

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL.54 No.3

MARCH 1986

## BALAM'S "DOCTRINE"

Last Sunday morning the O.T. reading (as per Bro. R.B. Scott's excellent Scripture Reading Cards) was Micah Chap. 6. This Chapter records God's 'controversy' with His people Israel, in which God asks the Jews to speak up, and to give expression to all their complaints against Him - to 'testify against Him' if they can. God reminds them of how He liberated them from their bondage in Egypt and nurtured them into the greatest of nations. During this 'argument', God also reminds them (v.5) of what "Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him (from Shittim to Gilgal) that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord". This was, of course, a reference to the fact that whereas Balak had employed Balaam to curse Israel God had disallowed it and made him bless Israel. Each time Balaam opened his mouth to curse Israel, he pronounced a blessing upon them. I don't know how many readers, last Sunday, took the trouble to research this interesting incident, and remind themselves of the circumstances, but for those who did not have the time to hunt up the facts and extract the lesson, I offer, herewith, my humble attempt at it.

The complete account is to be found in the book of Numbers, Chaps. 22-24, and well worth another read. The whole event, and sequel (chap. 25) is so capable of furnishing a valuable lesson, that reminders of the matter are recorded in Deut. (23:5); Joshua (13:22); Judges (11:25); Neh. (13:2) and, as above, Micah (6). It is also thought worthy of mention in the N.T. (in 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11; and in Rev. 2:14). John, alone, (in Rev. 2:14) refers to the '*doctrine of Balaam*' and gives us the clue to the great distaste the Holy Spirit has for Balaam and the reason for the reminders of the danger of his doctrine. Yet on the surface, as we read the narrative, in Numbers, we could be excused for failing to detect this doctrine.

### King Balak Hires Balaam

It seems that when the vast multitudes of the Israelites were brought out from slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea, having no country of their own, they had been wandering through the wilderness of Sinai and had lately come north. They had reached the land of Edom and now lingered just east of the Dead Sea, in the country of Moab. They had wreaked great havock in Edom, on the Amorites, and the sight of their frightening numbers filled Balak, king of Moab, with great terror and alarm. He agreed with his allies, the Midianites, that it would be impossible to overcome such armies with force of arms, and the only other possibility of getting rid of them would be to bring the wrath of the gods upon them. Accordingly he had sent for Balaam, a highly regarded professional "soothsayer". Not too much is known by us, about Balaam except that he was the son of Beor, and came from a town called Pethor, on

the banks of the Euphrates, in Mesopotamia (a long distance from Moab). We might be wondering why God should even be likely to listen to such a one as Balaam, but it seems that God was prepared to use Balaam for the outworking of His own purposes. At that time, it should be remembered, that God not unusually revealed His will in visions and dreams, and Balaam's birth and residence in Mesopotamia where the remains of the Patriarchal Age still lingered, account for his knowledge (and his apparent familiarity) with the true God.

On Balaam's arrival, Balak explained the problem and his hope that, with suitable monetary rewards, Balaam would curse the Israelites and get rid of them. Balaam, not averse to rewards, explained that he would like to help but would have to abide by God's instructions. On the first consultation, God forbade Balaam to go and accordingly Balaam excused himself to Balak. (no sign, so far of any doctrine from Balaam). Balak however was a great believer in ignoring initial failure, and so sent better princes (and more of them) with the promise of better rewards to Balaam. Balaam's studied reply was that Balaam could not go, even if he was offered Balak's fine palace and contents, but that he would consult God again. Balaam's integrity seems a little shaky now, perhaps, and this *second enquiry* seems to suggest that the first one was not quite to his liking. (When men clearly understand God's will but want to understand it 'some other way', that seems a bad sign). On the second consultation, however, Balaam gets the reply he is hoping for and is told that when, and if, Balak's servants come for him he can go with them. In his unseemly haste Balaam, it appears, could not wait for Balak's servants, but rises early in the morning, saddles his ass and departs. This angered God and so God sent an angel to bar his progress. The ass saw the angel, with drawn sword, and sensibly went out of its way to avoid confrontation. Balaam, unaware of the angel, flogged the ass. This occurred three times, on the final of which, the ass having no room for manoeuvre, could only flop to the ground and take another beating. The ass, in a man's voice, pleaded with Balaam and protested at the beatings. It seems that before Balaam had time to appreciate the novelty of an ass speaking to him, the angel presents himself and assures Balaam that if the ass had not taken evasive action on those three occasions he (the angel) would have slain Balaam with his sword, but would have saved the ass. Thus as Peter says, (2 Peter 2:15) "Balaam was rebuked for his iniquity, the dumb ass speaking with a man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet". (There still seems no sign of *Balaam's doctrine*).

In due course, after joining Balak, Balaam ascends the 'high' places of Baal, sacrificing rams and bullocks on seven altars, but each time he stood up to curse Israel he ended up praising and blessing them. To Balak's obvious chagrine and anger, Balaam could but protest "Must I not take heed and speak only that which the Lord hath put in my mouth". Balak was nothing if not persistent however, and took Balaam up into other 'high' places, with other sacrifices and other altars, but the result was always the same. After three serious attempts we read that they gave up (24:25) "And Balaam rose up, and returned to his place; and Balak also went his way." (This is not quite the last of the narrative, however, for we read (Josh. 13:22) that the Israelites later slew Balaam.) In all this there seems nothing that one could possibly describe as *doctrine* from Balaam, and indeed, apart from his indecent haste to acquire gain, it seems that he kept fairly correctly within the general brief given by God's angel.

#### What Balaam Taught Balak.

What then was the reason for the warnings and remembrances of this incident made, later, in the O. and N.T. and which drew such comments from Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, Micah, Peter, Jude and John? When I said, a few moments ago that Balak and Balaam gave up and went home I was not quite accurate, for it seems that although they went home they did not give up. I believe we can derive the answer from the Chapter immediately following Balaam's departure (i.e. Chap. 25). We are

informed there that Israel lingered for some time in Moab and became quite friendly with the Moabites. The Moabites offered their daughters to the Israelite men, and invited the Israelites to 'join them' in their worship of idols, and their heathenish rites. Israel responded "And Israel began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab... and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel". This was the new stratagem, recommended by Balaam to Balak and it certainly was 'paying off'. They had succeeded in getting Israel and God estranged. God sent a deadly plague through Israel and 24,000 died rapidly. Indeed God would have vented great destruction upon Israel had it not been for the timely action of Phinehas. Before the very eyes of Moses, and all the congregation of Israel (many weeping tears of repentance) an Israelite (a high ranking prince of the Simeonites) appeared with a Midianitish woman, (Cozbi by name and high ranking also) and entered a tent. Phinehas followed and smote both of them with his javelin. This action seemed to epitomize the general feeling of repugnance and repentance now growing amongst the Israelites and God withheld further punitive measures, but decreed that the Israelites should now vex the Midianites and smite them "For they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor and Cozbi". Thus Balak had almost accomplished the ruin of the Israelites not by open warfare, but by luring them into idolatry and moral corruption. The Midianites had *vexed* Israel *with their wives* and had *beguiled them* with evil craftiness. This, then, was *the doctrine of Balaam*. It was a doctrine of spiritual (and physical) seduction. Balaam, it seems, *proposed the scheme* and Balak implemented it. John (in Rev. 2:14) confirms this when he charged that *some members of the church at Pergamos held the doctrine of Balaam* (and this Balaam "*taught Balak to cast a stumblingstone before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication*".) Anyone, prepared to cast a stumblingblock in the path of the church and lead it away from the doctrine of Christ, would indeed be a modern Balaam. Thus we have it on good authority that before Balaam and Balak parted company the former advised the latter to befriend the Israelites and lead them astray.

### Beware The Doctrine Of Balaam

Is Balaam's doctrine around, today? Surely it is. The apostle Peter warned that there will be in the church 'spots' and 'Blemishes' who "have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. But was rebuked for his iniquity, the dumb ass speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet." Jude also warned the carnally minded, "Woe unto them, for they have gone the way of Cain and ran greedily after the error of Balaam, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah." Incidentally, Korah's fate is also described in Numbers (Chap. 15). It is also interesting to note that subsequent to the Balaam incident, as the Israelites vexed and plundered the Moabites (and Midianites) Moses expressed great anger at the Officers of Israel for capturing and *preserving alive*, amongst the spoil, large numbers of Midianite women and said, "Behold, these caused the Children of Israel, *through the counsel of Balaam*, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord". And so Moses knew, even then, that events had not been accidental but had been *contrived by Balaam*, (helped considerably by willing Israelites) and that craft had been more successful than force. Obviously this doctrine, or policy, has been used many times and will, doubtless, be used again. Nations use it, as do individuals. If an enemy is too big for force then craft must be resorted to. Every boy, of small stature, in the school playground, knows the problem and has to use much tact, and many sweets, to cope with the class bully. The resolute defenders of Troy were invincible until they allowed the intriguing horse to be dragged into their midst. The clan MacDonald of Glencoe were not in any real danger until they

welcomed Campbell of Glenlyon into their camp and were murdered in their beds. Readers will doubtless be able to think of many other examples: of nursing a serpent in the bosom. Political regimes know the principle and employ it all the time. Communism is spreading throughout the world, not always by force as in Afghanistan, but by stealth and craft. The Russians, at the same time believe that the C.I.A. would like to infiltrate their country with western decadence, and polute their youth with degeneracy and drugs. That is why Russia allows only the 'milder' type of 'pop-star', like Cliff Richard, into their country and why nothing indecent is allowed on their T.V.. Yes, Balaam's doctrine is around us today - all around us. The world is always hoping to bring the church down to the world's level and offers all kinds of inducement. British television bombards our youth (from cradle upwards) with the merits of 'manly' activities of drink, drugs, sex and violence. The denominational bodies would like the church to forsake its 'narrow' view of things and enter into 'Christian Unity' with them (and end up as just another denomination). Persecution has always strengthened and fostered the church, but friendship with the world will bring about its downfall. "Friendship with the world is enmity with God" and this is the reason. The Roman Empire was never conquered on the battlefield but its destruction came from within itself - it rotted at the core (from moral corruption). As with nations so also with individuals. The exemplary young man, with the high ideals, can, with the wrong companions, be soon reduced to a drunken wastrel. Thus the church can not be conquered by the frowns of the world but might well be destroyed by its encouraging smiles. We should be warned and aware of the danger. Israel of old were mighty men of valour, but were so easily brought down with flattery, smiles, gifts and guile. The church is always equally vulnerable. As I said in an earlier article, the doctrine of Balaam, will usually come from extremely nice men, 'in the interests of the church' and with the very best of intentions. The Holy Spirit considered the matter a serious one: so serious, in fact, that the doctrine of Balaam having been described early in the O.T., is mentioned again in the very last book of the N.T., and many times in between. The 'doctrine of Balaam' is to cast, wittingly or otherwise, a stumblingblock in the path of a brother, or the church. May we recognise it when we see it, and may we be able to strangle it at birth.

EDITOR

## A CHAT WITH AN 'OLD-PATHER'

(A chat between I. Davidson and the late Tom Nisbet)

IAN: Let's talk about the First World War. Were you a non-combatant in that war?

TOM: Yes.

IAN: Why did you take that position?

TOM: Because I thought it was wrong to kill anybody. I thought a Christian couldn't go and take the life of another person, no matter who they were, whether they were your enemy or not. I believed that sincerely, that we could not take the life of a person.

IAN: Of course, you stand with the majority on that like David King, Alexander Campbell, Walter Crosthwaite.

TOM: I would not say that, Ian. No, there were an awful lot of our brethren in this country opposed to the non-combatants, to the conscientious objectors. In fact, I think it was Walter Crosthwaite I heard say that the magistrate in a court was a member of the Church and consigned his brother to prison. I am only speaking from memory now. I know even in Tranent some would turn their back on the non-combatant.

IAN: Did you need to appear before a court?

TOM: No, there was no conscription then. I joined up voluntarily. There was no conscription until about 1917. I joined up in 1915.

IAN: Miners were not conscripted?

TOM: No, they would not take miners if they could get them to stay at home then. When conscription came in, if you were in the pits, you would not be taken either . . . I had a notion to become a sick-berth attendant in the Royal Navy. That was my first inclination. I thought I would like that, but then I turned to the R.A.M.C. My father went into Edinburgh that day to the recruiting office in Cockburn Street and I joined up that day. I can aye remember it. I refused to take the oath, you see, and I just affirmed for that as well. Mind you, I was only barely nineteen and I knew that much, that I didn't take an oath even to officers in the army. They asked me why I would not take the oath. I told them I was a Christian and quoted the bit out of the Bible. So I joined up. The place I was sent to was Sheffield. I could not be farther away from home - Hillsborough Barracks in Sheffield. I will never forget it. I arrived there at four o'clock in the morning. I did not know a single soul, or where to go, or where the Hillsborough Barracks were. Then I saw a man sweeping the street and he told me where it was. Well, it was rather early in the morning and the troops were not awake. I was put into the guardroom onto a bed to lie there until the reveille. Well, you know, Ian, when I got into that guardroom and I lay on that bed and looked at the window and saw that there were iron bars on it. I said to myself: "I'm in prison", and the thought came to me that I had done the wrong thing. I had three and a half years to live with the thought that I had done the wrong thing.

IAN: How soon after that did you get sent to the battle front?

TOM: We were sent to the battle front in December of that year. We had only two and a half months training.

IAN: I have just started to read John Buchan's personal account of the First World War which runs into twenty-four volumes. The horrors of war are quite incredible. Were you at the great battle fronts like the Somme?

TOM: I was in the Somme. I went out with the 112th Field Ambulance and the 16th Irish Division. We were in the first gas attack. I saw the horrors of that gas attack, the horrors of men gassed, and just felt it was terrible. I was invalided out and sent down the line to Boulogne, to a hospital. I was drafted from there back to the 51st Highland Division and the Highland Field Ambulance. I was sent back there as a stretcher-bearer and right into the Somme.

IAN: Overall, how did it affect you?

TOM: Well, when you were in it you just didn't think about it at all. The only thing it gave you was horror because you saw men in some terrible emaciated conditions. I have seen us at night climbing over a trench to go for the wounded, my foot slipping off a man's face, and the man was dead. That had no effect on me whatever. Whether one got hardened to it or not, I do not know, but it had no effect. You just knew you were there to do a job. You were there to help the wounded. The experience, of course, turned me anti-war. When we were being examined by Barbara Woodburn at the Labour college on public speaking, we all had to take a subject, and speak on it for so long, and then criticised by the rest of the class. The subject I took was *War* and, you know, after I got home I had all the cuttings out of the newspapers of what people had said about war. I had ample material. I gave an anti-war speech at the Labour college and it turned me that way and made me an absolute conscientious objector, not even R.A.M.C.; because once you are there in it, you are only a number, you are not a person. We got such things as: "You are not here to think, you are here to do what you are told!" That's what we got. The army in any

shape or form is no place for the Christian. I am convinced of that and still of that view. It is no place at all for the Christian. I remember reading during the war or after the war - for there was some anti-war work going on - and this man said: "Imagine the Christian going over the top with a fixed bayonet! Imagine that it is Jesus Christ that is leading him - and Jesus has fixed the bayonet ready to shove it into the Germans!" Well, you cannot imagine that.

IAN: There was a poem you once recited to me about God sending the bill to you.

TOM: That was a poem by J. Russell Lowell, an American poet, and if anybody wants to see the whole poem they will find it in the book *For His Namesake*.

"Es fer war, I call it murder-  
There you have it, plain and flat;  
I don't want to go no furdur  
Than my Testyment for that...

...Ef you take a sword an' dror it,  
An' go stick a feller thru,  
Guv'ment aint to answer for it,  
God'll send the bill to you."

IAN: I have just been reading some of the First World War poems by men like Siegfried Sassoon. They are really quite explicit. They paint a picture of the horrors of it all - the smell, the rats, the trenches, etc.

TOM: Rats! I have seen them like billy - O. You know, we had a dug-out that you would call the advance aid-post and this dug-out would be just behind the line. You see, you had the front line trenches, second line, third line, then you had the places where you had the dug-out; and when you came out of the dug-out and looked over the top - rats, scampering about.

IAN: Some would say that certain wars are justified, but you don't think any war is justified, do you?

TOM: No. My humble opinion about that is that the only kinds of war that are justified are the wars that God orders.

IAN: War has its origin in heaven, doesn't it? War originated in heaven, because we read in the book of Revelation that Satan rebelled and there was a war in heaven.

TOM: Aye, we read about that right enough; but what kind of war it was, we really do not know. It could not have been with rifles, bayonets, bombs, and that sort of thing, because the war in heaven is in a spiritual realm.

IAN: Did you ever argue with my grandfather John Sneddon on this because he was not a conscientious objector?

TOM: Neither was John Anderson. I have discussed it with John Anderson, but I know that he believed you should fight for your country.

IAN: So does Carl Ketcherside, by the way.

TOM: The lectureship in Frankfurt I attended in the 1950's, the Commander-in-Chief in Frankfurt, of the American Army, was a member of the Church of Christ, and they were having a discussion on war. He was the speaker and he was definitely in favour of war. After he had given his talk, everyone of the British brethren that were there stood up and contradicted him and spoke against it. The man did not believe that that would happen. There was Len Channing, Frank Worgan, Willie Steele, Andrew Gardiner, and someone else. The poor man did not know where to sit in the dining room when he came in. He thought everyone was against him. No, I cannot tie up the Christian taking another man's life, even by order of the government. I have thought about it, but I just simply cannot tie that up at all.

(To Be Continued)

## GLEANINGS

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

### TALKING WITH PURPOSE

"Talk ye of all His wondrous works." - Psalm 105:2

"We often quote "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints shall bless Thee." That sounds tolerably easy; but what next? "They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power." Is this among the things that we ought to have done and have left undone? Are we not verily guilty as to this command? "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law!" Perhaps we say we have kept it; we have had sweet converse with dear Christian friends about the Lord's kingdom and doings, and surely that is enough? No! Read further; there is not even a full stop after "talk of Thy power." It goes on to say why, and to whom: "To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom." Not just talking it over among our like-minded friends, exchanging a little information maybe; but talking with purpose, talking so as to make known what great things our God is doing, not gently alluding, but making the sons of men know things that they did not know were being done. Some very intelligent and well educated "sons of men" do not seem to know that there is such a thing as "His kingdom" at all; and whose fault is that? They do not and will not read about it, but they could not help the "true report" of it reaching their ears if every one of us simply obeyed orders and talked, right and left, "of the glory of Thy kingdom," instead of using our tongues to tell what we have just seen in the newspapers."

Frances Ridley Havergal.

### THERE GOES JESUS CHRIST'S MAN

"It is the business of the Christian to reproduce Christ. We are the sensitised paper on which Jesus is to be photographed. He is the mirror which glasses God's image before us, "and beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Sanhedrin "took knowledge of Peter and John that they had been with Jesus." Their association with the Son of God was manifested in their lives. They were reproducing Christ. In the life of the Christian, Christ must live again on earth. The natives of Burmah said of Judson, "There goes Jesus Christ's man." The world should say the same of us to-day. It is said that when Stanley went in search of Livingstone he was a man of the world, with little thought of God and Christ. He was not in the missionary's presence long before he was worshipping Livingstone's God, reading Livingstone's Bible and serving Livingstone's Saviour. A young man was asked by whose preaching he had been converted, and replied, "By no person's preaching - by my mother's practising." Everything must re-produce its kind. If we are "born of God", our lives will present God-like characteristics. "If Christ be in you," actions and words will reveal his presence. The perfect life is developed by imitation of Christ."

H. G. Harward.

### COME, ALL YE THAT FEAR THE LORD

"If people are loud in the praise of the physican who has cured them, recommending others to trust his skill, why should not Christ's people crown Him with equal honours, commend Him to a dying world, and proclaim what He has done for them? Let them say with David, "Come, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul," and tread in the steps of the Samaritan who threw away her pitcher, and, running to the city, brought them all out, crying: "Come, see a man who hath told me all things that I have ever done." It is a bad thing ostentatiously to parade

religion, but it is a base thing for a Christian man to be ashamed of it: not to stand by his colours; by his silence, if not his speech, to deny his Master; to sneak away, like a coward, out of the fight.'

Guthrie

### PRAYER AND STUDY

"A girl at boarding school was remarkable for repeating her lessons well. A school-fellow, rather idly inclined, said to her one day:-

"How is it that you always say your lessons so perfectly?"

She replied - "I always pray that I may say my lesson well."

"Do you!" said the other. "Well, then I will pray too."

But alas! the next morning she could not even repeat a word of her usual task. Very much confounded, she ran to her friend, and reproached her as deceitful.

"I prayed," said she, "but I could not say a single word of my lesson."

"Perhaps," rejoined the other, "you took no pains to learn it. You must study as well as pray." "

B. A. 1890

### SO THEY SHALL AGAIN

"We love no triumphs gained by force - they stain the brightest cause;

'Tis not in blood that liberty inscribes her sacred laws;

She writes them on the people's hearts, in language clear and plain;

True thoughts have moved the world before, and so they shall again.

We want no aid of barricade to show a front to wrong;

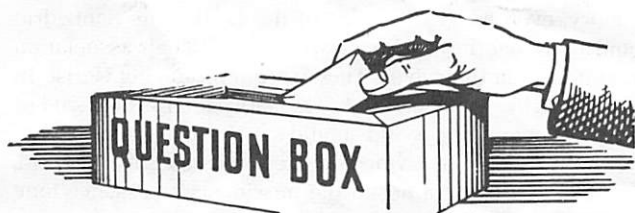
We have a fortress in the truth more durable and strong.

Calm words, great thoughts, unflinching faith, have never striven in vain,

They've won our victories many a time, and so they shall again".

For His Name's Sake.

SELECTED BY LEONARD MORGAN




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"Should the Church be giving teaching, especially to the young, about the problem of drug abuse. There are those who say that it is not necessary to dwell on such topics; all that is necessary is that the proper spiritual teaching be given and all will be well. What do you think, and could you possibly tell us something about drugs?"**

The point about spiritual teaching may be true if the teaching is accepted and *put into practice*; unfortunately, and to our detriment, the practice does not always match the theory which precedes it, otherwise we would have Churches full of perfect Christians. Therefore, the brethren who hold that the Church should not comment on the great social problems of the day take, I believe, a position which in many ways is an untenable one. To isolate the Church from society and pretend that spiritual criteria has no bearing on the practicalities of living is, I also believe, a negation of what Jesus taught and practiced. Obviously, then, I feel free to comment on the specific problem posed by the questioner, in the hope that whatever knowledge I have of the subject may prove useful to someone.



### Use and Abuse

The very fact that something can be *abused* is tantamount to saying that there are circumstances in which the same thing can be *used*; this is particularly true of drugs. Paradoxically, it is the great beneficial use to which drugs have been put which has led to the acceleration of abuses which prevail in society today.

A few years ago I was an active member of one of the great caring organisations, and it was my privilege, along with others, to learn something about the drug scene. This alerted me to many of the uses and abuses of drugs. Take, for example, cocaine; it is widely used as a local anaesthetic in dentistry and in the medical profession, but when in white powder form it is sniffed into the nostrils the drug passes into the bloodstream via the nasal lining and produces a feeling of exhilaration and well-being, reduces appetite, and causes increased muscular efficiency and extreme wakefulness. One doesn't need a vivid imagination to realise who would be likely to abuse this drug and why.

If we think of the Barbiturates - drugs used as sedatives - then we probably think of the most common, Phenobarbitone, and consider its uses; to prevent or reduce epileptic seizures, overcome persistent insomnia, etc. We might also think of Pentothal Sodium, which is a rapid-acting drug much used in general anaesthesia. We might also think of the tranquillisers in use, many of which have trade names which are household words. The correct use of such drugs can be extremely beneficial, but the *abuse* of them could produce unwanted symptoms such as sleepiness, slurred speech, confusion, slow reflexes with the consequent proneness to accident; on top of this they can be habit forming, and this is why such drugs should only be taken as directed by a doctor.

But to return for a moment to our spiritual/practical point. I wonder how many Christians find it necessary to take tranquillisers? It might be argued that the spirituality which ought to be inherent in the life of a Christian would nullify the normal worry and anxiety associated with indifferent health, so-called environmental deprivation, financial restriction, and educational incapacity. We do not always "consider the lillies of the field how *they* grow". We *do* like expensive homes and clothes; we *do* like financial security; we *do* like robust health; we *do* take pride in achievement, our own and our children's; and we *do* exhibit some kind of depression if these things pass us by on the other side. We *do*, on a number of occasions in our lives, need drugs prescribed for us in order to ease our troubled minds. We seem not to have absorbed the lesson "that whatsoever state I am in therewith to be content". People whom we class as of the world, and even our own children, see this and wonder. Perhaps we need a greater degree of realism so that we know when the veneer of Christianity is cracking. One thing that we do *not* need is to ignore the world as if it did not exist and had no influence on our lives.

### The Drug Scene

It should be obvious to everyone that the distribution of illegal drugs is now very big business. We read and hear of large quantities of drugs being apprehended by police and Customs and Excise officials, but this is only the tip of the iceberg, something in the region of five to ten per cent of all drugs distributed. It is estimated that drugs worth something in excess of two billion pounds found their way into Britain during 1984. This is in addition to drugs circulating in the country which can be bought, stolen, or in some illicit way get onto the street market. This should be of great concern to *all* parents, Christian or otherwise.

What are the inherent dangers for our young people in all this? In the first place, one of the most pervasive forces in the human make-up is that of experiment; the desire just to 'try it'. Why do people react like this? The obvious answer is that some have a strong desire to, as they put it, 'gain new experiences'. I must confess that I find this attitude deeply disturbing. It leads to all kinds of physical and sexual abuse; it can wreck lives even before they have got started properly; it can bring misery where happiness should exist.

Furthermore, we see evidence of this in the spiritual scene. I firmly believe that the desire 'to gain new experiences' is at the root of the proliferation of many so-called charismatic groups. Not content with the promise of the Holy Spirit indwelling us to change

our lives from *within*, there seems to be this great desire to 'experience' the *outward* manifestation of the Spirit in such things as tongue-speaking, healing, etc., and such groups may go so far as to say that if one has not had these 'experiences' then one cannot be a Christian.

Now if this is so in adult life, what pressure must our young people be under to 'try' things? They are told how pleasant it is to be 'high' on drugs; the well-being and euphoria which can be experienced. The natural urge is to 'try it' and many do, and so can begin the whole sordid business which can lead to physical malfunction, theft in order to pay for drugs, and the possibility of ultimate addiction. We should be *very* worried, not apathetic.

### What Can We Do?

One thing we *can* and *must* do is to watch our children carefully. I do not mean that we should be overly oppressive, peering round every corner at them and following them when they go out. One of the most dangerous situations is for children to be left unattended or in the charge of uncaring people while the parents are out, perhaps trying to earn a little more money in order to buy things for the family; a laudable objective which could have disastrous consequences. You say it doesn't happen in Christian homes? I wonder.

One of the more serious things is for parents to be ignorant of the facts, especially concerning drugs. How on earth can you discover physical evidence of drug-taking in others if you don't know what you are looking for in the first place. It is your *duty* to know as much as you can if you believe that your child's well-being can be threatened. And who would be so bold as to say that it *isn't* threatened?

In view of what we said earlier concerning tranquillisers, how careful are you in their use? Do you perhaps give the impression that you use them indiscriminately? Do you leave them lying around, and do you count how many are left when you use them? We have to pose the age-old question; how can you influence your children if your own example leaves much to be desired?

We ought to be more alert as Christians. There seems to be an unwritten law in the Church that if you marry in the Church, all will be well; if you enter into partnership with a fellow-Christian the partnership is bound to flourish; if you are Christian-parents then your children will automatically follow your lead. This is a hard and unrelenting world in which we live, and the things just said *should* be true but we know to our cost that they are not. It is not *always* our fault. There are evil forces at work, controlled by evil people who have no concern for the welfare and dignity of people. They are greedy and avaricious people and the Christian is not immune from their influences. It behoves us to watch, to learn, and to fight, using the spiritual weapons with which we have been blessed. May God grant us the strength to do this.

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

### GOOD MEMORY RULES

FORGET each kindness that you do as soon as you have done it;

Forget the praise that falls to you the moment you have won it;

Forget the slander that you hear before you can repeat it;

Forget each slight, each spite, each sneer, wherever you may meet it.

REMEMBER every kindness done, whatever it may measure;

Remember praise by others won and pass it on with pleasure;

Remember those who lend you aid and be a grateful debtor;

FORGET each worry and disaster, be hopeful and forgiving;

REMEMBER good, remember truth, remember heaven's above you—

And you will find, through age and youth that many hearts will love you.

# THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are believers who hold that this is every Christian's privilege — yes, his greatest need, to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Until that occurs (they say) he does not know anything as he ought about prayer, about power in service, about the holy life, about love, joy, peace, zeal for the lost, and Christlikeness in general. So that the baptism of the Holy Spirit becomes the prime desideratum, once a man becomes a Christian. For that he should seek and pray and wrestle in prayer until he obtains it from God. How does he know when he has obtained the GREAT GIFT? Some hold that it is always manifested by a speaking in tongues, citing Acts 2 and 10 as proof. They hold, however, that it is not the same as "the gift of tongues" of 1 Cor. 12, though those that hold this position generally believe in the "gifts" also, but a brief initial manifestation is evidence that the baptism of the Holy Spirit has taken place. Others do not insist on such evidence, but believe that the proof of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is experienced in mighty inward floods of joy and love toward God and man, in spiritual uplift, new desires for God's Word, new power in His work and service. Needless to say, these are the things the average Christian lacks and wants; and the desire for such a new life of freedom and power in the Lord leads many earnest souls to give ear to such teaching concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

But when we turn to God's Word to test these teachings we are at once impressed by the absence of teaching and reference to it. If the "baptism of the Spirit" is so supremely important to the Christian (as it must be if the claims are true) why does the New Testament — especially the part of it which is directly for the Christian's instruction have so little to say about it? Why in all the epistles written to Christians is there not so much as one passage that says a Christian should or could or might or ought to be baptized with the Spirit, or that he should seek and pray for such a thing? In all the range of the apostle's teaching to Christians there is but one passage that mentions the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). And there it refers to the initial incorporation of Christians into the one body, the church; not to any subsequent gift bestowed upon members of the church. If the matter stood as the Spirit-baptism advocates represent it, we would expect repeated and earnest exhortations to Christians to seek for the baptism of the Spirit, urging them to cease not to rest until they obtained such an all important gift. Why is there nothing said to that effect? Why has not God told us such things?

I would urge this weighty fact upon the attention of those who hold that teaching. It is the peculiar danger of those who bank on experiences to set them above the teaching of God's Word where the latter seems to clash with experience. But if this comes under the eyes of any who yet hold the Word of God as supreme, let such ask themselves why that Word preserves such a silence on a subject which to them forms the central point of thought and teaching.

Every man who is a Christian at all has the Spirit. (Rom. 8:9). And his possession of the Spirit (or should we say, the Spirit's possession of him) can be enlarged. He can be filled with the spirit (Eph. 5:18). He can be strengthened with power by the Spirit in the inward man, and be "filled unto all the fulness of God" Eph 3:16-19. Faith, prayer, self-surrender to God (Rom. 12:1), gives the Spirit fuller scope in His gracious working. But none of that is ever called "the baptism", nor is there any thing that cannot be accounted for by normal growth and progress of the Christian life. For this indeed let us seek. But why use such terms as "Baptism of the Spirit" to designate that.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Just a few words to accompany the balance sheet.

Our financial position is hardly changed from last year, so we intend to maintain the existing price structure. Thank you for your support throughout the past year.

Our thanks are also extended to brethren who contributed articles for publication. This is not an easy task and we appreciate the efforts made. Thanks too for your letters of encouragement.

We hope you enjoyed the 'Standard' last year and find it even more useful this year. God willing.

INCOME		£	£	EXPENDITURE		£	£
Bank Balance b/f	621.79			Printer	2637.59		
Cash in Hand	<u>44.00</u>			Postage	456.64		
	665.79			Stationery	<u>4.82</u>	3099.05	
Cheque not Drawn	<u>213.97</u>	451.82		Balance Deposit A/c	445.85		
Subscriptions	2407.76			Balance Current A/c	<u>272.49</u>		
Gifts	670.05				718.34		
Bank Interest	<u>73.73</u>	3151.54		Cheque not Drawn	<u>214.03</u>	504.31	
		<u>3603.36</u>				<u>3603.36</u>	

Treasurer J.K.KNELLER      Auditor J. McLUCKIE

1st January 1986

## OUR ATTITUDE TO GOD'S WORD

The following thoughts are presented after spending a holiday in a so-called Christian Guest House. Needless to say I was quite isolated from the rest of the company because I dared to express my faith in God's word. I often wonder if the scriptures are not seriously underestimated by many Christians (and even by some described as 'Ministers' of the gospel). During conversations in this Guest House a leader of the 'Plymouth Brethren' assured me that baptism was not meant in John 3:5 when Jesus said, "unless a man is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven". He said that 'water' mentioned referred to 'the word'. I warned him against interpretations not intended by the Lord. A 'minister' sitting nearby asked me if I believed that only those baptised would get to heaven, and I replied that I was no judge in the matter but we had a judge in the form of God's word (John 12:48) and that *obedience* was a theme on every page of the Bible.

More and more is impressed upon me the importance of God's inspired will and word. Without it we would not have known about Creation, let alone the re-creation through Christ; or the wonderful history of the Jewish nation (led and fed to the promised land); the fulfilment of prophesies and the fulfilment of so many of them in Jesus; of salvation; of eternal life and all the other vital themes. It is true that some few words have changed in meaning over the years but I would like to warn younger brethren of the risk in some of the newest translations. As an 82 year old student of the scriptures I have found that the King James Version (and the Standard Revised Version, with a few word exceptions) is quite sufficient for us. I think every student should read "How We Got Our Bible" by J. Paterson Smyth. I well remember our late bro. John McCartney saying, that when we consider a portion of scripture we should be closely guided by (1) *who* said it. (2) *When* it was said (in what Biblical dispensation) (3) *why* it was said. (4) *To whom* it was said, and while this may be

considered fairly obvious, countless numbers of people misinterpret the scriptures by failure to observe these elemental rules. Nothing *is more important* than God's living oracles and we should treat them with great sobriety, care and reverence. The best maxim in life is, as Paul urged Timothy, to "study" or to "agonise" to show ourselves to be approved of God, rightly handling the word of truth. Thus we shall never need to be ashamed.

John E. Breakell, Hindley, Wigan.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

APRIL 1986

6—Jer. 31:23-40	Hebrews 8
13—Exodus 24	Heb. 9:1-22
20—Psalm 4	Heb. 9:23 to 10:18
27—Exodus 25:1-22	Heb. 10:19-3

### THE GOD OF COVENANTS

God is a covenant-making God. All of his covenants with man have been designed to achieve the good of humanity.

A simple covenant is an agreement between two parties. In the eyes of the law, they are usually equal. But there cannot be equality in any divine-human covenant. God must always be regarded as supreme.

As a result, some commentators prefer the term "testament" to "covenant" when dealing with this important subject.

### THE OLD COVENANT

God announced the old covenant to his chosen people. It was made possible by a Divine act of deliverance.

". . . The covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jeremiah 31:32; Hebrews 8:9). The preamble plus the ten commandments constituted the covenant. "And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: you heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only you heard a voice. And He declared unto you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone" (Deuteronomy 4:12-13; K.J.V.). Nothing more was added Deuteronomy 5:22). True, there were other laws, statutes and

judgments, but all of them grew out of the ten commandments. The covenant established the nation's relationship as the elect of God, and the other commands regulated the people within that relationship.

The law that Moses gave was a written legalistic code. It consisted of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" (Exodus 20). It was designed to keep its subjects in confinement and under restraint. "It (the law) was added because of transgressions, till the seed (Jesus) should come to whom the promise was made." (Galatians 3:19). "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster (custodian) to bring us unto Christ..." (Galatians 3:14).

The law was perfect for its purpose. It could not be otherwise. The perfect God does not give an imperfect law. But why could it not justify? The answer is very simple. Its inability to justify lay in the fact that it was *a law*, a written code. "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

You see dear reader, the weakness lay not in the law, but in the human being. In other words, the law failed because man is what he is - incapable of perfection, incapable of never making a mistake. So the law brought knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). Sin spells death. (I wish I had the space to develop this subject, but I have not).

One writer put it this way: "The law cannot make a man good; it can only make him wish he had been good... The more we learn of the law the greater becomes our sense of guilt and inadequacy".

Right now, I am involved in a study in depth of the Holy Spirit. This has led me to re-read Alexander Campbell's essays entitled: *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Salvation of Men*. In one of them he

wrote: "The covenant of the letter could not inspire men with the spirit of sons. It demanded what it did not impart strength to yield. It presented a perfect rule, but left the heart unable to conform to its requisitions. The more clearly a Jew understood it, the less comfort he derived from it. It filled his heart with the spirit of bondage, and issued in condemnation and death."

Where then were freedom, justification and life to be found? God Himself provided the answer. The answer came in a person - His beloved Son Jesus.

### THE NEW COVENANT

The Hebrew writer clearly speaks of an old covenant and a new covenant (8:13). He also summarises about the superiority of the new over the old (8:8-12; 10:15-17). Consider this statement carefully: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (8:10-12; K.J.V.). What it clearly reveals is that the new covenant is based upon the spirit, and that this covenantal status is as a result of personal choice, an individual acceptance of God.

In the passing, I cannot help but comment on that last statement: "...and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more". God not only forgives, but also forgets. The apostle Paul, for example, could never forget what he did to the early disciples of Jesus. Because of his sins, he said that he was not worthy to be called an apostle (1 Corinthians 15:9). He knew he had been forgiven, of course, but he could never blot out the evil deeds from his mind. But God blotted them out. Oh, the wonder of salvation!

An important question is this: "If the Christian is no longer under law but

grace, how can God's laws be put into the mind or written in the heart?" W. Carl Ketcherside has said: "The answer lies in the fact that the word 'law' has a wide range of meanings... Law, in its primal meaning, is a principle of action. It is the basis, or foundation, the motivating dynamic that governs our whole course of conduct... God infuses our hearts with a divine principle of action, and this spontaneously and automatically responds in harmony with His will. Incorporated within that principle, which involves the divine nature or essence, is the fulfilment of all the commands of God, not as a way of life, but as 'the life of the Way'... The Spirit gives life. Law says, 'Do these things and you shall live'. The Spirit says, 'You live, so do these things' " (In the light of these words, a study of 2 Corinthians chapter 3 could prove most profitable).

Jesus did away with the law principle. Instead of giving us another law, He gave Himself. Faith in Him produces the right relationship. I now quote Galatians 3:24 in full: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

The Christian serves Jesus in faith. The Son of God is his pattern. Service is no longer conformity to a legalistic code, but to Christ. My father often tells the saints in Motherwell that "we have been saved to serve". How true! We are not free to do as we please; we are now free to do what will please Him. Paul said to the Galatians: "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbour as yourself" (Galatians 5:13-14; N.I.V.).

Love is really the key to the whole thing. Under the old covenant there was the love of law; under the new covenant there is the law of love. Love is the "more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31). "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of

wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8; N.I.V.).

Life and love are inseparable. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death" (1 John 3:14).

One final point. The epistles of the new testament were simply letters of love. Those who received them were already in the covenant relationship with God. Very often the saints needed correction, admonition and exhortation - thus the letters. I thank God for every one of them. Personally, I study them not to be a better lawyer, but a better loving disciple.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

## ANGER—A THIEF

Of all the passions that are incident to a man, there is none so impetuous, or that proceedeth so terrible effect as anger; for besides that intrinsical mischief which it works in a man's own heart, in regard whereof Hugo said well, "Pride robs me of God, envy of my neighbour, anger of myself." What bloody tragedies doth this passion act every day in the world, making the whole earth nothing but either an amphitheatre for fight or a shambles for slaughter. "Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down on your wrath."

## THE PREACHER'S PRAYER

I do not ask  
That crowds may throng the temple;  
That standing room be priced.  
I only ask that as I voice the message  
They may see Christ.

I do not ask  
For churchly pomp or pageant,  
Or music such as wealth alone can buy.  
I only ask that as I voice the message  
He may be nigh.

I do not ask  
That men may sound my praises,

Or headlines spread my praise abroad.  
I only ask that as I voice the message  
Hearts may find God.

I do not ask  
For earthly place of laurel,  
Or of this world's distinctions any part.  
I only ask, when I have voiced the  
message,

My Saviour's heart.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Kitwe, Zambia:** Our missionary apprentice, John Ramsay, has just completed forty days and forty nights in Zaire. He has lived with, stayed with and ate with the Zaireans. He has explained forcefully and at length why Zaireans should follow New Testament faith and practice. He has felt that he is "banging his head against a brick wall" in particular on the subject of New Testament church organization. The Zaireans seem very attached to the idea of church hierarchy and denominational structure. However, John does not quit - he has returned to Zaire on another preaching journey.

Chester Woodhall

## OBITUARY

**Tranent:** The church at Tranent is saddened at the death of sister Stevenson, on January 17th after a short illness. Sister Stevenson was the mother of Beryl and Moira Stevenson. She was baptised in her youth and was a faithful member until her death. The funeral service was conducted in the meeting-place by bro. Joe Nisbet and bro. Alex Strachan, both sons-in-law of sister Stevenson and at the graveside by Jim Sinclair (snr.) (assisted by John Kneller).

We commend her family to our Heavenly Father remembering that there is a crown of righteousness laid up for those who finish the course.

J. Colgan Sec.

## ANNUAL SOCIAL

The church at Tranent, will God willing, hold their Annual Social on Saturday, 22nd March, at 4 p.m. at the Loch Centre (Near site of former Meeting-house).  
Speakers:

Jimmy Grant, Wallacestone  
Jim Sinclair (Jnr.) Corby.  
All Welcome

## CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Secretary of the church at Ulverston, is now John Stanton, 'Woodcroft', 2 Carley Close, High Carley, ULVERSTON, Cumbria. LA12 0JS.

## IT DEPENDS ON ME

People losing faith in us may lose faith in God. Every time we do something wrong, those who see it or hear about it are weakened. They have less respect for us, less confidence in us. Sometimes that weakening leads other brethren to do wrong. The wrong leads them away from God.

## RELIGION

The religion of some people is constricted: they are like people who use the cold bath, not for pleasure, but for necessity and their health; they go in with reluctance, and are glad when they get out. But religion to a true believer is like water to a fish; it is his element, he lives in it, and he could not live out of it.

What I want is not to possess religion, but to have a religion that shall possess me.

## PARADOXES OF JESUS

He who is the Bread of Life began His ministry hungering;  
He who is the Water of Life began and ended His ministry thirsting;  
He who was weary is our true rest;  
He who paid tribute is the King of kings;  
He who prayed hears our prayers;  
He who wept dries our tears;  
He who was sold for 30 pieces of silver redeemed the world;  
He who was led like a lamb to the slaughter is the Good Shepherd;  
He who died, by dying destroyed death for all who believe.

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THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH .....£5.50

CANADA & U.S.A. .... \$10.00

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

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY  
Telephone: Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian,  
Scotland EH37 5PT. Telephone: Ford 320 527

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"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd.,  
Langley Mill, Nottm. Tel. Langley Mill (0773) 712266