

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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IN THE NAME OF GOD

Our attention has been taken up this week with the awful plight of those poor and innocent passengers aboard the hijacked Kuwaiti Jumbo-jet. Those unfortunate people have been on the plane for over a week now, in cramped and stuffy conditions and never knowing the moment when they may be selected to be shot in cold blood, or all blown up together. We usually read about these things with a passing interest only, but it must be quite horrific to be under such a strain. The hijackers are, apparently, quite polite on occasions but are quite capable, if necessary, of politely shooting passengers in the head. Two passengers have already been shot in cold blood, one having been previously badly tortured. The hijackers have not been precisely identified but are sympathisers of the cause of the 17 Muslim terrorists in prison in Kuwait for bombing. These Muslim fundamentalists, pro-Iranian Hezbollah's, are engaged, it seems, in a Holy War (Jihad) and violence and murder are all part and parcel of the policy. The Muslim religion is said to be the fastest growing in the world today and is, and always has been, committed to gaining converts by force of arms, if necessary. And so, according to those hijackers, they are doing the will of Allah (God) when they place the lives of innocent people (children included) in great danger and when they (very politely) shoot passengers in the head and drop them on the tarmac. How is it possible that anyone can believe that murder (cold-blooded or otherwise) can ever be 'the will of God' or that God looks pleasingly down upon these acts of terror and atrocities? Just how can that be possible? Yet these men who deal in death and terror would be quite ready, and even willing, to die for Allah.

Over the last few weeks we have also been watching, on T.V. newsreels, the subjugation of the Palestinian revolts by the Israeli troops to the accompaniment of many deaths and maimings. A week or two ago we watched the dreadful spectacle of three burly Israeli soldiers take it in turns over a period of 45 minutes to kick savagely two Palestinian youths. They kicked them all over their body and then struck them on the limbs with large rocks, trying to break their arms and legs. These extremely violent and sadistic activities are once again perpetrated in the name of religion and God. The conflict between Arab and Jew dates long back into the O.T. and has continued for centuries. Christ came, of course, and broke down the 'middle wall of partition' between the two; but the battle rages on.

Much closer to home we watched, a week or two ago and again on T.V. newsreel, the horrifying sight of two off-duty British soldiers being clubbed to death in west-Belfast. It is alleged that they were on their way back to their base when they encountered an I.R.A. funeral procession. Whatever the truth of this, they certainly encountered the bloodthirsty rage of the mourners. With bare hands and loose bricks the mourners

wrecked the car in minutes; dragged the two young men onto the roadway and clubbed them into unconsciousness. One rarely sees, even these days, such unbridled hatred and bloodlust translated into such a massacre within just a few moments. This is 1988 and we like to think we are civilised and sophisticated, but deep down man has not changed one bit since Cain slew Abel. The Catholic-Protestant situation in Ireland, and strong religious tradition, is overtly the cause of this long, bloody and bitter confrontation, and no doubt it is, but one can't help feeling that many there enjoy murdering one another. Is what is happening in Ireland (Belfast in particular) the will of God, and does God look down smilingly upon the horror the ghastly carnage? 'Religion' it may be, but certainly has nothing remotely to do with true Christianity.

HOLY WARS

The name of 'religion' has always been invoked for all kinds of death and destruction. Back in 1095 the Crusades (Holy Wars) began and were waged in the name of God. On that date, Pope Urban II appealed to the chivalry of France and Europe to fight in defence of the Christian religion. He described the suffering of the pilgrims in the East at the hands of the Seljuk Turks, a vigorous and fanatical race which had taken Palestine from the Arabs and had overrun Asia Minor. With great eloquence the Pope urged his audience to take up arms in the defence of Christendom. The response was immediate. On all sides shouts of "Deus de volt" (it is God's will) were raised. Tunics were torn up to make crosses and the Bishop of Le Puy was the first to kneel at the Pope's feet to receive the cross and make the 'Crusader's Vows'. Some, of course, went to these subsequent wars for personal gain, but most (many were poor peasants, women and children) went inspired with the ambition to free Jerusalem (the Holy City) from the infidel. Over many, many years the slaughter on both sides was enormous and these Crusades (Holy Wars) continued, incredibly, for over 400 years, both sides completely convinced that they were doing "God's will."

THE INQUISITIONS

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

The horrors of the Spanish Inquisition are well-known and this Inquisition reached its height in the reign of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. These monarchs took the opportunity of taking revenge on some of their political enemies as well as the heretics, and so the Spanish Inquisition was particularly severe. The main aim was to get rid of the Jews (the Marranes) and the Moors (Moriscos; converted Mohammedans). Their goods and properties were confiscated and many were tortured, killed or deported into ghettos. Arriving in a district, travelling Inquisitors would be joined by a local Bishop and a 30 days "period of grace" announced, during which those in custody, and the suspected, could confess their 'crimes.' When this period had expired, trials began and horrific torture was applied to extract 'confessions.' Names of 'witnesses' were kept secret and so false charges could be made and personal vendettas could be waged. At a grand public ceremonial called Auto-da-fe (Act of Faith) the names of the guilty were announced and the punishments (fines, imprisonment or death). Some Inquisitors General were highly infamous and greatly feared. The first to con-

demn 'heretics' to be burned alive was Pietro de Verona. He was later killed by the people of Como but notwithstanding, he was later canonised by the Church and called "St. Peter The Martyr." Napoleon put a stop to these Inquisitions in 1810 but they revived and were finally ended by Maria Christina in 1834. The total number of victims and total amount of pain and suffering can only be guessed at, but to take only the short period between 1500-1525 over 349,000 Marrones were accused, 28,540 were condemned and 12,000 of those burned at the stake. This was only a small fraction of the victims in Spain but the same was going on in many other countries. It was all done in God's name. It was all done to keep the 'Church' pure and was, therefore "God's Will." No doubt the officiating priest, in the torture chambers, would not be unduly perturbed when his prayers were drowned out by the screams of some poor wretch on the rack, or receiving the hot irons; he was only doing "God's Will."

MEEK AND GENTLE

These references in no way exhaust the long catalogue of crimes against humanity where God's name is invoked to justify all forms of blood-letting and gross cruelty.

If we had time we could describe the terrible things done to the Scottish 'Covenanters', and we could quote the words of Oliver Cromwell after the Battle of Marston Moor (York) in July 1644 when he boasted, "We never charged but we routed the enemy. God made them as stubble to our swords." Not so far from my home here in Pathhead there is an old church where the iron manacles are still to be seen attached to the wall at the entrance. These were used until relatively recently where defaulting members of the congregation ('Sinners') would be chained on a Sunday, so that all the other worshippers could scorn and spit on them as they entered the building. God's will?

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

Peter envisages the situation where the disciples might suffer, as a result of God's will, but not that they should make others suffer: a much different thing. He says,

“For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing” and later in the chapter (1 Peter 4) says, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other mens matters.” And so a great mass of murder, of evil-doing, and meddling in other mens’ matters goes on and masquerades as “God’s will.” We hear it so often. “Well it is God’s will,” when so often it is very far indeed from being anything like the will of God. I think a good guide in the matter is to be found in Christ’s words in Matt. 12:50 i.e. “For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.” By this criterion all those who do God’s will should be obviously and clearly identified as Christ’s brother, sister and mother. Could we imagine that the sectarian murderers in Belfast are individually a brother of Jesus, or that the hijackers of aeroplanes who frighten and shoot innocent passengers, are in any shape or form to be likened unto a brother of Christ? The man who turned the thumb-screws or applied the blinding hot poker in the Inquisitions: was he the brother of our gentle Lord; the Prince of Peace?

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

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

God is good and upright. Mans’ inhumanity to man can never ever be “God’s will.”

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

BACK TO THE EARLY ALTAR

“And he went on his way to Bethel ... unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first.” Genesis. 13. 3—4

“And that follows a dark chapter in the patriarch’s life. It is a period stained by deliberate falsehood and deceit. It has been a time of increasing wealth, but decreasing piety. In this season there is no mention of any altar-building, as, indeed, there is no mention of the name of God. It is a sterile page of history, and it finishes up with the believer being rebuked by the heathen, and practically dismissed from the country. And now we see him on his return, much increased in goods, but surely with the sense of something lacking, for which his possessions afford no recompense. And he makes his way to Bethel, “unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first.” And there he sought to get hold of the broken ends of his life, to recover what he had lost, and in the genius of the place, and in the re-awakening of sleeping sentiment, to walk anew in the fellowship of God

LET US GET BACK TO THE ALTAR OF EARLY CONSECRATION

We must visit the altar of early loyalties, for we have lost our first love. We must seek to regain the constancy of our early communion with the Lord. We must renew our trust with Him in private prayer, and in family prayer, and in public worship and in Christian service. We must get back and rebuild these first altars. Nay, it will not be going back – it will be going forward, upward, and in our glorious recovery of abandoned treasure we shall sing with the woman of old, “rejoice with me, for I have found that which was lost.”

J. H. Jowett.

THE DISCIPLINE OF FAILURE

“LOVE, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control, – these are the qualities in which we must grow if we would be really advancing in life as God sees us. And it is possible for a man to be making progress in these qualities of his heart-life even in the midst of earthly failure. Indeed, it is true that men oft-time learn their best lessons in the school of defeat. Nature in all of us needs to be disciplined before it reaches its best and ripest, and discipline is not achieved usually without many lessons in humility.”

J. R. Miller.

TRUE TO OURSELVES, OUR BRETHERN, AND OUR LORD

O LOVING Lord, who art for ever seeking
 Men of Thy mind, intent to do Thy will,
 Strong in Thy strength, Thy power and grace bespeaking;
 Faithful to Thee, through good report and ill –
 To Thee we come, and humbly make confession,
 Faithless so oft, in thought and word and deed,
 Asking that we may have, in true possession,
 Thy free forgiveness in the hour of need.
 In duties small be Thou our inspiration,
 In large affairs endue us with Thy might;
 Through faithful service cometh full salvation,
 So may we serve, Thy will our chief delight.
 Not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
 Faithful in all things, seeking not reward,
 Then, following Thee, may we fulfil our mission,
 True to ourselves, our brethren, and our Lord.

W. V. Jenkins.

THE PREACHER SAID THIS

“A preacher ought so to preach, that when the sermon is ended, the congregation shall disperse saying, ‘The preacher said this.’”

Martin Luther.

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

We had often puzzled what Rom. 8. 37 meant, “More than conquerors.” An Irish speaker explained. “What is a conquerer?” said he. “One who wins by fighting.” “What is more than conquerer?” “One who wins without fighting.”

H.P.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

THE CHURCH — THE SPHERE OF ITS WORK

THE CHURCH, by command, operates throughout the world and seeks the conversion of every creature. Its field of operation is unbounded but the nature of its work, as a community, is circumscribed. The operations authorised by the great Head of the Church are confined to what is spiritual and His Church should not go where He does not lead.

The Scriptures show Christ as the great Centre and around Him, marked off by His word, a clear line encircling all that is spiritual. Outwith that line, where the Church may not trespass, and where only the individual Christian can go, is everything that is social and political.

Within the circle where the Church operates we find every pure motive that the knowledge of God and the love of the Lord Jesus can beget in the human heart. There you find the grounds and assurance for every hope that stirs us to patient continuance in well-doing, and within its compass there is clearly laid down every principle and virtue that can guide us to actions honouring to God and beneficial to man. Reverence, humility and devotion are in its atmosphere.

If the Church within its defined province of work is able to give to its members a love of the Scriptures, a right spirit, pure motives, bright hopes, sound principles, goods morals, and examples of faith and zeal, how great is the work it may accomplish. It is limited, you may say, and our reply is, how inexhaustible and unfulfilled. Great would be the change in the world if these, the allotted duties of the Church, were fully accomplished. The necessity to maintain loyalty to Christ, to increase our love to God, to stir up our pure motives, and keep true to our principles, calls for unceasing labour.

With lawful duties more than it has yet overtaken, why should the Church stray into matters that are unauthorised, and be involved in work that divine wisdom has left for the members as individuals in their capacity as citizens to perform? The Church now, as at the first, makes progress spiritually just as it confines itself to the things our Lord has approved. Had our Lord thought that spiritual work would be assisted if His Church intruded into social, political, and worldly matters, then it is natural to conclude that He would have authorised it, and the early Church would have led the way. It would not have been left for men or women to discover where the primitive divinely-built Church was incomplete. 'Primitive simplicity is held to be the secret of primitive power.'

As the Church through the Gospel changes man and by its teaching maintains his spiritual life, then, as a consequence, there will soon follow a change in our laws and social conditions. A full faith in the divine plans will prevent the introduction into the Church of that which rests only on feeling or unconscious presumption. So-called helps and hand-maidens arise but to detract from real effort and to impede harmonious spiritual labour. Let us catch the spirit of the Church of apostolic times in its devotion to the proclamation of the Word. We are to be as 'lights in the world holding forth the word of life.' It is also written, 'Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.'

Experience shows and history proves that when a Church entertains other than spiritual affairs, its vision of the Gospel becomes dim and the vigour of its religious force grows weak. I also venture to say that when Churches interfere with matters political, it is doubtful whether they retard or hasten reforms, and on occasions they only muddle the result where a simple effective issue was desired. Apart from the work being unscriptural, the expediency of such efforts is condemned by results. They weaken the Church and fail to bring reforms where active individual effort might have succeeded.

The more liberty a Church takes in its corporate capacity, the less liberty have the members as individuals, and more limited becomes their sphere of influence. Go beyond the injunctions of inspired men or the example of the apostolic Church, and bring in every work that a majority however wise, may think clearly makes for good and, as a result, the unity and spirit of the Church will depart. It ever was so. We cannot submit to each other on matters of reason. In matters of faith there can be unity, but in matters of opinion we will fight for freedom.

If power has been vested in the Church not only to press its members to do good to all men, but also to dictate in what manner, place, or time, other than by preaching the Gospel, they should do good to the world, then passages should be given to show that she has this authority. The personal example of the Lord is not a guide as to corporate action of the Church. The primitive Church must be the standard. It operated with divine guidance and stands in a comparable position.

Let me quote: 'We all agree that every region of human life is to be Christianised. All the relations of men are to be regulated by the spirit of Jesus. Not only the life of the soul within but all the activities of the man without are to undergo this change. But we differ as to what methods are open to the Church in working toward this end.' In its duties, the Church stands distinguished from the world, and only seeks the regeneration of mankind. As citizens its members are not distinguished from their fellow-citizens, and they seek, united with all citizens, to improve the social life and conditions that surround them.

Political and social matters rightly viewed and compared with spiritual are not worthy of a place in the Church. God has always left man to do that which he could accomplish for himself. We are endowed by nature with the capability to govern our nation or empire. It is our selfish worldly disposition that leads to a misuse of our power to organise and rule. Make the heart right through the Gospel and man will soon create conditions that are merciful and just. One of our writers said:

'How small of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure.'

The Jews had divine laws, but they failed to bring happiness because man was not regenerated and forgiven.

You may ask why the mingling of duties should reduce the effectiveness of the Church and not have a like effect on the individual. It can have a bad effect on the individual if he neglects to keep first things first, but we must carry on God's plan, and He places this responsibility and trial on the Christian and not on the Church. Government is a necessity and the nation places a responsibility on every citizen, but neither God nor the nation has asked the Church to actively share this responsibility. The presence of bishops in the House of Lords is merely a relic of papal days. If the Church remains purely spiritual its influence will be the greater to keep spiritual things ever to the fore, and to help its members being carried too far by the secondary matters of trades unionism, co-operation, temperance reforms, politics, etc.

In matters of faith, unity; but in matters of opinion, liberty. This remains still the sound and profitable position. 'Let the love work in its own way, and it will do well.'

John Anderson.

CROSSBEARING FOR CHRIST

It does not consist simply in speaking or exhorting in social meeting. Praying in public does not exhaust the subject, nor the larger part of it. It is more — much more — than these. It is large forbearance — long suffering — great patience under severe

trials, for the sake of the cause of our loving Lord. It is to endure with resignation the loss of property, of friends and dear ones by death, and to say sincerely and reverently, "Thy will be done."

It is to meet with calmness and fortitude the blasting of the brightest hopes. and to bow with unfeigned submission before the irretrievable ruin of the grandest of our earthly prospects. Crosses are not arbitrary, nor do they lie across our paths by accident. In many instances they are not a bane but a blessing. How often the turbulent, passionate nature is subdued into the most submissive and gentle of spirits by years of Cross-bearing.

Many times the men who move the world are those who are born into it with the strongest and fiercest of passions. Witness John, the apostle, and James, his brother. Both of these men partook of the ambitious spirit of the mother in seeking the greatest place of honour in the coming kingdom.

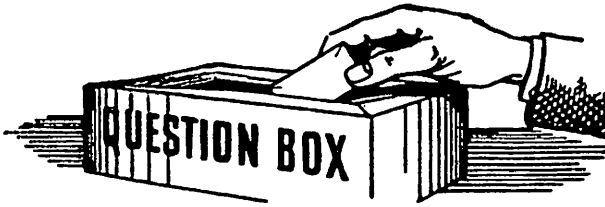
Unsanctified ambition is a heartless, selfish passion in the human heart. Ambition is the supremest passion in the loftiest spirits. The Saviour rebuked it, to give it direction, and pruned it that it might produce celestial fruit. When the Master was rejected by the people of a village in Samaria, both John and James said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did?" Here was the fiery passion of revenge. It was unhallowed in the Master's sight. Jealousy prompted John to forbid one casting out demons in Jesus' name, "because he followed not with them." It was not of "the godly sort." The Master surnamed the brothers, "The sons of Thunder." And yet after suffering for years the greatest persecutions for Jesus's sake, the heart of John became a perennial fountain of sweetness. The love divine that ejects earthly and carnal jealousy and demon-like revenge, was dominant in his heart. The lessons of Jesus were wonderfully helpful; his life and example assisted much; but these, without some of life's severest trials, would not be sufficient. The refining fire must burn and destroy the dross and melt the pure gold. It is in the molten gold that Christ sees and rejoices in, His image. John Bunyan was one of the vilest of blasphemers. He swore so terribly in an English village that the air seemed laden with moral infection. A mother of a lot of boys rushed out of her house and besought him to depart. The world will never forget the purified Bunyan. Without the gloom, restraint and sorrows of Bedford prison, he might not in a given period have passed so far on the "heavenly way." It was after the sore trials in the years of prison-life in Caesarea; after suffering cruelly from injustice before the courts of Felix and Festus; after the almost unparalleled voyage through storms and perils, to Italy; after years of sorrows as a prisoner in Rome; that Paul, the aged on the mellowness of his spirit, gave to the world that charming letter — the gem of his epistles — to his "joy and crown" in Philippi.

Paul's "thorn in the flesh" helped to bring into his soul a richer stream of Divine grace.

Nothing short of such personal tribulations could have produced such a Christ-like spirit. The character of Paul, thus exalted, can not be "hidden." In all the horizon of time, this grand character will stand out before the eyes of humanity, like a city of burnished gold on the highest mountain top.

It was on the Cross, in the hour of His most fearful torture, that Jesus gave utterance to His sublimest lesson. His cross must have been a great factor in the evolution of that loving, tender, and forgiving prayer.

Nearer my God to Thee; nearer to Thee,
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

I have visited various assemblies of Christians and I have noticed that opinions differ as to how the money which is collected each Lord's Day should be used. Is there any scriptural guidance on this?

Yes, I believe it is true to say that opinions do differ widely on this issue. Some say that the money should be used exclusively for the promoting of the Gospel; others say that it should be used for relieving distress among Christians in the Church; and if there is anything left over then that might be used for relieving general distress among non-Christians; yet others say that the money should be used for, as they put it, 'the Lord's work', but generally they do not specify what that work is. So there is quite a deal of confusion, and in order to say something which may be helpful to us all, I would like to deal with the question from a broader base.

Analysing the Early Church

It has been a long-stated aim of members of the Church of Christ that in matters relating to faith and practice we should refer ourselves and others to the first century A.D., and there see how the early Christians conducted themselves. When we do so, we find that the early Church 'had all things common' (Acts 2:44); "they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (2:45); and "neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own" (4:32-37).

How did they arrive at this enlightened conclusion? Was it by spontaneous reaction to the Gospel, or was it the result of Apostolic instruction? We must not forget that the people lived in volatile times. They were in bondage to Rome and longed for a deliverer; they had heard Jesus speak and teach and had seen Him perform miracles; they had seen Him crucified and had heard of His resurrection; and they had seen supernatural powers passed on to the Apostles, so much so that people brought their sick into the streets so that the shadow of Peter and the other Apostles would fall on them. Well might they have the spontaneous reaction of privileged community.

On the other hand we must not minimise the awesome power now wielded by the Apostles. It is quite evident that the three thousand saved on the first Pentecost, and others saved subsequently, had come under direct Apostolic teaching. Are we to understand that part of that teaching would include the design of a common community life which would be laid down for future generations of Christians in the Church, or would it be the advent of a voluntary system of giving as evidenced by the words of Peter to Ananias, "Whiles it remained was it not thine own, and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power" (Acts 5:1-11).

Our Private Stewardship

I can understand in one sense what Christians mean when they assert "everything that I have belongs to the Lord". The sense in which I understand that statement is that inevitably anything that anyone has must initially be as a result of the providence of God. That being the case, it is not difficult to understand that **stewardship** then becomes of paramount importance. My own view is that if we consider our possessions to be **ours** then we exhibit more commitment, love, and discipline to Christ in the exercise of good stewardship than we would in any other sense; "to whom much is

given. much is expected". If we could paraphrase what Peter said to Ananias I believe it would go something like this, "Look, Ananias, why did you have to lie to us? The receipts of the sale of the land were yours; it was in your power to withhold it if you had wanted to. It would have been **churlish** of you to have withheld the money after all that the Lord has done for us all, but you would not have been guilty of despite to the Holy Spirit by lying. Why did you do it, Ananias."

What really disturbs me, though, is the lack of consistency displayed in the stewardship of our own possessions against that of the Church's treasury. We will say, quite unreasonably in my opinion, that it is perfectly alright to jet off to distant shores for a holiday costing large sums of money, but it is quite wrong to take a few of our young people on an outing costing very little, and pay for it out of Church funds. If the objective in the latter is to keep our young people together, under Christian guidance in a healthy environment, with the express intention of one day being able to lead them to accept the Lord, then why is that considered to be more objectionable than putting an advert in the press to announce a Gospel meeting? Further-more, if the Church needs to put on a meal for a special occasion, why can it not be catered for out of Church funds if again the objective is to promote the fellowship of the Church so as to prepare ourselves for the work in hand? In addition to this, if we are to put **all** that we can into the treasury, then where does the **extra** money come from in order to do the things we want to do for the Church.

It seems to me that we have the idea that the money which we give every Lord's Day is for the exclusive use of what we loosely term the Lord's work; the trouble is that we have not properly defined what that work is; perhaps we should begin to look more closely at motives and objectives. We should always remember that we gave **ourselves** to the Lord, presumably for His exclusive use, but how many times do we seek to legitimise our actions relative to the service we offer Him? It is **there** that the inconsistency lies. After all, the Lord doesn't **need** our money, but what He **does** require is good stewardship of those things which we say are His — including ourselves — and a proper administration of those material things which can be relative to **all** His affairs here on earth.

Scriptural Guidance

Paul makes it clear in 1 Cor. 16:1,2; that the collection on the first day of the week was **for** the saints, and that the Christians in Corinth were to 'lay by in store as God had prospered them', so that there would be no need for 'gatherings' when he, Paul, came. Evidently their liberality in this respect was to be taken to Jerusalem and there, presumably, would be under Apostolic direction as regards dispersal to the saints. We, of course, have no such central system today, the monies which are collected every Lord's Day being under the jurisdiction of whatever form of leadership may be in force in any local community of Christians.

Paul brings up this subject again in 2 Cor.9. This particular part of the letter seems to indicate that the saints in Corinth were falling behind in their pledge (v.5). He also indicates that 'actions speak louder than words', because he reminds them that the brethren in Jerusalem will applaud the commitment of the Corinthian saints to the Gospel of Christ for their liberality (v.13). He reminds them, and us, of the debt that is owed to God, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (v.15). That 'gift', of course, was Christ.

In the present day, the Church uses funds to support brethren in the work of the Lord; financial support, of course, is meant here. Paul always claimed the right to such support, but he also boasted of his financial independence (See 2 Cor. chapter 9-12; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess.3:7-12). He worked night and day; he laboured at his craft of tent-making, and on top of this, as he says, he had the care of all the Churches on his shoulders. He did this so that he would not be a financial burden on the saints.

Far be it from me to comment on brethren who **do** receive legitimate support from the saints in this day and age; it surely is up to each individual to examine his own conscience in the light of Scriptural example and teaching. There is also a suggestion in 1 Tim. 5:17 that Elders should receive financial remuneration, but I personally have no knowledge of this taking place in this day.

There is also recorded the case of 'the widow indeed' as Paul refers to her; this is the widow who has no children or relatives to support her; the Church should relieve this situation out of its funds (Read 1 Tim.5:1-17). In other cases Paul affirms that if Christians will not look after those of their own house then they have denied the faith and are worse than infidels (1 Tim.5:8).

What I have tried to do in this answer is to pinpoint the responsibilities facing Christians in our personal lives, and in the corporate life of the Church. In essence they are not very different; but we must guard against being inconsistent and hypocritical in the dispersal of our resources in each case. Let us examine the motives and the objectives behind the call on Church funds and I believe that we shall find that we can rightly support things which hitherto we may have frowned upon.

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

TELEVISION EVANGELISM

We probably all saw, during February, on T.V. the tearful and emotional 'confessions' of the American 'Televangelist' Jimmy Swaggart. Jimmy Swaggart is one of the rich American Televangelists who recently sent an envoy over to Britain to see if he could appear preaching on British television. In this country we know nothing of what goes on in the name of religion on these vast television networks in the U.S.A. and from glimpses we have had of them we can only pray that they shall never come here. The B.B.C. have had a long tradition of keeping soapbox evangelism off our screens, but it seems that changes may be on the way.

A quote from a Church of Christ magazine, the "Christian Expositor" (June, 1987) gives us some idea of the popularity of these evangelical programmes and the vast amounts of money that is involved. I quote, "Television evangelism has become very popular in the past ten years to fifteen years. Millions of viewers are attracted daily to a variety of religious programmes. Several dynamic personal evangelists (called Televangelists) have created huge empires from the nearly two billion dollars contributed **each year** by their faithful supporters. Many of these 'Ministries' take in amounts in excess of six figures annually ..." end of quote. But one can go on reading in that magazine of the great luxury in which these evangelists live and the vast incomes they earn. On one snippet of these preaching sessions shown, I saw one elderly lady hand over eight million dollars to her favourite church leaders. It appears that some of these gospel syndicates have turned their eyes in the direction of Britain and perhaps think that there are rich pickings to be had if they can get in first.

I am sure that none of us want the kind of thing that goes on in the U.S.A on television: even the public in general would be opposed to it, and so I would suggest that if we are ever asked to engage in a referendum on whether British Television should open its screens to such religious programmes we should give a very definite negative. Those who would gain the longest screening time are those who would have most money: and they would not necessarily be likely to preach the truth. I am sure we are all grateful that up until now we have not had our ears and eyes bombarded each night on T.V. by some religious sect or other, and we should lobby our M.P.'s and other relevant officials to keep it that way.

Ivor Carey, Bristol.

JESUS' ENDORSEMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The history of the earthly ministry of Christ testifies that he endorsed the Old Testament Scriptures. He even endorsed the threefold division of the Old Testament the law, the prophets, and the Psalms. "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Hence, Christ endorsed the Pentateuch and the history of the Old Testament; he gave full endorsement to the prophets; he frequently said concerning the prophecies that they "must needs be fulfilled". This could not be truthfully said if the Old Testament was written by uninspired men. Christ fulfilled the prophecies concerning himself; he was the antitype of the types of him in the Old Testament. Frequently Matthew refers to the birth of Jesus and says that this was done that "it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet" (Matt. 1:22).

Christ endorsed David and said that he spoke by the Holy Spirit. "And Jesus answered and said while he taught in the temple, how say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, the Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Mark 12: 35-36). Christ then endorsed the Psalms and that which David prophesied. A further endorsement of the Old Testament is observed in that Christ spoke of it as "the word of God" (John 10:35). "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken." Christ could not call the Old Testament Scriptures the word of God if they were not inspired. Again, the fact that he came to fulfil the law and the prophets shows that he regarded "the law and the prophets" as inspired. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). Again, we have John bearing testimony and saying, "... The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). Again, Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). The evidence that Jesus endorsed the Old Testament is cumulative; however, we need no further proof of the testimony of Jesus to the inspiration of the Old Testament.

Dr. Harry Rimmer has calculated the number of quotations that Christ used from the Old Testament. Matthew contains 1,181 verses; 603 verses are the words of Jesus; this is fifty-one percent of all the verses. Eighty-three of these verses are Old Testament quotations, or fourteen percent of the verses used by Jesus are from the Old Testament. Mark contains 609 verses; 275 of these are quotations of Jesus; thus forty-five percent of the verses in Mark are the words of Jesus; thirty-four of these verses, or thirteen percent, are from the Old Testament. Luke contains 1,251 verses, of which 570 are the words of Jesus; this is forty-five percent of the verses; forty-two of these verses, or seven percent of his quotations, are from the Old Testament. John contains 879 verses; 417 of these, or forty-nine percent, are quotations from Jesus twenty of these quotations of Jesus, or five percent are from the Old Testament. The four gospels contain 3,290 verses, and 1,865 of these are the words of Jesus: this is forty-eight percent of all the verses; of his quoted conversation, 179 verses are literally Old Testament words. *Ten percent of the daily conversation of Jesus was Old Testament verses literally quoted.* Truly Jesus endorsed the Old Testament as inspired.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

June 5 Prov. 24:13-34 Eph. 5: 1-14
 June 12 Gen. 2:15-25 Eph. 5:15-53
 June 19 Prov. 23:12-26 Eph. 6
 June 26 Joshua 24:14-28 Phil. 1:1-17

The Imitation of God

It should be our constant prayer that we become more Christ-like as day succeeds day. Someone once said: "There is no greater example than personal example and Christ Jesus is our example in all things." Jesus loved, we must love. Jesus forgave, we must forgive. Jesus sacrificed Himself, we must present our bodies as living sacrifices unto Him (Romans 12:1). What a perfect example is our Lord!

Relationships

We read in this portion of Scripture of the relationship between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves. The teaching Paul gave should be read in the light of the immoral society of that day. Then, the marriage bond was on the way to a complete breakdown: infidelity was rife; there was a low view of women; child exposure was common; masters were cruel; slaves were treated as things, not people; etc. As William Barclay has written: "It is impossible to exaggerate the cleansing effect that Christianity had on home life in the ancient world and the benefits it brought to women".

Paul wrote that Christians were "children of light" (5:8) and sinners were involved in "unfruitful works of darkness" (5:11). The contrast could not be clearer. Personally, I am so glad I am in the Sonlight.

The Christian Soldier

War has been declared. The fight is on. It is good versus evil, light versus darkness. It is over the hearts and minds of men and women. God has properly armed His people and they are led by one who has never lost a battle and who will assuredly win the war — Jesus (Re-

velation 19: 11-21).

I must quote Alexander Campbell. "Great as the opposition is to truth and salvation, we have no reason to despond. Greater are our friends and allies, and infinitely more powerful than all our enemies. God is on our side — Jesus Christ is our King — the Holy Spirit is at his disposal — angels are his ministering servants — the prayers of all the prophets, apostles, saints and martyrs are for our success — our brethren are numerous and strong — they have the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the artillery of truth, the arguments of God, the preparation of the gospel of peace — our Commander and Captain is the most successful General that ever entered the field of war — He never lost a battle — He is wonderful in council, excellent in working, valiant in fight — the Lord of hosts is His name. He can stultify the machinations of our enemies, control all the power of nature, and subdue all our foes, terrestrial and infernal ..."

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, for too long we have been defensively minded. Our task is to take the battle to our enemies and meet them where they are. It is not "hold the fort!" but "attack the fort — and destroy!" When Jesus talked about "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (the church)" (Matthew 16:18), the picture is not one of the enemy at our doors, but we at our enemy's doors. (Please note from 6: 13-17 that there is no armour for the soldier's back.)

Tychicus

Tychicus is mentioned here and in Acts 20:4; Colossians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12 and Titus 3:12. He was from the province of Asia and was listed among Paul's fellow-travellers on his last journey to Jerusalem. He was the bearer of this letter to the Ephesians and the one to the Colossians. To the recipients of both he was to bring the latest news of Paul.

Tychicus is just one of a number of so-called "minor characters" in the New Testament Scriptures. Their overall importance can be seen by reading, for example, *The Pauline Circle* by F.F. Bruce. Bruce wrote: "Paul attracted friends around him as a magnet attracts iron filings".

The Philippian Letter

PHILIPPI: named after Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great. In Paul's day Philippi was a colony (*colonia*) of Rome. A colony was a little piece of Rome where the citizens took pride in their Roman citizenship; Latin was the language spoken; Roman dress was worn; Roman customs were observed; the magistrates had Roman titles; the coinage was Roman; etc.

CHURCH ESTABLISHED: c. A.D. 50, during the apostle Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:12 – 40). It was a colony of heaven in a colony of Rome.

WRITER: the apostle Paul. He wrote it while he was a prisoner at Rome (1:7, 13; 4:22).

DATE OF EPISTLE: c. A.D. 62.

PURPOSE: "thank you" letter by Paul for their support in his time of need. (It, of course, contains other things as well.) It was taken by the hand of Epaphroditus whom Paul called "my brother and companion in labour and fellowsoldier" (2:25). Paul's additional remarks on this great servant should be carefully studied (2: 25–30).

KEY WORDS: Joy and Rejoice. F. W. Farrar said of the epistle: "It breathes of joy, affection and gratitude."

Verse 1 Chapter 1 is very significant. It mentions Paul, an apostle; Timotheus, an evangelist; and the saints with the bishops or elders and deacons. This congregation was complete as to its government. (Note there is no mention of A MINISTER.)

Paul immediately speaks of *joy*. If Christianity is anything, it is a message of joy. I recall the words of the angel to the shepherds: "Fear not for behold, I

bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 10–11).

From verse 9, Paul details four great objectives of a Christian community.

1. Increase of love, coupled with knowledge and discernment.
2. Development of the ability to prove what is excellent.
3. Cultivation of purity of life and blameless character.
4. Production of the fruits of righteousness in abundant supply.

He speaks of being sincere. Carl Ketherside has written: "The word *sincere* is from the latin *sine cera* which literally means 'without wax'. It was first applied to strained honey, which was transparent and clear when viewed in the sunlight. Later, the term was given a special significance. Sculptors in marble often sought to conceal the cracks in the stone by rubbing tinted wax in the tiny crevices. The inspectors would carefully examine the work of art, and if no such tactics had been employed, they would stamp it 'sine cera'. In its application to christian character it refers to those whose lives do not have hidden faults that are glossed over. They are free from hypocrisy, deceit and trickery. Such persons have no hesitancy in being examined in the full glare of sunlight. They will meet the test when scrutinized and investigated."

"Furtherance" (verse 12) is a fascinating word in the original Greek. It is *prokope*, which literally means "a striking forward". K.S. Wuest has written: "This Greek word is thought to have been used in the first century to refer to a company of wood cutters preceding the progress of an army, cutting a road through the forest so that it might advance. Paul says that his circumstances are divine wood cutters, cutting a way through his opposition so that the gospel might be advanced".

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

COMING EVENTS

New Cumnock: The church here intends, God willing, to hold a short gospel MISSION on 3rd, 4th and 5th May, 1988, in the Town Hall, at 7 p.m. each evening. Speakers: Andrew Sharp (Newtongrange) Dean English (Livingston). Please support us with your presence: if not, by your prayers.

Also on Saturday, 7th May our SOCIAL in the Town Hall (4 p.m.). Speakers: Graeme Pearson (Dunfermline) Roy Renshaw (Cardiff).

A warm welcome awaits you. Items for the programme welcomed. All communications to:— Harry McGinn, 6 West Park Drive, New Cumnock, Ayrshire.

SOCIAL

The Church at **Buckie**, will, God Willing, hold their ANNUAL SOCIAL on May 28th in the Meetinghouse: 3.30 p.m. Speaker: John Kneller (Tranent).

A warm welcome awaits all who can join us in happy Christian fellowship. Singing items greatly appreciated. Please contact Bro. H. Pirie, 23 Harbour Place, Portnockie, Banffshire. AB5 2NR. Tel. (0542) 41291.

OBTUARY

Slamannan: It is with deep regret we report the passing of our esteemed sister Mary Neilson. She fell asleep in Jesus on 28th March, 1988, at Falkirk Royal infirmary. She was in her 81st year.

Sister Mary has been a devoted member of the church for 66 years during which time she held the position of church Secretary for 40 years: a position which she only relinquished when she suffered a severe stroke seven, or so, years ago. Her sufferings were long and severe but borne with patience and Christian fortitude. It can truly be said that the church was her life.

The funeral service in the church building and at the graveside was conducted by Bro. Hugh Davidson, Motherwell, in

the presence of many sympathetic relatives and friends. Our deepest sympathy goes out to sister Jean. We commend her to the care of our kind and Heavenly Father.

Grace Sneddon. (Sec.)

Buckie: The church here regrets to record the passing of Bro. Geddes. On Friday, 11th March, Brother John Geddes passed away. Brother John had been Secretary of the church here for 30 years. Besides being an excellent Secretary, he was a tireless worker for the Lord in preaching and teaching the word. He also organised the services and led the singing. He did a great amount of physical work in maintaining the building. We are already beginning to see the loss John is going to be to the Church here in Buckie.

The funeral service, on Monday, 14th March, was conducted by Brother William Mair, and Brother Michael Gaunt, Peterhead, at the graveside.

We commend our Sister Betty to the comfort of the Lord, and pray that He will sustain her in her great loss. Yet rejoice that Brother John is at home with his Lord which is far better.

Bill Mair.

(The Editor apologises for Betty being referred to as 'Mary' in last month's issue).

Wigan (Longshoot): We are sad to report the passing of sister Doris Pritt at the age of 67. Doris had been a lifelong and faithful member of the church, initially in Blackburn until the death of her husband Jim, and latterly with the church in Wigan. It was only about three weeks before her death that cancer was diagnosed, from which time her condition deteriorated rapidly. During her association with the church in Wigan, Doris had been an active member in the church and in the Ladies group, and we praise God for her service to the congregation. We rejoice in her faith, and mourn her passing not as those without hope, but in the assurance of the resurrection to

glory made possible by Jesus. We commend her daughter Norma and family to the loving care to be found in the Lord.

D. Melling.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Bro. P. Wilson now resides at:-
17 Gowan Lee Drive,
Slamannan.
Tel. 032 485-524

CHANGE OF SECRETARIES

The new church Secretary at Buckie is:-
Bro. H. Pirie,
23 Harbour Place,
Portnockie,
Banffshire. AB5 2NR.
Tel. (0542) 41291.

The new Secretary at Slamannan is:-
Sister Grace Sneddon,
14 Thorndene Terrace,
Slamannan. FK1 3EJ.
Tel. 032 485-587.

BIRTH

Buckie; To Hunter and Elaine Pirie, a daughter Samantha Jayne, on February 14th. A sister for Louise. Congratulations.

"JUSTIFICATION" FROM BIBLE
Mr. A. Gowie, secretary of the Drapers Chamber of Trade, discussing the system with a Press Association reporter to-day, recalled an amusing story of one establishment which was run by a very religious old draper. "A customer came in for a special shawl for which she wanted to pay five guineas. The assistant knew that the best shawl in the shop was only three guineas. He showed it to the customer, who said it was just what she wanted only it was not good enough. So the assistant took it away, put it in another box, marked it five guineas, and brought it back again. The customer was quite satisfied, and paying the five guineas, took the shawl.

"Unfortunately the assistant had been watched by his employer, and when the customer had gone told the assistant he had done wrong, and that unless he could justify his action with a quotation from the Bible he would have to go. To which the assistant replied: 'She was a stranger and I took her in.'

ON RICHES

Rich men without wisdom and learning are like sheep with golden fleeces.

Solon.

Wealth is not his that has it, but his that enjoys it.

Franklin.

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