

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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A THOUGHT FOR THE YEAR, 1986

**Be strong, be brave, have no fear, do not stand in
dread of them; for the LORD your God will be going
with you, never failing you nor forsaking you.**

(Deut. 31:6. Goodspeed's translation).

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM HISTORY?

Nothing stands still for long and here we are, again, at the portals of another year. I suppose that, at such times, we are inclined to reflect upon the passage of Time itself, and the changes we see around us. In some respects we *expect* to see changes, and indeed we sometimes *hope* to see changes. We would, for instance, like to see better relationships between the nations, much better living conditions for the Third-World countries; more food for the hungry and less bloodshed and violence. In the religious context we would prefer to see a great spiritual awakening sweep the land, and much more success in the preaching of the gospel. As time passes we would also like to think that we, as individuals, would improve as Christians, actually growing in grace and the knowledge of God. Yes, there are changes we would welcome.

Some things ought not to alter, however, and *the church* is one of them. The church should prosper and grow, but should never change; there is a difference between growth and change. There should be a constancy and permanency about the church with which man should never trifle. Amongst the sects and denominations there is certainly a constant pressure for change and changes take place all the time. With women elders and a female clergy we wonder, "What's next". We hear them say that the church "must be brought up to date"; "it must be made relevant to our modern society"; "outlived notions on the miracles, virgin birth and the resurrection must be updated"; "restrictive rules on divorce etc. must be amended"; and even that the hymns must be 'jazzed up' somewhat. Many of these changes are being implemented and we occasionally see the new breed of 'trendy' vicars with the lengthy hair (better fitted to 'relate' to the young) with the 'jeans' and a guitar always within easy reach. We also see, in the case of churches which do not make the changes fast enough, members being lost to the 'joyful' charismatic groups. Many of these churches have a very loose and casual approach to God's inspired word, and so I

suppose such changes are almost inevitable and certainly not surprising. Should we, however, ever expect to hear a call for changes *within the church of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Should we expect to see changes in churches of Christ in our lifetime? Would we expect such a thing? If so, *what* changes; and *why*?

Changes since A. Campbell's Day

It is true that when Luther, while studying his N.T., realised that the church of which he was a member, bore little relationship to the one in the N.T., he had to change, and had to try and reform his church. It is also true that Luther having gone only so far along the road to N.T. concepts of the church, the men of the Restoration Movement had to carry the change much farther. Since the time of Alexander Campbell, and the other pioneers, it has been generally understood that churches bearing an exact likeness to the church of the N.T. have emerged into the world once again. If churches, matching the N.T. pattern, were brought into being in Britain and the USA a hundred years, or so, ago, what further need should there be for change?

Change can never be neutral - change is either for the better or the worse. What possible justification can there be for change in the church of Jesus? The only legitimate change is one which would take the church *nearer to the N.T. pattern*. Brother Benjamin Franklin (Over a hundred years ago) describes how there were brethren, even then, poised to bring down what Alexander Campbell had built up and who were "determined to renounce, insidiously repudiate, and covertly sink all we have done and are now doing." (Life Of B. Franklin p.358). The disruptive elements mentioned by Franklin were very successful and today, in the USA, it would be difficult to determine exactly how many different 'brands' of 'Church Of Christ' there are, but they are 'legion'. And so there certainly have been vast changes in that country *since the Pioneers*. In Britain we had only one 'brand' until around 1925 when bro. Crosthwaite and others began to protest against digressive teaching which was making its appearance amongst the churches, and was emanating from Overdale College. Thereafter we had two 'brands' (which included the 'Old Paths' movement, formed to oppose modernism and 'an educated ministry'). Today, I do not know exactly how many 'brands' of 'Church Of Christ' we have, in the U.K., but some brethren seem to think that it might be four or five. It seems on that basis that, fifty years hence, we shall begin to catch up with our American brethren, and will have a great number of varieties. Surely U.K. brethren must be astounded at the changes witnessed in the last fifty years or so? But what of the '*church of the future*' - what will it be like? What will it be like in Britain, when all the 'chickens come home to roost'? If the church is not supposed to change, we have certainly seen some very important changes, in a very short space of time. We are not surprised at constant changes in the denominational bodies but *do we expect them* in the church of our Lord and Saviour?

The Church, like the Bible, is Changeless

Once *N.T. congregations* are established in a locality there should be no *need* for change. Indeed the inspired writers on the N.T. were continually exhorting that the church should *remain* stable and steadfast, and *should resist* all attempts to change it, or divert it from the God-ordained course. Not only should the members remain steadfast *as individuals*, but should remain united *as a Church*. Did not Jesus, Himself, pray that His church might "be one" (as close as He was to the Father, and vice versa) and that there be no divisions among them. Those who respect that prayer will actively promote unity, and will refuse to take any form of action which might set at nought a brother, and cause division with the body of Christ. Even in N.T. times, church members were susceptible to 'personality cults' and would rally round the strong, or popular personality. Today I suppose some preachers still have their 'fan' clubs. Paul condemned any such trend and (1 Cor. 1) asks, "Is Christ divided? was

Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul? The great apostacy, from which Luther managed to extricate himself hundreds of years later, had its beginnings in these very early days of the church. As Paul warned the elders at Ephesus, "after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:29). Christians must "all speak the same thing" and be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement". The Kingdom of God is brought into being by "the incorruptible seed" of the kingdom (the word of God). The word of God cannot be changed and neither can the church. The church is as permanent a fixture, as is the word of God, and one may as well talk of making 'changes' in the one as the other. If the church changes it is certainly not God's doing. God placed the blueprint in our hands, two thousand years ago, and has remained silent, since. Yet, if Jesus were to return to the world today, He would be hard-pressed to find His church. Quite apart from the changes in the American churches, subsequent to the times of Alexander Campbell, we have the experiences of British Churches of Christ to ponder. In his marvellous history of British Churches of Christ "Let Sects And Parties Fall" the author, brother David M. Thompson describes the rise and fall of the churches. The first "Annual Conference" of the churches was held in 1847, chaired by A. Campbell (during his one and only visit to Britain), and at that time there were about 80 congregations. By 1918 there were 208 prospering congregations (16,500 members). Two years later came Overdale College, and four years after that (in 1924) the first Conference of the 'Old Path' churches was held when several congregations broke away from the original (Co-operation) Churches of Christ. However the Co-operation churches continued their gradual slide into denominationalism e.g. by entering the 'Ecumenical Movement'; affiliation to the World Council of Churches, the Free Church Federal Council and the British Council Of Churches. Of the 208 congregations in 1918, there were only 75 left in 1978. By this time many of these congregations were very denominationally minded and, in 1980, became part of the "United Reformed Church" - but some have remained and describe themselves as "The Fellowship of Churches Of Christ". Thus, in the relatively short period of 60 years, (1920 to 1980) we have witnessed the demise of 208 prospering congregations, and the rise of a clergy, adopting the title 'Reverend.' Whether this was due to the College, and 'liberal' teaching in the churches, is academic, but the result is there for all to see, and vindicates the warnings of men like Walter Crosthwaite, Walter Barker, and others, who saw not only the trend, but foresaw the outcome, and formed the 'Old Path' movement. Will we learn anything from history? "Let Sects And Parties Fall" is compelling reading, and I recommend it to all.

Is The 'Restoration' Spirit Dead?

The church is unique. Jesus not only built the church, but He is also the impregnable rock upon which it stands. Jesus loved the church and gave himself for it. The Lord adds to the church, such as are being saved, but there is no allowance for any one who wants to modify the church. There is no substitute for the church and it has no rival institutions. Any 'rival institutions' are man-made and have no sanction from scripture. All plants which the Heavenly Father hath not planted will be rooted up. There is only "One body" just as there is but one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one Father of all. Although God ushered the church into the world almost 2,000 years ago it was designed to be timeless completely efficacious and the answer to mans' every need. It was not something cobbled together by some committee of men, but was shaped and conceived in the very vaults of heaven. Its position of complete pre-eminence may be challenged but will never be shared by any other system. It is completely universal in the sense that it is open equally to men of all nations; to all colours of skin; to men and women of all walks of life and to all degrees

of intellect. Within its bounds all members are completely equal, and unlike communism, no man is 'more equal' than another. Heaven does not conceive of anything better and has no plans for having it replaced. There will always be those, of course, who, having entered the church, find it too small for men of their intellect, or find it lacking in grandeur, and so they leave. Men are at liberty to *leave it* but no-one is authorised to *'improve' it*. In every century; in every country or clime; the church should universally be the same. It should be the same in the Middle Ages as it is now, and the same in Africa as in China. History reveals, however, that like the kings of Israel, the church has had fluctuating fortunes. It seems, that periods of apostasy are brought to a halt by reformations and restorations, only to be followed by apostasy again. The devil has, of course, a vested interest in the matter, and is continually using church members to bring about its downfall. We don't know too much about the Middle Ages, but even in our own little century we have all seen great changes. Most of these changes have splintered the brotherhood, and divided the church, but were originally made with the best of intentions. In the last hundred years, or less, such issues as instrumental music; 'one-man ministry'; colleges; missionary societies; Orphan Homes; 'neither invite nor debar'; individual cups; head covering; unleavened bread; bread breaking are all controversies which have wreaked great havoc upon the Lord's body and look very unlikely ever to be resolved. To the Pioneers the criterion was "is it scriptural". Today the criterion seems to be "does it work", or "will it bring people in". The early pioneers of the Restoration Movement swept everything out the door if it could not be justified by God's word. A few years later men were sneaking these things back in again. It was claimed that *'expediency'* demanded all these things. Instrumental music was required because it was pleasant to listen to and was said to be *a great help* to the worship. *Results* (it was claimed) proved 'one-man ministry' more effective. *Hygiene* was the justification for the introduction of 'individual cups' Orphan Homes, Colleges, Missionary Societies all had 'good reasons' (indeed obvious reasons) why the church should take them all on board. (Similarly, the sects and denominations could all come up with reasons, and expediencies, for what they do, and the changes they make. After all, the denominational clergy are all men highly trained, in Universities and Bible Colleges.)

The Next Fifty Years?

We should be careful about change, for changes not only affect us now but will have an influence on generations still to come. For instance who in the British churches, would have thought in 1920, when Overdale College came into being, that within five years the views of the staff there would give grave cause for concern, and bring about not only division in the church, but the birth of the 'Old Paths' movement. Again, who, in those churches in 1920 would have imagined, in their wildest dreams, that by the 1980's a large segment of the church would renounce the name 'church of Christ' and would become members of "The United Reformed Church". Those who brought about this catastrophe doubtless were very nice men who did all, with the best of motives and intentions. And so, perhaps we should ponder the question; what will our churches, in fifty years, be like? Once we abandon the test, "Is it scriptural" for the more popular one of "Does it work better" or "Will it bring quick results" we shall be courting trouble and will have failed to learn from history. If there's one thing we learn from history, it is that we never learn. Man will never outgrow the church. The next generation will still need the gospel and still need the church. God's word does not change; man's nature does not change; the gospel does not change; types of sin do not change; the church must not change. Those who would lead the quest for 'quick results' should, as should we all, ponder the 'results' already achieved. What have been *the results* of these things mentioned earlier, (like Overdale College, Instrumental music, Missionary Societies, individual containers etc. etc.) introduced

with the very best of intentions. There may be those who think that the church would make more progress if it more resembled the denominations around it. Such should remember that those who have joined 'The United Reformed Church', have proved that there is a much quicker way to disaster - that is, *join* the denominations.

We should change, and try to preach more. We should change, and try to pray more. We should change, and try to give more. We should change, and try to do more. Yes, we should change as *individuals*. But once we have a church in true conformity with the word of God, we should resist all efforts to 'improve' it. Shall we learn from history? What will our churches be like in fifty years?

EDITOR

A CHAT WITH AN OLD-PATHER

Tom Nisbet died, aged 89, on May 11, 1985 at Dunbar, Scotland. He was my brother in the Lord. He was also a very close friend. I loved him dearly. I miss him greatly.

The following interview was conducted in his home at 61 Meetinghouse Drive, Tranent, Scotland, on February 11, 1983. The object for publishing it is simple: to reveal the life and thinking of a man who had lived through an important period in the history of the British churches of Christ.

I pay tribute to Tom. He continuously helped, encouraged and guided me in all my church work. His voice is now silent, but his influence remains strong. I look forward to meeting him again in that "land that is fairer than day".

(Ian S. Davidson).

IAN: Now Tom, let's go right back to the beginning. Where and when were you born?

TOM: I was born on the 25th day of April, 1896, in the little village called Meadowmill, near Tranent, in East Lothian.

IAN: What about your parents?

TOM: Well, my father would only be eighteen when he married and my mother twenty. Father was a coal miner and worked in the pits all his working days.

IAN: What family did they have altogether?

TOM: There were six, three boys and three girls. I was the eldest.

IAN: Would you say that you grew up in a poor family?

TOM: Aye, I would think that my parents were very poor in the early days of their married life.

IAN: Where did you grow up?

TOM: Mostly Tranent; although for a period we were in the Borders. We lived at a place called Acre Knowe just outside Hawick near Stobs station, the place that ultimately became a territorial camp.

IAN: Did you go to school in Tranent?

TOM: I had schooling at a place called Cogsmill, about two or three miles from Acre Knowe. Then I had some of my schooling in Spittal. However, most of my schooling was in Tranent.

IAN: What sort of pupil were you?

TOM: A kind of dilatory one, I would think. Not very bright, no, not very bright.

IAN: What age were you when you left?

TOM: I left school at 14 years of age and went to work with my father down the pit at the coalface - the Fleets pit, outside Tranent.

IAN: How did you like that?

TOM: I liked it because I wanted to be a miner. In fact, all my chums wanted to be miners. The only thing that troubled me at the coalface was that I was bent all the time. I was always glad to get out of what they called the 'roadhead', to get my back straightened up.

IAN: Do you remember what your first wage was?

TOM: Well, I don't know that; but later on I got half-a-crown a day. However, I wasn't long in that job before the headmaster of the school sent for my father and me to come down to see him. I had grave misgivings about this proposed meeting with the headmaster because I felt that he was wanting to take me out of the pit, and I liked the job I was on. On the way down I said to my father: "Now, if it is a clerk's job he is going to give me, I am not taking it." Lo and behold, when we got down, it was a clerk's job and, of course, in those days you daren't say "no" to the headmaster. So I had to go and work in the colliery office.

IAN: You were never back down the pit, were you?

TOM: Never back down the pit. I did clerking work from then on until the day I retired. I was a wages' clerk for quite a number of years, on the pay books, and it was during the 1926 General Strike when I was suspended from the colliery office —, as everybody in Tranent knew, for political reasons. I was unemployed for almost six months.

IAN: Did you get unemployment benefit?

TOM: The Unemployment Benefit I got was 27/6d per week. From that, the first thing to be taken was 12/6d per week for the rent of the house to make sure that we had a roof over our heads. Knowing it was because of political reasons I was suspended at that time, I went in and joined the miners' Strike Committee. I was put in charge of propoganda to go round the coalfields to keep the miners solid with each other in unity. That's what I did during the whole of the strike, until about two weeks before it finished, when I got a job with a building contractor. I was with that building contractor until I retired in 1961.

IAN: Speaking of politics, you had taken an interest in politics prior to that, in your formative years, — I think in the Independent Labour Party. Is that right?

TOM: That's right. It was the Independent Labour Party that I was interested in. I don't know... When we are young we get queer ideas. I thought, having heard about Socialism, and having read about Socialism, and knowing some of the leaders in the area where I lived, that Socialism was the nearest thing to Christianity that I had discovered. Hence, I took an interest in it.

IAN: They taught you to speak in public, didn't they?

TOM: Yes, it was there that I learned to speak in public. Being in the I.L.P., I attended the winter Labour college educational meetings and was taught public speaking, and chairmanship, by Barbara Woodburn, an Edinburgh lady, and wife of, I think, Arthur Woodburn who was at one time the Secretary of State for Scotland. I also studied 'evolution', and the doctrine of Karl Marx. I don't think that did me any harm. I think it was good for me because I then knew these doctrines and could talk about them in later life.

IAN: What do you think of the Labour Party today?

TOM: The Socialism that I learned in my early days is nothing like what the Labour Party teaches and preaches today. Nothing like it.

IAN: How did you come in contact with the Church of Christ?

TOM: Of course, my father being a miner had to be drunk every Saturday night. He always had to have his drink, and as a boy I used to be sent down to the licensed grocer for this bottle of beer for him that he must get when he came home from the pit. Threepence we paid for it, if I remember, and then he had the drink every Saturday night. It was after we flitted to Tranent from Meadowmill, about 1906, that there was a great religious revival going on in Tranent with the Salvation Army, a group called the "Tramp Preachers" and the Church of Christ. My father, curiously enough, got hold of, first of all, the teaching of the "Tramp Preachers". Later, my mother became friendly with bro. Jimmy Hoggan's wife. We happened to be living in a place called Park Road,

opposite each other, and she had told her husband. She said: "Jimmy, try and get in touch with Johnny Nisbet, that's Bessie's man." Well, he got in touch with my father and they used to sit on their hunkers at the end of the miners' row discussing the Bible. I can remember it because I always happened to be with my father when these things were taking place. Jimmy Hoggan made a great impression upon him. Then he started going to their gospel meetings. He gave up all idea of the "Tramp Preachers" by that time and decided to be baptised. So that was my father's conversion, and it was like coming out of hell right into heaven. I often say that people who have never lived in a home where strong drink prevails, they just don't know what it means when a person becomes a Christian, the difference it makes in a house. The change was dramatic and it was good for us.

(To be continued)

GLEANINGS

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

THE NATURE OF FAITH

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen."
Hebrews 11:1

"These words constitute a declaration of the nature of faith. Faith is really the subject of the whole letter; for its purpose unquestionably was to stablish and strengthen the early Hebrew Christians, who felt that they had lost so much as they had turned from the splendid ritual and ceremony of the Hebrew faith to the simpler things that are in Christ Jesus. This letter was written to save them from that form of lack of faith which becomes apostacy. The history of this world's progress is that of the triumph of faith. Faith is a paradox, something contrary to reason, and yet true. In my boyhood I have loved horses. I still love them. The law of the road is a paradox, and I was taught in rhyme:

"The law of the road is a paradox quite,
And that you may tell by my song,
If you go to the left, you are sure to go right;
And if you go right, you go wrong!"

That is a perfect paradox; apparently wrong, contrary to reason, and yet true. So faith is always a paradox. Faith sings in prison, and not when it gets out of prison. Oh, it may sing when it gets out, but it antedates its escape by singing in prison, as witness Paul and Silas. Faith fights in chains. Paul said, "Remember my bonds." Faith works and accomplishes things without any of the tools upon which men seem so largely to depend."

Campbell Morgan

GOOD ADVICE

"Abraham Lincoln was once asked the secret of his extraordinary power of putting things, and he answered: "I remember, when a child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way that I could not understand. I don't think I ever got angry at anything else in my life. But that always disturbed my temper, and has ever since. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbours talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down, and trying to make out what was the meaning of their, to me, dark sayings. So it became a passion with me to put all I have to say into language that cannot be misunderstood."

B.T.I.

LOVE

"He Who is love sets most store by love. Love that delights in Him; love that communes with Him; love that is ever seeking to bring Him its best and richest; love that finds its heaven in His pleasure, its hell in His grief, its all in His service; love that blesses Him with rendering joy for His great love; that rests triumphantly in His presence, and wanders restlessly if He be gone — this is to Him earth's richest gift."

Mark Guy Pearse

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

"Obedience is the key to success in the Christian life; disobedience to disaster. Obedience recognizes the wisdom and love of God, and acknowledges that His will and ways are always best. Obedience pre-supposes the knowledge of the will of God, and this comes, not through any neat little formula learned at a seminar, but through much prayer and searching of the Word of God. This demands time — more time than some of us are willing to expend on it".

H. G. Mackay

THEN SHALL THE RIGHTEOUSNESS SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN Matt. 13:43

" "You don't get much sunshine in here, do you?" commented a lady as she entered an elevator at the back of a department store. "Only what you folks bring in, ma'am," answered the operator; "some people carry enough sunshine with them to light others up a bit". I thought, "How few carry enough extra sunshine with them to brighten someone else's life!" May the Lord help us to be "sunshine saints" until that day when the righteous shine forth in undimmed splendor."

C.G.

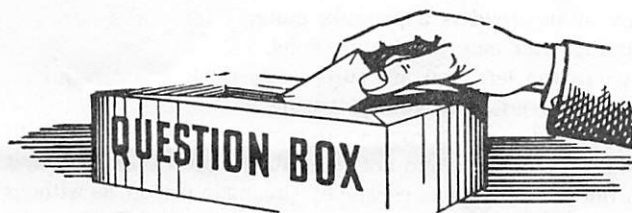
WE QUOTE — HORATIUS BONAR

"Oh, love of God, how strong and true, Eternal, and yet ever new; Uncomprehended and unbought, Beyond all knowledge and all thought.

Oh, heavenly love, how precious still, In days of weariness and ill,

In nights of pain and helplessness, To hear, to comfort, and to bless!"

SELECTED BY LEONARD MORGAN



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"We read in Heb. 1:1-2. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son". Could you please explain what is meant by the phrase 'in divers manners'?"

Reading from the New International Version the phrase 'in divers manners' is rendered 'in various ways', and this, I think, gives a clearer meaning. Relative to the complete statement from Heb. 1., there are one or two facts inherent in that statement which we must accept.

In the first place, if God used prophets as the medium for His revelation, then what emanated from the lips of the prophets must have been designated as *prophecy*; that is a truism that hardly needs stating. Secondly, if God spoke *through* the prophets, then the prophecies must inevitably have been what God wanted said, therefore, the prophet through whom God spoke could not err even though he, the

prophet, may not have realised the import of that which he prophesied (See 2 Peter 1:20-21. Also 1 Peter 1:10-12). Thirdly, if the above is true, then many of the prophecies relating to God's dealings with His people must have been fulfilled, and the remainder must have culminated with the advent of the Messiah. He, the Christ of God, would then continue the revelation of God to the world. This, in brief detail, seems to be what the Writer of the Hebrew letter is saying to us.

There are those who argue that prophecies may only be interpreted in *one* way. The argument goes something like this; if any prophecy is said to be literal, then *all* prophecies must be literally interpreted. If any prophecy is said to be figurative, then *all* must be figuratively interpreted. But in his book 'Prophecy and Premillennialism', J.D. Bales says, "Is this not an arbitrary and unfair approach which will cut one off from the truth, not only in the Bible, but in every other book?" Indeed, we can understand that this statement must be true, but in addition to this the Writer of the Hebrew letter says quite categorically that God spoke through the prophets '*in various ways*', so to all intents and purposes the matter should be settled; there are more ways than one. We now need to enquire as to what those ways are.

Before we do this, it is as well to note that the phrase 'last days' does not refer to the end of time but to the Christian or Gospel dispensation which, of course, is still with us. God no longer speaks to *us* through the prophets, but by His Son.

Literal Predictions

I think it is helpful to say what we mean by 'literal'; the Oxford Dictionary says, 'taking words in their usual or primary sense without mysticism, allegory, or metaphor': thus, literal Israel means the nation of Israel, as literal Jerusalem means the city of that name. What we can say, then, is that literal predictions ought to be interpreted as descriptions of coming events.

Take, for instance, the words of Deuteronomy chapter 28. It is quite evident that in the opening verses of that chapter God is indicating to His chosen people the blessings which would accrue to them if they obeyed Him. Conversely, in verse 15 we read, "However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you"; there then follows a catalogue of the curses. These curses indicate *literal* catastrophes and should be interpreted literally.

Similarly, we read in Isaiah chapter 13 a prophecy against Babylon which should be interpreted literally. In verse 17 we read, "See, I will stir up against them the Medes, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold". Isaiah then goes on, "Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonian pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah" (v19).

These, and others, are literal predictions as to what should happen, and did happen, to these two great nations. It is the duty of the interpreter and expositor to decide when a literal interpretation should be given.

Figurative Language

It is also true that some prophecies use figurative or symbolic language. Take for instance, the heart. When the Word says that someone's heart was 'hardened' it does not mean that the heart of a person literally takes on the quality of a stone; naturally and normally the heart is always the fleshy organ it was and is. Hardness of the heart is a *figurative* expression. How could we literally interpret the words of Joel, "rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God" (Joel 2:13).

Furthermore, how would we deal with 'self-sacrifice' if we were to give 'sacrifice' its literal meaning as applied to the Levitical priesthood? We are aware, as regards this, that we are speaking metaphorically of the body of a believer, presented to God as a living sacrifice. (See Rom. 12:1). We understand that when we speak of the death,

burial, and resurrection of the believer, we are using figurative language which means being dead to sin, immersed in water, and rising to walk in the new life.

Isaiah chapter 40 is a good example of prophecy in figurative or symbolic language. (vv 3-5). It must be quite obvious to the discerning reader that John the Baptist did not go about making motorways and highways in the desert; no, he was preparing mens' hearts and minds for the coming of Jesus. We could go on citing such examples, but suffice it to say that prophecy was given using figurative or symbolic language as well as literal.

Type and Antitype

This is another of the 'various ways' in which the prophets revealed God's will. 'Type' in the Bible prefigures an event or person of a much later time which is referred to as the 'antitype'. In the O.T. the type is referred to as the 'shadow' of the reality which is to come. In col. 2:16-17, we read, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ". (N.I.V.). Concerning the work of Christ we read, 'For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered into heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence" (Heb. 9:24. N.I.V.).

Perhaps the most crucial of these examples is that of King David being the O.T. type and the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the N.T. antitype. It is crucial because it illustrates the principle underlying the interpretation of the literal and non-literal. The prophecy of Ezekiel (37:24-27; and 34:24-26) is taken by some to mean that literal Israel will occupy again as a united nation the literal Promised Land, and that literal King David will again sit on a literal throne on earth presiding over the nation. This is standard pre-millennial teaching. However, if we examine carefully what Peter said on the Day of Pentecost a different picture emerges (See Acts 2:25-36). If we paraphrase what Peter said it goes something like this.

Let me talk to you about the patriarch David. He died, was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day; David did not ascend to heaven. But David was a prophet and he said 'Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see corruption'. He spoke prophetically about the resurrection of Christ; God has raised Him up and we are all witnesses of that *fact*. David did not ascend into heaven but he said, 'The Lord (God) said to my Lord (Christ) sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'. Now I want all you Israelites to know that God has made the Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ. King David once reigned, he died, he was buried, and he is in his tomb to this day. Jesus was crucified, buried, and resurrected; He now sits on the throne in Heaven from whence He reigns over His Kingdom, the church. David was the type; Jesus was the antitype.

Conclusion

Yes, God did speak many times and in various ways through the prophets. Sometimes He spoke literally; at other times figuratively; and yet again by type and antitype. It devolves on each one of us not to make just a cursory examination of God's Word, but to look at it in such detail that we shall be able to differentiate between the 'various ways' in which God reveals His Will?.

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

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO ELDERS

A congregation which has good, qualified elders is a richly blessed congregation. With this blessing, however, go responsibilities which the congregation sustains towards its elders. What are those responsibilities?

1. Financial assistance. If elders are devoting full time to the work of overseeing, they should be financially supported by the congregation. The scriptures say concerning elders:

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward". (1 Tim. 5:18).

These expressions are used in the scriptures to teach one's right to receive support.

2. Respect and appreciation. *"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thess. 5:12, 13).*

A sincere expression of appreciation from some member of the congregation can wonderfully lift elders' spirits as they grope with the problems and responsibilities associated with their work.

3. Co-operation of the congregation in any scriptural programme of work.

Christians are "to be ready to every good work" (Titus 3:1). Elders, therefore, in planning a reasonable work, should never be forced to hesitate for fear that the members might not respond. Good elders will arrange for Bible classes, missions, training programmes, evangelistic efforts support of faithful preachers, necessary discipline, and relief of needy saints, etc., and the members should join wholeheartedly in the work, assuring the elders of their co-operation.

4. Defense in the face of unjust criticism. Elders who do their work well are in position to make enemies. Some people cannot accept rebuke, and when they are rebuked, they respond with bitterness toward those who rebuke them. Elders, having the responsibility of rebuking sinners, are therefore vulnerable to false accusations from those who, upset over an elders's rebuke seek revenge. Timothy was instructed by Paul,

"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." (1 Tim. 5:19)

5. Prayers in their behalf. *"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." (Acts 14:23).*

The responsibilities of elders are great. They certainly need and deserve the prayers of the church.

While elders have a right to expect the above things from the congregation, they do not have the right to expect the congregation to uphold them in their sins. Concerning elders Paul wrote,

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." (1 Tim. 5:20).

Nor do elders have the right to expect the congregation to follow them into error. Paul warned the Ephesian elders,

"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:30).

Elders are not infallible, They, too, can sin and fall into error, and the congregation must be prepared to recognise sin and error when they appear, that they might not be influenced by their wayward elders.

When a congregation knows its responsibilities toward its elders, and seeks to fulfill them, elders can do their work "with joy, and not with grief" (Heb. 13:17). Good sound elders — co-operating members — a strong church!

BILL HALL

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY 1986

2—Micah 6	Gal. 5:7-26
9—Hosea 8	Gal. 6
16—Psalm 45	Hebrews 1:2-4
23—Psalm 8	Hebrews 2:5-18

FLESH AND SPIRIT

The word *flesh* is used in various ways in the N.T. Scriptures. Here it refers to "corrupt human nature, the dominate element in unregenerate man", as W. E. Vine put it.

In this passage, Paul contrasts "the works of the flesh" (5:19) with "the fruit of the Spirit" (5:22). An analysis of each word could prove profitable.

"Adultery" - *moichos* - denotes unlawful sexual intercourse with the spouse of another.

"Fornication" - *porneia* - illicit sexual intercourse.

"Uncleanness" - *akatharsia* - moral impurity.

"Lasciviousness" - *aselgeia* - excess, absence or restraint, indecency, wantonness. The idea is that of a man who is so far gone in desire that he has ceased to care what people say or think.

"Idolatry" - *eidololatreia* - the worship of false gods. An idol is anything that gets between you and God.

"Witchcraft" - *pharmakeia* - the use of drugs. Drug-taking is no new thing.

"Hatred" - *echthra* - enmity. *Echthros* is the normal Greek word for an enemy. This characteristic is the precise opposite of the Christian virtue of love for the brethren and for all men.

"Variance" - *eris* - strife, quarrelling, rivalry, contention, wrangling.

"Emulations" - *zelos* - jealousy or envy. This is the wrong desire to have what someone else has.

"Wrath" - *thumos* - hot anger, passion. It speaks of uncontrolled temper.

"Strife" - *eritheia* - self-seeking. The word describes the man who wants office, not from any motives of service, but for what he can get out of it.

"Seditions" - *dichostasia* - dissensions, divisions. The word literally means "a standing apart", that is, a state in which all community, all fellowship, and all togetherness are gone.

"Heresies" - *hairesis* - party spirit, party intrigues, factions, party quarrels. Some people are only interested in making pieces of the Church, not peace in the Church.

"Envyings" - *phthonos* - feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others. It is the quality of the embittered mind.

"Murders" - *phonos* - signifies the destruction of human life.

"Drunkenness" - *methe* - intoxication. We should note that the word "toxic" relates to poison.

"Revellings" - *komos* - unrestrained revelry, enjoyment that has degenerated into licence.

Now consider the complete contrast to all these.

"Love" - *agape* - the greatest of all, for God is love (1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 John 4:8). William Barclay put it this way: "Love means unconquerable benevolence. It means that no matter what a man may do to us by way of insult or injury or humiliation we will never seek anything else but his highest good."

"Joy" - *chara* - a joy whose foundation is God. The book of the New Testament is a book of joy. Even at the time of

Jesus's birth, the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds: "Fear not: for joy, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10).

"Peace" - *eirene* - "the peace which passes all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). This is a positive word. It is much more than the absence of trouble. Peace is everything which makes for a man's highest good. The Hebrew word is *shalom*.

"Longsuffering" - *makrothumia* - a word that derives from two Greek words *makros*, long and *thumos*, temper. It describes someone who is long-tempered as opposed to someone who is short-tempered. Chrysostom said that "it is the grace of the man who could revenge himself and does not, the man who is slow to wrath". The word is commonly used of God's attitude towards men.

"Gentleness" - *chrestotes* - goodness which is kind. Indeed, the word is also translated "kindness" in the Authorised Version. R.C. Trench says that "it is a beautiful word for the expression of a beautiful grace".

"Goodness" - *agathosune* - the generous goodness. This is the widest word for goodness. It speaks of the generosity which springs from the heart that is kind.

"Faith" - *pistis* - the characteristic of the man who is reliable. It was commonly used in secular Greek for "trustworthiness". It describes the man in whom there is the unswerving and inflexible fidelity of Jesus Christ.

"Meekness" - *prautes* - strength under control. The word describes the man who gives to God perfect trust, perfect obedience, and perfect submission. Meekness does not mean weakness. An interesting statement I once read in association with this Greek word is: "always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time".

"Temperance" - *egkrateia* - self-control, self-mastery. One writer has described it as "the victory over desire". It is the spirit which has mastered its desires and its love of pleasure.

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

WRITER - unknown. Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Aquila and Priscilla are just some of the names commentators have suggested. Origen once said: "Who wrote the letter to the Hebrews only God knows for certain". Alexander Campbell was more definite when he wrote: "Although not having directly the authority of Paul's name, it proves itself to be his work".

TO WHOM WRITTEN? - Jewish Christians. It was penned to those who were thoroughly familiar with the law given to Israel and with the history of those who lived under the law. These Hebrews might well have been Palestinians and residents of Jerusalem. Certainly, those addressed accepted the Lordship of Jesus.

DATE - uncertain, but probably some years prior to A.D. 70, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and her temple.

WHY WRITTEN? "These converts were in constant danger of relapsing into Judaism, or at least of attaching too much importance to ceremonial observances. The chief doctrinal purpose of the writer was to show the transcendent glory of the Christian dispensation, as compared with that of the Old Testament" - Frank Charles Thompson.

KEY WORD - "better", which occurs thirteen times in the letter. As each chapter unfolds, we have revealed that Jesus is better than angels; the message of Christ is better than that conveyed by angels under the first covenant; Christ is better than Moses; Christians have a better rest than that provided by Joshua in Canaan; Christ has a better priesthood than that under the law; Christians have better promises than those given to Israel; Christ is better than Aaron; Christians have a better covenant; they have a better sacrifice; a better hope; a better system of faith; a better kingdom; and a better altar.

THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS

The Jews had a great reverence for the prophets and a great pre-occupation with angels. The Hebrew writer reveals Jesus's superiority over them. It is demonstrated in seven declarations as to His power.

- 1) The Son has been appointed heir of all things.
- 2) The Son is the one by whom the worlds were made.
- 3) The Son is the brightness of God's glory.
- 4) The Son was the express image of God.
- 5) The Son upholds all things by the word of His power.
- 6) The Son purged our sins by Himself.
- 7) The Son sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

MAN

Recently, I was an invited speaker to a "Scottish Evening". I took the opportunity to inform the large gathering that I was a creationist, not an evolutionist. I accept the Biblical account that "God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). Man indeed was invested with glory and honour not accorded to any other creature. The Hebrew writer quotes Psalm 8 to emphasize the fact.

But sin marred the beauty and symmetry of man's character. As G.K. Chesterton once said: "Whatever else man is, he is not what he was meant to be". Thanks be to Jesus, who came to put us right by His own righteousness!

THE PRIESTHOOD

The book of Hebrews is really a treatise on the priesthood. The Israelites under the Old Covenant constituted a kingdom with priests. Spiritual Israel under the New Covenant constitute a kingdom of priests. Peter wrote: "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

The Jewish system had its high priest; the christian system has its high priest - Jesus. "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (2:17).

It was the high priest alone who was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the people. This took place once per year upon the tenth day of the seventh month (Yom Kippur). "But, Christ came as high priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is not of His creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood he entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption..." (Hebrews 9:11-12).

Remember, Jesus was a high priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:17).

IAN S. DAVIDSON, Motherwell

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kentish Town 114th anniversary of Hope Chapel - built and occupied with hope, continued in hope and hoping and continuing in hope of increase. We were joined by friends from Brighton, Bristol, Reading, Tunbridge Wells and Wembley, making 50 in happy fellowship, some old and new friends united in a desire to give thanks for the past and to gain encouragement for the future. A brief view of origin and beginnings and review of present work and worship was followed by addresses afternoon and evening by Bro. Geoffrey Daniell on 'communications', and a glance at William Tyndale appealing to the prison governor for comfort and help for work in translation, compared so fitly with Paul's appeal to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:13). Two heroic servants of Jesus with the same triumphant sequel - sad though we may think it.

Brother Leonard Daniell chaired the afternoon meeting and brother Qualls the evening, referring to the distribution of

invitations to correspondence courses. Brother Leonard Daniell served us in morning exhortation and gospel proclamation on the Lord's Day with special reference to the wonder of God's consideration for man, the crown of His creating works and the wonder of His redeeming love in Jesus.

Refreshments were provided and social intercourse enjoyed with loving remembrances and mutual encouragement.

R.B.Scott

Woodhall visits Likasi, Zaire: Evangelists of the Church of Christ from KIPUSHI, LIKASI, KOLWEZI and DILOLO areas of ZAIRE'S SHABA Province gathered for a preachers' meeting at the mud church building of the Church of Christ in Lakasi. There were about twenty five evangelists and church leaders present - some of whom had travelled from as far away as the Angolan border. The key speaker at the preachers meeting was Chester Woodhall on such subjects as "Who are we? Why are we on the earth? What is our destiny?" "Salvation" and "The Bible our only Guide". A Zambian-Zairean dispute did close the frontier for a while but Chester got through for the meeting. He stayed in a mud hut at Lakasi, bathed in water from the stream and ate local delicacies such as boiled goat. In the areas where these evangelists preach there are thirty six congregations whom they serve and one thousand eight hundred and thirty two christians. No English was used - only French and Swahili. Literature in French and Swahili was requested.

Angela Woodhall

Meeting Changes, Church of Christ, Stretford: The gospel meeting is now being held in the Manchester Y.M.C.A. Study, (please use the Mount Street Entrance) at 6.30 p.m. each Lord's Day. The Breaking of the Bread is still at 60 Kenwood Road, Stretford at 12.45 p.m.

A.Ashurst. Sec.

Slamannan District: On Saturday, 7th December, the Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting was held in the Meeting-house of the Tranent church. The Meeting was

chaired by John Kneller, and the subject was "Does God hear the unsaved or Christians only". The speakers were Bro. John McLuckie, from Tranent, and J.R. Gardiner from Haddington. Bro. McLuckie dealt very comprehensively with the subject; defining the terms and showing that God 'hears' everything but does not hear it always with 'approval'. Bro. Gardiner considered the question basically unanswerable and really none of our business. (see John 21:22 "What is that to thee"). During the hour's discussion a great many interesting points were raised. Cornelius and Paul (when Saul) were considered by a few as 'special cases'. Also if God hears not the prayers of the 'unsaved' will he hear their praise - then why hand them a hymn book? A happy time of fellowship were enjoyed and thanks is due to the sisters for the lovely tea. The next meeting, God willing, will be in March at Haddington, when the question will be "What is the basis for us rejecting "Open Communion". Speakers Leslie Purcell, and Hugh Davidson: Chairman Ian Davidson, all from Motherwell.

H. Davidson

Mayfield, Easthouses: The church at Easthouses is delighted to welcome brother Michael and sister Margaret Ball, back into fellowship. May they grow in grace, as we help one another to become more like unto Jesus our Lord.

M. Finlay

OBITUARY

Kirkcaldy, Fife: On 4th November, sister Rena Seath was taken to be with her Lord, in her 70th year. Although she suffered a long, uncomfortable illness, we are thankful that she was in no pain. Rena faithfully served her Lord for over 50 years, mainly as a worker behind the scenes, but valuable to the progress of the church. We will miss her but we look forward to our reunion with her and all who have gone before. Please pray for her family, in Christ, and out of Christ.

Robt. Hughes. Sec.

OBITUARY

Mayfield, Easthouses: We are deeply shocked by the sudden death of our sister Betty Kerr. She was a very faithful attender at all our services. On the Wednesday evening she felt too unwell to attend our evening Bible Study, and by the early hours of Thursday morning she had passed from this scene of time and had gone to be with her Lord. Our sympathy goes out to her husband, brother George, and his family at this time of bereavement.

M. Finlay. Sec.

Kirkcaldy, Fife: Lynn Best has attended the meetings here over a period of several months, and, after personal Bible Studies desired to obey her Lord. She was immersed on 13th November, 1985, for the remission of sins. May God bless her as she begins her walk in Jesus and may her influence extend to her family that they, too, may desire to seek Jesus.

Robt. Hughes. Sec.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Newtown, Wigan: The Secretary is now:-
ANDREW MARSDEN,
 120 Hodges Street,
 WIGAN, WN6 7JE
 Tel No. 0942 - 493316
 M. Mannion

NEW ADDRESS

Brother R. B. Scott's new address is:-
 5B Bickerton Road,
 Archway,
 LONDON N19 5JU
 Tel. No. 01 281 1458

THANKS

Sister Margaret Clifford, of Wallacestone, wishes to express her grateful thanks to all the visits, cards and floral gifts which have helped her through her present illness. They are all deeply appreciated and she solicits your continued prayers.

(Sent in, on behalf of sister Margaret, by Jimmy Grant.)

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JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
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EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian,
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