

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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LEARN YE A PARABLE (OR TWO)

Congregations using the Scripture Reading Cards produced by our good Bro. Scott will know that we have reached Matt. Chap. 13 where Jesus not only treats us to some of His best parables but also explains why He employed them. It might, therefore, be a profitable exercise to ruminate a little on the matter of Christ's parables and on the great attraction they have for each succeeding generation. Probably the best definition ever given of 'a parable' came not from Trench, Greswell or Lisco but came from a little girl in Sunday School when she said "A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning". The Greek *parabole* simply means 'a similitude' and signifies "To set side by side". A parable is, therefore, literally a placing side by side for comparison and involves a similitude or illustration of one subject by the employment of another. The more we try and explain it the more we shall gravitate to the little girl's definition. There are, of course, other figures of speech which profess to draw such comparisons, e.g. the similitude; the proverb; the metaphor; the fable; the myth; the allegory. Paul himself refers to an allegory (Gal. 4:24) and draws its application, but a parable differs from all these figures of speech in that a narrative (or story) is usually employed which is at once sensible and realistic. Fables and myths also draw upon narrative but involve monsters and lower forms of animal life (and even inanimate objects are given the power of speech). Fables usually are intended to impart some lesson in *worldly prudence* whereas parables always have a "heavenly meaning" and aspire to some lesson of a *spiritual nature*. Fables and allegories may be regarded as a species of poetical imagination whereas parables are concerned with the realities of life and teach some important moral truth.

Parables exhibit characteristics of human endeavour which have a parallel in the ideal or spiritual world, and are illustrations of a powerful kind. For example; years after hearing a good 'sermon' we may, perhaps, forget the subject of it but we are unlikely to forget the illustrations. All of our Lord's parables are beautifully appropriate, and unlike fables or myths, never jar our intelligence or sensitivity. Jesus made teaching an art-form, I suppose.

Parables in the Old Testament

Jesus honoured us by giving us some forty wonderful parables but He did not originate this method of teaching. Parables are mentioned about a dozen times in the O.T. but the Hebrew word *Mashal* (for parable) really means something more akin to proverbs than to the parables spoken by Jesus. However, in 2 Sam. 12:1-10, we have perhaps one of the most telling and beautiful parables in the entire Bible. Nathan, we read, was sent by God to convict David of his sin. Nathan did not bluntly confront

David with his crime but first of all told him a story. Nathan described two men in a certain city; one was rich with many flocks and herds, but the other was abjectly poor. "... poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter". The rich man had a visitor and rather than kill a lamb of his own many flocks for a meal, he stole the poor man's lamb, killed it and dressed it. David's anger at this callous and wicked deed was fierce and he vowed that "the man that hath done this thing shall surely be put to death". Consider David's shock when Nathan replied, "*Thou art that man*". What could have been more effective in achieving Nathan's purpose than this simple parable? See also Judges 9:7 (the bramble).

However, it is in the N.T. that we find parables in the sense in which we usually employ the term. They are, incidentally, confined to the lips of Jesus and it seems that none of the apostles ever tried to copy this method of teaching.

Classification

The parables cannot be classified into neat bundles, as some have tried to do, for each parable while having a general thrust overlaps in meaning with other parables. For instance, while the immediate lesson of the 'Good Samaritan' is brotherly kindness it also points to Jesus as "the brother born for adversity". And while the "Labourers in the Vineyard" teaches that a reward awaits all God's people, it also shows the danger of the spirit of envy, and further, that it is never too late to seek the K. of H. (even the 11th hour).

Nor does there appear any particular reason for the *sequence* of the parables. The one first recorded is that of "The Two Builders" (Matt. 7) and then we have 'the parabolic discourse' (of Matt. 13 supplemented by Mark 4:26-28) where we have 9 parables which exhibit the historical evolution of the K. of G. The purpose of this discourse was to encourage the disciples in the work of evangelising the world by showing them that, despite all the obstacles, the gospel would eventually cover the whole earth. Then there followed parables which *refer to duty* - e.g. the "The Lost Sheep"; "The Unmerciful Servant"; "The Two Sons" and the "Labourers In the Vineyard". After this we have that renowned parable of Judgement Day in Chaps. 21, 22 and 25 of Matt.

The parables in Luke are mainly directed to life's drama - e.g. "The Two Debtors"; "The Good Samaritan"; "The Friend at Midnight"; "The Rich Fool"; "The Unprofitable Servants"; "The Unjust Judge"; and "The Pharisee and The Publican". Also in Luke we have a group of related parables (also in Matt.) of "The Lost Sheep"; "The Lost Coin"; "The Prodigal Son" and "The Unjust Steward". He also records "The Rich Man And Lazarus" but many, including myself, doubt that this is a parable at all. Parables in Luke referring to the Judgement include "The Great Supper" and "The Pounds".

The Interpretation Thereof

The object of the parable is often stated but certainly not always. For instance in the parable of "The Unjust Judge" we read, "And He spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Here the purpose is stated but mostly we are left to interpret the parable for ourselves with the help of the circumstances obtaining just prior to the parable, or just subsequent to it. For example, the parable of "The Unmerciful Servant" was our Lord's answer to Peter's question, 'How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him.' The lesson was designed to illustrate that we who have freely been forgiven all our sins are thereby bound to an unlimited forgiveness of our fellowmen. The three parables; "The Lost Sheep", "The Lost Coin" and "The Prodigal Son" were all addressed to those who had murmured against Jesus for receiving and eating with 'sinners', and usually the object, with a little investigation and thought, can be found.

We should remember that not all the parables involve a lengthy narrative - indeed some are extremely short and abrupt. For example we read, (Luke 6) "And He spake a parable unto them; Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Also in Mark 7:17, after Jesus had taught that not the things entering into a man (but the things of the heart emanating from the man) defiles the man, the disciples came and asked Jesus the meaning of *this parable*. No stories are involved in these but obviously the germ of a parable is present in each of those two examples. We have only to work on the hint given to us in some parables and we can visualise the rest. We can, in the mind's eye, see two blind men leading each other along the road, struggling for a while with great difficulty to stay in the road but eventually both falling into the ditch at the wayside. Likewise we can conjure up a mental picture of the pure and noble-spirited man taking his bread with unwashed hands, while the hypocrite and oppressor of the poor washes his hands meticulously before dining. Both rise from the table and return, one to his career of benevolence, and the other to his wrongs and injustice. Or again, the banquet is spread and the guests arrive in all their finery. A vain guest enters and appropriates the best seat. A more worthy but more humble guest arrives later and quietly takes a more secluded position. The Master of the House notices the incongruity and asks, in the presence of all the assembly, that the two change places. Thus in each of those cases we have the substance, if not the form, of a parable and in each incident of common life an illustration of higher truth.

We should make a real effort to capture the full strength of each parable. For instance, the whole beauty of the parable of "The Lost Sheep" is lessened if we look upon sheep with the casual disregard sheep receive in this country. By contrast the eastern shepherd loved each one in the flock, and like the picture drawn by Nathan, probably reared each lamb as if it was his own child. Thus the motive of the shepherd in the search for a lost sheep was not merely the recovery of an item of property but love and compassion for a simple straying creature, harmless and exposed to every danger. Similarly the strength of the parable of "The Good Samaritan" is lost if we fail to appreciate the estimation in which the Samaritans, Priests and Levites were respectively held in Israel - the contempt held for the Samaritans and the halo of sanctity which appeared to attach to the Priest and Levite. The parable of "The Wheat and the Tares" is weakened if we do not know that the 'tares' referred to were plants wholly different from those to which the term is now applied. The 'tares' of the parable were, especially in the early stages of growth, very similar to wheat in appearance and indeed belonged to the same family; contained very similar ingredients when analysed, but had such a different effect on the human body if eaten. Thus we must try and familiarise ourselves with this kind of information, if we are to derive full benefit from the parables.

In understanding the parables it is, perhaps, a greater danger to read too much into them than too little. There are those who force meanings from the parables never intended, and give vent to all kinds of fancies. For instance, in the case of the 10 virgins, it is taught by some that the fact that there were 5 wise and 5 foolish means that there will be an equal number saved to the number lost. Such a doctrine is, of course, nowhere taught and certainly not in this parable. Some believe that the 2 pence mentioned in "The Good Samaritan" refers to the 'two sacraments'. We really must be careful to differentiate between incidental items from those that matter in any parable. Again some believe that when the father said (in the parable of "The Prodigal Son") "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet" that the 'best robe' means 'The Saviour's righteousness'; that the ring refers to 'the gift of the Spirit whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption' and that the shoes refer to 'those works of our calling whereby the penitent shall be equipped for holy obedience'. Others teach (I believe Trench is one of them) that in

the parable (Matt. 13:33) which likens the K. of H. to a woman who hid some leaven in 3 measures of meal, that the 3 measures of meal represents the 3 parts of the then known world, or the 3 sons of Noah, or the 3 elements of the human-being (body, soul and spirit). We must not make too much of numbers (the talents given to the servants) and be able to distinguish between fact and fancy.

Why Parables/

For many years I used to think that Jesus spoke in parables in order to make the lesson readily receivable and little realised that the very opposite was the case. Jesus did not begin His ministry with parables but began with a clear and pointed call e.g. "The time is fulfilled, the K. of G. is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Similarly, as in the 'Sermon On The Mount' His teaching was unfolded at once, plainly, providing great facts and truths concerning Himself and the coming Kingdom. This open and straightforward style of teaching continued until about half-way through His ministry (about the second Feast Of Tabernacles) and then we find the employment of the Parabolic style. Matthew (Chap. 13:34) marks the transition with the words, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables: and without a parable spake He not unto them". Even the disciples, so dull at times in perception, noticed the change in style and asked, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables". We can do no better than observe our Lord's own straight answer to a straight question. "Because, it is given to you to know the mysteries of the K. of H., but unto them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I unto them in parables; because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears for they hear."

I believe that a careful study of our Lord's answer will assure us that He did not employ parables to withhold the gospel from the Jews but rather to make them expend some effort to find it. After all, Jesus came to save, not to destroy: He came to give, not to withhold; He came to enlighten, not to darken. However Jesus could do very little for those (who fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy) who had already shut their eyes, closed their ears and hardened their hearts against Him. God did nothing to hinder their salvation, but, just as today, the bulk of humanity has no ears or eyes for Jesus. God's truth is for those who are prepared to make some effort to embrace it. To those who made the effort the rewards would be given (to those who had would be given, but from those who had not would be taken away even that little they had). Those who had ears to hear (a desire to learn) were to hear (pay attention). Now, in His parabolic teaching, some effort of will would be required of His hearers. It was not because the disciples were disciples that He explained His truths to them (while masking these truths from the worldly wise), but because they heard with a completely different spirit and attitude. Thus, even before the Great Judgement, Jesus was dividing the populace into two great classes - those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness and those who had closed their hearts to His claims. Indeed the last verse of Matt. 13 tells us that, for precisely similar reasons (unbelief) Jesus, in many places, would perform no miracles.

Thus it transpires that Jesus did not teach in parables primarily because they were effective (although they were); or because they were attractive (which they were); or because they were memorable (which they were) but because they required

the hearer to agonise and meditate a little to gain a foothold in the K. of H. Jesus intended to lead, not drive, men to virtue and the parables (and their solution) became a formal test of the true state of the heart of the hearer. Thus in Mark 12:12 we read that "They (scribes and elders) sought to lay hold upon Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them". In this case they had 'ears to hear', and they heard.

Conclusions

The parables of Jesus are unique and have always been considered, justly, one of the most characteristic and beautiful aspects of His teaching, full of interest to the youngest and oldest, to the simple rustic as well as to the 'man of letters'. The parables are as timeless as the teaching and span all barriers of time, language or culture. Once heard they are seldom forgotten, and the N.T. is the richer for their inclusion. As word pictures they were designed to drive home, in a telling manner some great and profound spiritual truth. As we have seen Jesus employed them so that their meaning would not be apparent too soon and would be the reward for the honest seeker (just as a nutshell preserves its kernel as much for the earnest, as from the careless). In the closing verses of this illustrious 13th chapter of Matt. Jesus asked His disciples if they had understood these parables, and on receiving an answer in the affirmative He said, "Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the K. of H. is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." May it be that we shall be like the friendly householder and not lock up our treasures in 'the glass case' or in the cellar but that all truths we may learn, whether new truth or old (from O.T. or N.T.), shall be brought forth in due season and shared with our friends.

EDITOR

BREAKING THE BREAD

(A Discussion With Brother Gardiner)

In the September 1980 issue of the S.S., brother Gardiner published an article by me entitled "Breaking the Bread". Although I knew the editor did not agree with the position advanced, I felt confident he would publish the article. British Christians (and the S.S. in particular) have a commendable tradition of open discussion, better, in my judgment, than Americans. In the October 1984 issue of S.S. brother Gardiner responded to my article with extensive comments. This discussion is a continuation of that exchange. Readers are referred to the two previous articles for background information.

I was pleased for several reasons to read brother Gardiner's response. First, I consider our exchange to be in the highest tradition of Christians searching for truth. Throughout the history of the church, open discussions have been a means of testing individual's convictions against revealed truth. Good results always come from these efforts if participants regard each other as brothers and conduct themselves as Christians. I view brother Gardiner as a Christian and a gentleman, and I believe he sees me in the same way.

I am pleased too that the matter has not been cast as a British - American issue. It is not. In 1969, the late brother David Dougall, himself a good Bible student, told me he had come to the conclusion the bread should not be broken before it was served to the congregation. In Christ there is neither "Jew or Greek" nor British or American. To Christians, it does not matter whether something is taught in Edinburgh or Oklahoma City, but it does matter whether it was taught in Jerusalem.

Brother Gardiner stated that he did not fully appreciate until my article that brethren anywhere believed as I do. He and I are in complete agreement that the

number of people that accept a practice does not make it right. I would point out, however, that the issue is not a new one.

It was thoroughly discussed in the U.S. in the 1930's about the time the real division came over the use of individual cups. The majority of churches that rejected individual cups and loaves, also ultimately rejected the practice of dividing the loaf. Dividing the loaf could not be an issue, of course, with churches that accept many loaves and cups.

In the interest of being brief, I will summarize the major themes in brother Gardiner's response to my article and comment on them. It would not be profitable to attempt to respond to each individual statement.

Did Jesus Eat?

The major difference between our positions is over whether Jesus ate of the bread. It is important to brother Gardiner to prove that Jesus did not eat. If Jesus ate, His command to His disciples, "This do in remembrance of me", would obviously have had reference to His breaking to eat, since the record in no way suggests He broke the bread twice. If Jesus did not eat the bread, then his breaking was a symbolic act, as brother Gardiner believes it to be.

Brother Gardiner argues Jesus would not have eaten the bread because it was eaten in memory of His body. Jesus, he reasons, was not likely to forget His own body. I find it surprising that a person of Jim's Biblical knowledge would make such an argument. At the very time that Jesus established the Lord's Supper, He was eating the passover lamb which pointed forward to His crucified body. He not only ate the passover, He said, "I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22:15) Why would brother Gardiner think it strange for Jesus to eat the bread that pointed backward to His body, when He "desired" to eat the passover that pointed forward to it? On that occasion Jesus ate the final passover with His disciples and the original Lord's Supper. Thus, He closed one religious observance and opened another.

Jesus' participation with His disciples as an example of what they should do was in agreement with His practice in other areas. Brother James Grant has appropriately pointed out (January 1985 S.S.) that Jesus was baptized, not because he had sins to be remitted, but as an example for others. In fact, it seems that John the Baptist reasoned as brother Gardiner does. When Jesus asked John to baptize Him, John forbade Him, until Jesus insisted. No doubt if brother Gardiner had been present at the passover, he would have forbidden Jesus to eat, on the grounds that it was unnecessary since the Lord had not forgotten His coming sacrifice.

Brother Gardiner argues that the Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of me," was not an instruction to disciples to eat, but an order to congregations to prepare and serve the feast. That could not be so. First, there were no congregations at the time the command was given. The order to the disciples implied what churches were to do, but the instructions were given to disciples who were present, not to nonexistent churches.

Second, the laws of language would not allow such an interpretation. The statement, "This do," clearly referred to what the Lord was doing at the time the statement was made. It could not have applied to preparing the Lord's Supper, for Jesus did not do that at all; the disciples did. "...the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, where wilt thou that WE PREPARE for thee to eat the passover?" (Matt. 26:17) "This do" had to refer to His use of the elements they had prepared.

A Second Major Theme

The second major theme in brother Gardiner's response concerns the meaning of the work "broke". Basically, his argument is that break does not include eating, therefore when the Bible says "Jesus took bread and broke," it means that He broke it for the disciples but did not partake himself. He illustrated his argument by describing

his own actions in breaking bread for birds and remarked, "but I do not eat it — the birds actually eat it." I do not believe Jim will stick with that argument. For example, Acts 20:7 says, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." Does this mean that the disciples came together to sit around the Lord's Table and break bread into pieces and leave without anybody eating it? Here, breaking certainly included eating.

Biblical use of the work "brake" is neither mysterious or unusual. It is sometimes used in its simple, primary sense meaning to break. In other places, the word is used in a figure of speech, called synecdoche, in which a part of something is put for the whole. The context tells the difference. As an example, some people refer to fishing as "wetting a hook." Obviously, there is a great deal more to fishing than dropping a hook into the water, but that integral part of the action is put for the whole process. At other times one might name each individual step in the process. In Acts 20:7, "to break" bread referred to the whole process of communion. In Acts 27:35, Paul named the individual steps in his action of taking bread, giving thanks, breaking it, and eating it.

The question is, when the Bible says "Jesus took bread and broke," was that just literal breaking bread and no more? Or, was it the part put for the whole of partaking of the bread, as in Acts 20:7? Thus, we come again to the importance of establishing whether Jesus ate and drank with the disciples in the Lord's Supper.

Brother Gardiner quotes from Thayer the definition of the Greek word *klao*: "To break. Used in the N.T. of the breaking of the bread. THE ACT OF DIVIDING A LOAF SO THAT MORE THAN ONE PERSON CAN PROPERLY PARTAKE OF IT". The line that I have capitalized in that definition is a powerful argument for Brother Gardiner's position. The trouble is, I can find no Greek lexicon anywhere, including Thayer, that has that line in it. I do not believe my brother intentionally misrepresented Thayer's definition. But the meaning of words is so important in understanding the scripture that the matter should be cleared up. I am forwarding Jim a photocopy of page 348 of my copy of Thayer as an aid in clearing up this mystery.

Brother Gardiner argues that "plucking" a piece off a loaf, as he thinks we do, is not really breaking the loaf. Actually, whether the piece was broken off or pulled off would depend on the consistency of the bread rather than the action of the person. Even so, the action exactly fits the definition of "*klao*" as given by some of the best lexicons. For example, Moulton's *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (1978 edition, p. 232) says: "To break off; in N.T. to break bread." One form of the word refers to the fragments broken off, such as branches or twigs.

Again, the major difference in brother Gardiner's belief and mine is over whether Jesus ate the supper with His disciples. Jim believes that Jesus' statement (in Luke 22), "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine", refers to His drinking the cup in the passover, not the Lord's Supper. Thus, he rejects my conclusion that Jesus would not have drunk of the cup without eating of the bread. To convince himself this statement does not refer to the passover cup, he needs only to read the accounts in Matthew and Mark in this connection. Neither of them mention a passover cup, but both quote Jesus as saying He will not drink henceforth until He does so in the Kingdom of God.

Please notice. Jesus ate the passover with His disciples; He drank of the cup in the Lord's supper; He said He would eat and drink with them in the Kingdom of God. How much more proof does one require to accept that the Lord broke the loaf and ate with His disciples?

GLEANINGS

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

PERFECT LOVE — PERFECT TRUTH — PERFECT PURITY

"Christ knew His sheep, by that mystic power always finest in the best natures, most developed in the highest, by which Like detects what is like and what unlike itself. He was Perfect Love - Perfect Truth - Perfect Purity: therefore He knew what was in man, and felt, as by another sense, afar off the shadows of unlovingness, and falseness, and impurity. No one can have read the Gospels without remarking that they ascribe to Him unerring skill in reading man. People, we read, began to show enthusiasm for Him. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, "for He knew what was in man". He knew that the flatterers of to-day would be the accusers of to-morrow. Nathaniel stood before Him. He had scarcely spoken a word; but at once unhesitatingly, to Nathaniel's own astonishment, - "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" There came to Him a young man with vast possessions: a single sentence, an exaggerated epithet, an excited manner, revealed his character. Enthusiastic and amiable, Jesus loved him: capable of obedience, on life's sunshine and prosperity, ay, and capable of aspiration after something more than mere obedience, but not of sacrifice. Jesus tested him to the quick, and the young man failed. He did not try to call him back, for He knew what was in him and what was not. He read through Zaccheus when he climbed into the sycamore-tree, despised by the people as a publican, really a son of Abraham: through Judas, with his benevolent saying about the selling of alabaster-box for the poor, and his false kiss: through the curses of the thief upon the cross, a faith that could be saved: through the zeal of the man who in a fit of enthusiasm offered to go with Him whithersoever He would. He read through the Pharisees, and His whole being shuddered with the recoil of utter and irreconcilable aversion. It was as if His bosom was some mysterious mirror on which all that came near Him left a sullied or unsullied surface, detecting themselves by every breath."

F.W. Robertson.

EXTRACT THE SWEETNESS

"The bee does not analyse the flower, it extracts the sweetness. So do you. You do not say 'I will not touch a fragment of my dinner until I understand its chemical components,' you would under such conditions be liable to a prolonged and irritating fast. You are sustained by the food you do not comprehend. It may be even so with the religion of Christ. I know little of flowers botanically; their germs and their species often puzzle me, but I understand them sympathetically. So I approach the Christian faith, though much of mystery be associated with it; bless its beauty and revel in its fragrance. There is an infinite atonement, and there are twenty theories of it; we are saved by none of them, but by the Atonement itself."

Dinsdale Young.

CROSSES

"You will go on having crosses to carry as long as ever you love the Lord Jesus Christ; but remember this — all troubles are not crosses. God has nothing to do with lots of our troubles. Indeed, I am not sure that what we call a trouble is ever a cross. That only is a cross which we carry for His sake."

W. Riley

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT

"Immediately after World War 2 the Allied Armies gathered up many hungry, homeless children and placed them in large camps. There the children were abundantly fed and cared for. However, at night they did not sleep well. They seemed restless and afraid. Finally, a psychologist hit on a solution. After the children were put to bed, they each received a slice of bread to hold. If they wanted more to eat, more was provided, but this particular slice was not to be eaten - it was just to hold.

The slice of bread produced marvellous results. The child would go to sleep, subconsciously feeling it would have something to eat tomorrow. That assurance gave the child a calm and peaceful rest. In the Twenty-third Psalm, David points out something of the same feeling in the sheep when he says, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Instinctively, the sheep knows the shepherd has made plans for its grazing tomorrow. He knows the shepherd made ample provision for it today, so will he tomorrow, so the sheep lies down in its fold with, figuratively speaking, the piece of bread in its hand".

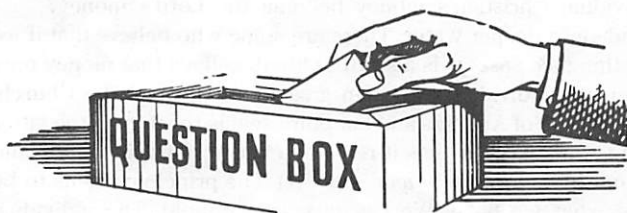
Charles L. Allen.

LOOK AFTER THE LAMBS

"A Highland shepherd, asked how he took so many prizes for the best flock at the cattle shows, answered: "I look weel to the lambs"."

T.W.T.

SELECTED BY LEONARD MORGAN.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Is it right that the money in the Lord's 'Treasury' should be put into a bank and reinvested by the bank (probably to finance breweries or ballistic missiles)? If it is wrong for the Church's (or Lord's) money to be used in this way, is it right for individual Christians to allow their money to be used in this way, by putting it in a bank?"

There are so many questions prefixed by the phrase 'Is it right', that I feel I must point out one very important fact. In a feature like 'Question Box' in a magazine like the "S.S.", it would be wrong of me, I believe, to try to give definitive answers to the questions which are asked. One can only guide, suggest, inform; the Scriptures themselves being the 'touchstone' for everything which is said, whether by revealed and stated fact, correctly interpreted historical precedent, or necessary inferential reasoning. I am sure that readers would not want it to be otherwise.

The reason for the statement above is because of the plea stated at the top of the "S.S.". It seems to me that the preaching of the Gospel, the terms of acceptance of it, and the necessity of man's obedience to it are clear and unambiguous, and can be presented as the means of salvation to people in *any* age. But to reproduce in *all other* respects, i.e., social, economic, cultural, environmental, etc., a replica of the First Century Church in the Twentieth Century is extremely difficult. Personally I have held the view for some time that if we want to live as the First Century Church lived then we must to the greatest extent dissociate ourselves from the world and live as true Christian Communities, obeying the laws of the lands in which we live, if we can, but in all other respects separate from the world except for the fact that we *must* preach the Gospel to the world. I am well aware that this is not a popular view - there are certain advantages in having a foot in each camp - but to my mind such a view is germane to many of the problems which trouble us so much, e.g., the problem of what to do with our money. There are so many facets to this problem that I feel the best way to deal with it is to use the technique of question and answer. I shall attempt, as always, to reason from first principles.

Q. What is a bank and should the Church's money be kept there?

A. A bank is an establishment for custody of money, which it pays out on customer's order, so says the Oxford Dictionary. In line with that definition there seems no logical reason why the Church cannot use banks.

Q. Can a bank invest its financial assets in other activities (the questioner mentions breweries, and the production of missiles)?

A. A bank certainly uses its assets for such things as loans for home improvements, purchase of houses and cars, mortgages, etc. How far, and in which direction, investment goes is a matter for consideration. Most banks are Public Liability Companies, and I suppose that if a Christian wanted to carry out a full depth of investigation he would have to inquire what was contained in the Memorandum of Association and the Articles of Association of the bank concerned, because the expressed objects of the Company would be contained therein. The implication in the question is that the Church would not want its money to be used for the activities mentioned. Another question implicit in the main question must now be asked.

Q. When does an individual Christian's money become the Lord's money?

A. We now begin to wade into deeper water. There are some who believe that if *we* are the Lord's then everything *we possess* is also His. Others believe that money only becomes the Lord's when the individual Christian gives it to Him via the Church.

It must be said that the case of Ananias and Sapphira seems to support the latter view (Acts 5). Peter said to Ananias, "Whiles it remained was it not *thine own?* and after it was sold, was it not in *thine own power*" (vv 3,4). The principle seems to be that we are stewards of what we have. We can give or withhold. The individual Christian, I believe, can do what he or she wants to with the resources they have, but in the final analysis the stewardship will have to be accounted for. Implicit in what I am saying, of course, is that if *we are* Christian stewards, then even though we have power over the *direction* in which our resources are used, those resources do, in fact, belong to someone else. This would indicate that the individual Christian's use of them should be consistent, at least, with the Church's use. But here again we are in difficulty.

Take, for instance, the purchase of a house through a Building Society. Many Christians do this. What they do in reality is to invest *with* the Building Society in a fixed asset, a house, and they agree to channel a substantial amount of their financial resources to the Building Society over a prolonged period of time. But I suppose that Building Societies invest *their* accrued financial assets into areas that the Church might consider to be dubious. And what about Finance Houses? There are, no doubt, millions of people, Christians included, who use the Charge Card through various major stores and shops, and where do the Finance Houses invest *their* assets? Similarly, we could think of Insurance Societies, Pension Schemes, etc., and so we could go on. Where do we stop? The Christian is caught up almost inextricably in the economic, cultural, and financial strictures of our age, and the only way, and I mean the *only* way, to avoid this is either to renounce all of these systems and go it alone, with the subsequent consequences (and these may not be as grievous as we may think), or by the Church *itself* assuming the role of the institutions I have mentioned so that at all times it has full control of the disposition of all its resources, and who can envisage *that* happening. If what I say is true, that the Church's aim ought to be consistent with the individual Christian's aim, and vice versa, then surely it is begging the question to say that the conscience of each individual Christian should be the guide. That is precisely the point we are at now, and we keep asking questions.

Q. What is the alternative to keeping the Church's money in a bank?

A. Obviously, the Church Treasurer can keep it in his home with all the attendant risks which this course of action entails. Is it prudent to keep what can amount to fairly substantial sums of money in a home where there will usually be a wife and small children? We all know the sort of society in which we live today. The alternative

to this alternative would be to let the Treasurer be an older man, but surely this is self-defeating in the type of situation we are envisaging.

The other way would be to use the money as soon as we have received it, but again, we cannot always do that in the society of which we are a part; plans have to be made and adhered to and this may mean keeping sums of money for some time.

Q. How, then, can we prevent the Church's money being used to support some of the unchristian activities we have mentioned?

A. Looking across the whole environment of the problem I cannot see how we can prevent support to some dubious activity; our life-style just does not allow it. Support is many-sided. I know that we are discussing financial matters, but if you support a political party by voting for them then surely you support the economic and defence measures which their pre-election manifesto may set out, and these may or may not be consistent with Church objectives and aims. And if Church leaders have to be *really* consistent, then doesn't it follow that they would have to investigate the activities of every preacher and teacher who purports to teach the Church the *right* way, whatever that may be.

Q. Is there any Scriptural guidance?

A. I believe so. In the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30) the Lord took the example of *real money* to teach the lesson of the *spiritual* application of our special aptitudes, skills, and gifts, in God's service. In His example He said that two of the servants 'traded' with their talents, and that the third one ought *at least* to have gone to the money 'exchangers' so that he could have got 'usury' (interest) on his 'one-talent investment'. I am well aware, as I say, of the basic teaching of the Parable, but the Lord did not condemn at that point *the methods used* in the practical example, whatever the spiritual implications may be.

Q. So what do we do?

A. I believe we as christians and Churches *can* use banks. I do believe as some do, that interest on deposited money is 'tainted money'. I would tend to draw some sort of line on known investment in such things as Defence Bonds and Government stock, and I would watch carefully the utilisation of monies in *any* financial institution which I may be using now or may want to use in the future. I have never understood, nor do I understand now, the statement, "We are in the world but not of the world". We certainly are *in* the world, and in many ways we are *of* the world. Do we have the courage to *get out* of the world so that our spiritual potential may flourish, and so that we are not constantly looking over our shoulders and saying, "Is it right".

I know that I may have raised points with which some brethren may not necessarily agree. If I have, please do not let it engender ill-feeling, but rather write to the S.S. (if the Editor will allow) so that we may all learn from each other.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JULY 1985

7—Ezek. 34:1-19	Matt. 18:1-20
14—1 Sam. 28	Matt. 18:21-35
21—Deut. 24	Matt. 19:1-15
28—Ex. 20:1-21	Matt. 19:16-30

GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM

Peter's outstanding confession (16,16)

was a personal triumph and so acknowledged by Jesus with consequent promises. To him with John and James was shown a supreme revelation of glory. Thus the GREATNESS of their God-given eminence in the kingdom of heaven became clear - the other apostles shared it but were not shown the so obvious GREATNESS. With all OUR appreciation of the apostolic HONOUR, have we really understood its SUPREME position in God's universe? With the honour goes the responsibility! Peter's questions reveal

the awful dangers of conceit to which "flesh is heir" - wanting the pre-eminence (3 John)! With what tact and yet severity Jesus handles the question. He brings into the "counsel" the humblest least important person, sets him in the midst and insists on the greatest honour being paid to him. The eternal judgement is made to depend upon how this person is treated, received in the name of Jesus, or caused to stumble by rejection. With what care should the humblest folk be treated by the GREATEST in the kingdom of heaven. Thus is Peter and every saint appointed his or her proper place, and shown how to behave towards his or her fellows whatever their station.

HOW TO AVOID STUMBLING 18:15-17

Make sure first by humble private approach, use another trusted person also, seek help from others in the assembly. If every effort fails to clear away the wrong, regard the wrongdoer with the love you owe to the unsaved. Bear in mind you are endeavouring to SAVE your brother. Sin estranges a person from God, and that is fatal FOR EVER. Finally only God can forgive.

OUR FORGIVENESS, GOD'S FORGIVENESS

PETER seeks guidance. There has been cross purpose and a measure of strife in the apostolic band. How disappointing to Jesus must that be but how humanly natural when sharing so wonderful a leader and friend. The teaching is clear. Jesus spoke purposefully. An unforgiving spirit could not be tolerated in the apostles, but it was there. They had just been assured of powers (verses 18 to 20) when working together under divine guidance. Peter sought personal individual guidance and received it in the form of a parable, showing up the fate of the unforgiving servant. However there are two points about forgiveness, made clear by Jesus (Luke 17:3). Forgiveness is conditional upon repentance ultimately. If that is not manifested the evil remains and cannot just be "put under the carpet". Nevertheless there must be the forgiving spirit - a christian cannot harbour a grudge, or seek revenge.

APOSTOLIC PRIVILEGE ONLY?

There are words and phrases (in 16:16 and 18:18) which must apply only and particularly as promises of divine guidance. I approach them humbly feeling I may not have properly understood. The very special position of the apostles in relation to the church are with us in these and associated verses. Literal translation must be "will have been bound" and "will have been loosed" in heaven. As we have the all-sufficient word already, we could not claim inspired authority simply from being gathered together in Jesus's name - this is apostolic, while assuring us of blessing when totally honest.

MARRIAGE A DIVINE APPOINTMENT

If we demand a New Testament justification for a "marriage service" we do not find one in so many words but the "powers that be" in this country require a public gathering of both parties with formal undertakings and suitable declarations. If this is not conducted by Establishment or Roman Catholic "priests" the Public Registrar must be present to hear the vows and take the signatures. Churches of Christ have normally used their meeting places for what is regarded as a suitable "service", conforming to the law and an occasion for manifestation of Christian love and goodwill, a brother used to platform work taking the leading part. In this way the opportunity is given for the church to show her interest, sympathy and obedience to the divine appointment, and seeking in mutual worship the blessing of the Lord. The straight words of Jesus seemed to shock even His disciples being so contrary to their common understanding and practice for He allowed only one exception to the firm rule, and that involved the breaking of the contract by one of the parties, thus closing the door on divorce as commonly understood. "The Book of Common Prayer" as issued by the English Reformers is a worthy declaration of the sanctity of marriage,

however we may disagree with the formalities. Better still we read Paul's words in Eph. 5:22-23.

TO MARRY OR NOT TO MARRY

To marry and bring up children was a normal expectation and obedience to God, and we must listen to Jesus as He states the case for not marrying. It is threefold and may be applied to either man or woman - (1) Some are born without the capacity - (2) Some are made so by castration (a cruel, and now we trust uncommon, practice exercised by unscrupulous human monsters for political or personal ends) - (3) Some voluntarily deny themselves of all sexual powers and pleasures for the sake of efficient service to God. This last has to be a deliberate decision based on experience, and cannot be enforced by rule. Read 1 Cor. 7. Does not Paul follow Jesus in His closing of 19:12?

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

It would seem at this point Jesus is moving away from a multitude, and before He leaves some parents brought little children (Luke 18:15-17 "Babes") just for a touch of His hands and a blessing. The disciples, thinking Him to be overburdened with His steadfast move toward Jerusalem, tried to release Him from this "interruption". A little while ago He had put a little child before them as example of GREATNESS. Now He has the lesson to give again. Unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom. He was "moved with indignation", rebuked the disciples, and did not only accede to the parents' wishes but took them in His arms, laying His hands on them (Mark 10:16). Another - perhaps all, were not wanting Him to leave, but came running and kneeled to Him, asking a question

The Rich Young Ruler

This very respectable young man had realised he was losing an opportunity -

hence his hurry. He was seriously concerned about his own personal position in God's sight. He must have heard Jesus teaching, and recognised His goodness. His approach was respectful and something about him was attractive to Jesus. Whereas Jesus loved all men, this man one who could be regarded as a true Jew (Romans 2:19). Hence the conversation concerning the law, wellknown and obeyed - and the outward obedience did not satisfy. Thus the answer of Jesus met his need, and he went away sad. (We need to read the parallel passages - Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-24). Naturally we ask, "Did he finally reject the divine counsel?" Riches are a hindrance rather than a help!

SURPRISES

Looking over the two chapters 18 and 19, Jesus surprised His apostles by contrasts. He teaches them and us to take right views on greatness. He makes us consider the values of physical and spiritual things. Some great losses such as sight, powers of bodily functions, of no value when compared with causing children to go astray. It is the preciousness of souls in the sight of God that should be our concern. His disciples hardly know yet what they are facing. Jesus is telling them but they have still so much to learn. Their reaction to the truth about the marriage bond was - true marriage must be impossible. Viewing the comparatively eminent young ruler as having good hopes, with other like persons, of heavenly reward - "Who then can be saved?" Jesus had so taught but still how much worldliness clouds our vision? The answer to Peter's question remains OUR HOPE TODAY - (19:29).

R. B. SCOTT

There are some people who would argue the hind leg off a donkey, without ever going into the field to have a look at the animal.

R.G. Collingwood

WHY NO HONEY?

Some swarms of special honey-bees were imported into the island of Barbados in the West Indies. At first the bees went diligently to work gathering honey for the coming winter. But when those bees found that winter did not come, for they were in a land of perpetual summer, they ceased to gather honey; instead, they spent most of their time flying around, and ultimately became a nuisance instead of an asset.

Is it not a fact that some Christians are like that? Surrounded by so many blessings they idle away their lives, when they should be busy gathering the sweetness of gospel truth that they might give this to a hungry world.

“THE OLD IS BETTER”

Religion, you say, is old fashioned.

How true! So is food, so is drink;
So are fathers and mothers and neighbours
And all things of value, I think.

A new-fangled creed has no power
Until it is tried by the years:
If good it endures through misfortune
And abides in the valley of tears.

True faith, understanding and kindness—
These are old fashioned virtues too:
Thank God for old fashioned religion
In this world where too much is new.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

you all to join us here in praising the Lord. By His grace we did have much rains last year so we have been blessed with some of the local foodstuffs. The only problem is lack of good roads and transport to cart the foodstuffs to the places where they are needed. Also our source of protein is limited and we depend on vegetable proteins a great deal, such as beans, because fish and meat are very expensive.

I am pleased to announce that I have been able to get two faithful brethren who are willing and zealous to propagate the gospel in the method of “the old path”. They are brothers Abraham Asante and J. O. K. Boakye. Between them a new congregation has been established and plans are afoot to start another one in a village near Koforidua.

At the moment what is very much needed are some communion cups, each one should hold about a pint of liquid; also a hand-held (portable) “D” cell loud speaker suitable for public address which will be used for preaching on market days. Travelling is also very expensive so any help to overcome this problem will be appreciated. They also need some communion wine. The best to send is the concentrated grape juice used for home wine making.

Any person or groups of persons who wish to assist in this evangelistic work should contact: THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, P.O. BOX 50, KOFORIDUA, GHANA.

Slamannan District: The churches held their Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting on Saturday 11th May at Dalmellington, where a larger than usual gathering discussed the subject “We shall all stand before the Judgement seat of Christ” - Why ALL? The chairman was William Black, Dalmellington, and the speakers were Ian Davidson, Motherwell, and Gareth Jones (at 14

Accra, Ghana: Greetings in the name of our Lord. Once more I will like to ask

years the youngest speaker we have had for a while.)

Obviously there is an opinion held, fairly generally, that the baptised have passed from death to life, and it would seem strange that such would be brought from 'Abraham's Bosom' to stand trial in the General Judgement. Others believe that baptism merely sets our feet on the narrow way and that much can happen on the journey through life. Paul seemed to think, (in spite of his confidence in the 'crown of righteousness') that he, having preached to others, might himself be a castaway. The two speakers ably supplied an introduction to the subject and an interesting discussion ensued.

God willing, our next M. B. Meeting will be on September 21st at 4 p.m. at Wallacestone. The chairman will be Bro. J. R. Gardiner and the speakers will be Bro. Harry McGinn, Dalmellington, and Bro. Mark Plain (Snr) Tranent. The proposed subject is "What is meant by 'Private Interpretation' of 2 Peter 1:20".

Kitwe, Zambia: The French-speaking nation of Zaire has a population of about 30 million. In our second church-planting-thrust into Zaire in 1985, John Ramsey and two Zambian preachers crossed the border successfully from Zambia to Zaire and spent 10 days visiting and exhorting congregations in Shaba Province. Their experience included being taken into army custody for a few hours in Lubumbashi. As of April, 1985, the count is 301 congregations in Zaire. This does not include 31 congregations which have chosen to affiliate with a certain Christian Church Mission. The majority of our congregations are in the Shaba Province. One of our Zambian preachers stated, "We want our doctrine to that of the New Testament".

Chester Woodhall
P.O. Box 22297, Kitwe, Zambia.

OBITUARY

Haddington East Lothian: The church here sadly records the passing of our esteemed brother Thomas Nisbet, at Belhaven Hospital, Dunbar, on Saturday 11th May, 1985, aged 89 years.

Bro. Nisbet had been in Belhaven Hospital since January last and latterly was confined to bed. Although his body was failing his mind was as clear as ever and he enjoyed discussing with visitors the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, and was ever trying to interest the nurses in Christian literature. At the last he died fairly peacefully and has been spared any further pain or discomfort.

While saddened by his passing we rejoice that he has gone to a much better place and that he has left behind a wonderful example of steadfastness to God's way. Baptised, as he was at 13 years of age, he was still faithful in his 90th year. We thank God for his good influence, fine example and solid teaching.

The funeral was held on Wednesday, 15th May with a service in Tranent meeting-house and at the graveside - both services being conducted by Bro. Hugh Davidson. We thank all who attended the funeral, some coming from a great distance. Ruth Nisbet, Sec.

Burn's Street, Ilkeston: The church here sadly reports the passing of Brother F. H. Faulks, who was immersed 34 years ago. Our brother was a very conscientious worker in this corner of the Lord's vineyard, and no job was too large or too small for him to cope with. He will be sadly missed here. His passing was on 24th April and he was cremated on 30th April. May he receive his reward, as we all hope to do if we remain faithful. Our sympathy goes to his family who are left behind to mourn his loss. We commend all to a loving Father in Heaven. W. Wheatley, Sec.

BOOKS WANTED

The following books are being sought:-
 'The Christian System' - by A. Campbell
 'On The Rock' - by D. R. Dungan
 'The Hammersmith Protestant Discussion'
 between Dr. John Cumming and Daniel
 French (1848)
 Details & prices please to Editor.

THANKS

The family of Bro. Thomas Nisbet wish to thank all those who:-

(1) Sent letters and cards in abundance to our brother while he was hospitalised. He did really appreciate every one.

(2) Have sent letters and cards of sympathy and condolence to members of our brother's family of his passing. They have been warmly received. Thank you.
 Mrs. E. R. Gardiner

THANKS

Brother and sister David and Betty Colgan, Tranent, having both been hospitalised at the same time would, jointly, like to thank all those good brethren who send cards and letters and offered prayers. The interest taken by the brethren has been a great help and encouragement to Bro. and sister Colgan.

THE TWO DISHES

A Greek Philosopher asked his servant to provide the best dish possible. The servant prepared a dish of tongue, saying, "It is the best of all dishes, because with it we may bless, and communicate happiness, dispel sorrow, remove despair, cheer the faint-hearted, inspire the discouraged, and say a hundred other things to uplift and bless mankind."

Later the philosopher asked his servant to prepare the worst dish of which he could think. Again a dish of tongue appeared on the table. The servant said, "It is the worst, because with it we may curse and break human hearts; destroy reputations; promote discord and strife; set families, communities and nations at war with each other, and destroy the world."

He was a wise servant. Solomon said, "Whoso keepeth his tongue, keepeth his soul from trouble."

Ye numerous sects which all declare
 "Lo, Christ is here; Lo, Christ is there"
 Your stronger proofs divinely give
 And show me where the Christians live.
 "Where is Thy church, O Saviour where?"
 I heard the cry; and then I heard,
 "Here is my church, where men still dare
 To take me at my word."

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JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
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EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian,
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