

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THINGS HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Every trade, profession or scholastic discipline seems to have evolved its own particular brand of jargon. 'Jargon' is actually a French word, lifted, without any alteration whatsoever, into the English language and means 'prattle'. In current usage it means, "technical terminology that is unintelligible to the uninitiated, or muddled incantatory speech". New types of jargon arise all the time and is rife in the fast-growing electronic industry, especially in the field of computers. In some work-places, laboratories, factories and offices new employees have no hope of coping with the job until they have mastered the jargon.

I received a lengthy legal document through the letter-box the other day and had to read it several times before I began to understand it. Lawyers and Solicitors would strongly deny that they employ any kind of jargon in the legal profession but one can't help feeling that there must be a much more direct way of stating facts and drawing up agreements. Lawyers claim that the 'wordy' nature of legally-binding writs, and contracts, is necessary to cover all possible eventualities, especially if at a much later stage someone challenges the contents of these documents. This is obviously true but it is still difficult to believe that lawyers do not try to preserve an aura of mystery around the legal profession, and an impression of immense complexity in the things they have to do. This all helps to justify the fat fee they will later charge and certainly discourages 'the man in the street' from attempting to do the conveyancing of his own house, or even writing his own Will. Thus the legal profession jealously guard and preserve their use of outdated and archaic terminology to confuse the reader, it would seem, rather than to enlighten him, and so Title Deeds, Wills and Contracts continue to occupy the use of ten sheets of parchment when one would probably do. We have all heard of the Suit of Jarndyce and Jarndyce.

Solicitors are not alone in this, of course, in baffling us with latin phrases and the technicalities of jurisprudence, but Insurance Brokers, Estate Agents, Money Lenders and Banks all force us to read carefully the small print and the Warranty clauses.

RELIGIOUS MUMBO-JUMBO

It is no exaggeration to say that there is also a special jargon in the world of religion. If you doubt this to be true just try reading a few of the works written by the well-attested theologians and see what you can make of them. The quest of Philosophy has been described as rather like a blind man searching for a black cat down a deserted coalmine, and theologians certainly seem to bring a lot of human philosophy into their treatises on the Christian religion. It seems that the clergy take

that which is simple and make it appear complicated, and take something which is clear and cloud it over with mysticism. The main purpose of language is that one human-being should understand the other but sometimes, as we all know from experience, language is used to prevent understanding and to conceal true meaning. Politicians constantly accuse one another of employing words that deceive, and Judges in the courts constantly have to give judicial decisions on the precise meaning of words, and phrases. And so words can be used not only to convey truth but also to conceal it: intentionally or otherwise. It seems that with reference to God's words, and the importance of their original and true meaning, we spend a great deal of time in defining and disputing over the meaning of words; truth being mislaid in the process. Just the other morning, the 'Minister' who takes the 'Pause For Thought' spot on the radio was accused by the presenter of the programme of turning religion into a mumbo-jumbo and talking above the heads of the general public: and the clergyman readily agreed. It was Spurgeon, I think, who said that the elderly bald-headed men who snoozed through his discourses were bald because of his sermons bouncing over their heads. It certainly can not be denied that the most common complaint of the average churchgoer who regularly goes to the various places of worship is that they do not always understand the sermon, for it is often well above their heads. Much of religion today is certainly a theological mumbo-jumbo and the 'common people' who heard Jesus gladly have been completely 'turned off' by those in the pulpits, realising that Christ's teaching was much less complicated. The common people know enough about what Jesus taught to know that much of what passes for Christianity today is at odds with the sentiments of the Saviour. There are many who are doubtless hungering and thirsting after the truth but just can't find it. They realise that it must be something much simpler than the vocabulary of the clerics would suggest. After all, the gospel was intended for the common man: the wayfaring man: and a University degree in 'Divinity' should not be a prerequisite.

WORLD'S GREATEST TEACHER

What the Scribes and Pharisees did to the Old Testament, the present-day theologians are doing to the New. It is being locked away in obscurity. Generally speaking, Jesus ignored the niceties and intricacies of Jewish ritual and theology and cut through it all with a loud call for true repentance and genuine love towards God. The Jews had already thwarted the scriptures with the substitution and introduction of their own 'Traditions Of The Elders': a document which attracted more respect and attention than God's inspired Word. Christ did not give a long, reasoned and 'not-likely-to-offend' theological discourse on the matter but destroyed the whole evil system with a few well-chosen words, i.e. "Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your traditions". It seems fairly certain that if Jesus were here today He would do the same with all that is currently being palmed off as 'Christianity'.

Jesus, as a teacher, was quite unique in many respects, but mainly for His simplicity. He made many references to the O.T., and even employed some of its imagery, and phraseology, but all in a direct way and in a new sense. He used plain words and the 'common people' heard him gladly. He spoke in extremely uncomplicated terminology so that even the smallest child could understand. (Likewise preachers should so speak that the very youngest in their audience can understand). He was dealing with profound and sublime themes but made them entirely within the comprehension of the most simple-minded. He never used technical language and most certainly made no use of any ecclesiastical jargon. It surely is a tribute to Christ, as a teacher, that He could make such difficult themes appear so rudimentary. Like a hot knife through butter His words went to the very heart of a matter and could instantly convict or amaze the hearers. Dean Farrer has said, "How exquisitely and freshly simple is the actual language of Christ compared with all the teaching that has gained the ear of

the world. There is no science in it; no art; no point of demonstration; no carefulness of toil; no trick of rhetoricians; no wisdom of the schools. Straight as an arrow to the mark His precepts pierce to the very depth of soul and spirit. All is short, clear, precise, full of holiness, full of images of daily life."

Jesus highlighted mans' tendency to honour God with the lips albeit his heart was far from Him, and much of the religious form and ritual was, in Christ's eyes, so much imposture and humbug. The simpleton who repents and lives a life of praise, obedience and service to God (without necessarily understanding much about the philosophical questions about the nature of man, much less the nature of God) is more pleasing to God than the pomp and ceremony practised by those in high office in the 'established church'. Did not Jesus say, to the religious elite of His day, "The publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom Of God before you" because the scum of society had more real faith than the religious leaders. Likewise it was the Publican's prayer that God listened to and turned a deaf ear to the Pharisee. Even in Christ's use of parables (designed to enlighten some and keep others ignorant for a temporary period) He demonstrates His consummate skill in couching deep themes in everyday parlance. Prof. R.T. Moulton rightly remarks, "What literature associates mainly with the name of Jesus are the wonderful parables: children love them. They are understood at once by the simple; yet the deep thinker, the more he thinks, sees more and more a whole philosophy of life standing out clear from a story of half-a-dozen lines."

It seems that Christ's few years of 'Ministry' were so full of purpose and urgency, His time too short, and His mission too deadly serious, for Him to play with words or toy with oratory. He left all that to the rabbis. Certainly, "never man spake like this Man."

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Jesus taught as one having authority and not as the Scribes. All His utterances were clearly understood by the wise and unwise, the learned and the wayfaring man, the adult and the child. Jesus warned against the leaven of the teachings of the theologians of His day, and we should apply His words to the theologians of our day. God's will is again being frustrated by human tradition and we should make sure that we are never guilty of any such thing. We should, at all times, try to emulate Christ's simplicity. Even in the church of our Lord there may still be those who would by "good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17). These were the words of Paul and yet Peter could say that in Paul's epistles "were some things hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16) and that the unlearned and unstable would wrest them, as they did the other scriptures, to their own destruction. Certainly Paul's erudition led him to a wider vocabulary and while some of his argumentation requires much study and concentration yet, in the main, he spoke quite simply and plainly. Nothing he said was impossible to understand, but some things hard to understand. The same Paul could yet refer to the "simplicity that is in Christ" and certainly never confounds us with ecclesiastical jargon.

There seems to be a steady tendency, in some places, for the churches of Christ to copy the denominational bodies in many respects, and we can see an increasing similarity. We continue to reiterate our distinctive 'plea' but the reality is often something quite different. We see a trend towards copying the denominations in their forms of music (instrumental as against vocal) robed choirs and the like; observance of 'Special' Services at Easter and Christmas etc.; dedication services to buildings and 'ministers' etc.; erection of buildings to more resemble the common conception of a 'church' (with spire and stained-glass windows); college - trained 'educated ministry' dominating the pulpits; women preachers and other similar signs of a desire to be in step and general alignment with the various 'churches' around us. It seems that we are also beginning to copy the jargon of these religious establishments. Ira Y. Rice

(Jnr.) in his "Axe On The Root" referring to the "language of Ashdod" by the "degrees brethren" (Vol. 1 p.29/30) says, It reminds me of something Joe Barret said recently:— It has been suggested that if Simon Peter had attended a 20th Century 'Seminar' and spoken in the theological jargon which becomes increasingly characteristic of some of our Lectureship Programs, Matt. 16: 15-17 might have sounded something like this — "Jesus said, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Messianic Parousia, the Pre-existent Logos, the Eschatalogical Anticipation of the Cosmos. And Jesus answered and said unto him. The Who?" There is always the temptation, and human weakness, of trying to impress others with a show of learning, and this clearly was never evidenced by Jesus or any of the apostles. Jesus could have used 'big' words and impressed us with an amazing vocabulary but He chose, rather, to astound us with simplicity. Seventy-five per cent of Jesus' words were of one syllable. May we try to emulate Him. As the hymnwriter says,

"Make the message clear and plain
Christ receiveth sinful men."

And let us heed Paul's warning to the Corinthians, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor. 11:3).

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

"NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO"

"For even the Son of man came **not to be ministered unto**, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

A great fact is here stated concerning the Son of man. The speaker is our Lord Himself, who in this, as in all matters, left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

The Incident

The incident that gave rise to His words is a sad one. Two of His disciples, James and John, wanted to be ministered unto by being granted the chief places in His glory (verses 35-37). When the others heard it, they were highly indignant, for they wanted to be ministered unto by having the chief places themselves. But out of the ferment the Lord brought good. He made it an occasion to remind His disciples that they were not of the world, and that their distinguishing mark must be lowliness and readiness to serve one another.

The Master's Example

"Jesus called them unto Him" (Verse 42). Notice the tenderness and pathos here. He had been telling the Twelve about Himself — of the awful betrayal, the cruel sufferings and indignity, the shameful death that awaited Him at Jerusalem (verses 32-34). Surely their hearts are melted? Nay, they seem unable to think of Him. They begin to quarrel among themselves as to who should be the greatest. Picture their flushed faces, their angry tones, their violent gestures! "But Jesus called them unto Him," and gently quelled the storm. Earthly rulers, He tells them, exercise lordship over others: "but so shall it not be among you: but whosoever desires to be great among you must be your servant, and whosoever of you desires to be first must be the bondsman of all, for even the Son of Man came **NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO**, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (verses 42-45). In a word, "Remember you are My disciples. The disciple must be as His Master."

“Not to be Ministered Unto”

Evidently this is something which closely concerns us all if we are Jesus' disciples. It tells us something of what spirit we should have and what our life ought to be to-day — and everyday. The passage tells us that the Son of Man came to minister. This is a great subject. It is not that incidentally He ministered unto a few or to many; but He **“came to minister.”** It was His set purpose. But this wonderful passage tells us something else about the Son of Man. He **“CAME NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO.** We are apt to slur over this, to forget it, or perhaps to pass it by altogether unnoticed. The disciples of Jesus are to be **“even as the Son of Man”** in coming to minister. Yes, and the disciples of Jesus are to be **“even as the Son of Man”** in coming **“NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO.”**

J. H. HORSBURGH.

MEMORY

“They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness.” Psalm 145:7.

“Memory can be our kindest friend or our cruellest foe. It all depends on the supply from which it draws. It has been said that the best preparation for a happy old age is accumulating a bountiful supply of pleasant memories. Certainly when the storehouse of our mind is well stocked with thoughts of the goodness and guidance, and the forgiveness and faithfulness of our God, the recollection of such will dispel the shadows which creep stealthily into our later years.

H. G. MACKAY.

WE QUOTE — H. BONAR

**“Thou must be true thyself, if thou the truth wouldst teach;
Thy soul must overflow, if thou Another's soul wouldst reach:
It needs the overflow Of heart to give the lips full speech.
Think truly, and thy thoughts Shall the world's famine feed;
Speak truly, and each word of thine Shall be a fruitful seed;
Live truly, and thy life Shall be a great and noble creed.”**

SOMEONE HAS SAID

“God's leadings lead to God's glory.”

W.LAW.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

GOD IS NEVER DEAF

He who planted the ear, shall he not hear? (Psa. xciv. 9) Neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. (Isa. lix 1.) His ears are open unto their cry. (Psa. xxxiv. 15)

To those of us whose hearing has been impaired by any physical cause, there are numberless vexations and losses and privations caused by deafness. Over one of the inlets into the mind there is inscribed **“No thoroughfare.”** What a comfort it is to know that our Heavenly Father is never deaf! His hand is never shortened, that it cannot save; neither is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. Human ears grow deaf by disease; worse still, they are closed by indifference or hard-hearted unkindness. The most benevolent people sometimes get impatient under oft-repeated appeals for assistance. Beggary wears out its welcome. But who has ever tired out the infinite love by oft-knocking at His door, or by frequent importunities? The oftener we come, the oftener we may. God loveth to be enquired of.

I do not believe that the covenant-keeping God ever leaves a sincere prayer, breathed to Him in faith, *unnoticed* or *entirely unanswered*. The answer may be long delayed. For example, the martyr Stephen prayed for his bigoted persecutors. Among them was that young man Saul, on whose wonderful future that day's scenes had a wonderful influence. Perhaps one of the joys of heaven will be the discovery of answers to our petitions which we laid at the throne of grace during our life-time.

1. God is a supreme Sovereign. We are responsible free agents here on His footstool. As a Sovereign, He commands us to pray, to pray without ceasing. It is our privilege and duty to pray; it is God's right to bestow just such answers as His all-wise love may deem to be best. Faith is that child-like temper of the soul which submits implicitly to everything which God *orders*, but never submits to what God *can better*. If we yield to discouragements which we ought to battle against, or if we submit to the absence of spiritual blessings without wrestling for them, then are we but worthless clods, who deserve to suffer the worst that can befall us. In spite of discouragements, we must never grow faint in prayer. Genuine faith, coupled with obedience, creates such a condition of things, that it may become wise for our Heavenly Father to grant what would otherwise be denied.

2. Sometimes God hears and answers our petitions in a way that is quite unlooked for. God sends us something different from what we expected, and something far better. A man prays that he may be purified in spirit. God takes him at his word, and puts him in a blazing furnace of affliction. The sufferer finds that in that furnace his dross has been purged off, his faith has been strengthened, and his love quickened, and he is ready to cry out "O God Thou hast tried me, and I came forth as gold." This brother's petition was answered according to its *intention*, and not according to the letter of the request. We do not always recognise the answers to our prayers when they come. Be sure of one thing, and that is that God is never too deaf to hear, or never too busy to attend to us. Paul besought God three times over, to deliver him from that "thorn in the flesh." All in good time the answer came: "My grace is sufficient for thee." God did not take away the affliction. He gave him grace to triumph over it.

3. Then, too, we must remember that some of God's promises require time to mature. We get impatient. Things do not turn out as we had hoped. Too often we raise an ado like the weepers and wailers in the house of Jairus. Unbelief begins to wring its hands, and cry, "It is all over." When Jesus came to that turbulent house of the ruler, He put all the noisy mourners out and calmly spake the omnipotent word "Maiden arise!" I often think that this story of Christ's restoration of the dead damsel was given to teach Christians how to behave in times of trouble. Instead of sitting down in despair, or letting our unbelief rave, we should call for the *Master*. Nor should we worry if He does not come at our first call, or if He does not bring just what we expected.

The bell-rope of prayer reaches up to the ear that is never heavy. Let us pull it with a strong hand, and with a submissive spirit. When we have pulled, let us wait till the answer comes. If we do our duty, we shall never fail to receive what God knows to be the very best thing for us.

Selected.

WHAT ABOUT THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

'And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying. If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him saying. Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him. Verily I say unto thee. To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' (Luke 23: 39-43).

ALMOST invariably when men are confronted with passages of scripture which plainly state that baptism is essential to salvation (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16 and 1 Peter 3:21 for examples) they will ask. 'What about the thief on the cross then? He was saved without baptism.

That the thief on the cross was saved there is — to my mind at least — no doubt. But to affirm that he was not baptised is to assume something that the Bible does not say. It is entirely possible that he might have been baptised. Mark 1:5 says, 'And there went out unto him (John the Baptist) all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptised of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.' How can we know that the thief was not one of them?

Let us assume, however, that we know that the thief was saved and that he was never baptised. Does this mean that we who live in this Christian age can be saved exactly like he was? No thoughtful Bible student would think of denying that Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc., were saved without baptism. They were not commanded to be baptised but were told to offer animal sacrifices. We are commanded to be baptised but are not told to offer animal sacrifices. In other words, we live under a different law from that which governed their religious lives. The thief on the cross lived under the law of Moses. Moses' law did not go out of effect until Christ died on the cross. (See Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:15). When the thief died Christ had not yet said to all the world. 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved' (Mark 16:16). Nor had Peter uttered these words, 'Repent, and he baptised . . . for the remission of sins . . .' (Acts 2:38).

While He was still on earth Christ said to his apostles, 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matt. 18:18). The apostle Peter bound 'baptism for the remission of sins' on earth (Acts 2:38), and what Peter bound on earth Christ said He would bind in heaven. Unless it can be shown where 'baptism and remission of sins' was loosed by one of the apostles it is still binding and Christ requires it of us. Will someone show us when and where this was done?

Let us now look at the thief's case from another viewpoint:

Christ's Will

That Christ, when on earth, had power to forgive sins (on any or no conditions) cannot be disputed; the Bible plainly says so: 'When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee ... But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins' (Mark 2:5,10). Note that 'when Jesus saw *their* faith,' He forgave the palsied man *his* sins. Nothing is said about the forgiven man's having faith. Is this, too, an example of salvation for to-day?

Many other scriptures could be cited to prove that Christ had power while on earth to forgive sins, but these should be sufficient.

While Christ was on earth He made His last will and testament, but His will did not become operative until after His death. Since His will has been sealed by His death everyone who benefits from that will (*i.e.*, receives remission of sins and eternal life) must comply with the conditions contained in that will. One of those conditions is that one must 'repent, and be baptised for the remission of sins.' (Acts 2:38). For positive proof of the correctness of the above statement read Hebrews 9:15-17 from the Revised Standard Version: 'Therefore he (Christ) is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeemed them from the transgressions under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.'

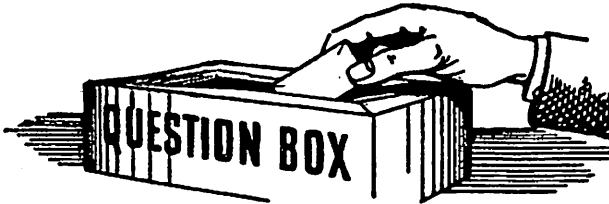
There we have it in a nutshell. When Christ was on earth he could say to the thief on the cross, the palsied man or anyone else. 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.' Since his death, however, his will (the gospel) has gone into effect. No wonder the apostle Paul exclaimed, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth? No wonder, too, that he pronounced

a solemn curse upon man or angel that preached another gospel. (Gal. 1:8-9). Could he have done otherwise than warn what will happen to those who obey not that gospel? (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Here is a simple illustration that will help to understand the matter of Christ's will: let us suppose that you have £1,000,000. So long as you live you may do as you please with this money; you can give every penny away on any or no conditions. After your last will and testament is drawn up you can still use your money in anyway you see fit. Once you are dead, however, no one can inherit a shilling of your possessions unless he complies with every stipulation in your will. The conditions you require may seem foolish and the beneficiary may be at a loss to know why you made such conditions, but he can claim his inheritance only if he complies with the conditions.

Christ has left you and me an eternal inheritance but we can claim that inheritance only, if we obey the conditions of His will. 'Baptism for the remission of sins' is one of those conditions.

Bible Advocate (New Zealand).



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

I read in Matt. 28:18 that Jesus said to His disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me". As a non-christian this seems to me to be a staggering claim to make. Could you please explain what authority Jesus really had?

In the world of industry and commerce, people are given certain responsibilities; these responsibilities are, broadly speaking, the tasks which they are expected to accomplish. In order to successfully discharge their responsibilities they must be given authority consistent with what they have to accomplish, e.g., if a freight lorry driver has to travel from say, Newcastle to Paris, then he must be given authority by his company to spend such sums of money on fuel and accommodation as will enable him to accomplish his task. Having accepted the responsibility and been given the authority, the person is then held to be accountable for the outcome. That is the system.

Relative to the question, I consider Jesus had certain responsibilities, i.e., He had certain things to accomplish, and in order to discharge those responsibilities He was endowed with authority consistent with the successful outcome of the tasks He had to accomplish. We need to look at the responsibility which He had and then look at the authority necessary to discharge the responsibility.

To Reveal God

This was an important responsibility which needed to be discharged. John says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:18). Speaking to Timothy about God, Paul says, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6:16) Now here is a great mystery. We may ask ourselves, 'why did God have to reveal Himself; why did He have to interpose Himself in human affairs'? The answer seems to be that the offence had been perpetrated in the flesh, therefore the remedy had to be applied in the same medium. We must understand, of course, that no God had ever taken human form. The revelation by Jesus to the woman at the well of Sychar was "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). That being so, it was necessary for

God to take human form in order to be seen by human man, and in order to accomplish what needed to be done. A man had to be created in the flesh. Not only had this man to appear in flesh as a man, but he also had to manifestly declare in that medium all the attributes of God, in other words, he had to be God in the flesh. The revelation was thus to be complete; the Sent One had to speak like God, act like God, and have all the authoritative power of the Godhead behind him. He had to have the authority to declare of Himself, as He did, that He was both Son of God and Son of Man.

To Deal with Sin

Many Christians, I feel, have an imperfect appreciation of the responsibility which devolved on Jesus in dealing with sin. They tend to equate the sacrifice of Jesus with what they term **our** sins, such as watching television, football, dancing, etc., but until we all get a really cosmic view of sin we shall not understand fully the value of the sacrifice. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Satan despoiled the good creation of God when Adam and Eve succumbed to his devices and lies, and from that time death passed upon all men in that all have sinned. It seems to me that the great controversy between Satan and God had been going on in some sphere that we do not know of even before Satan entered the Garden. The dire resultant consequences of sin took place in God's fleshy creation, and seemingly the antidote had to be in the same medium, hence the advent of Jesus in the flesh.

Paul argues in his Roman letter that if God had not dealt with sin then He would not have been a just God. His standard of righteousness had to be revealed and that standard was to be found in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:21-23). Paul goes on, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (3:26). So Jesus was the one 'slain from the foundation of the world' who was to be the sacrifice for sin. He came in the appearance of human-kind but He was not exactly as human-kind was and is, otherwise He too would have fallen under the condemnation of sin for, "There is none righteous (of human-kind) no not one: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". His bastion against sin was in the God-kind of nature which existed with and alongside the human-kind nature. He was, while in the flesh, perfect man, and while He was in that medium "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell ... For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Read Colossians ch.2 and 3).

So what authority did Jesus have in order to deal effectively with sin? Matthew records that they brought Jesus to one who was sick of the palsy, and Jesus said to him, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee". Now the scribes thought this was blasphemy, but Jesus knew their hearts and said to them, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house". (See Matt. 9:1-8).

Revelations of Divine Authority

Jesus was always at pains to say where His authority came from. On one occasion Jesus made a staggering claim, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:48,49). God was, and is, the authority for all that Jesus said, for in Jesus "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". This note of authority runs all the way through the so-called Sermon on the Mount.

When speaking to Philip who had asked to see the Father, Jesus said to him, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe

me for the very works sake" (John 14:8-11). Can anyone doubt the authority which resided in Jesus when He could say from His own lips, 'the Father dwelleth in me'. It was this divine relationship which made Jesus supreme; the inseparable relationship between Father and Son. If Christians today fail in one respect in their appreciation of Jesus, it is in the respect that they try to explain too much in terms of His humanity. He had all the power and authority of Heaven behind Him when He came to earth. No mere man could have said and done what He said and did, and if He had been a mere man then no other mortal should or could have put his trust in Him.

From whatever angle you look at it, all authority has been vested in Jesus, and when He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" then we had better take notice of Him, because there is coming a day when we shall all have to stand before God, and if we cannot say that we have sought our justification in Christ, then we shall be lost eternally. All the authority which Jesus had was to this end, that He should be our Saviour from sin.

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

THE CLEANSING BLOOD

'The blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin,' is part of a sentence in John's first Epistle. Sin is a dark stain upon human life, which nothing else than the precious blood of Christ can remove. What is sin? The Apostle says it is 'lawlessness' — rebellion against God. Its malignant character and damaging effects should make us desire its removal. Jesus said, 'Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.' If such dire consequences follow what we often mistakenly conceive as a trifling wrong against one of His, what terrible punishment must result from sin against Almighty Jehovah. Life is forfeited by one sin, as in Adam's transgression. What a joy to know there is a remedy for the deadly disease of sin.

'Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.' There is a red line running through the Bible; from Abel's sacrifice until the Lamb of God was offered as a sacrifice once for all. The animal sacrifices (sin offerings) under the Law were most impressive pictorial lessons that sin deserved death, and that a victim had to be offered as the means of escape for the guilty. But the blood of bulls and goats could not make those who offered them perfect. The life of an animal is not value for the life of a man, hence those who were under the Law had a consciousness of sin because of the insufficiency of the sacrifice offered. These, however taught them to look for
'A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.'

In contrast with these, 'how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.' (Heb. ix. 14-15). The sacrifice of the Son of God is the ground on which forgiveness of sins, past, present, and future, can alone be obtained.

How do the blessings secured through the atoning death of Christ become ours? The former part of the sentence informs us: 'If we walk in the light as he is in the light.' It is a serious error to take part of a sentence and apply it to an unsaved person as sufficient for acceptance with God. A tract came into my hand appealing to the sinner to accept salvation, quoting only this part: 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' This was very misleading. Who are the 'us' thus cleansed from all sin? Those who 'walk in the light.' It is like telling a hungry man there is ample

provision in the cupboard without giving him the key that admits to its abundant supply. 'The entrance of thy word giveth light.' To walk in the light is to conform to the things that God requires of us as contained in His Word. We may know the will of God, believe it to be the way that is right, but unless we *walk* in it the pleasure of fellowship cannot be ours, nor the assurance of cleansing from sin by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. To have the knowledge of sins forgiven, we must obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered by inspired men. To the Apostles, Jesus said, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' (Matt. xxviii. 19-20).

Consider the blessings 'walking in the light' will bring to us personally and mutually. It gives assurance of forgiveness, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and vouchsafes the resources of God's abounding grace. It leads to fulfilment of that for which Christ prayed, that His people might be one, and would certainly be a powerful factor in winning the world for Christ. If all who profess the name Christian were to walk in the light, add nothing to and take nothing from the Word of God, then the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace would become a grand reality.

THEY SET HIM AT NOUGHT

Jas. Wardrop.

In the gospel of Luke, chapter 23, Christ appears before Pilate who can find no fault in Him. Realizing He is a Galilean, and under Herod's jurisdiction, Pilate then sends Him to Herod. "When Herod saw Jesus he was exceedingly glad; he was desirous to see Him because he had heard many things of Him and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him."

In verse eleven it says "and Herod with his men of war set Him at nought."

They considered His teachings, His claims, His offers, His miracles, His fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, His love and kindness, and set Him at nought, zero, nothing. They thought nothing of Him and dismissed Him mockingly, chastising Him, they sent Him back to Pilate.

This is the significance placed on Christ by the world at large today. They have no time to give any thought to His existence, they do not even want to discuss Him. They exclude Him completely from their lives, in reality they set Him at nought. The christian person obviously accepts Christ and His teachings and sets Him far above nought; but to what extent? What actually is the reality of Him in our lives? Every moment of the day we make choices, where we go, what we do, who we meet, what we say, how we react or do not react to situations, how we behave. Our way of thinking determines how we live our daily lives, how much in these situations, these choices, these reactions do we include Christ? Do we make all these decisions on our own, do we set Him at nought, or do we include Him in our thoughts and thus in our actions? Do we set Him at nought, or is He more important to us than that? Time is a great factor in our lives; the use of it, and the misuse of it are greatly influenced by the way we think. We all get involved with our daily living and right to do so; involvement with our employment, our academic studies, our friends, our families, all the things that seem important, but all things in this life that could end in the fraction of a second. Do we include Christ in all these things, have we got time, or as Herod did, do we set Him at nought?

This statement of historical fact could become the yardstick for each day in the remainder of our christian life on earth. If at the end of each day we paused just to think of our activities and thoughts and decided at what level we had set Christ. How many times would we have to admit we had set Him at nought or very little above this level.

"And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought". Cliff Whitton, Wigan.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

July 3	Job 14	Phil. 1, 18-30
July 10	Psalms 2	Phil. 2, 1-18
July 17	Isaiah 38	Phil. 2, 19-30
July 24	Isaiah 43, 1-11	Phil. 3, 1-16
July 31	Psalms 33	Phil. 3, 17-4, 7

More Useful For Us

INDEED! How useful was it for us that the Apostle wrote the words of this letter. God so regarded it. That is why the apostle was spared so long as to write "the letter of rejoicing". Faced with ill will and opposition Paul is rejoicing in the work of people moved by wrong motives because they served to spread further the glorious news of Christ's resurrection. Two things ministered to the magnification of the joy, the flesh of Paul. The first is the fact that the saints were known to be praying for him in his difficult and trying time in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea, and the supply of the Spirit of God. Magnification means enlarging in appearance and otherwise, thus increasing the appearance and influence of Jesus through the preaching of the cross. We can hardly imagine Paul not being bold to preach Jesus but these were times of extreme peril and discouragement, Nevertheless it was the power he had in the flesh which made his life fruitful, and so with us, His people, that made and makes us fruitful. However, when thinking of the greatness of the glory of Christ's presence, seeing his salvation was assured, was not to be compared with actually being present with the Saviour. The experience and the labour were alike a joy. What mutual joy he may yet have in another visit. Meanwhile we have his letters.

A Supreme Suffering Still Needed

Joy for the apostle would be in the suffering they must experience by further loyalty and submission to the ways and example of the Son of God Himself in leaving the glories of heaven to take our flesh and endure all its deepest suffering and humiliation. The

deepest experience of humiliation was supremely rewarded and the highest honour and glory given as the result of the suffering and thus did the glory outshine any overclouding of gloom as passing through the valley of the shadow of death. We are reminded of the three hours of darkness upon the cross, His mysterious and awful conflict ("MY GOD! MY GOD!") and His dying moments as soldiers pitied and enemies scoffed at His pain, and thought Him a deluded criminal. Paul expresses the holy thoughts, kindness of heart and purity of soul, and, while calling upon His people to rejoice, pictures Himself as an offering to be made with their sufferings for the truth of the gospel, actually picturing himself as consecrating their agonies endured for Christ's sake accompanied by his own death, so to speak dying together to enter into glory. It is as though their pain and sacrifice brings with it the surpassing joys of being offered up to God with Christ. This is the expression of His love for them: it is in their sacrifice for Christ. It is all together the offering of holiness in life and work in the one great offering of holy and blessed human and divine life to God ... "That ye may be **BLAMELESS AND HARMLESS, SONS OF GOD** among whom ye shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation."

Wonderful Friends

But they are separated for a time and have made efforts to communicate. The loving thoughts are to be put into action in the person of Epaphroditus, who is willing to take any risks in order to convey not simply messages but either money or goods to relieve the captivity in a Roman prison. He has taken the risk and fallen into serious sickness. The journey or its risks brought serious sickness upon him, but after recovery is going back with messages of comfort and help to Paul. This is good but he plans also to send his trusted friend Timothy with further encouragement, and with sound teaching to back up his letter, and

give sound instruction for counteracting the false teaching he has known to be spreading. While he hopes to go himself that will depend how "it will go with him" — presumably at the expected trial. Some of the Jewish professing christians are teaching falsely that circumcision is to be enforced as a doctrine of Christ upon Gentiles — named by Paul "concision" meaning a cutting off, not a cutting around. These are to be opposed and "cut off" from membership IN Christ.

The Circumcision

This is a holy ordinance appointed by God for the Physical descendants of Abraham.

As a religious ordinance it ceased having immediate observance. Jesus told Nicodemus of the new birth He instituted. We do appreciate the strength of the feelings which resulted in the "dogs, evil workers and concision" developed in opposition to Paul. They were convinced that the ordinance remained in force being a part of their religion. Paul gives us the position as his own prior to the meeting on the Damascus Road. It enables us to estimate the greatness of the change which took place in his life at that point. He was a dedicated Pharisee, a very active opponent to Christianity. The acceptance by the Gentiles and the joy manifested by them was a very important feature of the apostle's work. It must have been some years from the time of the conference at Jerusalem (recounted in Acts 15) when the matter was first discussed, but the Judaizers were still at work so that it was very much in place for Paul to lay emphasis upon it. He can never forget the need for keeping away from salvation by works. "The Circumcision" is now "the Church of Christ", a spiritually-based faith; christians being apprehended by Christ.

The Christian's Path

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ, the fellowship of His sufferings if by any means we may attain unto the

resurrection of the dead. Paul does not see himself as made perfect but he presses towards the prize, the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We must be pressing towards this, deeply conscious of our deep need of the sufficient grace. We have both the good and the bad examples. Let us long for that change in our likeness (3,21). Let us walk by the same rule, the old paths!

The Affectionate Apostle

Note the terms. Dearly beloved; joy and crown; rejoicing; suffering and sacrificing; beseeching and intreating; weakness; true yoke fellow; labourers with the women; happily working together and names in the Book of Life. Let everyone see your kindness, gentleness and the peace of God (too good to be fully understood) will stand guard over your hearts and minds!

R.B.Scott.

THEOLOGICAL JARGON: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

"The appositeness of the liturgical pattern of our corporate Communion, with its placing of the 'acts' of Lections, Prayers, Sermons and Offertory all before the climactic Oblation, itself, commemorative and sacrificial, was brought home in such a conclusive manner as to . . . carry general conviction in setting it forth as the indispensable safeguard against spiritual pride in the Church's presentation of herself to the world she is commissioned to save."

(An extract from the "Christian Advocate," 1944, since when the association of Churches of Christ has moved even further in its conventional, yet meaningless, theological language. Perhaps only an Anglo or Roman Catholic priest would be able to understand it. — Ed.)

BREVITIES

Christian brotherhood obliterates all social and class distinctions.

All the exercise some get is jumping to conclusions.

“SINGLES RETREAT”

Are you young, free and single? Or are you not quite so young, maybe not quite free, but definitely single? Then we invite you join us at the annual “Singles’ Retreat” at the Broomlee Centre, near West Linton. Enjoy a relaxing, spiritual, fun-packed weekend from Friday 26th August to Sunday 28th August.

The theme for the weekend will be “The Abundant Life — Following Jesus.” As usual, a full programme is planned, and will include discussion time, a quiz, some entertainment (!), and also some free time to enjoy the local countryside or visit Scotland’s wonderful capital, Edinburgh.

We have managed to keep the price to £26.50, which is only a small increase over last year. The cost includes accommodation in twin-bedded rooms, and meals from supper on the Friday evening to lunch on the Sunday afternoon.

A deposit of £10.00 is required before the 15th July in order to secure your place. This year we request that the balance be paid in advance of the weekend, and should be paid no later than 10th August. Cheques should be made out to the “Church of Christ,” and sent, along with your details, to me at the address given below.

This weekend is open to over 18-year-olds. We hope you can join us.

David Ferguson,
2D Keir Hardie Drive,
Mayfield, Dalkeith,
Midlothian EH22 5QX.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Cape Town R.S.A. Where I am labouring with the Church of Christ at Bokmakierie, in the Athlone area of Cape Town, attendance wise with visitors and members is going along well, and we are still hopefully looking forward to more precious souls turning to the Lord. Well, since we had our usual April “Special Gospel Meeting” it was on the 24th of April, 1988, with my theme “WHAT

YOU SHOULD KNOW?” the a.m. service was almost 50 present, and p.m. service was almost 40. There was no immediate results as hoped, but at least the word was brought forth, so we hope those of whom I am aware, shall soon make their decision, Lord willing.

But Glory to God, that since my services given to the congregation in 1979 up to date since last year 1987 we have witnessed 39 baptisms. More than that our young men are doing very well reading, praying, and endeavouring to encourage friends of theirs to come to the services.

And we ask you to share in your prayers, and express thanks with us. Husband and wife look forward to witness on the 9th of this month our 56th Wedding Anniversary, Lord willing, with the happy years we have shared together, with the Lord’s blessings showered upon our lives and home which are too “Innumerable to mention.”

Thomas W. Hartle (Evangelist)
11 Killarney Mansions,
Gorge Road, Oranjezicht,
Cape Town, R.S.A.

Haddington. The church at Haddington, are, with the congregation at Tranent, sharing an effort to interest people, in the locality, in the Bible and offering a free Correspondence Course. The church also had, this weekend, a very enjoyable and profitable visit from brother and sister Otis Castleberry, who are on vacation in Britain and Europe at the moment. Bro. Castleberry spoke both morning and evening on the Sunday and his messages were very uplifting and encouraging. We wish them a pleasant journey and safe return to the U.S.A.

Ruth Nisbet (Sec.)

Newtongrange. On Thursday, 28th April last, a company of friends and brethren met for a time of fellowship and praise. The occasion was the close of the present season of women’s meetings. Upwards of 30 met together, with some of the past speakers as guests.

Sister N. Wilson opened the fellowship meeting with a few appropriate words of welcome and thanks.

After the meal a "feast" of song and verse was much enjoyed.

The opening song was sung by Sister Coventry, this being "Precious Memories" The final song being "He hideth my soul." It was noted that when the words of the songs and verse were simply linked together the true gospel message was expounded. The most enjoyable evening sped by, ever so quickly: too soon, it was time to say goodbye. The prayers of the evening were led by Bro. J. R. Gardiner.

A. P. Sharp (Sec.)

OBITUARY

Haddington. It is with particular regret and sorrow that we record the passing of our beloved brother John S. McLuckie on 22nd April, 1988, in his 76th year. Our brother was born greatly handicapped physically but managed wonderfully well on crutches all his life and even managed to run a business. He was a man of great resource, of a pleasant personality and undiminished faith in his Lord and Saviour. He took a very active part in all the services and a constant interest in the welfare of the church. It was an exhortation in itself to see him preach from the platform, propped against the pulpit on his crutches. In spite of the debilitating nature of his illness during his last months he was, nevertheless, always in his place, and always cheerful. He will be a very great loss to the church here but we rejoice that he has gone to be with the Lord, which is much better, and will receive that crown of life promised by the Saviour.

Bro. James Sinclair (Sen.) officiated at the funeral on 26th April attended by a large company at Warriston Crematorium. We commend sister Peggie, his beloved wife, and all other bereaved, to the comfort and consolation of our Heavenly Father. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

Ruth Nisbet (Sec.)

DADDY FLOCKHART

From "Edinburgh Encyclopaedia"

Dear old Daddy Flockhart! Of all the ghosts that haunt the Royal Mile his is one of the most lovable, Robert Flockhart was a preacher with a style peculiarly his own. His favourite pulpit was a chair, set beside the railings which used to surround St. Giles' and on the west side. On the railings he hung his hat and when darkness fell a lantern..

His idea of evangelising the Royal Mile was "to load Mons Meg wi' Bibles and fire it doon every close." Such drollery of illustration never failed to attract a congregation of High Street loafers, who ragged the preacher unmercifully only to receive from Bobbie a quaint and good natured reply.

In search of material for his sermons he used to pop in and out of the forenoon and afternoon services of nearby churches collecting a phrase here and an illustration there. Sir Archibald Geikie, the famous geologist declared that Flockhart was one of the most remarkable men he had ever listened to, and related one of the best stories concerning him.

"He was once denouncing the careless ingratitude of man for all the benefits conferred on him by Providence. 'My friends' he said 'look at the hens when they drink. There is not ane o' them but lifts its heid in thankfulness, even for the water that is sae common. O that we were a' hens.'"

T.W.I.

READING THE BIBLE

WHO that ever read the tale of the Prodigal Son failed to remember it.

No literature, no book was ever so well-knit as the New Testament, no library richer than the Bible. Fine literature it may be, but this goes for nothing if we do not make it so by fair reading. It is a sober fact that not only the church but civilisation is built upon it. "Reading maketh a full man." Shall we be content with a Sunday ration? No feast is richer than the Bible.

“DO-GOODERS”

It is a pity when people use slick derogatory phrases, not thinking of the harm they might do. The other day a speaker told a gathering of social workers that their job should not be regarded as just another bit of work by “woolly do-gooders.”

It was plain enough what was meant in that case. But the term “do-gooders” is an unfortunate one, too often used nowadays. In fact, it has somehow become almost a dirty word — like “intellectual,” “cultural” and (at least until recently) “peace-lover.” In this sense, strangely enough, it can be traced back to a bishop, of all people: Bishop Mandell Creighton, who once wrote that “no people do so much harm as those who go about doing good.”

Just what he meant by that, or in what context the words were uttered, is now forgotten: and it is impossible to ask him, because he died in 1901. But the label “do-gooders” has stuck with unfortunate results. Of course, there are a few people here and there whose overpowering and self-esteeming benevolence become irritating after a time. But they are such rare exceptions that it is wrong indeed to make a sweeping generalisation about all who try to help their fellow men and women, with sin-

cerity and often at considerable sacrifice.

Incidentally, “do-gooders” is an escape route — an “alibi,” in modern jargon — for those who are always ready to pass by on the other side — the “I’m all right Jack” brigade. We would do well to forget the term “do-gooder” and instead remember the lines of the great John Wesley:

Do all the good you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

And to remember, too, some of the simplest and most moving words ever uttered: Peter’s summing-up of the life of Christ: He went about doing good.

—Selected.

THANKS

Dennyloanhead. Joseph and I wish to express our deep appreciation of the love and good wishes showered upon us by our brethren during Joseph’s stay in hospital. Words cannot fully explain the strength and encouragement we have gained. We belong to a wonderful family through the precious blood of Jesus. To God be the Glory.

Nora Malcolm.

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