

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 68 No. 5

MAY, 2001

THE BIBLE - AHEAD OF ITS TIME

Amid the ongoing adverse criticism of the medical profession in Britain, it is reported in this morning's newspaper that, in the current re-appraisal of British medical structuring, hospital "Matrons" are to be re-introduced after an absence of 30 years. If the new version of matron is anything like the old style of matron, then things may improve in the wards. Last month many hospitals were heavily criticised for having dust under the beds, and other similar signs of lack of cleanliness, including large plastic bags of surgical waste lying in the hospital corridors. Many patients were emerging from hospital with infections they did not have when they went into hospital. Perhaps the new matrons will sort things out.

All this is very surprising and hospitals are the very last places one would expect to be careless with the regard to the spread of disease and infection. Our present struggle in Britain to subdue the spread of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, illustrates, as nothing else can, that liberties cannot be taken with virulent bacteria. All of this gives me the opportunity to mention a subject, upon which I have previously written, and which ponders the question as to how the Jews were able to cope with disease and infection; albeit they could know nothing whatsoever about the existence of germs and microbes. Even now, in some of the remoter parts of the world, there are people with only a very elementary knowledge of the causes and spread of infection, and very limited medical facilities. Brother Graeme Pearson has recently been doing a very valuable work in sending out large quantities of booklets on hygiene, and basic medical care, to those parts of Africa who might benefit from such information. But what about people who were living some 3,500 years ago? What chance had they of ever forming any strategy of sanitation, or any avoidance of disease and infection? Amazingly, by following instructions given to them in the Bible, the Jews were able to deal with infectious diseases such as leprosy, plagues, various other kinds of bacterial infections and were light-years ahead of all other nations in regard to sanitisation and public health.

THE BIBLE - AHEAD OF ITS TIME

In the world at large, in O.T. times, *any measures* for public health must have been extremely elementary; just as it is, **even today**, virtually unknown in most primitive tribes (eg. the Amazon) and a cause of profound despair by visiting missionaries, doctors or Health Officers. It is not surprising, therefore, that in a book like the Bible, which is alleged to be backward and unscientific, there should be any sanitary code at all, much less a very advanced and comprehensive manual for public health. In his *Manual of Tropical Medicine*, A Castellani says "No one can fail to be impressed with

the careful hygienic precautions of the Mosaic period. The extremely stringent quarantine rules very likely did a great deal of good," and F.H. Garrison in his standard work on the history of medicine quotes Neuberger as saying, "The chief glory of Biblical medicine lies in the institution of social hygiene as a science." I am informed that any modern Medical Officer of Health would insist upon (1) Public cleanliness and the abatement of nuisances: (2) a pure and wholesome water supply: (3) Disposal of sewage: (4) Uncontaminated food: (5) Control of infectious diseases. All these fundamental requirements are based upon the fact **that bacteria are everywhere** (in the earth, in the water, in the atmosphere, in our bodies, on our bodies, on animals, on every exposed surface, on our food: indeed are everywhere). Bacteria are absolutely essential to the functioning of the world: many are helpful to man but some are deadly dangerous (and so even in the world of bacteria we have good and evil). The Jews knew nothing about the existence of bacteria (**how could they?**) and yet all the instructions of a hygienic nature given to them in the Bible *had bacteria in mind*. Surely this fact should stimulate our minds into an acknowledgement that the Bible is from God, for only God, at that time, knew anything about the existence of germs and virulent infection.

For example, Lev. 11 describes circumstances in which water contaminated with dead animals should not be drunk and vessels cleansed. Vessels of clay badly contaminated could not be re-used and had to be broken, while metal vessels were to be sterilised in fire. When Elisha was in Jericho he was asked by the elders to purify a spring suspected of causing an epidemic of disease. He cast salt into the spring and said, "**Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not from them thence any more death or barren land**" (2 Kings 2). Fevers like typhoid and cholera are, of course, carried by water. Sewage disposal was also practised by the Jews, and even in army manoeuvres a place "outwith the camp" was provided and every man was responsible for carrying a spade and burying all human waste (Deut. 23:12). The Talmud tells us that inside large towns and cities all rubbish heaps and dunghills were forbidden and no dead body might remain overnight. Fires were kept burning continuously in the valley of Hinnom as a public incinerator. All this was, and still is, the best way to combat fly-borne infections. One can't help contrasting this situation with that which obtained not so very long ago in Edinburgh, when all kinds of fouled water and kitchen rubbish were tipped out of tenement windows to the shout of "Gardyloo," where it lay in stinking heaps in the streets below: there being no system for refuse removal.

ISOLATION AND CLEANSING

The Bible also specified the beasts, birds and fish that ought to not to be eaten by the Jews. The "clean" edible beasts were required to not only chew the cud but also have a cloven hoof, and although the distinction between clean and unclean had a religious content and is not always easy to understand, we all, today, eat more or less the same animals as directed in the Bible. Although we now eat the pig and the rabbit we must handle them carefully for they are still unclean feeders and harbour many types of fleck and worm. Animals dying of natural causes could not be eaten (Deut. 14:21) for obviously they may have died of a disease, nor could wounded animals. **Blood** could not be consumed (Lev. 17:10) but must be drained away from a slaughtered animal. Apart from any religious reason for this, blood does carry a great variety of bacteria. The Jews were also punctilious in dealing with the dead, and quick, decent burials were the norm. Those who had to handle corpses had to remain "unclean" for seven days and stay in isolation outwith the camps washing themselves

and their clothes regularly before returning. This is not necessary today because death from dangerous infections can be quickly identified, but obviously in O.T. times could not be.

The Mosaic code for dealing with infection and infectious diseases was also thousands of years before its time. The Book of Leviticus, and elsewhere, describes the condition of "clean" and "unclean" and gives various periods of time for the isolation of victims of disease and uncleanness. "Unclean" often referred to those with suppurating sores or wounds (but also included all manner of other things such as sexual relations and child-birth). Hands had to be washed many times as had the body, and all the clothing and bedding. Isolation was also observed in cases which were infectious and particularly with reference to leprosy. If a person was confirmed as having leprosy he had to live outwith the camp and have no physical contact with anyone else. If the disease left him he had to be certified clear of the disease, by a trained Jewish priest before being allowed back into society. This, of course, seems obvious to us today but was not obvious in O.T. times and when *other nations did not know to isolate lepers*. Josephus says that other nations did not separate their lepers, and certainly it seems that Naaman did not have any restrictions of movement (2 Kings 5). Also the Mosaic code of chastity and sexual morality was a great assistance to public health and resisted the spread of venereal disease.

HOW COULD MOSES HAVE KNOWN

Again I suggest that these advanced and effective public health measures carried out by the Jews, as enjoined upon them by the Bible, surely confirms to us that God is the author of the Bible. How else can it be explained? How could the Jews know about bacilli or how germs were transmitted? God, who through Moses gave all these directives to the Jews, could not very well explain to them what microbes were, but could recommend rules of hygiene which would offset any danger from them. We flatter ourselves that we are a very wise and sophisticated nation and yet it's difficult to believe that elementary health services, such as a piped water supply, drainage, sewage and waste disposal, *were virtually unknown* less than a century ago, and that the first Public Health Act was only in 1875. Yet over 3,500 years ago, the Jews, albeit unwittingly, were already observing the basic rules of sanitation and public health. How could they possibly know about bacteria? The first person to see bacteria was Anton van Leeuwenhoek, in 1683, on a fairly primitive microscope, although microscopes had slowly been evolving from 1610. **Previously bacilli had not been known to exist.** Even at that, bacteria were not in any way studied systematically **until 1870** by Robert Koch. And it was not until 1865 that the British surgeon Joseph Lister came to the conclusion that it was infection in wounds that was causing the death of his patients, and that the infection was caused by germs. It was only then that hands and wounds were washed, that bedding was cleansed, and any crude rules of hospital hygiene were observed. Previously most surgeons and nurses wore dirty old clothes because they got in such a mess at amputations, etc. And yet the Bible, a book so often ridiculed, recommended all those measures thousands of years ago.

We have "isolation" wards in hospitals today and other places of **quarantine** for infectious diseases. The periods of "isolation" in the O.T. for "uncleanness" would, today, be described as "quarantine." Indeed the word quarantine comes from the Old French *quarantaine*, meaning 40 days. It was noticed in Europe in the 14th century that the Jews seemed to escape lightly from the plague and pestilence while others were dying in vast numbers, and it was rightly concluded that this might be due to the Jewish religious practices requiring washings, isolations and strict avoidance of contamination

from dead bodies. Thus the Jewish rule of 40 days isolation for "uncleanness" (Lev. 12) was copied by many Europeans and the English word "quarantine" produced. At one time an incoming ship's crew and cargo were detained for fully 40 days in ports-of-arrival if suspected of carrying any infectious disease. This period is much shorter now, if indeed required, because of modern techniques of bacilli identification and effective methods of disinfection.

DEFILEMENT IS WORSE THAN DISEASE

Useful and beneficial as these rules (for washing and isolation) were in controlling illness and disease, the Jews "went overboard" in the matter as they often did (and still do) and through The Traditions of the Elders they added a great collection of *unauthorised* washings to their Mosaic regime. These additional washings had not been commanded by Moses but had grown, like a canker, upon the Jewish religion, and, if anything, had assumed more importance than Moses. Jesus had many confrontations with the Pharisees on this issue. A good example is in Mark Chap. 7 when Jesus challenged on the question as to why His disciples did not seem to wash their hands before eating. We read, **"And when they (the Pharisees) saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the Elders. And when they come from the market except they wash they eat not. And many things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees asked Him, why walk not Thy disciples to the tradition of the Elders but eat bread with unwashed hands."** Jesus answered: **"Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men as the washing of cups and pots and many other such like things ye do. And He said unto them. 'Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition;"** Jesus then invited a large crowd to hear Him say, **"There is nothing from outwith a man that entering into him can defile him, but the things that come out of him, those are they that defile a man."** When later pressed by the disciples to explain His words, Jesus pointed out that man's food enters his stomach, not the heart, and food simply passes straight through the body; thus food cannot defile a man. That which **does** defile a man is what enters his heart and is acted upon by the man: i.e. that which *emerges* from the human heart. Jesus said, **"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth a man. For, from within, out of the hearts of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within and defile a man."** I'm sure Jesus and His disciples kept themselves well washed and groomed, and didn't eat with dirty hands. The washings insisted upon by the Pharisees were not for hygienic purposes but were part of the great body of *ritual washings* insisted upon by the Traditions of the Elders. The commandments of God were laid aside that men's traditions might be kept. Jesus had certainly no intention of allowing His disciples to observe any of the ritual hand-washings ordained by the Elders. We notice also that Jesus was not talking about **disease** but **defilement**. Disease might come through the stomach but defilement comes from the heart. To Jesus there was no point to having clean hands with, at the same time, a defiled heart. Washing is important but there are some things even more important.

CONCLUSION

The rapid advance of medical science over the last 50 years or so, means most

epidemics can eventually be brought under control. While we rightly congratulate ourselves on our successes over *disease*, progress has not been matched by our victories over the things which *defile*: i.e. the things referred to be Christ. Such things still defile the human race and even a casual glance at any newspaper, any day of the week, will quickly confirm the fact that crime and sin are rampant. Like the world of the ante-deluvians, "**the earth is full of violence**" and today we are steadily sinking in a morass of murder, immorality, robbery, rape, greed, drug-addiction, cruelty, indifference and selfishness. Man has mastered many diseases but not the defilements. Our physicians can X-ray the skull but know little of the human mind. Our doctors can write prescriptions for the distempers of the body, but can do little for the human condition: the crime and sin. Once again the Bible is the only book which holds the prescription for the human condition: and once again **isolations and washings** play an essential part. Man must resolve to isolate himself from all evil doings, and evil companionships (not "walking in the counsel of the ungodly"). In short, man must resolve to repent of his past ways; and eschew evil. This can be done with the help and under the control, of Jesus Himself. Past sins must not only be regretted but must be washed away through the blood of Christ and by the holy ordinance of baptism: "**the washing of regeneration**" (Tit. 3:5). At the apostle Paul's own conversion he was instructed, by God's messenger, to "**Arise**" (after three days of remorse and prayer) "**and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord**" (Acts 22:16). And the same Paul, much later in his apostolic career, could remind the Christians at Corinth of *the defilements* to which, they, themselves, had been subject (fornication, idolatry, adultery, effeminacy, theft, covetousness, extortion, drunkenness and homosexuality) but could add, triumphantly, "**And such were some of you, BUT YE ARE WASHED, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God**" (1 Cor. 6:11). And so no matter how deeply we may be steeped and stained in sin, we can be washed, cleansed, sanctified, justified and able to "**rise to walk in newness of life**" (Rom. 6:4). Praise be to God.

Clearly, we must be cleansed from the plague of sin. **What can we do about it?** The apostle Peter answered *that same question* 2,000 years ago and the remedy has never changed. He said, "**Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call**" (Acts 2:38). That's what we can do about it: but what will we do about it?

EDITOR.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER

"Know the truth, live the truth, die in the truth - for some wonderful day, or some awful day, you will be judged by the truth" is a terribly serious thought. But "**Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**" (John 8:32) raises questions among people just like it did long ago (v. 33). To announce that Christ is the truth bearer yet provokes the answer of countless Pliates, "**What is truth?**" (John 18:37,38). Is there really such a thing as fixed standard of truth? Can environmentally "programmed" people ever really discover and accept truth?

Rather than wandering around in that maze of endless questions, let's establish from God's word a few great fundamentals that need to be ground into the conscience of every one of us.

TRUTH IS TRUTH

Number One: *"Truth does not depend for its truthfulness upon anybody's believing it."* We have no difficulty in understanding this as we think about scientific truth. Scientists of a given time have argued vigorously and have reached opposite conclusions about some specific, but continuing research eventually settled the matter conclusively. In any given disagreement, one may have been right and one may have been wrong, BUT "the truth" did not depend on someone's believing correctly, nor was it kept from being "truth" because someone misunderstood or disbelieved. Actually it doesn't make any difference to truth whether or not anybody understands, but it does make a difference to you and me in view of our bringing ourselves into harmony with that truth.

Let's think about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

"And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16,17).

Did that depend for its truthfulness upon this man and his wife believing it? Oh no. It was truth whether or not they believed. It wouldn't be made truth because they disbelieved it. The serpent's "reasonable" explanation couldn't change that (Gen. 3:1-5). It didn't make any difference to truth whether they believed it, but it made a tremendous difference to Adam and Eve when they were misdirected.

Think about Noah and his family. The time for destruction of sinful mankind had come: **"Behold I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is in the earth shall die"** (Gen. 6:17). Really, now? Had Noah, the preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), tried to bring his neighbours to repentance during the 120 years after Jehovah's first announcement of the impending destruction? What reaction was there to the mammoth ark being constructed on dry land? What faith was there? What disbelief and scorn? But let's never forget that the deluge came not because Noah believed it would BUT because God said it would. Noah's faith did not make it happen; rather his faith had him ready when it did happen. All the disbelief and ridicule of the world's population didn't keep it from happening. Truth didn't depend for its truthfulness upon anybody's believing it!

Think about the resurrection of Jesus. **"From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, that He must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up"** (Matt. 16:21). Following His death, His burial and the sealing of the tomb, the disbelievers must have thought that this "blasphemer's" efforts were finally ended. Ah, their disbelief didn't keep Him in the tomb. Surely there must have been those of His discipleship who believed He would be raised up on the third day - widow of Nain, Jairus, Lazarus, and perhaps many others - but their faith wasn't what brought Him forth from the tomb. Truth does not depend for its truthfulness upon somebody's believing it. Let's imbed that in our conscience.

TRUTH IS UNCHANGEABLE

Number Two: *Truth cannot be changed.* This is another fundamental of Christian thought and dedication. And before you object by saying, "Oh, but I know teachings in the Bible that have been changes by religious leaders," let's have a look at what is really meant by our saying "Truth cannot be changed." Change from the gospel results in a perverted gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

Read very carefully the apostle Paul's words, 1 Timothy 4:1-2. **"But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies . . ."** Notice **"fall away from the faith."** The faith wouldn't change: people would fall away from it. In this sense we can insist that the faith cannot be changed. Change is away from the faith.

Watch again:

"Preach the word . . . For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Did the sound doctrine change? Oh no, the people turned away from it. Truth stayed exactly where it had been, what it had been.

Again:

"My brethren, "If any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19,20).

Truth wasn't changed; some of the brethren erred from the truth. Here is the concept of truth unchanged and unchangeable.

WHAT IF I FALL SHORT?

Are you asking, "How near do I have to be to the truth in order to be accepted of the Lord? How far away can I be before I am no longer considered one of His? We leave that up to the Lord. We must. Lessons relating to opportunities, capacities, and disposition of heart and mind, however, do not change that fact that there is revealed truth, that truth does not depend for its truthfulness upon our believing it, that truth is unchangeable, that we are all called upon to accept it and adhere strictly to it. It is ours to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

It doesn't make any difference to *truth* whether or not we accept it, but it makes all the difference to *us* - for time and eternity - whether or not we live and die in it.

C. ROGERS.

THE SPIRIT'S BURNING MESSAGE

The requirement that all men everywhere should believe, repent and be immersed into Jesus is without doubt the highest and first priority of the teaching of the New Testament. Immediately following that, is the clear emphasis on exactly where the obedient persons find themselves. Having obeyed, they now have been given entrance into the Spiritual realm of the kingdom of their Lord and Saviour (Col. 1:13,14).

The eye-opening gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 3:38) which accompanies this is, that, which if we allow Him, will provide the power to understand more richly, deeply and clearly the things that are revealed by Him, in the pages of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

Few people, whether they have believed and obeyed or not, recognise that when they open their Bible they are stepping across a threshold and opening a door leading from this physical world into a Spiritual realm, which cannot be understood from a *worldly* point of view (1 John 4:5-6) We who have obeyed have joined those who **"are not of this world"** (John 17: 13-21).

The entrance into the Spiritual kingdom is clearly defined throughout the pages of the Bible but it cannot be seen by those of the world, for Jesus said **"it is within you"**

(Luke 17:20,21). This statement has to do with *our state of mind* (Rom. 12:2). Those who can understand this are those who "**walk by faith not by sight**" (2 Cor. 5:7). This concept of new Spiritual life is difficult to grasp, even for those who have obeyed from the heart. In reference to this, one of the most important statements, made by Jesus Himself, is found in John 6:63 "**The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life.**" More emphatic evidence of the Spiritual nature of this new life is given in Heb. 12:22-24. Now this marvellous scene is quite real and can be seen by the believer. However I can't point to it and say to you "there it is," because it is only seen by faith and not by sight. Jesus Himself said that men everywhere must become as trusting and as unquestioning as little children if they are to enter unto this Spiritual kingdom (Luke 18:16,17).

Having to do with every word of the New Testament are the words of the Holy Spirit delivered by John the immerser in Matt. 3:10-12. Unfortunately Satan has been able to intervene and those who were allowed to translate Greek to English have knowingly and deliberately thrown confusion into this by not translating the Greek "baptizo" as "immerse" (it can also quite properly be translated as "bury" or "dip").

HUMAN REACTIONS TO THE SPIRIT'S FIERY MESSAGE

We note, regarding John, that he was "**filled with the Holy Spirit**" even from birth (Luke 1:15). We also note that Jesus was given the Holy Spirit at the time of His immersion (Matt. 3:16). Both of these men preached "**repentance**" (Matt. 3:11 and Matt. 4:17) but in all of this we sometimes forget by WHOM it was that they preached their message - John to: "**Jerusalem, Judea and the whole region of the Jordan**" (Matt. 3:5) - Jesus to: "**only to the lost sheep of Israel**" (Matt. 15:24). Both preached a message that was never and has never been, extinguished, this fiery message has been demonstrated throughout the New Testament as having one or the other of two results. Starting with John we see that those who came to him either *burned in their hearts* to obey and repent, or they refused to believe the message (Luke 3:7-14). Jesus in Luke 7:24-30 reveals the condition of those Pharisees and experts in the law who had not been baptised by John; they "**had rejected God's purpose for themselves.**"

Jesus was impatient to get on with the spreading of this fiery message of the Holy Spirit, as we read His remark in Luke 12:49,50, but He knew He had to undergo a "burial" of His own first.

The burning words of truth of the Holy Spirit, which were delivered by John to Herod, caused Herodias (Herod's illegal wife) to develop a fierce desire to silence the "unquencheable fire" that burned her up, and so she was instrumental in having John beheaded (Mark 6:17-29).

This "immersion" of, and by, the Holy Spirit in the unquencheable fire of the word of God, is interchangeable with the metaphor of the two-edged sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17, Rev. 2:12-16, and Heb. 4:12).

In the book of Ezekiel 20:45 through 21:5 we see that God uses interchangeably those two figures of speech. At that particular point in time the prophecy was against Jerusalem, and the utterances of both John and Jesus were also against Jerusalem, with Jesus giving them warning of the final destruction that was coming (which did come in A.D 70) Matt. 24:1,2.

"QUENCH NOT" THE SPIRIT

The Jews who were opposed to the message, became so inflamed as to desire to kill the messenger and thus put out this irritating fire. They were actually successful (or so they thought) in having Jesus silenced (by having Him crucified), but to their dismay and utter frustraion, He arose and appointed His apostles to continue with the message.

The intensity of the way that the truth inflamed those who would not believe, is clearly demonstrated in the account of the stoning of Stephen. The Jews were so burning with hatred they "gnashed their teeth" and took Stephen outside the city and stoned him (Acts 6:8 to 7:60). This fire was not to be put out. The message will never go away (Matt, 24:35) "**Heaven and earth shall pass away but My words will never pass away.**"

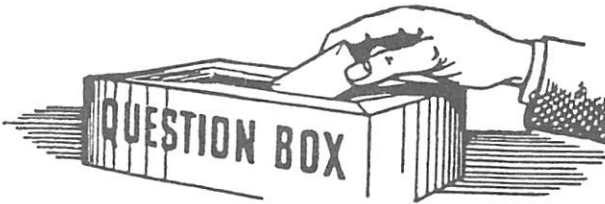
So it is that today men are still being immersed in the fire of the words of the Holy Spirit, some to burn with a desire to humble themselves and obey, while others burn in a desire to stop the message, and to kill the messenger - indeed to destroy the Bible itself.

We are "to snatch others **from the fire**" (Jude 23). How can this be done if we do not preach and teach the truth?

Others who have been exposed to the truth have become so immune to its message that they have no more conscience left, having it "**seared as by a hot iron**" (1 Tim. 4:2) and there are those who "follow natural instincts" and do not have the Spirit (Jude 19).

We, who believe, are warned not to "**quench**" the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19). This is done many times by those who, in their zeal to be "loving and kind" have avoided correcting errors and have compromised the truth, speaking only those things which men want to hear.

G. SILLMAN,
Chilliwack, Canada.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

The question that faces me this month concerns a subject about which I have no personal experience. Fasting!

The question is: "Should Christians fast?"

My first - (and I must admit, facetious) - response is to say, "*Some certainly should!*" But, of course, when this topic is raised, what the questioner is asking is not if it is *wise* to fast for health reasons, but if the Scriptures *require* Christians to fast. Are Christians *commanded* to fast?

There have always been bodies in so-called 'Christendom' that have imposed fasting on their members. Both of the 'Catholic churches - Roman and Eastern - claim to believe in it and to practise it, although not always with a great deal of conviction, enthusiasm or consistency. Nor do they agree with each other as to *when* their members should fast. There are in the Calendar of the Eastern Orthodox Church, certain periods designated as periods for fasting which the Church of Rome declares, have been reduced to days on which '*flesh-meat and other special foods*' should be avoided, and the Roman Church freely admits that, '*Fasting is far more rigorous and lasts for longer periods in all Eastern Churches.*'

To 'Fast' or to 'Abstain'?

In the theological mind there is a distinction to be made between 'abstinence' and 'fasting'. In a time of 'abstinence' anyone over the age of seven years of age must not eat meat, or soup made from meat. 'Abstinence' is said to concern the *kind* of food, which

must be avoided, whilst, according to Rome, 'fasting' concerns the *quantity* of food that may be eaten, and therefore must be distinguished from abstinence.

'On a fast-day only one meal may be taken, and that after noon.'

Not surprisingly, the rules and regulations are both complicated - and inconsistent. People avoid meat - and eat fish instead. Milk and soup count as food - and are therefore to be avoided! Clearly all this takes us into the realm of man-made law, and has little in common with what the Bible describes as fasting. However, the major period of fasting, about which these Churches are agreed is 'Lent' which is the English name for the period of forty days up to the death of the Lord Jesus. During this period, says the Church of Rome, *'The Faithful must observe the law of fasting, unless dispensed or excused.'*

Fasting in Bible Times

As we read through the scriptures it becomes evident that fasting was a widely accepted practice among the ancient people of God in every period of their history. In the Old Testament the first reference to it occurs as early as the Book of Judges, and the last is found in the prophecy of Zechariah.

As the Jews saw it, fasting served several purposes.

Firstly, they regarded it as a way of attracting the attention of God. They felt that, if a man fasted, God noticed him. They believed that, by fasting, he proved to God that his sorrow was genuine and that when he prayed he meant what he said.

Secondly, they also saw fasting as a way of moving God to action on their behalf. They believed that, if they fasted, He would be prepared to do something about the situation which had led them to fast.

If you consider this second point, you will recognise that when a man believed that his fasting could be effective in moving God to action, he could very easily persuade himself that he was someone special!

Commanded by God?

Here is an important fact which should be borne in mind.

The overwhelming majority of the fasts undertaken either by individuals or by the entire nation were undertaken voluntarily and were not required by God.

After their return from the Babylonian Captivity, the Jews began to observe several National days of fasting. There were four fasts, which commemorated various stages in the siege and fall of Jerusalem, and during one period in their history they observed no fewer than 28 regular fast-days in the year, some of them weekly and others monthly. But the fact remains that the only fast commanded by God and enshrined in the Law of Moses, was the fast connected with the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29) and, until the Babylonian Captivity, this was the only fast which the nation regularly observed.

The phrase 'afflict your souls', used in this verse is a term for fasting.

This means that, although in the time of the Lord Jesus the Jews fasted - some of them often (Matt. 9:14; Luke 18:12), these were all voluntary acts of private devotion.

Indeed, when we turn to the New Testament, it may even come as a surprise to discover that whilst fasting was clearly one of the religious practices upon which the Pharisees and others set great store, the Lord spoke about it only twice. The two occasions are recorded in Matt. 6:16, 18 and Mark 2: 18-22.

Moving on in the New Testament, the only other references to the practice are found in Acts 13:2,3, at Antioch, and Acts 14:23. The first of these references relates to the sending out of Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, and the second with the appointment of Elders in the Churches they established.

Paul, also mentions fasting in 1 Corinthians 7:5, but makes it clear that he is not

imposing it in the Church as a command.

Then, in 2 Corinthians 6:5 and 11:27, he writes about the things he is enduring for the sake of the Gospel, and states that there were times when he suffered hunger. But he is referring to times when he went without food *simply because he had none to eat*, and this involuntary abstinence does not qualify as fasting in the religious sense.

So, what I am saying is this: whilst as a Jew, Jesus, Himself, without doubt, observed the annual fast on the Day of Atonement as imposed by God's law, He did not impose any other fast as a religious duty, on others. He neither approved of the practice, nor did He disapprove.

In this connection it is interesting to look at Matt. 6:16, where in His 'Sermon on the Mount' the Lord speaks about fasting. Notice that He does not introduce the subject with the formula which He used so often in that discourse, '*It was said by them of old . . . but I say to you,*' because the fasting He was discussing had no parallel in the Mosaic Law and was not covered by it. It was something, which the people had imposed upon themselves as an act of personal piety.

(To be continued).

(Questions to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way,
Houston, Renfrewshire, Scotland. PA6 7NZ.)

WHICH IS IT?

Is it "made Himself of no reputation" or "emptied Himself"?

(Philippians 2:7)

In King James version (AV) rendering of that beautiful passage, Philippians 2:1-11, which portrays as the example for us, the depth of love the Lord Jesus exercised on our behalf, we read that He **"made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant."** Whereas the Revised and the American Standard versions read **"emptied Himself taking the form of a servant."** Even the first copies of the New King James Version broke away from the AV rendering and had **"emptied Himself"** but later editions reverted to the AV wording, **"made Himself of no reputation."** The question arises, is this a problem and if so which is correct?

The revisers were right to correct "and took" to "taking" (Gk. *labwn*, aorist participle) but it does not seem logical to say that He emptied Himself by "taking." We empty things by removing - not taking in. This puts a question mark against the translation "emptied Himself."

Also, if it is telling us that He emptied Himself then took on the form of a servant we will want to know of what He emptied Himself. This has given rise to much speculation. For example - did He empty Himself of deity? This, of course, would contradict such statements as **"For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."** Colossians 2:9. So there is a problem.

If on the other hand it is saying that the Lord Jesus made Himself of no reputation by taking on the form of a servant then there is no problem and it leads smoothly to the next thought **"being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself"** v.8.

THE FORM OF A SERVANT

So, which is correct? Is it "made Himself of no reputation" or "emptied Himself"?

The phrase "made Himself of no reputation" is from the Greek word "*kenow*" which lexicons do define as "to empty" but it is not that simple because every time the AV translates "*kenow*" figuratively. These are all the occurrences of "*kenow*" and their AV renderings:-

Romans 4:14 "is made void", 1 Corinthians 1:17 "should be made of none effect", 1 Corinthians 9:15 "should make . . . void", 2 Corinthians 9:3 "should be in vain" and the case in point: Philippians 2:7 "made . . . of no reputation."

So in the New Testament the verb "*kenow*" is always used idiomatically. Also the Septuagint translators of the Old Testament used "*kenow*" to translate the Hebrew word "AMAL" which means "to be weak" in Jeremiah 14:2 (AV "languish") and 15:9 (AV "languisheth"). It is then evident that despite the etymological meaning "to empty" given in lexicons, "*kenow*" in the scriptures was understood to refer to something being *insignificant or ineffective*. That would mean, we are being told, the Lord Jesus made Himself insignificant by taking on the form of a servant (Greek *doulos*, a slave) and verse 5 tells us we should have the same mind in us. There is no room for self-esteem in the Christian.

Our Lord did not cling on to prestige - He took on the totally non prestigious form of a slave. We should have the same mind in us.

ALLAN ASHURST,
60 Kenwood Road,
Stretford, Manchester.

BE STILL

The tendency of many today is hurry, hurry, hurry. It would seem that we have lost something of the past when times moved at a more leisurely pace. Patience, calmness and unhurriedness are things of the past. The Bible does not say much about hurrying, but it certainly mentions the theme of being calm, being still.

"Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

In Psalm 46, there is much we might be taught! **"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."** We have to believe and realise that these words of scripture must be continually words of our own. In this, we can look squarely at the world and know we have safety in the Lord. In his writing the Psalmist obviously realised the overwhelming presence and power of God. Having God is of the ultimate importance. To know Him and be with Him requires patience and calmness. **"Be still and know that I am God."** It is only when we are quiet that we hear God speak to us.

Sometimes we hear so many other voices telling us what to do that we can not hear God. If we are to succeed in life, we certainly need to hear God's voice and signals, giving direction and guidance. Be still, keep quiet, be calm, in soul and mind. Let it happen: be overcome with the Spirit. Be fully absorbed in Him. We need in these times to be drinking more often at the spiritual rivers. Too often we merely gargle and rush on. Brethren it takes time, to take time, so take it! Psalm 4:4 **"Stand in awe and sin not. Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still."** In other words take time to be holy. Practice the art of being still and paradoxically lead a more active life in Christ Jesus. We must unwind and be at peace with self and God. If we are too busy to pray, then indeed we are too busy. If you want to be busy though, be busy for the Lord. **Make the time, and take the time,** to be with the Lord, and love a full life in His blessings.

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, and feed on His word;
Make friends of God's children; help those who are weak;
Forgetting, in nothing, His blessing to seek.

A. P. SHARPE, Newtongrange.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

June 3	Isiah 29:13-24	Matt. 15:1-20
June 10	Exodus 16:1-21	Matt. 15:21-39
June 17	Jonah 1:17 & 2:10	Matt. 16:1-20
June 24	Malachi 3:16 to 4:6	Matt. 16:21 to 17:13

THE HEART

The Scribes and the Pharisees believed in a religion in which the observance of certain rules and regulations, such as the correct way to wash hands before eating, was all-important. To Jesus religion was a thing which had its seat in the heart. A right heart was all-important.

The Bible has a great deal to say about the heart. The heart thinks (Matt. 9:4); the heart understands (Isaiah 32:4); the heart knows (Prov. 14:10); the heart believes (Rom. 10:10); the heart doubts (Mark 11:23); the heart ponders (Luke 2:19); the heart judges (1 John 3:20,21). We love with the heart (Matt. 22:37); we despise with the heart (2 Sam. 6:16); and we rejoice with the heart (Ps. 33:21). In addition, we determine with the heart (1 Cor. 7:37); we purpose with the heart (2 Cor. 9:7); we repent with the heart (Rom. 2:4,5); and we obey from the heart (Rom. 6:17,18).

Change the heart, and you have changed the man. A spiritual heart transplant is vital. W. Carl Ketcherside was once moved to write: "When I became conscious that I was suffering from calcification of the spiritual heart and went to the Great Physician and Surgeon, He did exactly what He promised to do. And as soon as the new heart began to function a new life really began. This does not mean that I do not have occasional symptoms of my former life or that I do not need blood transfusions regularly, but the new heart is there. My vision has been materially

helped, my mental processes cleared up, and my speech purified." What change!

A WOMAN OF CANAAN

Women provide many of the great examples of faith in the Bible. The woman of Canaan is no exception. Jesus said of her: "O woman, great is your faith!" Dear reader, could He say that of you?

This woman was a Gentile. In fact, not only was she a Gentile, but she belonged to the old Canaanites who were the ancestral enemies of the Jews. She was willing to accept any crumbs of blessing that were going - crumbs from the bread delivered by the Master to his children. She saw the force of Jesus' words, and her response was really quite witty. (A study of the term "dog" as used in those days will help here.) I like the last sentence: "**And her daughter was healed from that very hour**" (15:28).

PETER'S GREAT CONFESSION

I once did a special study of the apostle Peter. I learned a lot from it. He was the one who denied his Lord to save himself from persecution. But later he was a changed man. Acts 4, for example, testifies to this.

In 1837 Alexander Campbell debated with John B. Purcell, Roman Catholic Bishop of Cincinnati, Ohio. It is one of the most profound debates I have ever read. Of course, this passage in Matthew 16 was raised during the discussion. Purcell said: "I have already quoted scriptures for the dogma of the supremacy of Peter - **'upon this rock will I build my Church.'** My friend does not like to approach that rock - he takes care to keep shy of it." Campbell replied: "Jesus asked for a confession, Peter gave it . . . We Protestants say that the Church is founded on the thing confessed. Christ Himself, is indeed, the rock; but figuratively the truth which represents Him."

Keys are for opening doors. The

keys given to Peter were for the opening of the two-leaved gate to introduce both Jews and Gentiles into the kingdom (fulfilled in Acts 2 and 10). To quote Alexander Campbell again: "This being once done, needs not to be repeated. The gates of heaven have not since been locked. There is no more use for the keys. Peter has them yet. He took them to heaven with him. He did not will them to any heir or successor. The popes are fighting for shadows . . ."

Jesus later rebuked Peter (16:23). "Satan" is not good translation in this verse. Jesus calls him not *ho satanas*, Satan, but simply opponent. In other words, "Stand aside thou who opposeth Me in this matter: thou dost not understand these divine things."

CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Frank Charles Thompson in his Chain-Reference Bible has among others, these headings, at Matthew 16:24-28 - Self-Denials, Cross-Bearing, Self-Sacrifice and Gain Through Loss. They led me to read Jesus' words with greater care.

Sin is all about enthronement of self and dethronement of God. It is saying: "Not thy will but mine be done." Self-denial is all about the opposite. Self-denial means in every moment of life to say no to self and yes to God. It means, as one writer has put it: "To obliterate self as the dominant principle of life, and to make God the ruling principle, more, the ruling passion, of life. The life of constant self-denial is the life of constant assent to God."

Cross-bearing involves sacrifice. Paul wrote to the saints at Rome: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (12:1). Jesus sacrificed Himself for us. We in turn must sacrifice ourselves for Him.

We learn from this passage that one soul is more precious to God than the whole universe. Jesus asked: "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" The great hymn-writer Isaac Watts was moved to pen these words. Jesus Himself is the theme.

*When I survey the wondrous cross
Where the young Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

The last verse reads:

*Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

These words are worth meditating upon.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

The word "transfigured" is from the Greek verb *metamorphoo*, which means to change into another form. That is how we get our English word metamorphosis. The change in Jesus was dramatic. "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes become as white as the light" (17:2).

The apostle Peter never forgot this "mountain-top experience." He later wrote: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His Majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

The American Walter Scott was a contemporary of Alexander Campbell and an outstanding gospel preacher. Robert O. Fife's cassette on his life is a

treasure. Scott wrote a book called *The Messiahship* and in it he dealt with the Transfiguration. He described it as a type of eternal life. He further wrote: "The Transfiguration should be the theme of our most devout meditation. It should be studied by every disciple who desires to possess a bright and animated hope of the glory to be revealed."

Moses and Elijah appeared at this time - Moses the great lawgiver and Elijah the great reforming prophet. But God said of Jesus: "**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear you Him**" (17:5). Here was the approval of God. In other words, "Go no more to the law, nor to the prophets, to seek for a coming Messiah; for behold He is come! Hear and obey Him, and Him only" (Adam Clarke).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. From which mountain did Moses look into the promised land?
2. Who threatened to cut a baby in half.
3. Which two men made a treaty at Beersheba ?
4. Who was the son of Nun?
5. Who was Laban's older daughter?
6. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of which king of Judah?
7. Who visited Paul in Damascus?
8. In which city does the book of Acts close?
9. Sapphira died within how many hours of her husband's death?
10. Why had the Ethiopian eunuch gone to Jerusalem?

GHANA APPEAL

The work of healing, both physical and spiritual, continues in Ghana and we extend our thanks and appreciation to brethren who have contributed towards this.

Although our March Appeal to fund a P.A. system has been under subscribed we have supplied this because of its effectiveness in evangelising. Any contributions to redress this shortfall would be gratefully received.

A considerable number of new congregations have been established in outlying villages in remote areas and these infant churches need teaching and encouragement from mature brethren. To supply this need and also to extend further, we are appealing for the cost of four bicycles and one megaphone.

Our Ghanaian brethren have an outstanding zeal to extend the Lord's Kingdom and work hard to achieve this. The church in the remote village of Okumah in Kete-Krachi district have built a meeting place up to roof level themselves and before the rains destroy the mud bricks, it must be cement rendered and a roof constructed. We feel it a privilege to be in partnership with such dedicated brethren as we see the growth of the Lord's Church there. So much has been achieved, but the potential for the future seems without limit. Together, in the spirit of Christ, we can achieve so much more.

Those wishing to help in this work, please make cheques payable to:- Den-nyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer Mrs. Janet W. Macdonald, 12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB. Tel. 01324 562480.

APPEAL FROM NIGERIA

I, brother Samuel M. Hayioye, request financial and material support in evangelistic work in Nigeria. I am married, above 35 years of age, with four children. I have been preaching since my conversion in 1978 and the work here is promising and has great potential but I need assistance. Feel free to contact references to prove the authenticity of my work: any as follows: Bro. Weldon Newton, 602 E.N. 16th Street, Abilene TX 79601 (Phone 915 677 2691) or Dr. Glen Boyd, 102 N. Locust, Searcy, Arkansas, USA, 72143 (Phone 501 268 9511). My address is Enwan Church of Christ, 101B Imiezua, Enwan-Town P.O. Box 87, Igarra, Edo State, NIGERIA.

May God bless us all as we faithfully labour for Him.

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD:

Gospel Campaign:

With Harding Students in June

17th to 24th June

(No meeting on 22nd)

Speaker: Jack Strachan

(East Kilbride)

A warm welcome awaits all.

GLENROTHES

Gospel Mission:

With Harding Students

20th to 25th May (7.30 p.m.)

Speaker: Frank Worgan

BUCKIE

Annual Social:

Saturday, 5th May, 2001, 3.00 p.m.

Speaker: Bro. M. Heinemeir

QUOTABLE QUOTES

I once read about an Eskimo hunter who asked the local missionary priest, "If I did not know about God and sin, would I go to hell?" "No" said the priest, "Not if you really did not know." "Then why," asked the Eskimo earnestly, "did you tell me?"

10. To worship (Acts 8:27).
9. Three hours (Acts 5:7).
8. Rome (Acts 28:14).
7. Antanas (Acts 9:17).
6. Jostiah (Zephaniah 1:1).
5. Leah (Gen. 29:16).
4. Joshua (Num. 13:16).
- (Gen. 21:32).
3. Abraham & King Abimelech.
2. Solomon (1 Kings 3:25).
1. Mount Pisgah (Deut. 3:27).

ANSWERS

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY— POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

UNITED KINGDOM.....£9.00

OVERSEAS BY SURFACE MAIL.....£10.00 (\$16.00US or \$20.00Can)

OVERSEAS BY AIR MAIL.....£14.00 (\$22.00US or \$28.00Can)

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian. EH32 0NY.

E-mail: john@kkneller.freeserve.co.uk

Telephone: (01875) 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 70 Avon Street, Motherwell, Lanarkshire, Scotland. ML1 3AB. Telephone: (01698) 264064