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# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## SAVOURING THE THINGS OF GOD

This week, in Saudi Arabia, a bomb, large enough to create a crater 35 feet deep, and to be heard exploding from a distance 7 miles away, has just killed 19 Americans and seriously injured a great many more. A week or two earlier, a massive bomb ripped through the city centre of Manchester, England, miraculously not killing anyone but injuring hundreds and doing damage estimated at hundreds of millions of pounds. Apparently the work of a terrorist is never done and, sadly as we all know, this kind of thing goes on all the time. In Palestine and elsewhere Jew and Arab shoot and shell one another on an ongoing basis. The siege and shelling of Kabul has been going on for years now, and there are other 'holy wars' here and there, and from time to time. Many of the bombing outrages may ostensibly be politically motivated, but in reality they are caused by *religious* differences and are perpetrated either *in the name of God, or Allah*. The I.R.A. have been blowing people up since I was a wee boy, but deny that they are terrorists, choosing rather to be known as "freedom fighters." Historically however, the 'great divide' in Ireland is not so much political as *religious* and goes back as far as 'King Billy' (William of Orange). The polarisation in Ireland between Catholic and Protestant is still, in many areas, deep and strong and never far from the surface. Indeed, just a few days ago, riot police had to cope with serious scuffles over freedom of passage for the Orange Parades in Ulster.

Muslim fundamentalists, pro-Iranian Hezbollahs, are engaged, it seems in a Holy War (Jehad), and violence and murder are all part and parcel of that policy. The Muslim religion is said to be the fastest growing in the world and is, and always has been, committed to gaining converts by force of arms. The animosity between Jew and Arab goes back, of course, to Abraham. The I.R.A. have currently had the rare opportunity of declaring a cease-fire without 'losing face' but have declined to do so, and one can't help feeling that many of that type *actually enjoy* the plotting and killing, and are very reluctant to give it up. This is 1996 and although we like to consider ourselves civilised and sophisticated, the truth is that, as has been said before, man is still not so very far removed from the 'cave man' image. One often wonders if those who perpetrate these outrages of murder and carnage for religious reasons, or in a 'Holy War' ever consider what **God** thinks of it all. Do those who stoop to death and destruction in the name of God, or Allah, imagine that God looks down smilingly upon such horror and bloodshed? 'Religion' it may be, but it certainly has nothing to do with true Christianity. However, a warped sense of religious purpose, and a jaundiced conception of "the will of God," is nothing new and can go back quite a long way.

### HOLY WARS

The name of 'religion' has always been invoked for all kinds of death and destruction. Back in 1095 the Crusades (Holy Wars) began and were waged in the name of God. On that

date, Pope Urban II appealed to the chivalry of France and Europe to fight in defence of the Christian religion. He described the suffering of the pilgrims in the East at the hands of the Seljuk Turks, a vigorous and fanatical race which had taken Palestine from the Arabs and had over-run Asia Minor. With great eloquence the Pope urged his audience to take up arms in the defence of Christendom. The response was immediate. On all sides shouts of "Deus de volt" (it is God's will) were raised. Tunics were torn up to make crosses and the Bishop of Le Puy was first to kneel at the Pope's feet to receive the cross and make the 'Crusader's Vows.' Some, of course, went to these subsequent wars for personal gain, but most (many were poor peasants, women and children) went inspired with the ambition to free Jerusalem (the Holy City) from the infidel. Over many, many years the slaughter on both sides was enormous and these Crusades (Holy Wars) continued, incredibly, for over 400 years, both sides completely convinced that they were doing "God's Will."

### THE INQUISITIONS

Akin to the above was the role played by the Inquisition, not, this time, to free the Holy Land from the infidel, but to 'purify' the Church from heresy; the Church being the R.C. Church. The official terminology for 'heretic' at that time included anyone who held a religious opinion "opposed to established doctrine." In 1215 Pope Innocent III sent special delegates to Provence (southern France) to enquire into heresy there, (the Waldenses started about then) and by 1248 Innocent IV had established a full-scale Inquisition. These Inquisitions spread to Italy, Portugal, Spain, Mexico, Peru, India and Germany, and indeed wherever the R.C. Church prevailed. Again it is quite incredible to know that these Inquisitions lasted 600 years and ended only a little over one hundred years ago in some places.

The horrors of the Spanish Inquisition are well-known and this Inquisition reached its height in the reign of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. These monarchs took the opportunity of taking revenge on some of their political enemies as well as the heretics, and so the Spanish Inquisition was particularly severe. The main aim was to get rid of the Jews (The Marranos) and the Moors (Moriscos: converted Mohammedans). Their goods and properties were confiscated and many were tortured, killed or deported into ghettos. Arriving in a district, travelling Inquisitors would be joined by a local Bishop and a 30 days "period of grace" announced, during which those in custody, and the suspected, could confess their 'crimes.' When this period had expired, trials began and horrific torture was applied to extract 'confessions.' Names of 'witnesses' were kept secret and so false charges could be made and personal vendettas could be waged. At a grand public ceremonial called Auto-da-fe (Act of Faith) the names of the guilty were announced and the punishments (fines, imprisonment or death). Some Inquisitors General were highly infamous and greatly feared. The first to condemn 'heretics' to be burned alive was Pietro de Verona. He was later killed by the people of Como but notwithstanding, he was later canonised by the R.C. Church and called "St. Peter The Martyr." Napoleon put a stop to these Inquisitions in 1810 but they revived and were finally ended by Maria Christina in 1834. The total number of victims and total amount of pain and suffering can only be guessed at, but to take only the short period between 1500-1525 over 349,000 Marranos were accused, 28,540 were condemned and 12,000 of those burned at the stake. This was only a small fraction of the victims in Spain but the same was going on in many other countries. It was all done in God's name. It was all done to keep the 'Church' pure and was, therefore 'God's Will.' No doubt the officiating priest, in the torture chambers, would not be unduly perturbed when his prayers were drowned out by the screams of some poor wretch on the rack, or receiving the hot irons: he was only doing "God's Will."

### MEEK AND GENTLE

These references in no way exhaust the long catalogue of crimes against humanity

where God's name is invoked to justify all forms of blood-letting and gross cruelty. If we had time we could describe the terrible things done to the Scottish 'Covenanters,' and we could quote the words of Oliver Cromwell after the Battle of Marston Moor (York) in July 1644 when he boasted. "We never charged but we routed the enemy, God made them as stubble to our swords."

Can we imagine for a moment that all these things just described, have any connection whatsoever with the will of God? The poet Burns said, "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." Burns quite often gets a bad press but he knew where the fault lay. It is man's inhumanity that is the root of all our troubles. Jesus did the '**will of the Father**' and nobody could have been more 'humane' than Jesus. His teaching was, "love thy neighbour" a sentiment with which the Jew must have been greatly familiar; for it was the second greatest commandment given in the law. Yes, there was bloodshed and 'Holy' wars in the O.T. but God's Will, expressed through Christ, is that we should "do good" to those who despise us and pray for those who spitefully use us. Yes, the O.T. rule was "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" (a principle the Israelis exact upon the Arabs today, and vice-versa) but Jesus said, "**But I say unto you, love your enemies.**" The Jews have never been able to accept such a thing - loving one's enemies. On the question of mortal combat, even for a good cause, Jesus said, "**My kingdom is not of this world, else would my disciples fight.**" Jesus obviously, could have extricated Himself from His arrest and trial by resorting to physical force but He rejected the idea totally. He came to do "God's Will" but that did not include inflicting pain and death upon His fellow-man. To Peter who sprang to his Master's defence with a sword, Jesus said, "**Put up thy sword; for those who live by the sword shall die by the sword.**" Muslims intend, where necessary, to make converts at the point of a sword but this has nothing in common with the teachings of Christ. Jesus wins converts by the drawing-power of His love; not by the threat of the sword. Did not Paul say, (2 Cor. 10) "**For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.**" Paul made these remarks to the Corinthians as he besought them "**by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.**" Christ's life was personified by *meekness* and *gentleness*.

#### SAVOURING THE THINGS OF GOD

Some people have strange ideas about "God's will" and there is a common belief that *nearly everything* that happens is "God's will." I once had neighbours (who considered themselves strong Christians) who, if anyone in their household fell sick, would never summon a doctor in the belief that if the illness proved fatal it must be God's will. It is also quite common to hear people say, if, for instance, they failed to get a particular job they sought, after interview, that it must have been God's will. If they got the job it was God's will and if they failed to get the post it was also God's will, whereas the truth might have been that they were not properly qualified for the job or had not sufficiently prepared for the interview: i.e. God had nothing whatever to do with it. It is also quite common for God to be blamed for all kinds of natural disaster and for everyday catastrophes such as train crashes, plane crashes, explosions down mines, drowning and road accidents involving small children: i.e. if God does not personally intervene, such things must be God's will. Jesus, Himself, believed in doctors and the seeking of medical aid, and certainly did not subscribe to the fatalistic opinion that everything that happened was God's will and could not be influenced or altered. Jesus was "the Great Physician."

Anyone who seriously wants to know "God's will" can find it only in the scriptures: God's revealed word. "God's will" is now enshrined in the teaching of Christ and His apostles. David, in his day, said "**I delight to do THY WILL O God: yea Thy law is within my heart.**" (Ps. 40:8). Thus David links God's will with the law as revealed, Paul prayed that God would make the brethren "**perfect in every good work to do HIS WILL**

working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever." (Heb. 13:21). Thus "God's will" includes "every good work" and "that which is well pleasing to God," which rather precludes groups like the I.R.A. This is reinforced by Christ's parable of the lost sheep and the fact that there is more rejoicing over one lost sheep that is found than over 99 that never strayed. Jesus said, "Even so it is NOT the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. 18:14).

It seems inevitable that if we fail to study the N.T. to know what is, and what is not, "God's will" we will end up with some bizarre ideas on the subject. Being earthly creatures it isn't easy for us to get on God's wavelength. Material concerns, come more readily to our minds than spiritual. Even the apostle Peter, after years in the presence of his Master, was miles away from God's wavelength and had to be rebuked by Jesus because he "savoured not the things that be of God, but of men." This could befall any of us. James and John, likewise, seemed light-years away from the mind of God when they suggested to Jesus that they should "bring down fire" and incinerate a small village in Samaria just because the villagers seemed rather cold towards Jesus. "But He turned and rebuked them and said, Ye know what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." If members of 'the twelve' could seriously misread the mind of God in this way, it behoves us lesser mortals to be closely guided by "God's will" as revealed in His word. And all those engaged in "Holy Wars" should give great heed to the words just quoted: i.e. "For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

#### MAKING OTHERS SUFFER IS NEVER GOD'S WILL

Peter envisages the situation where *the disciples* might suffer, as a result of "God's will" but not that they should make others suffer: a much different thing. He says, "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" and later in the chapter (1 Peter 4) says, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." And so a great mass of murder, evil-doing, and meddling in other men's matters, goes on and masquerades as "God's will," when, so often, it is very far indeed from being anything like the will of God. I think a good guide in the matter is to be found in Christ's words in Matt.12:50 i.e. "For whosoever *shall do the will of My Father* which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." By this criterion all those who do God's will should be obviously and clearly identified as Christ's brother, sister and mother. Could we imagine that the sectarian murders in Belfast are, individually, *a brother of Jesus*, or that the hijackers of aeroplanes who frighten and shoot innocent passengers, are in any shape or form to be likened unto a brother of Christ? The man who turned the thumb-screws or applied the blinding hot poker in the Inquisitions: was he the brother of our gentle Lord: the Prince of Peace?

Yes, many may be very sincere, and genuinely believe that they do God's will and have a clear conscience in the matter, but *sincerity* can not make that which is evil, good. I suppose the apostle Paul was a classical case. He persecuted Christians with a fervent zeal, sending men to prison and to death, and he said he did it in "in all good conscience" which no doubt he did. His conscience, in this case, was unreliable because on many things he was misinformed. Jesus warned of this situation when He said, "These things I have spoken unto you that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the Synagogues: Yea the time will come that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service. And these things they will do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor Me." (John 16:1-3) Thus, then, those who kill others, and maltreat them, thinking that they do God's service, merely illustrate the fact that, not only do they not do God's will, but they "have not known God, nor Christ."

The Psalmist prayed thus, "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God; Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (143:10).

God is good and upright. Man's inhumanity to man can never be "God's will."

EDITOR.

## GLEANINGS

*"Let her glean even among the sheaves."*

Ruth 2:15

### COUNT TEN

"Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly."

Acts 19:36

### WISE WORDS

"Gentlemen, if you have no objection, we will consult a little with the town clerk of Ephesus."

Cotton Mather

### THE BIBLE SPEAKS

"As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone."

1 Kings 20:40

"Study to be quiet, and to do your own business."

1 Thess. 4:11

"Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

James 1:19

"Lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty."

1 Tim. 2:2

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established."

Prov. 4:26

"In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Isaiah 30:15

"When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble."

Job 34:29

### WE QUOTE - J. H. JOWETT

"One of the gravest perils which beset our ministry is a restless scattering of energies over an amazing multiplicity of interest, which leaves no margin of time or of strength for receptive and absorbing communion with God.

We are tempted to be always on the run and to measure our fruitfulness by our pace and the ground we cover in the course of a week! . . . . We are not always doing the most business when we seem to be the most busy. We may think we are truly busy when we are really only restless."

### BE CAREFULL

"Keep the door of my lips"

Psalms 141:3

### GLEANINGS

"Guard thou thy tongue from ceaseless words, "whatever else you do; And ere you speak of anything, be sure you know it's true. For oftentimes some little word, though said in fun and jest, Will fill some tender, loving heart with dire unhappiness.

Alice M. Barr

"Speak gently! it is better by far to rule by love than fear; Speak gently! let not harsh words mar the good we might do here."

D. Bates

"Never come to a hasty decision - wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast."

W. Riley

"Don't steal tomorrow out of God's hands. Give God time to speak to you and reveal His will. He is never late; learn to wait."

C.G.

## TALES WORTH TELLING

An active woman had on her wall the text, "Be strong and work." She was smitten down with sickness and was constantly worried by that word of exhortation, for she had no power to rise and serve. A Christian friend turned the card and wrote, "Be still and know." It is well for us to understand how a master hand directs. At one time it is "Come and rest"; at another time it is "Go over to the other side."

## SIMPLE SAYINGS

On a fishmonger's slab I once saw a nice salmon, uncut and unspoiled, looking really superb. The price ticket was stuck in it, but some humourist had printed another label and stuck that on too. It bore the words: "If only I had kept my mouth shut I wouldn't be here."

That simple saying was very true, but when I told my wife about it she thought it had another value, she said, "I wish sometimes I could remember that, when I start to grumble about something or someone with whom I feel annoyed or upset at the moment."

C. A. Joyce

Selected by Leonard Morgan

## BAPTISM AND THE RESURRECTION (1 Cor. 15)

Some in the Corinthian congregation were obviously having doubts about the resurrection of the dead. This *whole chapter* is devoted to that subject.

Paul has not changed the subject in verse 29 - he is speaking about the resurrection of the dead. The reason he mentions the practice of baptising living people for those who have passed away, is to show the *inconsistency* of those who; having been involved in this practice before becoming Christians; were now questioning whether the dead were raised.

Pagan peoples and some Jewish sects practised a form of ceremonial washings for many different reasons; and if Paul were alive today he might very well question those who sprinkle infants (calling it baptism) and possibly might ask them what the infant *believes* and what *sin* it had committed.

*Ungers Bible Dictionary* has this to say under the heading of "baptisms": "baptism or ceremonial purifications, were common among the Jews. Not only the priests and other persons, but also clothing, utensils, and articles of furniture were thus ceremonially cleansed."

Now the ceremonial "washings" that Unger places under the heading of "baptism" are; according to the scriptures he quotes (Lev. 8:6 and Ex. 19:10-14 in the O.T. and Mark 7:3-4 as well as Heb. 9:10 in the N.T.) "*ceremonial washings*," and these (although done as a ceremonial cleansing) could never be compared with the ONE baptism (by immersion) referred to in Ephs. 4:5. As a matter of fact, when we look at 1st Peter 3:21 we can readily see why this baptism by immersion was not to be considered as, or compared to, the ceremonial washing that had previously been practised under the law.

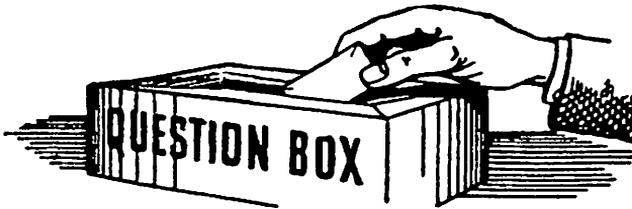
The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, but the Sadducees did not, and Paul used this very fact to extricate himself from a very threatening situation in Acts 23:6-8. This belief by the Jewish sect of the Sadducees is the very reason for which Paul wrote that which is contained in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians.

In passing we should note that we can apply the passage in 1st Peter 3:21 in another way to-day: there are thousands of "good" people to-day who "put off the filth of the flesh" - they stop lying, swearing, and they start praying to God and acknowledge Jesus Christ (they say, "just let Jesus come into our heart"). They also do many works of benevolence - all of which can be accomplished by simply reading the New Testament - but they can never have "the answer of a good conscience towards God," because they have not obeyed that command

which "now saves us" - the ONE baptism. Those who; in the O.T. obeyed the law regarding ceremonial washings; are in many respects similar to those who to-day obey that form of Christianity which calls for a change of life-style, yet never believe that it is God's choice, or will, and His power, that saves us *through baptism*.

We become alive in Jesus Christ through our faith and trust in Him which is demonstrated by our obedience in being "**buried with Him in baptism,**" - Col. 2:12. It is only then that our life is secured and not by any of the changes in our life-style, which, being motivated by our love of God and the sacrifice of His dear Son, automatically follow.

G. Sillman,  
Box 327,  
Chilliwack, B.C., Canada.




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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### "Can sisters ask questions and make comments in Bible Study Meetings?"

During my Service years I had some experience in negotiating minefields; the fact that I am still here proves that I was fairly successful. Since taking over 'Question Box,' the 'minefields' have become inherent in some of the questions, and since I have never given answers which people **want to hear**, I have, inevitably, pleased some and offended others. This is another such question. and I shall have to tread very carefully.

#### HAS ANYTHING CHANGED?

Well, there are some things which **haven't** changed. The immutability of God and His counsel stand supreme. If God cannot change, and the words of scripture are 'God-breathed,' then I think we must also conclude that God's revelation is of an unchanging nature, that is, of course, if we correctly interpret the mind of God in the revelation He has left for us of Himself. The truth of the principle of incorrect interpretation can be seen in the diversity of 'faiths' in the world today.

In view of the above, we can say that we have been blessed with a new relationship in Christ. "**For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither *male nor female*; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.**" Gal. 3:27,28. That is also a relationship which cannot change so long as we are '*in Christ*'. So in the *spiritual* nature of the Church, we all become '**new creatures in Christ Jesus.**' We must, however, realise that though we are 'a new creation in Christ Jesus,' we still maintain our sexuality in the **physical** sense, i.e., man and woman. As regards headship the order as laid down in 1 Cor. 11 is God, Christ, man, woman. We shall need to return to this later.

There are some things, however, which **have** changed, the most important being the changed roles of male and female in the secular society; we have almost reached the stage of role-reversal. Women no longer see themselves as units for the mass-production of children. Nor do they see themselves as head cook and crockery-washer in the home. Many women now hold senior and executive positions in industry and commerce. Many men now find themselves at home looking after the children, preparing meals, etc., while the woman is out working and acting as provider. But what has this got to do with the conduct of women in the Church, some may ask. Well, when we ask such a question we are no doubt thinking that

our sisters remain **unaffected** by what is happening around them. I am not too sure that this is the case. Dress fashions change, and our sisters respond. The capacity to be intellectually competent, with its prospect of 'upward mobility' affects our sisters as it does others. We could go on, but everyone realises that changes **have** taken place since the first century A.D.

So our sisters - and it is women we are talking about - are somewhat polarised. On the one hand they are being drawn to God and his requirements of them, and on the other hand, they are inevitably influenced by the changes taking place around them. A situation which is not easy to come to terms with, both for men and women. So what is the answer?

#### PAUL'S TEACHING

The teaching by Paul is plain and unambiguous. In 1 Cor. 14:34,35, we read, "**Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.**" The reader will remember that Paul, in chapter 11, had rebuked Christian women for disorderly conduct with respect to dress. They were bringing shame on their heads (the men), and also on the Church. Now it seems that the women are compounding the offence by bringing shameful attitudes into the public worship of the Church. All this is in addition to the gluttony being engaged in by some at the Lord's Table. There was much wrong at Corinth, and their luxurious, licentious, and immoral lives gave rise and meaning to a verb "to corinthianise."

The teaching found in 1 Tim. 2:11-15 is very similar, "**Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence . . .**" To 'usurp authority' over the man means 'to dominate the man.' Paul again refers to the Creation and the hierarchy that God established. Paul saw it as reprehensible that the 'new creation' should bring shame upon Christ, and also, in the Church, that the woman should bring shame upon the man. This teaching again refers to public worship. As I have pointed out before, there is no question of **inferiority**; it is how God has decreed it.

#### AN ANALYSIS

I think it is time now to analyse what we actually **do** as Churches of Christ, against what is **said**. The only Meeting of the saints which I can find in the N.T. is the one for the Breaking of Bread. Not many Churches known to me confine themselves to that one Meeting. So it seems to me that there is no scriptural authority as such for holding other types of Meeting. However, we have taken the view that the teaching ministry of the Church is implied in the Bible. Paul says, "I suffer not a woman to teach," but it is also true that a teaching ministry by women takes place in the Church, e.g., Sunday School Bible classes, women's Meetings, special Ladies Days, etc. Dare I say that not many leaders know what is taught at such Meetings? Not that I am casting aspersions on the motives of our dear sisters, but you understand, of course, what I mean.

How has the above situation developed? Has **authority** been given by the various Oversights? Have the Meetings just evolved over a period of time? Do women teach children better than men? Whatever the reasons, a teaching role for women **does** exist. My personal view is that I have never seen this to be disruptive, nor have I seen usurpation of authority over men, particularly in the Breaking of Bread services. So I would endorse this sort of teaching ministry; I believe our sisters are intelligent enough to know when they may over-step the mark.

Part of Paul's instruction in 1 Cor. 14 has always caused me a little confusion, "**And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home.**" What about our unmarried sisters? They have no husband at home to teach them.

So what about our question? In view of what we have said up to now, we need to

consider this sensibly and lovingly. Our sisters don't have blocks of wood on their shoulders. If the Bible is being studied, and they don't understand something, why should they not ask, and even make a comment to illustrate their lack of understanding? Some of the Bible Studies I have 'endured' show a marked degree of mis-interpretation, so if our married sisters wait until they get home to ask their husbands, they may get a greater degree of confusion than they had in the Meeting. In order to quell the fears of some of our brothers, perhaps if a sister said, "Do you mind if I ask a question or make a comment?" That sort of attitude cannot be classed as disorderly, nor is the sister being disobedient. If the presiding brother said, "Yes, I do mind; you must keep silent," then that would be the end of the matter; not a very sensible end, I might add, but an end. However, it would seem wrong to me to give sisters authority to hold women's Meetings, and then deny them the right to ask a question in a Bible Study Meeting, especially if they asked permission to speak. Now **that is** inconsistent.

The Breaking of Bread Service, though, is another matter, not least because this was the Service referred to by Paul when he gave his instructions. I have only ever heard one sister behave in a disorderly manner at such a Service. She was dealt with summarily, and the outburst was viewed so seriously that she had to apologise to the Church.

So I give my answer unhesitatingly, YES.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy way,  
Winstanley, Wigan, WN3 6ES)

## CATCHING UP WITH THE CO-OPERATION CHURCHES

It seems that it has taken only about forty years or so for the Old Path Churches to catch up with the "progressiveness" (or digressiveness) of the Co-operation Churches of Christ, and one wonders who should get the credit for it.

In my June article, "By Public Demand," I mentioned that every disciple of Jesus is a minister (or servant), and is also a priest unto God in the priesthood of all believers. I also stated that it would be as scriptural to describe any one man in a congregation as "The Priest" of that congregation, as it would to describe him as "The Minister" of that congregation. In the same month (on 1st June, 1996), by a complete coincidence, the Church of Christ in St. John's Lane, Bedminster, Bristol, held a special "Service of Welcome" to welcome the installation of "their New Minister," and many invitations were distributed to publicise the service: brother Geoff Daniel being scheduled to give "the message of welcome."

Obviously, many of the young brethren in this country can not be expected to be surprised at *the purpose* of this meeting (i.e. "The Minister" being replaced), not having had the teaching that some of us had in our younger days, but one can't help wondering what our elderly and contemporary brethren think of it, and what some of the previous members (now deceased), at Bristol, would have thought of it. Well, they say we can't halt progress, but that depends upon what we define as "progress" (a question briefly posed and answered in the following article).

In 1952 (really not so long ago) when the Co-operation Churches of Christ (then considered to be digressive) decided at their Annual Conference to call "the man who occupied the pulpit" no longer "the evangelist" but "The Minister" it was considered a great step forward *by them*, but not by all, and prompted what was perhaps one of the best articles at that time (there were others) on "The Minister" issue. The article, written by brother Albert Winstanley, was published in the April issue of the "Scripture Standard," 1953, and

his words are as true today as they were then.

I have, therefore, pleasure in reprinting Albert's article with the hope that it may be helpful to all, but especially to some of our younger brothers and sisters.

Editor.

## THE MINISTER

THE *Christian Advocate* of January 9th printed an article entitled, 'As Others See Us.' The writer quoted at length impressions of a South African delegate to the last Annual Conference of the Co-operation of Churches of Christ, held last August. Here is what Mr. Holt (the visitor concerned) had to say about a particular conference resolution.

*"Conservatism still delays the progress of our British brethren. It was amusing to hear them gravely deliberate, for the best part of a morning, whether they should now officially dub the man who occupies the pulpit, "the minister." (Hitherto they have called him "the Evangelist). . . I contributed a speech, urging them to take the brakes off the ministry and to give the splendid body of preachers they have, the opportunity of leading them freely in the work of the Church. . . Though not without misgiving on the part of a few, the brethren passed a resolution to the effect that henceforth the preaching brother should be styled "the minister." Slight as the matter may seem, it represented a step forward."*

In the light of such events it is amazing that leading men in the Co-operation should claim that they still advocate the restoration of New Testament Christianity. It is even more surprising that anyone should think it possible to reform that human organisation from the inside. Unquestionably there are those (and not a few) still identified with the Co-operation who hope that the drift may be halted, and that a return to the old-time plea and position is possible. But in the light of facts, any such hope appears to be completely unfounded. The above is not by any means an isolated instance. It is but one of many, indicating a progressive movement away from the original order and towards sectarianism. Indeed, the best friends of the movement would find it impossible to show that it is other than a sect among sects. One by one the fundamental principles of the restoration have been abandoned. Instrumental music in worship is widespread. In some congregations the platform is often placed at the disposal of sectarian preachers. The use of the term 'Reverend' is not unknown. Some churches exercise little or no care to restrict the Lord's Supper to immersed believers. It would be hard to find one good reason for the Co-operation's continued existence as a separate religious body.

This article is not written in any spirit of carping criticism. It springs from a *two-fold conviction*. **First:** that many fine people inside this body are wasting time and effort: trying to reform it. We must bring home to them the seriousness of their position, and seek by every legitimate means to persuade them to make a stand for truth. **Second:** we ourselves must maintain unbending vigilance. It is futile to imagine that the mere fact of withdrawal from the Co-operation makes a Church a New Testament assembly - or places it beyond the reach of sectarian influences. It is as easy to be sectarian outside the organisation as in it. Our aim must surely be to show our erring brethren - and the world at large - an unquestionably better way. How may we do this? In one way only; by reproducing the pattern Church of the New Testament - by restoring the ancient order of things.

Relative to the statement quoted we ask a few questions. **First:**

### WHAT IS TRUE PROGRESS?

It is asserted that progress among the churches concerned is held back by conservatism. 'Conservatism' evidently refers to the attitude of those who felt 'misgiving' at labelling a preacher 'the minister.' Would to God there were much more such conservatism among those

churches, but significantly the objectors were but 'a few.' The majority apparently, were much more 'progressive' in their attitude: they passed a resolution which 'represented a step forward.'

Behind all this is an utterly false conception of what true progress is. And it is one often heard, even among faithful Churches of Christ. It is assumed that progress consists of adding large numbers to the Churches. Whatever has popular appeal and is likely to attract the crowd is 'progressive,' we are told. Anything, therefore, that is unpopular with the masses - or emphasises the obvious difference between the Lord's Church and the sects - is conservative, or old-fashioned. Again and again, the writer has met the charge that he and his brethren are just that - old-fashioned and out-of-date. And why? Simply because we insist on the full inspiration of the Scriptures, and urge an unqualified return to the faith and order of the New Testament. Well, we are on safe ground. The Word of God makes it plain that true progress is spiritual progress. Given that, numerical increase will eventually come. Denied it, no numerical growth is of any value at all. To abandon the Lord's system (of ministry, worship or belief) for any other is not progress at all. It is retrogression. In spiritual things quality is ever more important than quantity - or, as someone has said, 'God counts hearts not heads.' In a word, if we are ever to go forward we must go back - right back to Jerusalem.

Next we ask:

#### WHAT ABOUT THE TITLE?

Do we read anywhere in the New Testament of the word 'minister' being used as a title for preachers? To ask that question is to answer it. We do not. Certainly preachers are called 'ministers of the word' (Luke 1:2). We read also of 'ministers of Christ' (1 Cor. 4:1) and 'ministers by whom ye believed' (1 Cor. 3:5). Of course, preachers are 'ministers.' But the fundamental error involved in calling a preacher 'THE minister' is the baseless assumption that preaching is THE ONLY MINISTRY. In fact, it is but one ministry among many.

Ministry being (generally) service, every necessary work done by all the members of the Church is ministry. Every member, therefore, who is serving according to his individual capacity is a 'minister' - a servant of the Lord. To label one man in a congregation 'THE minister' is not merely totally un-Scriptural, it is anti-Scriptural, in that it denies the divine system of ministry. This is, that the Church has a ministering membership - every member is a minister. Moreover, this anti-Scriptural practice is a slight on every member of the congregation which advertises a man as 'THE minister.' It is, in fact, an assertion that he alone is serving the Lord. The late David King well wrote: 'If the term ("minister") in Church usage, were applied to all departments of service, and to all who serve, there could be no objection to its use. Let it be deprived of its special parsonic application, and brought back to its proper and original use, and there will be no need to set it aside' (*British Harbinger*, 1870, p77). Finally we ask:

#### WHAT ABOUT THE OFFICE?

If the Word does not provide for this term being applied to a special class within the Church - does it provide for the office occupied by such men? 'THE minister' where he exists, is the man hired to do the preaching for a congregation. In many assemblies bearing the name 'Churches of Christ', both at home and abroad, such a man 'fills the pulpit.' Most (if not all) gospel proclamation is regarded as the prerogative of this special class. Often well-nigh all the exhortation at the Lord's Supper is limited to 'the minister,' too. Is this a New Testament arrangement? Is it Scriptural for a Church to hand over the edifying of the Church, or the public preaching of the gospel to any one man? The answer is emphatically: NO! More will be said (D.V.) in a further article, but the following references prove beyond question that neither teaching nor preaching are the special prerogative of a particular class in the Church. Both (with certain limitations) are the responsibility of the whole Church - 1

Thess. 5:11; Tit. 1:9; Heb. 10:25; Acts 8:4; 1 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 22:17. Brother King well said: 'What is that office in the Church of Christ which entitles the person who fills it to be termed THE MINISTER? The answer is short and simple. There is no such office; and therefore, no such officer . . . there is no trace (in the N.T.) of a class of officers who are authorised specially and exclusively to designate themselves ministers. In a word, that there is no more authority for one man to be regarded as the one minister of a Church than there is for popes and cardinals' (Ibid. pp.77-78).

Faithful Churches of Christ in Britain today stand not merely with David King and other great restoration pioneers, but also with the inspired apostles of Christ in their opposition to one man ministry.

Let us maintain this position faithfully. Let us uphold the divine system of ministry that is our glorious heritage, unmoved by sectarian influences, from whatever quarter they come.

A. E. Winstanley.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sept. 1 Isaiah 1:10-20 Col. 2:6-23  
 Sept 8 Prov. 23:1-20 Col. 3:1-17  
 Sept 15 Job 31:1-15 Col. 3:18 to 4:18  
 Sept 22 Ruth 1 Philemon  
 Sept 29 Psalm 36 I John 1: to 2:6

### LIFE IN CHRIST

Paul in chapter two is responding, I think, to a mixture of Gnosticism and Judaism. In Gnosticism we have intellectual elitism; in Judaism we have cold legalism. Both were a major challenge for the early Christians. But Paul knew that if the saints remained close to Jesus then their faith would overcome anything. He wrote: "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (2:6, N.I.V.). Also, "In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead" (2:11-12, N.I.V.).

I must admit that for many years I have studied Gnosticism and Judaism. I got into the former when I was preparing

background material for a special study of the second and third letters of John. It was the parish minister of Lesmahagow, Scotland who advised me to contact Prof. R. M. Wilson of St. Andrews University on the subject. I soon discovered he was one of the world experts on Gnosticism and a two-hour discussion in his home, following lengthy correspondence, proved invaluable to my developing knowledge of a complex philosophy.

Judaism, in its many forms, has always deeply interested me. I like to read books published by Jews themselves. For example, I often refer to Louis Jacobs' work *What Does Judaism Say About . . . ?* which handles subjects from Abortion to Zen. But I also like to read Alexander Campbell on the Jewish religion because his analysis is second to none. He once wrote: "The Jews were under a government of precepts - we (Christians) are under a government of principles." He also penned these most helpful words: ". . . the design of the Jewish religion and the design of the Christian are not the same. The former looked exclusively to the present world: the latter primarily and almost exclusively, looks to the next." By Jesus' day Judaism had, of course, become corrupted. Many were bogged down in all sorts of petty rules and regulations (as many orthodox Jews still are). What did

Jesus do? "He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross" (2:13,14. N.I.V.). It is interesting to know about Gnosticism and Judaism, but it is vital to know Jesus, and Him crucified.

### HOLY LIVING

Chapter three is a wonderful chapter. It was written by an inspired apostle and is altogether inspirational. There is the question: How should we then live? The answer is clearly given in this section of the Colossian letter. For example, Paul exhorts: "Then put on the garments that suit God's chosen people, His own, His beloved: **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. Be forbearing with one another, and forgiving, where any of you has cause for complaint: you must forgive as the Lord forgave you. To crown all, there must be love, to bind all together and complete the whole"** (3:12-14, N.E.B.). Every disciple's aim should be to put these words of wisdom into practice.

The Christian religion is a practical religion. It is not all talk and no action. Far from it! It is living life to the full - the life that comes from the Son of God. It is walking in the footsteps of Jesus and going about doing good as He went about doing good. It is making a difference, which is exactly what holiness is all about.

### PHILEMON

**AUTHOR:** the apostle Paul.

**RECIPIENT:** Philemon, a Christian of Colossae. He was the master of the slave Onesimus. He and Paul were intimate friends.

**DATE:** when Paul was a prisoner in Rome.

**BACKGROUND:** "Onesimus was a runaway slave of Philemon. It is implied that he robbed his master and fled to Rome (18), where he came under the influence of the Paul and was converted. He became a devoted disciple of Christ (Colossians 4:9). Paul wanted to keep him in Rome as a helper (13), but not having the consent of

Philemon (14), he felt it his duty to send the slave back to his master" (Thompson Chain Reference Bible).

**COMMENTS:** "In one thing this letter to Philemon is unique. It is the only private letter of Paul which we possess" (W. Barclay). "This epistle gives us a masterful and tender illustration of Christian love. For here we see how Paul takes the part of poor Onesimus and, to the best of his ability, advocates his case with his master" (Martin Luther). "From this epistle we learn what sort of man the apostle was in private life. He has here displayed qualities which are in the highest estimation among men . . ." (Adam Clarke).

### LETTER OF COMMENDATION

To me, this is a letter of commendation. I have often wondered how Philemon received it. I am sure he did exactly as Paul asked. How could he have done otherwise!

Slavery is the background to this short epistle. A study of Roman slavery would help the reader appreciate it all the more.

We must remember that slavery was an integral part of the ancient world. The whole of society was built on it. No people in recorded history owned so many slaves or relied as heavily upon slave labour as the Romans. And slaves were not treated as persons at all, but as things. Consequently, they were brutally used and abused. F.W. Farrer in his book *The Early Days of Christianity* wrote: "At the lowest extreme of the social scale were millions of slaves, without family, without religion, without possessions, who had no recognised rights, and towards whom none had any recognised duties, passing normally from a childhood of degradation to a manhood of hardship, and an old age of unpitied neglect." Think of how Christianity changed everything for both master and slave. I like what Bruce once said of the Philemon letter: "What this epistle does is to bring us into an atmosphere in which the institution of *slavery* could only wilt and die."

**THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN**

**AUTHOR:** the apostle John.

**PLACE and DATE:** uncertain, but probably in Ephesus near the end of the first century.

**TO WHOM ADDRESSED:** the Church at large.

**PURPOSE:** "The apostle John, having lived to see great corruptions, both in doctrine and practice, introduced into the Church, by many who professed themselves the disciples of Christ, employed the last years of his life in opposing these corruptions. For he wrote his three epistles, to establish the truths concerning the person and offices of Christ, and to condemn the errors then prevailing contrary to these truths" (James Macknight).

**KEY WORD:** know.

Gnosticism was a major challenge to the Christian religion in its early days. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means knowledge. Gnostics were, therefore, "the knowing ones." They regarded themselves as an intellectual elite, possessed of esoteric knowledge given by divine illumination for them and them alone. To the Gnostics, the "common herd" did not count. They would always remain ignorant, unteachable and unfortunate.

Gnosticism was a complex philosophy. One only needs to read Kurt Rudolph's *Gnosis* to see that. John is undoubtedly responding to Gnostic teaching in this first epistle. Dear reader, every time you come across the word *know* underline it, and you will soon appreciate what John is emphasising: that Christians are the real "knowing ones." Their knowledge of God is through Christ Jesus, who came in the flesh (denied by all Gnostics) and who is the true light of the world and the all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Personally, I believe that the apostle John was spared by almighty God to meet the challenge of Gnosticism and to deal it a crippling blow.

Ian S. Davidson,  
Motherwell.

**TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE**

1. What was the second beast Daniel saw in his first vision?
2. Who was sent to warn the Ninevites?
3. Which is the longest book in the Old Testament?
4. Who was Noah's father?
5. How many sisters did Joseph have?
6. How long did it take to build Solomon's temple?
7. What was Anna's occupation?
8. How old was Anna when she saw the baby Jesus?
9. Who killed James, the brother of John?
10. How many pigs drowned when Jesus sent demons into them?

**OBITUARY**

**Kentish Town, London:** It is with great sadness that we report the passing of our dear sister Daisy Norton, on May 27th, 1996. Daisy attended our services until her physical condition and hospitalisation prevented her. We extend our sympathies to her family and pray that her example, and that of her son, Brother Thomas Walton, will cause others to consider their own position and relationship with God. The funeral service was carried out by Brother Derek Daniell.

Dorothy Proud (Sec.)

**CHANGE OF SECRETARY**

Please note the change of Secretary at Buckie: W. Mair,

"Mamre,"

15 King Edward Terrace,

Portknockie,

Grampian. AB56 4NX.

Telephone: 01542 840944.

(Sorry I could not have this change in the July issue as requested: I only received it on 5th July, Ed.)

**BIRTH**

Congratulations to Kim Kealey and husband - a son Jake, on May 7th.

D. Proud (Sec.)

## COMING EVENTS

(For your diary)

### ANNUAL SOCIAL

At Newtongrange, will, God willing,  
take place on  
SATURDAY, 12th OCTOBER, 1996  
at 4.00 p.m.  
(Details later)

### ANNIVERSARY MEETING

125th Anniversary at Kentish Town  
on SATURDAY, 12th OCTOBER, 1996  
3.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m.  
Tea at 4.45 p.m.  
Speaker: Jon Glessinger

## APPEAL FROM GHANA

In the month of March this year, Ghanaian Brethren were privileged to receive brothers Graeme Pearson and Bill Cook into their midst for one month's visit. The two came purposely to see for themselves the extent to which the seven year-old appeal they launched to assist Churches in Ghana had gone, and to discuss the future of the work with the Ghanaian brethren. There is no doubt in my mind that they were encouraged by the growth of the Lord's Kingdom here. They were able to report to many donors on 39 congregations they visited. The spiritual joy we all shared was the continued growth of the Church. The way forward is to consolidate what has been achieved so far and continue to assist in the growth of the Church. For this cause, we add our voices to the "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal" to first express our appreciation to all who have willingly supported the "Kingdom Project" over the years. And secondly, to let the report by the two brothers on the Ghanaian situation as they saw it renew your interest in assisting the work. A faithful congregation at Agona Nyakrom meets in a collapsing two storey building. This poses danger to members'

lives. A meeting hall is being urgently looked for, to move the brethren out of that danger. The meeting hall would have to be rented for a fee, for which at least three years advance payment would be required. It is a worthy cause to support. The Committee selected to assist in local management of the funds in Ghana have met twice between mid-April and June. Far reaching decisions were taken on identifying areas of priority and concern. High on our priority list now is how to get the uncompleted five buildings (for Church meetings) completed. These buildings started with donations from Scripture Standard readers and have all reached levels ready for roofing. Roofing materials such as timber and roofing sheets are in urgent need to provide urgent shelter to some distressed congregations.

A case on hand is the forceful ejection of Petriansa Church from school classrooms where they were meeting. The brethren now meet in the block walls of the unroofed building to worship, however, at the mercy of the weather. This is a matter of great concern to us and I believe to all readers. Many congregations are facing similar problems. We really need assistance for these projects. Encouraging news of much joy to us the recent discovery of two faithful congregations in the Northern Region of the country. These Churches at Navorongo and Yorogo with membership over 60, were visited by Brothers Fred Tamatey and David Arku-Mensah. The news of an old Christian brother called Kwadwo Kumah, who is ill came to the committee at meeting yesterday. The brother is over 60 years old and lives with his wife and a son in a farmhouse. They can only be reached by canoe over River Pra. The brother fell sick recently with near paralysis. The old wife also a Christian is now deaf in one ear. The irony of it all is that the able-bodied son who wins breads for the three has gone blind. So it is the old sister who is

providing care for the two. The report drew a lot of sympathy and concern. The committee is working feverishly to get the old man to hospital. By the time you read this report he might be in hospital. I know many who read this story will be moved by the plight of this family and would like to tell them "we love and care." All who wish to help this needy family are encouraged to do so now and give the sick man a little comfort. My congregation wrote expressing their thanks to all donors whose gifts reached them recently by the hands of brothers Graeme Pearson and Bill Cook.

Wisdom Kobla Kpehor.

Cheques should be made payable to Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal) and sent to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, Scotland, KY12 0DU. Telephone: 01383 728624.

**KEEPING UP TO TONE**

"One day when I was with Mr. Hicks, the painter, I saw on his table some high coloured stones, and I asked him what they were for. He said they were to keep his eye up to tone. When he was working in pigments, insensibly his sense of colour was weakened, and by having a pure colour near him he brought it up again, just

as the musician, by his test fork, brings himself up to the right pitch. Now every day men need to have a sense of the invisible God. A clear conception of the perfect one produces a moral impression. No nature is of such magnitude that it does not need, every day, to be tuned, chorded, borne up to the ideal of a pure and lofty life. "The New Testament furnishes this "clear conception of the perfect One," this "ideal of a pure and lofty life." If we would keep up to tone spiritually we must continually look to Jesus as there portrayed. Paul says "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of God, are changed into the same image from glory, to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18).

Henry Ward Beecher.

- 10. 2000 (Mark 5:13)
- 9. King Herod (Acts 12:1,2)
- 8. 84 (Luke 2:37)
- 7. Prophets (Luke 2:36)
- 6. 7 years (1 Kings 6:38)
- 5. One (Genesis 34:1)
- 4. Lamech (Genesis 5:28,29)
- 3. Psalms
- 2. Jonah (Jonah 1:2)
- 1. Bear (Daniel 7:5)

**ANSWERS**

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DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian. EH32 0NY.  
Telephone: Longniddry (01875) 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 70 Avon Street, Motherwell, Lanarkshire,  
Scotland. ML1 3AB. Telephone: (01698) 264064