

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE NEW COMMANDMENT

A SCHOOLBOY once defined friendship thus, "A friend is someone who knows all about you and still likes you". William Barclay in 'Marching Orders' quotes a reference of C. F. Andrews about true friendship. In the 1914-18 war there were two men who were close friends. One was left wounded in 'No-man's land' between the trenches. His friend waited until darkness came, and then at the peril of his life crawled out to help him. The first words of the wounded man were, "I knew you would come". Real friendships endure over the years. Some however suffer shipwreck and there are people with whom we were once inseparable, with whom nowadays we would find it difficult even to make conversation. 'Friendship' is akin to 'Fellowship' but they are not truly synonymous. John Wesley said, "Is your heart as my heart? Then give me your hand!" This is fellowship. There is also an affinity between 'friendship' and 'brotherly love' but there is a difference. Solomon (in Pro. 18:24) said, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Solomon could hardly conceive a friend who could stick *closer than a brother* and yet the first murder was committed not amongst sworn enemies but was when Cain slew his brother Abel. Such is the paradox of 'brotherly' love. Some families have brothers who are ever at one another's throat. Yet the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David (although not brothers) and Jonathan loved David "as his own soul". It is extremely sad to see former *friends* drift apart or part asunder. It is possibly even more sad to see *members of the same family* become estranged. There are specially strong ties amongst children of the same family which gradually dissolve as those children become adults and move their separate ways — some prosper more than others and envy works great havoc. Sometimes the rift is based on some extremely trivial matter such as chance remark at a wedding, or funeral, (which is sometimes the only time family members meet). Some undiplomatic remark is seized upon as being a snub or insult, and the barriers go up. I have a little experience in these things in that my only brother in the flesh is someone I have not seen, or heard from, during the last twenty-five years or so. How sad, is it not, to see formerly happy families eventually estranged and bitter — and in extreme cases feuding and fighting.

But how much more sad is it to see members of *the Lord's family* at odds with one another, not speaking, having nothing to do with one another. I had a letter the other day from a good brother (who does not subscribe to the "Scripture Standard") but

who expressed great disappointment that I had printed in the magazine material from a brother with whom he had had a serious difference many years ago. As editor it is not possible for me to investigate the past of any brother who sends material for the "S.S." nor would it be my purpose. I'm not too proud of my own past and I have never laid claim to any form of infallibility, but the really sad thing about the letter was that brethren should still be estranged years after the alleged offence. Each congregation is autonomous and I have no wish or business to know what goes on in any other congregation — on the level of personal offences, but surely there is machinery within the church to put such things right. *Our numbers are surely too small* for any of us to be able to afford 'withdrawing our membership' because we have been personally insulted, maligned, snubbed, slighted, ignored, or whatever the charge might be. If the house was burning down would we refuse to work the pump with someone with whom 'we were not on speaking terms'? Surely those who say "I'm leaving the church" because of some trivial (and probably imagined) slight must have forgotten that Christ paid for the church in blood — His own. The devil must rejoice at such situations — indeed the devil engineers such situations. Surely we must all pull together and resist the common foe — the Devil and his angels. It is said that, during the height of one of his naval battles, Nelson learned that two of his officers were at enmity and not on speaking terms. He called them up on deck, face to face, and made them shake hands. As they did so, he pointed to the French ships and said, "*There is the enemy, gentlemen*".

Jesus said, "*By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*". Nevertheless there was oftentimes friction amongst even the Lord's disciples. On one occasion did not Jesus overhear their 'strife' and 'disputations' concerning who amongst them should be the greatest in the kingdom of God. On another occasion James and John were brought by their mother with the same request to Jesus, i.e. to be given the highest position in the kingdom of heaven, and this caused great indignation amongst the other disciples (and their mothers, no doubt) but Jesus taught the then surprising lesson that the greatest in the kingdom are the truly servile. Jesus also taught another pleasantly surprising lesson when He dissuaded them from the obvious desire to be called 'Rabbi'. "But be ye not called Rabbi, for One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye *are brethren*". This is the extent of the great and grand honour which God has conferred upon the disciples of Christ — to call them sons and for them to be 'brethren'. He could have regarded us as 'comrades' or 'associates': or 'companions': or 'colleagues': or 'partners': or 'allies': or 'members': or 'participants': or 'assistants': or 'compatriots': but No! He calls us 'sons' and we are 'brethren'. Firstly and foremostly we are 'brethren' in the household of God — and by virtue of that fact we also may describe ourselves by these other terms, i.e. 'associates'; 'members'; 'fellows'; 'colleagues'; 'partners' etc. etc. But we be brethren, and many centuries ago, "Abraham said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, *for we be brethren*". Surely this should be the aim and attitude of us all. Let there be no strife between us — for we are brethren. Solomon, (in Proverbs 6:19) catalogues six (indeed seven) things that God abhors and the seventh and last is "he that soweth discord among brethren".

We are all engaged on our journey through life. We all seek the destination set before us — the heavenly city; the New Jerusalem. None of us is any better than the other. We have all had our sins forgiven — we are all abject sinners saved by the grace of a pardoning God. Our aim should be not only to reach the destination ourselves, but to do our utmost to help all others to get there. Those who stumble should be given a helping hand to get back on the road again. Those who collapse completely should perhaps be carried by the strong. There certainly should be goodwill and a spirit of

'give-and-take' whereby we are prepared to overlook the things in the others which may annoy and offend us. Not easy perhaps, but the standard at which to aim. It certainly is not the time to wound and to maim one another by the wayside. When Joseph sent his brethren on their journey homeward his parting words to them were, "And see that ye fall not out by the way". He doubtless remembered that these same brethren had once sold him into slavery (as an alternative to killing him altogether) and that certain of them had the propensity to be quite vicious. The envy they had had of him could quite easily be directed at one another. Joseph's words can just as appropriately be directed at each of us today: "See that ye fall not out by the way". Let us endeavour to avoid the 'wars and fightings' mentioned by James (4:1) knowing that the desires and motives which inspire such contentions are only evil. "A brother that is offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle". So said Solomon (Ro. 18:19), but Jesus said to his disciples "A *new commandment* I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. *By this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another". This 'new commandment' was not 'new' inasmuch as love between men had been commanded before, but it was 'new' in the sense that never before had love been made the thing by which a body of people would be distinguished from all others. The love of Christ's disciples for one another was to be the *badge* of their discipleship. The Jew was known by his external rites, by his peculiarity of dress, military men by their uniforms and insignia — indeed each society of men, even today, wish to be recognised by some token (perhaps even just a special neck-tie) but Jesus said His disciples would be known not by these (nor even by the distinctions of wealth, fame or learning) but by the evidence and *the standard* of love that they had *for one another*. "By *this* shall men know that ye are My disciples". John, many years later, had much to say on brotherly love and the 'new' commandment and said "And *this commandment* have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also". (1 John 4:21). All the New Testament epistles give similar exhortations. The apostle Peter makes many references to the outworking of the 'new' commandment of which the following is a good example, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, *love as brethren*, be pitiful, be courteous" (1 Peter 3:8). The writer to the Hebrews says, "Let brotherly love continue". Paul rejoiced that he did not have to exhort the brethren at Thessalonica as touching brotherly love because they knew about it and did it to "all the brethren which are in all Macedonia" but he did exhort them to increase it "more and more" (1 Thess. 4:9).

And so, as John says, the commandment he gave was not so much a new commandment but a reemphasis and renewal of an old commandment towards brotherly love, now exemplified in the love Christ had for the brethren. (1 John 2:7). The standard has been set. Jesus gave His own life for the brotherhood. This was love indeed, and it cannot be surpassed for "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" "And ye are my friends", says Jesus, "if ye do whatsoever I command you". His commands include the 'new commandment' that we all love one another. "By *this*" shall men know that we are His disciples.

EDITOR

A RULER BECOMES A DISCIPLE

The third chapter of the Gospel according to Saint John opens with a familiar story. It is the story of a man, Nicodemus, who in darkness came to Jesus looking for light. This ruler left home at a late hour to make this secret call, in the hope that no one would see him, especially a Pharisee. Upon being received by Jesus, he said,

(verse 2) "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him".

The reply was a surprise, for Jesus answered, (verse 3) "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God".

Nicodemus was an educated, wealthy man -- a ruler in Israel -- but in the sight of God and in the presence of Jesus, these things were of no avail.

Did Nicodemus wish Jesus to become Ruler? 'For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many'. (Mark 10, v. 45).

Did Nicodemus desire the terms of a disciple?

JESUS GAVE THEM FOR ALL TIME. A new birth - a new beginning - a fresh start.

The second reference to Nicodemus is found in John chapter seven. Officers had been sent to arrest Jesus but came to the chief priests and Pharisees without their prisoner. When questioned, they replied, "Never man spake like this man". (verse 46) 'Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.' (verses 47-49). Picture the speaker watching each person signify approval, with one exception - NICODEMUS. "Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" he asked them. (verse 51) 'They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.' (verse 52) In other words, his claims are false. In the centre of the court, of which he was an honoured member, Nicodemus questioned its right to condemn Jesus. Here was a brave man, who stood alone. He might have lost his temper, or walked out but instead he asked a question and together with its implications, suggested that until it was proved otherwise Jesus was innocent and worthy of their trust. Nicodemus was a little nearer the Kingdom, for his action needed courage - the courage he lacked when he stole along the darkened streets of the city to talk with Jesus.

DO WE HAVE THAT COURAGE

The third and last reference to Nicodemus is found in John Chapter 19. Jesus had been crucified; not for any wrong that he had done, but for your sins and mine. The rulers thought that was His end and His enemies were glad but He had many sorrowing friends; among them two, who up to this time had been *secret* disciples. They now came forward openly, to identify themselves with Him and to do all they could to show their love for him.

The first was Joseph of Arimathaea. Matthew chapter 27 gives us more detail. (verses 57-60) When the evening came, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. Luke tells us that Joseph was a counsellor, a good man and just - who had not consented to the deeds of the counsel. While Mark says that Joseph went in boldly, requested the body of Jesus and laid Him in a new tomb, which only rich had.

The second was Nicodemus. 'And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred

pound weight. (John chapter 20, verse 39). Taking his stand, openly now, with Jesus, Nicodemus shared with Joseph the loving service of burying a man, they had learned to know and love.

Nicodemus - the ruler who became a disciple. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *ALL MEN* unto Me". (John 12, v. 32) The cross is the meeting place for men of every nation - men of every station - men of high estate and men of low degree. May we meet there and like the ruler Nicodemus become a disciple.

AMEN

by Mr. F. R. W. KIMBERLEY

GLEANINGS

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

Whom Have I In Heaven But Thee?

"I have in Christ an all-wise Head; a glorious and a tender Husband; an infallible Prophet; a merciful and faithful High Priest; a gracious King; a watchful Shepherd; a loving Friend; an everlasting Father; A Child born unto me; A Son given unto me, who is Himself Heir of all things; the Lord of glory; the Prince of Peace; the Lord, my righteousness; the Holy One of Israel; the Redeemer of His people; the Saviour of sinners; my Light; my Life; my God; my Glory; my Shield; my exceeding great Reward; my Alpha; my Omega; my All in All; my Salvation and all my desire." C.G.

It Isn't Easy

"To apologise. To begin again. To admit error. To be unselfish. To face a sneer. To be considerate. To endure success. To keep on trying. To profit by mistakes. To forgive and forget. To think and then act. To keep out of the rut. To make the best of little. To shoulder deserved blame. To subdue an ugly temper. To maintain a high standard. To recognize the silver lining. But it always pays in the end." Jerome Fleshman

Habakkuk 2:1 I....Will Watch To See What He Will Say Unto Me

"If I had something to tell you, and wrote it on paper, and gave it to you, would not that be exactly the same as if I had told you with my lips?... So, when you read your Bible, watch to see what the Lord Jesus will say to you. You will never watch in vain. You will see some word that seems to come home to you. That is the voice of the Lord speaking to your heart. Listen to it, treasure it, follow it". F.R.H.

We Quote — Isaac Selby

"Out of every evil the Infinite mind can extract a good. To our little minds a thing may appear unwise, but to Him with whom a day is as a thousand years, it may be a beneficent act. A good chess player will sometimes sacrifice a man to gain a position. To an onlooker unversed in the movements of the game it will seem a foolish thing to give your men away, but the player knows that it enables him to gain the victory. To pick out incidents without studying their causes and bring them as indictments against the goodness of God is like a boy breaking up a glass marble to see where its beauty is. Its beauty is in contemplating it in its completeness. 'All things work together for good to those that love God.' In affliction there is an evident purpose; it is frequently an incentive to development. Where would be the skill of the sailor if there were no storms at sea. If our gardens never brought forth weeds, but only fruits and flowers, where would be the necessity for the gardener? and if things were always as we just wanted them, even then, I fear, the Atheist would not be satisfied but would go about complaining that the Deity had put him in the world without leaving him anything to

do. Progress is often the outcome of calamity, or as the old saying has it, "Necessity is the mother of invention." The very existence of pain makes us value pleasure. As Will Carleton says:

"To appreciate Heaven well,
'Tis good for a man to have
Some fifteen minutes in Hell."

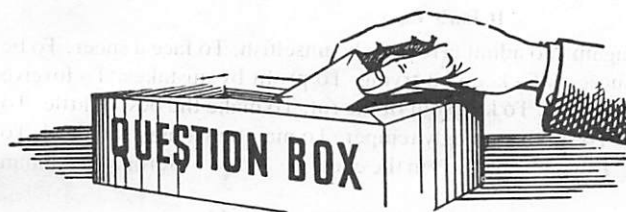
We estimate all things by comparison. By darkness we realise light; by cold, heat; so from the very existence of evil can we understand the great advantages of virtue."

The Bible Is Our Only Authority

"The Word of God is the only source whence we may learn what conversion is and how it is brought about. An English dictionary should help us to the commonly accepted meaning of any word in every-day use; but if we mean to be correctly informed as to what conversion is in God's employment of that term, we must turn to the usage of the word by those holy men of God, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Modern reports of work done by various sections of professing Christians, may enable us to discover what they severally understand by conversion; but it is to the Scriptures that we must have recourse, if our aim be to obtain well-grounded assurance as to what is God's presentation of conversion, its causes and its real ingredients. Nor need that necessity be deemed unnatural to Protestants, whose motto is, The Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible."

Alexander Brown

Selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"WHY did God designate for the Jews clean and unclean animals? What determined a clean or unclean animal?"

God's Choices

IT seems to me that it is in the province of God to make choices consistent with His will. Such choices could be made irrespective of the people concerned, or they could be so arranged that the compliance of the people would be necessary in order to make them effective. This would surely be consistent with what we know and understand of God.

Furthermore, we can understand that the choices of God would be fully consistent with what we call His Omniscience, i.e. His ability to foreknow the end from the beginning. The idea of foreknowledge should not lead us to think that because God *knows* the end from the beginning that He actually *makes* things happen to verify His foreknowledge.

In order to illustrate this point let us consider the choice by God of the nation of Israel as His personal choice from among all the nations of the earth. We need to ask ourselves the question, "Did God choose the Jews because He wanted to *make* them do as He willed, or because He foreknew that their actions and development would *best suit* His will? Admittedly, He did on occasions directly intervene in their affairs, but don't forget that all the prophecies were Messianic in content, and were in

preparation for that precise time when the Messiah would come. In Acts of Apostles, Peter makes two statements which substantiate what we are saying. Concerning the crucifixion of Jesus he says, "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But *this is how* God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets, saying that His Christ would suffer" (Acts 3:17,18). Also in Acts 4:27,28, we have Peter telling us that God acted at the precise time that only His foreknowledge could have determined, "Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen". What God did *make* happen at that time was the death of His Son on the cross; every other circumstance, I believe, He *used* for His prime purpose.

Therefore, I conclude that every instruction which God gave to His chosen people was fully consistent with His Divine Will and Nature, and that His Will and Nature were ideally expressed in the sacrificial offering of His Son Jesus.

The Eternal Nature

The word AIONIOS in the Greek describes duration. When applied to God as in Rom. 16:26; of His power, 1 Tim. 6:16; and of His glory, 1 Pet. 5:10; it means 'endless'. It is also used of the redemption effected by Christ (Heb. 9:14), i.e. and endless redemption. So we understand that God's nature is endless, and that whatever emanates from that nature must also be endless. Therefore we can say that Jesus, who in self-sacrifice offered to God His perfect humanity, was Himself eternal (endless) by nature. It is important to realise this because if the redemption (deliverance) effected by Christ was 'once for all', then of necessity the sacrificial offering (in this case Christ Himself) must have been a clean (pure) sacrifice: as the Hebrew letter says, "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14. But read the whole chapter to get the full implication of purification).

We need to understand the sacrifices of the old covenant in order to fully understand the importance of the sacrifice of Christ. The Hebrew letter goes on, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (9:22). Ritual sacrifice, conducted ceremonially, had the efficacy under the Old covenant to cleanse the body from ritual sins, "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean" (9:13). Therefore the Hebrew letter seems to be saying, 'if the ritual sacrifice can effect external purity, then surely the self-sacrifice of the spotless Son of God will cleanse for ever the sins of the soul'. The *limited* efficacy of the sacrificial animal offerings was no match for the *endless* redemption accomplished by Christ.

It is my view that purification from sin was always in the mind of God after sin had entered into the world, and death by sin. If this is so, then we can readily understand that purification could not come from that which in itself was unclean. Therefore, God had to designate clean animals as offerings for ritualistic sacrifices: by the same reasoning under the new covenant God had to provide a spotless lamb whose life should be given for the inner cleansing of the soul, and the self-oblation of Christ was and is a standing testimony to this.

Clean and Unclean Animals

The Book of Leviticus tells us about this; "The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Say to the Israelites: Of all the animals that live on land these are the ones you may eat: You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud'" (Lev. 11:1-3). These were the animals which were ceremonially clean. Leviticus then goes on to tell of those animals which were ceremonially unclean.

Purification from defilement was something which God insisted on quite strictly. Not only does such purification refer to animals only, but it covered the whole spectrum of Israelite living. Such was (and is) God's concern for purity in that which He asks for. I think that we must understand that God has the power to designate cleanliness and uncleanness; this is in His nature. We must always be conscious of what He said to Peter, "What *God* has cleansed, call not that unclean".

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

SECOND STUDY OF THE REFERENCE TO THE BREAD IN THE FOUR ACCOUNTS OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

MATTHEW 26

1. Jesus took bread
2. blessed it
3. brake it
4. gave it to the disciples and said
5. *take eat*
6. this is my body
7. — — —
8. — — —

MARK 14

- + 1. Jesus took bread
- + 2. blessed
- + 3. brake it
- + 4. gave to them and said
- + 5. *take eat*
- + 6. this is my body
- + 7. — — —
- + 8. — — —

LUKE 22

- + 1. He took bread
- + 2. gave thanks
- + 3. brake it
- + 4. gave unto them saying
- + 5. — —
- + 6. this is my body
- + 7. which is given for you
- + 8. this do in remembrance of me

1 COR. II

- + 1. Jesus took bread
- + 2. gave thanks
- + 3. brake it
- + 4. and said
- + 5. *take eat*
- + 6. this is my body
- + 7. which is broken for you
- + 8. this do in remembrance of me

TOTAL

- = 1. Jesus took bread
- = 2. gave thanks
- = 3. brake it
- = 4. gave it to the disciples and said
- = 5. *take eat*
- = 6. this is my body
- = 7. which is broken for you
- = 8. this do in remembrance of me

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus took a loaf
2. Jesus gave thanks
3. Jesus then broke the loaf
4. Jesus gave the broken loaf to his disciples saying: "TAKE EAT;" "This is my body which is broken for you." "This do in remembrance of me."

CONCLUSION:

1. A loaf should be used
2. Thanks should be given
3. The loaf should be broken
4. Each one should eat of the broken loaf in remembrance of Jesus.

1 Cor. 11:26: "For as often as YE EAT THIS BREAD, and DRINK THIS CUP ye do shew the LORD'S DEATH till he come."

We cannot go wrong if we follow the example of Jesus.

Arranged by Tom Nisbet, Tranent in collaboration with Jack Nisbet, Ulverston.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JANUARY 1983

2 Deut. 5:1-15	Luke 6:1-19
9 Ex. 23:1-13	Luke 6:20-36
16 Psa. 37:1-22	Luke 6:37-49
23 2 Kings 4:1-17	Luke 7:1-17
30 Malachi 3	Luke 7:18-35

LORD OF THE SABBATH

A GLASGOW native looking back to the 1830's recounted hearing a policeman rebuking a child for running on Sunday, saying "Don't you know it is the Sabbath?". He has long since passed to his rest - and so have those ideas. More respect in these days for the Lord's Day would be welcome, but the extremes to which the Pharisees went in the day and time of Jesus were 'pernickety' and yet very seriously held. We must observe God's estimate also of disobedience to the Sabbath commandment. Jesus was justly looked upon as a 'rabbi' because He had a following of disciples though He was 'unregistered'. His popularity (see 5:17 and 6:17-19) forced a measure of respect from "religious authority", and special attention, criticism and opposition. We must, they thought, bring Him to heel. "The people who know not the law are accursed" (John 7:49). There is no doubt that Jesus deliberately defied their "tradition" which they called "the law" because their interpretation of it was "law" to them — making law of

man's mind LAW OF GOD. Their attitude towards Jesus was dictated by unreasoning rage (Matt. 12:14; Mark 3:6; Luke 6:11). Is this the unforgiveable sin? To know the truth and refuse it! We do not think Jesus justified David's breaking the law but David was their "hero" and the disciples of Jesus could quote Deut. 23:25. Jesus claimed the right to change or remove the Sabbath law, and meanwhile corrected their interpretation. Both Matthew and Mark report further comments on observance of it. The phrase "second sabbath after the first" seems unexplainable. It could mean simply the second between Passover and Pentecost. The legalist attitude was often taken by the enemies of Jesus. Read a few verses in Luke 13:10-17, where the sin and the rebuke are exhibited. In making endeavour to be true to "words" we must avoid being untrue in 'deeds'.

Vital Choice

We cannot over stress the responsibility of the choice Jesus made from His numerous disciples, of twelve to be His APOSTLES. For Jesus the choice of men to follow Him must have been a reminder of His coming sacrifice of HIMSELF, which was to be spread by their agency throughout the world and for all generations thereafter. We naturally regard the Saviour as a man of prayer, yet more as a person in constant touch with the Almighty than formally engaged in conversational sense. Here we see Him separating Himself from human contact to be alone — so to speak — with God.

We need at times to be withdrawn from immediate contact with our fellows as indicated in Matt. 6:6. We connect His withdrawal on this occasion on His premeditated choice of "the Twelve". Four times are the names recorded for us with some puzzling differences, once by Matthew and Mark, twice by Luke. We comment merely on contrast between human and divine wisdom. Here are fishermen, a taxgatherer and a Zealot (One time fierce and violent rebel), and several family connections. A closer study would be interesting.

Vast Public Interest

The prophet from Nazareth had gathered around Him a large following of those He was teaching, but a much larger circle of vitally interested and affected folk must have been gathering wherever He went. The impact of His healing power must have been tremendous. The record of His so-called "sermon" in both Matthew and Luke show the nature of His teaching as well as many of the actual words. Doubtless only comparatively few really appreciated what the teaching meant in daily living. That it could be truly acceptable to the multitude we can hardly imagine. It must excite hostility from the rank and file when its full meaning is realised. Human nature is naturally selfish. "All have sinned"! The blessings are for the submissive, the woes are for the "fortunate"! It is only the "fools" who accept robbery and loss without resentment or revenge! How many of the committed followers of Jesus fully follow or appreciate all that HIS TEACHING MEANS in everyday behaviour? It is comparatively easy to preach but only practice is truly effective and acceptable to God, or finally "perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle" His people (1 Pet. 5:10) — founded on rock.

Unexpected Faith

I suppose we never realise into what a dark and wicked world our Saviour came. Someone has written a book entitled "WHEN IT WAS DARK" in which some idea of the darkness and

ignorance and vice to which mankind had descended, was described. Might was right — and in general terms it is still here — and the measure of justice provided by the then "powers that be" affected only a very small minority of the population. The hymn writer has a happy thought when he states "that in the darkest spot of earth some love is found", but the only real light in that dark world was in the Jewish race under Mosiac influence, and even there "He came unto His own, and they received Him not". The domination of Rome was violent and cruel. We might compare it with the "rape" of Belgium in two world wars. We are then surprised as were the Jews, and as was Jesus to find a Centurion representing a cruel militarism, with friendship in Capernaum, and besides a heathen: with faith enough in God to build a synagogue, and faith enough in Jesus to recognise a spiritual power greater than his own discipline. But so it was. His faith was more than justified. Jesus expressed grief but truth in divine disappointment that the privileged would have to be rejected. Correspondingly there is joy among the angels in heaven that many otherwise underprivileged will be joined with the saints. The beloved servant was restored to the loving centurion (verses 2 & 5).

A Public Resurrection

On one of those days when Jesus was walking the countryside with a large following of people, some from love, some from gratitude, some to learn His teaching, some merely from curiosity, He arrived at the gate of Nain and there the two processions met, the journeying crowd with Jesus at their head and the mourning relatives and sympathisers accompanying the bier and the weeping widow, bereaved of her closest earthly friend. Imagine the Saviour coming thus face to face with such loss and sorrow, tenderly expressing the compassion He felt, and then "restoring the lost son to his mother". But what a shock of astonishment the whole population received! Luke has already recorded wonder at the works of Jesus, but here

notes two exclamations of realised truth — 1. "A great prophet has risen up among us", 2. "God has visited His people". Two literal truths to be forgotten until terror-stricken souls cried out at Pentecost "What shall we do?" when it was too late to reverse their wickedness. It was not a small number who saw the dead man sit up and heard him speak. Probably the whole nation heard the story. What evidence will overcome deliberate blindness?

Cause of Stumbling (7:23; John 1:32-34)

John Baptist, a man of strong and vigorous action languishing in prison for his loyalty to God and truth became very much aware of the character and work of Jesus. It was all so far from his anticipation of the Messiah that even after the heavenly assurance of Jesus's office and ministry, wondered whether indeed He could be the One. John's disciples received specially the evidence which must convince and satisfy his doubting soul. It must have been shortly after having this further assurance that the executioner's sword ended his short but magnificent function in God's eternal purpose. The answer to his doubts was divine power at work. Jesus gave us God's estimate of John — the greatest of the old covenant prophets. He gave us a warning in expressing the blessedness of all who are not offended at Jesus on account of preconceived expectations but will take Him at His word and submit their ideas to His teaching and example. Let us earnestly seek to do so.

R. B. Scott

SHOCK-ABSORBERS

In the old dictionaries the word shock-absorber does not appear. Yet, for ages men have tried all sorts of devices to take some of the jolts and bumps out of life.

I am thinking of other kinds of shock-absorbers, more necessary than the springs and tubular oil-pumps that make our automobiles ride more comfortably for us.

The mind must have certain aids to relieve the jolts. I have a few friends who make travelling easier and more pleasant. It's pretty rough going on the old road of life without a few friends. The Master put friendship near the top of human excellencies.

I find that, with the world blowing up like a volcano all about us, I need a shock-absorber which is called Faith. So many things happen to us that jar our reasons. There are so many super-brutes among the sons of men. One is tempted to ask: "Why are such things allowed?" A man who had thought and lived and suffered said, "The wrath of man is made to praise God." Pretty hard to see while the wrath is active. After wrath has spent its force, it is sometimes possible to see great movements for human betterment arising out of the ashes of destruction. The Bible makes no promise of easy lives for any of God's children, but it does picture men and women who could not be defeated in their hearts by the rough treatment they suffered from others.

A letter came to me one day from a triumphant woman who had recently lost her husband by death. "I thought I could not go on living for a while, but my faith in the God revealed by Jesus has helped me more than I could have believed to be possible."

I have a wonderful shock-absorber in my library. It is a large book which came to me from my grandparents. It is a Bible that was carried to Iowa by pioneers a century ago. My grandmother used to sit at her little west window as evening gathered, and read from this old book. When she was left alone in later life, she seemed to read this book more than ever. It was her shock-absorber.

— Selected

A truth that's told with bad intent
Beats all the lies you can invent. (Wm. Blake).

May we not hesitate to be difficult
when we know we are right. (A. R. Neptune).

THE TONGUE

O that my tongue might so possess
 The accents of His tenderness
 That every word I breathe should bless!
 For those who mourn, a word of cheer;
 A word of hope for those who fear
 And love to all men, far and near.
 O that it might be said of me
 "Surely thy speech betrayeth thee" -
 The friend of Christ of Galilee.

THE CHURCH OF THE UPPER ROOM

The Lord's Supper was first instituted in a larger upper chamber which was loaned on the occasion for the use of Him who had no where to lay His head. The church of Christ in its earliest and purest development was largely confined to upper rooms. It was from the third loft that young Eutychus fell down while in deep slumber (Acts 20:9).

The primitive church had no tall steeples, or jangling bells, or thundering organs to attract the attention of the world. They were quite glad NOT to attract attention; the keen-scented bloodhounds of heathenism were baying on their track. Their light shone so brightly that men saw its beams, and they had no need of pompously advertising themselves to attract attention. They were living epistles, known and read of all men, and it may be a question now whether the whole paraphernalia of Gothic architecture, stained-glass windows, towering steeples and sweetly-sounding chimes, will attract any more people than would be attracted by a church composed of men who paid their debts, lived honestly, visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction, devoting their lives to seeking the welfare of their fellowmen, served God in their families and worshipped him in spirit and in truth, and had something glowing in their hearts, shining in their countenances, beaming in their lives, of which worldlings know nothing except that they are destitute of it.

The church in the upper chambers had no hired singers perched in an organ loft, and no hired ministers planted in the pulpit; but there were elders who watched over the flock, and there on the first day of the week, the disciples gathered together to break bread. In such assemblies everyone might have a psalm, a hymn, or an exhortation. They were all allowed to prophesy in succession, or speak to edification, exhortation and comfort, as the Spirit of God directed, and the unbeliever coming among them was convinced of all, judged of all, and falling down upon his face would confess that God was with them of a truth (I Cor. 14-23-33).

What was the result of this system of Christian labour? The church of the upper chambers was without wealth, learning or prestige. Not a steeple towered aloft among all the gorgeous edifices of the heathen world; no officials lent dignity and consequence to the Christian religion; no endowments provided for its expenditures; and no rulers or governors stood ready to protect this infant church. On the contrary, the heathenism of the centuries was arrayed against Christianity. Literature, intellect, ridicule and imperial power conspired to subvert the infant church. Imperial decrees were levelled at this "new superstition," which was despised, derided and persecuted, but which, in spite of all foes, marched triumphantly on.

And what did the religion of the upper chambers accomplish? It spread throughout the known world. Its messengers transversed the deserts, scaled the mountains, crossed the seas, penetrated the jungles, carried the message where the imperial eagles of Rome had never flown; spread the knowledge of Christ where the fame of Rome's mightiest deities had never gone; subdued by the gospel tribes and nations that had

never borne the Roman yoke; permeated with its spirit even Rome itself, sending the light of sacred truth through camp and court, through hut and palace; facing rulers, emperors, gladiators and wild beasts; filling the catacombs of Rome with the bones of martyrs and saints, who loved not their lives unto death; until at last the heathenism of the proud empire gave way before the assaults of this determined and unconquerable power, until the idols of classic Greece and imperial Rome were cast to the moles and the bats, and the thirty thousand gods sunk into such darkness and contempt that of the whole rabble of them not one is worshipped or adored today.

This was the work of the church of the upper chambers, without show or pretension, working quietly by personal testimony, hand to hand effort, and individual influence accomplishing a work which in its results shames the inefficiency of the churches of the present day, and leads the thoughtful to inquire: "Is it not best to ask for the old paths?"

— Above quotation from "The Old Paths."

You can find the same worship, the same sincerity, the same close adherence to God's Word in the Churches of Christ today, as was found in the days of the apostles. Simplicity, dignity and earnestness crown the public services; and eagerness to serve God and their fellow-men manifests itself in the everyday lives of the members.

BELIEF (4)

Repentance and Turning to God

AS we have seen, repentance is a change of mind by which the one who repents turns to God. Such turning to God is consequent upon our belief in Jesus as God's Son. This is revealed in Mark 1:14-15, where we read, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand:

repent ye, and believe the gospel." Prior to this the Lord had been immersed by John the Baptist in the river Jordan, and there had come a voice from heaven, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mark 1:11.

So belief in Jesus as the Son of God leads to a turning towards God, which of course implies listening to God's words or directions. It also implies a change in the direction of our whole life away from sin and evil and towards God consequent upon "godly sorrow". Paul says that "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). Jesus said to the Jews, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). This implies that if we do repent we put ourselves in the way that leadeth to salvation. Of course the opposite consequence follows: if we do *not* repent or change our minds Godwards we shall perish. "The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that *all* should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). This consequence of the failure to repent is not a threat, but merely a statement of fact. If we do not turn to God, and hear God's words which are recorded for our benefit in the Scriptures, then we cannot complain if we get our just deserts, being cast into "outer darkness"

What does "Belief" really mean?

In view of what has been said, the importance of this question is obvious. Indeed, it is vital, in view of the important consequences which flow therefrom. Let us then use the reasoning powers with which God has endowed us, however weak they may be, to determine the meaning of belief in Jesus as the Son of God. As God has said, "Come, let us reason together" he has implied that it is possible to approach this question in the light of human reason and obtain an answer.

In the first place belief may be used of persons or things and it has two aspects. We can believe *about* or believe

in persons or things, and there is a world of difference between the two aspects.

Of Things

Let us take a simple example of belief in things, such as trains or aeroplanes. Most people believe in trains, but only about 50 per cent believe in aeroplanes: the rest only believe *about* them. Why is this?

We have seen that the dictionary definition of belief is to be firmly persuaded of, to trust in. The one arises out of the other. Trust arises out of believing in. When we do not trust we simply believe *about* something. So those who only believe about aeroplanes are usually those who have never been in them or do not trust them sufficiently to go into them.

Of Persons

Much the same could be said about these two aspects of belief in dealing with persons. However, different considerations require us to deal with the aspects of believing in or about persons in a slightly different way.

For example, we may believe in a person, but we cannot go into persons as we go into aeroplanes or trains. However, we can do something that is equally appropriate: We can take a part in their life, or allow them to share in, or influence our life. Arising out of this we get an intimate relationship which engenders mutual trust.

Community of Interest

In all aspects of belief there is a common interest or influence. Before there can be belief in persons, as distinct from believing about them, there must be a community of benefit. We must have something to offer, which the other accepts, and vice versa. It is thus on this community of interest or benefit that faith, or trust, depends. This is true not only of persons, but of things.

With regard to things, e.g. aeroplanes, this interest exists in the carriage of our persons or goods from place to place. Since, however, the factor of interest is the same in both cases, we might justifiably ask why more believe in trains than in aeroplanes.

The reason is simple. It is because there is something other than community of interest which affects belief and upon which trust relies, and that is the element of safety.

In our next article we hope to continue our study in these interesting aspects of belief, which we so often take for granted, yet which colour and affect all our lives. In the meantime, here are a few

Exercises in Belief

Isaiah 55, John 4:14; 5:22-24, 40; 10:27-28; 17:21-24. Galatians 3:22-29. 1 John 5:13. Acts 17:30.

W. BROWN

(To be Continued)

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dennyloanhead, Scotland: During the months of September, October, November, and December, the brethren here have decided to hold a series of gospel meetings on Saturday evenings, with invited speakers — the meetings being on a once-a-month basis. Our first meeting was well attended and our speaker was Bro. Tom Nisbet, Tranent. We have just completed our second meeting, which was also well attended, and on this occasion our speaker was Bro. Tom Kemp from Hindley, Wigan. Those attending enjoyed a rich time of fellowship together and we pray that 'The Word' preached will yet bear fruit, to the honour and glory of God. Bro. Kemp also served the church on the following Lord's Day. We again thank these brethren for their efforts in spreading the gospel, and also thank all those who attended and by their presence supported the work. We look forward with great

anticipation to our next Saturday evening meeting, which will be held (God Willing) on November 27th when we hope to have with us, as our speaker, Bro. John Dodsley, from the church which meets at Beulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts. We ask that our brethren in Christ everywhere will remember our efforts in their prayers, so the Lord's kingdom might be extended in this part of His vineyard.

Joseph Malcolm, Sec.

NEWTONGRANGE: On Saturday 23rd October last, a large number of friends and brethren met for a time of fellowship and study. The event was the Annual Social of the church at Newtongrange.

The first speaker was Bro. William Black from Dalmellington, whose subject was 'The Great I Am' which was very well received. Our second speaker, Bro. Ian Davidson, Motherwell, (deputising for indisposed Bro. Tom Nisbet) addressed the company on the theme of 'Faith and Its Importance'. This again being well received. Good wishes from the assembled company were expressed that the health of Bro. Nisbet would improve.

Throughout the evening various brethren participated in the social to the enjoyment and edification of all. Bro. W. Allen (Haddington) sang two solos "Before a Cross Uplifted High" and "Abiding, Oh so wondrous sweet". Sister Scobie recited the poem "The Judgement Reserved" and showed great powers of memory. A solo each, from sister Hughes and sister Roberts from Kirkcaldy was followed later by a duet from those same ladies. The Newtongrange ingredients were supplied by this writer and sister Coventry. "Oh love that will not let me go" was sweetly sung by sister Gray from Haddington. Near the close of a wonderful evening, brother John McCallum sang a solo and also led the District choir.

A fine time of spiritual uplift was enjoyed by all, and a rich time of fellowship. We praise the Lord for all good things.

Andrew Sharp Sec.

OBITUARY

Tranent, Scotland: It is with sadness that we report the passing from this scene of time of our sister Jenny Haswell on the 2nd October. Sister Haswell has been a faithful member of the church for many years, and although she suffered ill-health for many recent years she always endeavoured to attend the Breaking of Bread on the Lord's Day. Brother James Sinclair and Brother David Scott conducted the Service. We commend all that mourn unto our Heavenly Father. Jesus died that we might have life.

John Colgan, Sec.

Sydney, Australia: It is with great regret and sadness that I report the passing of brother Sydney Bell, on October 15th. Brother Bell was a member of the congregation at Merrylands in Sydney and was a real stalwart in the faith. He was a gifted preacher and teacher and a strong advocate of the 'Old Paths'. We, in Haddington, were privileged to have had several visits from our brother, and sister Bell, and to have enjoyed his fellowship and to have heard his preaching and teaching. This writer has regularly corresponded with him for close on forty years. Our close association began when brother Bell freely undertook to send religious books from the U.S.A. to brethren in Britain. This was at a time when import regulations in Britain prohibited books to come direct from U.S.A. into Britain. We enjoyed a close association ever after. Brother Bell was of the 'old school' and will be difficult to replace. He is a great loss to the church and will be greatly missed by the brethren at Merrylands. On behalf of all the brethren in Britain who met and loved brother Bell I send condolences to our good brethren in Merrylands, and especially to Hilda. May God bless and strengthen you all in the great loss you have sustained.

Editor

CYCLONE IN ANDRA PRADESH

ON the 18th of October a very severe cyclone hit the southern parts of Andra Pradesh in South India, affecting large areas of Prakasam, Nelore and Guntur districts.

To date the Indian High Commission has not got precise details of what has happened but we know that large areas have been devastated many homes have been destroyed including the houses of many brethren. My information is that only hill tribes and Hindu Harijans (untouchables), qualify for assistance from the Indian Government. Other Hindu castes, however poor, Muslims and Christians, (even if they are Harijans), unless they renounce their faith and declare themselves Hindus, do not qualify.

Many of the faithful christians had not fully recovered from the 1979 cyclone.

Financial assistance will be needed to purchase building materials to rebuild their homes.

We recommend that money should be sent by means of bankers draught to:

Brother Paul Suban, Church of Christ, A.K.Nagar, NELLORE, Andra Pradesh, South INDIA, and earmarked for 'Cyclone Victims'. Brother Paul Suban is well known to me and to Brother Ted Cline of Phoenix Arizona, U.S.A.. He is well positioned for supervising this work and can be trusted to see that the money gets to people who need it.

Pray for them.

Allan Ashurst, 60 Kenwood Road, Stretford, Manchester, M32 8PT.

AID TO INDIA FUND

NO matter how poor we think we are in Britain we are 'Millionaires' compared with our abjectly poor brethren in parts of India. Some contributions have already been sent to our fund, some very handsome, but we can use as much as we can receive. Why not save up your loose change and when it reaches a £1 note, send it to this good cause. Any gift, no matter how small or large will be gratefully received. Cheques can be made out to "Aid To India Fund" and all gifts should be sent to: Miss Ruth Nisbet, 1F Station Court, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

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