

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 59 No. 8

AUGUST, 1991

THE LAND OF PROMISE

In last month's article I mentioned the Christadelphians and also the modern doctrine of Pre-millennialism. Belief in the coming 'Millenium' is not confined to Christadelphians, but, of course, is a widely held belief throughout many religious denominations. Before leaving the subject (Pre-millennialism) it may be beneficial to comment upon what amounts to perhaps the **most basic reason** behind the doctrine: (certainly the one most offered in justification for the alleged "millennial" reign of Christ) i.e. **that the promises made to Abraham were never received personally by him.** The theory in essence means that, since God had never refused to honour a promise, Abraham will have to be brought back from the dead, some time in the future, and be given the 'promised land'. As we can imagine, there are many versions and variations of the premillennial theme, but essentially it is asserted that Christ will return prior (pre-) to the 'millenium' (1,000 years) and will reign over the earth for 1,000 years on David's old ivory throne. Associated with this idea is the conviction that all Jews will return to Palestine and be restored to their ancient heritage. This grand doctrine of 'The Thousand Years Reign' is based upon a tiny fragment of a verse at Rev. 20:4 which, in fact, **does not say that Christ will reign for 1,000 years but says, rather, that "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus"** would live and reign for a thousand years (with Christ). This is, of course radically different from saying that Christ's reign would be limited to 1,000 years: after all, Jesus has already been reigning over His kingdom for nearly 2,000 years and will continue so to reign until his foes are all put under His feet. (1 Cor. 15:25). In any case, Rev. 20:4 applies **only to those "beheaded" for the witness of Christ** and such must be very limited in number.

With regard to the ideas that all Jews will eventually return to Palestine (assuming that there will be room for the teeming millions of them), it is usually found that the O.T. prophecies advanced to justify this theory, have already been fulfilled, and were, in any case, prophesying the return of the Jews to Palestine **after their captivities**: not at the millenium. Pre-millennialists have a habit of selecting O.T. prophecies and applying them to the future, when, in fact, they have already been fulfilled. The N.T. writers, such as Peter and Paul provide the best commentaries on O.T. prophecy and they never envisaged a return of Jews to Canaan, but spoke always in terms of Christ's kingdom being entirely spiritual: destined for heaven, not Palestine. We should always keep in mind that most O.T. prophets wrote either **before, or during, the Captivities of Israel and Judah, in Syria or Babylon, and although they predicted the return of a remnant of Jews to their homeland: these predictions came to pass under Ezra and Nehemiah about 450 BC: after which nothing was ever said about Jews gathering in**

Jerusalem. Indeed during the following 400 years (between the Old and New Testaments) God said nothing at all: not a word.

What Was Promised?

In dealing with the claim that Abraham never personally received the land promised by God, we would, first of all, be best to look at **exactly what** was promised to Abraham. The first mention of Abraham is in Gen. 11:27, and his death is recorded in Gen. 25. Between those two events, God made the same promise to Abraham about six or seven times (which was not often, over a lifespan of 175 years). Space precludes a verbatim quote of all the references but those that follow will suffice.

God instructed Abraham to leave his ancestral home in Ur of the Chaldeas, and to move to a land that God would show him, with the accompanying promise, **"I will make thee a great nation, and will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."** (Gen. 12:2). When Abraham reached this land (Canaan), after a long journey, God said, **"Unto thy seed will I give this land."** (Gen. 12:7). It is important to notice that the 'promised land' is to be given to Abraham's SEED, or progeny. In due course and years later, when Abraham and Lot separated, Abraham moved again to Canaan and God said, **"Lift up your eyes and look northward, southward, eastward and westward. For all the land which thou seest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth. Arise walk through the land and in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee."** (Gen 13:12). Still later, after Abraham had rescued Lot from captivity and paid tithes to Melchizedek God made a covenant with Abraham, saying, **"UNTO THY SEED have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates, the Kenites and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims. And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."** (Gen 15:18). Again we notice that the promise was to Abraham's SEED (his offspring) and we notice also that 'promised land' was larger than just Canaan. Much later, after Abraham's preparedness to offer up his only son Isaac, God declared, **"By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thine only son. That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice."** (Gen. 22:16).

Finally, when Abraham was sending his servant on a quest to find a suitable wife for his son Isaac, he said, **"The Lord God which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, UNTO THY SEED will I give this land: he shall send His angel before thee and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence."** (Gen. 24:7).

It seems that, even in Abraham's own understanding of the promise, the land was to be given to his descendants: his seed. Obviously if the promise had materialised in Abraham's time, there would be no cause to reiterate it to his sons, but it was transferred to Isaac. God said to Isaac, **"I will bless thee, for unto thee and THY SEED, I will give all these countries and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father."** Thus, the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham was yet future, even in Isaac's day. (Gen. 26:2). Likewise the promise was still something in the future in Jacob's day (son of Isaac) for much later God transferred the same promise to Jacob, i.e. that his seed would be as numerous as the stars of heaven, that he would enlarge his borders in every direction and that the land he lay upon would be given to HIS SEED (Gen. 28:13).

From all this we can surely see that although the promise was made originally to Abraham (and in turn, personally to Isaac and Jacob) its fulfilment was ever intended to be enjoyed by **Abraham's offspring**, well down the corridors of time.

SEVERAL PROMISES INVOLVED

Clearly, more than one promise was involved: there were several: viz. (1) God would make Abraham a great nation; (2) God would bless those that blessed Abraham and cursed those that cursed him; (3) and was promised: the 'Promised Land'; (4) Abraham's descendants would be numberless: as the stars of heaven, and (5) in Abraham would all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Promise No. 1 was certainly fulfilled for Abraham was father, not only of the Jews, but a large number of other races, including the Arabs. The Bible also shows that promise No. 2 was fulfilled and that those who blessed Abraham were blessed of God, and vice versa. Promise No. 4 was also fulfilled for we read (after Israel's 400 years slavery in Egypt) in Deut. 10:22, "**Thy fathers went down into Egypt with three score and ten persons: and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.**" Promise No. 5 is commented upon by Paul (in Gal. 3:8,16) and is fulfilled in Christ and the gospel. This leaves Promise No. 3 (the land-promise) and is, of course, the point at issue. Has the land-promise been fulfilled to Abraham and his seed: or is it awaiting the 'millenium'?

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

As previously mentioned, the best commentators on O.T. prophecy are the N.T. prophets and writers. Stephen (in Acts 7) gives us a wonderful 'potted' history of the Jews (well worth another read) and at v.17 seems to indicate that the original promise given to Abraham was always futuristic and destined for his seed **after their rescue from bondage in Egypt**, for he says, "**BUT WHEN THE TIME OF THE PROMISE DREW NIGH which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt.**" I'm sure we prefer the word of Stephen to that of any other pre-millennialist, and here Stephen says that **the time of fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham was when the Israelites were multiplying in Egypt**. It also follows that if the promise **drew nigh** at that time, it cannot **draw nigh** at the alleged millenium. Indeed, after escaping from Egypt under Moses, the land-promise was reiterated to Israel (the seed of Abraham) but was **by this time conditional** upon their loyalty and fidelity to God. God said, "**For if ye shall diligently keep all those commandments which I command you to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave unto him. Then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater and mightier nations than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours, from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea.**" (Deut. 11:24). We forget, I suppose, that all the many powerful nations already occupying the 'promised land' had to be dispossessed and driven out. This was to be contingent upon Israel's love and allegiance to God. Did it come to pass?

Joshua sums up the conquest by saying, "**And the Lord gave unto Israel ALL THE LAND which He sware unto their fathers, AND THEY POSSESSED it and dwelt therein, and the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them: the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; ALL CAME TO PASS.**" (Joshua 21:43). Christadelphians and others may claim that the promise to Abraham has still to be fulfilled but this passage contradicts them all. Joshua says that God gave to Israel **ALL THE LAND** that was promised to Abraham: and they not only dwelt in it but possessed it. Respecting the promise; all came to pass. This is confirmed in 1

Kings 4:21, where we read, "And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms, from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents and served Solomon all the days of his life."

In Nehemiah (9:7,8) the Levites, in praising God, said, "Thou art the Lord, the God who didst choose Abraham . . . and foundest his heart faithful before Thee, and madest a covenant with him, to give him the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it I say TO HIS SEED and HAST PERFORMED THY WORDS, for Thou art righteous." And so the Levites were also convinced that the land-promise to Abraham had been fulfilled. Indeed, the Levites go on to be more specific about the fulfilment, and to describe how Israel ultimately proved to be disloyal to God and lost in idolatry. "Their children also multiplied Thou as the stars of heaven, and BROUGHTEST THEM INTO THE LAND, concerning which Thou had promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. So the children went in AND POSSESSED THE LAND and Thou subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would ... Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them, to turn them to Thee, and they wrought great provocations. Therefore Thou delivered them into the hands of their enemies ..." Israel certainly received all the land promised to Abraham, but eventually lost it again.

Conclusion

Space has more than gone and allows only a quick summing-up. Obviously some promises made to Abraham could not materialise in his actual life-time: e.g. it took centuries for his descendants to multiply as the stars of heaven, and the land-promise was evidently also destined for the Israelites (his seed) much later in time. Abraham had vast numbers of other seed, not only through Ishmael, but through Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, Shuah, and others, but the 'the promise' came only through his son Isaac. As we have seen, Abraham's own perception of the promise was that it would not come to him personally but to his descendants. And so, Abraham received the promise in that his seed received it, just as Isaac and Jacob received the same promise in that their seed received it. If the promise was received in O.T. times by Israel, there will be no need of a 'millenium', or for bringing back Abraham to receive something already received.

Sadly, Israel having received the land forfeited it again by their habitual indifference and disobedience, and, having lost it, were taken into captivity. Is there a lesson here for us? We also have received 'a promise' of everlasting life: but it is a promise easily capable of forfeiture. As Paul says, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us (of entering into his rest) any of us should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1).

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

Who are the Great?

"It is not improbable that the noblest human beings are to be found in the least favoured conditions of society, among those whose names are never uttered beyond the narrow circle in which they toil and suffer, who have but "two mites" to give away, who have perhaps not even that, but who "desire to be fed with the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table;" for in this class may be found those who have withstood the severest temptations, who have practised the most arduous duties, who have confided in God under the heaviest trials, who have been most wronged and

have forgiven most; and these are the great, the exalted. It matters nothing what the particular duties are to which the individual is called – how minute or obscure in their outward form. Greatness, in God's sight, lies not in the extent of the sphere that is filled, or of the effect which is produced, but altogether in the power of virtue in the soul, in the energy with which God's will is chosen, with which trial is borne, and goodness loved and pursued. – Channing.

Art thou religious?

“Religion does not consist entirely in praying and worshipping God; the holy man takes religion into all his concerns. Godliness will make good husbands and wives; good parents and children; good masters and mistresses; good tradesmen, good servants, and good subjects. It does this to the astonishment of all who deserve it; and this is the best way people can take to promote the gospel, and make their neighbours like it. Thus the believer becomes a practical preacher, “holding forth the word of life”. Our light must shine before men; and then, they seeing our good works will glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Knowledge

Lord Bacon, on the design of knowledge, says: “He who seeks knowledge truly, does not seek a couch wherein to rest a languid spirit; nor a terrace, for a valuable mind and wandering feet to walk up and down with a fair prospect: nor a fort and commanding ground, for strife and contention; nor a shop for self-interest; but a rich storehouse, for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man.”

Christian integrity

“The gospel requires of all who profess it, perfect integrity; not only the not lying to one another in word, but in deed also; not only the shunning of all evil, but of the appearance of evil also. Christians are denominated the children of the day and of the light. “Let us who are of the day,” says the Apostle, “be sober: for we are not of the night or of darkness.” They are called children of the day, because they have professed to believe in an everywhere present and all wise God. They profess to believe in the perfection of his moral character, as holy, just, and good: and in their responsibility to his judgment seat. Because God is everywhere and sees and knows all things – because he is true and requires truth, and will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil – and all Christians have professed to believe this – it is required and expected of them to live and act uprightly. As the darkness and the light – day and night – are both alike to God, they are alike, too, to all children of God. They are true – they are honest before God and their fellow creatures. They will not do in the dark or in secret, what they would not do openly in the light of day. Or if any do, or would do this, they walk not, or would not walk uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel.”

A fragment

“In God's Word we behold the excellency of His character: we learn His laws and our duty. In worship we pay homage to God. In almsgiving we pay Him tribute. In the Breaking of Bread we confess Christ before the world, profess to live in Him, and for Him; and to look for His coming in glory. In prayer we acknowledge His providence; “and praise is our rent to the great Lord from whom we hold our all.”

Selected by Leonard Morgan from *The Gospel Banner and Biblical Treasury*: containing the writings of Alexander Campbell and Coadjutors in America and Great Britain. 1849.

ANCHOR OF THE SOUL

What a delightful theme this is to meditate upon, particularly so when we read this passage in the Hebrew letter chapter 6 verses 19-20; “**Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever,**

after the order of Melchisedec.”

Every sailing vessel carries an anchor which is useful for stopping the course or fixing a vessel at sea. In the above passage hope is likened to such an anchor keeping the soul steady in the sea of life. We remember this when we sing that grand chorus –

“We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll.
Fastened to the rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour’s Love.”

Drifting

Sometimes an anchor may lose its hold; then the vessel will drift and be imperilled. We are reminded (in Hebrews 2:1) **“To give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should drift away from them.”** When the ship is drifting, if the anchor is dropped anew, the ship is stayed.

When the soul loses its hold on Jesus, it is driven and tossed hither and thither, **“carried about by every wind and doctrine,”** by the storms and tempests of life, amid the rock of pride and the quicksand of error. Then the only remedy is repentance and faith in Jesus’ pardoning grace and love, and casting the anchor anew. If the Christian firmly casts his anchor, he will weather every storm and tempest and at last sail joyfully into the heavenly harbour.

Life’s Ups and Downs

Let us remember that even a boat at anchor is not free from motion, even if the sea be calm. A sudden swell and the vessel will roll; sometimes causing alarm amongst the passengers. So are all believers, though secure in Jesus, yet jostled by the rolling billows of adversity. They may be troubled on every side, yet not distressed, have fightings within and fears without, yet still enabled by His grace to **“fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life.”** The cable of **faith**, to which the anchor of **hope** is fastened, is stronger than all human hopes and trust; and keep the soul secure amid all perils, even in death.

I remember reading somewhere a wonderful illustration of this passage we are meditating upon. The following is a rough paraphrase of it.

“In years gone by when a ship was trying to enter harbour, being buffeted by heavy seas, the captain would order out the longboat carrying the ship’s anchor, and the seamen would work hard to get into the harbour. When they were able to do this, they would drop the anchor within the harbour and signal to the ship. The captain would then order his crew to pull on the windlass and the ship would gradually be pulled unto the harbour and to safety.” Jesus has entered into Heaven’s harbour and has dropped there the anchor of hope attached to which is the cable of faith. We must all pull on the cable but, one day, these earthly vessels of ours will, we pray, reach that safe anchorage in the heavens, May God, by His grace, help us all to get there.

Hope’s anchor, holding in the stormy strife;

Is stronger as the days go by:

We feel the throbbings of immortal life

Grow stronger as the days go by.”

Tom Kemp, Hindley.

GIVE AN ANSWER

1 Peter 3:15 **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to everyone that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and of fear:”**

A well known sect informs us that God has made a mistake in John 1:1, the Gospel written by the apostle. The correct rendering seemingly should be **“a God”** in the third phrase of the verse. As they deny the Deity of Christ Jesus, this rendering

makes Jesus a lesser God, not Jehovah God, thus robbing Jesus of his Deity, in spite of the inspired words of the prophets.

(a) Isaiah 9:6 **"Therefore the Lord (Jehovah) himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"** (lit. God or Jehovah with us, since Jehovah is the only God).

(b) Isaiah 9:6 **"For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."**

(c) Micah 5:2 **"But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."**

Isaiah 44:6 ... **"I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God."**

Isaiah 48:12 God says **"I am he; I am the first, I also am the last."**

Rev. 1:17 **"Jesus says ... Fear not; I am the first and the last."**

Throughout the entire content of Inspired Scripture the fact of Christ's identity is clearly taught. He is revealed as Jehovah God in human form.

1 John 5:7 **"For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."**

The Deity of Christ is the answer to the sect, for if the Triune Godhead is a reality which it is if Jesus and Jehovah are "One" and the "Same", then the whole framework of the cult collapses into a heap of shattered disconnected doctrine, incapable of even a semblance of congruity. The Deity of Christ is the cornerstone of Christianity.

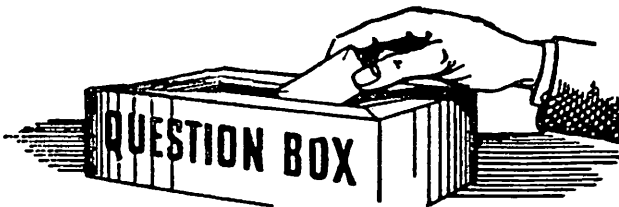
Surely we must be very careful to take heed of God's command in Proverb's 30:5,6 **"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."**

In addition to the proof of the Holy Scriptures of the Deity of Christ Jesus, notice must be given to the grammatical construction of the verse John 1:1 to reveal the error of the sects rendering.

The subject of the Sentence is WORD (Logos), the Verb WAS. There can be no direct object following WAS since according to grammatical usage, intransitive verbs take no objects but take instead predicate nominatives which refer back to the subject, in this case, WORD (Logos). It is therefore easy to see that no article is needed for THEOS (God) and to translate it "a" God is both incorrect grammar and poor Greek since THEOS is the predicate nominative of WAS in the third sentence clause of the verse, and must refer back to the subject, WORD (Logos).

Christ then, if he is the WORD made flesh John 1:14, can be no one else except God, unless the Greek text, and consequently God's word be denied.

Sister Bethia Davidson.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"How do you interpret 2 Tim. 2:15 which says "Study to show thyself approved unto God, etc." Is this an instruction for all Christians, or is it aimed specifically at evangelists, preachers, and teachers?"

This is an interesting question, and also a very important one. To answer it, we must look briefly as to why 1st and 2nd Timothy were written. This is explained by

Paul in 1 Timothy 3:14,15, **“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”**

Let me set the background as to **“these things”** which Paul wants to pass on to Timothy. Paul has gone into Macedonia and left Timothy in charge of the work at Ephesus; one might say that the saints at Ephesus were in Timothy’s ‘pastoral’ care (see 1 Tim. 1:3). It seems quite obvious that Timothy was in a position of authority. He had been subject to **“the laying on of the hands of the presbytery”** (1 Tim. 4:14 see also 2 Tim. 1:6); he was charged by Paul to maintain the purity of the faith and the doctrine; to command and exhort; to commit to faithful men the things he had learned from Paul; to put the saints ‘in remembrance’ of the teaching; to look for men qualified to lead; to preach the word; to do the work of an evangelist; and to keep that which had been committed to his trust. (the reader will have to read both letters to get the full import of these ‘charges’, but I think you will agree that they are quite formidable). It is among these ‘charges’ that the further charge **‘to study’** appears, so in the context I think we have to say that in the first instance this is an instruction from the Apostle to a ‘gifted’ (in all senses of the word), well-trusted, faithful, fellow-saint and colleague in missionary work. Even so, Paul finds it necessary to remind Timothy of his Christian family background, and on two occasions to exhort him to **“stir up the gift”** which is in him, i.e., **“strike up the light”**, and **“re-kindle the fire.”** This is a salutary lesson we all need whenever we begin to feel complacent about things.

Study

It is thought by many that this word is explained solely by definitions which can be found in our dictionaries, e.g., **“the acquiring of information especially from books”**; **“to devote time and thought to understanding (subject, facts, etc)”**. Of course, these are laudable objectives, and it is true to say that much information has been gleaned from books, and many facts have been established based on information gained from books. Consequently, some preachers and teachers have approached the Bible in the same way as they would a text-book on any specific subject; the end result has been that they have developed textual excellence, and have gained much information and gathered many facts; unfortunately it is quite possible that they may not have gained much else. The Bible is not a book whose main aim is to support social and psychological concepts; nor is its main use as a textbook to sustain religious argument. The Bible is a **collection of books unified** with a central message, and that message indicates God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and His Christ – one born into the world as Jesus of Nazareth – as God’s Son and Saviour of the world. It calls for belief and faith in them, and even though the Christian ethic which it contains will bring about improved social conditions, the central message is that without acceptance of God and His Christ **there can be no salvation for mankind.**

So what does the word “study” mean in the context of 2 Tim. 2:15? The Greek word is SPOUDAZŌ and is defined as, **“to hasten to do a thing, to exert oneself, endeavour, give diligence”** (W.E. VINE). **But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.”** So a more correct rendering of our question passage would be, **“Endeavour, strive diligently, to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.”** I rather like the rendering of this verse in the Jerusalem Bible, **“Do all you can to present yourself in front of God as a man who has no cause to be ashamed of his life’s work and has kept a straight course with the message of the truth.”** Statements like this, of course, imply a correct knowledge of the truth, because if we are **“to cut it straight”**, then we must know the truth ourselves, and we must also have the “work” skill to convince the

hearer and reader. So our “approval before God” is conditional on (1) the extent of our diligence and endeavour, (2) the spiritual refining of our work, (3) how “rightly” we handle His message. I believe this is why Paul impresses on Timothy, “**don’t be ashamed of the message**”, and “**re-light the flame and keep it burning bright**” and again “**guard with your life that which has been committed to you, and pass it on to faithful men**”. This, then, was Paul’s counsel to Timothy, but how do we view it today?

WHO IS MEANT ?

Well certainly evangelists, preachers and teachers will fall into the category of those who have to ‘handle aright’ the word of God; theirs is a great responsibility, which should not be entered into lightly. The amount of preaching and teaching done in the Church should make for the best informed groups of Christians anywhere in the country, but after some 40 years in the Church I ask myself the question, “Where has all the teaching led us?” Are church members **really** better informed. Are the teachers, ostensibly teaching from the One Book, **really** speaking with **one voice** on the subject matter therein, or have the hearers become so meeting-hardened that they no longer have the will to act as the Bereans of old, and are quite content to be spoon-fed? What I am saying, of course, is that **we all** – evangelist, preachers, teachers, saints in general – should be following the counsel given by Paul to Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:15. We **all** need approval of God in the ultimate. If the Bible is for **all** which it is, then **all** need to handle it aright. If the ones who teach handle it aright in **their** ministry, then **all** can agree; if not, then the Book **which is open to all** can be used as a monitor of the truth, and as a corrective of error. We have to ask, why some scriptural exegesis is ‘crooked’ and not ‘cut straight’.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

Take, for example, Church Government. I looked at the C.W. Directory of Churches the other day, and of eighty-three (83) churches listed in the British Isles and Eire only Six (6) had forms of scriptural government (Elders and Deacons). What is the problem ? Is the teaching obscure, or has it been presented in the wrong way. Or has it been presented at all. The teacher **may** have handled the word aright; responsibility would then devolve on the hearer to agree and to help implement the true teaching, i.e., by preparing and presenting himself in order to fulfil the scripture. Does “**the flame burn bright**” in all our hearts, or are we quite content to let others carry the torch ?

What about the vexed problem of head covering? There seems to be a degree of inconsistency here. If “**handling the word aright**” means that we come to the conclusion that either way is acceptable, then we should be courageous enough to say that this is what the word indicates. It does not help me personally when sisters who normally do not cover their heads in the home congregations, come to Longshoot and **cover** their heads. The simple fact is they are **pleasing us**, but what about **pleasing God**? Surely if it is right in one place to worship God with head uncovered, then it **must** be right in another place geographically distant. There should be no hiding behind congregational autonomy.

Relative to our teaching. I strongly believe that we should scrutinise source information from commentaries before we present it as authentic scriptural exegesis. To take the word of a Bible commentator and present it almost in its entirety to our congregations is not good enough. Also, I find it particularly offensive to quote a commentator who supports **our own view** and to leave the same commentator unquoted when he may **oppose** our view. Let’s be honest, if we can’t interpret a portion of scripture in a way which is consistent with the rest of the word, then it is better to acknowledge that fact, rather than to take the words of someone else and teach them as **truth**, when the writer may not **himself** have arrived at the truth as we would teach

it. Where are our own Bible commentators? Haven't we **anything** to say which will help and encourage our brethren? If an employer asked a Christian employee for a detailed report on some particular activity, then he would get it 'forthwith'. If the editor of one of our magazines asks for written contributions to the magazine from the brethren, he is usually met with studied indifference. Do our Father and Jesus mean so little to us that we don't want to tell of their love? We don't always have to be contentious.

I have made these observations – and there are more that **could** be made – to illustrate the point Paul was making to Timothy. We **all** need to '**stir-up**' the '**flame**' in us, i.e. the Holy Spirit. We should not be ashamed of testifying to our faith even though scepticism seems to reign supreme. The Bible is the revealed will of God concerning the salvation of His Creation. It is the most important document anyone can ever possess. This is why Paul exhorted Timothy to '**guard the deposit**' and that is why **we** are exhorted to do the same. The teacher has a special responsibility to see that he "handles it aright". **All** of us have a responsibility to see that we do, that is why we are to 'endeavour' with 'diligence' to understand its message and to guard its truth. After all, it is the pillar and ground of the truth. May we all be able to do this.

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

FORGIVENESS

Dear Editor,

As author of the article on "Forgiveness" in the May issue, I must beg space to answer the question on this subject.

The article was prompted by that appearing in the April issue under the heading "Forgive", in which the context of the matter is defined as, ". . . that of forgiving **BRETHREN** who have offended . . ." Matt. 6:14,15 is cited as evidence that one is **BOUND** to forgive **EVERY** trespass regardless of any other circumstance. Quote: "This contains no loopholes, or escape clause. No alternative to forgiving is acceptable". I think that argument has been adequately dealt with.

I take exception, however, to the statement that my article, ". . . **SUGGESTS** that we can **ONLY** forgive those who are repentant". I would point out that, "transgressions which are too great to be overlooked" are mentioned. The point obviously being that while the vast majority of offences can (and are) ignored for the sake of . . . "keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," one is not under necessity to forgive regardless of other considerations. What was the Lord's object in giving us the Law of Offences?

One must be naive indeed to suppose that all offences are of the same magnitude. No rational person would put the Law of Offences into operation for every single offence. On the other hand, no offender can lawfully be evicted from an assembly for **PERSONAL** offences until the Law has run its course. "**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do**". Had the full consequences of the guilt for the crucifixion of Christ been held against the Jews, none of them could ever have had any hope of the salvation for which Jesus died.

It has to be noted that Peter's Pentecostal sermon still holds the same people to be **GUILTY** of their crime. (Acts 2:36. See also Acts 7:52). Without **REPENTANCE** there was still no hope of forgiveness. Acts 2:38.

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SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sept. 1	Ezra 6:1-18	Luke 21:1-19
Sept. 8	Daniel 9:20-27	Luke 21:20-38
Sept 15	Exodus 12:1-20	Luke 22:1-23
Sept 22	Micah 6:1-8	Luke 22:24-38
Sept. 29	Psalms 41	Luke 22:29-53

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

James Macknight was an outstanding expositor of the Scriptures.

Macknight's analysis of Luke 21 is different to most, as he strongly believed that it dealt exclusively with the destruction of Jerusalem. Personally, I concur with his interpretation. Please note these verses, for example: **"And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation is nigh (21:20). 'Verily I say unto. This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled'".** (21:32).

Verse 27, admittedly, requires special care. It says, **"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory"**. In reading it some immediately think of the second coming. But this verse, like every other, should not be wrested from its context.

One of Macknight's explanations of Luke 21:27 reads "This figurative expression, in several other passages of Scripture, signifies God's interposing evidently and irrefutably, to execute vengeance on a wicked generation and to assert His own government over the world. (See 2 Samuel 22:10-11; Psalm 97:2; Isaiah 19:1)" Another one reads: "Nevertheless, by the coming of the Son of man in the clouds, Daniel (7:13) meant His interposing for the erection of His kingdom and for the destruction of His enemies, particularly the unbelieving Jews: and by a kingdom over all nations He meant a spiritual kingdom, a new dispensation of religion, the gospel, which should comprehend the whole world within its pale. Therefore, to show the disciples that they had mistaken the prophecy, which referred wholly to the destruction of Jerusalem

and the conversion of the Gentiles. He adopted it into his prediction of these events and thereby settled its true meaning."

We might also find difficulty with verse 31: **"So likewise you, when you see these things come to pass, know you that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand"**. After all, surely the kingdom was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts ch. 2)? Indeed it was, but Albert Barnes, I think, gave us the sense of Jesus' words when he wrote: ". . . from that time God will signally build up His kingdom, It shall be fully established when the Jewish policy shall come to an end; when the temple shall be destroyed and the Jews scattered abroad. Then the power of the Jews shall be at an end; they shall no longer be able to persecute you, and you shall be completely delivered from all these trials and calamities in Judea."

THE PASSOVER

The origin of the Passover (Hebrew: Pesach) is found in Exodus 12:1-14. It was, and is, one of the great feasts of the Jewish calendar. The Passover, of course, commemorated the 'passing over', or the sparing, of the first-born of the Israelites when the Lord **"smote the land of Egypt"** on the eve of the Exodus (Nisan 14). The Jews had marked their door posts with the blood of a lamb to signify they were the children of God.

Jesus said to His apostles: **"With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God"** (22:15-16). I never read these words, but I think of the late brother Tom Miller of Kilbirnie congregation in Ayrshire. He often repeated them at the Lord's table and, as he did so, I often felt that he had just returned from the scene and was simply relating the experience. I do not think I have heard anyone who read the Scriptures as he did. He made quite an impact on me as a young Christian and was such a great disciple that one

day I should like to tell you something about him and, his beautiful and moving poems.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is the greatest of memorials. It was Jesus Himself who commanded: "This do in remembrance of Me" (22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25). Alexander Campbell wrote, in *The Christian System* "Upon the loaf and upon the cup of the Lord, in letters which speak not to the eye, but to the heart of every disciple, is inscribed, 'When this you see remember me'. Indeed, the Lord says to each disciple, when he puts the symbols into his hand. 'This is my body broken for you. This is my blood shed for you.' . . . In receiving it the disciple says, 'Lord, I believe it. My life from thy suffering: my joy from thy sorrows: and my hope of glory everlasting from thy humiliation and abasement even to death'. Each disciple, in handing the symbols to his fellow disciple, says, in effect 'You my brother, once an alien, are now a citizen of heaven: once a stranger now brought home to the Family of God. You have owned my Lord as your Lord, my people as your people. Under Jesus the Messiah we are one. Mutually embraced in the everlasting arms, I embrace you in mine: thy sorrows shall be my sorrows, and thy joys my joys.' Joint debtors to the favour of God and the love of Jesus, we shall jointly suffer with Him, that we may reign with him."

One of the great tragedies in history, I think, is the division of the church of Christ over the various aspects of the Lord's Supper. The thing that should most unite us has been the thing that has most divided us. The Devil must laugh up his diabolical sleeve at the whole sorry state. We are divided over whether it should be leavened or unleavened bread: whether it should be fermented or unfermented wine: whether a piece should be broken from the loaf or whether it should be broken in pieces: whether there should be one cup on the table or a multiplicity of

cups: etc. I can hear someone ask: "How could something so simple as the Lord's Supper turn out to be so complex and divisive?" Dear reader, I leave you to try to answer that one as best you can. Certainly it is safe to say that the faults lie with man and not with God.

BETRAYAL

Jesus was betrayed by one of His own – Judas Iscariot, whose name will always be associated with infamy of the worst kind. What got into Judas to make him carry out such a dastardly deed? The answer is very simple – Satan (22:3) Judas allowed himself to be used as an instrument of the evil one. The love of money was a huge weakness in his character and Satan, as ever, exploited it to the full. I always remember a banking lecturer once telling our class: "Never forget lads, money is the great motivator." How right he was! and Judas was an example he could have used.

Some people think that the betrayal of Jesus was all pre-ordained by God and that, therefore Judas was not wholly responsible for his actions. Personally, I do not believe that for one moment. God, of course, foreknew what would happen, but He most certainly did not Pre-ordain it. Judas' subsequent suicide, I believe is one proof of this.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

GHANA REPORT

On Sunday, 7th July, 1991 Brother Bill Cook telephoned to say that he had been granted permission to stay in Ghana for another three months. He also informed me that the New Testament churches of Christ had been issued with a provisional certificate of registration which grants the same privileges as full registration.

In the six-minute call he was able to inform me that the Brother in Accra who suffered from cancer had died and was buried on Saturday, 6th July. There was another baptism in Nobowam and in Kumasi.

This month I would like to share with you a part of the joy that I receive in the Ghana Appeal, through the commendable efforts of Brother Bill Cook, by printing a paragraph of his 30th letter to me . . . "I've just returned from Aflao, Koforidua and Huhunya and met the most remarkable man I've had the pleasure of meeting. His name is Kwabla Amesinu, In other parts of Ghana old ancestral worship of idols has died out, but it is still practised here in Aflao and round about it, often with great dedication, and brother Amesinu inherited the position of fetish priest from his father. He also became a member of the Roman Catholic Church – they and other denominations accept them as members even although they continue in idol worship. I saw some of the stone idols. The Churches of Christ are the only ones to insist on them abandoning idol worship, and so do not get so many members, whereas the attendance at the Catholic Church is large.

Brother Amesinu is a carpenter to trade, with his own business and four apprentices, although he has not had much formal education and cannot read or write in English, but can in his own language.

He saw from his Bible that Roman Catholic teaching was wrong, and then examined Jehovah's Witnesses, until he disagreed with their teaching as well.

So he just read his own Bible, in his own language with no help from anyone, and came to the complete understanding of the Gospel, including baptism for the remission of sins, even to the correct observance of the Lord's Supper using one cup. He talked with the 'many cups' people in Aflao, but disagreed with them on the cup, and asked them if they could tell him if one cup was practised anywhere else in Ghana. They told him – yes, there is a man called Abraham Mante in Koforidua teaching and practising it and told him how to reach him. So he went there one day (100 miles) and arrived at Abraham's home at about four o'clock, asking if he could speak to

him. Abraham said that when he questioned him and they talked he realized his understanding of the Bible teaching, and asked who had taught him. He was amazed when he answered that nobody had taught him – he had just carefully read his Bible. He stayed the night at Abraham's home and later Abraham and Kwao Dautey went down for a long weekend to teach and encourage them. By this time our brother had converted another man, but on our visit last weekend we learned that the other man's in-laws had said that if he did not give up Christianity at the expense of idol worship then they would take their daughter back – so once again he (Kwabla) was alone, the man gave up Christ to keep his wife. Kwabla's wife left him when he gave up idols and he has two or three sons with him (I'm not sure how many). He has suffered abuse for his faith, and one old woman, who is a fetish priest (or priestess?) spoke to him very angrily while we were there.

I left Kumasi on Thursday, stayed overnight in Koforidua and left for Aflao fairly early on Friday, arriving at the town where he has his worship, a few miles outside Aflao about one o'clock. I waited with the luggage while Abraham went to see him and they both arrived about an hour later and we went on to his house (which he built himself on land he inherited from his father). He also built a meeting place on another piece of land his father had left him, but it is well out of the way and would be difficult for me to find again.

He arranged for a number of people to call at his home the next day – a Roman Catholic, a Presbyterian, and others including one fetish priest – there would be about half a dozen there. I spoke with Abraham interpreting (Abraham and David are, as far as I know, the only ones who speak the language for this area, and because of his sight, David cannot go) I think the meeting lasted three hours, after which we drank and ate coconuts. Our Brother also bought some food from the wayside mar-

kets.

We learned on Sunday that a young man from the Presbyterian church said to Amesinu on Saturday evening, that he understood what I've said, and wanted to be baptised. Brother Amesinu questioned him and spoke with him for a while to make sure that he understood and knew what he was doing, and then baptised him. I believe that there is another young man who came as a baptised Christian from another area. Another girl in her late teens was also interested (she was not at the Saturday meeting - she came to it but, when Amesinu asked her to go for another chair, she did not come back. He said her grandmother would have given her some job to do). She came to the Sunday worship and explained to Kwao Dautey later that she believed, but she stays with her grandmother who keeps her and sends her to school and looks after her and that if she was baptised she might be put out of the house, and would have nowhere to go, as well as not getting any more schooling.

On 8th July, 1991 £2510.00 was transferred to Ghana. £270 was for Medical Aid and the remainder for Gospel Work. This left £102.69 in the Ghana Account. Two weeks prior to this 200 sets of Bible Correspondence Courses and 3 complete sets of E. M. Zerr commentaries were dispatched to Ghana. This Appeal has now been running for exactly two years and has received 232 donations which have totalled £21,792.40.

The Brethren in Ghana are deeply grateful for these gifts and there is a hunger in Ghana for the Word of God. Please remember our Brethren in Ghana in your prayers and especially the tremendous work of Brother Bill Cook who supports himself from his pension. (I only mention this to dispel any doubts about the Appeal, the policy has not changed, 100% of gifts received go to, Ghana). Anyone wishing to help this appeal in any way please contact me. This month's appeal will be as last months,

for Gospel Work. Please send cheques made out to "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal" and send to, Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel. (0383) 728624. (P.S. thanks to the anonymous donor who sent me a £100 note for the fund, just received i.e. on 10/7/91. This has receipt number 233, and will be used for Bibles as requested. Thanks also for the uplifting letter).

OBITUARY

Kirkcaldy: It is with sadness that we report the passing of Brother Alex. Lowrie, who died, very suddenly, while at work. He was sixty years old and is survived by his wife Betty, and daughters Fiona and Eileen. Alex was a quiet family man. The funeral was at Kirkcaldy Crematorium conducted by Brother Robert Hughes. Please remember the Lowrie family in your prayers.

Ruth Moyes (Sec.).

Hindley, Wigan: Sister Madge Hart fell asleep in Jesus after an operation in hospital, on Wednesday, June 5th. The funeral service took place on Friday, 14th at the meeting house when a good number were present to bid our sister farewell, and to pay tribute to her faithful service to the Lord whom she loved so well.

Her association with the church reaches far back to her early years in Wigan. Coming to Hindley she has been constant: always meeting at the Lord's Table. We bear our brother Tom and his family of children; grand children and Great-grand children, (who are a source of joy and help to him), before our Father's throne, praying that all comfort may be his portion, and theirs also, at this time of loss.

Tom Kemp.

COMING EVENTS

The church at Motherwell intends holding (D.V.) Special Meetings in August. Details are as follows :-

Place: Meeting-house, Motherwell

Dates: Saturday, August, 24 & 31

Time Both at 6.30 p.m.

Subject: Wealth, Money, Riches
Poverty, etc.

Speaker: Bro. Ian. S. Davidson.

These meetings are for eager students of the word of God as Ian, a banker by profession, will concentrate over the two nights on simply what the Bible has to say on the subject.

W. Purcell, Secretary.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

In last months intimation of Bro. David Chalmers' change of address, his Telephone Number was given incorrectly. It should have been 0292 288356. Hopefully David will receive your calls now.

R. B. SCOTT – A Tribute in Letters

Brother R. B. Scott died at the age of ninety-three on the 23rd June, 1988. He had been a Christian for seventy-six years. In the *Scripture Standard* tribute to him it was said: "He was one of the last of a special breed; a rare species — a true 'Old Pather', the likes of whom many of us are unlikely to see again."

For forty-three years brother Scott was involved in the *Standard's* Scripture

Readings. He compiled the Annual Reading Cards and wrote the relative monthly article on the New Testament passages. Many saints owe a great debt for his sterling work.

In 1982 I began to share his workload principally to ease some of the burdens resulting from the serious illness of Sister Scott. In consequence, we began a correspondence which lasted to within a few days of his death. I thought it a good idea to seek to make available a number of his letters to me in the 1980's, which clearly show his remarkable energy, his deep faith and his continuous concern for the work of the Lord. Of course, Hope Chapel, Kentish Town, London was always close to his heart, but he had a great love for all saints everywhere and the letters reveal a man of universal kindness, goodness and compassion. He has gone, but his influence remains strong. I pray that all readers everywhere will catch from these letters even a glimpse of R.B. Scott's Christian character. Personally, it was a joy and a privilege to know him, and I look forward to meeting him again in the glory world.

To obtain copies of the letters, please write to me at 21 Glen Lyon, St. Leonards, East Kilbride, Glasgow. G74 2JJ. This is a free offer.

(I express my sincere thanks to sister Dorothy Proud (Brother Scott's daughter) for preparing these letters for general issue).

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

HAPPINESS

Happiness is a difficult thing to define. The pleasant smile, the cheerful song, the hilarious fun all indicate a presence of happiness. But is it real?

The smile may hide a secret sorrow, the song may be there to drown misery that fills the heart. The fun may be no more than a counterfeit of genuine joy.

It has been said that the majority of fun-giving clowns of circus life, are indeed sad men at heart.

However all the attributes of happiness are a good thing in themselves. After all who would counterfeit such a thing, if it be of no value. The Scriptures tell us that we should not seek happiness where it cannot be found: i.e. the world.

Ask a rich man, if it is in material riches; the politician if it be in politics; the student, if it be in learning; the worldly man, if it be in his wisdom. If all be honest, they will reply that there is nothing completely satisfying in these things. You will remember that the wise king Solomon wrote, of man in his unregenerate state, that : "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it, the eye is not satisfied by seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing, Eccl. 1:8.

It must be noted God did not create man to be unhappy. Adam and Eve were made without sin, in God's image. Perfectly happy in intimate fellowship, that is, until they fell into the trap set for them by Satan, who, it seems, envied them the condition of innocence, from which he had fallen.

Misery, unhappiness stems from sin. Sin creates misery, unhappiness in all its associations. But praise the Lord, God, as we know, has made a way back to himself through Jesus Christ.

Without close friendship with God, real happiness cannot be found. The great Augustine said that man is restless, and can find no rest until he finds God. How true this statement is. Jesus made the way back to God for sinners, in living for them; dying for them; and rising again from the dead for them. Jesus made the statement regarding the way. "I am the way the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the father but by me," (John 14:6). Jesus is the secret of happiness.

The depth of happiness we experience is related to the closeness of walk we have in Christ Jesus. The closer we are the happier we shall be. It then depends on the individuals experience in Christ. It is God's wish that all should be happy. How happy are you? Are we missing out, if so, a closer walk with Jesus is the answer.

Perhaps we have only enough religion to make us miserable.

Andrew P. Sharpe, Newtongrange.

QUOTEABLE QUOTES

"When I think of him who forsook the Palace of the Universe, and the glory of His Father's Court, and condescended to be born of a woman and to live in an unfriendly world, and to be treated a thousand times worse than I have ever been, to save us from our sins, I think but little of all I have done, or can do, to republish His salvation, and to call sinners to reformation and to build up the cause of Life, of ancient Christianity."

Alexander Campbell.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER YEAR — POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH £ 6.00
CANADA & U.S.A. \$10.00

AIR MAIL please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

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Scotland EH37 5PT. Telephone: Ford 320 527

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by
Lothian Printers, 109 High Street, Dunbar, East Lothian. Tel: (0368) 63785