

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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NOMINAL CHRISTIANITY

At School we used to be told that Britain was a 'Christian' country. Very few teachers would try and tell pupils that sort of thing today; it would cause too much hilarity in the classroom. Using even a very loose definition of 'Christian' Britain could never be described by that term although I suppose it is *nominally* 'Christian' in contrast to the U.S.S.R. being described as a land of atheists.

The word 'nominal' is from the latin *nominalis* which means "belonging to a name; or, existing in name only; verbal but not actual". Thus Britain is nominally 'Christian' i.e. in name only. To *nominate* (the verb) means to *name a person* (usually to some office). Thus we read in the local press that the lads on the factory floor have nominated Joe Bloggs to be Shop Steward. To nominate means, therefore, to recommend a name towards some appointment. The lads on the shop floor did not give Joe Bloggs his name, they merely "named the name" as suitable candidate for Shop Steward. It was God who gave Jesus His name. The angels decreed "Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins". Christians, however, *name the name* of Jesus in the sense that they *nominate* Him as their Lord and Master. To *de-nominate* means 'to name down' and so denominationalism is a breaking down of the church into factions or denominations.

Paul mentions those "who have *named the name* of Jesus" (in II Tim. 2:19) when he says "and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity". Those who have "named the name of Christ" have become His servants and have nominated Him to be their leader and king. Thus they may be termed 'Christians'. It is possible however to take His name but not to take His nature; to nominate Him with our lips but not sublimate him in our lives - in short to be Christians only in a nominal sense i.e. in name only. I suppose that what can be true of a country can equally be true of an individual. If Britain can be 'Christian' only nominally, so can individuals.

'Naming The Name' Of Jesus

In this 2nd Chap. of II Timothy Paul says some striking things about what is expected of those who have named the name of Christ. He likens Christians to soldiers (of all things) and says that followers of Jesus must *endure hardships* as 'good soldiers' of Jesus Christ. (v. 3). Enduring hardship may not appeal to many of us and so we shall, perhaps, take steps to avoid it. During the First World War young men used to stand in long queues to join the army but after a few weeks in the trenches, lying unwashed in the mud, hungry and covered in lice, deafened by bursting shells and shrieks of the wounded, they would have given anything to get home. In our centrally heated meeting-houses, with the wall-to-wall carpeting, it is difficult to

realise that there is a war going on and that Christ is depending on us in the heat of the battle. We might snipe away at one-another but the nearest we shall come to actual danger is the possibility of a long sermon making us late for lunch.

Then (v. 4) Paul points out that "no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life. That he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier". Thus, when we become soldiers for Christ we resign a lot of personal freedom and become subject to Army Law. The farmer leaves off ploughing; the mechanic leaves his tools; the merchant leaves his store; the clerk his desk, when he becomes a soldier and truly understands that he cannot resume such activities until the war is over. Think of all the brethren who have become involved in the world's affairs (sometimes rising to great heights as politicians, magistrates etc) and having discovered that we really cannot serve God and mammon, have ditched God.

In v. 7-14 Paul, while reminding us that he suffered personally (as an evildoer) for teaching the resurrection of Christ and was actually placed in bonds, he, at the same time rejoiced in the knowledge that God's word could not be chained. The only places where God's word is bound is in closed Bibles or the sealed lips of those who "have named the name of Christ". God depends on us to spread His word. Other gigantic steps in personal committal include being prepared *to die* with Christ that we might live with Him; being prepared *to suffer* with him that we might reign with Him; knowing that if we *deny Him* He will deny us. In these latter verses the word 'If' indicates to us that the matter (*If* we suffer with Him: *If* we deny Him) is one in which we make a completely personal choice.

Then, in v. 15 Paul provides those words, now so well known, advocating Christians to "Study (or to agonise) to show themselves approved unto God, as workmen that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth". We must handle aright God's word but (next verse) "shun profane and vain babblings which lead unto more ungodliness, and which eat as doth a canker of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus". It has been most helpful of Paul to give us an example of what he means by 'profane and vain babblings' and by citing the case of these two church members. Hymenaeus and Philetus taught that 'the resurrection was past already' and thus erred from the truth and overthrew the faith of some. This surely shows how we must strive to be correct doctrinally and how careful we must be in what we teach. These two Christians are on the eternal record as those who 'erred from the truth' and 'overthrew the faith of some', because of their mistaken understanding of the resurrection (a fairly harmless misconception as some might think.)

In v. 19 we are given the glorious assurance that nothing will prevail against the church. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are His, And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity". No matter what happens, and in spite of all the false teaching that goes on, the 'foundation of God' (and the foundation of the church) stands secure and undiminished. Men can pluck the leaves, or even snap the branches but they cannot destroy the tree. The foundation of the church is Christ and His apostles and so it can never be shaken. It has also, says Paul, this seal - Firstly "The Lord knoweth them that are His": and Secondly, "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity". This is, perhaps, an allusion to the practice of large edifices having the architect's, or builder's, name chiseled on the foundation stone. Thus there are on the plinth of the church these two seals or inscriptions:-

(1) "The Lord knoweth them that are His". This presupposes that in every age there will be in the church those who are *not His - nominal Christians* i.e. in name only. This seal means that no matter who apostatizes or teaches error the foundation remains unscathed and others, better deserving can build upon it. If all the Christians in this age were to 'down tools', spiritually speaking, the next generation could easily

pick them up again. This seal also means that no-one can deceive God and that amongst all the many thousands who enter the church God knows those who are truly His and can oversee them with a benevolent eye. Jesus, Himself, warned that many on that great day would say unto Him, "Lord, Lord, have we not done many wonderful works in Thy name" and He would disclaim all knowledge of them and say, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

(2) "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity". Christians are those who have "made the good confession" and named the name of Jesus. At baptism we "call upon the name of the Lord" and acknowledge our *nomination* of Him as our new Master and Lord. We are thus translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God. Having thrust off the bondage of Satan and taken upon us the yoke which is easy and the burden which is light, we must not live as we did before. Having nominated Jesus as Lord we must treat Him as such, with all reverence and Godly fear.

Now these few verses from II Timothy constitute only a minute part of the N.T. and yet we are brought face to face with many of the things expected of us. Christians are soldiers for Christ, locked in a warfare with the Devil, committed to hardship and disentanglement with worldly considerations; to die (daily) with Christ and to suffer with Him; to agonise and study to receive approval; an unashamed workman, handling God's word intelligently and eschewing false teachings and vain disputations. All these allude to nouns, anything but attractive; hardship, warfare, suffering, sacrifice, agony, work, fidelity, and we could add many more. This seemed to be the Christianity of the N.T. and we often advocate a return to N.T. Christianity, do we not? When we look at ourselves today, and look around us at the religious world, is it not true to say that much of Christianity is fairly nominal - Christianity in name only. Are we *nominal Christians* - Christians in name only? How do we shape up to such a suggestion? A question was posed in a religious magazine recently, somewhat to the effect "If you were arrested for being a Christian could they find evidence against you?" We may have smiled at it, but once we try and tabulate the evidence it might not be so funny. No one wants to be regarded as a nominal Christian but we can all put ourselves through a little test by asking ourselves a few searching and uncomfortable questions. For example *how many hours*, on an average week, do we devote solely to the service of our Lord and Master. What do we actually ever *do* for Jesus. What do we ever *say* for Jesus. What do we actually *give* towards the Lord's work? The work languishes for lack of funds but what do we give to it in contrast to what we spend on our selves? It is better for us to ask ourselves these questions now, than for Jesus to ask them later. What am I doing for Jesus? Do I preach the gospel to my neighbour? Do I visit the sick or leave it to others? Do I encourage my brethren or look bored? Am I enthusiastic about the Lord's work or does some have to cajole me? I can easily point out the shortcomings of others; can I see my own faults? Do I take any steps to relieve suffering, or visit the lonely members? Do I encourage any weaker brethren, or ignore them? If we were to write down what we actually do, in a week, for Jesus we might be surprised; even shocked.

Jesus knew about nominal Christians. He said, "What do ye more than others?" If you love those who love you, and are good to those who are good to you, you are really no better than anyone else, for even the publicans had reached that standard. So said Jesus (in Matt. 5) when He added this general rule, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness *shall exceed* the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (v. 20). We say that we love Jesus with our lips but do we deny it with our lives? Love (and faith) can only really be expressed in actions. God loved us *and acted* - indeed we read that God so

loved the world that *He gave* His only Son. When we think of what God has given to us - what do we give back to Him? When we consider what God has done for us - what do we actually do for Him? Truly we must love God, and believe God, but we must also obey God and serve God. What more do we than others? Do we give our earthly employer a higher standard of service than we give to our Heavenly Master. As those who have "named the name of Jesus" and nominated Him as our Lord and Saviour, what are we really and truly doing for Him? In short are we, like Britain as a country, only Christian in a nominal sense; i.e. Christian in name only?

If the answer tends to be in the affirmative let us change all that, and let us be up and doing; seeking ways to help in the great cause of Christ, let us endure hardness as good soldiers of the great warfare. As Paul says (in v. 7 of the chap. already quoted from II Tim.) "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things".

EDITOR

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

(continued from last issue)

Majority Texts

2) Generally speaking manuscripts can be divided into two categories. Those before the 4th century, and those written after the 4th century.

90% of the manuscripts were written after the 4th century and these are known as the 'Majority Text'. This text is also known as the Byzantine or Traditional Text. These manuscripts show a broad area of agreement and tend to disagree with the smaller group of earlier manuscripts. They also disagree with the versions and early church father quotations.

The argument for this text is based on the view that early Christians had such a high view of the Scripture they would not have altered it deliberately. Rather, they would have taken the greatest care in ensuring the production of faithful copies of the original manuscripts.

At the same time heretics would mutilate and scar the Scriptures in attempts to promote their views. Such corrupted copies of the Scriptures could have an influence for a short time but ultimately the true Scripture would win through because orthodox, sincere Christians would continue to produce uncorrupted Scriptures and the heretics' day would pass.

Let us examine this theory. The assumption has been made here that the majority is correct. If the majority opinion meant anything it would in turn mean that our doctrine is wrong.

The church of Christ is in the minority in the religious world today but that does not unduly concern me for I have done my study and I am totally convinced that I have the truth, even although my opinions are in the minority. Remember Noah?

The argument that early, sincere Christians would not alter the word willingly does not hold up. The facts of history are against this view. To give one example Epiphanius states that orthodox Christians deleted "he wept" from Luke 19 v 41 out of jealousy for the Lord's Divinity.

Translators today look for something a bit more substantial on which to choose their variants.

Eclectic Principles

3) Finally I would like to discuss selecting the reading to be followed on Eclectic principles. It is very important to appreciate that in the world of Eclectic there is a wide range of scholars.

The word "eclectic" simply means the selection of a reading by making a choice between them on the basis of reasonable principles. The poorest example of an eclectic scholar is one with only two principles:-

1. Firstly they look for the reading that best suits the context.
2. Secondly for that which best explains the origins of all the others.

Such scholars receive criticism and rightly so from all quarters.

At the other end of the scale the true and more thoughtful eclecticists show a much larger and more far ranging group of principles in selecting their variants.

These principles may be divided into two groups. Those relating to external factors and those relating to internal considerations.

The external factors can broadly be broken down into question form, they are:-

1. Has this reading support from the ancient manuscripts.?
2. Has this reading geographical support? for the wider its' geographical distribution is normally due to the historical fact that it was widely read and therefore it strengthens its' case.
3. What weight is to be attached to this reading and its' evidence in light of other readings and their evidence.

Internal Evidence

In addition to this external evidence the eclecticist uses internal evidence. Internal evidence involves two kinds of probabilities. The first type of probability is based upon the problems of copying and the habits of the scribes.

The second type of probability is based on what the author is more likely to have written. The types of questions that are asked of the text are as follows:-

1. When the text varies which text is the most difficult for the scribe to accept? Scribes are more likely to try and iron out difficulties than to actually make them.

2. When there is a choice between a long and a short reading, is there any evidence that the scribe has accidentally missed out something because of a slip of the eye? Is the omitted material something that the scribe would have omitted because it seems superfluous, harsh or contrary to orthodox belief and practice? If not, the shorter reading is to be preferred.

3. When we have a choice of passages which involve a quotation from the old Testament or which has a parallel New Testament passage then the scribe is more likely to harmonize than to disharmonize, so the less harmonized variant is probably correct.

4. When there is a variant that makes the text neat and smooth and takes away its' more rugged character then the more rugged is preferable. It is well known that the scribes liked smoothness of reading.

5. When there is a choice between variants then that which fits the general style and vocabulary of the author in the same book is most likely to be correct.

There are other principles, but these are the main ones.

Objections

Let us now look at the objections to this method of determining the true text. There are NO criticisms of the 'external principles'.

There are however, valid criticisms of the 'Internal principles'.

Everyone of these principles are subjective, i.e. They leave a lot up to the opinion of the student looking at the variant.

We can speak of what we think scribes would have done and what men would have written, but no-one today knows, or can know exactly what happened.

Before we dismiss this, we must remember that ALL our historical research, our doctrines and our preaching are also subjective.

We all interpret according to the context of our text and we take into consideration other things that the author has said.

This is a consequence of living nearly 2000 years after Christ.

It would be easy to cancel all these principles out, but anyone can do that.

Because principles have weaknesses, this does NOT mean they are not valid. It should merely make us very cautious.

Perhaps you will now begin to appreciate the problems of the translators.

Some people argue, that as long as we have the general idea of what God said, then the loss of the exact words, does not matter.

This is NOT TRUE.

Important arguments are hinged in Scripture, on individual words, verb tenses, phrases, etc.

The exact words are therefore of great importance. It is only by the study of the very words of the original languages, that they can be meaningfully translated into our language.

The aim of the translator is unattainable, but each has to strive towards it.

Let us therefore, strive to be workmen that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word Of Truth.

GRAEME PEARSON, Glasgow

GLEANINGS

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

PERSONAL GODLINESS

“Urgently do we need a revival of personal godliness. This is, indeed, the secret of church prosperity. When individuals fall from their steadfastness, the church is tossed to and fro; when personal faith is steadfast, the church abides true to her Lord Oh, for more truly holy men, quickened and filled with the Holy Spirit, consecrated to the Lord, and sanctified by His truth! Brethren, we must each one live if the church is to be alive; we must live unto God if we expect to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in our hands. Sanctified men are the necessity of every age, for they are the salt of society, and the saviours of the race. The Lord has made a man more precious than a wedge of gold, - I mean, a decided, instructed, bold, unswerving man of God O Christian men and women, be thorough in what you do, and know, and teach! Hold truth as with an iron grip; let your families be trained in the fear of God, and be yourselves “holiness unto the Lord; “so shall you stand like rocks amid the surging waves of error and ungodliness which rage around you.”

C. H. Spurgeon.

GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH

“He was born of a woman; yet He made woman. He ate and hungered, drank and thirsted; yet he made corn to grow on the mountains, and poured the rivers from his crystal chalices. He needed sleep; yet He slumbers not, and needs not to repair his wasted energy. He wept; yet he created the lachrymal duct. He died; yet He is the ever-living Jehovah, and made the tree of his cross. He inherited all things by death; yet they were His before by inherent right. And what is the word to us? - In His first Epistle, the holy Apostle tells us His intention in declaring that which he had seen and heard and handled of the word : it was that others might share with him his fellowship with the Father and the Son. And fellowship means partnership, a common participation in a common stock; and, in this case, a blessed share in the very life and light and love of God. But how may such things become ours? There is a sense in which the orator, the thinker, the friend, is able to infuse himself into us by his fervid and quickening words. And is therefore not also a deep sense in which Jesus is the Word of God, because through Him God is ever pouring himself into our hearts and lives? As a man puts himself into his words, and by them communicates himself to others, so has God embodied Himself in Jesus, and those who receive the Son receive the Father, who has sent Him (Matt. 10:40). As the Father has put himself into the

Word, so has the word put Himself into his words. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Live then in meditation on the words of Jesus; so that his being may become infused into yours, and through the Word the eternal Father may come and make his abode with you (John 14:23). So shall you be inspired by the very life and indwelling of God, and be lifted increasingly out of the time-sphere into the eternal; into fellowship with all noble souls, with all saints and angels, with all who, through all worlds, live on Him, who is the Eternal and Divine Word, ever-blessed, ever to be adored."

F. B. Meyer

WE QUOTE - T. H. MILNER

"Purity is essential to fellowship with the holy. How can two walk together except they be agreed? 'What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath the believing with the unbelieving? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? With this purification from sin by the blood of the Lamb, there is therefore of necessity the isolation of the purified from the personally impure: 'wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you.' So 1 Tim 5:22, - Be not 'partaker of other men's sins'. The separation of the participators in the divine fellowship from sin and sinners, is an unalterable condition of their being made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:3,4".

POOR PREACHING

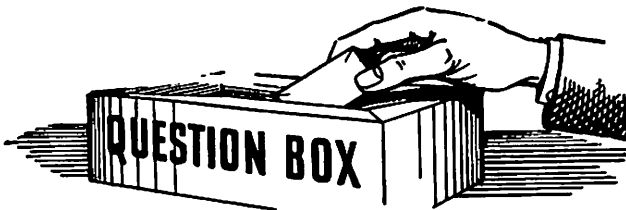
"A young man said he could preach for half an hour any time, and think nothing about it. "Probably the audience thought the same," replied an aged fellow-worker." T.W.T.

THINK AND THANK

"Jonathan Swift, author of Gulliver's Travels, was the most devastating pessimist in English literature. He was so sorry that he had been born that he wore black and fasted on his birthdays; yet, in his despair, this supreme pessimist of English literature praised the great health-giving powers of cheerfulness and happiness. "The best doctors in the world," he declared, "are Doctor Diet, Doctor Quiet, and Doctor Merryman." You and I may have the services of "Doctor Merryman" free every hour of the day by keeping our attention fixed on all the incredible riches we possess - riches exceeding by far the fabled treasures of Ali Baba. Would you sell both your eyes for a billion dollars? What would you take for your two legs? Your hands? Your hearing? Your children? Your family? Add up your assets, and you will find that you won't sell what you have for all the gold ever amassed by the Rockefellers, the Fords, and the Morgans combined."

Dale Carnegie

selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"During a discussion on the Church, one brother made the statement, "I think the mutual ministry is being destroyed". Is it possible for this to happen?"

Over the years I have heard many comments made about the desirability of mutual ministry in the Church, but I must confess that of late I have not heard many

references to it. Perhaps this is because the real meaning of mutual ministry has been lost, or because no real significance is attached to it in many peoples minds. Before we can say whether or not we think it is being destroyed, we must first of all refresh our minds as to what it really is.

Furthermore, it is a matter of some interest - and some concern - when we try to analyse the directions in which the Church seems to be moving. The mutuality of the ministry of preaching and teaching from an inter-congregational standpoint is restricted for many because of the increasing numbers of itinerant full-time preachers. More recently we have seen the advent of evangelists who, possessing great personal charisma, have set their sights on the conversion of the young and have found that to the converted the messenger has become more important than the message. In addition to this, the mutual ministry of love and devotion to the Church is being eroded because the considerable impact of the world on the Church is forbidding many from rendering that undiluted service to the Church which It so urgently needs. We shall no doubt need to return to some of these points in our analysis of the subject.

Mutual Ministry

To be a minister in the sense in which the Bible reveals the term is to 'be serviceable or contributory'. One who serves as a devoted follower is a 'servant', so when one becomes a Christian in the N.T. sense, one becomes a 'slave' or a 'bondservant' of Christ and should then be ready and willing to contribute oneself to the service of the Lord. The mutuality of such a ministry is seen when each renders to the other, and to the Lord those things which speak of affection and benefit from such joint action.

Such a definition opens up many avenues along which we *must* travel if we are to succeed in this great ministry. The highway of service and the highway to Heaven are one and the same road; you cannot use the highway to Heaven without realising that you have to travel the road of service; this no doubt comes as something of a shock to those who believe that spiritual and contemplative meditation will by themselves ensure entry into the Celestial City. The brother who says that mutual ministry is being destroyed may be right; I don't know how he defines things in his mind, but let us see how mutual ministry *can* be destroyed.

Willingness and Ability

These two great attributes must always be present in individual Christians before the mutual ministry of saints can be really effective. We realise, of course, that willingness is an expressed desire to do something for the Lord; ability is a measure of how well we do it. Some have achieved positions of relative importance simply and solely on their willingness to be used; the matching ability has not been present. consequently, such have found themselves in deep water, and confidence has been lost on all sides. The mutual benefits from such an arrangement have been either non-existent or of questionable value to the Church.

Conversely, others have been pushed into positions of responsibility because of their ability alone. This, in many cases, has resulted in an autocratic approach which has tended to elevate the individual and *his* importance, and has probably done much to retard the growth of mutual ministry.

The reader does not have to take my word for this. We can look across any organisation in the field of human experience and we can see this to be so. The damage caused by this approach has been incalculable; so it can be, and has been, in the Church.

Personal Ministry

It is in the realisation that a dedicated *personal* ministry will ensure a true mutual ministry that the Church will reach its true maturity. The mistake we make is in trying

to foster *mutual* ministry *before* we have elevated *personal* ministry to its true, high level. How does each individual Christian achieve his highest personal ministry?

First, we learn from the example of Christ. Matthew records Jesus as saying, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). Paul also tells us that Jesus left the glory of Heaven and "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). Jesus calls us into His body, the Church, and that Body, as Paul says in another place, should be "compacted by that which every joint supplieth".

Second, we ought to conduct a personal analysis in order to determine what the extent of our service should be, always remembering, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48). The areas of service are extended to include such things as money, possessions, time, wisdom, intellect, ability, and a host of other things. It would be quite wrong, I believe, for a Christian with special qualities to be what I term a 'peripheral' Christian.

Third, we ought to seek to demonstrate the reality of our faith. Jesus put it like this, "For I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matt. 25:35,36). Can anyone say that if every Christian worked out in their lives this type of personal ministry that *mutual* ministry could be destroyed? No, never. If it were destroyed, then it would surely mean that Christians were no longer living lives of free and willing service to the Lord and to each other.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

the reconciliation of sinners to God is effected through the Gospel. this requires that the gospel be taught and preached, for, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Each individual Christian ought to be able to pass on to someone else what the Gospel of Christ entails; if we can articulate, then we should be able to tell about our own salvation. Each individual Christian should be able to give a *reason* for the hope within him; many have become 'bogged down' because they are trying to give *proof* rather than *state* reasons.

there is, however, one area of Gospel statement which, unhappily the Church has defined almost exclusively as mutual ministry; that is the area we call 'preaching'. I think we have said enough even in this short article to indicate that mutual ministry does *not* mean 'mutual mouth'. Young converts, if they can string a few sentences together, have been launched onto our platforms to make definitive statements not only about the Gospel, but also about the most complex personal problems imaginable. Sometimes the results have been almost catastrophic. But someone will say, 'Well, how do they learn if they never do it?' The short answer is, 'Do we send a person out to perform intricate surgery without having *taught* him how to do it?' The idea is quite ludicrous.

A note of warning should be sounded here. Patterns of teaching and training which are too formalised could produce undesirable elements for the Church. it is undoubtedly true that the student can be overly influenced by the teacher. what the Church does *not* need is a 'cloned' ministry of preaching, whether the teaching is done in a formal place of learning or in the local community. This aspect has been so marked in the past that some students, when *they* have been teaching and preaching, have even effected mannerisms and gestures of the ones who have taught them. Furthermore, we should have no wish to develop a preaching and evangelical Ministry. Some communities are becoming increasingly isolated, and many of the fine young men with the ability to preach and teach are rarely seen or heard outside their

own communities; this I find very sad because they are being denied the inter-congregational experience which many of us had in times past, and consequently, inter-congregational fellowship with other saints suffers as a result.

In addition to this, there seems to be a growing tendency for the Church to become more exclusive. While I certainly hold no brief for Religious Pluralism (the belief that all religious groups are travelling to the same place along different roads) I can certainly find no basis for non-co-operation in those areas *where we can* co-operate without compromising our own position and teaching. If and when we have to withdraw then we can do it firmly but graciously; in the meantime we might have been able to exert some influence on others (or, who knows, we might even have learned something from them).

Is mutual ministry being destroyed? I suggest that before we can comment on whether *anything* is being destroyed, we must first be ensured that it already exists. Perhaps we should exercise our minds on that.

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

WE WOULD SEE JESUS

Reading :- John 12 verses 20 to 36.

The men referred to were evidently tired of heathenism and had turned to Judaism. They wanted to know more of the great Teacher, so they came to Philip, perhaps because they were Greeks. The name Philip is Grecian, and he might have been a Jew born amongst Greeks.

Philip tells Andrew, and together they tell Jesus. Jesus answers them by saying "The hour is come that the son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it will bring forth much fruit."

The death of Jesus was the hour of glorification, for he later said, "I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me." Jesus died not merely for the Jews but for all throughout the world. He is the Saviour of both Jew and Gentile.

A grain of wheat may abide in a granary for a thousand years and be preserved, but it is useless there. It neither reproduces nor is food. It is when it is *put* into the ground and dies that it brings forth fruit. It is fruitful by giving itself up. In like manner Jesus gave Himself up in order that He might impart Life to the nations.

If we too would see Jesus we must see Him in the right way and accept of His gracious offering to appropriate to ourselves the efficacy of His Precious Blood and thus receive the benefits of His atoning sacrifice. To understand aright the word of God and to follow its instructions correctly, we must have a right view of the position which Jesus holds.

1. We must see Jesus as Prophet.

Moses was told by God that "The Lord Thy God shall raise up unto thee, a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto thee." Deut. 18:15. It is to this prediction that Peter refers in Acts 3:22 and claims that Jesus is that prophet. The work of the prophet was to speak on behalf of God to men. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers through the prophets; hath in these last days spoken unto us in His Son." Heb. 1:1. On the mount of transfiguration we hear the voice of God testifying to the pre-eminence of Jesus over Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased HEAR YE HIM". Matt. 17:5. We are warned by the Hebrew writer "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." Heb. 2:3.

2. We must see Jesus as Priest

The Priest was appointed by God to speak on behalf of man. He was the mediator or go-between. It was his duty to offer up the sacrifices required by God as a covering for sin. The High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies once every year, first having offered a sacrifice for his own sin, then for the sins of the people. He was the type of Jesus who has offered up a more acceptable sacrifice. "For it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins, Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me; in burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will O God". Heb. 10:4-7. At His death, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, no longer standing between God and men. Access is now possible through the veil of His flesh, He being made a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. His offering was a pure, holy, sinless one, which God has accepted. The Blood of Jesus can cleanse for all sin. So we need to realise, Jesus is a reigning Priest who sits at God's right hand making intercession for all who come unto God by Him.

3. we must see Jesus as King.

A reigning monarch, with all power and authority. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and upon earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them into 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 always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:18-20. Jesus reigns Now over His Kingdom which began on the first Pentecost after His resurrection from the dead. "He shall reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." 1 Cor. 15:25-26. We enter His Kingdom by believing that He is the Son of the Living God; by repentance of sin and a turning from it to serve God; By confessing our faith openly before men; and by being baptised (that is dipped, immersed) in water for the remission of sins, for it is in this act that we identify ourselves with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection; and thus rising to walk in newness of life. We crown Jesus our Lord and King and walk in the light of His Word.

Jesus is speaking from God to you. Are you listening?

Jesus can speak for you to God. Are you allowing Him to?

Jesus can be your King. Will you crown Him?

TOM KEMP, Hindley

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JANUARY 1986

5—I Kings 22:2-28	Gal. 2
12—Genesis 13	Gal. 3:1-25
19—Genesis 15	Gal. 3:26 to 4:20
26—Genesis 21:1-21	Gal. 4:21 to 5:6

INTRODUCTION

See last month's issue for comments on Ch. 1

Relations with Jerusalem Church

It is obvious that the Jerusalem church

was looked to for guidance from apostolic authority. We are indebted to this letter for approximate dating of events. I suggest the following -

- A.D. 37 Paul's Conversion (Acts 9)
 - A.D. 39 Conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10)
 - A.D. 40 Paul's first visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30 Gal. 1:18)
 - A.D. 44 Peter rebuked by Paul at Antioch (Gal. 2:14)
 - A.D. 52 Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13)
 - A.D. 54 Paul's visit to Jerusalem at the council (Acts 15 Gal. 2:1)
- While Peter's acceptance of Cornelius was approved (Acts 11:1-18) at Jeru-

saalem, the position of Jewish Christians may not have been affected as they were in a large majority, but at Antioch the barriers were removed as a matter of normal Christian behaviour. We can therefore understand Peter and Barnabas failing to realise' perhaps inexcusably, what a vital principle was at stake. So Paul, a Jew of Jews, was compelled to take a stern stand, even against a fellow apostle. The battle for freedom from Jewish restrictive practices had to be fought then. The idea of EARNING salvation by self or other discipline can be easily adopted because we must all strive for pure and holy living. True faith is falsified if we fail to exercise the spirit of Christ, but when the utmost is done "we are unprofitable servants when we have only begun to do even our most obvious obligation, in fact cannot even do that. We observe the care taken by Paul in that God guided his footsteps to Jerusalem ("by revelation") and it was not a boastful apostle but one anxious to co-operate, not find fault, and we note the willingness to understand. There is a thought that Paul was an expert in law, the others were fishermen and a tax-gatherer, and what else, but appointed by God for their place in the church (2:6). How good to read "the right hand of fellowship" (koinonia).

Abraham's Example

It is clear that those who sought to denigrate Paul among those he had brought to know Jesus, put stress upon the great "father" of the Jewish race in order to insist on obedience to circumcision and the Mosaic law. Thus Paul is compelled to show that God's approval of Abraham was not just upon his action but his faith. He trusted completely on the promises of God - some of which he seemed by his obedience in offering Isaac to make impossible of fulfilment. The scriptures on which the Judaisers based their false teaching, prove their falsity. The Galatians had enjoyed the good tidings of a Saviour crucified in fulfilment of the promises, displayed graphically by one who had divine mira-

culous powers. What a come-down to depend on a cutting of their flesh or observance of restrictions on eating, drinking and manners! They needed the same brand of faith as Abraham which had already changed their lives.

Grace Not Law

The Galatians had been too ready to listen to the teachers who sought to belittle Paul. Every man who seeks to justify himself in the sight of God finds he remains guilty however much he tries to abide by the mosaic, or other, highest moral code. Only the gift of a Saviour can be good tidings for him. They had received the messenger who came among them through a weakness of the flesh with warm acceptance because of the grace presented to them to which their heart had responded with humility, joy and responsive love. With what forceful argument and exhortation, drastically needed does Paul appeal to both reason and sentiment. The false teachers would put stress upon their coming from Jerusalem where the priests in that magnificent temple were fulfilling their requirements of the Law, apparently by approval of God, and acceptance of this and of circumcision would remove persecution by Jews with an agreement with their sacrifices previously offered to heathen gods to escape punishment for sin. They had suffered for their acceptance of the new FAITH. No earthly shrine, gorgeous robes or costly sacrifices were to be offered, only lives exhibiting the unselfish spirit with universal application. BUT acceptance of the law means a curse for no one has lived perfectly in it, and Jesus became that curse to relieve us from it (83:10-14). Grace came by promise. The law was added to prepare the way for grace by showing God's standard of righteousness. It is not a contradiction of the promises but makes the fulfilment of them clear through the virgin birth of a Saviour who is Christ the Lord, God manifest in the flesh to condemn sin by perfect fulfilment of it in the flesh loving us and giving Himself for us (2:20). The covenant with Abraham was not affected

by the law. It was required to prepare for it.

Children Of God (3:20)

Yes! We are God's children by natural birth, but we can likewise be children of the devil (John 8:44). Can we ever fully understand the honour we have (3:26)? Children by adoption through Christ, "born of water and the spirit". The Galatians had become God's children but they were deceived into thinking they needed to have fleshly mark and legal status to be sure of divine approval. Such would only prove to be back to bondage. Any system of observances inflicted upon Christians as laws of God must be an infringement without authority from God Himself. Faith working by love gives them motive and power to do right in the sight of God always with a consciousness of being a sinner, saved by grace. We do indeed need the means of grace initially and always - obedience in baptism and not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, not the obedience to precise laws. but the glad obedience co-responding love in the heart.

Two Covenants (4:21-31)

Illustrating the difference between what they had originally accepted and what they were now being offered by false teachers, Paul shows a vital difference between Christian Faith and Jewish Law. Contrasting Hagar and Sarah and their sons he shows one as a fleshly covenant only, limited to fleshly descendants and the other as a divine institution of universal character. He does not mention the coming and even then, dare we say "in sight" the destruction of all the material splendour of the Old Covenant with the Roman dissolution of Judaism as it appeared to the fleshly mind. The spiritual heritage so outshone that, and is beautifully portrayed in the remaining chapters of this wonderful letter. The immediate call for the letter has passed, but its lessons and warnings have been needed and actually illustrate the errors still abundant with us.

R. B. SCOTT

AN EDITOR'S DILEMMA

Why Print Alternate Views? —From time to time, someone asks the editor, "Why did you print an article giving an interpretation or viewpoint different from one published earlier?" Other concerned readers agree that it is good to give each person his say, but fear that some new convert will be misled by a questionable teaching.

One such friend recently wrote something like this—"What the man in the pew gets is often only an occasional issue of CHRISTIAN STANDARD, with neither rebuttal nor alternate view given for an article. If it were included, at least it would send him to the Bible to see which is right. As it is, he believes what he finds printed." such a reader, he noted, might miss the later issue in which a rebuttal were printed. This is a real problem. The answer is not easy to find.

If the editor printed only what *he* considered to be the correct interpretation, the journal would quickly become narrow and sectarian, one man's opinion. The same holds true whenever any one individual's understanding of scripture is held by a church or college as the criterion of truth.

Believing Scripture is one thing; agreeing on every interpretation of it is another. In his incisive *Declaration and Address*, Thomas Campbell proposed:

That although inferences and deductions from scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word: yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men; but in the power and veracity of God—therefore no such deduction can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the church.

In CHRISTIAN STANDARD, we attempt to present a fair hearing for different points of view. Within the con-

text of Biblical faith, we try to allow liberty for a writer to give his opinion, inference, or interpretation.

Ideally any "poor interpretation" that we might print should be corrected in the same issue by an article giving the "better view." Sometimes this can happen. Usually it can't. Even when this is done, will every reader come to agree with the "better view"? And which is the "better view"—the editor's, the writer's, or your's? Balancing and corrective replies, though often necessarily delayed, are not ignored.

Such a course is not out of line with that followed by Alexander Campbell and other early editors in the restoration movement. These men sought truth. They were teachable. They would listen to and learn from others, even as they sought to teach them.

The ideal solution to the problem is found in the example recorded in Acts 17:11, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

We welcome such careful inquiry on the part of every reader. Indeed we urge it. Nothing written by men is sacred, only what comes from God in His Word. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

(The above appeared in a recent issue of the Christian Standard and explains why some editors print the conflicting views of readers.)

A FEW MINUTES TO BE THANKFUL

How's your health? Not so good? Well, thank God you've lived this long. A lot of people haven't. You're hurting? Thousands — maybe millions — are hurting more. (Have you ever visited a nursing home, a hospital, or a rehabilitation clinic for crippled children?)

If you awakened this morning and were able to hear the birds sing, use your vocal chords to utter human sounds, walk to the breakfast table on two good legs and read the newspaper with two

good eyes, praise the Lord! A lot of people couldn't.

How's your pocketbook? Thin? Well, most of the world is a lot poorer. No pensions. No welfare. No food stamps. No Social Security. In fact, one-third of the people in the world will go to bed hungry tonight.

Are you lonely? The way to have a friend is to be one. If nobody calls you, call them. Go out of your way to do something nice for somebody. It's a cure for the blues.

'The Light'

(How true the above remarks are. The brother of sister Murdie, of the church at Haddington, has for a long time been seeking and hoping for a kidney transplant. Christopher is also diabetic. Last week-end he received a kidney transplant and every thing looks well. We hope and pray that his progress will continue, but think of how those of us who have healthy kidneys *take all our blessings for granted.* Ed.)

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dennyloanhead, Scotland: The church here has great cause for rejoicing in that two young persons have obeyed the gospel. On Tuesday 29th October, young Niall Scobie confessed his faith in Jesus, as the Son of God, and was baptised for the remission of sins. Niall is the youngest son of Andrew and Jenny Scobie. Also we rejoice over the baptism on Tuesday 5th November of Claire Louise Sneddon, daughter of Peter and Glenys Sneddon.

Our hearts are indeed uplifted by these baptisms and we give thanks to God, and to Him be the glory for the increase. We do pray that these two young souls will remain faithful.

Joe Malcolm (Sec.)

Kitwe, Zambia: Some people in Zaire speak of those who like human flesh and live near the big river. However, all that Chester lost on his most recent trip to

Zaire was his voice. The main subject of discussion with church leaders from DILOLO, LIKASI and LUBUMBASHI was national registration for Churches of Christ and the fee required by the Zairean Government. A rumor has circulated overseas that the church is registered in Zaire. This is not so. One small group - "The Federation of Churches of Christ" - has permission to operate in Lubumbashi but that is not the same thing as national registration for Churches of Christ. Chester did track down the "Federation" church building - a mud hut building on the outskirts of Lubumbashi.

Army personnel seemed to check Chester and the vehicle about every ten minutes along the road. However, tracts in French turned scowls into smiles. All the French language tracts are now out of stock - more would be welcome.

Chester Woodhall

Newtongrange, Midlothian: On Saturday the 19th past, it was the privilege of the church that meets at Newtongrange to experience a great time of fellowship. Brethren and friends up to the number of eighty gathered to hear Bro. Brown and Bro. Chalmers speak at our annual social. At the hour of 'four of the clock' all met for tea. A splendid affair prepared by the ladies. Bro. Hunter, the chairman of the day thanked each and every one for being in attendance. The singing, as usual was robustly led by Bro. John McCallum. After the chairman's remarks we were delighted to hear Sister May Wilson, of the church at Slamannan, sing a solo. This was complemented by Sisters Hughes and Must of Kirkcaldy in the singing of a lovely duet. The beautiful harmony and words thrilled the hearts of all.

The first speaker of the evening was Bro. Brown from the church, that meets at Dennyloanhead. His topic was "Hello how are you" on the theme physical/spiritual. The fine delivery and content had the company as we say "on the edge of our seats". A fine piece of exhortation indeed. After the talk, which seemed to pass so quickly, the company sang the

old favourite "When the roll is called up yonder". This old fashioned gospel song, on this occasion, was sung with great gusto.

With a short intermission, the assembly met for the second half of the social. The first solo, was the song "No never alone". This was ably sung by Sister Coventry from the church at Newtongrange. Following this Bro. Sharp rendered in his own fashion the song "Would you be free from your burden of Sin", with of course his usual introductory notes. After this the assembly were again privileged to hear the two sisters from the church at Kirkcaldy, in duet. The chairman then introduced the second speaker Bro. Chalmers, from the church that meets at Dalmellington.

Bro. Chalmers held the audience captive with his talk on "We who are living between the two appearances". Our Bro. spoke very ably and gave us much food for thought. Too soon the meeting ended, with some fine singing from the company. As usual many stayed on for a while to chat and partake of tea.

We, the church at Newtongrange would like to thank all concerned for their assistance in making the social a great success. Ladies, speakers, assistants, thank you. We look forward to the next time.

May God bless you all abundantly.

A.P.SHARP, Sec.

OBITUARY

Bedminster, Bristol: On Saturday 12th October, the Lord called our sister Elsie William to rest at the age of 82 years.

Becoming a Christian later in life she remained faithful to the end. Her great joy was to meet with her brethren as often as she could, although not enjoying the best of health. She was an inspiration to her brethren; also to every preacher. We commend her daughter, Sisters and family in prayer to God.

Len Daniell.

THE PERFECT CHURCH

I think that I shall never see
 A church that's all it ought to be;
 A church whose members never stray
 Beyond the strait and narrow way;
 A church that has no empty pews
 Where preachers never have the blues;
 A church whose deacons always 'deak'
 And none is proud, and all are meek;
 Where gossips never peddle lies,
 Or make complaints or criticize;
 Where all are always sweet and kind,
 And to repented faults are blind,
 Such perfect churches there may be,
 But none of them is known to me.
 But still, we'll work and pray and plan
 To make this one the best we can.

We can change the world by changing
 men.

A GOOD CHRISTIAN

I spent some time today with a fellow I
 admire very much. He doesn't drink
 alcoholic beverages, nor use tobacco in
 any form. I never heard him gossip or tell
 a lie. He doesn't patronize the road
 houses, or theaters or dance halls. I can't
 recall him ever resorting to cursing or
 blasphemy, profanity or obscenity. I never
 heard him cheating another in a
 business deal. By some folks' standards
 we could call him a "good Christian". But
 I think you ought to know that I have
 been describing my dog. Which is all to
 say that being a "good Christian" in-
 volves infinitely more than having a list
 of things one does not do. "But put ye on
 the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Rom. 13:14) is
 the scriptural admonition.

J. Douthitt

Pride Rebuked

THE life and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ are a standing rebuke to every
 form of pride:

Pride of birth: "Is not this the carpenter's son?"
 Pride of wealth: "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head."
 Pride of reputation: "Made himself of no reputation."
 Pride of personal appearance: "He hath no form nor comeliness."
 Pride of superiority: "I am . . . as one that serveth."
 Pride of ability: "I can of mine own self do nothing."
 Pride of will: "I seek not mine own will."
 Pride of resentment: "Father, forgive them."

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