

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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A WILLING MIND

It is extremely sad to see a neglected building fall into total decay. First of all a few tiles come loose; then unpainted windows lose a few panes; weeds obliterate the pathway; dampness brings plaster off the walls and soon the place is inhabited solely by pigeons and rats. Britain abounds in 'stately homes' and some mansion houses, although surrounded with acres of pleasant landscaped parkland, lie completely abandoned and in a few years will become piles of rubble. Past glories are now forgotten and present economic circumstances decree the demise of such, once illustrious, piles. The Victorians built huge, and often very ornate, church buildings to 'the glory of God' and today, because the cost of upkeep of such edifices, many of them are abandoned, used as storage space or completely demolished. The obvious lesson, as all property owners know, is that unless care and money are spent on property in its preservation the consequences will be dire. 'The Lord's House' is not, of course, a literal building, of wood and brick, but consists of 'living stones' (men and women) cemented together by common interests and God's love. Nevertheless the need for money is ever present in the execution of the Lord's work, and in many quarters the 'House of the Lord' languishes and has fallen into decay through lack of funds. New congregations are not set up through lack of funds. The gospel is not sufficiently dispersed abroad through lack of funds. It is sometimes alleged (rightly perhaps in some quarters) that those with a vested interest like to harp on about giving, and money, but most readers will know that can not apply to me. It would be extremely regrettable, and an indictment of church members, if the 'Lords House' (the church) was to pine and fade away through lack of financial support. We gladly pay all the bills for our earthly comforts, television licences, road fund tax, insurance policies, union dues, theatre tickets, rent, rates, daily newspapers, glossy magazine, 'Radio Times' etc. etc. and then perhaps turn our noses up at having to pay a little, once a year, for a church magazine, or giving, on the first day of the week, to the extent of God's prospering of us.

A 'Willing' Heart

Under the Jewish economy, the 'Lord's House' was very often very literal and the people were expected to contribute towards the construction of God's House and for its subsequent upkeep. Even when Moses was instructed to construct the Tabernacle, and the people were invited to subscribe towards its erection, the criterion was that offerings should be taken from "**whosoever is of a willing heart**" (Ex. 35:5) and readers of that chapter will find that this, 'willingness' was an important pre-requisite and is mentioned several times. Thus God expects not only 'that every man will do his duty' but that he will do it with a good grace, and in the proper spirit. It is not enough to

give of our financial resources, and our physical talents to the Lord, but they must be given, not reluctantly, but willingly. This is as important as the gift itself. Indeed this is **more important** than the gift. Giving to God is really a privilege and **how** we give is as much a measure of how we regard God, as is **what** we give. To those who say 'It's the thought that counts' the cynic replies 'It's the gift that counts' and, of course, men are inclined to equate the 'thought' with the actual value of the gift. Thus very few young men would insult the young lady they hope to impress, with a shabby gift. Is it possible that we treat God shabbily with not only the value of our gifts, but also with the spirit in which we present them?

God has always had a Treasury and Jesus, on one occasion, sat watching how the people cast their gifts into the treasury. It must have been possible to see how much each person contributed for Jesus remarked upon the rich giving (of their abundance) and the poor widow casting in two mites (all she possessed). One wonders what went through the mind of Jesus as He regarded each contributor, as they queued to give, just as we, no doubt, wonder what He thinks as he watches us, today, as we cast into His treasury. Our late, and highly esteemed, brother Dougal used to tell of the preacher who, when he saw all the fine cars outside the meeting house wondered where all the poor members were, and when he saw the contribution wondered where all the prosperous members were. Jesus watches our 'casting in to the treasury'.

Can We Rob God?

Paul instructed (1 Cor. 16:2) that on the first day of the week (presumably when the church was gathered together) every member of the church should lay by them in store as God had prospered, that there be no gatherings when he came. This collection was a special one 'for the poor saints' but nevertheless the principle and the practice is a worthy one. Such a plan (contributing on the first day of the week) should, therefore, be regarded as the Lord's way of raising money for carrying on His work. We have no authority for gathering money by any other method. Thus, for this particular emergency ('the poor saints in Jerusalem') the brethren were not to save up the money in their homes, but each first day of the week were to pool their resources in a common fund so that when Paul arrived the money would be available, and the need for a sudden and a hasty collection be obviated. And so if the church contributes systematically, each first day of the week, the treasury will grow and any cause or crisis will be catered for without special collections. This seems to be the intention of these instructions given by Paul, augmented a little later in his second epistle (chaps. 8 and 9). Doubtless the Christians were wondering **who** was required to give, and **how much** they were expected to give. They wondered, no doubt if they would be asked to tithe, and give a tenth as Israel of old. Paul, I think, answers those questions when he says that 'every one of you' (each brother and sister) should contribute (not the husband contributing on behalf of his wife) and the extent of their giving was to be regulated, not by some set percentage (as a tenth) but 'as God has prospered' each one. This could mean that we would give **less** than a tenth or **more** than a tenth - depending upon how much we considered God had prospered us. It is possible to rob God, of course, and many of us might be indignant at the mere suggestion, but the possibility is ever present. The Jews were highly indignant when God suggested that they had robbed Him and challenged God to prove His words and show exactly where and when they had ever robbed Him. The answer - "In tithes and offerings". (Mal. 3:8) It is truly frightening to think that we may be robbing God in our giving and offerings. There are other facets of giving, of course, not mentioned in 1 Cor. 16:2, such as the giving of **our time** and **our talents** to the service of the Lord. Paul says that he was completely confident in the generosity of the church at Corinth and that they would respond liberally to the appeal 'for the poor saints' but reminds them (2 Cor. 9:5) of

the broad general principle that "he which soweth sparingly will reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully will reap bountifully". Bearing this rule firmly in mind, Paul urges that "everyman" should contribute "as he purposed in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." When we read this our minds go back to Ex. 35 "whosoever be of a willing mind" and clearly illustrates that our attitude when we give is of a vital significance. It's not just a question of God preferring a cheerful giver, but God loveth a cheerful giver. Paul (in the previous verse) expresses the hope that their contributions to their poorer brethren will be a matter of 'bounty' and not one of 'extortion' and perhaps there hangs the difference. We can either be bountiful in our giving to the Lord or merely dutiful. We can either take pleasure in it, or it can be a matter of having it extorted from us.

Giving Cheerfully

We can surely understand why God likes a cheerful giver. None of us, I suppose, would like to receive a gift from someone which was clearly grugged. None of us would like to receive a favour given merely out of necessity - we would rather do without it. Likewise God does not twist arms or hold pistols to heads, but delights in the ready service given freely with joy and true enthusiasm. He deplores (and probably disregards) the gift which has to be squeezed from tight fingers and sweaty palm. (It is true that money does not come to us easily and we must look after it - the fool and his money are soon parted, and we must not be foolish - but surely we cannot put money to any better use than to give it back to the Lord, and employ it in His purposes.) Thus from Paul's words to the Corinthians we see:-

(1) God deplores those who give only because the necessity is placed upon them, and that it is expected of them. It is a matter of trust between us and our God and only we ourselves can estimate how much God has prospered us. Fortunately God does not say He will prosper us in accordance with the level of our giving, but the other way around. Giving to the Lord should be considered a privilege and if we see it that way, our giving will be transformed (not only of money but of time and effort). Thayer defines 'grudgingly' as 'sorrow, pain and grief' (i.e. *ek lupes* - 'out of grief'.) If, at any time, what we are asked to do for the Lord, or give to the Lord, gives us 'pain, sorrow or grief' then we can be sure that we are acting 'grudgingly'. Some say that we should "give until it hurts" (and we know what they mean) but it would not seem scriptural, would it? If it hurts us, we give *ek lupes* - grudgingly.

(2) God loves a cheerful giver. Many, if not all, gifts are entirely deprived of any value if they are not given freely, gracefully and cheerfully. There are things 'that money cannot buy' in this world and sometimes gifts can be 'as cold as charity' if not given in the right spirit. It is not always enough 'to write a cheque' to extricate us from our obligations. There is more to 'giving' than just giving, and gifts of money can mean much, or very little. Some would say, "What does it matter, as long as we get the money"? yet it greatly matters if principle is absent and especially if love is missing. "Thy money perish with thee" said Peter to Simon, and so money is not the 'be all, and end all' - it cannot buy everything. After all God can doubtless accomplish His purposes without us, and without our gifts, but He solicits our bounty and loves cheerful givers. Cheerful givers are a mighty power and have built many meeting-houses, sent many evangelists, spread the word into distant lands and relieved dire distress. God Himself is, after all, a very cheerful giver. There is nothing sour, grugged and mean about His bounty to us, unworthy of it as we are. God sends His rain and sunshine upon the just and the unjust and God gave us His all in the person of His only begotten Son. We do not have to twist God's arm or prise His fingers apart - who is more bountiful to us, than God?

More Blessed to Give

Giving is actually very good for us. The giving up of material possessions, in the proper spirit for the good of others, will enhance our spiritual development and enrich our lives. This is doubtless why parents encourage their small children to share their toys and eschew a selfish spirit. Paul quotes Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) and although these words cannot be traced in any of the gospels Jesus uttered them, nevertheless. Our Lord's teaching was always radical and while nine out of ten of 'the man in the street' would urge the reverse — with a little reflection, our Lord is right, again. The early church (indeed the very first congregation — at Jerusalem) had a great sense of generosity and brotherhood, and we read "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." This is surely one of the most attractive attributes of the church, that each and every member will rally to the help and assistance of all others, should the need arise. Thus the church at Corinth and throughout Galatia came readily to the assistance of all 'the poor saints.' It was tangible "proof of their love" (2 Cor. 8:24) and in the circumstances was more blessed to give than to receive.

We live in a prosperous land (relatively speaking) and we spend much not only upon our basic needs, but upon creature comfort, pleasures and even upon pastimes and hobbies. Let us also reflect upon the state of the 'Lord's House' and ensure that funds are available for its wellbeing — not only to save it from neglect and decay, but to extend its borders. May it be that the church will not languish and die in any quarter through indifference or tight-fistedness. Let us give not only of our money but let us give of our time, and let us give of our energies, and our talents to the furtherance of the gospel and the increase of the church; and let us do it all most joyfully for God **loveth the cheerful giver**. "Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold and silver, and brass." (Ex. 35:5).

"Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread,

For giving is living," the angel said

"And must I be giving again and again?"

"Oh, no," said the angel piercing me through;

"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."

EDITOR

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

Through studying the New Testament Text, I came to a conclusion on the last twelve verses of Mark 16 which differs from an article I wrote on the 21st of October, 1984.

My conscience led me to mention this by way of a foreword to my article, on the New Testament Text. (Nov.85). Having read Brother Tom Kemp's response to my article, I realise that I should perhaps have expanded my reasons, a little more than I did. I appreciate Brother Kemp's concern for the young in the faith. It was only 12 years ago that I was added to the Lord's church. The strongest argument which drew me to the church of Christ, was the fact that the church speaks where the Bible speaks and it is silent where the Bible is silent. There is no need for anyone in the church of Christ to fear the truth, whether they are young or old in the faith.

The Bible is the Hebrew and Greek text. Exactly 100 years ago, J. W. McGarvey wrote "Integrity of the New Testament Text." He quoted Dr. Hort as stating that seven eighths (83%) of the text was above doubt. Today 97% of the text is above doubt, which shows the progress that has taken place. Progress has also been made on the long standing doubts on Mark 16:9-20.

- a) **Eusebius**, called the Father of Ecclesiastical History, because he wrote the first church history that has come down to our present day, is my first witness. He lived from A.D. 270 - 340. He lived through the persecution under Emperor Diocletian, which continued from A.D. 303 - 311. The works of Eusebius do not merely depend upon his personal knowledge, but more upon the fact that he had gleaned all the christian literature, which had come down to his age. He constantly refers to the "ancients" and "the ancient writers" for the things that he says in his works. If we suppose that by "ancient writers" he meant those who lived as far back as 200 years before his own time, he would be including the Apostles. Eusebius affirms that the last twelve verses were absent from ALL the Greek manuscripts known to him.
- b) For my second witness I would appeal to **Jerome**. When the Latin version of the scriptures was 200 years old and contained many variations, the Bishop of Rome entrusted a revision to be made by Jerome in the year 382 A.D. The completed work, was known as the Latin Vulgate. (Roman Catholics today when translating the Bible into other tongues, do not use the Greek Text, but the Latin Vulgate, because Jerome, when preparing it, used what he called the ancient Greek manuscripts). Jerome did not know of the existence of the last twelve verses in Mark's Gospel.
- c) For my third witness I would refer to **Origen**, who was born at Alexandria in A.D. 183 (He died in A.D. 254). He was the most voluminous and one of the most eminent of the Greek writers of the early church. In a sermon on Joshua, he named the books of the New Testament as we have them today. In his commentary on the books of Matthew, he says that the four Gospels are unconverted, but Origen had no knowledge of the existence of these last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel.
- d) For my fourth witness, I would call on **Clement of Alexandria**. He lived from A.D. 165 to 220. He was a student of pagan philosophy before his conversion to Christ. On becoming a christian, he visited eminent teachers of christianity in Greece, Syria, Egypt and Palestine, to receive oral instruction. Such was his proficiency in these studies, that he was made catechetical teacher in Alexandria in A.D. 189 and held that position to 202 A.D. when he left Alexandria and was succeeded by his pupil Origen. Clement shows no knowledge of the existence of these verses.

The Manuscripts

Let us turn our attention now to the manuscripts. In 1959 John Burgon wrote that "the last twelve verses of Mark are contained in every manuscript in the world except two." The most accurate text available today is The United Bible Societies 3rd edition of the Greek New Testament. The Textual commentary on the Greek New Testament is a companion to the third edition, which sets out the reasons that led the translating committee to come to certain conclusions about the text. They have enclosed the last twelve verses in brackets, to indicate that this is the work of an author other than Mark. The last twelve verses of the commonly received text of Mark are absent from the two oldest Greek manuscripts (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), from the old Latin Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae, the Sinaitic Syriac manuscripts, about 100 Armenian manuscripts and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts. Many manuscripts which contain the passage, have scribal notes stating that older Greek copies lack it, and in other witnesses the passage is marked with asterisks or obeli, the conventional signs used by copyists to indicate a spurious addition to a document. I am aware that there are, numerically, more manuscripts with a continuation after verse 8, but this argument is weakened by the fact that these manuscripts they are young and they are not all identical with their endings. There are four different endings to Mark.

Having briefly discussed the external evidence, let us proceed to examine the internal evidence. When we study the vocabulary and style of the last 12 verses of Mark we find that they are Non-Markan. The following words are found in no other place in Mark:-

- 1) apisteo — verse 11 — believe not.
- 2) blapto — verse 18 — to hurt.
- 3) bebaicountos — verse 20 — confirming.
- 4) epakoloutheo — verse 17 — follow after.
- 5) theaomai — verses 11 and 14 — seen.
- 6) meta tauta — verse 12 — And after these things.
- 7) poreuomai — verse 12 — going.
- 8) sunergeo — verse 20 — working (together).
- 9) husteron — verse 14 — and later.

The following designations of the disciples occur here in the entire New Testament:-

- 1) thanasemon — verse 18 — deadly.
- 2) tois met autou genomenois — verse 10 — to the ones with him having been.

The connection between verse 8 and verses 9-20 is so awkward that it is difficult to believe the evangelist intended the section to be a continuation of the Gospel. Thus the subject of verse 8 is woman, whereas Jesus is the presumed subject in verse 9. In verse 9 Mary Magdalene is identified even though she has been mentioned only a few lines before in 15:47 and 16:1, the other women of verses 1 - 8 are now forgotten, the use of 'anastas de' (And rising - v.9) and the position of the 'proton' (first — v.9) are appropriate at the beginning of a comprehensive narrative, but they are ill-suited in a continuation of verses 1 - 8. In short, all these features indicate that the section was added by someone who knew a form of Mark that ended abruptly with verse 8 and who wished to supply a more appropriate conclusion. There are three possibilities:-

- 1) Mark intended to close his gospel at verse 8.
 - 2) The gospel of Mark was never finished.
 - 3) The gospel lost its last leaf before it was multiplied by transcription.
- (I, personally, am of the opinion that 3 seems the most probable). This would also account for manuscripts that stop at verse 8 but leave a space.

In Conclusion

Finally I would like to say a little on why I wrote this article. When I was young in the faith, I invited two Jehovah witnesses into my home to discuss the scripture. They very quickly said that they did not believe in the trinity and I, in inexperience, began to defend the trinity. I was soon informed that the word trinity is never mentioned in the Bible. Looking up my Strong's concordance I found that they were correct but I found 1st John 5:7 and put this to my guests, to be informed that this verse is not found in any manuscript. This taught me a lesson.

The Bible contains 31,102 verses. The loss of a few verses from that number will make no difference to the preaching of the truth. We do the young in Christ no favours in protecting them from one or two doubtful passages especially in this day and age. I have noted when speaking to Plymouth Brethren on the truth, the mention of Mark 16:16 very quickly draws remarks on the validity of the text. There is absolutely no doubt on every other passage which mentions baptism, so why do we insist on quoting the only doubtful passage, more than the rest. Do we not justifiably level criticism at the Roman Catholic Church because they insist on adhering to traditions handed down to them?

Is there perhaps not a trace of this in the church when dealing with fond text? The search for the identity of the New Testament Text is not an abstract, irrelevant area of study for scholars and no-one else. It is a vital subject that has an importance for everyone who reveres God and would know what he has said. The scriptures claim to be "inspired of God" or more literally, "God breathed" (2 Tim.3:16). As such, they come from God's mouth and are His words. Their origin and authority are divine.

What scripture says, is what God says. Consequently, it is of great importance that we know exactly what God has said, for it is this that is binding on us as Divine truth. (I wish to thank the United Bible Society who publish The Greek New Testament, 3rd edition and also the Textual Commentary by Bruce M. Metzger who have kindly given me permission to quote from these books, for the purpose of this article).

GRAEME PEARSON, Glasgow.

A CONSUMING FIRE

Fire, in Holy Scripture, is quite often a type of the Holy Spirit. While minding sheep on Mt. Horeb Moses saw a bush afire. It is often referred to as "the burning bush" but it did not consume, but was aflame by the power of God. Moses' natural curiosity made him 'turn aside' to see this strange phenomenon, but was stopped in his tracks and told to remove his shoes. The place upon which he stood had become holy ground. Why had Moses to remove his shoes? It was a confession of personal defilement or unworthiness.

Shoes are earthly things, if not earthy things, and nothing of an earthly nature is to be allowed to come between us and God. Sometimes our prayers may be hindered, or we may be unsuccessful in our efforts for God, because **the things of this world** have not been removed, and have come between us and our God. To be servants of God we must be pure and true. No surgeon would use dirty instruments and neither will God.

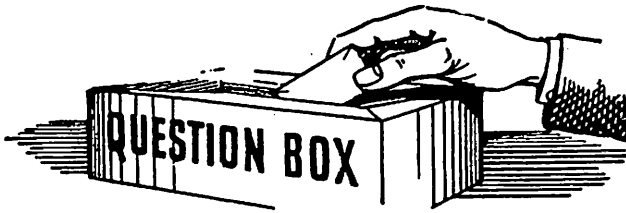
We are all acquainted with the use God made of fire in the confrontation between Elijah, on Mt. Carmel, and the prophets of Baal. This contest between the servants of God and the forces of evil was also a testing-time for Elijah himself. The odds against poor Elijah were certainly enormous and apart from anything else he was outnumbered by 850 prophets of Baal. This confrontation between God and Baal is eternal and we must all emulate the courage and strength of Elijah, and, each in our turn, put to flight the prophets of Jezebel. We notice that in the proceedings of that day Elijah began by "**rebuilding the altar of the Lord that had been broken down.**" What a wonderful testimony. May it be possible that the same should be said of us when we leave this world — that we devoted our lives to rebuilding God's altars that have been broken down. The fire that God sent (1 Kings 18) destroyed not only the sacrifice but also the stones of the altar, and shows that God's fire can preserve (the 'burning bush') or can completely destroy.

The 'one baptism' (Eph. 4:5) is in water and the 'baptism of fire' is yet future, but at Pentecost God sent his Holy Spirit upon the apostles attended, it seems, in the firey manifestation of 'cloven tongues, as of fire' alighting upon each one of them. The fire, and the noise, signifying the coming of the Spirit of God. This was a beautiful, if striking, symbol of the burning energy and the immense power of the Spirit, now descending upon the church and about to pour itself throughout the world to every tribe under heaven, on the tongues of the apostles. **Are we on fire for God?** Jesus had much to say about fire, yet said that He would spue lukewarm disciples 'out of his mouth.'

The appearance of fire, and flame, has always been regarded as the most awe-inspiring emblems of God's power and divinity, not only in the case of the 'burning bush,' but also when he descended on Mt. Sinai in the midst of thunders, and lightnings, and smoke, and fire; vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel. Until that time let us, in the service of God take the shoes off our feet and remember that we tread on holy ground. Let us devote all our energies, like Elijah, to the building up the altars of the Lord which have been broken down, and let us be 'set on fire' for God.

O, Thou who camest from above,
 The pure celestial fire to impart,
 Kindle a flame of sacred love,
 Upon the mean altar of my heart.

T. H. BLACKMORE, Weston-Super-Mare.



Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

“Will you kindly give me your views on the teaching of the Scriptures 1 Cor. 14:1-33. Would not some of these verses condemn the using of versions other than the King James Version in an assembly where the majority of the members have always used that version?”

The above question forms the crux of a letter received from a brother from overseas. He goes on to explain that people cannot be edified if they cannot understand what is read or spoken by the one preaching or teaching (hence the reference to 1 Cor. 14). He allows that he does not mind other brethren using other versions for home study, but he does not hold as valid the criticism that the King James Version is out of date. The obvious implication from the question is this; ‘should any practice which

THE MAIN TEACHING

The main thrust of the passage seems to be that one should desire one gift in preference to another. The gifts are designated as **spiritual** gifts. The word ‘spiritual,’ I believe, describes the **nature** of the gift, but does not in my view indicate that the Holy Spirit bestows, in spite of themselves, selected gifts to selected people. The word ‘desire’ implies that I have some innate desire which will be responsive to sources not of myself; by that I mean that I have the propensity to be responsive to promptings from the Holy Spirit rather than the unrequested bestowal by the Holy Spirit of miraculous gifts. I believe this distinction to be important in view of what the Apostle says. A non-realisation of this distinction leads, in this day and age, to the almost infantile view that unless one can speak in ‘tongues’ then one cannot be a recipient of the Holy Spirit.

The preference of gifts seems to fall between the ‘prophecy’ and ‘speaking in tongues;’ the Apostle comes down heavily on the side of ‘prophecy.’ I wonder why the charismatics don’t find it strange that an Apostle, speaking and writing under direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, should do that. It’s as if the Holy Spirit is saying to us, “Don’t be swayed by that which elevates the person, but rather desire that which elevates God and the Church.” It is significant that Paul opens the passage by saying, “Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophecy.”

A word about prophecy. The Apostle is not talking about the prophecy which is predictive; he explains in v.3, “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” Nothing predictive there. In v.12 he substantiates the principle, “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church.” The importance of the type of prophecy which the Apostle is speaking of is demonstrated quite practically in v.24, “But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.” Prophecy as Paul understood it here, is the deep search for truth, and having found it, the glad impartation of it so that others could be saved and rejoice in the Lord.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

The serious student of 1 Cor. 14 will no doubt be struck by the marked contrast in the euphoria of those who claim to speak in tongues in this day and age, and the relegation of it by Paul in this passage. The ones who advocate speaking in tongues should ponder v.23, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad." Of course they would, and quite rightly so. Such a demonstration would do nothing for edification.

How did Paul view 'tongues'? In the first place he asserted that they did nothing for understanding, "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men for no man understandeth him" (v.2). Secondly, he likens it to the inarticulate sounds of musical instruments, and the plain inference is that speaking in tongues gives an 'uncertain sound' if the tongue cannot be understood. "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle" (v.8). The sounds made by musical instruments have a meaning, but being unworded they appeal to the emotions and not to the intellect. How can a person gain knowledge if words cannot be articulated. The importance of articulated words was testified to by the Lord Himself when He prayed to His Father, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them (the words), and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" We are not looking today for signs and manifestations of individual ego-trips, but we are looking to the solid, dependable unchanging Word of God, for therein is our salvation and edification, as Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). I believe that we can have no greater testimony to the efficacy of words which can be understood, and which teach us those things which it is vital for us to know.

WHAT ABOUT THE KING JAMES VERSION?

Well, 1 Cor. 14 cannot be referring to versions of the Bible because, of course, no versions were extant in the first century; but I take our Brother's point and to a very large extent I agree with it. There is nothing more annoying in my view than a brother to read in open assembly from a modern-day translation of the Bible when the congregation have, in the main, the King James Version. The thread is lost because of the comparison of words as the reading is taking place, and therefore the sense and the understanding of the passage is impaired. The idea that modern translations make for better understanding may not be a tenable one; things can be lost (or gained) in translations. The supposed extra clarity of meaning may only be in the mind of the one who wants to pass it on to others. The mere reading of it to others may not do that; an **explanation** of it in a teaching session might be a better idea.

Like the questioner, I think there is a great benefit to be gained from an examination of various versions and translations during personal study. My individual preference in open assembly scripture reading would be for all, reader and congregation, to have the King James Version, and then to bring out other thoughts in study sessions. The A.V. is certainly not a dead letter; its beauty, symmetry of expression and, dare we say, clarity of understanding, have stood people in good stead since it was introduced, and in my view will continue to do so for a very long time to come, if the Lord tarries. It is not my brief in this particular question to explore the merits or demerits of various versions and translations, but some have to be viewed very carefully.

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

A CHAT WITH AN 'OLD PATHER' (Cont.) (4)

(A Chat between I. Davidson & the late Tom Nisbet)

IAN: Is there a difference between a conscientious objector and a pacifist? Would you say you were a pacifist like Bob Macdonald who refused to be involved in any way with any activity to help his country at time of war?

- TOM:** He was thrown into prison for it. There were alternative occupations, but he was not prepared to do that. I don't think I would say I was a pacifist I would not do anything — this is my impression now — that would result in a man losing his life. I do not think that we have any right whatever. Mind you, this idea of mine goes a long way, even to abortion. It goes right to that. We have no right to interfere with life, but to save it. This is the hypocratic oath the doctors have to take. Save life by all means. See, if we take a man's life we may be hurtling a man into eternity unprepared for it. If he had lived, he might have become a Christian. All these questions crop up.
- IAN:** Did you ever discuss this with anyone in the battle-front in the First World War?
- TCM:** Yes we discussed it in our billets and even up in the trenches. Now, I will give you an experience of one little discussion. There was fellow yonder who said: "You see, I joined the R.A.M.C because it was not a fighting unit, but according to my beliefs and principles I should not even have joined the army or the R.A.M.C. My brother at home would not join anything, so he is in jail. Now, my brother went to jail, but I had not the courage. I could not have gone to the jail because I did not have the courage of my brother." He backed up his brother at home in jail as being a better man than he serving his country in the R.A.M.C. We often discussed it, but the most of the fellows, of course, were all real patriots.
- IAN:** Your sons — Jack and Joe — when it came to the Second World War took up the same position. Were they non-combatants?
- TOM:** Joe wasn't. Joe was in the tank regiment in India. But Jack was. Jack was an out-and-out non-combatant. Even abroad in North Africa, when they were fighting and invading Italy Jack was in the parachute regiment, of course. He was offered promotion, but he would not take it because he would have had to carry a revolver.
- IAN:** I thought Joe was a non-combatant as well.
- TOM:** No, he was a corporal in the tank regiment. He joined the Navy to begin with No, I think I would still be an out-and-out non-combatant. But here is the crux You see, in a country there is hardly a job you would do but what would be helping the war effort. So that if you claim to be a pacifist, you have to stop all that. So you have to be careful. Words are funny things. Words can lead you astray awfully easy. That was my experience.
- IAN:** After the war, I suppose you resumed work as a clerk and indeed worked as a clerk for the rest of your working life.
- TOM:** Yes, I retired in 1961 — April.
- IAN:** You were associated with the Tranent congregation, of course, from the beginning. Who were the main men in the congregation at that time?
- TOM:** We had a lovely congregation about that time. I was just telling somebody at the Luncheon Club yesterday that both sides of the Sinclair's Hall, at the back of the Crown Hotel, were always filled. A big church. Well, the main men then were Joe Guiney, a Slamannan man; his brother Robert Guiney; Walter Wilson, who was a colliery winding engineman (no relation to the Slamannan Wilsons); Robert Wright; James Simpson. These were all wonderful speakers and expositors. Bob Weir, he was an East Lothian man, I think, and he was a surface foreman at Bankton Colliery; Tom Shaw was another winding engineman; his sister Janet Shaw, who was a schoolmistress — (headmistress in the Primary School at Galashiels), was here every weekend, a wonderful woman; Willie Knox who was in Motherwell for a while, he was a grand preacher too; Jimmy Hoggan; Tommy King, who later became a provost in this town and left the church and died outwith the church; Robert Baird; William Hogg.
- IAN:** These days of the church, they were looking for unity, attempting to unite all the sects and all the factions. You can remember the time when there was a

great unity amongst all the Churches of Christ in Great Britain. You once told me of that.

TOM: Aye, I can remember that time; from John O' Groats to Land's End every Church of Christ was in union with one another. This is what the Restoration Movement was all about — bringing together. But it was wider than that. It was meaning to do away with the sects and bring them all into the Church of Christ, and wherever you went in this country they were all the same. It was a wonderful time that lasted right up to the beginning of the First World War..... It was a wonderful time of Christian experience, a time our young folk today are not experiencing. Not only was there spiritual growth, there was growth numerically. Now, the growth numerically was because they were spiritually growing. Today we are not spiritually growing ... The miners used to congregate at the corner of the street and then go for a walk. The Church of Christ miners were always together. They had their Bibles in their pockets and they would raise a subject and thrash that out all the way of the walk. Then they would sit down at the roadside and out would come their Bibles just to verify what had been said. An older brother, Rab Wright, was a great one for saying when a knotty problem came up: "Wait until I get my sword out." It was his Bible! He would settle everthing with the Bible. This is how things were, right up until 1915/16, I would say.

IAN: What went wrong, Tom?

TOM: Oh well, the college had a lot to do with it in the first instance — Overdale. 1920 it started. The modernist teaching they were getting had a lot to do with it. But even before Overdale, there was a sign that there was something wrong because lots of the Churches began to be wanting to be recognised by other religious bodies. The real spirit was beginning to wane, I think, and so when Overdale came along with its modernist teaching, that was the beginning of the rot. It has never been the same since.

IAN: The Church has always been a favourite theme of yours. In fact, you wrote a pamphlet on it recently. Why has the Church always been a favourite topic for you?

TOM: I wonder why! I was thinking that myself. I have in my file the first essay I wrote to Jimmy Hoggan after he came back from Birmingham. I was only a very young boy then, but I was in the Church and asked him if he would teach me to be a speaker. Well, he said: "Tommy you go and write an essay on the Church for me, and bring it to me," which I did. I have it yet. It's in my file. The things that I said in that essay are some of the things that are in that pamphlet yet. The Church then became a favourite theme of mine. Two favourite themes I have: the Church and the Resurrection. I can speak at any time on either of these, and I have any amount of notes on them. Why should it be? I do not know. It's just that I was enamoured with the idea of the Church. It is such a wonderful institution and so perfect in every aspect. It appealed to me. That is the only explanation I can give. I was looking through my file the other day there and came across this, and you should see my writing, it's schoolboyish writing, O dear!

IAN: You have never questioned that the Church of Christ has taken the correct position?

TOM: I have never questioned that. No. The teaching that I heard in the Church of Christ in my very young days convinced me that it was the Bible way. The teaching was so plain that I was always convinced it was the Bible way and I have never had any doubts about it. Even when we were abroad, even when we were in the army, when we got the chance, we used to have a lot of Bible classes in the army in our unit. There were about six or seven of us in the 112th Field Ambulance that were keen on studying the Bible. We used to have

a little ring and would be studying the Bible in the corner of an old barn behind the line somewhere. Over in the other corner, there would be a group sitting playing Rummy, or Crown and Anchor, or some other kind of card game — gambling. They used to make cat-calls across at us. I can remember them very well. One of these fellows was a keen Methodist, but some were not even Church members at all. But out would come the Bibles and we would have a good Bible study even out there in France.

(to be continued)

GLEANINGS

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

BEECHER'S ADVICE TO HIS SON

The following letter from the late Henry Ward Beecher to his son was published in *The Christian Life*, it is said for the first time:-

My Dear Herbert — You are now for the first time really launched into life for yourself. You go from your Father's house, and from all family connections, to make your own way in the world. It is a good time to make a new start, to cast out faults of whose evil you have had an experience, and to take on habits the want of which you have found to be so damaging.

1. You must not go into debt. Avoid debts as you would avoid the devil. Make it a fundamental rule: No debt — cash or nothing.
2. Make few promises. Religiously observe even the smallest promise. A man who means to keep his promise cannot afford to make many.
3. Be scrupulously careful in all statements. Accuracy and perfect frankness, no guesswork. Either nothing or accurate truth.
4. When working for others, sink yourself out of sight; seek their interest. Make yourself necessary to those who employ you by industry, fidelity, and scrupulous integrity. Selfishness is fatal.
5. Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody expects of you. Demand more of yourself than anybody expects of you. Keep your personal standard high. Never excuse yourself by yourself. Never pity yourself. Be a hard master to yourself, but lenient to everybody else.
6. Concentrate your force on your own proper business. Do not turn off — Be constant, steadfast, persevering.
7. The art of making one's fortune is to spend little. In this country any intelligent and industrious young man may become rich if he stops all leaks, and is not in a hurry. Do not make haste; be patient.
8. Do not speculate or gamble. You go to a land where everybody is excited and strives to make money, suddenly, largely, and without working for it. They blow soap bubbles. Steady, patient industry is both the surest and the safest way. Greediness and haste are two devils that destroy thousands every year.
9. In regard to Mr. B — .He is receiving you as a favour to me. Do not let him regret it.
10. I beseech you to correct one fault — severe speech of others: Never speak evil of any man, no matter what the facts may be. Hasty fault-finding and a severe speech of absent people is not honourable, is apt to be unjust and cruel, make enemies to yourself, and is wicked.
11. If by integrity, industry, and well earned success you deserve well of your fellow-citizens, they may in years to come, ask you to accept honours. Do not seek them while you are young — wait; but when you are established you may make your

father's name known with honour in halls of legislation. Lastly, do not forget father's and mother's God. Because you will be largely deprived of church privileges, you need all the more to keep your heart before God. But do not despise small churches and humble preachers: "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate."

12. Read often the Proverbs, the precepts and duties enjoined in the New Testament. May your father's God go with you and protect you."

THE GOSPEL OF £ s. d.

MATTHEW HENRY tells us:- "There is a burden of care in getting riches, fear in keeping them, temptation in using them, guilt in abusing them, sorrow in losing them, and a burden of account at last to be given up concerning them."

A GREAT MAN'S GREATEST THOUGHT

At a dinner at the Astor House, when Daniel Webster was Secretary of State under President Fillmore, after a period of silence, which fell upon the company of some twenty gentlemen who were present, one of the guests said: "Mr. Webster, will you tell us what was the most important thought that ever occupied your mind?"

Mr. Webster slowly passed his hand over his forehead, and in a low tone inquired of one near him: "Is there anyone here who does not know me?"

"No; all are your friends."

"The most important thought that ever occupied my mind," said Mr. Webster, "was that of my individual responsibility to God." And after speaking on this subject in the most solemn strain for about twenty minutes, he silently rose from the table and retired to his room.

This incident, related by Harvey, in his "Reminiscences," serves to illustrate the attitude of great minds toward eternal things. Great men are not scoffers. The men of flippant jeers and godless jests are men of small calibre and shallow intellect. It is not the wise man who has "said in his heart, there is no God."

Selected by LEONARD MORGAN

SCRIPTURE READINGS

June 1	Num. 1:44-54	Acts 1
June 8	Joel 2:22 to 3:8	Acts 2:1-21
June 15	Psalms 110 & 111	Acts 2:22-47
June 22	Deut. 18:9-22	Acts 3
June 29	Dan. 3:8-30	Acts 4:1-22

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Title: not of God but of man. Some have preferred "The Gospel of the Holy Spirit." Chrysostom called it "The Book, the Demonstration of the Ressurrection." Alexander Campbell has written: "It is not the Acts of the Apostles; for only two of the Apostles occupy the particular attention of the author; nor is it the Acts of even two of them. It might, with more propriety, have been designated Acts of Apostles. This, indeed, though correct, is but a meagre title. With more easy intel-

ligence, and with as much authority, it might have been called, The Commencement of the Church of Christ."

Author: Luke, the companion and fellow-labourer of the Apostle Paul (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24). Luke was a gentile and a doctor. He also penned the gospel record that bears his name. Both works are addressed to one Theophilus who was probably a ruler of a Greek city-state.

That Luke travelled with Paul is clearly seen in the "we — passages" of chapters 16, 20, 21, 27 and 28.

Date and place of publication: uncertain; but probably A.D. 63 or 64 and in Rome. It had to be written after Paul's imprisonment in that city.

Objects: to set forth in order a narrative of all the prominent facts and events connected with the commencement and progress of the church. To quote Campbell again: "It is the only authentic, infallible, ecclesiastic history of the com-

mencement of the Church of Christ, and a perfect development and demonstration of what the gospel is, as ministered by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Its importance cannot easily be exaggerated."

Genuineness and authenticity: attested by the early Christian Fathers and many others. Also, the historical trustworthiness of Luke's account has been amply confirmed by archaeological discovery.

CHAPTER 1

Jesus taken up into heaven (1-11)

A few years ago Steven Spielberg's film *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* was a major box-office success and one of the most profitable films in cinema history. I saw it in a Glasgow cinema crowded with children. They were all awe-struck by the space creature who came down to earth and befriended the young boy Elliott. It was all fantasy, of course. But as I followed the story, I could not help but think of the real visitor to our planet from outer space. He too came as a friend. His mission was to save the world. Once achieved, He returned to His home in the third heaven far beyond the sun, moon and stars. I do not know about you, dear reader, but I hope to join Him there one day. It all depends on my faithfulness to Him on this earth.

Matthias chosen to replace Judas (12-26)

The mode of election in this case was quite popular. Matthias and Joseph were selected. They were then probably represented by two pebbles placed in an urn. Some person being appointed, after a prayer, drew out one of these *calculi*, and from it calculated the Divine will. Indeed, the word "calculate" is derived from the word *calculus*, a pebble, by which doubtful matters were anciently decided. The lot fell on Matthias and he was added to the eleven (2:14).

CHAPTER 2

The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost (1-13)

The feast of Pentecost or Weeks or First-Fruits was held at the end of wheat harvest. Pentecost is of Greek origin and means fifty. This refers to the number of days from the offering of the barley sheaf at the beginning of the Passover. Alexan-

der Brown has written: "The fiftieth day brings us to the first conversions under Christianity, the first-fruits of the new dispensation, corresponding to the two wave loaves.

The coming of the Holy Spirit fulfilled Jesus' words (1:4-5). We must remember that the Holy Spirit is a personality of the Godhead (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Peter addresses the crowd (14-41).

There used to be a derelect railway line which ran past our first house in East Kilbride. I used it as a short-cut to and from the office. The journeys were often spent memorising this outstanding gospel address. I'm glad now I took the time to do it. The life-giving words remain indelibly upon my mind.

The gospel was preached for the first time. It was preached in its fullness. The message indicated the Jewish audience because of the quotations from Joel and David. Jesus was the theme. A key verse is the 36th: "Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." To the question: "Brothers what shall we do?" Peter replied: "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" About three thousand obeyed that day. Imagine the joy in heaven!

The fellowship of the believers (42-47).

The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*. It means to "share in a common life." So fellowship is simply sharing the life of God. In a fragmented church today, a better understanding of the fellowship could work wonders.

CHAPTER 3

Peter heals the crippled beggar (1-10)

The Apostles had the power to heal the sick (Mark 16:18; Hebrews 2:4). Peter instantly healed this beggar crippled from birth. (How often is this done today?). Luke's account in the original Greek language clearly reveals his medical background.

Peter speaks to the onlookers (11-26)

There is no conflict between this address and the one delivered on Pentecost. How could there be? The Holy Spirit who inspired Peter never contradicts Himself, but always complements Himself. For example, Peter said "be baptised" in chapter 2 and "turn to God" in this chapter. Alexander Brown commented: "Every repenting one who is baptised in the name of Jesus Christ is a convert to Christ; every convert has repented and been baptised. Conversion is a turning; baptism is an action in which the turning takes place. The old life is therein renounced; a new cause is therein espoused. While then conversion and baptism are not equivalent terms, they may, nevertheless, in some cases be exchanged, and the purpose of truth be served thereby"

CHAPTER 4**Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (1-22).**

The Sanhedrin was the name given to the supreme Jewish court. Under the procurators (a.d. 6-66), the powers of the Sanhedrin were extensive, the internal government of the country being in its hands. It was presided over by the high priest. This is the same council or senate before whom Jesus appeared (Matthew 26:57-75). Peter's denial then is to be compared with Peter's confession now. "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed" (10). I love the following words: "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus" (13). You do not need to be learned, you can be unlearned. You do not need to be knowledgeable, you can be ignorant. What matters is that you have been with Jesus.

Christianity has always had its opponents throughout the ages. They were there in the 1st century; they are with us in the 20th century. Despite the threats, Peter and John could say: "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (20). God grant us all similar

courage. Someone once wrote: "Our motive must be concern for the glory of God, not the glory of the Church or our own glory. Our message must be the Gospel of God, as given by Christ and his apostles, not the traditions of men or our own opinions. Our manpower must be the Church of God, and every member of it, not a privileged few who want to retain evangelism as their own prerogative. Our dynamic must be the Spirit of God, not the power of human personality, organization or eloquence. Without these priorities we shall be silent when we ought to be vocal". In other words to speak up and speak out for the Master!

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

COMING EVENTS.

New Cumnock. The church here (DV) intend holding their ANNUAL SOCIAL, on Saturday, 14th June, at 4 p.m. in the Town Hall. Speakers: Jack Nisbet, Ulverston; Joseph Nisbet, Corby. A cordial invitation to all. Items for the programme to the undersigned.

HARRY MCHINN

Booklet: "The Passover, Crucifixion and the Supper" by Alfred L. Newberry. Copies free on request from: James Grant, 45 Kirkwood Avenue, Redding, Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK2 9UG.

The church at BUCKIE intend holding (D.V.) Their Annual Social on 31st May, 1986, (Saturday) commencing at 3 p.m. Speaker: John Morgan (Hindley). A very warm invitation is extended from the brethren at Buckie (Cluny Terrace). Programme items appreciated.

JOHN GEDDES (Sec.)

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Zambia: Zambezi is in Northwestern Zambia close to the Angolan border. Film strips are being shown in this bush settlement as part of the outreach of the church of Christ. The subject is the life of Christ.

KABWE is the Southernmost mining town in Zambia and is about half way between Kitwe and Lusaka, Zambia's capital. On a recent visit to Kabwe, the Woodhall family organised some video showings on the subject "In the beginning, . . ."

CHESTER WOODHALL

Ghana: The church here was greatly overjoyed when they had a visit from the United States in the persons of Brothers James Orten and Bill Davis. This was a great encouragement since the brethren here were uncertain of the preaching of the 'Old Path' teaching I presented to them. The visit of Brothers Orten and Davis and the re-emphasising of the need to return to the 'Old Path' has brought a new life into the three congregations, namely, Churches of Christ in Koforidua Central, Nkurakang and Obretema near Suhum, all in the Eastern Region of Ghana. It is so encouraging to see many

people wishing to know more about many of the practices in the church which have been changed by other brothers.

It is unfortunate that we still face a lot of economic problems. With the recent devaluation in the country, petrol price has gone up and so transportation cost is high. Simple items for the Lord's Supper are very expensive and sometimes unavailable.

May I, therefore, take this opportunity in appealing to all who are in a position to help for the following items:

1. Grape Juice Concentrate.
2. Communion Cups (To hold about one pint.)
3. Church of Christ Hymn Books.

All items must be, please, sent to:

Church of Christ,
P.O. Box 50,
Koforidua,
Ghana.

D. ARKU-MENSAH.

CHANGE OF PRINTER

We humbly apologise for the non-appearance of the April issue. Very suddenly, without any prior warning whatsoever, our former printers (Walter Barker Ltd.) informed us that they had been in Voluntary Liquidation since 21/3/86. Obviously it took some time to contact other printers and make suitable arrangements for the future printing of the magazine. We thus greatly regret the loss of the April issue but the circumstances were really quite outwith our control. I have written on behalf of all our readers, to Walter Barker Ltd. thanking them for their kind help and assistance lasting over half-a-century.

Printing costs will now be a bit higher and we can either: (1) increase the Annual Subscription (reluctantly) to somewhere in the region of £6 or £7 per annum and retain twelve issues per year or, (2) retain the current price (as near as possible) but print only ten issues per year (omitting the July and August issues; over the 'holiday' period). Readers' views (including alternative suggestions) will be greatly appreciated before a definite decision is made, and bro, Kneller would be pleased to hear from you (soon).

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