("Thy will be done" 26:42). We take a lesson "into the mountain apart to pray" (14:23). OR DO WE?

#### **WALKING ON THE SEA**

What a debt we owe to these gospel writers, including this Customs officer, called, chosen, and inspired by our heavenly Father to present to us our only God and Saviour, Who having all power in heaven and on earth with mastery over the awesome forces of the UNIVERSE, stooped to save our fallen human nature by the sacrifice of HIMSELF. The toiling boat-men were terrified but Peter ennobled by faith essayed to step upon the unstable sea to share his master's power. Alas! he needed his master's hand and with that contact was saved. We need that contact in our spiritual weakness constantly. The disciples had to learn to "sell his cloak and buy a sword" later - that is without miraculous aid to face persecution and death. They did face greater danger than the stormy sea, the

wives of Satan, false brethren, powers of darkness not yet felt "when the bridegroom is with them" (9:15), "to stretch forth His hand". What an astounding experience and a tremendous responsibility they had - the honour of sharing the work of Jesus BUT do not we all share it who are God's people? They came to shore and worshipped saying "THOU ART THE SON OF GOD", and we agree - and worship.

### MULTITUDES

Let us notice the references in these portions of scriptures to the crowds of people involved. There must have been times when they gathered wherever Jesus came, and remember His thanksgiving to His Father that "Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and reveal them unto babes" (11:25). Marshall translates "infants" not "babes" indicating that meaning rather 'not grown up' rather than our normal thought "babies". However the point is clear that mothers and children formed part of most crowds. The Greek word is used in 1 Cor. 11:3:11 of Paul putting away childish things. Thinking of the people forming the crowds gathering around Him, how good that His teaching was fitted for them, and purposefully illustrative from the "everyday" rather than the intellectual. Nevertheless we know God is no respecter of persons. Jesus was of course speaking of choice and comparison rather than absolute. Jesus loves us all, and knows our joys and sorrows. Each parable needs separate treatment and space is limited.

R.B. SCOTT

## THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IS

Shall we continue to teach and practice principles relative to the *spiritual* nature and function of the church - a divine institution primarily concerned with the eternal destiny of the soul; or - Shall we allow social and temporal welfare activi-

ties to dominate our programme of work?

### BIBLE TEACHING

The bible reveals that churches in the first century engaged in the following activities:

(1) **Evangelism** - converting the lost. Paul described the church as "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). That truth is the "power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). We are not surprised, therefore, to learn that, as the Jerusalem church upheld the truth according to God's divine plan, "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of man and women" (Acts 5:14). The churches not only evangelised communities, but as faithful preachers went forth evangelising the world, they sent support to them. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service" (2 Cor. 11:8). He further wrote to the Philippians, "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Phil. 4:16).

(2) **Edification** — teaching and strengthening the saved. The church was given apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11, 12 - New American Standard Translation). Those baptised on the day of Pentecost "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Through daily teaching and the Lord's day worship periods the early Christians were strengthened and taught, so that when the church was scattered through persecution, they were able to go everywhere "preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

(3) **Benevolence**. Churches cared for the needy saints. Acts 2:44, 45 and 4:32-37 tell of the Christians' selling their property and laying the money at the apostles' feet that "distribution might be made unto every man as he had need". When churches became destitute and unable to care for their own needy, other churches sent to their relief (Acts 11:27-30; Rom.

15:25, 26; 2 Cor. 8 and 9).

### A SPIRITUAL INSTITUTION WITH A SPIRITUAL MISSION

We view with sorrow and disapproval the trend among churches of Christ today to become involved in activities that have no connection with the mission of the church as taught in the Scriptures. The church is a spiritual institution with a spiritual mission. It has as its primary goal the preparation of men and women for eternity. An important part of its message is, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16:26). It cannot compete with the schools in the educational field, the restaurants in the banqueting field, the politicians in the political field, or the TV in the entertainment field, for it was never established to function in these fields; but in spiritual realms it has no peer, for it is perfectly equipped by a perfect Founder to function in spiritual realms.

Shall we take the church away from its God-ordained role, and "allow social and temporal welfare activities to dominate its programme of work?" Our answer must be . . . GOD FORBID!

From: "Continue In The Faith".

### CHRISTIAN MANLINESS

"Quit you like men." 1 Cor. 16:13. The word "quit" means to show oneself a man, or to be brave. One might ask, "How else could men act?" To find the answer to this question I suggest two possibilities. Man is not like the lower animal in that they can only act by natural instinct which would limit their actions to unvarying uniformity. Man has the ability to reason and choose. In addition, we must remember the influences that are at work in man which will degrade his nature. Gal. 5:17.

An appeal for manliness is most noble and very effective. Sometimes we point out how we ought to perform or how others are behaving in an effort to shame people into action. 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard.' Prov. 6:6, thereby, goading one into duty. R. C. H. Lenski makes the

following comment on 1 Cor. 16:13; "The Greek means: Be men constantly, or show yourselves men always! Paul refers to the virtue of Christian manliness with its strong connotation of bravery and unflinching courage, but it is used here in connection with maintaining the faith." Let us examine some areas in which such manliness can be displayed.

In everyday life we find our lives made up of little acts or scenes. We reveal our true character in our unguarded moments. At such times, we may act discourteously, slovenly, or ungenerously. People will remember these moments, and the best in us can hardly erase them. For example, when we disregard the feelings of a friend, we could hardly say that we are ruled by love and truth. To remain faithful over the smaller matters in life, we need to look at the overall values in respect to eternity. 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth.' Col. 3:2. Let us give priority to Spiritual matters above material. An insult against our character, dirty finger marks upon the windows, or damage to our new car could be some of the things that could catch us in a flash of temper. If we "Put on the new man", we will not allow these relatively minor events to overthrow our composure and cause us to offend someone. Remember, people are just waiting for a Christian to make a slip. Yes, a Christian must be manly in the common affairs of life.

We should not be content with nominal Christianity which means to be a Christian in name only. We must develop fortitude and strength beyond our natural abilities. Eph. 3:20: "Now to him is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us". Recall the young shepherd boy as he championed God's cause by slaying the giant. Instead of cowering, David asked, "Who is this Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" David faced Goliath and said, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defiled . . . and Goliath fell upon his face to the earth." 1

Sam. 17. It will take faith in God equal to David's faith, if we are going to be courageous Christians.

May we rally to the Apostle Paul's challenging words, "Quit you like man", by not being petty nor nominal, but always displaying a union of strength and tenderness in love, which are the true attributes of Christian manliness.

Phillip A. Morr,

## INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY IN BENEVOLENCE

An individual Christian, sustaining both spiritual and humanitarian relationships, has benevolent responsibilities both to saints and to sinners. The following principles should govern him in his benevolence.

(1) His responsibilities begin with his own relatives, growing out of **family** relationships:

*"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" - 1 Tim. 5:8.*

*"If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged. . . ." - 1 Tim 5:16.*

(2) He further has responsibilities to needy saints, these responsibilities growing out of a **spiritual** relationship with them. One should observe that saints are to be given preference over non-Christians even in the individual's benevolent work.

*"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, ESPECIALLY unto them who are of the household of faith" - Gal. 6:10.*

(3) The individual's final responsibility is to any needy among his fellow-men, this responsibility growing out of his **humanitarian** or **social** relationships. This is the message in Jesus' story of "the good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37).

(4) All benevolent responsibilities are to be fulfilled out of a heart of genuine compassion and love:

*"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing" - 1 Cor. 13:3.*

(5) The real test in benevolence come when personal service is the need. The individual with a calloused heart might give a "hand-out" or write a cheque, but only those who are moved with compassion and love will render personal service. The "good Samaritan" rendered personal service, binding wounds, pouring in oil and wine, setting the unfortunate Jew on his own beast, bringing him to an inn, and taking care of him. This personal service took place because "he had compassion on him" (Luke 10:33,34). The individual, therefore, who is willing to write a cheque, but unwilling to provide personal care is hardly benevolent in God's sight.

A benevolent spirit is absolutely essential in the practice of pure and undefiled religion (James 1:27). A Christian, then, must never become calloused, hardened, or lacking in compassion, for such a person can never go to heaven. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

Bill Hall.

## TEMPTATION

Temptation is one of Satan's favourite methods of winning souls to hell. Snares of this character beset our feet every day of life, and especially is this true of the christian with whom the devil is constantly at work, seeking to lure him from the path that leads to God.

All sorts of human weaknesses are seized and used by the evil one. Temptations come from every quarter and from points whence we least expect them, and toward which we are least prepared for resistance.

In business, in social life, in general intercourse with the world; even in our homes and in the bosom of our families - indeed within the walls of the church itself do temptations come to us. But the Christian always has these three

weapons with which to fight. They are repentance, faith and prayer. Besides, we know that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, and we have this example of resistance. We also have the promise that God will not permit us to be tempted above that we are able to bear. We must always regard temptation as a trial of our faith and life.

## NO BALANCES

If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with £864.00; if it carried over no balances, allowed you to keep no cash, but every evening cancelled whatever you had failed to use during the day, what would you do?

Draw out every penny each day, of course, and invest it in something worthwhile! Well, you have just such a bank, and its name is *time*. Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off as lost whatever of these you have failed to invest to good purposes. It carries over no balances. It allows no overdrafts. Each day it opens a new account with you. Each night it burns the record of the day. If you have failed to use the day's deposit, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against the morrow.

You must live in the present, on today's deposit. But - and here is the hopeful part of it - it is never too late to begin. Even though you have wasted all your years, even though you have never drawn out one penny, you will find the Paying Teller Time just as cheerful, just as ready to honor your drafts, as if you had been his most regular customer. Take advantage of that most precious and most limited of all commodities - *time*. Draw upon it for what you want. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health and happiness and success.

Adapted.

news to send. All I can say is that the work at Bokmakierie, Athlone, where I am labouring, is still going along very well. Attendances at all services, which include the weekly 'Cottage Meetings' and Bible Study, are good and we are still hopefully and prayerfully looking forward to precious souls turning to the Lord; and I hope that, Lord willing, I shall be able to send you that good news sometime.

Thomas W. Hartle

**Slamannan District, Scotland:** On Saturday, 9th March, 1985, the churches in the Slamannan District held their Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting, at Dennyloanhead. The Chairman was Andrew Scobie and the Speakers were James Sinclair (Snr) and John Kneller, both of Tranent. The subject under discussion was "How should a Church use its money and how should a Church Not use its money". A goodly attendance enjoyed the subject greatly and there was much discussion on the matter.

The next meeting, God Willing, will be held at Dalmellington, on 11th May, 1985, at 4 p.m. when the subject will be "We shall *all* stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ" - why 'All'? The Chairman will be David Chalmers and the speakers will be Gareth Jones (14 years) from Haddington and Ian Davidson from Motherwell.

H. Davidson

## OBITUARY

**Mayfield, Easthouses:** It is with deep regret that we report the passing of our faithful sister Lily Dunn.

Until a few months ago she attended at all the services including Sunday School, where she was a firm favourite of the children. Sister Dunn was in her 91st year and her determination to attend the services was an example to us all.

Morris Finlay.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Cape Town, R.S.A.:** I know that it is a long time since I have written to you 'newswise' but I have had no special

**COMING EVENTS**

Annual Social at Kirkcaldy

Saturday, 13th April

Tea at 4.45 p.m.

Speaker: J. Strachan, East Kilbride

**REMEMBER THE NOBODIES**

**Let's Remember the Nobodies!** A woman was in a store looking for a birthday card with just a general message, but all she could find were cards specifically for mum, dad, husband, wife, etc. Finally she turned to the assistant. "These cards are all for somebody. Haven't you any for nobody?"

I suppose we've all been buying cards for somebody at this festive season, and we've received them too. But action groups like Oxfam and Christian Aid keep reminding us of the need of the nobodies, the boys and girls we don't know, who will die if we don't dig deep into our pockets. Jesus said "Don't just give to those who give to you." Let's remember the nobodies, God knows them!

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Quiet now...

Close the minds door  
on business of the day  
And for this brief moment  
Clear the way  
for God

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**SMILE - SOMEBODY  
LOVES YOU**

It is a marvellous thing to be loved. It somehow purifies you, ennobles you, makes you carry your head high. You want everyone to know about it. Your heart sings. Someone has thought you worth loving! And that is one of the most marvellous things about the Christian life; The Lord Himself has thought you and me worth loving... When I look at Calvary I can no longer doubt that He loves me - with a love stronger than death.

Michael Green

**WHY HE WAS SORRY**

In a large gathering of Christians the speaker said, "I would like to ask if there is anyone here who is sorry that he came to Christ?"

For a few seconds there was a great silence over the large crowd, who were surprised at the unexpected question. Then, to everyone's surprise, one man rose to his feet.

"Yes Sir?" said the speaker.

"I only wanted to say, sir", replied the man who had stood on his feet, "that I am sincerely sorry that I did not come to Christ much sooner than I did."

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