

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

In 2 Cor. 5:18-20 we read "*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*"

The New Testament introduces us to some grand and glorious themes. REPENTANCE: REFORMATION: JUSTIFICATION: CONVERSION: REGENERATION: REMISSION: RESURRECTION: ELECTION: RESTORATION: RESTITUTION are just a few. We could add to this list, of course, and surely one of the most beautiful additions would be RECONCILIATION. We can't always measure the importance of a subject by the number of times it receives mention in the N.T. but Paul (exclusively) advances this subject in his epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Corinthians and the Hebrews. In a discussion with a Christadelphian, recently, it was inferred that the importance of a matter is proportionate to the number of times it is mentioned in the N.T. As far as I am concerned a matter requires *only one mention* in scripture to be important, and as important as anything else; albeit referred to fifty times. When we remember that God "was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" there can be little danger of us over-emphasising the importance of reconciliation. Indeed, Paul, aware of the continual process of reconciliations between men referred to "THE reconciliation" - the reconciliation to end all reconciliations. This reference (in Rom 5:11) is translated by the KJV as 'The Atonement' (the only mention of the word in the N.T.) but is correctly rendered 'reconciliation' in the Revised Version.

We are no strangers to the need for reconciliation between man and man. Squabbings and animosities begin early in the human family (it begins in the Kindergarten over a teddy-bear) and gets more deadly and serious the older we grow. Time would fail us to enumerate areas of human conflict; ranging from fully-fledged wars (e.g. Iran and Iraq) down through lesser situations of belligerence such as San Salvador - down to terrorist activities (e.g. Northern Ireland). Apart from actual bloodshed there are the ongoing 'wars' on a personal level in the home, in business and in politics. For instance, we have all just witnessed unbelievable levels of hatred and vicious animosity in the year-long miners' strike and one is left wondering if such wounds can be healed - if a place can be found for reconciliation. Matrimonial disharmony is also rife and divorces commonplace. Couples now change partners, it

seems, about as often as the furniture. What a little matter can rupture harmony between humans.

The Irreconcilable

The very term 'Reconciliation' carries with it a bitter-sweet association. Nothing can be more satisfying to the contemplation than the thought of two warring factions being brought together again in peace and harmony. However the mention of 'Reconciliation' presupposes that estrangement exists and that the parties are (or were) at odds with one another. Fortunate is the individual who has never experienced any form of alienation and thus has no need of any conciliation. Paul (Rom. 14:10) recognises that alienation, even in the churches, will not be unknown and asks, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ" *Our function*, Paul states, is merely that of a humble servant and the role of Judge is restricted to Jesus. "Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or any occasion to fall, in his brother's way". This is the awesome responsibility upon each one of us that not only do we not *set at nought* our brother, but that nothing we say or do can possibly cause him *to stumble* much less to fall. *The value* which the Lord placed upon harmony amongst men is well seen in the following:- "If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way. First *be reconciled* to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift." This is a beautiful Christian law in the setting of a Jewish ceremony. The altar and the gifts may have passed but the principle remains.

Jesus is the Prince Of Peace. "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us... for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that He might *reconcile both* unto God in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby". (Eph. 2:14). Paul is here saying that God hath reconciled, by Christ, both Jew and Gentile together but we might be excused for doubting this as we watch (on T.V. News Bulletins) the Jews and Gentiles blowing one another to bits with bombs and shells. Paul qualifies the matter, of course, and says that the two are reconciled in *the one body - in the church* of Jesus Christ. Outside the church the old scores remain to be settled and the carnage goes on. Inside the church swords are beaten into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks but only those *who come to Christ* can be expected to participate in such reconciliation. Those reconciled to Jesus are usually reconciled to one another. Those who come to learn at the feet of Jesus will find others there. However, in coming to Christ we risk other alienations for Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a mans' foes shall be they of his own household." There will, then, be situations where reconciliation is difficult, if not impossible. *Error* can never be reconciled with *truth* just as oil cannot be mixed with water. Jesus said two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Paul said, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ... Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." (2 Cor. 6:14). Certain things are almost incapable of reconciliation and truth must never bow the knee to error in the cause of reconciliation - rather the reverse. We must abandon self-will and humbly come to the feet of Jesus. We must change.

There Must Be Change

If there is to be reconciliation in Northern Ireland there must be change - not that Protestants should become Catholics, or vice versa, but that all should become followers of Christ. The problems between white men and black, rich and poor, east and west, left or right, can all be resolved if there is a willingness to change. This indeed is the meaning of the Greek word (*katallassein*) which is translated 'Reconciliation'; a change from a disposition of enmity to one of friendship. William Barclay, in "N.T. Words" explains that the Greek '*allassein*' means *change of any kind* (e.g. Stephen accused of wanting to *change* the customs of the Jews (Acts 6:14) or Paul accusing the unGodly of wanting to *change* God's glory into totem poles (Rom. 1:23); or where the inspired writer tells us that the world will be *changed* as a garment is changed (Heb. 1:12). *Katallassein*, however, generally means the change involved in man's *reconciliation with God* - (i.e. a change in mental attitude from hostility to one of affection.) I quote from Wm. Barclay only because I know nothing of Greek, but other Greek Concordances will confirm the above. The word implies a *resumption of dialogue* between God and man for, after all, man was made by God with the intention that a close bond of fellowship and conversation should exist. The first thing, usually, in an estrangement is that conversation is terminated and the parties cease to be 'on speaking terms'. By man's disobedience and rebellious intransigence close fellowship with God terminated. Jesus came to restore the former harmony by His atoning sacrifice. The Atonement (or at/one/ment) has been brought about by Jesus and man can now be at/one with his Maker. We must, however, keep the matter in true perspective for God has not found it necessary to change - *man must change*. It was man who moved away from God - it is man who must return. Nothing lessened God's love for man. Nothing turned that love to hate. Indeed God *so loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Man sinned but God still loved. Man must seek the At-one-ment with God.

The Offended Takes The Initiative

The bitter aspect of 'Reconciliation' is, therefore, that there was any alienation in the first place, but the sweet part is the actual reunion of the estranged parties. A time, indeed, for rejoicing, as did the father of the Prodigal Son and as do the very Angels when any of the sons of men repenteth. The wonderful thing is that it was God who took the initiative. Probably the most difficult thing to achieve in any reconciliation amongst men is to get one party to take the first step. Human pride and obstinacy being what it is, no-one is prepared to make the first move. By the world's standards to seek conciliation is taken as a sign of weakness. Amongst men it is usual for the poor to seek to pacify the wealthy, and the weak to seek conciliation with the strong, but God, *the offended*, seeks a restoration of fellowship with the offenders (the enemies). It also is rare amongst men for the *offended* to seek re-union with the *offender* but probably the most best known instance would be restoration of Joseph to his brethren. After scheming to kill Joseph and finally selling him into slavery, Joseph's brethren found it impossible to believe that he could forgive them. Joseph had to make a great effort to convince them; pointing out how well their selling of him had turned out and how God's over-ruling hand had emerged. Joseph "comforted them and spake kindly unto them". As we read of the very emotional and tearful re-union we are almost moved to tears ourselves as we witness this amazing example of brotherly love. How much more should we be moved to imagine the God of the Universe seeking reconciliation with puny, weak, foolish, sinful little man. "Enough to melt our hearts and prove, the antidote of sin". What a delight it is to know that God excels *in love* far and beyond His wisdom, power, strength and creative wonders.

These reconciliations in the Bible, such as Joseph to his brethren, Jacob and Esau, and the many more, are surely amongst the most blessed and happy experiences

in life, and did not Jesus pronounce a blessing upon all those who would try to bring such scenes about - the Peacemakers - (the go-betweens). "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."

The Mediator

We are conversant with the fact that in the event of an impasse between two alienated parties an arbiter must be found. Indeed in the world of commerce and Industrial relations there are many professional arbiters who successfully arbitrate between the factions and establish common ground. Quite often a third party can bring the other two together. Jesus mediates between man and God. Paul never speaks of God being reconciled to man but three times speaks of God reconciling man unto Himself. This reconciliation has been achieved through the sacrifice of Jesus, for it was "by the cross" that Jesus "slew the enmity" between Jew and Gentile" and reconciled both unto God in one body" (Eph. 2:16). And so Jesus, in one great master-stroke, not only reconciled *man to man* but also all *men to God*. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." In any reunion one party must be induced to confess wrongdoing and desire forgiveness, while the other must be induced to forgive. Thus Joab intervened to get David to forgive and bring home his banished son, Absalom. In the case where *the injured party* is ready and anxious to forgive the battle is seemingly half won. All that remains is to persuade the wrongdoer to acknowledge his wrongdoing and accept the offer of forgiveness. But this is surely the stumblingblock for man is most reluctant to do any such thing. Man is the immovable object. At school it used to be a boyish conundrum to ask "What would happen if an irresistible force was to meet an immovable object". I now know, of course, that it is impossible to have both phenomena co-existent, but at the time the usual answer was that there would be a great and noisy explosion. I suppose that, in a spiritual sense, we could ask the same question today. God is the irresistible force who has removed all obstacles, legal or moral, to a free reconciliation with man; and man, in turn, is the immovable object: cold, hostile, disinterested and implacable. We can but marvel with the Psalmist, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him". Man can thus 'cock-a-snoot' at an all powerful God and is allowed to resist the Omnipotent God.

Jesus was highly qualified to be the-go-between in that He was endowed both with the divine and the human nature. He was intimately acquainted with God and man. He was a friend of both parties and loved both parties. It might be thought that, as God was desirous of forgiving the world, all He had to do was proclaim a general amnesty to all men. Doubtless this would be well received but would ignore the problem of Sin. Forgiveness of sin could only be obtained at a great price. God had to demonstrate His hatred of sin by providing a sacrifice - His own Son. "Without the shedding of blood" there could be no remission of sins and so Jesus was Mediator in a very real sense - for He was the actual sacrifice. "The Lord laid upon Him the iniquities of us all". Jesus did not have to die to pacify an angry God. God is the Governor of the Universe and, as *His law* is necessary to the happiness and harmony of all His intelligent subjects, so *His love* demanded that pardon must be obtained *without dishonouring that law* - and so sin had to be overcome. He who knew no sin was made sin for us. The death of Jesus did not result in God loving us, but rather God's loving us resulted in the death of Jesus.

Be Ye Reconciled

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself". God's initiative in this is a measure of His love for us. God has acted; we must respond. In the world around us, in Palestine, N. Ireland, Russia, S. Africa etc. it seems that men are busily re-erecting barriers that Christ has already broken down. When we consider God (holy and undefiled) and then look at man, and see the vast disparity between them (Potter and

clay), are we not lost in wonder, love and praise that God would seek such a reconciliation? The barricades will come down only *"in Christ"*.

According to our quotation from 2 Cor. (at the beginning of this article) God has given to the church "the ministry of reconciliation" and the church must honour this ministry. The quotation also says that we have received "the word of reconciliation" and we must publish this good news in every corner of the world. As "ambassadors for Christ" in this ministry of reconciliation we have a great compliment given to us in that God depends upon us to tell the world that He is prepared to receive sinful men in reconciliation. And so the joyful function of God's preacher is not to announce the threat of God's wrath, but the proclamation of God's offer of love. The task of the preacher is to break mens' hearts at the sight of the broken heart of God. Contemplate the cross and see how much God loved us. Jesus has removed all obstacles to reunion with God and this is the most important theme of the gospel, if not the most beautiful. What unfeigned joy there would be at the news. Let us not be cold and implacable, let us not be the immovable object but let us succumb to the irresistible love of God, for God is indeed irresistible in more ways than one.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, (as though God did beseech you by us); we pray you (in Christ's stead), Be ye reconciled to God."

EDITOR

PRAYER

Prayer is very important in the life of a christian and it is often neglected. I don't think we intentionally neglect to pray, it's just that we tend to get our priorities wrong. In 1 Peter 4:7 we read "The end of all things is at hand; watch unto prayer". 2000 years ago Peter issued this warning, that time is fast, running out. How much more urgent is it today! This age in which we live, is a fast moving one, with so many demands upon our time, that more and more christians are neglecting, the priority matter, of making time to pray. Someone has said "if we are too busy to pray, then we are TOO busy" Prayer is worth more than all the time it takes.

First Things First - In The Morning

In Psalm 5:3 we read "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee". From this verse and similar verses, I believe that a clear picture is given, how a christian should take advantage of the mighty power of prayer, in a normal day in our life. Upon awakening in the morning, our first thoughts should turn to the Lord. Our whole desire of our heart should be, that this day, will be a day in which we will truly walk with the Lord. We should meditate on the fact that everything that we are concerned about, should be shared with our Master. We are off to a bad start if we find ourselves saying "I have a busy day ahead of me Lord". We should be saying "WE have a busy day ahead of us Lord". Then step by step we should proceed, together.

There are always problems which *will* crop up, and perhaps we will not feel that we can cope with them but *we* should share them with our Lord. Of course there will be emergencies, and things that are not anticipated, but we know enough about our Lord to be confident that nothing occurs that will baffle His eternal wisdom. Then at the close of the day, when we review the hours that are past, we can say, "We have had a good day together" I wonder how often the Lord says this to us. When we have failures, we should analyse ourselves and no doubt we will find ourselves admitting that, 'we did *that* all by ourselves.'

In Mark 1:35 we read of what Jesus did in the morning, for we read "In the morning rising up a great while before day He went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed". How does our day begin? Do we tumble out of bed, rub our eyes, stretch and yawn, then grab a piece of toast, gulp down some coffee and with

one eye on the clock dash around the house, getting ready for another day at the office, the factory, or the shop. Jesus set us an example, the first thing that He did on awakening, would be to turn His thoughts and heart toward God in prayer. To the Son of God, prayer was more important than breakfast. Jesus knew that there was something more important than physical sustenance and He found it in communion with His Father. There is nothing more challenging, to any christian, than to be faced with an example such as this. How difficult it is to crucify the flesh, and force our minds and bodies to become submissive to the demands of prayer and quietness, before the Lord, *before the day begins*. For some it is simple. There are those who awaken fresh and ready for an hour with their Lord, but there are others who find it a struggle. Let no one think that our Lord stands over us, at day break, like an angry father waiting for his child to speak to him, but rather God waits with open arms, and an eagerness, to draw us into His arms as the day begins.

Pattern and Passion

I believe that prayer should follow a pattern.

Firstly, we should set apart a certain period of the day for prayer.

Secondly, we should read a few verses of the Bible, as this will bring us more speedily than anything else, into the conscious presence of the Master.

Thirdly, we should begin by praising the Lord in our hearts. Think of the wonder of being allowed to stand in the presence of God, The Creator, and speak to Him. With all the turmoil around, it is still God's world. No nuclear power will destroy His throne, so we should praise Him.

Fourthly, we should dedicate our lives afresh each day to Him. renew our vow each day to serve Him.

Fifthly, we should ask to be made sensitive all day to His guiding hand. To us the day is beginning, but to Him it has been Known throughout eternity.

Sixthly, present our petitions. Remember to pray for others first, then make known our own requests to God.

We should make it a rule, No day without prayer.

In James 5:16 we also read "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much". Effectual fervent praying will drive sleep from our eyes, hunger from our stomachs and thirst from our mouths. Too much of our praying is mechanical. We mouth words, recite phrases and yet lack in passion, the type to set our prayer alight. How long is it since *we* prayed to God in dead earnestness? When did we last grapple with God in an urgent matter that pushed aside the important things of life, to the margin? If we are to change things in the world, then it can only be by the power of prayer that is in deadly earnest. This kind of praying, burns its way through obstacles, a determined prayer, until that prayer is finally answered. We should remember that God is not concerned with the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they be. Neither is He concerned with the geography of our prayers, how wide they are. Nor even with the oratory of our prayers, how polished they may be. God is however, concerned with the sincerity of our prayers, how passionate they be.

One of the greatest tragedies of the christian life, is that so many christians spend so much time in their efforts to work and witness for Christ, but neglect the cultivation of their own personal prayer times. If we are so busy that we have no time to pray, then we are busier than the Lord intended us to be. In this day of constant rush we must be ever on our guard to fence off these parts of the day where we can get to one side and pray. We can be busy, active, energetic, dynamic but if we draw our sustenance from these, then we will be forced to make the painful confession found in, the song of Solomon 1:6 "they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

The Ever Open Ear

There is one prayer, that we will never be called upon to pray, which is found in the Bible in Matthew 27:46. It was a prayer of Jesus. "My God why hast thou forsaken me?" It was uttered in the hour of Christ's Death on the cross. As He dies, He feels the horror of God's presence being withdrawn and thus He cries "Why hast thou forsaken me?" This was the awful experience of Christ, dying outside the presence of God, as God His Father turns His back upon Him, because of *the sin*, that He had taken upon Himself. That was *our sin*. To die forsaken of God, must have been a terrible thing, but thus He died for you and me. Imagine our crying to God and getting no answer, and knowing that His back was turned upon us. This was the death that He died, He endured the terrors of a lost soul, terrors that we need never experience, because He took our place on the cross. This is a prayer, that we as Christians should never have to utter, because does not the Bible say "Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world." Did He not also say "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Just think of that, every moment of our lives, Jesus walks with us, He stands over us, watches our steps, knows the number of the hairs upon our head and knows the very beat of our hearts. He knows all that there is to know about us, He watches and cares for us each day. He will be with us to the end of our lives and when the day comes to cross through the veil of death He will be with us still. When we think on these things, are we not glad today that we belong to Him?

Also Praise And Thanks.

We are so often in a hurry to ask God for His help, but we are often slow to thank Him, for the answer He so graciously gives. Are we not often like the ten lepers who came to Jesus to be healed, but only one returned afterwards to give God thanks? The Bible also says, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your requests be known unto God." (Philippians 4:6).

When Jesus gave the model prayer to His disciples in Luke 11, He made it quite clear, that the first thing that we should do when we pray, is ACKNOWLEDGE GOD AS OUR FATHER (our Father which art in heaven). Then ADORE HIM IN PRAISE (Hallowed be thy name). Majority of Christians do not understand the relationship of prayer and praise. Praise actually produces the very atmosphere conducive to effective prayer. "The Lord dwelleth in the praises of His people" Psalm 22:3. The apostles were in the temple praising and worshipping God, prior to the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Luke 24:52-53). The secret of prayer, is the secret of praise. To learn one, we have to know something of the other. No one has learned to pray effectively, unless they have also learned the art of praise. Praise drives back the power of darkness, and brings the blessing of God upon us. Praise is the one thing that we can give to God which He has *not* first given to us, and for that purpose, he created us.

In John 4:23 we read, "But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father SEEKETH SUCH TO WORSHIP HIM". God has put into the hands of Christians, more power by prayer than all the atomic energy stored on the earth. If only we knew how to avail ourselves of the power there is in praying, against the forces of Satan, the story of the church would be a far different one, *in this 20th century*.

The pathway into God's presence has been opened for us, through the shed blood of the Lamb of God. How hurtful it must be to the heart of God, when we fail to *take advantage of the avenue opened up for us into His Royal presence*. Perhaps we have thought of prayerlessness as mere laziness or apathy. In 1 Samuel 12:23 we read "God forbid that I should SIN against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" Samuel considered prayerlessness as a sin. I am sure that we are all aware of our own weaknesses, our shortcomings and failings. We all need to pray earnestly and fervently for God's help, in all our difficulties, temptations and trials of life. The

apostle Paul, suffered greatly for Christ, as we all know, and considered it a joy. He had not only learned the secret of prayer he also taught it, and I think it fitting to close this address with Paul's teaching, which is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. There we read:

16 REJOICE ALWAYS;

17 Pray without ceasing;

18 in everything give thanks: for this is the will of GOD in Christ Jesus to you-ward.

AMEN

. GRAEME PEARSON, Glasgow.

GLEANINGS

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

LET US PRAY

"You must understand that prayer, to be called prayer, is not what you hear people all about you calling prayer. That is not prayer. Jacob's thigh was out of joint, and our Lord's sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. Prayer is colossal work. There were giants in those days. Prayer takes all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength, and all our mind, and all our life, sleeping and waking. Prayer is the princeliest, the noblest, the most unearthly act on this side heaven. Only pray, then; only pray aright, and enough, and it will change your whole nature as it changed Jacob's. Till, from the meanest, the falsest, the most treacherous, the most deceitful, the most found-out, the most miserable of men, it will make you also a very prince with God and with men. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help!"

Alexander Whyte.

THINGS TO BE REMEMBERED

"That the tongue is not steel, yet it cuts. That cheerfulness should be the weather of the heart. That sleep is the best stimulant, a nervine safe for all. That it is better to learn to say "No" than to be able to read Latin. That cold air is not necessarily pure, nor warm air necessarily impure. That a cheerful face is nearly as good for an invalid as healthy weather. That there are men whose friends are more to be pitied than their enemies. That advice is like castor oil easy enough to give, but hard enough to take. That wealth may bring luxuries, but luxuries do not always bring happiness. That grand temples are built of small stones, and great lives made up of small events. That nature is a rag merchant, who works up every shred and rag, and end into new creations. That an open mind, an open heart, and an open hand, would everywhere find an open door. That it is not enough to keep the poor in mind; give them something to keep you in mind. That men often preach from the housetops while the devil is crawling in at the basement below. That life's real heroes and heroines are those who bear their own burdens bravely, and give a helping hand to those around them. That hasty words often rankle in the wound which injury gives, and that soft words assuage it; forgiveness cures, and forgetfulness takes away the scar."

Doctor

WE QUOTE - WILLIAM JAMES

"Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keeps faithfully busy each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can, with perfect certainty, count on waking up some fine morning to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation, in whatever pursuit he may have singled out."

IN THE STRENGTH OF JESUS

"Ye contracted with Christ, I hope, when ye began to follow Him, that ye would bear his cross. Fulfil your part of the contract with patience, and break not to

Jesus Christ... Be honest, brother, in your bargaining with Him... Forward, brother, and lose not your grips... In the strength of Jesus, despatch your business!"

Samuel Rutherford

TALES WORTH TELLING

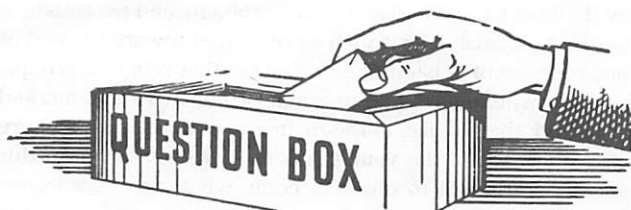
" "You can't Rub it out" - A little boy was amusing himself by writing with a diamond upon the window-pane. "Don't write there, my son," said his father. "Why not, father?" replied the boy. "Because you can't rub it out," was the answer."

I THANK THEE LORD

"For peaceful slumbers, and for strength restored,
And morning freshness, I now thank Thee, Lord,
And as I venture out I humbly pray
For power, to grasp the promise in this day,
For patience, to pursue where duty lies,
For faith, to stand if dangers should arise,
For wisdom, to assist my fellow man,
For guidance, as I seek Thy perfect plan,
For love, reflecting that of One Who gave
Himself, the sinful and the sick to save."

Maurice Cox

SELECTED BY LEONARD MORGAN



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"How do you see Churches of Christ in the British Isles developing up to, say, the turn of the century?"

This is a very important question for two reasons; if the developments seem to engender unsought problems then they need to be monitored quite closely; if, on the other hand, they seem to present us with golden opportunities to promote the Gospel then they should be welcomed, so long as they are in accord with God's Word. Having said that, we must understand that when someone or something is developing then what would be seen to be a *problem* by some may be seen as an *opportunity* by others. The two questions we need to address our minds to are (a) is the development producing the results we require, and (b) are the lines along which the Church is developing consistent with the Word.

What is Development?

The verb 'to develop' means to unfold, to bring out what is potentially contained in a person or thing; to bring forth from a latent or elementary condition. Therefore, according to the definition we need to ask ourselves (a) has the Church got potential, and (b) is the Church in a latent or elementary condition (at this point I seem to be posing more questions than I'm answering, but you will understand that I am questioning my own mind also).

If we answer the question of potential from God's side and refer it to the Gospel then there is no possible argument. In his letter to the saints in Rome Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The Greek word for 'power' is DUNAMIS from which we get our word "dynamite", and we all know what potential there is in *that*. Furthermore, when we refer potential to the Church with Christ as Its Head, then Paul says, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:15, 16). To work 'effectually' means 'to work with power', and it is Christ, the Head, who supplies the power. So from the Source the Church *has* potential; as much as it needs.

If we now answer the question of potential from *our* side then there would seem to be no reason to be unduly pessimistic. Was there ever a time when resources, both educational and financial, were so favourable? Many of our young people are university-educated and very able, and the opulent style of our living cannot be denied, as a matter of fact it is in marked contrast to the frugal and austere pattern of our Lord's life. So why is this latent potential not being realised? I believe it can be summed up in one statement - lack of *commitment* on *our* part. It is a startling paradox, is it not, that the dynamic power of the Godhead can be held latent by *our* impotence, an impotence, I might add, which is self-imposed because we neglect to use God's resources for the purposes for which He gave them. So how is the development of the Church being retarded by this, and what prospects are there for the future?

The Problems of Age

It must be clear to any thinking Christian that age is a problem, and potentially a serious one. Many Churches in the British Isles which were started toward the end of the 19th Century have either gone out of existence, defected to other religious groups, or are declining in membership. Whether we like to admit or not there is a marked antipathy between young and old; the old are, in the main, set in their ways and are resentful of the disturbing exuberance of the young; it is the "we have lived in this Church all of our lives and we are going to die in it come what may" syndrome. Consequently, these older communities are suffering an inevitable and inexorable decline because of mortality, and because of age they are becoming increasingly less inclined to seek transfusions of new blood through Gospel promotion. The 'Wayside Pulpit', if there was one, could possibly read "Do not disturb".

On the other hand, young, able, and presentable young men are taking the Gospel out to people and setting up communities of Christians in various parts of the British Isles. Quite naturally *because* they are young, and because they may have a certain charisma, young people are responding to the Gospel. So far as numerical advantage goes this may be great, but the problem of spiritual immaturity is ever-present and will not be resolved unless and until more experience is gained, both temporal and spiritual; but this takes time. In the meantime, are we about to see the *transfer* of Elders to such communities? The idea may not be as radical to some minds as it would seem to be to others.

The obvious answer, of course, is to make a deliberate and selective Gospel assault *on the age group we want to respond*. Surely, there can be nothing wrong with this objective. Nor, I believe, can there be anything wrong with aiming the Gospel at *anyone* who in our judgment will be an asset of great potential to the Church. I am convinced that when we have courted people with the Gospel for a good length of time and they have not shown a positive response, that we should tell them quite kindly where they can reach us should they wish to respond in the future and then pass on to what may prove to be more fertile soil.

We shall, I believe, in the future see the continued polarisation of old and young assemblies of Christians. But we must not grow impatient with each other, nor must we condemn without taking the time and trouble to investigate properly. Even though age may have dimmed the vision somewhat, nevertheless experience and maturity once gained are always valid, and can be used to modify and rectify some of the indiscretions of youth; in short, there is no earthly reason why spiritually integrated Christians should not work together effectively no matter what their respective ages may be.

Methodology

I firmly believe that the end can never justify the means used to achieve it, especially if those means are questionable. But if some means *are* questionable, let us question them with the people concerned, and do it in the right spirit. It is not the slightest use trying to defend Christian principles in an unchristian attitude; we have done too much of that in the past. However, methods need to be looked at objectively. It is quite wrong to throw out any method completely because it doesn't seem to work in one locality; it may achieve spectacular results in another locality.

What about many of our so-called Gospel Meetings? I can think of nothing more frustrating than to speak to about 50% of the normal congregation who are converted anyway. The listeners, bombarded by Scriptures which they have been able to recite from being children, and being asked to respond to something they have responded to long ago; can be excused for taking the easy way out and going to sleep. And if, perchance, someone gets lost and wanders into the Meeting, all heads turn sharply to acknowledge this unusual event; so much so, in fact, that the poor soul flees in confusion. If we have no intention of inviting unsaved people to such Meetings, then they should be discontinued and replaced with something else.

Correspondence Courses have had, and are still having, some success. I believe that to advertise such Courses in the local press is largely ineffective; there needs to be a 'blanket' coverage of a given area by door-to-door knocking in order to discover real interest. Incidentally, people differ in their reactions because of the geographical areas in which they live; perhaps we should give some thought to producing Courses for different areas of people and not rely solely on *standard* Courses. There is potential in this method providing that monitoring and follow-up procedures are good.

The best method, I believe, is person to person communication. Teach someone who will become excited with the Message and will teach others, who in *their* turn will teach others also. The Deuteronomists did it, and it was the instruction which Paul gave to Timothy. The greatest exponent of this method was the Lord Himself; He made peoples' hearts "burn within them".

I sense an increasing awareness by many people that the evils in society today are too many and are accelerating too fast. They want to draw back from the abyss before it is too late. Perhaps we in the Church of Christ can point them to a cleaner and more wholesome way of life here, and the prospect of an eternal inheritance in Heaven. May God help us.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JUNE 1985

- 2—Isaiah 29:9-24 Matt. 15:1-20
 9—Ex. 16:9-36 Matt. 15:21-39
 16—Deut. 18:9-22 Matt. 16:1-20

- 23—Psalm 49 Matt. 16:21 to 17:13
 30—Ex. 30:1-16 Matt. 17:14-27

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 (Matthew 9:4); the heart understands (Isaiah 32:4); the heart knows (Proverbs 14:10); the heart believes (Romans 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 (Matthew 22:37); we despise with the heart (2 Samuel 6:16); and we rejoice with the heart (Psalm 33:21). In addition, we determine with the heart (1 Corinthians 7:37); we purpose with the heart (2 Corinthians 9:7); we repent with the heart (Romans 2:4, 5); and we obey from the heart (Romans 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 a 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 - 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 of 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 scripture for the dogma of the supremacy of Peter - 'upon this rock I will 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. The conversation turned upon that confession, and not upon Peter. The comment ought to have been upon the text, and not upon him that 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 a 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-Denial, 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." (Rom. 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

became 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."

One other point. Notice Moses and Elijah (Greek Elias) talked with Jesus on the mount. Moses made it to the promised land after all!

DEMONS

A lot of Bible students find the subject of demons difficult. Perhaps that is a good reason to make it a special study. It was Alexander Campbell who wrote: "I think the subject of demons is one that fairly comes in the path of every student of the New Testament and ought to be well understood."

Our late brother William Wardrop always contended that demons were released in the days of Jesus to show the power of truth over the spirit of error and also the sovereignty of Jesus in the universe. I think he was right. Jesus defeated and disarmed these demonic forces and they are back in chains of darkness. Is that not what Colossians 2:14-15 teaches us?

Demons were not all the same. Note Jesus' words: "However, *this kind* does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (17:21).

IAN S. DAVIDSON, Motherwell

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF SISTER TATTUM

It has been my privilege for a good many years to visit one I have grown to love, and as a result of those visits the tie that binds in Christ, had developed to our mutual advantage. Our Lord Jesus said: "Give and it shall be given you". He was not only thinking of money. My own life has been enriched by those visits, having seen and heard her love and loyalty to her Lord. "Iron sharpeneth iron so doth a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." (Proverbs 27:17). I thank God for the precious gift of memory, for I shall treasure her love for me over the years. My son John reminded me of the time she brought me gruel to our home when I was not well, she loved to give and serve like her Lord. And what of her sufferings, for very many years she had much backache, I wonder how many brethren have seen an hot-water bottle brought to the Lord's Day breaking of bread service ... what a glorious example ... She had a deformed body, but I told her that there is many a beautiful soul in a deformed body, and the "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." They lose nothing who gain Christ, and although you will not find her name in the Guinness's book of records, or in Who's Who, but if you were able to inspect it, you would find it in the Lamb's Book of Life. Someone has said that "All God's paintings show the hand of the Master". On the 15th of April 1948 she was buried with her Lord by Immersion, that night she came into contact with the Blood of Christ, and her sins were washed away. He became her life-long friend, and from Him received great consolation and strength to bear the sufferings she endured so bravely. She died in the Lord, and we can say "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." With the Apostle Paul, she could have said:- "I

have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

'As some rare perfume in a vase of clay Pervades it with a fragrance not its own So when Thou dwellest in a mortal soul, All heaven's own sweetness seem around it thrown."

"Long Long may the heart with such memories be filled, Like the vase in which roses have once been distilled; You may break, you may shatter the vase as you will, But the scent of the roses will cling round it still."

May the fragrance of her life be a source of rich blessing and deep inspiration to those who mourn her loss.

Leonard Morgan

IT is unthinkable to expect a child to listen to your advice and ignore your example.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dennyloanhead, Scotland: The church here have now completed the present series of Saturday Evening meetings, and we would like to thank all those brethren who have proclaimed the Gospel of Christ for us. We pray that God, our Heavenly Father, will bless these efforts to extend His kingdom in the hearts of men and women, to His praise, honour and glory. Our meetings have, indeed, been well attended and the Word Of Truth sown. Our thanks also goes out to those who came from other churches to swell our numbers and to support the meetings.

Joe Malcolm, Sec.

Kitwe, Zambia: Some major campaigning with the gospel of Christ is planned for Zambia's Luapula Province during April, 1985. The manpower and financing

of this evangelistic effort is coming from mainly five congregations in Kitwe on the Zambian Copperbelt who are regarding Luapula as their own Mission Area. This is an achievement in our desire to get the Zambians to contribute and do it themselves to the maximum.

Luapula Province lies along the eastern bank of the river from which it takes its name. The Luapula river also forms the border with Zaire and the journey to Luapula from the Copperbelt is through Zaire. The swamps in the south-east of Luapula are the home of the unique Black Lechwe, a rare member of the Antelope family. This is a rural Province of Zambia where there are two congregations, and numerous preaching points.

The Registration of the congregation at Mansa was recently adopted by the government in Zambian capital Lusaka and this means that the churches of Christ are operating legally in Luapula Province. We are trying hard in the rural areas and hope and pray for good results in Luapula during 1985. We solicit your prayers.

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

OBITUARY

Hindley: It is with mixed feelings of sorrow and of joy that we report that Sister Nellie Tattum fell asleep in Jesus on March 9th, aged 87 years.

It was in 1948 that she was added to the Lord and since then she has remained faithful and loyal. We can never fully evaluate her contribution to the work of the Lord. Her readiness to communicate to others about Jesus has no doubt opened doors that were locked and barred to many. Her patient love, and appreciation of every service she enjoyed, was encouragement itself, and she will be greatly missed.

May her loving example envelop her loved ones and bring us all closer together to the dear Lord whom she loved so much and Who so dearly loves us.

Tom Kemp.

Motherwell, Scotland: It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of our much loved sister Meg Sneddon, at the age of 85 years.

She was the eldest daughter of our late brother and sister John Sneddon, of "Lea-rigg", Jerviston Road, Motherwell, where she died on Lord's Day, March 31st.

Her life was a long and fruitful one, a blessing indeed, because it meant that those of younger years also got to know and love her. She endeared herself to the brethren everywhere because she was interested in everyone, and in their well-being. She was friend, guide and counselor to so many in her life, and many owe much to her for her thoughtfulness and kindness to them. She was, indeed, a Mother Figure to so many and 'Aunt Meg' to all, and in this she will be sadly missed.

She was a faithful member of the church for many years, was possessed of true Christian virtues, and was a wonderful example to all who knew her. She was loved by all, young and old, and although we shall never forget her, we rejoice that she was a faithful Christian, true to her Saviour, and like Paul, could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness". We thank God for her living testimony, and look forward to a glad re-union, when our Saviour returns to claim His own.

The church owes much to those who tenderly cared for her in her last days, making her as comfortable as they could, and we gratefully thank them for their loving care of her.

The funeral took place on Wednesday, 3rd April when the church meeting-place was full to capacity, as we met to pay our last respects to the one whom we shall miss so much. We commend all who mourn her passing to our Heavenly Father's care.

The Funeral Service was presided over by brother Hugh Davidson, with help from Andrew Scobbie, (Dennyloanhead); brother Willie Black and David Chalmers (Dalmellington) and also brother Ian Davidson. Wm. Purcell, Sec.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Brother David Chalmers, 62 Park Crescent, Dalmellington, Ayr KA6 7RR is the new Secretary of the Dalmellington Church. Tel No. Dalmellington 550649.

EARTHEN VESSELS

"But we have this in **earthen vessels**, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." 2 Corinthians 4:7.

Earthen vessels are breakable and should be handled with care. Paul admonished, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, do ye also. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Col. 3:12-14.

Being frail earthen vessels we must be careful to not break or damage any of them.

Each vessel should look not only to his or her own interest, but also to the interest of others.

P.O. Box 67
Rosemead, CA. 91770
U.S.A.

T. W. PHILLIPS II

COMING EVENTS**ANNUAL SOCIAL**

The Buckie Social, will be held, (D.V.) on Saturday, 1st June, 1985 at 3.15 p.m. in the Meetinghouse, Cluny Terrace.

Chairman: Bro. Wm. Mair.

Speaker: Bro. Ian Davidson, Motherwell.

A warm invitation to all. Items will be appreciated.

J. Geddes (Sec.)

NEWS

WE will sit nights by the bedside of the man who is losing his health, and not have time to talk to the man that's losing his soul.

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