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

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BEYOND REDEMPTION ?

THERE is a large and very dingy hostel in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, occupies mainly by drunks and 'down-and-outs'. In the course of a working-week I walk past it many times and am always saddened by the sight of men (made in God's image) and women (some quite young) standing forlornly on the footpath trying to catch the eye of passers-by to beg money (for drink). Quite a number are also to be seen sitting together on street benches, passing the bottle, or even lying in the gutter oblivious of the passing world. No doubt every city has such scenes. We are inclined to intolerant of people in such a condition until we remember the words, "There, but for the grace of God, go I". From observation of such scenes over many years I have come to the conclusion that, after a certain stage in the decline of the individual has been reached, there is little that can be done in their restitution. The point of being "Beyond Redemption" can be reached: certainly as far as any human agency is concerned, Alcoholics Anonymous do the best they can, as do the Social Service Department and various other 'Do-gooder' bodies in the city. Most of the time, however, after they have got some food into the victims and got them back to some semblance of rationality they allow them to go forth, only to find them some hours later, back in the gutter. Some rough idea of the nature of the problem is grasped when we remember that these poor wrecks of humanity will, in their craving, drink almost anything at all from methylated spirit to "Brasso" and furniture polish. Indeed the City Council had to remove the gas jets used in lighting the common-stairs because these hard drinkers discovered that a heady brew could be obtained by passing coal-gas through any liquid, even milk.

Amongst the wretched and unhappy group of alcoholics in the Grassmarket there was, until about a year ago, a youngish man who was, at one time, an office colleague of mine. He was very athletic at that time and played in the football team. Apparently he passed from the 'social drinking' stage very rapidly and in a frighteningly short time was to be seen sharing a few words and a few gulps with the 'Down-and-outs' in the Grassmarket. Within a very few years he was indistinguishable from the others and the last time I saw him his physical condition and appearance could only be described as 'terrifying'. I have not seen him on the pavements for about a year now and can only assume that he is dead. I know that countless efforts were mounted to rescue him from his predicament and while sometimes these attempts showed promise they all, in the end, failed. He was 'Beyond Redemption' it is very sad to say, his body was but human wreckage and his mind was so scrambled that he did not know who he was, and certainly for the most part he did not know where he was. His case is not unique; it is in fact quite commonplace - there are hundreds of others.

There is something very frightening about the phrase "Beyond Redemption" is there not? There is a terrible finality about it, is there not? Even for the man who is extremely ill, hope springs eternal. However once the surgeon makes the exploratory cut and shakes his head we are faced with the awful thought and, perhaps, the awful truth — we are beyond the bounds of hope, we have passed beyond recall. There is then nothing man, with the best will in the world, can possible do for us. A black and bleak picture indeed. Every dark cloud has, however, its silver lining and in the present context the gospel provides man with the most wonderful lining of choicest sterling. Christ not only provides a silver lining to the dark clouds of hopelessness but illumines even the most tragic circumstances with the brightest rays of hope. 'Beyond Redemption' is a phrase alien to the whole tenor of the scriptures and if man is beyond redemption it is because he has placed himself there. Man is his own worst enemy. Man, if he chooses can, however, through Christ, cheat death of its sting and the grave of its victory. The prodigal can always return. This mortal can put on immortality; this corruptible incorruption; we can be buried in the grave in weakness but raised in power; sown in dishonour but raised in glory; sown a natural body and raised a spiritual body.

If man is 'Beyond Redemption' it is none of God's doing. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. "Beyond Redemption" is certainly a spine-chilling statement and sensible men have regard to it. It is this same fear which sends even followers of Christ scurrying to their bibles when Matt. 12: 32 is mentioned. But if we trust the scriptures our fear is supplanted with confidence and our dread with joy. Both the Old and New Testaments richly abound with declarations of God's good intent and unfolds His grand designs for the complete redemption of man.

'Redemption', of course, involves the buying back of something previously removed from our possession, such as a pledge in pawn; or the paying of the ransom price for the release of a prisoner (or hostage). Professor Barclay says that the very employment of such a word implies (1) man was in captivity, or slavery or subject to an alien power (something which had man in its grip) (2) that by no conceivable means could man himself have effected his own release (3) his liberation therefore had to come from some external source with adequate resources to achieve it. How true. We were in bondage to sin and Satan, (prisoners in the kingdom of darkness) and Jesus paid for our release with His blood, as the following statement indicates. "Who (God) hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.." (Col. 1:13, 14). This declaration says it all, but there are many others. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works". (Titus 2:13, 14). "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: ..." (1 Peter 1:18, 19). Thus, if by continued disregard or hostility to God's everlasting word, grace and forgiveness, a man or a woman can be rightly described as being 'Beyond Redemption' the situation is not to God's liking or one of God's making.

Redemption; Oh wonderful story
Glad message for you and for me,
That Jesus has purchased our Pardon
And paid all the Debt on the Tree.

EDITOR.

RECOVERING OUR PURPOSE

WHILE preparing the articles for my autobiography, now being printed monthly in Restoration Review, I had occasion to review my visits to Great Britain in 1947 and 1951. It was a refreshing

experience. One thing I did was to take from the bookshelf the bound volumes of early periodicals presented me by good brethren, most of whom have since departed to be with our precious Lord. As I read in these issues of yesterday I became impressed with the strength of the movement devoted to "the propagation of Christianity as it was at the first". The British Harbinger for 1867 contains 442 pages. That is more than .36 pages per month. Under "Items of News" appear reports of many congregations, some of which have ceased to exist. One wonders what has happened to the descendants of those who sent in reports. In the issue for June Camden Town reports 31 immersed and 4 restored. Wigan reports 14 immersed. Other places have good news of many conversions to the Lord.

Apparently there was a great deal of activity 111 years ago. Men such as David King, J.B. Rotherham, and C. Abercrombie were working incessantly. New congregations of saints were being planted. Debates were being held with prominent secularists. Tracts were being distributed by the thousands. Brethren were being strengthened by intensive study of the revealed Word. Contacts were being made with immersed believers in other groups. It was difficult to ignore the impact of the plea for the ideal of being Christians only.

It is probable that none of us would even suggest that the Cause we love enjoys the growth now that it did then. Many things have happened to take their toll. But we need not despair. Instead, we should analyze the situation as it confronts us and prepare ourselves for whatever responsibility is laid upon us. None of us want the thing for which our fathers contended to disappear from the earth. Certainly Jesus did not die and rise again to preside over a failing kingdom.

Out of a heart filled with deep gratitude and love I would like to suggest some things which it seems to me would assist in the recapture of the zeal which once obtained. I am not oblivious to the fact that I am an American and what I say may be looked at askance. But all of you are my brothers and sisters. We are members of the same family. We are children of the same father. I love all of you very dearly and unashamedly, You need not concur with what I say for me to hold you in my heart.

First, I think we should meet together for prayers directed to God, asking Him to open up great doors and effectual unto us though the adversaries be many. We sing about a "Sweet hour of prayer" but seldom have one. When the primitive disciples were confronted by crises they "lifted up their voice to God with one accord". It seems to me we should gather to pray for a revival of interest in our plea. It has been my personal experience that when we seriously pray for God to bring to us those who need us it is surprising what happens. Amazing grace is still amazing!

Second, we need to examine anew our approach. We are not living in the world of a hundred years ago. We have the Good News which never changes. But how we bring it into contact with the hearts of those who desperately need it must be determined by the kind of world in which we live. Truth is unchanging in its nature. Methods of presenting it are not. We have been experimenting with different methods of approach and have found some of them very effective. We must never forget; however, that what works in one place is not to be universally adopted. The method must be tailored to fit the situation.

Third, we must be ever on the alert that we do not further erode away our forces by division. It is important that "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from among you, with all malice". There is no place for suspicion or evil surmising. We need to receive one another to the glory of God. Through the indwelling Spirit we can produce the fruits of the Spirit. Differences may be grounds for discussion, but not for division among the saints. We need not see everything alike to recognise that Jesus is the centre of our faith. Those who are drawn unto Him should be drawn unto one another. We must recover a sense of our purpose in this life!

Sent for publication in the 'S.S.' by brother W. CARL KETCHERSIDE, 139 Signal Hill Drive, Saint Louis, Missouri.

ASK

“On such love, my soul, still ponder, love so great, so rich, so free;
 Say while lost in holy wonder, Why, O Lord, such love for me?”

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”. Ephesians 3:20.

ASK ... WHAT DO I ASK? “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” 2 Thess. 3:5.
 “O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me”. “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me”.
 “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”. Psalm 139 : 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 23, 24.
 “I the Lord search the heart”. Jeremiah 17:10. “But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7. “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies”. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man”. Matthew 15:18-20.

Last month we considered a few Bible characters who had a consciousness of sin, and by their words we were left in no doubt, as to the awfulness of sin.

Job:- “I abhor myself”. “I am vile”.

David:- “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight”.

Isaiah:- “All our righteousness are as filthy rags”.

Paul:- “I am carnal, sold under sin”.

We could of course quote others, but the above should convince us of the sinfulness of sin, and make us realize the power of the Devil over the lives of some of God’s devoted servants. What of ourselves, can we say with the prophet Isaiah : “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” Isaiah 53:6; The word of God takes our photograph, and if we are honest with ourselves we do not like the result. We cannot run away from God, and we cannot run away from ourselves. I can never hide myself from me, I see what others fail to see. We would do well to pray the prayer of the publican in the temple:— “God be merciful to me a sinner” Luke 18:13.

ASK ... WHAT DO I ASK? ... “The Lord direct your hearts in to the love of God”.

It is as well to remember that we cannot have our hearts directed – “Into the love of God”, without having a feeling of humility. “For this saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”. Isaiah 57:15. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” James 4:10. “Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”. 1 Peter 5:5,6. “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 18:4.

“And some, O Lord, crave perfect rest,
 And to be wholly free from sin;
 And they who fain would serve Thee best,
 Are conscious most of wrong within”.

Samuel Rutherford:- “When I look at my sinfulness, my salvation is to me my Saviour’s greatest miracle. He has done nothing in heaven or on earth like my salvation”.

Jacob Behman:- "Do not mistake me, for my heart is as full as it can hold of all malice at you and all ill-will. My heart is the very dunghill of the devil, and it is no easy work to wrestle with him on his own chosen ground. But wrestle with him on that ground of his I must, and that the whole of my life to the end".

Philip Neri:- 'Begone! all ye self-ignorant and false flatterers, I am good for nothing but to do evil'.

Luther:- "When a man like me, come to know the plague of his own heart, he is not miserable only – he is absolute misery itself; he is not sinful only – he is absolute sin itself".

Jonathan Edwards:- "It has often appeared to me, that if God were to mark my heart – iniquity my bed would be in hell".

William Guthrie:- "The saints of God are far too sharp - sighted for their own self – satisfaction".

Alexander Whyte:- "It is when I take my own heart, with all its wickedness-working self-love and with all its self-seeking in everything, and self-serving out of every thing and every one: with all its deceitfulness, and disingenuousness, and envy, and jealousy, and grudging, and malevolence, and lay it alongside of the holy heart of my Lord, it is that that does it".

Carlyle:- "I am only a poor man, but I can say in serious truth that I would give one third of all I possess for a veritable likeness of Christ".

Henry Drummond:- "It is when drawing near the Lord Jesus Christ, and longing to be loved, that I have the most vivid sense of unsymmetry, of imperfection, of absolute unworthiness, and of my sinfulness. Character and conduct are never so vividly set before me as when in silence I bend in the presence of Christ, revealed not in wrath, but in love to me, I never so much long to be lovely, that I may be loved, as when I have this revelation of Christ before my mind".

ASK ... WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the Love of God".

Shall we allow our loving heavenly Father to search our hearts. Are you conscious of your sinfulness in the sight of God? Am I conscious of my sinfulness in the sight of God? Is our position hopeless? A thousand times No! God loves you! God loves me! He loves the unlovely! God is Love! Love loves me! Can I grasp that glorious thought! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" 1 John 4:10.

W. Riley said:- "He is a better weaver than you and me, and can turn a faulty warp into good cloth". Do you believe that? I think he also said:- "Every man is a bundle of possibilities and sometimes the bundle is unwrapped and I get a glimpse of the unsuspected treasure of a soul". So our heavenly Father sent HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON to pay the price of our sin. "For the son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Luke 9:56 "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost". Luke 19:10.

"Wonderful Love Wonderful Love,
Brought my Saviour from above,
Down to die on mount Calvary's tree,
All to save a poor sinner like me,
O it was wonderful love,
O it was wonderful love.

May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN.

DO WE CAUSE 'JOY' OR 'SADNESS' IN HEAVEN?

IF "There is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repents", surely there is sadness there when any Christian backslides and it is possible to "grieve the Holy Spirit". In the Old Testament we read that God was "grieved with Israel forty years" when they erred, Psalm

95:10. Let us constantly examine ourselves and always endeavour to do right, for Christ said. "He that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad". Also, "Any man who puts his hand to the plough and looketh back, is not fit for the Kingdom of God".

Let us cause "joy in the presence of the Angels".
Sister Payne, Reading.

INTERESTING SIDELIGHT ON THE HALDANE BROTHERS (AND A CERTAIN MR. BROWN)

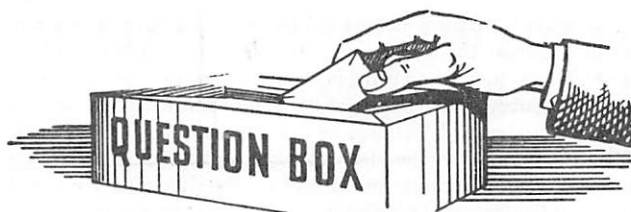
IN 1789 the preaching itinerancies of Robert and James Haldane agitated all classes of religionists throughout Scotland. After they had founded a Congregational or Independent meeting-house in Haddington, Garvald village was favoured with a visit from them. They discoursed on Bible subjects, illustrating their trustfulness and divinity. Their reception did not seem to have been very favourable in Garvald, as many of the folk there thought it most extraordinary that gentlemen dressed in blue coats and yellow buttons, with white vests and wearing queues, the fashionable dress at that time, should dare to open up the Scriptures and discourse on them. Some parties, however, in Garvald and round about, received their statements with love and became Congregationalists and Independents, among whom were Mr Brown and one of his sisters.

The Haldanes having in 1808 become Baptists, the Congregational meeting-house at Haddington was split up. Mr Brown adopted the Baptist doctrines, and established a congregation at Garvald, with whom he met and preached until they removed their place of meeting to Haddington in 1819.

Their place of worship in Haddington was in a large room in Simpson's land at the Custom Stone. Every Sunday, wet or dry, Mr Brown was seen on the road to Haddington almost up to the day of his death. His congregation at Haddington generally consisted of fifteen or twenty, among whom was John Affleck, long a weaver at Stenton, and an early and worthy friend of Mr Brown's, and the last of the Garvald flock. He died in Nungate of Haddington in 1856, age eighty-nine.

"The singularly uncommon views Mr Brown entertained on prophecy are fully expressed in a pamphlet published by him in 1828, under the name of Agricola. The pamphlet contains a large number of historical facts, most ingeniously made to bear upon his apprehension of things which are coming on the earth. He takes the ancient Roman Empire as a key to unlock many a dark saying of the prophet John, and as an exponent of Mr Brown's mind the pamphlet is a faithful record. The article was entirely upon one point, the reappearing of the ten ancient divisions of the Roman Empire in their old limits or bounds. Mr Brown persistently asserted that the year 1854 would be the end of the long peace, an assertion verified by the outbreak of the Crimean war that year. Besides this publication Mr Brown gave lectures in defence of his particular views, both in Edinburgh and elsewhere, and was always listened to with attention and interest, Mr Brown was truly Bible taught. The Book of Life and Cruden's Concordance were his only study. He discarded all others. He left no library of distinguished authors. He never made comparisons between human and divine authority. "What saith the Scripture?" was his only guide. This he considered the safest, the surest, and the best. With him the Bible, and the Bible alone, without note or comment, was the chart to heaven, the record of mercy, and the abiding testimony of truth without any mixture. Thus lived George Brown, the first Baptist in East Lothian, who for honour and honesty was surpassed by few, and for faithfulness and steadiness of conviction of duty to God and fidelity to men was inferior to none". A return was at one time ordered by Government to be made by the ministers of each parish in Scotland of the different churches and congregations in it. The late Rev. Dr. Cook was somewhat puzzled what to say about Mr Brown's congregation. He returned it under the name of the Brownist Congregation, meeting in Haddington.

Taken from:-- "Reminiscences & Notices of the County of Haddington by John Martine (1890).



 Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

"I get quite depressed when I see the many kinds of sin which are rampant today; violence, theft, sexual perversion, marital incompatibility, etc. How can christians help such people, and how can we keep our own families from contact with such things?"

This is a question which is troubling the minds of many christians, and not only christians but many social and community workers also. What has gone wrong, we ask ourselves? Have we contributed in any way to this undesirable and unwholesome state of affairs?

For my own part, I feel sure that many of our problems are attributable to one cause — disobedience. It is the root cause of sin; it is responsible for the disintegration of that bulwark of the social structure, the family unit; it is out-working itself in industrial anarchy; and sad to relate, it has been and still is the most divisive element in a pathetically divided church. The questioner is quite right to feel concern about such things; perhaps the best way we can help everyone concerned is by learning something about obedience and stressing the importance that God places upon it.

Obedience

This is defined as, "submission to a superior's will; compliance with that will". In the general sense this means that anyone who is in a position of authority over other people has a right to expect that such authority as is evident will be submitted to, and that all reasonable demands from the source of such authority will be complied with. In the christian context, of course, the source of our superior authority is God, and submission to His will and compliance with His commands are absolutely vital to the christian.

The above definition needs, perhaps, a little more explanation. The christian needs to understand that it is not enough to be passive in submission but that he should actively comply in bringing the will of God before others. Furthermore, it displays a wrong attitude to submit in obedience to someone because he is stronger than we are, or to comply because we are forced to. Neither of these attitudes was true of Christ, nor should they be true of us.

If we are to believe Jesus — and we surely must — then we can only conclude that he experienced delight in being obedient unto his father. Yes, with all the pain, humiliation, and suffering, he delighted in doing the will of God. This is the corner-stone of the biblical teaching on obedience; this must permeate our thoughts as we search for our responses to God's will.

The Obedience of Christ

Paul taught, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous". (Rom. 5:19). Oh, the awful power of disobedience! This statement by Paul illustrates quite clearly why man forfeited the grace of God. It was because he stupidly and willingly took upon himself the rebellious nature of Satan. The awful climax of disobedience and rebellion is portrayed by Milton when he depicts Satan as saying, 'Better to reign in hell, than to serve in heaven'. The rich man who went to that place of torment evidently didn't think so.

In marked contrast, the obedience of Christ illustrates just how far-reaching his attitude was. Disobedience, which had separated, was now rectified by obedience which re-united. The way to God was re-opened by the obedience of Jesus. You mark and choose carefully, dear reader. Will you accelerate the discriptive and de-harmonizing elements by disobedience; or will you apply the healing and unifying balm of obedience, as Jesus did?

In order to further our quest for finding delight in obedience, we ought to examine a statement made about Jesus in Hebrews. The writer says, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him". (Heb. 5:8,9). This obedience of Christ was not learned in the sense in which we understand learning, i.e., in the sense that he was ignorant concerning obedience previous to learning it. The idea expressed in the Hebrew passage is of Christ being accustomed to obedience by constant practice of it. This embodies the idea that Christ understood at all times that God required obedience as a constant and recurring attitude. Therefore, the verb 'to learn', in this case, means to be accustomed to obedience by constant use and practice. Paul expressed the same idea when he said, "Not that I speak in respect of want: For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). Now, how can we apply this?

Obedience to Parents

Paul teaches, "Children, obey your parents in all things: For this is well pleasing unto the Lord". (Coll. 3:20). The verb 'to obey' is an old verb and means 'to listen under (as looking up to), to hearken'. The idea expressed is that of the child looking up to the parents and listening intently to what the parents are saying. There is also the thought that what is intended is continual obedience and not just occasional; Paul says 'in all things'.

This teaching implies and presupposes that christian parents, at least, will not make unreasonable or unjust demands of the child. Parents should try to create the climate in which a child can fulfil the teaching of Paul. Children can be provoked in two ways; either in a bad sense or a good sense. To provoke in the bad sense would be to nag and victimise the child habitually, but in the good sense it would be to motivate by good influence and zeal. It is extremely difficult for children to obey parents in all things; if this is to be done then parents will need to make the road to obedience as easy as possible for the children.

I have always thought that if the child/parent relationship is to be right then a meaningful dialogue needs to be entered into. By dialogue I simply mean parents and children talking to each other. Meaningful dialogue does not consist solely in parents telling children what they want them to do. The understanding of each other's point of view is vitally necessary in creating the atmosphere in which the child can obey the parent. The burden of our society is that waves of lawlessness sweep the country because of parental waywardness leading to disobedience. There is much more understanding needed in this area.

Obedience to the Word

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, 'We ought to obey God rather than men'. (Acts 5:29). Obedience to God is exemplified in obedience to His word. After all, we started our christian lives in this way. In his letter to Rome Paul said, "But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17) 'Form' as used here is probably an allusion to immersion which indicated our separation from sin. In this we became 'slaves of righteousness'; we changed masters. This, I believe, is what was in Peter's mind when he said "we ought to obey God rather than men". You see, there is no middle ground. We either obey God or we don't; all of us would do well to remember this.

Obedience to the word ensures that we have the key to spiritual knowledge. As Jesus himself put it. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). It will also ensure divine fellowship. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: And my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). Now I ask you, can we go wrong if we realise that we have the divine presence with us? Not at all. But we must be absolutely sure that we can obey the divine will, and we can only do this if we know what that word is. Therefore, let's read it.

Conclusion

Before we can lift the depression which our questioner talks about, I believe that we must stop giving the impression that obedience to parents and to God's word doesn't really matter.

We must also tell people that at the heart of God's love is obedience, and we must not be afraid to tell them that God expects that they will obey Him in all things. And finally, we must become accustomed to obedience by constant use and practice. Then we shall see a better society, and we shall be glad to be part of it.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JUNE 1978

4—Genesis 1	John 1:1-18
11—Isaiah 40:1-11	John 1:19-34
18—Isaiah 6	John 1:35-51
25—2 Kings 4:1-7	John 2

AN ABSOLUTELY UNIQUE BOOK

THIS title could of course be applied to the whole Bible, but we are applying it to John's Gospel in a fuller sense. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke have so much in common that skeptics have accused them of copying one another, but from the first words in John's we immediately perceive that it is quite different. It is not that there is any real difference in ultimate result for each of the four has its special characteristics. We have the princely figure in Matthew, the supremely active Jesus in Mark and the sympathetic son of man in Luke. Here in John we have the WORD MADE FLESH; the mind of God set forth in a series of narratives and discourses completed with the tragedy of rejection. The first few sentences present us with an "excursus" on Genesis chapter one. We are introduced to light and darkness, the former being identified with LIFE. We assume that there has always been light for man in a relationship with God, however misunderstood or rejected. As Paul sets it forth in the early chapters of his letter to the Romans, the heathen had a revelation of Him by the action of conscience, but finally Jesus came to be the LIGHT OF THE WORLD. We shall never be able to grasp the truth that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". (Col. 2:9), but we gladly accept that to all intents and purposes Jesus and His Father are ONE (John 10:30). The divine intention to provide for man's sinfulness began with His "being in the form of God... emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave" (Phil. 2:7). This supreme humiliation is beauti-

fully described in our first chapter as "the Word became flesh" (v. 14) and then the wonder of a perfect man dwelling with (in particular) His disciples breaks through from the memory of John, the beloved disciple, "we beheld His glory". This theme is expressed also in John's first letter with emphasis on the closeness of personal relationship (1 John 1:1-4). What an ecstatic recollection it must have been at the close of a long life of joys and sorrows, enlightened if not transfigured by so wonderful an experience.

The Herald

"Sent from God" (1:6) is the honourable description of John Baptist. Here we have an heroic figure, not Elijah and yet Elijah in character and function (Matt. 11:14). His work was vital for the work of Jesus, and we see his testimony was instrumental in making contact with those men who were to become the apostles. It would seem that John expected a much different activity on the part of the Messiah but he bore his testimony faithfully (Matt. 11:2-19), and accepted his humbler role without question (John 3:30). It is a striking point that he by inspiration, while naming Jesus as baptising in the Holy Spirit, obviously divine power, named Him "the Lamb of God" —the lambs signifying "offering for sacrifice". Did he know this from his knowledge of Isaiah 53?

Choice of Discipleship

We reconcile the accounts of the calling of those who became apostles as recorded in the other gospels with John's account of their first contact with Him by recognising that there was not an immediate following on this first acquaintance because the ministry in Galilee did not develop until later. The break from all worldly occupations had to come, but earlier knowledge due to the testimony of John must have prepared mind and heart for the crisis. Some of them at least had concluded that Jesus was in fact the Messiah through being with Him in 'Bethany beyond Jordan' (1:28). The energetic campaign of John Baptist had

stirred up the thoughtful and expectant people and it was natural that Jesus should find His closest disciples among them. It is true there were disciples of Jesus who followed Him through His ministries besides the twelve, for they were able to select two for appointment in Judas's place (Acts 1:21-23). Multitudes, even including scribes and Pharisees, were influenced by John's work, and it must have affected the earlier ministry of Jesus as is plainly indicated in ch. 3:22-36). The work of Jesus must have involved numerous visits to Jerusalem very little of which is described by the other Evangelists. John gives several accounts of special miracles wrought there, but that centre became dangerous as His popularity increased, and the envy of the religious leaders grew in intensity. Discipleship increasingly involved clinging to Jesus (11:16), and they did!

The Marriage at Cana

We are so glad that Jesus and His disciples were invited to the simple and happy gathering, and that Jesus 'manifested His glory' there in supplying wine when those who should have provided enough were "in a fix". We have wondered often whether as disciples ourselves we are sufficiently open to give help of so simple a kind. There has naturally arisen among members of churches of Christ a question about the character and danger of intoxicating drink. Perhaps the fearful consequences of excessive drinking in our own community have blinded us to customs normal in other communities where no question of intoxication is involved. We personally feel strongly that total abstinence on the part of Christians is the only safe plan, and suggest that in this incident there was not a question of excessive drinking in any case for "the good wine" was not necessarily alcoholic but was simply of the very finest quality. Those who have tasted different qualities of grape juice know there are good, better and best, and intoxicated people would hardly know one from another! However there is not conclusive evidence from Scripture about the nature of the wine except that it was the best at that feast. It has been thought that Jesus was disrespectful to His mother but we may note that she did not take it so. Her instruction to the servants surely means that there was understanding between them, but the implied rebuke was needed or would not have been given. The

term "Woman" could be better translated "Lady" in our habitual use of terms.

Cleansing the Temple

We think it certain that Jesus did this twice. Here we have the first of the attacks on "commercialism" in the House of God. We assume Jesus's ministry lasted three years, and during that time He always attended the Feasts according to the Law of Moses, but it is unlikely this "cleansing" had a lasting effect, and his other visits to Jerusalem might not provide opportunity of repetition without serious danger of shortening "His time". However at the last visit He made just as drastic a cleansing and this hastened His final rejection. The opposition had hardened, and the plotting reached a final stage. The revised versions limit the use of the cords to the sheep and oxen His violence however on all can be well justified and undoubtedly the money changers desecrated (with permission) the sacred courts of the House. The reply of Jesus to criticism must have been misunderstood as so much of His teaching until by the Holy Spirit the memories of His apostles were infallibly inspired.

R. B. SCOTT.

CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

Chapter 20

- 1 Why did Paul not sail direct to Syria?
- 2 Why were so many outstanding brethren going with Paul to Jerusalem?
- 3 Record your observations of the meetings (7-12), making special note of the times of the different happenings.
- 4 Note the different places at which Luke says they called during their journey from Troas to Miletus. (Those who have maps showing Paul's travels, should trace out the course).
- 5 Why had Paul asked the elders from the Church in Ephesus to meet him at Miletus?
- 6 Give an outline of Paul's address to the elders.
- 7 What duty of the elders is indicated in verse 28.

Answers to E. Jess, 34 Charles Street, Penicuik, Midlothian, Scotland. Use one side of the paper only, please, and leave a margin.

THE OLD TIME PREACHER

The old time preacher with saddlebag,
 A shirt and Bible and a one-eyed nag,
 Was priest and prophet who boldly warred
 On evil, crying, "Thus saith the Lord".
 He never wobbled on where he stood;
 He never doubted that God was good.
 He based his sermons on Gospel true-
 He never mumbled a book review.
 He stuck to preaching that sin is sin,
 That grace can handle the fix we're in.
 He preached on brimstone and made it hot,
 And salvaged sinners from scamp to sot.
 His pay was little, his fame was less;
 His wealth was Heaven and blessedness;
 And when he wearied, and angel band
 Swept down to take him to Glory Land.

by Lynn Laudrum

THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND

'Twas battered, scarred, and the auctioneer
 Though it scarcely worth his while,
 To waste his time on the old violin;
 But he held it up with a smile.
 "What am I bidden, good people?" he cried,
 "Who'll start the bidding for me?"
 "A dollar, a dollar?" Now two; only two;
 Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"
 "Three dollars once; three dollars twice-
 Going for three" - but no;
 From the room far-back, a grey-bearded man
 Came forward and picked up the bow.
 Then wiping the dust from the old violin,
 And tightening up the strings,
 He played a melody pure and sweet,
 As sweet as the Angels sing.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
 With a voice that was quiet and low,
 Said "What am I bid for the old violin?"
 And he held it up with the bow.
 "A thousand dollars; and who'll make it two?
 Two thousand dollars, and who'll make it three
 Three thousand once; three thousand twice,
 And going - and gone", said he.
 The people cheered; but some of them voiced:
 "We don't quite understand, what changed it's
 worth?"

Swift came the reply -

"The touch of the Master's hand".

And many a man with life out of tune,
 And battered, and torn with sin,
 Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd.

Much like the old violin.
 A mess of pottage, and a glass of wine,
 A game and he travels on.
 He is going once, and going twice,
 He is going, and almost gone;
 But the Master comes and the foolish crowd
 Can never quite understand,
 The worth of a soul, and the change that's
 wrought
 By the touch of the Master's hand.
 Selected.

One can feel assured, that the above Poem
 could be a reminder to the Christian who had
 this experience, to be thankful! and to the
 sinner who has not, to see this need!

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Haddington, East Lothian: The brethren here again witnessed the gospel in action when, on Tuesday evening 21st March, 1978, William Ewen, accepted Christ as his Lord and Saviour by being immersed into His name. We pray that our brother will be strong in the grace that is in the Lord and that he, and his wife Anne, who was baptised last month, will share many happy years in the service of the Lord.

Thanks are again extended to the brethren at Tranent for the use of their meeting-house and baptistry. Mary Murdie.

Peterhead: Sister Jean Geddes was restored to the church on the 26th of March '78. She had been a member of the church years ago up at Buckie but she fell away from the Lord. We were distributing leaflets round the doors and it was through reading one of these that she knew that there was a church in Peterhead. She now lives at Peterhead.

During the month of July Bro. Roy Davison from the church at Wellen in Belgium is to be over in Scotland for a holiday. He has written to the church at Peterhead and has offered his services to us for the time that he is here. We have accepted his offer and hope that his labours will be fruitful.

W. Strachan, Secretary.

WHAT IS CHRIST TO YOU?

To the astronomer, He is the Sun of righteousness.

To the baker, He is the Living Bread.

To the banker, He is the Hidden Treasure.

To the biologist, He is the Life.

To the builder, He is the sure Foundation.

To the doctor, He is the great Physician.

To the educator, He is the great Teacher.

To the farmer, He is the Sower and the Lord of the Harvest.

To the florist, He is the Rose of Sharon.

To the geologist, He is the Rock of Ages.

To the horticulturist, He is the True Vine.

To the judge, He is the Righteous Judge.

To the juror, He is the Faithful and True Witness.

To the jeweller, He is the Pearl of Great Price.

To the lawyer, He is the Counselor, the Law-giver.

To the newspaper man, He is the Good Tidings.

To the philanthropist, He is the Unspeakable Gift.

To the philosopher, He is the Wisdom of God.

To the preacher, He is the Word of God.

To the sculptor, He is the Living Stone.

To the servant, He is the Good Master.

To the statesman, He is the Desire of all Nations.

To the theologian, He is the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

HEART SURGERY

Much is heard these days about heart surgery—Some folk even have new hearts or “pacemakers” inserted to keep up the vital work and good-functioning of this indispensable organ. As we all realise, heart surgery is a major operation; and alas, mankind has unfortunately needed this drastic treatment in a religious way ever since the Fall, when man’s heart became “deceitful and desperately wicked”.

Jesus, also, in His teaching, stressed the importance of a new heart, His words reading: “Except a man be born again (from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God”, so without such a changed life “we are none of His”. In other words we are called upon to ‘Repent’.

Today a great Revival of true religion is urgently wanted. For this heart-surgery, the church needs preachers who, like Longfellow’s “Singers” - “can touch the hearts of man and bring them back to Heaven again”. Also, as the hymn says to all Christians, may the Lord “wing our words that they may reach the hidden depths of many a heart”.

It is vital for each Christian to “KEEP THY HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE FOR OUT OF IT ARE THE ISSUES OF LIFE”.

As Christ said “Blessed are the pure in Heart, For they shall see God”.

Sister Payne, Reading.

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