

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## LOST OR MISLAID

Those who travel on Richard Branson's "Virgin" railways will perhaps be familiar with the magazine "*Hotline*" which is presented free to lucky passengers. In the current issue there is an interesting article entitled "The Preaching And The Converted" in which the author describes how British Churches close at the rate of about six every week, and that over the last 20 years 1500 Methodist Churches have closed down, and, during the same period, Presbyterians and Anglicans have had to close around 800 Churches each. Parishes have had to merge to prevent even more closures. The Churches closed by the C. of E. between 1993 and 1997 (100 in all) raised the sum of £28.5m for the C. of E. coffers, and new uses were easily found for the redundant buildings; i.e. offices, warerooms, nightclubs, theatres, day-centres, housing, etc. The article goes on to quote from the "*Christian Handbook 1998*" and states, inter alia, that while 60 per cent of the British population claim to be Christians, only 8.7 per cent ever attend Sunday services, and that church attendance has dropped by 20 per cent in the last twenty years. The handbook also claimed that most "believers" would "rather spend their week-ends shopping, working or pursuing hobbies than sitting in a pew." The author then asks, in view of all of this, "Are we losing our religion?"

The causes of the general fall in "church attendances" are really not hard to identify, nor is it greatly surprising that some of those massive, Victorian (or Gothic), ornate, stone-built edifices have had to close. They were built over a hundred years ago (to a specification commensurate with "the glory of God") when times were prosperous for the gentry, and when labour was cheap. Now, of course, they are far too expensive to heat, extremely costly to repair and are ludicrously huge for the forlorn little handful of worshippers sprinkled amongst the pews. Nevertheless, it is a very sad sight indeed to see a tacky Bingo sign on what was previously not only a magnificent specimen of church architecture, but a hive of bustling religious activity. There hangs a tale.

### THE LOST BOOK

If "our religion is lost" it is, in my humble view, because the Bible has been lost. After all, true religion is based on the Bible, and only on the Bible. It seems clear that the Bible's influence has been lost on the populace, and is no longer the source of authority, guidance and standards in "religious" matters. It should be obvious to all, that if the Bible is dispensed with, true religion will inevitably fall. Not for the first time, the country has lost, or mislaid, the Bible. Britain was "Great Britain" when it was closer to the Bible than it is now. *Our present moral decay*, not just a downturn in religion, is manifestly due to men "turning their backs" upon God and His holy word.

Publishers keep telling us that the Bible is perennially the 'Best Seller' amongst books but, given the sad moral state of the world, one has to wonder what becomes of all the Bibles. Satan certainly seems to have been most successful at smothering the effect God intended the Bible to have. I suppose that in almost every home there is a copy of the Holy Bible but perhaps it is kept mainly as a 'good luck' charm and rarely read. Some are to be seen on sideboards perhaps with a pot plant on top, and some are mostly unseen, tucked away with some old faded photographs in the bottom of a drawer. The average working man jumps out of bed in the morning, gulps down his breakfast and is so busy with life's whirl that when he returns in the evening he flops into an easy-chair to watch the offerings on his T.V. set; eventually dragging himself off to bed - only to repeat the process the following day. His Bible gathers dust and Satan rejoices. The Bible is therefore, effectively lost to the world for **an unread Bible is equal to no Bible at all.** But God's Word has been lost before - recall, for instance, the case of Josiah.

### JOSIAH

Josiah's right to God's 'Hall of Fame' is truly undeniable. His wonderful works are described in 2 Kings 22 & 23 but presaged by a spectacular prophecy in 1 Kings 13. Crowned king at the tender age of eight years (in troublous times) he began, after becoming 16 years, a far reaching purge of all the idolatrous wickedness in the country and a complete national religious reformation. He pulled down the graven images and altars of Baal, destroyed the groves, and put many of the pagan priests to the sword, burning their very bones, and literally grinding their altars to powder. Amongst the people of God idolatry had become rife and well entrenched, even within the temple. Having accomplished this purge he turned his attention to the restoration of the temple itself, and it was while the rebuilding work was going on that a book was found amongst the rubble and dust. Closer examination of the volume revealed that it was a copy of God's law to Israel, and Josiah was so anguished when he read its contents that he rent his clothes and commanded a public reading of the book to his entire nation. He realised how far God's people had strayed from the standards set in the book and sought counsel with Hulda the prophetess ". . . For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our Fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us." When Josiah made a public reading of the book to the entire nation, ". . . all the people stood to the covenant." Josiah's restoration movement, based on the contents of this book of the law, was an unqualified success. We read, "And all his days the people departed not from following the Lord." And so Josiah, while refurbishing the *temple*, found an old scroll with which he was able to reform a *nation*.

### HOW LOST

"But," someone says, "the Bible cannot be lost if there are millions of copies in the world." This is rather like the words of the little boy who, while looking over the side of the ship, asked his father, "Is a thing lost if I know where it is?" His father replied, "No, of course not" to which the little boy responded, "Then your watch isn't lost because I know where it is." "And where is it?" asked the anxious father. "Down there on the bottom of the sea" replied the little boy. Childish humour no doubt, but it is still true that many things are lost albeit we know where they are. The Bible certainly falls into this category. The scriptures can be lost:-

(1) **By Neglect:** Obviously Josiah's father and grandfather had neglected to read their personal copy of God's word; probably far too busy with the affairs of state. In the hurly-burly of daily life the reading of the scriptures comes, without a doubt, very low

on the list of human priority. Indeed even amongst Christians, and amongst the various denominational churches, the Bible is often neglected and Bible Study is not given the enthusiasm it merits, or the attendances it deserves. In the street in which I reside there is a large denominational body which is a constant hive of activity. Every day, and evening, there are cars parked everywhere with members attending crèches, choirs, badminton, mother's meetings, senior citizen groups, youth groups, coffee mornings, etc., etc. and one wonders if there would be quite as many cars parked if Bible Study was to be announced. Peter exhorted not only that we should "grow in grace" but grow also **in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ** (2 Peter 3:18) and clearly that knowledge is only to be found in God's word. Hence the need not to neglect the study of the scriptures.

(2) **By Misunderstanding:** We must '*rightly divide*' the word of truth. many of us read the scriptures regularly but misunderstand them. Some read the Old Testament believing that its statutes and laws are binding on us today. Jesus said to some, "**Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures.**" The Bible is lost to those who misunderstand the scriptures. Some things we shall never fully understand but we must learn to rightly handle the Word of God.

In our ignorance of what the Bible teaches we may misunderstand to the point of promoting false teaching. The apostle Peter remarked on the fact that some of Paul's statements were hard to understand, and therefore we must study the more that we might not misconstrue divine truth. He said, ". . . even as our beloved brother Paul, also according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures to their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:16). We might not be "unstable" but we might be "*unlearned*" if we neglect God's word.

(3) **By Substitution:** Jesus often charged the Jewish lawyers of His day with having nullified God's law by supplanting it with the traditions of the elders. God's word was made of none effect because they overlaid it with their own, grievous, commandments (over 300 such commandments).

When Christ's disciples were, on one occasion, accused of transgressing "**the tradition of the elders,**" Jesus replied, "**Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God with your tradition.**" Any document, creed, tradition or otherwise, regardless of how well intentioned, which in any way usurps the teaching of scripture, is "**a transgression of the commandments of God**" and will carry the due penalty. In much of religion today the "**commandments of men**" have replaced scripture. Jesus, when He encountered this, left no one in any doubt as to how God regarded the matter. Such worship, He said, was all in vain. "**In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men**" (Matt. 15:9). There are others, again, of course, who take the process of substitution a good stage further, and urge upon us other books entirely, as better alternatives to the Bible: e.g. Book of Mormon, Koran, Vedas, Zend-avesta, Puranas, etc., etc.

(4) **By Mutilation:** In Jer. 36 we read that when Jehudi read God's will (through Jeremiah) to King Jehoiakim he only got as far as three or four pages when the king snatched the book, cut it up with a penknife and threw it into the fire in the hearth. There are many modern Jehoiakim's amongst us today who mutilate God's word by cutting out the unpopular parts. When Stephen spoke God's truth to the Jews they stuck their fingers in their ears and gnashed upon him with their teeth. Man is basically unchanged, albeit a little more subtle in his response to God's truth, but still closes his

ears to unpalatable facts in the scriptures, and still wields the scissors of prejudice and ignorance. 2,000 years ago God closed the Book and to it nothing can be added or taken away.

(5) **By Degeneration:** Obviously the Bible has suffered (and does suffer) from attacks from all quarters, ranging from Higher Criticism to Theories of Evolution and, to some, God's word is now considered to be merely a collection of fables, symbolical legends and mythological folk-tales. This is all bad and bad enough, but when even "ministers of the gospel" attack the Bible we cannot wonder at the man-in-the-street coming to the conclusion the Bible is of little consequence or value. Thus, the Bible is to a large extent "lost" upon the general public. From time to time the clergy hit press headlines by airing their considered conclusions on some Biblical subject, and make a declaration of the fact that they can not, in their wisdom, accept the Genesis account of creation: or the flood, or the ark, or the Garden of Eden, or the virgin birth, or the miracles, or the concept of hell, or the resurrection, etc., etc. and thus destroy the influence of the book they are paid to uphold. As recently as 1993, for instance, we had the Bishop of the Episcopal Church of Scotland (the "Most Reverend" Richard Holloway) referring to things (such as the account of creation) in the Bible that "*just can't be true,*" and declaring that the Bible "*contains as much dross as gold; contains as much out-of-date nonsense as enduring wisdom, and that we must find the courage to reject the bits of the Bible that are not of God.*" This kind of utterance from a Bishop, and similar utterances from the clergy in general, creates a very negative attitude to God's word in the average member of the public, as they contemplate the Bible.

#### CONTINUAL RESTORATION

These are but a few of the more obvious causes of the Bible being a lost book today, but of course, there are many others. If history tells us anything it tells us that restoration must be a continual process. Just as weeds grow in the best-kept gardens and barnacles collect on the bottoms of the best boats, so does rubbish collect in the attics of even the best homes. Every so often a 'Spring clean' is required. Every generation needs a Josiah - one who will tear down the graven images and altars to Baal erected by previous generations. Each generation must be prepared to critically examine the spiritual legacy left by the previous generation and be prepared to amputate anything not in harmony with God's word. Just as Noah's Ark would collect a few barnacles the Church is likely to collect a few malpractices and we must be clever enough to recognise them and honest enough to remove them. Brethren talk about the 'Restoration Movement' in the past tense as if it was a 'one-off' historical movement of a century ago, but surely it should be a continuous process - surely a question of constant introspection and examination.

#### IN CONCLUSION

If, as stated in the "Hotline" article, churches in Britain are closing at the rate of six per week, and church attendance is only 8.7 per cent of church membership, it would certainly seem that there is (and has been for a while) a distinct disenchantment with the main-stream churches and a decided trend towards a godless society. "Are we losing our religion?" asks the "Hotline." To lose the "national religion" is bad and bad enough I suppose, but as suggested earlier, the situation is much worse than that because it is the Bible that is lost, or certainly mislaid. With the Bible there is hope for the world: without the Bible there is no hope whatsoever. With the Bible we can recover the "national religion" and an even better and more authentic religion, but without the Bible a dark world will become very much darker. In any case, religious fervour and activity are subject to cycle, rising and falling in response to the spiritual temperature of the

age, but if the Bible is sidetracked for too long, we will indeed see a godless society "Where every man will do that which is right in his own eyes."

Certainly our younger generations are not going to Sunday Schools, and are seriously unaware of the contents of the Bible. They are, however, subjected, at every turn, to the theory of evolution as if it were a fact. Religious Education in schools now seems to embrace all world religions on equal footing and the Bible is presented as being on a par with the Koran. (Apparently Prince Charles has stated that if he ever becomes sovereign he will want to be known as "Defender of the Faith(s)" (various) and not as his mother, "Defender of the Faith (Christian) and I suppose that is simply additional evidence to the way things are going). The Bible, and church-going, are such negative things amongst the children of today that those who do attend church would be frightened to admit it to their school mates.

Space has gone. In the circumstances we must do what we can to publish God's word and emulate the young Josiah. If the country is at such a low spiritual level as it seems to be, things can only get better and the only way forward is up. We shall see.

EDITOR.

## MY BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

The reasons for faith in the Bible as the word of God are more numerous and more convincing than for any other like object of man's faith.

My Bible claims to be the word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16, AV). Of the sacred prophecy Peter said, "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). Repeatedly, the Bible claims to be the "in-breathed" message of God to man. Justice and candour demand that this claim be honoured and investigated.

I believe the Bible is the word of God because many of its prophetic utterances have been corroborated by secular historians. The destruction of ancient Tyre is one of the many conspicuous examples. One has but to read Deuteronomy 28 and note the history of the Jew to see a remarkable and incontrovertible demonstration of the fulfilment of prophecy.

The spade of archeology continues to bear cumulative and impressive testimony to the fact that my Bible is the word of God. Liberals long contended that there was no writing at the time of Moses. But the massive discoveries of D. Leonard Woolley in Ur of the Chaldees show an advanced civilisation even in the days of Abraham. *Ancient History* was one of the subjects taught to children in the schools of Ur! From Babylonia, from Egypt, and from Palestine have come archeological confirmation of such facts as the Egyptian bondage of the Israelites, the four kings of Genesis 14, the reign of Belshazzar as viceregent, and the destruction of such cities as Gibeah and Jericho. Sir Frederick Kenyon assures us that the Christian can take his Bible in his hand and confidently affirm that he has the word of God handed down and preserved through the centuries without essential loss or alteration.

I believe my Bible is the word of God because of the superabundance of its manuscripts (some 30,000 in whole or in part of the New Testament alone in all languages), and the painstaking and assiduous efforts of lower criticism in restoring the original text.

### IT'S INFLUENCE AND ANSWERS

Reason to believe my Bible is the word of God is seen in its influence. It is not by accident that the people who love and hold to the basic freedoms, and the people whose

culture and ideals have soared the highest are those among whom the Bible has enjoyed its widest circulation.

I confidently believe that my Bible is God's revelation because of its systematic unity. Where among the world's innumerable books is there to be found a composite volume authored by some forty men of widely varying backgrounds and transversing sixteen centuries that can offer such distinct unity as the Bible? With ease and characteristic beauty do the Books of the Bible fall into one complementary whole.

The Bible appeals to willing believers as the word of God because of its unspeakable moral excellence. Without hesitation I say that the standard set by the Lord Jesus will know no equal both in what He was and what He did.

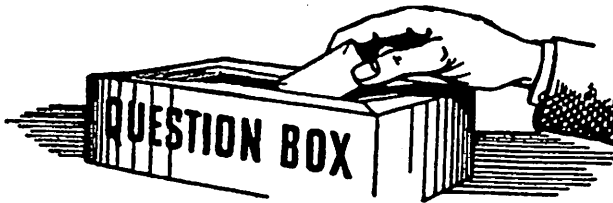
I believe the Bible also because in it I find unequivocal answers to the fundamental questions that fall across the path of man's existence - from where did I come? Why am I here? What is the nature of my being? What about the hereafter? Doubtless the Bible *raises* some difficult questions. But the Bible is remarkably more outstanding for the questions it *answers* than for the questions it *raises*.

I assuredly hold that the pragmatic worth of the Bible strenuously favours its being accepted as the word of God. Demonstration is an aggressive and relentless polemic. The Bible is practicable. It works!

I believe my Bible is the word of God because great minds through the centuries have attested to its uniqueness. The trailing lists honours such names as Milton, George Herbert, Isaak Walton, Isaac Newton, William Cowper, Walter Scott, Lord Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, Judge Blackstone, William Wilberforce and George Peabody.

I believe my Bible is the very word of God because of its indestructibility. Kings, philosophers, pseudoscientists and atheists have expended every energy and device at their command in efforts to mortify the Bible. But the Bible rises from their feeble attacks "like a phoenix from the fire as much unharmed as were Shadrach, Mesach and Abednigo" in the fiery furnace.

H. LAWRENCE




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Conducted by  
Frank Worgan

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*"Does God have a Sense of Humour?"*

I must admit that this question, received recently, is one, which I have never previously encountered. Indeed, it is one that has never occurred to me to ask!

But it has obviously occurred to someone, and it is a question, which might well arouse our curiosity.

**Does God, have a sense of humour?**

The short and simple answer must be that, since the Scriptures do not provide us with the answer we can only speculate, and anything that I may write will only be conjecture - which may, or may not, be helpful, but which will not be harmful!

The word in the question, that creates our difficulty, is the word 'humour,' because it does not occur in the entire Bible.

**Humour and Laughter**

We are aware, of course, that humour is invariably associated with laughter, and

here we *do* have something on which we may take hold, since in both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament there are words which relate to laughter.

To be specific, there are three Hebrew words which have been rendered 'laugh' and which express emotions ranging from delight and joy, through admiration and pleasure, down to scorn and contempt. One of them - '*laag*' - may even be used to stand for '*jest*' whilst in the New Testament, there is even a word - '*entrapelia*' - which is translated '*Jesting*.'

However it has to be noticed that neither of these two words is used in a *good* sense.

The Old Testament word '*laag*' is used of the act of making mockery of sacred things; that is, of joking about matters which ought to be treated with reverence.

The New Testament word, found in Eph. 5:4, is actually translated 'jesting' in the AV., and 'levity' in the RSV and other later versions.

Therefore, if the questioner had asked, "*Does God Laugh?*" we should have been on safer ground, and could have answered, "*Yes! The Bible tells us that God laughs.*"

#### *The Laughter of God*

But, what are we to make of the 'laughter' of God? We find mention of it in the familiar 2nd Psalm verse 4, where God 'laughs' at the foolish rulers of the world who plot against Him. This is even more explicitly expressed in Psalm 37:13, where we read, "*YHWH laughs at the wicked (man) for He sees that his day is coming.*"

These and other passages, such as Psalm 59:8, make it plain that what is indicated here is scornful laughter. God is not amused, and none of the references to His laughter, has anything to do with humour.

#### *Anthropomorphic Language*

Whilst we recognise this fact, we must also understand that, when God is described as 'laughing', the inspired writers are using anthropomorphic language; that is to say, they are describing God's response in human terms.

Anthropomorphism is a literary device that is frequently used in the Scriptures, simply because we have no other way of conveying how God feels about *anything*, other than by using words that express emotions which we, as human beings, experience ourselves.

#### *Does God Repent?*

I think one of the clearest examples of what I mean, is found in Gen. 6:6, where we read that there came a time when, because of mankind's utter depravity, God was '*sorry that He had made man.*' The older, traditional, version even says that it '*repented*' God that He had made man, and that word 'repented' is one used of God repeatedly in the Old Testament.

Now clearly, there can be no question of God *changing His mind* about the creation of Man. Yet, when the emotion of regret or sorrow or repentance is used in connection with a *human* act, it invariably implies that there has been a change of mind, brought about by a change of circumstances, which had not been anticipated.

Obviously, then, since God is 'all-knowing' Gen. 6:6 cannot possibly mean that, because He failed to anticipate the subsequent wickedness of Man whom He had created, God 'changed His mind.' What it means is, that the historian is seeking to convey God's reaction to Man's wickedness in such terms as would be used, if He were Himself a Man.

And indeed, this is the only way in which we human beings are able to understand God's actions. We necessarily think in human terms. When we express a thought, we are restricted to the limitations of human language.

But we must always remember that God is not a man, as He Himself makes

abundantly plain in 1 Sam. 15:29. After stating in the 11th verse of that chapter, "*repent that I have made Saul king*" God declares, in the 29th verse, that He is "*not a man that He should repent*." This truth is further explained by His statement, "*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways*," found in Isa. 55:8.

### Our Problem

The trouble is, that although we profess to *know* this, we are *still* inclined to think about God as though He were some sort of 'Man' - though, of course, perfect and glorified!

And it is this that creates all kinds of problems for us.

*Because* God is not a man, He never needs to change His mind. He is not subject to 'after-thoughts', and even when we read of His anger, it is anger, which we can never fully comprehend.

Therefore, when we speak of Him expressing scorn, or regret, or anger or sorrow or even laughter; and whilst we do our best, within the narrow limits of human thought and language to describe His 'feelings' the truth is that the 'feelings' of Deity are quite beyond our understanding.

### So, does God have a Sense of Humour?

Perhaps the statement made by Goethe, the great German poet, gives us something to think about. He said, "*Men show their character in nothing more clearly than by what they think laughable*."

If, in this discussion, we are thinking of that human characteristic which, sadly, often produces laughter by poking cruel fun at the mental or physical inadequacies of others; or which causes amusement by making the colour or race or language - or even the religion - of another person the butt of demeaning ridicule, we may be absolutely sure that the answer to the question is, "Emphatically not! God has no such sense of humour."

The teller of unkind 'humorous' tales may acquire a reputation as a one who '*has a great sense of humour*', and may be considered '*very funny*' but such a characteristic can never be said to be '*Godlike*.'

### The Ability to Laugh - a Gift from God

Men far wiser than I have regarded laughter as a gift from God, but have, at the same time, made it plain that it is a gift which must be *used* and not *abused*.

Sheridan wrote *Wit loses its respect with the good (people) when seen in company with malice; and to smile at the jest which places a thorn in another's breast, is to become a principal in the mischief*."

Even Martin Luther expressed a view of laughter that differs radically from that still held by certain religious people today, whose Calvinist theology apparently causes them to see life as 'all doom and gloom.'

He said, "*The Gospel of the grace of God is nothing else but laughter and joy*."

There is no doubt; also, that people about whom we read in the Bible believed that the ability to laugh comes from God. For instance, when Isaac was born, Sarah said, "*God has prepared laughter for me, and everyone who hears will laugh with me*" Gen. 21:6.

Notice that she said 'with' me; not 'at' me. She was sure that others would share her joy - and laugh with her.

Whilst we cannot - dare not - presume to say that God Himself has a sense of humour, I think we might concede that the burdens and problems of life can be made a little easier to bear, when one has the ability to '*see the funny side*' as it is so often expressed.



This would be, in effect, putting a sense of humour to a legitimate use.

**The Final and Authoritative word**

Of this we may be certain; the Lord Jesus was not opposed to laughter, as an expression of joy, thankfulness and praise. He once said, in words that are often overlooked, "*Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh*" Luke 6:21.

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## THE LORD'S SUPPER (7) - ANSWERS?

### SYMBOLISM

Human nature seems to require to worship something and to have the activity filled with symbolism as is seen in the occult, freemasonry, and a whole range of ancient and modern religions. All have built up elaborate rituals to provide an aura of mystery. This has crept into the worship services of many of those who proclaim they are doing it in the name of Christ. The orthodox churches have erected magnificent buildings filled with golden images and incense, in which they conduct worship dressed in highly distinctive elaborate and expensive regalia. At the other end of the religious spectrum the Salvation Army has just reviewed their attitude to the Supper and have concluded (September, 1998) that as they have "a God-given freedom in Christ which should never be under-estimated . . . we rejoice in the freedom to celebrate Christ's real presence at all meals and in all meetings . . . in accordance with Salvation Army practice these will not become established rituals nor will frequency be prescribed." They then go on to say "Christ's presence is at the mercy seat that God has given the Army, as Christ uses this means of grace to confirm His presence . . . and we acknowledge the truth of Eph. 4:5,6 by swearing-in beneath the trinitarian sign of the army's flag . . . These elements are based on a foundation of traditions and symbolic acts and artistry we have developed over the years."

Is it not remarkable that the simple symbols that the Apostles left for our instruction have been wrapped in so many trimmings that the essentials they authorised are all but forgotten? The following comments are but suggestions as to how to restore this ancient feast to its original intent and practice. The prime purpose of this series of articles has been to stimulate questions on why we do what we now do, and for each to challenge if their practice aligns with that found in the New Testament, and is not based on practices introduced by man.

### WHY?

'Zachor' the Hebrew word for remembrance was used in the context of the grain offering (Lev. 2:2) the frankincense on the temple shewbread (Lev. 24:7) Aaron's breastplate (Exodus 28:12). Each of these provided a remembrance about the spiritual truth of God. The Jewish Passover was a highly symbolic meal of remembrance. God ordered His people never to forget the great things He did to release them from bondage (Ex. 12:14). This was not just an historic act; it applied to those who kept the feast each year "but with us, who are alive today" (Deut. 5:3). Our requirement to remember is one of Christ's last instructions to us (today) before He was crucified (1 Cor. 11:24).

### WHEN?

The Supper should be held each first day of the week. This was the day Jesus rose from the dead (Jn. 20:1). The day Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples (Jn. 20:19), the day Jesus showed Thomas His pierced side (Jn. 20:26), and the day (six weeks later, on the first day of the week) the Church was born at Pentecost (Acts 2:2; Lev. 23:16).

Early practice was that it was held in the evening of the first day (Saturday night) (Acts 20:11); later this was moved to the early hours on Sunday morning. It is suggested that a time from Saturday evening till Sunday afternoon, as meets the needs of the local congregation, fits in with the practice of the first 200 years of Christianity.

#### WHO?

Only those acceptable to Christ can benefit from partaking. The denial of anyone to take part places a considerable burden on those who exercise this judgement, as Paul says **"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye"** (Rom. 14:1) and **"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?"** (Rom. 14:4). Refusal however, must take place when a clear breach of Christ's standards has been made **"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or a extortioner; with such a one no not to eat"** (1 Cor. 5:11). The depth of feeling against such is shown in the Amplified NT of 1Cor. 5:13 **"Drive out that wicked one from among you - expel him from your church"** (compare 2 Thes. 3:6) this is because none such have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ (Eph. 5:5). The Law of Christ on these issues is far more onerous than the Law of Moses: **"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind"** (1 Cor. 6:9). Indeed, Christ's word on marriage even shocked the disciples (Matt. 19:9,10).

To those that are 'outside' we are required to **"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time"** (Col. 4:5). Each particular circumstance will then require delicate handling and requires wisdom, which is available - **"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."** (Jas. 1:5) (see also Matt. 7:1; Luke 6:37; Rom. 14:4,10,13; 1 Cor. 4:5).

#### WHAT BREAD?

The loaf should be unleavened **"Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"** (1 Cor. 5:8). This is what Jesus initiated the feast with: **"Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?"** (Matt. 26:17).

#### WHAT CONTENTS IN THE CUP?

Jesus instituted the feast with fruit of the vine **"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom"** (Matt. 26:29). The Nazarite vow expressly forbade partaking of any product of the vine (Num. 6:3,4) so the abstinence from fermented grape products cannot be associated with their vow. However, Aaron and his sons were forbidden to drink wine or strong drink when they went into the tent of the meeting (Lev. 10:9). The question is, then, did Jesus as our great high priest (Heb. 4:14) use fermented or unfermented grape juice. The question that fermented wine was not allowed at the Passover is not a valid one, as the Jews have always used fermented wine. Jesus only stipulated fruit of the vine, this is then what it must be. The choice of what sort must lie on personal preference of each congregation. The option for unfermented wine based on Romans 14:21 puts it alongside that of choosing to be a vegetarian. **"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."** The weight of Old Testament practice is that the feast should be surrounded with tokens of joy (2 Cor. 30:23-26; Lev. 23:13) The Jews still use the best fermented wine they can afford.

### HOW?

The practice given in "*The Christian System*" by Alexander Campbell seems to fit closely to the practice of the Church during its first two hundred years:-

After singing and reading of the scriptures Campbell observes -

"That the table was furnished before the disciples met in the morning, and that the disciples occupied a few benches on each side of it, while strangers sat off more remote. The president arose and said that our Lord had a table for his friends, and that He invited His disciples to sup with Him, "in memory of His death, this monumental table" said He, "was instituted; and as the Lord ever lives in heaven, so He ever lives in the hearts of His people. As the first disciples, taught by the apostles in person, came together into one place to eat the Lord's supper, they selected the first day of the week in honour of His resurrection, for this purpose, so we having the same Lord, the same faith, and the same hope with them, have owed to do as they did. We owe as much to the Lord as they; and ought to love, honour and obey Him as much as they." Thus having spoken, He took a small loaf from the table, and in one or two periods gave thanks for it. After thanksgiving, He raised it in His hand, and significantly brake it, and handed it to the disciples on each side of Him, who passed the broken loaf from one to another, until they all partook of it. There was no stiffness, no formality, no pageantry; all was easy, familiar, solemn, cheerful. He then took the cup in a similar manner, and returned thanks for it, and handed it to the disciples sitting next to Him, who passed it round . . . They then arose and sang a hymn. The president of the meeting then called upon a brother to remember the poor . . . etc. . . After this prayer the fellowship or contribution was attended to. . . A general invitation was tendered to all the brotherhood if they had anything to propose or enquire . . . several brethren arose in succession . . . after singing and prayers the meeting concluded. The joy, the affection, and the reverence which appeared in this little assembly was the strongest argument in favour or their order . . ."

### CONCLUSION

We should not be bound by beliefs and practices that have developed in the last few generations. We need to re-examine what was the practice of the early Church and what the scriptures have to say on the subject. This will not be easy as it is so human to accept the *status quo*. If the Church is to be a dynamic force in the 21st century we all need to re-light the fire the early reformers and restorers had in proclaiming New Testament Christianity.

After only a couple of hundred years from the splendour of Solomon's reign and the building of the temple, Joel had to make a plea for Israel to return to the Lord God (Joel 2:13). Do we need a similar call to get us back to the simple plea for a return to the apostolic teaching we used to proclaim?

### POSTSCRIPT

Whilst penning the above conclusion the Roman Catholic Church announced their release (October, 1998) of a teaching document on the 'Eucharist' and its place in 'sacramental sharing'. The main thrust is to proscribe their members from receiving 'Holy Communion' from the Anglican and reformation Churches, and to refuse members of those Churches from partaking in their rites. Their document is to be studied for six weeks at all levels within their Church. It is proposed, 'God willing' to review this subject in a future article once Rome's position is better understood.

BRIAN J. BOLAND,  
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Halifax. HX2 6XG.

## REVERENCE AT THE WORSHIP HOUR

Today I went to worship. I took time to go early, I so badly needed to meditate and concentrate upon our Lord's goodness and love. The Table was set in anticipation of the service, and how sweet and sublime were my thoughts of Him as I viewed that Holy reminder. The quietness of being alone before the service uplifted me, and the sober meditation quietened my anxiousness. But the sweetness of that moment was broken, for others were coming to worship. Blithely they entered; happy and carefree they appeared; nonchalantly they spoke of the events of the past week, and glibly of the anticipation of the morrow. I gazed at the table on which lay the emblems of the Lord's blood and body. Never had it been so apparent that lightness and frivolity only desecrate that holy memorial. How could it be possible that the God of Heavens would accept such nonchalance as worship?

ADAPTED.

## NEW BOOK

A book entitled "**Churches of Christ in the County of Fife, Scotland**" has been published by the Church as part of the commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Church in Kirkcaldy.

The book is a compilation of historical information, prominent members, and membership statistics for at least 29 Churches which exist or have existed in Fife during the last 2 centuries.

For those interested in Alexander Campbell, there is information regarding his visits to 4 of these Churches in 1847, a portion of which is believed to be new.

The book contains approximately 52,000 words and 29 illustrations on 151 pages, in A5 perfect binding.

Copies of the book can be obtained from:- Church of Christ, Hayfield Road, Kirkcaldy, KY2 5DG. A minimum donation of £4.00 per copy, is requested to cover cost of printing, plus £1.00 P & P for UK delivery; Outwith UK, price on application.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

January 3	Psalm 130	Luke 5:17-39
January 10	1 Sam. 21:1-6	Luke 6:1-19
January 17	Deut. 10:12-22	Luke 6:20-36
January 24	Isa. 29:13-24	Luke 6:37-49
January 31	2 Kings 4:17-37	Luke 7:1-17

### JESUS HEALS A PARALYTIC

I often wonder what it was really like to be in the presence of Jesus during His ministry on earth. Sometimes I wish God could take me back in time so that I could spend even one day with the Master. For example, I should have liked to speak to the healed paralytic after the miraculous work of Jesus. It would have

been an animated conversation I am sure. Also, it would have been a wonderful experience to share in the crowd's amazement and glorification of God. Surely there could be no doubt that all were in the presence of the promised Messiah, the Son of the Living God. He could heal and He could forgive because He was God in the flesh. Those days were special days in the history of mankind. We are limited to reading about them, but are comforted by the fact that, if we remain faithful, we will one day in heaven look upon Jesus in all His glory.

### THE SABBATH

God had commanded: "**Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your**

work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work . . ." (Exodus 20:9-11). What constituted "work?" "So categorical was the original interpretation of these verses that physical exertion and secular occupation of any kind were forbidden. The art of healing, for instance, could not be practised unless life was in danger. No fires be lighted and no food cooked" (A.I. Polack & W.W. Simpson). To the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus and His disciples were guilty of breaking the law of the sabbath because of the healing and the plucking of the corn. Jesus' response was to refer them to the case of David (6:3,4) and to ask: "Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or destroy it?" (6:9). Jesus also said: "The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath: Therefore, the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27,28). William Barclay has written: "But the sacred things are only sacred when they are used for men. The shewbread was never so sacred as when it was used to feed a starving man. The Sabbath was never so sacred as when it was used to help those who needed help. The final arbiter in the use of all things is love and not law."

#### THE TWELVE APOSTLES

There were twelve tribes of Israel and there were twelve apostles. Biblical numerology is quite a study in itself. I have a book on it by Robert Johnston. he writes: "Twelve is the numeral of manifest sovereignty. It speaks of the administration of Divine government on the earth . . . Twelve, therefore, is the symbol of governmental perfection. . ."

Some of the apostles had more than one name. Levi was called Matthew, Judas son of James was also known as Thaddaeus, Simon was renamed Peter, and Bartholomew and Nathanael were probably one and the same. Some, of

course, are better known than others. Peter, James and John are probably the best known, although Judas Iscariot is not far short of them for all the wrong reasons. It bothers a lot of people that Jesus chose Judas, who, in the end, betrayed Him. But, surely, Judas had every opportunity to serve the Master as he ought.

There was no team in history like this one. It was unique. These twelve men were to be the ambassadors of Christ. I have just read Steve Chalke's book "*Making a Team Work*" I found it very helpful. He writes of common goals, good communication, trust, good training and total commitment. I am sure he had Jesus and His apostles in mind when he outlined these features of a successful team.

#### LOVE

Jesus loved His enemies and we must too. This, of course, is not easy, but by the strength of God through the indwelling Spirit, it is possible. A study of the Greek word *agape* (noun) and *agapan* (verb) should prove useful. They have to do with the will, because no one ever naturally loved his enemies. To love one's enemies is a conquest of all natural inclinations and emotions.

Jesus' words on this subject (6:27-35) are truly revolutionary. One writer has commented: "It is implied that disciples of Jesus should do more than others. They should be more friendly, more hospitable, more generous, and more kind. They should be less egotistical, less selfish. Merely coming up to the standards of Gentiles is not enough. To greet only your brethren is still to fall short. It is to miss the mark! The love that Jesus commanded is as wide as the ocean, as boundless as eternity, and as high as the heavens."

#### THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

Foundations are important. Any builder will tell you that. I was recently

in New York city where there are massive buildings. They have stood the test of time because they are built on solid rock. Jesus, in His day, pointed out the importance of having a sure foundation. He likened the wise builder to one who "hears my sayings and does them" the foolish builder to one who "hears and does not" (6:47-49). In other words, the only true foundation is obedience to the teaching of Jesus.

Christianity is not just about saying, but doing. Truly, deeds are the test of words and the true indication of character. I am reminded here of the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things *done* while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10, N.I.V.).

#### THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION

Each legion of the Roman army had fifty nine centurions. Peter Connolly has written: "Centurions were often brutal; many a legionary could show scars on his back from the centurion's vine cane. They were not above taking bribes from legionaries who wished to avoid some duty. Bribery became so common that even the Emperor dared not stop it . . ." This centurion, about whom we read (7:1-10), was quite different. He was a man who loved his slave; a man who was deeply religious; a man who had a high regard for Judaism; a man of humility and faith. It is interesting to note that he had no direct contact with Jesus. First, he sent the elders of the Jews (7:3) and, second, his friends (7:6). But the centurion was absolutely convinced that Jesus could heal his slave by a simple command. His faith was rewarded. Jesus said: ". . . I have found not so great faith, no, not in Israel" (7:9).

#### JESUS RAISES A WIDOW'S SON

Death is the consequence of sin. The

Bible speaks of spiritual death, physical death and eternal death. Life is union; death is separation. When we physically die, the spirit is separated from the body. James wrote: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (2:26).

The spirit of the widow's son was again united with his body when Jesus resurrected him. It was, of course, a miracle performed by the One who had power over death. This power was also seen in the resurrection of Jairus' daughter and Lazarus. We must also not forget the resurrection of Jesus Himself - the greatest resurrection of all. We read: "And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God saying, that a great prophet is risen among us; and, That God has visited His people" (7:16). This was the very prophet whose coming was prophesied all those years ago by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). Why was He not recognised as such by all?

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

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### TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Name the home town of Samson's wife?
2. Where did Moses and Aaron disobey God by striking the rock with a staff and not giving Him the glory?
3. Who buried Isaac?
4. On what mountain did Saul die?
5. Where was Rachel buried?
6. How long did Saul's son Ish-Bosheth reign over Israel?
7. Paul was a descendant of which tribe?
8. What did Dorcas serve the widows?
9. What colour is God's throne?
10. To what city was Philip taken after his baptising the eunuch?

## OBITUARY

**Newtongrange:** The Church here regrets to announce the passing of our dear sister Sybil Moar, aged 97 years, on Sunday, 11th October, 1998. Sybil was baptised at the age of 16 years and was a faithful and highly respected Christian ever after. She was always present at the Church meetings until ill-health prevented her in her latter years, but her thoughts were always with us. She was an inspiration to all who knew her, and we extend our sympathy to her family at this time.

Sybil's long life in the Lord's service is worthy of celebration - she ran the race, kept the faith and finished the course; and is now at peace with the Lord. We shall greatly miss her.

The funeral service at Mortonhall Crematorium was conducted by Bro. Joe Currie, assisted by Bro. David Ferguson.  
MARGARET HUNTER, Secy.

**Ashfield:** It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Bro. Sam Douglas Bullimore of the Church meeting in Kirkby in Ashfield. Although Sam had been prevented from attending the meeting place for over two years, he will be greatly missed, particularly for his caring concern for all his brethren. Over the years Sam was actively involved with the Church. Up to the closure of the meeting place at Mutton Hill in Kirkby in Ashfield in 1980, after an adverse building report, Sam was Church secretary. He had been born close by, educated near by and after a short time with the Metropolitan Police, and then the Railway Police, he returned to work for 35 years with NCB.

His funeral thanksgiving service was held on the 7th October and conducted by the writer at the request of his daughter, the reading was given by Bro. Geoff Ellis.

TOM KING.

## APPEAL NIGERIA

We have been corresponding with a brother in Nigeria for 2 years who writes on behalf of 4 Evangelists of the Churches of Christ in Abia State and the following is an extract from one of his letters.

"We have learnt that there are some brethren in the United Kingdom who share the same belief as we profess. We all know the Lord's Supper is the central object of Christian worship. Because of our faith we are forsaken by the mighty liberal supporters and preachers, we have no share, no sense of belonging. Nearly four years now we have been subjected to persistent abject poverty. We humbly beg if the dedication of these believing brethren in Britain could motivate them to see the yearning and aspiration of our plight and solicit for a sort of relief holy to us the Nigerian starving Preachers as to save us from untimely poverty and disgrace."

They are very appreciative of the few Bibles and other literature we have been able to send, but if anyone would like to contribute to the support of these fellow Christians could they please send any contributions to me, Mrs. Margery Purcell, 3 Dale Avenue, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 2JP and make any cheques payable to Church of Christ, Stretford.

## THANKS SIERRA LEONE

We have only recently been able to contact and send money donated last year to the brother in Sierra Leone as all postal services were suspended during the crisis. They have been through a traumatic time and he is giving thanks that he has been only slightly injured. Others, he says, have not fared so well. He wishes me to extend his appreciation and thanks to all the brothers and sisters who have sent money.

MARGERY PURCELL, Stockport.

**TRIBUTE**

Readers will be saddened to hear of the passing of brother Thomas W. Hartle, of Cape Town, RSA. I had a letter from his daughter Ruth to the effect that brother Hartle died of pneumonia on the 26th September and would have been 88 years of age if he had lived to the 29th September. Our brother became a Christian at the age of 22 years and became a full-time evangelist at the age of 55 years. I never had the pleasure of meeting brother Hartle but received many charming letters from him, and indeed he was a great friend of the "Scripture Standard" and contributed many fine articles to our paper, especially during the eighties. I know too, that he was an indefatigable worker for the Lord and was the means of greatly strengthening and enlarging the Church where he was. As I say I never met him but I remember a brother who had visited him saying how highly impressed he was with brother Thomas W. Hartle. I am sure all "SS" readers will join me in sending our condolences to Ruth and the rest of the family in their great loss, but confident in the fact that Thomas has gone to his rich reward.

(Ed.)

**WHERE TO GO**

In the midst of the religious confusion of our day, where can the really sincere and honest person go?

Go to your Bible? Search the scriptures! Find the church that is in the Bible!

Forget about all the different things you have always heard about the church. Find out what the Bible says about it and you will have the truth! Too many people are reading the latest popular respected theologian or listening to what the local vicar has to say. You need to look for the church in the Bible and when you find it you can be sure you will find the Bible in the Church!

- 
- 1. Timnah (Judges 14:2).
  - 2. Meribah (Numbers 20:24).
  - 3. Jacob and Esau (Genesis 35:29).
  - 4. Mount Gilboa (2 Samuel 1:6).
  - 5. Bethlem (Genesis 35:19).
  - 6. Two years (2 Samuel 2:10).
  - 7. Benjamin (Philippians 3:5).
  - 8. Sewed clothes (Acts 9:39).
  - 9. White (Revelation 20:11).
  - 10. Azotus (Acts 8:40).

**ANSWERS**

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