

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

VOL. 44. No. 2

FEBRUARY, 1976

SEEING IS BELIEVING

IT is generally agreed that a healthy human-being has five senses, viz. sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, although quite apart from those who believe in extra-sensory perception there are some who believe that many of us have a sixth sense – those in the Scottish highlands used to call it 'the second sight' and perhaps still do. Certainly the witch of Endor had an ability well outside the scope of the average 'man in the street' and displayed powers not quite covered by the normal five senses. Nor was the witch of Endor unique for there were plenty of others, then and now, with similar talents. The ranks of those who believe in the supernatural are thin however and the vast majority of humanity have a very basic approach to most things they encounter, i.e. seeing is believing. To most men and women only that which can be seen can be believed and accepted. Logic itself seems to demand that it is unreasonable to be asked to accept that which one cannot see. Man has a suspicion of anything which is described as being invisible (especially after 'the King's New Clothes' episode) and so because of ignorance and doubt prefers to avoid anything which smacks of the supernatural or spiritual. Thus the world's broad rule of thumb – "show me it and I'll believe you". By the same token, however, men take in their everyday stride such things as the force of gravity, magnetism and electricity all of which are very real but yet can never be seen. Men make windmills and powerstations to harness the wind and electricity – strange behaviour in those who believe only in what they can see.

It should make men think to ponder the fact that many such forces existed, latent and undiscovered, for many centuries before man finally stumbled across them and who knows what other untold forces lie slumbering not far from the probing fingers of man, awaiting discovery. The apostle Paul did not share this current popular maxim – "if you can't see it you can't believe it" – for Paul took the view that "if you can see it it's not worth believing" and that it was the invisible things only which were worth our attention. He said, in 2 Cor. 4:18 "...for we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Anything we can see is transient and consists of but dust (as any mortician or gravedigger will confirm) and the ravages of time will reduce all things which exist in the world to this simple constituent in due course – thus things which can be seen are, in reality, about as temporary as the gingerbread house in Hansel and Gretel. It is the invisible things only which have any permanency and are the eternal things.

'Seeing is believing' is actually a contradiction of terms for surely the mental processes of belief or disbelief are not exercised when we are confronted with that which we can see. I have not seen New York but I believe that it exists — my belief is based upon all the evidences which have been presented to me over the years. If I were to go and see New York the question of whether I believed or disbelieved in its existence would not present themselves to me. We believe that the wind exists, not because we can see the wind but because we can see evidences of it nearly every day. We cannot see the forces of gravity or electricity but we daily see the evidences of their existence and thus we believe in them. We believe in God, not because we can see God but because we are surrounded by evidences of His existence. We believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, because of evidences within and without the New Testament. We believe the scriptures to be the Word Of God because of internal and external evidences. What we can actually see, however, does not call for great quantities of faith for, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:7, "we walk by faith and not by sight", and again, in Rom. 8:24, "...hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for." There seems, therefore, to be little praise or virtue in believing that which we can readily see. Lately a great interest has been revived in the existence, or otherwise, of the Loch Ness monster. Our good friends south of the border used to say that the monster was always sighted just at the start of the holiday season with a view to increasing the tourist trade in Scotland but we always put this down to 'sour grapes' because they don't have anything quite like 'the monster' down in the Lake District. However for the last few years Cambridge University, and other responsible bodies, have been mounting round-the-clock surveillance of the loch with film cameras hoping for some good shots. Even the Japanese have been searching the depths in a submarine.

A lot of good photographs already exist, of course, but all are unacceptable to the world at large because they could have been 'faked'. I have always believed in the existence of the Loch Ness monster and especially so since reading a book, many years ago, which catalogued all the official sightings over the years and one could not but be impressed by the obvious integrity of them. After all, the first sighting was recorded in the 8th century (before the tourist trade) and a 12th Century document talks of "...the beastie in Lochhe Nesse". The local water bailiff has seen the creature about eighteen times or more. Of all the attempts to adduce evidence of the existence of the monster the recent American project has been by far the most successful: With their usual ingenuity and thoroughness the American scientists have obtained exciting underwater photographs and electrical impulse recordings which, when exhibited recently, convinced many naturalists of the existence of a large creature down there in the murky depths of Loch Ness. Most scientists remain, however, very sceptical and require, they say, more convincing evidence. What they mean, of course, is that they will require to see it with their own eyes — for seeing is believing. They will have to have the monster dragged to the water's edge and be able to poke it with a stick. Even then some will not believe it. Many are like that with regards to God. They can't see God, and put Him under a microscope, or place Him on the pathologist's table, therefore they can't believe in God. This is hardly surprising, I suppose, when we consider that the early disciples once made a request along those lines, recorded in John 14:8 when Philip said, "Lord show us the Father and it sufficeth us". Like Philip, the world is prepared to believe the Father if they can but see Him. Thomas was likewise hard to convince and when the disciples told him that they had seen the risen Christ his reply was fairly representative of the basic attitude on our present unbelieving world, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I shall not believe". Eight days later Jesus confronted the embarrassed Thomas and said "Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing". May it be that we shall not be faithless but believing and that we shall not have to literally see the things of God before we are prepared to believe them. May it be that we shall not insult the Maker of our universe by approaching Him with the suspicious frame of mind of those who may be buying a second-hand car. On such a subject as 'Seeing is Believing' we could not do better than close with quoting with our Lord's final words to 'doubting' Thomas (and to all the Doubting Thomas' in our present time), "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed". EDITOR.

NON-PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE "S S"

There has been a lively and encouraging reaction to the little sheet inserted in copies of the "S.S." recently by our treasurer, brother Paul Jones, regarding what he should do regarding the recurring financial difficulties of the "S.S." and the non-payment by some subscribers to the magazine. We wish to thank all those who took the trouble to write in, many offering tangible assistance, and the expressions of appreciation for the work done by those who participate in filling the pages of the paper. A fairly representative example came from our brother Brown in Dunfermline and we have pleasure in printing it mainly because of its exhortatory qualities:—

Dear Brother Jones,

It appals me to see from the missive you enclosed with the December issue of the "S.S." how many readers have failed to honour their subscription dues, thereby failing in one of the most important of Christian duties, viz:— "Discharge your obligations to all men: pay tax and toll, reverence and respect, to those to whom they are due. Leave no claim outstanding against you, except that of mutual love" (Romans 8:7-8: N.E.B.).

Perhaps such defaulters should be reprov'd as required by 2 Tim. 3:16-17, not only for the good of the "S.S.", but also for their own spiritual good, and further copies withheld, until payment is forthcoming, I certainly think the "S.S." should continue, all honour to those who give of their time and labour in giving us such wonderful expositions of the word of truth. So far as I, and I am sure many other subscribers are concerned, "their labour is not in vain in the Lord" "and surely there is no more honourable labour than to "proclaim the message, press it home, on all occasions, convenient or inconvenient, use argument, reproof and appeals with all patience that the work of teaching requires" (2 Tim. 4:1-3: N.E.B.).

As to your appeal for increased subscriptions, let each subscriber consider how much fighting for the truth of the Scriptures is worth. Let us compare it honestly with what we pay weekly for newspapers and magazines (including horoscopes — Paul calls it mythology 2 Tim. 4:4) and other worthless luxuries and let us make a realistic monthly contribution towards what is, after all, of great benefit to each of our spiritual welfares. W. BROWN

P.S. To this end, I propose to contribute (D.V.). £1 monthly during 1976 and accordingly I enclose cheque p £12. W.B.

IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

"Beneath the shadow of Thy throne,
Thy saints have felt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure."

PERFECT TRUST — "SURELY" Psalm 23:6

Yet again, I invite you to walk with the Shepherd to the "green pastures", to the "pastures of tender grass", then on to the "still waters", the "waters of quietness". It is vital for heaven-loving souls, to tune their thoughts to eternal things, and we can do this better, by coming aside once more and resting awhile, away from the noise and bustle of a pleasure-mad world. We have a need to refresh ourselves with God's sanctifying influence, and how better to do that, than by spending a little time with the Good Shepherd. We cannot be long in His presence, before we share some of the fragrance of the One who is known as the "Rose of Sharon". In these dark days, we need to sit at His feet more and more, and eat of the Bread of Life, and drink from the ever flowing fountain, the Water of Life. What does He possess that we yearn for? Power? Strength? Life? Love? Truth? Beauty? Peace? Joy? The secret of happiness? Yes! Yes! Yes! is the answer to our questions. SURELY SURELY SURELY...let that word be fixed in our minds

during the coming days. I pray that the thought of this month's meditation will be a rich blessing to your soul, and that you may experience the inflowing of the love and grace of our Lord Jesus, that your whole life may be enriched.

David had experienced the blessings of the companionship with His Lord. Let us recap, and note the source of his confidence and trust, and why he used this word "SURELY".

The Lord is MY Shepherd; I shall not want.

HE maketh ME to lie down in green pastures:

HE leadeth ME beside the still waters.

HE restoreth MY soul:

HE leadeth ME in the paths of righteousness for HIS name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for THOU art with ME;

THY rod and THY staff they comfort ME.

THOU preparest a table before ME in the presence of MINE enemies:

THOU anointest MY head with oil; My cup runneth over.

One of the deadliest arrows that the enemy of the human soul can shoot, is the arrow of doubt. If the Devil can get the child of God doubting he is half-way to victory. Remember again what the serpent said to our first parents:— "Yea, hath God said?" Genesis 3:1. That is the voice of the devil. Brethren, we are on the battlefield, and if we are to be victorious, invincible, we must go forward in the strength of the Lord, only then can we overcome all obstacles. Paul's message to the Ephesians will help us to remain in possession of the field as victors, after fighting the good fight of faith. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" Ephesians 6:10-13.

"Fear not, He is with you – O be not dismayed!

For He is your God, and will still give you aid;

He'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,

Upheld by His righteous, omnipotent hand".

SURELY "IS ABLE TO DELIVER US" " HE WILL DELIVER US".

"Sha-drach, Me-shach, and A-bed-ne-go, answered and said to the king, O Neb-u-chad-nez-zar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king" Daniel 3:16-17.

SURELY THE MESSAGE OF THE LORD TO E-BED-MEL-ECH.

"For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord" Jer.39:18.

SURELY THE MESSAGE OF DAVID TO DAVID

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Psalm 23:6"

SURELY ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS ARE SURE

"The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness" Psalm 3:7,8.

SURELY THOU ART THAT CHRIST THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" John 6:66-69

SURELY THAT THOU KNOWEST ALL THINGS

"His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speaketh no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee' by this we believe that thou camest forth from God" John 16:29-30.

SURELY SHALL HE NOT MUCH MORE CLOTHE YOU

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow, is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith" Matt. 6:30

SURELY LORD' SAVE US: WE PERISH

"And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying. Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm" Matthew 8:25-26.

SURELY LORD, SAVE ME

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Matthew 14:31.

SURELY WE HAVE HERE BUT FIVE LOAVES, AND TWO FISHES

"He said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude, And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and-children" Matthew 14:18-21.

SURELY ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" Philippians 4:13.

SURELY I KNOW

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" 2 Timothy 1:12.

SURELY ALSO MAKE A WAY OF ESCAPE

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" 1 Corinthians 10:13.

SURELY MORE THAN CONQUERORS

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" Romans 8:37.

SURELY Beloved, the message of God's Holy Spirit, is clear – we all need to stop doubting and start trusting.

"Once I thought I walked with Jesus,
Yet such changeful feelings had;
Sometimes trusting, sometimes doubting,
Sometimes joyful, sometimes sad.

But He called me closer to Him,
Bade my doubting, fearing cease;
And when I had fully yielded,
Filled my soul with perfect peace".

This month's exercise:— Learn by heart the passage or passages, you think will be most helpful for you. May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN.

FROM THE TREASURER

The minimum subscription for 1976 and until further notice is £1.50 or \$3.50 by cheque or \$3.00 in bills. I make no apologies for increasing the rates brethren, because these are entirely due to costs in printing and postage. Neither the Editor nor I take anything for the service we seek to render to you the readers. Every possible economy is made to distribute the paper as cheaply as possible. We are constrained to draw attention of all readers to their duty to support the paper by prompt payment of subscription and to consider the desirability of the magazine and give generously to its support where possible. We would draw your attention to a comparison between 1974 and 1975 balance sheet. This year there is a drop of nearly £140.00 in subscriptions.

HAVE YOU PAID YOURS?

In future we will consider that subscriptions are due on or before 1st January of the current year. A slip will be enclosed each month in the case of single copies when the subscription has not been paid. If an account is one year overdue we will cease to send if arrears and current, subscription are not paid by the end of March. Perhaps you will realise how much work you can save me by sending your subscriptions immediately. I am ashamed to have to write to christians in this manner. You can make sure that it does not apply to you. In future when agents for churches are over a year behind with their payments I will write once and if no satisfaction is received I shall write to the church secretary or the treasurer if the secretary is the agent.

If your copy of the Scripture Standard fails to arrive,

THINK SUBSCRIPTION FIRST

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 1975.

<i>INCOME</i>		<i>EXPENDITURE</i>	
Cash in Hand at 1.1.75	87.60	By Walter Barker (Printing)	657.48
Cash in Bank at 1.1.75	655.07	By Printers Postage	55.49
Subscriptions During 1975	384.50	Distribution Postage	90.81
Gifts During 1975	353.55		<u>146.30</u>
		Sundries. Reading Cards	19.03
		News Wrappers	.84
		Treasurers Stationery and Telephone	5.00
			<u>24.87</u>
		Total Expenditure	828.65
		Cash in Hand at 31.12.75	255.46
		Cash in Bank at 31.12.75	396.61
			<u>652.07</u>
Grand Total	£1480.72	Grand Total	£1480.72

Audited and found correct *A. SCOBIE*. Date 17.1.76

OUR GUIDE

John 14:6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" -

Whatever is lacking in our lives may be found in Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life", from past experience we may have learned that without Him as the way there is nothing but wandering. Again without Him as the truth there is nothing but error; without Him as the life there is nothing but death. Let us therefore keep the services of our guide. When we dispense with the services of our guide, one can be assured of trouble.

The secret of victory over sin, of recovery from failure, of deliverance in time of need, is the fastening of one's thought upon Jesus the Christ. To be occupied with self is guaranteed despair

To be occupied with Christ is never-failing glory. The text clearly indicates that He is the way to God, and the only way. Note He is not a way as if there were many: Jesus is the way.

The wonderful thing about Jesus is that, as we know Him, we come to Know God the Father. Jesus said "He that hath seen me hath seen my Father also". Jesus is the only way to a complete life. Be humble and let Jesus guide us all the way. He gives rest and peace in place of unrest. Let us always be clothed with strength instead of weakness. Jesus leads us continually – if we let Him – into the Father's presence.

Take the expression "I am the way" and whatever the soul longs for and is in the interest of our wellbeing it will be our inheritance in Christ. He is the way:-

To God – "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

To Peace – "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14).

To Rest – "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

To Joy – "That my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

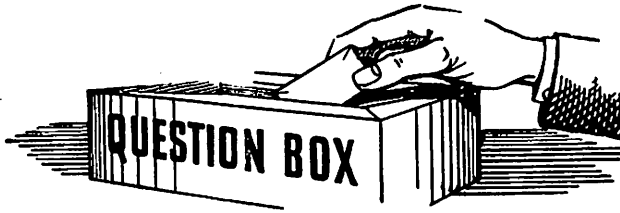
To Power – "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

To Victory – "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

To Heaven – Our standing before God throughout eternity is due to the finished work of Jesus the Christ.

Brethren let us use the full service of our guide in all aspects of our living. And be assured of reaching that Heavenly Home.

A.P. SHARP Newtongrange.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Most times when I speak to people about christianity I receive the comment, "Yes, it sounds very nice, but it is not really relevant to the problems of today"" How should I deal with comments like this?"

This is a stock reply and I have heard it many times when I have spoken with people about Christ. They see christianity as nearly two thousand years old, and in their minds they relate it to the period in which it was born. Coupled with this they see a phenomenal rate of change in things around them, and they cannot equate a changeless God with so many changing things and events.

How do we relate the chariot to Concorde: the comparative luxury enjoyed by most people in the western world to the Son of Man who had nowhere to lay his head; the intellectual ignorance of the early disciples to the vast store of so-called theological knowledge exhibited by prelates and dignitaries in organised religion today? While many people couldn't care less, I believe that others are genuinely confused. These are the ones we must try to help. In order to do this we must think our faith more, perhaps, than we have been accustomed to doing in the past. But let us look at the question in a little more detail.

No Doubts

We must be convincing to others. The probing fingers of doubt must not assail our faith. Furthermore, we must not forget the words of the Lord to us, and this is why we must constantly keep ourselves before the Word.

You will no doubt recall the incident as recorded by Luke (24:1-8). when some of the Lord's followers went to take spices to the tomb and found the body gone; the scripture says "They were much perplexed" (in doubt). So much so, in fact, that the two men in shining garments

had to tell them that Jesus had risen, as He had promised when he taught them. Then, says the scripture rather reproachfully, "they remembered his words".

Shouldn't they have remembered His words so that there would have been no perplexity? Well, of course they should. But when the tide is running swiftly against us we sometimes doubt in our minds whether the things we have believed are really true. When evil seems to triumph, the voice of faith may become muted. It is then that we must stand, and having done all, to stand. Then people will see that to some, at least, the gospel is relevant in the twentieth century. The confident exhibition of our faith might be the means of making others seek Christ.

What about the Problems?

I believe that when we talk with people we should not allow sweeping generalisations to go unchecked. This should be true also when we as christians meet together to study. We can only allow the statement that christianity is not relevant to the problems of today, when the problems of today are manifestly in every way different from the problems of any other age. When people make such statements we should challenge them to say the ways in which this age differs from any other, particularly the first century A.D. Here are some of the things which have been suggested to me, which, so people say, make this age so much different from any other.

Trades Unions

It is argued that the power of trades unions, with the consequent facility to disrupt social and business life, is a problem which is peculiar to the twentieth century. I wonder. I would like to direct your attention to Acts 19:23-41. Here we are told of Demetrius, a silversmith, calling together what is, ostensibly, a craft union; They see their livelihoods threatened and they strike out at those who they think are depriving them of their earning capacity. The result is that the whole city of Ephesus is thrown into confusion.

Now I ask you, is this so much different to today? Organisationally things may be more sophisticated today, but surely the principle remains the same. Moreover, the way that this furore was dealt with is an object lesson for us today. The emphasis on lawful means, reasoned argument, and a rational approach, ought to make it clear to us that the scriptural way to the solution of our problems is not only relevant, but indeed necessary today. (see verses 35-41).

Infidelity

Yes, this is indeed a serious problem today and one can only add that it seems to be getting worse. But the degree to which this has been allowed to escalate in our society is a measure, not of the uniqueness of the problem but the level to which our society has sunk.

But is infidelity peculiar to our age? Not on your life! We can think of the promiscuity practiced in early Rome (Rom. 1.) We are reminded of the problems concerning marriage in Corinth. Nor must we imagine that infidelity simply and solely refers to disloyalty to husband or wife; the literal meaning of the word is a disbelief in christianity.

Now then, we know that the N.T. teaching emphasises the honourable estate of marriage, and that the relationship between husband and wife should be based on mutual love and respect; salutary lessons which our society sorely needs today. But what about disbelief? Just a product of our age? Why, when the Son of God came to earth preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven they crucified him. However, it was He who gave the commission to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16). The relevancy of that message to our society today cannot be questioned.

Technology

That this is a technological age in which we live cannot be gainsayed. Great and wonderful discoveries have been made. But the nature of discovery is to bring to light things which are already there. The utilisation of these things marks out the ingenuity of man.

The space exploration programmes have been hailed as astounding achievements, and of course they are. But here again, man is journeying through space to places which already exist, and man as yet has not propounded a convincing theory as to how they came into being.

Now the Bible states facts about creation. God created, and He did it by word of command. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light". How puny is the advanced technology of man when contrasted with the majestic power of God. Not for Him the long years of research; He speaks and things spring into being. The wonderful thing is that the power of God is not diminished at all, and that same power is available to man today. Ecclesiastes says, "There is nothing new under the Sun", yet people today look upon technology as a God and say that the supreme power of Almighty God is not relevant to their needs.

Conclusion

There are many more areas of life which could be explored, and I feel sure that you know of some yourselves. My advice is that we should so study the Word that we are able to relate the problems of any age to the christian doctrine. When we are able to do this, we shall find that not only is christianity relevant to today but that it is vitally necessary to successful living.

(All questions to brother Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan).

AS I SEE THINGS

THE fundamental problem facing the churches of Christ today is as old as the church itself. The things that divide us are the things that should unite us. To me, they are basic truths. I have always recognised the bible as being the inspired Word of God and have always tried to treat it so. To me, it is also very noticeable in the scriptures that when God wants something done He wants it done in His way and gives the necessary instructions. We can note God's instructions to our first parents: His instructions regarding the first sacrifices: His instructions regarding the Ark of the Covenant even to the details regarding the carrying of it: His minute instructions regarding the Tabernacle and the worship therein, and so on. That which also comes over to us with great force is the severity of God's displeasure when these instructions are either ignored or misapplied, even when misapplied with the best of motives and intentions.

If we take a similarly good luck at the New Testament we will note that similar codes of conduct exist for those who seek internal salvation. Jesus outlined that there was a wise and a foolish way to build (I suggest for eternity). The result of building foolishly was catastrophic for we note that 'great was the fall' of the structure Matt. 7:27. Again then we note that our very salvation depends upon our loving obedience to God's instructions and the genuine respect we give to His wishes regarding the way things are done to be. "If ye love me keep my commandments", said the Lord.

The conduct of the church in worship is also subject to the basic teaching of Christ and His apostles. Jesus said, in response to Peter's confession, "Upon this rock I will build My church" and the apostle Paul, later on, assures the disciples at Ephesus that we, the Body of Christ, are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, i.e. instructions through the apostles and prophets form the basis of our procedures in the church. Some time ago I noted that this rigid attitude was being described by some brethren as 'Legalistic' and this at a time when digressive forms seemed to be arising in the worship. Brethren are turning to practices which many of the brethren in older times would certainly not have countenanced and had, in fact, warned against. It is true that each assembly has the right to conduct its own affairs, always providing that in doing so it adheres to the Word of God, but each assembly must surely also give heed to the effect that it is having on congregations in the immediate vicinity. How can anyone with any concern for his brothers in Christ insist on having his own way if in doing so he causes brethren to separate and offence to arise?

My plea and prayer is this that all those brethren who are striving for a return to Christianity as it was in the beginning will seek to avoid the introduction into an assembly of anything foreign to such a high and lofty ideal. Let us all have a rethink on such important issues as these and if necessary make the supreme sacrifice in the interests of the faith that was once, for all, delivered to the saints. J.E. BREAKELL, Hindley, Wigan.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

MARCH 1976

7—Isaiah 52:1-12	Romans 1:1-17
14—Genesis 6	Romans 1:18-32
21—Isaiah 1:1-17	Romans 2:10-16
28—Psalm 51	Romans 2:17-29

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER TO ROMANS

This letter was evidently written from Corinth while Paul was anticipating his journey to Jerusalem with the gifts of the Gentile churches (Rom. 15:26). This was a perilous journey for which he sought the prayerful interest of the Roman Christians (15:30-32). He had never been to Rome but longed to do so, and planned for it in mind (Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:11; 15:22). It would seem that the church there was begun by the "Sojourners from Rome, Jews and proselytes" (Acts 2:10). The news of their faithfulness had been spread abroad among Christians, and we can understand the central position of the city would insure this. It was natural that Paul should wish to both see the Christians gathered in so important and so hard an environment for two reasons. Spiritual gifts might well be scarce in a place so far from Jerusalem and the apostolic control, and his work and special mission called him to even further fields — Spain, the westernmost part of the empire (Rom. 15:24 & 28).

We may summarise the letter as follows:-
 Chapters 1 to 8The way of salvation
 Chapters 9 to 11The case of the Jews
 Chapters 12 to 15.....How Christians should live
 Chapters 16 Personal greetings

Paul's Commission and it's outcome

We might well expect Paul to extend his introduction of himself beyond the usual, and he has certainly done so effectively. Those to whom he is writing may know but little of the details of his work. Thus he states with emphasis his divine call. He is the "sent out" slave of Jesus Christ set aside for service of the gospel. We wonder whether his use of the word "separated" stems from the fact that he was a Pharisee - a separated one. Now the consecration is very different. Its world embracing nature is in complete contrast with the ex-

clusiveness of the Pharisee — "obedience to the faith among ALL nations". He is "called to be an apostle" — they (and we) are called to be saints" and saints are "separated ones" — separated from sin and worldliness. The dual nature of the Lord is very clearly stated here — "Son of David according to the flesh"; "Son of God according to the Spirit of Holiness". What a happy note Paul strikes as his first thought — thankfulness for his readers 'faithfulness! Those occupying this outpost of the empire of Christ have been often in his prayers. He writes elsewhere of "the care of all the churches" His wide vision involves so much mental and spiritual strength, which many of us would do well to emulate. He regards himself as having a duty to all sorts and conditions of men — Jews, Greeks and barbarians alike. The thought of Rome as the centre, the hub of the great empire built on force and maintained thereby is in contrast with the thought of the world-wide scope of the gospel he is preaching, building up a body from all nationalities to share God's blessings of forgiveness and salvation, the motive force of which is love. No wonder he is not ashamed. The saints of God in the Citadel of Rome.

The Wrath of God

The gospel is the remedy for sin. It is therefore in place to consider the development of the religions and behaviour of the world in which the Romans lived. Idolatry brings sin in its train. It is conceived in distrust and disobedience to God. His everlasting power and divinity are evidenced to man by the creation around him. It is unexplainable apart from a supreme mind as Paul indeed had occasion to point out to the heathens in Lystra (Acts 14:17). Here he presents the story of man's failure, sinking into degrading practices because of the deliberate choice of his own cravings, the cravings of his animal nature. Wherever there is worship of things or creatures, there is degradation. That man at the beginning had knowledge of God, there can be no doubt. He ceased to praise and thank Him, and turned to offer worship to things he could handle and even make, symbols or likenesses. "The God unworshipped rapidly becomes unknown". Shameless behaviour follows as we are seeing in this present society with the excuse that there is not a moral standard. It remains true in experience, sometimes alas too late, that God is not mocked; what we

sow we reap. It is not just that physical deterioration follows physical permissiveness but the dreadful list of mental and spiritual disorders drawn in verses 28-32 of our first chapter become more and more the standard behaviour of a people. Such was characteristic of a large area of Roman society in those days.

The wrath of God is not angry vengeance but the eternal repulsion of evil by good. Scripturally we can no more dispose of the love of God than the wrath of God. Real love cannot tolerate evil because evil is inseparable from harm. The amazing thing is that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us".

All Have Sinned

Having utterly condemned idolatry, Paul turns to those who would regard themselves as superior to and in some measure innocent of the grosser sins. For such there remains the same Judge to face, and not one is innocent. Everyone must face justice and find himself under condemnation. So whether we are among the degraded sinners of chapter one or the proud "righteous" judges of chapter 2 repentance and submission are essential. There is of course reward for well-doing and punishment for evil-doing but who can stand before the Judge for acquittal? We bear in mind that Paul had enemies in the church who placed such emphasis upon being of Jewish race that it is not surprising that he draws a picture of the self-righteous. His words need still to be heeded by all professing christians who are always in danger of a self-righteous attitude especially towards really degraded people. He is careful to distinguish between Gentile and Jew in the matter of sinful behaviour, making clear that judgement takes in account the circumstances of society and upbringing. The more enlightened a person is the greater his responsibility before God. R.B. SCOTT.

A bad habit is at first a caller, then a guest, and at last a master.

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SCOTLAND.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Blackburn, New Wellington Street: We rejoice in the news of our sister Carol Lowe desiring to return into the fellowship of the church here. We do pray that she shall grow to know our Lord better and be a faithful worker for the Lord. Indeed may we all see more clearly the responsibilities of being a follower of the Christ. T. TYSON

Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan: On Sunday 4th January, the brethren at Longshoot had the joy of witnessing a soul being added to the Lord's body. After the evening gospel meeting, Lynn McMahon, eldest daughter of Bro. & Sis. Bernard McMahon, expressed her desire to follow Jesus by being baptised, and immediate arrangements were made for her immersion. We give thanks to God for her decision to follow her Master, and pray that she may be helped to remain faithful to Him in the coming years. D. MELLING

Slamannan District: The churches in Scotland got off to a good start in 1976 with a social in the Kintore Rooms, Edinburgh. A large gathering of brethren from all parts enjoyed a varied programme of singing and exhortations. Ian Davidson, Motherwell, was the chairman and the speakers were Andrew Scobie, Dennyloanhead and Jack Nisbet from Peterhead. Two outstanding addresses were given; brother Scobie choosing to speak on the unswerving faith of Nehemiah and brother Nisbet on 'Loyalty to Christ'. A great time was had by all and the chairman rightly accorded the thanks of everyone to those 'Behind the scenes' and for a function very smoothly organised. J.G.

OBITUARY

THE PASSING OF BRO. G. NICHOLS

Jasper, Ala:— Gus Nichols was born on 12th January, 1892, began preaching in 1917 and preached a total of 59 years. Bro. Nichols died November 16th, 1975 after a series of strokes and three bouts of pneumonia. He was 83 years and 10 months of age.

Brother Gus Nichols funeral was held 19th November at the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama. Above 1500 people attended the funeral of which about 400 were gospel preachers. The funeral was conducted by B.C. Goodpasture, W.A. Black, William Woodson and Ray Dutton. Graveside services were conducted by Glen Posey and James Horton. The body lay in state in the Sixth Avenue church building for 30 hours before the funeral; during which time an honour guard of gospel preachers and elders stood vigil continuously. The local radio station broadcast the full funeral service. The Freed-Hardeman chorus sang.

All of Brother Nichols sons are gospel preachers and three of the sons-in-law are also gospel preachers. HE had preached 43 years at the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ at Jasper and had carried on two daily radio broadcasts for many years. (A fuller article will appear in the next issue).

(From "The Christian Chronicle")

COMING EVENTS

THE church in Haddington, Lord willing, intend holding a gospel mission during the month of February with our brother Paul Jones as public proclaimer of the gospel. We intend to advertise widely and visit as many homes as possible with an invitation to the meetings, and we hope local churches will help us to swell the numbers at these meetings. With this in mind we have made the meetings on each Sunday evening commence at 7.30 p.m. We solicit your prayers brethren, for this effort. M.M.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

OUR brother Carlton Melling, who was editor of the "S.S." during some of the most difficult years of its history now stays with his son, Douglas Melling at :- 38 Lulworth Drive, Hindley Green, Wigan, Lancs. Brother Melling has, due to failing health, lost his sight now and this, as we all realise, must be a heavy cross to bear. However, I am told by Douglas that despite all his difficulties he still manages to look on the bright side. Readers of the S.S. are grateful to our brother for all the years, of fairly thankless, service he gave us as editor, and surely he is well worthy of a little remembrance now and again, in the form of a greeting card or perhaps a short letter. Perhaps we shall remember him in our prayers as well, and those who so kindly look after him. ED.

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