

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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BY FAITH

In last Sunday's N.T. reading (from bro. Scott's helpful Reading Cards) we reached that marvellous eleventh chapter of Hebrews which not only defines faith but illustrates the definition with a host of examples. Perhaps it would be remiss of me if I was to pass such an important matter without comment, especially when Paul (the supposed writer of the epistle) devotes a whole chapter (and much more) to the subject. 'Faith' is a term which is bandied about in the religious world and not, it seems, always clearly understood. A few generations ago 'Faith' was the 'in' thing amongst the denominations and we had the emergence of 'Faith Missions' and 'Faith only' doctrines, just as today the 'in' thing seems to be 'baptism in the Holy Spirit'; (a subject which seems equally misunderstood).

'Faith' is a small word yet it divides the world's population into two great segments; believers or unbelievers (in God, that is). Faith in Jesus Christ makes a further division amongst the ranks of believers into those who believe that Christ was the Messiah, and those who don't. The Jews are an example of those who believe in God (Jehovah) but who largely do not believe that Jesus was God's Son, but there are many others. There are thus countless millions who live and die as complete unbelievers, in a faithless condition (without faith in Jesus Christ). Doubtless many believers will be condemned on Judgement Day **but the unbeliever is condemned already** (John 3:18) "because he hath not believed in the only begotten Son of God". When Jesus was here in person He referred to a 'faithless generation' in His own time and there have been many such generations since, and I suppose many still to come. Thus it is vitally important to spread the testimony concerning Jesus to as many as we can, so that all may have the opportunity to have faith in Him. This is how faith comes: by hearing and believing the facts and testimony concerning Christ. If there is no testimony there certainly can never be faith.

How Faith Comes

There is no great theological mystery about faith, as some would have us believe, or that faith is something bestowed miraculously on some while it passes others by. God is no respecter of persons and does not give messages to some while withholding them from others. From time to time we hear of 'testimonies' which describe blinding lights, visions at night and whisperings in the ear. Indeed a friend of mine, in the Faith Mission used to tell me that he got special messages from God and for a while I was impressed. I later discovered, however, that these 'messages' came to him by means of him shutting his eyes, opening his bible suddenly and placing his finger

somewhere on the page. He then opened his eyes and read the passage under his finger. So much for special 'messages' from God. In actual fact the N.T. is quite clear about how faith will come to us, and Paul (in Rom. 10:17), says "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". In the previous verses he asks, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher.? Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, did not seem to know anything about flashing lights, visions or whisperings in the ear. Faith comes by hearing the testimony of God's witnesses concerning Christ as contained in God's word. This faith is essentially the same as the faith we exhibit in anything else. Faith is simply **belief, trust and confidence** and it can apply to anything. We might have faith in a person (the Germans had a strong but misplaced faith in Hitler); we might have faith in a politician (if we are naive enough); we might have faith in our medical adviser: we might have faith in our teacher; faith, in each case, being the same. It is **the object** of our faith that makes the difference. Alexander Campbell in his 'Christian System' has a wonderful chapter on this subject and describes the **Measure, Quality, and Power** of faith and shows that it is **the object** of our faith that qualifies all the rest and is determined by the reputation of the source. We have faith, for instance, in a promissory note from the Bank of England but we might not have any faith in an I.O.U. from the scrap-merchant in the next street. We would have more faith (trust) in a man who had risked his life to save us than we would in someone who had tried to ruin us. It is also true that we might believe certain facts equally strongly (faith) but the effects of that belief upon us might differ. We might believe equally strongly that Caesar was assassinated as we would believe that Jesus was crucified but **the effects** upon us of these two events would differ. **The object** of our faith also regulates the **degree and quality** of our faith, and as brother Campbell says, it takes less faith to believe that a 95 year old man, recently very sick, has died than it takes to believe that another man has lived to the ripe old age of 140 years. The testimony has to be stronger in the latter case as does **the confirmation** of testimony. Thus the testimony concerning Jesus Christ is exhaustive, flawless, comprehensive and quite incontrovertable. We notice too that God also **confirmed** the testimony (with wonders, divers miracles and signs following.) Supernatural events required supernatural confirmation. The gospel according to John contains a great deal about faith and ends by John saying, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name". (John 20:30). These things were written that we might believe. To disbelieve them is to make God a liar. (I John 5:10).

Faith Is Our Starting Point

Faith, where it exists, stems from our first real encounter with the claims of Jesus Paul, in this 11th Chapter of the Hebrews, reminds us (v.5) that Enoch didn't die, but was translated directly into heaven, because He pleased God so much, and that without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore, if we desire to please God we must have faith "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Thus if we come to God it must be upon that solid basis; that we believe in God (and Christ) and have confidence in His promises. This, then is faith and is the starting place for any fellowship with Christ. The apostle Peter exhorts that we should, with great diligence, **add to our faith** such things as virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. But we must start with faith.

Once conscious of having faith in Christ, what then? If our faith is real, and of the required intensity, it will prompt us to change our way of life (to repentance) and to urge us to obey Christ in the new birth (baptism) and to be immersed for the

remission of our sins, and to rise to walk in newness of life (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom 6). Once we have such a faith can we lose it? Can it wane? Can it be increased? Can we measure its strength or weakness? These are all questions which should concern us and, keeping in mind that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen" (R.V.), I think we can learn about faith by looking at some of the remarks made on the subject by Jesus and His apostles. For instance, Jesus once referred to the disciples as "Ye of little faith" whereas Stephen was a man "full of faith." Jesus reckoned the faith of a certain Roman Centurion (gentile) was greater than any He had encountered amongst the people of God (the Jews). Paul talks to Timothy about 'faith unfeigned' and about those who would "cast off their first faith," and he also mentions the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus whose false teaching would "overthrow the faith of some." Paul also talks of some who were "weak in the faith" and of some who, although poor in material things, were "rich in faith." When Jesus cured the two blind men He touched their eyes saying, "according to your faith be it unto you" and their eyes were opened. By contrast when Jesus' own disciples were frightened by the storm He asked them, "Where is your faith." Paul hoped for "an increase" in the faith of the Corinthians, and prayed that he might be able "to perfect that which was lacking" in the faith of the Thessalonians. With reference to the latter, he later, in his second epistle to these Thessalonians, thanked God that their faith "grew exceedingly" and their love abounded to one another. Thus our faith can be little or it can be lacking; it can be great or it can be cast off; it can be overthrown or it can be increased; it can grow or wither. Faith, it seems, varies in strength and quality in the person and is not something which is inevitable but is something which can be increased "exceedingly" if we work on it. It depends on us. What then is the litmus test of our personal faith? How do we know if our faith is doughty or dwarfish; mighty or miniscule? How can we tell?

Even The Demons Believe

It seems we are indebted to James for the answer, for James warns us that our faith may not only be diminished but may actually be dead; dead as a corpse. James (Chap. 2:18) addresses those who may think that faith and works are two completely separate and distinct virtues, of equal worth, and that a person is at liberty to choose one or the other as it pleases. He shows that this constitutes a complete misunderstanding of the position, and that the two (faith and works) are inseparably linked. It is not a question of "Thou hast faith and I have works," but "I will show my faith by my works." Thus our 'works' (or lack of them) is the true measure of our faith, i.e. no works - no faith. Faith is not, of course, only a question of us **believing** certain facts but includes 'assurance' or confidence, or trust, in the author of our faith. If that confidence is really present it will prompt us to carry out Christ's will (works). After all, says Jesus, "the devils believe." If we believe in Jesus we share that belief with many others, including the demons. The thing which separates us from the demons is the fact that we allow our faith to work by love. Our love for Christ induces us to allow our faith to have expression in deeds for Him. But James goes farther and says that unless our faith culminates in good works it is not true faith at all (or is a deceased faith, which is the same thing). "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead, being alone." James then quotes the case of Abraham as a classic case of where the actions (works) of Abraham provided proof of his extremely formidable faith. The trust in God that Abraham had, extended even to his preparedness to slay his only son, for whom he had already waited so long and patiently. Paul (in Heb. Chap. 11) refers also to Abraham when he quotes extensively from that great Hall of Fame in the O.T. of all those many 'worthies', 'immortalised' in the chapter by virtue of the actions their faith made them take. Some have suggested that Paul and James were not in agreement on the subject of faith but surely this is nonsense and Paul merely complemented James in that he said works without faith

(in Christ) would not justify; whereas James taught that faith (in Christ) without actions (works) would not justify. Faith is really a N.T. theme (for the word hardly ever appears in the O.T.) and refers specifically to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless these men of faith of the O.T., catalogued in Heb. 11, are offered to us as excellent examples to follow. Paul, here, describes them as a 'great cloud of witnesses' looking down upon us and 'cheering us on' in the great arena of life, applauding our successes and saddened by our failures. "Wherefore", says Paul, "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith and although we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (these men of great faith) yet we must "look unto Jesus" as the ultimate example of faith and works towards God. As Moses was faithful in all his house so was Jesus entirely "faithful to Him that appointed Him." How healthy is our faith?

O For a faith that will not shrink
 Though pressed by many a foe,
 That will not tremble on the brink
 Of poverty or woe.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

GOOD NEWS

"The God of heaven has made a communication to men on earth. That communication is in the form of a Message; and consequently requires, in the first place, to be faithfully delivered to those whom it concerns; in the next place, to be well considered by those who receive it; and, finally to be answered in a manner suited to the nature of the message and the infinite majesty of him who has sent it. Delightful to tell, the Message of God is altogether a thing of grace and gladness. Though making constant reference to human sin and shame; and to consequent, sorrow and death, the Word sent by God is meant to condemn no one; it does not threaten; it does not chide; it offers no discouragement to the most guilty, and hints no doubt as to the chances of the most unpromising. It is wholly a message of love. It has sprung from God's infinite pity; it discovers the unimaginable resources of his holy mercy; it announces accomplished facts, brought to pass by his wisdom and power, altogether in advance of man's highest hopes and in excess of all his own promises; and finally, it opens up to us a future of eternal and unspeakable blessedness. This Divine Message reveals, in their most affecting outgoings, the love and joy and hope of the inmost heart of the Sender, who has made himself known as the Happy God. In every sense, therefore, God's Message to us is a joyful one: it is Good-News, with the advantage of being stamped with authority; and the further advantage of being directed to a definite destination, to which it is sent on the most benevolent errand. All this is hinted to us in the very word chosen of God to characterise the tidings of his mercy to men.

Joseph B. Rotherham.

JUST LIKE JESUS

"A little girl, while listening to the portrayal of the Saviour in His "going about doing good," exclaimed in her admiration and enthusiasm, "That's just like Jesus!" The thought of the great Helper in human form in His ministrations of mercy and tenderness was so peculiar and Godlike, that its character was at once recognized by a child.

All who have the Spirit of Christ will have no difficulty in identifying any thought or action that is "just like Jesus." There need never be any doubt as to the nature of either, when tried in this scale of fitness for the character of our Lord and Master. That which is appropriate for Him is as easily comprehended by a child as by his parents, so transparently pure and perfect is that Divine life in the human form. And, consciously or unconsciously, this is the standard by which those who are Christ's weigh every evidence of carnality or spirituality in the lives of men. Whether or no it be openly admitted to ourselves and others, we instinctively know when anything or anybody is like or unlike Jesus."

Evangelist.

THE RUIN OF THE WILL BY DRINK

"Dr. John Cheyne cites a remarkable instance of the ruin of the will by drink:—"A gentleman of birth and refined tastes, deservedly popular for his attractive qualities, became habitually intemperate. A dear friend wrote to him, 'Your family are in the utmost distress on account of this unfortunate habit. They see that your business is neglected, your moral influence is gone, your health is ruined.' To this he replied. 'Your remarks are, indeed, too true, but I can no longer resist temptation. If a bottle of brandy stood on one side, and a pit of hell yawned on the other, and I knew that I should be pushed in if I took one more glass, I could not refrain. You are all very kind. I ought to be grateful; but spare yourselves the trouble of trying to reform me, the thing is impossible.'"

Lancelot Oliver

INEXPEDIENCY

"When many of Christ's disciples went back, because of the nature of His preaching. I do not find there was any attempt to increase a diminished congregation by resorting to something more pleasant to the flesh. I do not hear Him saying, 'We must keep up the gatherings anyway; so run, Peter, and tell them we will have a different style of service to-morrow. Something very short and attractive; with little, if any, preaching. To-day was a service for God, but to-morrow we will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it, and have a happy hour. BE QUICK, Peter; we must get the people somehow. If not by Gospel, then by nonsense.' No, this was not how He argued. Gazing in sorrow on those who would not hear the word, He simply turns to the twelve and asks 'Will ye also go away?'"

Archibald Brown.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

A CHAT WITH AN 'OLD PATHER' (Cont.) (5)

(Chat between I. Davidson & the late Tom Nisbet)

- IAN : After a time you began to get involved in evangelism. Where did you go?
 TOM : I was twice or thrice at Blackburn in Lancashire. I think we had two conversions there. It was a big church then, a wonderful church. That was where Slater Wilson was. He was an evangelist at one time. Then I was five or six times at Ulverston. I never had any conversions there. I was two months at Kentish-Town in London. We had one conversion there, a coloured woman from Ghana, a delightful person she was. Then I was at Bristol on three different occasions, a month each time, and Bristol was my harvest field because I am pleased to say that we had four conversions on each occasion. That was twelve added to the Church and I have watched them, all these twelve. They have remained faithful.

One or two have passed on since then. I was also at Peterhead on two or three occasions. I had one conversion there, curiously enough, a girl who was a Roman Catholic, and, curiously enough, who is now the wife of Jackie Strachan at East Kilbride. That woman, a delightful lassie she was, and I can remember going up to her father and mother's house that night—pouring of rain — to let them know she was going to be baptised. Well, her mother is in the Church too now. I was at Buckie one month on one occasion. In fact, Buckie was the last mission I did for the Old Paths Committee. That was in 1966. I had no conversions there, but I had a time of value there I can assure you. A wonderful church it was. In fact, the Buckie church reminded me of Tranent in its earlier days because it did have Bible-appointed elders. When I went there, I was taken before the elders and was given my marching orders. I liked that. I was told certain controversial subjects to avoid and if anything cropped up I was to see them. I liked that. I liked being told by the elders what I was to do. We had a grand time there.

IAN: You talk here about the Old Paths Committee. What does it mean to be an 'Old-Pather'?

TOM: Well, I think it was to distinguish the churches who were still standing for the old order of things and against the innovations of modernism that had crept into the churches. It was merely to distinguish the one from the other. The phrase is in the Bible, as you know. Jeremiah: "Ask for the old paths . . . and walk therein. But they say, we will not."

IAN: Right, we are talking about difficulties in the Church.

TOM: Well, long before we started the church in Haddington — it started at the end of 1955 — long before that, we used to hold Bible-Study meetings in my house and various people from Haddington came to it. It was to that meeting that the Moncrieffs came. That is where they were converted — in this Bible study in my house. The Logans, also and others like that. Well, at the beginning of our meetings we were stressing the fallacy of the 'clergy-system' and that in the Church of Christ we had no system like that at all. At one of the meetings, one of the outsiders, who worked in the same printing office as my son Joe, came with a copy of the **Radio Times**. When the meeting started he said "I thought you told me you didn't have clergymen or ministers in the Church of Christ?" I said: "Yes." "Well, what can you make of this?", he asked. He showed us the **Radio Times**, and at that time they advertised religious meetings on the Sunday night. It gave the name of the preacher and stated that the lesson would be read by the **Reverend** "so and so" of the Church of Christ, Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh. Now that was flung in our face! "The Reverend . . ." and he was the **Pastor** in Dalkeith Road. Now, we had to try to explain all that. These are the kinds of difficulties we had and still have.

IAN: In September 1934, you formally requested, on behalf of the Tranent church, that the congregation be admitted to the Slamannan District. Of course, you later had dealings with the Slamannan District because you acted as treasurer for over seventeen years for the District. To those who do not understand, what is the Slamannan District? What is it all about?

TOM: I understood even at that time that it was just simply the churches in this certain area who were combining to get up enough funds to pay a full-time evangelist. We understood it to be that.

IAN: So the "co-operation" was for **evangelistic purposes** only. It was not to rule over the churches in any way.

TOM: No, never to rule. No.

IAN: A lot of people do not understand the Slamannan District. John Allan Hudson in his book, I don't think, quite got it either, did he?

TOM: No, he was all wrong in that book of his.

IAN: Do you think the Americans have had difficulty in understanding?

TOM: The Americans have had difficulties. That is unfortunate. They don't seem to be able to grasp what we mean by the words we use.

IAN: May-be it is like Churchill once said: "We are a people divided by a common language."

TOM: Something like that. I remember there was a discussion going on in 'The Scripture Standard' at one time on the mutual ministry question by an American who was resident in Tunbridge Wells. After all the explanations – (and they were as simple as A.B.C.) – the last letter that American brother wrote, he still maintained the same ideas as he had before. He didn't know what we meant by "mutual ministry". He thought that meant that every member in the church, either every member or every male member, should be able to perform every service the church requires. He should be an exhorter, a preacher of the gospel, a visitor, he should do pastoring, he should do shepherding of the sheep, and all that sort of thing, which is wrong. We have never at any time preached that. We have preached that every member in the church has a talent. They have at least a talent. There is nobody with no talents and, therefore, they use these talents in the service of the church. A man may be a grand preacher of the gospel, we give him the job to preach the gospel, but he may be hopeless at visiting anybody at home. So we do not use him for that purpose. They can't understand that.

IAN: That is what is meant by "mutual ministry."

TOM: Yes, everyone utilising whatever talents they have. **The Parable of the Talents** tells us that, that there are different talents in the church. I see people today attempting service in the church and they are not fitted for it, not suited for it at all. It is a mistake. There are not many of our brethren who can really chair a meeting. I can remember the very first Slamannan District conference that I was chairman at. John Sneddon was secretary then. I forget who was treasurer . . . no, I was treasurer! They got me to chair the meeting. After I had chaired it, John Sneddon – he was a right forthright man, wasn't he, you got it right from the shoulder from him, you know – well, he says: "Tom, you made a grand job of that chairmanship today. A lot of our folk don't know how to be a chairman at a meeting." He was right. I hear them locally, they can't chair a meeting, they don't know what to do. Of course, may-be I had an advantage over other people because I had the chance to be educated along that line through the Labour Movement. I always blame the Labour Movement for something that people find bad in me, that they don't like, but I must credit them too for the things that I do right. I always tell them to blame the Labour Party for my being a long speaker because we were always taught every address should last for sixty minutes.

IAN: Looking back Tom, these are the Slamannan District records, and the first records we have are dated 10th September, 1898, two years after you were born. You read of such congregations as Armadale, Bathgate, Bellshill, Blackridge, Bo'ness, Coarbridge, Crofthead, Grangemouth, Falkirk, Hamilton, Standburn, Wilsontown, Slamannan and Bonnybridge. Now, the vast majority of these are gone. It is sad to read that, isn't it, of these congregations?

TOM: Yes, it is very sad, because I read in the old **Bible Advocate** volumes about Bellshill, and I knew Standburn myself. I was at it. I was at their social meeting once. And I knew Armadale. Nearly all these churches would be established likely by the preaching of James Anderson. He was really used as an evangelist then. That was the evangelist's job, not to be continually giving the brethren in the local churches a rest. That is not an evangelist's job.

(to be continued)

PRACTICAL FAITH

Any pursuit, whether in the realms of music, art, medicine, building or whatever, requires, first of all a good grounding in theory. Theory, however, is of little consequence if not coupled with practice. If, in the erection of a building, materials such as sand and bricks are delivered to the site but the workmen simply stand back looking at the stuff, the building will never come to completion. The theory, in such circumstances, means nothing. The same applies in the spiritual realm. The plan and guide for the church is found in the New Testament but if we are experts in the theory only, then little will be accomplished for the Lord. Even God's own infallible word is quite worthless in not coupled with practice. Faith without works is most certainly dead.

In Hebrews 2:7 we read that "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Noah's faith in God's plan was so strong that he was motivated into real action, over a very, very long period of years, to build the ark. Here was indeed an exhibition of PRACTICAL FAITH. Some are spurred into short bursts of activity, followed by periods of lethargy but Noah was consistent in effort over the years until the goal had been reached and the ship of salvation was ready for launching. Such faith resulted in "the saving of his house."

When Abraham was called of God (Gen. 22) he did not deliberate or argue but obeyed. Even when required to offer his son, his only son, he never faltered. He gathered the wood, provided the rope and even answered Isaac's terrible questions. As he lifted the knife to strike his son, God could say, "Now I know" that thou are faithful. This is the proof of the pudding as far as faith is concerned. This is the only confirmation of faith. How practical is our faith?

Elisha, the prophet, (2 Kings 5) instructed the Gentile Namaan to go and wash seven times in the Jordan. Namaan came close to rejecting these instructions and would never have lost his dreaded leprosy if he had not complied. He came around to the knowledge that the God of Israel not only required faith, but a faith that operates, and is active. The word of God abounds with similar examples, ranging from the blind man, who was told to go and wash in the pool of Siloam to the woman who said, within herself, "If I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole". Hebrews (Chap. 11) is, of course, filled to capacity with examples of ACTIVE FAITH.

After citing dozens of examples Paul is forced to admit that time would fail him to quote more. "And what can I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." These all obtained 'a good report' through faith. James confirms all this (2:22) and asks us to see "how faith wrought with works, and that by works was faith made perfect" PRACTICAL FAITH is faith made perfect (complete). Quite often we are mere hearers of the word, and certainly that is HOW faith comes - by hearing the word. "But" says James, "Be ye DOERS of the word and not hearers only." So often we are but hearers of the word, only.

ARE YOU, dear unsaved friend, amongst those who have, perhaps, heard the gospel, or read it and have been disposed to believe it. If so, I urge you also to quickly obey it. May your faith be an active faith - "a faith that worketh through love". When the apostle Paul heard the gospel he asked "Lord what wilt thou have me to do" and when he was told what to do HE DID IT. He repented and was baptised for the remission of his sins. He was told, "arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord". Do likewise and be ye reconciled to God in His own appointed way, and join the ranks of those who believe that faith without works is very dead, being alone.

Thomas Hartle, Evangelist, Cape Town, R.S.A.

ENRICHING CHARACTER THROUGH EDUCATION

Every Christian should have a good character. When leaving school and applying for our first place of employment recommendation as to our character is requested. There is definitely a great difference between character and reputation. Character is what a person is. Reputation is what others think he is, or what he pretends to be. A man by reputation may be mean, but in character very liberal.

God requires character rather than reputation. He knows what we are for He seeth not as man seeth. He reads our hearts and knows all that we are.

Character is developed from within

“As a man thinketh in his heart-so is he.” Prov. 23:7. All have some ability and each should develop into usefulness. For all that we know in this life we are indebted to others. God is the source of the world’s best knowledge. All that is pure and holy and satisfactory to the deepening of man’s faith, to the develop-~~ng~~ of character, that we may be upright, honest and sincere, is to be found in the word of God.

“Only let your manner of life be as it becometh the teaching of Jesus.” Phil. 1:27. For this reason we need to **Acquire learning**.

There is no wrong in acquiring knowledge as long as it is the right kind. Do not attach too much value to worldly wisdom, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” I Cor. 3:19

“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” 1 Cor. 1: 20-21. All that God requires us to know He has revealed to us in His Word, and requests us that we take heed to the things which become sound doctrine.” Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.” 2 Tim. 2:15.

Jesus is the great teacher

He came to earth to lead men to God. To show how to live and how character should be developed. In every detail of His life He was what He professed to be, and there was never a time in His whole life when He could have been convicted of speaking an idle word, committing an evil act, or thinking an impure thought. His life was exemplary in every detail, and it is God’s desire that we should be just like Him. This will not be without effort on our part. We are scholars in the school of Jesus, and He desires that we “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” Phil. 2:12. That we add the things that Peter declares in 2 Pet. 1:5-7. That we subtract all that is not in accordance with His Will, and multiply our talents to the extension of His Kingdom. Let us give all our attention to the Teacher. “Hear ye Him.” Matt. 17:5. Without His help we shall not pass the final examination and fail to enter into the glory of His presence. Without Him to guide and control our lives we shall stumble in darkness, in ignorance and despair.

We must develop spiritually

Peter encourages us to “Grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. 3:18.

Man is a being consisting of body, soul, and spirit. As in the case of mortal man, deficiency of food results in stunted growth and death, so in spiritual man, lack of feeding upon God’s Word results in lack of growth and spiritual death. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Matt 4:4.

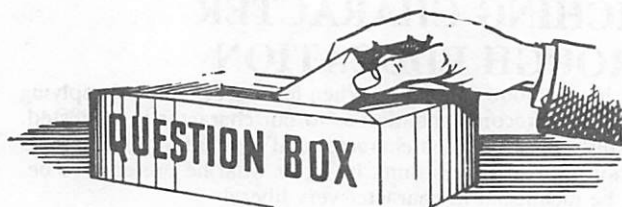
Are we going on to complete development?

Are we continuing to study under the Great Teacher?

Are we following out in our lives all His directions?

If so, then we shall have indeed a good character that will fit us for glory, and we shall not be ashamed at His coming.

TOM KEMP, Hindley.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“You said in the February issue of the S.S., and I quote, ‘The question of women’s meetings raises further issues in my mind’. What did you mean by that statement?”

The difficulties inherent in the complex relationships between men and women have, during the last fifty or sixty years, been compounded by the so-called matrimonial, social and industrial emancipation of women. This has been evidenced by a re-assessment of conjugal rights in the courts, and an Act on the Statute Book named the Sex Discrimination Act. What Christians have to decide for themselves is whether or not the hierarchical structure as laid down in the Bible is relevant to twentieth century Christians, and will remain relevant in the twenty-first century. The real question is not one of **capability** – if it were then the answer would be simple – but of authority and the placement by creation in the hierarchy as laid down by God. If the hierarchy has **not** changed, then the **acceptance** of relative position becomes of paramount importance. It would be as wrong for **man** to assume authority over Christ, as it would be for woman to assume authority over man. Whether we believe it to be right or wrong, masculinity has been ascribed to God and the Holy Spirit, and was actually evidenced in Christ and the Apostles. No created man, or woman, arranged things like that; it is of God. The foregoing **has** to be pointed out and understood because I believe it to be germane to the whole argument.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY

I believe that Christians can and should apply Christian parameters in their dealings with social issues; the constancy of Christian belief should be apparent at all times. I very much doubt if social parameters can achieve any degree of constancy if and when applied to the Church.

Take, for instance, the case of a woman who has some executive or authoritative position over men in her secular employment. Is it reasonable, or even sensible, to assume that immediately she steps over the threshold of her own home that she becomes the willing and docile recipient of all of her husband’s wishes; intent on carrying out his every whim and command? “Ah”, but some will say, “an adverse attitude may be adopted by women in non-Christian homes, but it can’t happen in the homes of Church members; the woman will keep her ‘place’”. Well, she may keep her place, but that place may be in the exercising of authority in the home just as at work.

In these days of high unemployment it may very well be that the woman is the sole bread-winner in the home. Isn’t it reasonable to assume that the degradation felt by the man would tend to influence him to adopt a non-leading role, and wouldn’t the reverse be true of the bread-winning woman? The spectacle of this would also tend to have an adverse effect upon the children.

Furthermore, the woman whose secular employment is in the teaching profession is not likely to take too kindly to the vague ramblings she may sometimes hear from the platform in Church when some male members are speaking, and she would look askance at the injunction “I suffer not a woman to teach.”

These things, and others, are having a profound effect on the primary relationship between man and woman; that of marriage. Women are assuming a more dominant role in the home. Men are being introduced to the intricacies of ‘nappy’ changing; they are learning to make remarkable manoeuvres with the supermarket trolley; and they seem willing to stand around with bemused expectation while the woman performs

what should be that most private and intimate natural function, giving birth to a child. These, coupled with a marked effeminacy in style of dress and personal hygiene, make one wonder whether or not the sexes are changing their fundamental roles. Let me hasten to add that I am a male chauvinist – if chauvinism means a demonstrable loyalty to the male sex – and I make no apology for it, but that does not make me anti-feminist. I have always maintained that women have a unique and vital role, in society as in the Church; indeed, the whole fabric of family, Church, and society, has borne testimony to this remarkable role, but I am rather afraid that so-called emancipatory slogans and postures are doing much to deface the image of the caring wife and mother. Taking these things into account, can we wonder why the Anglican, R.C., and Methodist communions are experiencing the trauma of campaigns for the ordination of woman priests and bishops.

A Re-statement

It will do no harm at all to re-state what the N.T. teaches regarding women in the Church. “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). I cannot see how this verse can be misinterpreted.

“Let your women keep silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience (hupotasso, to be in subjection) as also saith the law” (1 Cor. 14:34). The question is often asked, “Well what if, for some reason, women cannot learn from their husbands at home, how do they learn”? My answer would be that the teaching sessions at the Church should take care of that situation. If the woman has no husband at home then it is quite impossible for her to obey the injunction ‘to learn from her husband at home’, but surely it does not require a great deal of imagination to see other legitimate ways in which she can be taught.

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:11,12). There seems to be a general feeling that if a number of women gather together in a certain place and at a certain time when no men are present then they cannot possibly usurp authority over the man. We are prompted to ask the question, “Does the hierarchical structure in the Church then only apply when men and women are together and not at any other time”? The Greek word AUTHENTEIO means, ‘to exercise authority on one’s own account’. Is this what the women do?

Finally, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church” (Eph. 5:22,23). No one would dispute the statement that Christ is the Head of the Church; why, then, should the statement regarding man and woman be challenged?

Women’s Meetings

As I said, the question of nationwide womens’ meetings raises further issues in my mind. I am asked what I mean by that, so I shall try to explain as objectively as possible.

Who calls the meetings, and what is the objective in view? Is it the case that the sisters of an assembly go to the Elders or leaders and ask, “Can we hold a women’s meeting”? Who, then, chooses the speakers, and ensures the wholesome content of what is taught? This is not to denigrate in any way the women who do speak, or have spoken. You will no doubt know that in a general assembly when any brother speaks, the Elders are supposed to vet what is said in order to eradicate error. Who does this at womens’ meetings, and who gives them authority to do so? This may be an inverted case of the husband, who may be an Elder, learning from his wife at home. A rather peculiar scriptural arrangement.

The diversity of assemblies represented at such meetings can also present some long-term problems. There will be some women with their heads covered; some will have them uncovered. Some will be inclined to sit during prayers; others will want to stand. There can be little doubt that groups from particular assemblies will be much influenced by what is normally practised in their assemblies. It is a well known fact that assemblies in the U.K. do differ in practice; how will non-members who may be present react to this; will they get the impression that there is justification for different practises, or will they conclude that it doesn't matter anyway.

If there are non-members present, what about the doctrine? Is it acceptable at women's meetings to preach the Gospel. If it is, then why not at other times? Furthermore, what about baptism. If it is right to preach then it would seem right to baptise.

The numbers present at nationwide women's meetings leaves me a little baffled. Is it seen as a 'liberation' from the everyday matrimonial and family problems? If it is, then I can understand that; but why not just arrange a day out together at some convenient place? If a series of Gospel meetings is arranged then it is difficult to muster forty or fifty people; why is it that there can be three times that number at women's meetings? This is not sour grapes, it is a fact. Perhaps someone could supply the answer.

I believe that in any local assembly women can fulfil a role as defined by Paul, "The aged women, likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:3-5). Such teaching is acceptable, and can be overseen in the normal way in the assembly. I believe that Christian women are emancipated. I also believe that they emulate their sisters in the world at their peril.
(All questions, please to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessey Way, Winstanley, Wigan, WN3 6ES.)

DO YOU HAVE A REASON OR IS IT A HABIT?

The new husband watched his wife prepare her first ham for the oven and noticed that she cut off a few inches from one end. Asked why she did that, she replied that her mother always did it that way. They called mother, and while she admitted cutting off a few inches, she could give no reason except that her mother had always done it that way. Finally they called grandma, who said, "Oh, I always did that because my pan was too small."

If the world contains so much wickedness with religion what would it be without it?

WHERE TO GO

In the midst of the religious confusion of our day, where can the really sincere and honest person go?

Go to your Bible? Search the scriptures! Find the church that is in the Bible!

Forget about all the different things you have always heard about the church. Find out what the Bible says about it and you will have the truth! Too many people are reading the latest popular respected theologian or listening to what the local vicar has to say. You need to look for the church in the Bible and when you find it you can be sure you will find the Bible in the church!

The prodigal robs his heir; the miser robs himself.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

July 6 Psalm 2 Acts 4:23-37
 July 13 I Kings 4:1-8 Acts 5:1-16
 July 20 Jer. 38:1-18 Acts 5:17-42
 July 27 I Kings 8:1-21 Acts 6

REPORT AND REACTION

The august ruling body was compelled to release Peter and John "with a caution," which certainly involved a threat of more serious action. It was accorded, and expected respect. It had been defied by "unlearned and ignorant men". It became aware of a continuing problem. The believers had stated their position, and now commended their cause to God in Prayer. What a blessed action. No wonder in the circumstances God answered their appeal to scripture and to help. They witnessed "signs and wonders", and asked for more, quite certain that God was with them. We note the futility of earthly powers working against heaven. But God needed Human boldness, the choice humans did exercise. We need it too.

THE NEW FELLOWSHIP

The charities of these early days are not comparable with present days in detail but in principle are the same — love is the basis. The great outflow of mutual love and and self-sacrifice in a new relationship produced wondrous unity and removed want from all concerned.

APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

The Holy Spirit so specifically inspired the apostles as to separate them from all other disciples. Ananias and Sapphira thought to gain credit which they were not entitled to, and were therefore exposed before the whole company. The apostles, backed by divine authority, thus took a prominent position in the Temple and their power was exercised so fully that the news spread all around and multitudes were drawn from surrounding districts: certainly Judaea (see Acts 1, 8). Naturally

this could not be allowed after the warning just given, so there was an arrest of God's authorised messengers. All the apostles were arrested and put into prison, from which the angel released them with the divine command to continue their work. Some at least of the Sandhedrin did realise a power greater than theirs was at work, but how strong is unbelief? The whole Jewish nation of today is as blind.

DEFIANCE AND SUFFERING

Keep thinking how great was the shock to those who were used to being treated with profound moral, religious and political obedience. The uneducated common men who had been with Jesus were in a position of control in the Temple, and the whole city and country, were holding forth a message totally contrary to Authority. They in fact proclaimed the action against Jesus to be an outrageous act of murder, bringing a sentence against those who opposed them. In fact bringing "this man's blood upon them." Many of those in the council had desired to kill Jesus as soon as He declared Himself. Their plot against Him had succeeded to the point of crucifixion, but now they were face to face with astounding proof of the resurrection which they were quite powerless to disprove. Had the body not been raised they could have produced it — and they knew the facts as plainly as they now knew the works of the apostles proved to be of divine power. They could attribute it to the devil BUT no one else would accept that — the people glorified God! Unwillingly, they accepted good advice from Gamaliel but used violence and threats. Verses 29 to 32 present persistent defiance, and they had to take that. We must suppose the beating was 39 stripes, and they hurt. (Deut. 25,1-3) It was the alternative to what they wanted (verse 33).

INCREASE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Multitudes of men and women were being added to the Lord (5,14) so that the work of mutual support became onerous and wider spread. The apostles

had borne the brunt of it but obviously they could not maintain the increased responsibility. Hence difficulty between Jews of Hebrew (native) and Grecian habits arose. We note how wisely the apostles were led to handle a grievance by appointing men to be set aside to take over the burden. The religious and social blessings of the new faith must go together, and ultimately two at least of the "deacons" became evangelists or preachers. The Holy Spirit in the heart fits us for service of whatever kind, and in this matter choice with the church and appointment by the apostles imparted spiritual gifts also, which we find specially manifested in Stephen.

SPIRITUAL DISPUTING

We may regard Stephen as "Grecian" in the sense of life and education, and therefore specially fitted to meet the Jewish representatives of a synagogue maintained particularly for Jews frequenting Jerusalem from foreign parts — many of the "straitest sect of our religion, a Pharisee" (Acts 26,5). Was Paul there? We see how alive they would be to insults and opposition to the Sanhedrin, and therefore blind to the reasoning of ignorant (or rather "common") men teaching venerable rabbis and priests in the courts of Jewish learning and influence. We are all liable to turn deaf ears to new truths when they contradict long cherished habits of life and teaching. We will see in our next chapter that Stephen did not deny the two main charges.

WONDERFUL DEVELOPMENT

Our chapters this month have given us a picture of most astonishing events, perhaps true to say the most outstanding events in the world's history. Apart from the days of the REFORMATION when the Bible was, so to speak, raked out of the institutions which were as blind as the Sanhedrin of the days of the Jesus, and the vile apostacies of Roman and Greek origin had taken over the real religion of Christianity and overlaid it with errors of darkness, sinful misunderstanding, misrepresentation with forms, ceremonies, fables and fo-

malities, we see how the revelation of biblical truth is enlightening those who are willing to receive it. Yet we suppose another kind of darkness is descending in the form of unbelief, worldliness and lustful behaviour, pouring doubt upon God's word, and claiming credit for brotherly kindness which ministers only material blessings and denies that every good thing in social service and security for man's wisdom, which never could compare with God's. The gospel preached by the apostles is God's wisdom applied to man's need. "There is no other name given among men under heaven, whereby we must be saved." We need to give thought to the tremendous impact of the miraculous power of the apostles: the crowds bringing their sick into Jerusalem so that even a shadow of an apostle was available for healing. But do remember that it was a minority of the Jewish folk that really responded. Persecution arose which drove them out, and many of them paid for it with their lives. Yet a mighty empire capitulated to its main truths.

R. B. SCOTT

OBITUARY

Hindley, Wigan

Our hearts have been saddened by the loss of a dear Sister in Christ. Kathleen Levick was laid to rest in Jesus on Monday, March 24th to await the return of her dear Lord. Bro. L. Morgan paid tribute to her faith and fortitude. She came into fellowship with us on December 30th 1974. Although seriously afflicted with Arthritis she continued to attend the meetings until she was no longer able to do so. She looked forward eagerly to the ones who continually came to see and converse with her. Her faith, though severely tested, remained steadfast and now she is at peace, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious reappearing of her Saviour.

To her near and dear ones we express our sincere sympathy, commending them to follow her loving example and trust in the Lord she loved.

TOM KEMP.

Hindley, Wigan: The church has, yet again, suffered the loss of a dear sister, Sister Ethel Southern, who died in Christ, on April 1st. Our sister broke bread at Hindley for the first time 68 years ago. The writer remembers, as a small boy, listening to her beautiful and strong singing voice. Our Sister Ethel worked most of her life in the weaving sheds and later in the local paint works. She had strong Christian principles, standing up for the right and vigorously opposing the wrong. Her faith and trust was to be put severely to the test in later life, for, like the woman in Mark 5:25 (who suffered 12 years) our sister suffered greatly from Rheumatoid Arthritis for 42 years. We will never know the depth of pain and suffering she endured but she is now at rest, awaiting the resurrection morning. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble . . ." (Cor. 1:3).

TOM KEMP.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Alf Marsden's new address is:- 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan, WN3 6ES. His Tel. No. remains the same.

COMING EVENTS

New Cumnock: The Church here (DV) intend holding their ANNUAL SOCIAL on Saturday, 14th June, at 4 p.m. in the Town hall. Speakers: Jack Nisbet, Ulverston; Joe Nisbet, Corby. A cordial invitation to all. Items for the programme to the undersigned.

H. MCGINN,
6 Westpark Drive,
New Cumnock, Strathclyde.

Stretford, Manchester: Please support the brethren at Stretford, Manchester in the following meetings:-

Saturday, 21st June, 1986 at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, 7.30 p.m.

Two ex-muslim Speakers:-

Paul Subhan from India.

Nino Braik from N. Ireland.

Monday, 23rd June, 1986 at the Town Hall, Chadderton, Oldham, 7.30 p.m.

Speaker: Paul Subhan

Topic: WHY JESUS?

Please pray that God will be glorified through Jesus the Lord.

ALAN ASHURST, Sec.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kitwe, Zambia: The Stop-press news is that 26 religious groups have appeared on a Zaire Government List as banned. Those banned include J.W.'s, Seventh-Day Adventists, a 'Jesus Name' Pentecostal group and seven 'Church of Christ' groupings. Chester is taking some practical steps to right the situation. Correspondents writing to Zaire are asked to inform and co-operate with Chester Woodhall or they could add to the confusion. There are two major problems:-

- (1) Lack of unity amongst the church of Christ groupings, and
- (2) non-payment of the Zaire Government Registration Deposit.

ANGELA WOODHALL,
Kitwe, Zambia.

Dennyloanhead: The present series of Saturday evening Gospel Meetings have been concluded and we would like to express our thanks and appreciation to all our visiting speakers who preached the gospel and all those who came to the meetings and supported us with their presence. We trust that the preaching carried out may yet bring forth fruit to God's glory.

The church has restored to fellow-ship sister Cathie McAlpine. She has been attending our current Saturday evening gospel meetings and has decided to return to the fellowship of the church. We thank God for her decision and pray that she, with us, will remain faithful to Him who Loved us and gave Himself for us.

JOE MALCOLM, Sec.

Newtongrange — Ladies' Meeting

On Thursday, 24th April last, the ladies of the meeting held their annual "Close of Meeting" tea. Upwards of 50 met for a time of fellowship and song. Invited along were some of the brethren who throughout the year, contributed to the speaking plan. After the meal, all were entertained to a time of solo and community singing: The chairlady being Sister N. Wilson

Sister Wilson thanked each and everyone for being present. Prayers were led by Bro. Joe Currie and Bro. James Gardiner. Sister Coventry led the solo singing, followed by Messrs.: Sister Jean Gardiner; Bros. Scott, Sharp, Moncrieff; Miss Wood, Sister Moncrieff and Bro. Currie. Sister Jean Halliday recited a lovely scots poem. As all was most enjoyable, time flew past ever so quickly. At the end of the meeting Sister N. Wilson once again thanked all who took part, with a special thank you to the catering crew. We look forward to the next time.

A. SHARP, Sec.

Children may tear up a house, but they seldom break up a home — that's done by Dad and Mom.

SOCIALS — A THING OF THE PAST

Newtongrange (Midlothian)

15th May, 1897.

Our Social Meeting in connection with the Sunday School took place on Saturday, the 15th May. Bro. Smith (Edinburgh), presided over a large attendance of children and brethren and friends, and was supported on the platform by Bren. James Anderson and Laurie Grinstead (evangelists), Rodgers (Edinburgh), Wilson (Musselburgh), and Bro. Kerr (Newtongrange). After the address our Sunday School Secs., report showed the school to be in a flourishing condition. The children enlivened the proceedings with a few an-thems, and Bro. Grinstead sang a solo, "Not half has ever been told."

W.B.

(Sent in by Andrew Sharp)

GIVING

There is no need for commands and rules as to how much the members of the church in New Testament times should part with, how it was to be contributed, and such like. They gave *what* was needed, *when* it was needed, and *all* that was needed. (Wm. Crockart at Ann. Conf. of Churches of Christ, 1897).

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