

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE MUFFLED CALL

In our 'Scripture Readings' for Sunday mornings we have reached the point (Mark 6) where the demise of John The Baptist seems to coincide with the sending out, by Jesus, of the twelve to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. It can't have escaped our notice that the preachers were to place strong emphasis upon **repentance**. This had been the great clarion call of John The Baptist (and his disciples): "**Repent**, for the kingdom is at hand." This sending out of the 12 (and later the 70) is not to be confused with the 'Great Commission' (to all nations) but was restricted to the Jews (house of Israel) and we read that "**they went out and preached that men should repent**" (v.12). This was the overriding theme of the message.

We really don't hear much of that call, today. If we were, at random, to slip into a pew at most denominational places of worship in this country today, and eavesdrop upon the preaching, we would be unlikely to hear any references to **repentance**, just as we might hear very little mention of **sin**. We might hear muted remarks about 'mistakes' and 'foibles' and slightly louder references to the 'brotherhood of man'; 'mutual understanding'; 'share our faith'; 'join our worship' and other fairly vague examples of current religious rhetoric, but generally, vital words like 'repent' are disappearing from the present ecclesiastical vocabulary. The thunderings of John Knox (which frightened Mary Queen of Scots) and the hell-fire preachers have all gone: to the great relief of some and sharp disappointment of others. Certainly the importance attached to a drastic reformation of lifestyle demanded by John The Baptist, and Jesus Himself, is not in evidence today. I suppose that in the keen competition for new members, most religious groups don't emphasise repentance too strongly; and I suppose there are 'converts' looking for such groups.

GOD'S CLARION CALL

Perhaps, in stressing the need for **faith** in Christ, and **baptism** for the remission of sins, we have inadvertently squeezed 'repentance' out of its rightful place in the process of 'conversion'. Certainly the N.T. does not fail to give it full force. The ministry, both of John and Jesus (and the disciples of both) concentrated entirely upon calling men to repentance and Jesus was completely uncompromising in His denouncement of those towns which remained indifferent. He upbraided the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum for their intransigence, comparing them most unfavourably with Tyre, Sidon, Sodom and Gemorrah and predicting that Capernaum would be "brought down to hell" (Matt. 11:20-24). We don't hear much talk like that today. Jesus not only condemned these unrepentant cities but the whole generation of His time, recalling that whereas the heathen men of Nineveh had **repented** at the preaching of Jonah: a deaf ear had been turned to a greater than Jonah. Jesus avowed

His purpose quite often: He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. When Christ's own close disciples brought to Him news of calamities in the city, involving many "fatalities", He replied (doubtless foreshadowing the coming destruction of Jerusalem) "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

This summons to repent was not, of course, confined to the House of Israel, but was carried over into the 'Great Commission' (Mark 16:15) and was extended to all nations, Jesus Himself saying, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name AMONG ALL NATIONS, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46). The early Jewish Christians were duly convinced of this when Cornelius was baptised, for we read that, "When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18). And Paul, in his preaching to the Athenians, referring to their unenlightened attempts at worship, said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere TO REPENT." (Acts 17:30). Thus the call to repentance is directed at ALL MEN, EVERYWHERE, and surely no statement could be more comprehensive or all-embracing. It means you, and me, it means everybody.

A DEFINITION

There is no pat or concise definition of 'Repentance' or 'Repent' in the N.T. and we must be guided mainly by the way in which the words are used. 'Repent' comes from the Greek *metanoia* which Young describes as "A change of mind." Obviously not every 'change of mind' constitutes repentance. The definition given by most English dictionaries includes, 'To feel regret; to resolve to make amends for; to feel sorrow and to change one's ways; to turn,' and I suppose that the true scriptural meaning lies somewhere amidst all of these suggestions.

All that glitters is not gold and all regret is not necessarily repentance. Many changes of heart are due entirely to self-interest. Even Dick Whittington, of nursery-rhyme fame, turned for only selfish reasons. The present Prime Minister refuses to make any U-turns in her policies and, apparently, views such a change as a weakness and an admission that she was previously wrong. Indeed most politicians, of any colour, try to conceal any change they make in policy in case it should be regarded as a 'climb-down' and a confession of incompetence. Similarly, much of the heartache and regret that besets mankind has little to do with repentance or sorrow for sin. Usually the criminal is sorry, but only sorry that he was caught. Self-pity was never remotely akin to repentance and we should try not to confuse the two. Even where there is real sorrow for sin, and genuine Godly sorrow; this is not, in itself, repentance, but only something which leads to repentance. Repentance is not regret, or sorrow for sin; it is a CHANGE OF MIND. Clearly it does not refer to any-old-kind of change of mind, but a resolve of mind that whereas we formerly walked contrary to God, from henceforth we would turn: do a U-turn, and thereafter seek to walk in harmony with God. Thus, repentance refers to a resolve to change from serving Satan, to serving God. Paul draws a valuable distinction between 'regret' and 'repentance' (in 2 Cor. 7:8) where he says, in reference to his previous letter, "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent (regret R.V.) it, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a Godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of: but the sorrow of this world worketh death." We see, then, that Paul has sent an epistle to the church in Corinth and after he sent it he regretted sending it: but later his regret vanished when he realised that his letter had been received in the proper spirit and

had made the Corinthians truly sorry for what had passed. But mainly he was pleased because their sorrow was of a Godly sort and it had led them to repentance. "The sorrow of the world", on the other hand, Paul said 'worketh death'. Certainly the regret and terrible sorrow that Judas experienced, after his betrayal of Christ, did not result in his repentance, but rather in his tragic self-destruction. Repentance, therefore, is not sorrow and regret, but rather the transformation of life brought about by that regret.

EVIDENCES THEREOF

Similarly, we may sometimes confuse repentance with the fruits, or consequence, of repentance. True repentance should lead to a reformed life, but the reformed life ensues entirely as a **result of the repentance** i.e. the change of mind. For instance, when the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33) washed the stripes of Paul and Silas, this is properly referred to as an **evidence of previous repentance**. Later (in Acts 26:20); Paul states that he declared to the Gentiles that **"they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance"**. Likewise, (in Matt. 3:7) John The Baptist, on seeing Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism charged them to **"Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance"** i.e. to produce evidence of their professed repentance. "Repentance", therefore, is neither Godly sorrow nor is it good works, but it lies somewhere between the two. Godly sorrow leads to our **CHANGE OF MIND**, and good works is the **eventual outcome** of that change of mind. This change of attitude must relate to God and involve an improvement in our lives. Lancelot Oliver once suggested a good way of remembering the difference: he said that we should regard **Godly sorrow** as the roots of the tree; **Repentance** as the trunk of the tree: and **good works** as the leaves and fruits of the tree.

As mentioned previously, John The Baptist's preaching was almost exclusively devoted to bringing about the repentance of the people and indeed his baptism is several times referred to as the "baptism of repentance". John's baptism was confined only to those who expressed genuine repentance and accompanied their claim with consistent works. Thus we have John's charge to the Pharisees to come back only when they could **demonstrate** their complete contrition.

When the people asked John The Baptist for some advice on how they should illustrate their repentance, he suggested that, for a start he that had two coats should give to those who had no coat. To the Publicans he said that they should exact no more in taxation than was legitimately required (for Publicans had a habit of exacting not only the tax but also a little extra for the Publican). To the soldiers John said that they should do violence to no man, nor accuse any falsely. (Luke 3:10). And so, John expected to see men become kind, generous, compassionate, honest and non-violent. We also recall that Zacchaeus, (who was also a Publican), in the joy of his own repentance, declared that he would give half of what he owned to the poor, and those he had defrauded he would restore fourfold. These benevolent outworkings were, then, the fruits and evidences of truly repentant hearts and minds.

There are those today who would insist upon similar evidences being displayed prior to any candidate being baptised, and who would, for instance, insist that anyone, presently party to an 'irregular' marriage, be refused baptism until they had 'normalised' their marital status. Surely without John The Baptist's special intuition in these matters, it would be well-nigh impossible for anyone today to determine the presence of repentance, or gauge its quality, in the breast of any other person presenting themselves for immersion, nor does it seem to be an incumbency placed upon us. The only thing that seemed to be likely "to hinder" the Ethiopian eunuch from being baptised was the necessity for him to affirm his belief that Jesus was the Christ. If he had been a polygamist can we imagine that Philip would have said, "I would like to have baptised you, but can't until you go back to Ethiopia and get rid of all your

wives but one"? After baptism many men and women would have to set about reconstructing their lives but there seemed to be little time for it prior to their immersion. On Pentecost, 3,000 were baptised and it seems to me that there would be little time for lengthy interviews prior to each dipping to ascertain personal details, including marital status, of each applicant.

CONTINUING GRACE

And so, just as faith is based upon facts and that which is true: repentance is based upon deeds and that which is right. Faith involves a change from ignorance to enlightenment: repentance involves a change from evil to goodness. As the writer to the Hebrews puts it, we must seek "**repentance from dead works to serve the true and living God.**" It must surely be impossible to over-emphasise the importance of such a resolve. It must rank as the most important change of heart we can ever make. Many lessons have been extracted from the parable of the Prodigal Son but surely most of them hinge upon the son "coming to himself" and his RESOLVE to return to his father. This was a decision the father could not make: it had to come from the son. Paul, (in Rom. 2:4) refers to God's goodness, forbearance and long-suffering and states that these are designed to lead us to repentance. But, he adds, those men and women with hard and impenitent hearts, who fail to recognise that "**the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance,**" are storing up for themselves disaster on God's day of wrath and righteous judgement. Indeed it is for this very cause that Christ delays His imminent return. Peter says, "**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise (to return) as some men count slackness: but is long suffering to usward not willing that any should perish BUT THAT ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE**". (2 Peter 3:9). And so Jesus delays His coming, not through disinterest or disinclination; but to give us all further opportunities of repenting and turning to God. The alternative is to perish. To what purpose do we put these God-given opportunities? God is gracious and retains Jesus in heaven that we might avail ourselves of His pardon. Does His call fall upon deaf ears? Will we be found, on Judgement Day, amongst the ranks of those with the hard and impenitent hearts from Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum? If so, as Jesus says, it will be more tolerable on Judgement Day for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for us. The barbarian men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah: and a greater than Jonah is here. Christ is come. "**Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you ... and to as many as the Lord our God shall call.**" (Acts 2:38).

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

FRIENDSHIP: THE THEME

"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

Proverbs 18:24

MORNING MESSAGES

"Friendship is the perfection of love."

"Friendship multiply joys, and divide griefs"

"Friendships are better than battleships."

"He does good to himself who does good to his friend."

"Go oft to the home of thy friends for weeds choke up the unused path."

"New friends are like autumn leaves, found everywhere; old friends are like diamonds, precious and rare."

Shaws

"If you would keep your friend, approach him with a telescope never with a microscope."

WE QUOTE "SUNSHINE MAGAZINE".

"Speak well of your friends or do not speak at all. Be so generous in extolling their virtues that there is no time to mention their faults. Remember all the traits that make them likeable; forget the few times they displease you. When you speak highly of your friends, you speak highly of yourself; for a man who is proud of his friend is worthy of them."

SOMEONE HAS SAID

"A grip of the hand, a friendly look, a word of praise and trust — these are small things, but they are enough to warm the heart and stir the emotions.

W. Riley.

AT LAST: ALREADY

Asked how she succeeded in always making her guests feel welcome, Elsa Maxwell replied: "Three words suffice." When they arrive, I say "At last," and when they are ready to depart, I say "Already?"

Shaw's.

READ AGAIN

"A little word in kindness spoken,
A motion or a tear,
Has often healed the heart that's broken,
And made a friend sincere."

Whittier.

**THERE IS A FRIEND THAT STICKETH CLOSER
THAN A BROTHER**

"The weary may find a resting-place upon His breast, and the friendless may reckon Him their Friend. He never varies, He never fails, He never dies, His sympathy is ever fresh, His love is ever free."

D.C.M. C.G.

CAN YOU SAY THIS?

"I've found a Friend; O such a Friend'.
He bled, He died to save me;
And not alone the gift of life,
But His own love He gave me.
Nought that I have mine own I'll call,
I'll hold it for the Giver;
My heart, my strength, my life, my all,
Are His, and His for ever."

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

WHY A SCIENTIST BELIEVES IN GOD

We are still in the dawn of the scientific age and every increase of light reveals more brightly the handiwork of an intelligent Creator. In the ninety years since Darwin we have made stupendous discoveries; with a spirit of scientific humility and of faith grounded in knowledge we are approaching even nearer to an awareness of God. For myself, I count seven reasons for my faith.

First: *By unwavering mathematical law we can prove that our universe was designed and executed by a great engineering intelligence.*

Suppose you put ten pennies, marked from one to ten, into your pocket and give them a good shuffle. Now try to take them out in sequence from one to ten, putting back the coin each time and shaking them all again. Mathematically we know that your chances of first drawing number one is one to ten; of drawing one and two in succession, one to 100; of drawing one, two and three in succession, one in a thousand, and so on; your chance of drawing them all, from number one to number ten in succession, would reach the unbelievable figure of one chance in ten billion.

By the same reasoning, so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on the earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance. The earth rotates on its axis one thousand miles an hour, if it turned at one hundred miles an hour, our days and nights would be ten times as long as now, and the hot sun would then burn up our vegetation each long day while in the long night any surviving sprout would freeze.

Again, the sun, source of our life, has a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and our earth is just far enough away so that this "eternal fire" warms us "*just enough and not too much!*" If the sun gave off only one half its present radiation, we would freeze and if it gave half as much more, we would roast.

The slant of the earth, tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, gives us our seasons; if it had not been so tilted, vapors from the ocean would move north and south, piling up for us continents of ice. If our moon was, say, only 50,000 miles away instead of its actual distance, our tides would be so enormous that twice a day all continents would be submerged; even the mountains would soon be eroded away. If the crust of the earth had been only ten feet thicker there would be no oxygen, without which animal life must die. Had the ocean been a few feet deeper, carbon dioxide and oxygen would have been absorbed and no vegetable life would exist. Or if our atmosphere had been much thinner, some of the meteors, now burned in space by the millions every day, would be striking all parts of the earth, setting fire everywhere.

Because of these and a host of other examples, there is not one chance in millions that life on our planet is an accident.

Second: *The resourcefulness of life to accomplish its purpose is a manifestation of all-pervading Intelligence.*

What life itself is, no man has fathomed. It was neither weight nor dimensions, but it does have force; a growing root will crack a rock. Life has conquered water, land and air, mastering the elements, compelling them to dissolve and reform their combinations.

Life, the sculptor, shapes all living things; an artist, it designs every leaf of every tree, and colours every flower. Life is a musician and has taught each bird to sing its love songs, the insects to call each other in the music of their multitudinous sounds. Life is a sublime chemist, giving taste to fruits and spices, and perfume to the rose, changing water and carbonic acid into sugar and wood, and, in so doing, releasing oxygen that animals may have life.

Third: *Animal wisdom speaks irresistibly of a good Creator who infused instinct into otherwise helpless little creatures.*

The young salmon spends years at sea, then comes back to his own river, and travels up the very side of the river into which flows the tributary where he was born. What brings him back so precisely? If you transfer him to another tributary he will know at once that he is off course and fight his way down and back to the main stream and turn up against the current to finish his destiny accurately.

Even more difficult to solve is the mystery of eels. These amazing creatures migrate at maturity from all ponds and rivers everywhere—those from Europe across thousands of miles of ocean—all bound for the same abysmal depths near Bermuda. There they breed and die. The little ones, with no apparent means of knowing anything except that they are in a wilderness of water, nevertheless start back and find their way not only to the very shore from which their parents came, but thence to the rivers, lakes or little ponds—so that each body of water is always populated with eels. No American eel has ever been caught in Europe, no European eel in American waters. Nature has even delayed the maturity of the European eel by a year or more to make up for its longer journey.

A wasp will overpower a grasshopper, dig a hole in the earth, sting the grasshopper in exactly the right place so that he does not die but becomes unconscious and lives on as a form of preserved meat. Then the wasp will lay her eggs handily so that her children, when they hatch, can nibble without killing the insect on which they feed; to them dead meat would be fatal. The mother then flies away and dies; she never sees her young. Such mysterious techniques cannot be explained by adaptation; they were bestowed.

Fourth: *Man has something more than animal instinct—the power of reason.*

No other animal has ever left a record of its ability to count ten. Where instinct is like a single note of a flute, beautiful but limited, the human brain contains all the notes of all the instruments in the orchestra. No need to belabor this fourth point; thanks to human reason we can contemplate the possibility that we are what we are only because we have received a spark of Universal Intelligence.

Fifth: *Provision for all living is revealed in phenomena which we know today but which Darwin did not know—such as the wonders of genes.*

So unspeakably tiny are these genes that, if all of them responsible for all living people in the world could be put in one place, there would be less than a thimblefull. Yet these ultramicroscopic genes and their companions, the chromosomes, inhabit every living cell and are the absolute keys to all human, animal and vegetable characteristics. A thimble is a small place in which to put all the individual characteristics of two billions of human beings. However, the facts are beyond question. Well, then—how do genes lock up all the normal heredity of a multitude of ancestors and preserve the psychology of each in such an infinitely small space? How a few million atoms, locked up as an ultramicroscopic gene, can absolutely rule all life on earth is an example of profound cunning and provision that could emanate only from a Creative Intelligence; no other hypothesis will serve.

Sixth: *By the economy of nature.* We are forced to realize that only infinite wisdom could have foreseen and prepared for nature with such astute husbandry.

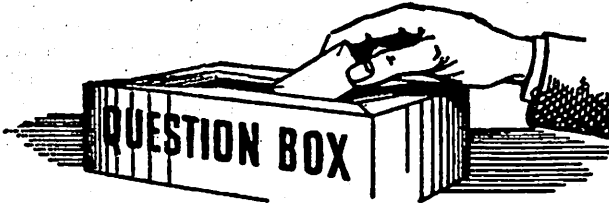
Many years ago a species of cactus was planted in Australia as a protective fence. Having no insect enemies in Australia, the cactus soon began a prodigious growth; the alarming abundance persisted until the plants covered an area as long and as wide as England, crowding villages, and destroying their farms. Seeking a defence, the entomologists scoured the world; finally they turned up an insect which lived exclusively on cactus, and would eat nothing else. It would breed freely too; and it had no enemies in Australia. So animal soon conquered vegetable and today the cactus pest has retreated and with it all but a small protective residue of the insects, enough to hold the cactus in check forever.

Such checks and balances have been universally provided. Why have not fastbreeding insects dominated the earth? Because they have no lungs such as man possesses; they breathe through tubes. But when insects grow large, their tubes do not grow in ratio to the increasing size of the body. Hence there has never been an insect of great size; this limitation on growth has held them all in check. If this physical check had not been provided, man could not exist. Imagine meeting a hornet as big as a lion!

Seventh: *The fact that man can conceive the idea of God is in itself a unique proof.*

The conception of God rises from a divine faculty of man, unshared with the rest of our world—the faculty we call intellect. By its power, man and man alone can find the evidence of things unseen. The vista that power opens up is unbounded; indeed, as man's perfected intellect becomes a spiritual reality, he may discern in all the evidences of design and purpose the great truth that heaven must be real; that God is everywhere and in everything but nowhere so close as in our hearts.

Condensed from A. Cressy Morrison, former President of New York Academy of Sciences. (Sent in by John E. Breakell, Hindley).



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“What part would you expect the Church of Christ to be playing as we enter the 21st century? I ask this because there seem to have been so many changes since my younger days.”

We tend to think that the 21st century is a long way into the future, but in actual fact we are talking about a period of ten years or so, and for evolutionary change this is a comparatively short period of time. If, as I suspect, the questioner has spent almost a lifetime in the Church, then I can well understand the concern for what has been the focal point of life for so long. At the end of the day the issue tends to become personalised, and one asks oneself, “Well, what influence have I had on the Church during the time I have been a member”? Surely this is the crux of the matter, because we understand that the Church has been much influenced from many sources in the past, and consequently we need to turn to Church history and examine how those influences have impinged on the present before we can say anything meaningful about the future. I shall speak in general terms from my own experience so as not to weary you with quotes from other people.

The Personality Trap

I was added to the Lord’s Body during one of the Hindley Bible Schools. My previous background was Methodism, and I suppose I would have been designated a nominal church-goer. Nevertheless, that background, probably viewed as spiritually useless by those who had been brought up in the Church of Christ, kept me from becoming tarnished with the extreme sins of worldliness during seven years spent in the Forces during the war; that is why I shall never speak disparagingly of other religious groups even though I may consider them in error doctrinally.

Those early days were exciting, heady days. I fell in love with the Lord and the Church, and I thrilled to the messages which I heard from very able brethren. The Church seemed to be so vibrant; it seemed to me that all error would be swept away and that I should be part of Christ’s victorious army, bringing light to those beleaguered souls who had lost their way in the maze of denominationalism. But, like the roll of distant cannon, undercurrents of personality in the Church were to drag the newly-converted away from the shimmering brightness of a seemingly undisturbed sea of tranquillity into the murky depths of personality cult.

Religion, like politics, is a fertile field for people with out-going personalities. Such people take what should be a topic for discussion and, by their ability to sway peoples’ minds, make it an issue in the Church. Topics which are turned into issues do not generally, at their inception, command overall support or interest; the protagonists are generally one or two people who hold strong convictions, rightly or wrongly, and who, by the force of their personalities, draw others into the melee. Very quickly the personalities become of prime importance, and the issues become blurred. Entrenched positions are then taken, and where there was once peace and unity there emerges turbulence and hostility. This sort of thing has a profound effect at the time it is happening, but more importantly, it can have a devastating effect on the future progress of the Church. Experience has taught me to examine very closely the ideas and ideals of those brethren who set themselves up as custodians of the purity of the Church. The great danger is that the campaigning idealists becomes more revered in some

minds than the Cause to which all have pledged their allegiance, and consequently the zeal for the campaign has become more important than the Person in whose name it was fought. In the history of the Church of Christ some people seem to have become more revered than God and His Christ, and are Quoted so often that one would think they had direct Apostolic lineage and authority. This is no denegration of what they were and are; it is a factual assessment of what Christians of their day made them, and of how Christians in later days have carried on the tradition. To the extent that Christians in the Church can be thus elevated, to that extent God and His Christ can be hidden.

What of the Present?

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that issues which have confronted the Church over the past fifty years have had a profound and detrimental effect on the Church as it is today. The S.S. is a magazine for the Churches and most readers will know the issues to which I refer without naming them specifically. The battles have been fought; I have no idea as to whether they have been won or lost, but one thing is crystal clear to me; the battlefields have been littered with the bodies of those who did not really understand what the battles were about. In too many cases babes in Christ have been chopped down by the sword of contention before they could even feed on the solid food, let alone the strong meat of the Word.

The autonomy of the local assembly seems to have developed into something that God never intended it to be. Of course it is right that a local assembly has the authority to arrange its own affairs without interference from anyone else, but in my view it has no right to disbar from its fellowship other Christians who may not necessarily agree with the interpretation of the Word laid down and adhered to by such an assembly, unless, of course, such Christians are in serious violation of God's Word ethically and morally to the extent that they need repentance and restoration. I wonder how many Christians in so-called 'pure' assemblies wholeheartedly agree with everything their leaders propose for them?

Am I right in saying that the principle under-pinning the foregoing have spawned the Crossroads Movement? It is not my intention nor inclination to say anything hurtful about these brethren; their zeal and enthusiasm for what they are doing, and the results flowing therefrom make many of us seem, by comparison, pedestrian. But if one reads the dedications in such books as "How Christianity Grows In The City", and "Shining Like Stars", then one can see that the Boston Church of Christ and some of the personalities therein, have become enshrined in the minds of the authors. It would be churlish of me to even hint that these brethren do not love God and His Christ, but you take the point that the Boston Church has become the focal point and also the point of reference for Christian communities which are set up world-wide under this system. This is a classic example of a local assembly stepping out of its Biblical role of autonomy, and by its teaching and practice claiming for itself a near-divine fiat. No matter how successful the methodology may seem to be, the main, inherent assumption which is being made is clearly wrong. Furthermore, the Central London Church has attracted national media attention to itself to the extent that it has been designated 'cultish'. I don't know if the brethren in London welcome the publicity or not, but for those of us who labour in other vineyards, and who employ different methods, the appellation 'cultish' is clearly a further barrier to the progress of the Gospel. I would hope that other Christians do not take seriously that puerile and worldly statement, "If you can't beat them, join them".

So What of the Future?

The indications are that unless there is a public outcry against them then these 'city churches' will grow and spread. If that is the case, then great pressure will be put on existing Churches in close proximity to them. Young people especially will be

most vulnerable. They no doubt see the value of the heavenly objective after a long life here on earth but in the interim they are greatly influenced by the realisation of earthly objectives in the Christian sense; we like to attach ourselves to seemingly successful people.

In the Wigan area particularly there are several assemblies which have a very tenuous hold on existence. That tenuous hold in each case is still maintained because of events and personalities rooted in the past. The particular stances adopted over long years cannot be altered because people do not want to 'lose face'. Those assemblies will die because, to put it brutally, the final closure of the doors will take place after those doors have closed behind the last coffin to go through them. Our young people don't understand why this should happen, and neither do I. Sadly, it is probably too late to unify.

If 'city churches' should spread to our major cities then my belief is that we should not draw battle lines but that we should continue to do Christ's work where we have always done it. The Church in conflict is not a pretty sight.

If present worldly trends continue then the 21st century will see an almost total rejection of Christian values. In those circumstances it may very well be that we shall be invited to co-operate with groups other than the Church of Christ who are trying to uphold the name of Christ, even though we may not agree with them doctrinally. There has been a constant fear that such co-operation would dilute our own standards but this needn't be the case; we co-operate with many people for the general good without necessarily accepting their way of life. Isolationism leads to loss of contact with the people we may want to influence most; after all, we have a head-start in talking about a Saviour whom they also believe in and serve, however imperfect that service might appear to us. In the process we might even learn something, and who knows, maybe lead some soul to tread a surer path.

There is much more I could say but perhaps I have said enough to put myself outside the 'pale' with some of my brethren. I pray not, because I love them all. But whatever we do, and with whatever situation we find ourselves in, we must not compromise the truth. We must 'contend earnestly for the faith', but that should not lead to a continuance of the internecine struggle.

(All questions, please, to:

Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan WN3 6ES.)

IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS

Circumstances of life are not always pleasant. There is much sorrow, heartache and pain; but in every situation and in everything we are to "give thanks". The best reason for such thanksgiving is that it "is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18). It is God's desire we be thankful. Our whole life should be a continual "thank-offering" for the many blessings we receive. From childhood we are taught to say "thank-you." Such a virtue in life will serve each one well that practices it. It is much easier to help someone when we know it is appreciated by them.

Jesus set the example of thankfulness (Matt. 11:25; John 11:41), the heavenly host engaged in it continually (Rev. 4:9; 7:12), the apostles and early Christians were thankful (Acts 27:35; 1 Cor. 1:4); why then should we not do that which they have done? Psalm 136 speaks of such thankfulness. "O GIVE thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever." (vs. 1-3). The remaining twenty-three verses continue giving thanks unto God for his many great works and blessings.

The Christian life is characterized by thankfulness. Gratitude and gratefulness

should be expressed in joy and in sorrow, for prosperity and for adversity, in the assembly of the saints and on the bed of affliction. Examples of such are numerous throughout the scriptures. When the brethren at Ephesus were told to sing and make melody in their heart to the Lord, they were to do so **“giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Eph. 5:20). We are to **“offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”** (Heb. 13:15). The brethren at Colossae were to walk in Christ being **“rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving”** (Col. 2:7).

Thanksgiving should be offered unto God through Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 1:8). We should offer thanks before our meals as Jesus did (John 6:11). We should remember to thank God for the bread and fruit of the vine when we partake of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22: 19-20). Many fail in this regard when they thank the Lord **“for the opportunity to partake”** or **“pray for this bread and cup.”** Somehow, they never get around to thanking God **“for the bread”** and **“for the fruit of the vine.”**

Disciples are to be careful **for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”** (Phil. 4:6). God knows we have needs, and desires we ask of him for those things we need, but we should always do so with thanksgiving. Nothing is worse than to assist someone and receive not even a **“thank you.”** Always remember to offer **“thanks”** to those who have helped you in some way.

We should believe Romans 8:28 which says that **“all things work together for good to them that love God”**. Not everything will be pleasant or joyous, but the end result will fit us to be partakers of our heavenly home. Should we then not give thanks in everything?

G. M. Robinson.

TRASURER'S REPORT

Following these few comments is the balance sheet for 1988. It does not purport to be anything other than a simple statement of where the money comes from and how we spent it.

What the Balance Sheet does not show is that our finances were severely stretched at the end of last year. Indeed we had to use subscriptions for 1989 to pay for the December issue. From time to time we have considered printing only ten issues per year, and shall have to keep that option in our minds for this year. We have been advised of a 5.9% increase by the printer and last year saw a rise in postal rates. Our final decision will be based on the level of income (your subscriptions) and what we can now project for our costs.

You will see below that we have had Bound Volumes for years 1985-1987 prepared. Five copies are still available at a cost of £13.20 each. If you would like one please let me know.

Last year I was asked what the top line of the address label means. There are three pieces of information to help me when mailing out. From the left there is the number of copies to be sent to you, followed by the date your subscription is due to be renewed and at the end in brackets the cost of postage. Next time you get your magazine just check your label before opening and see what your renewal date is. If it says 'DEC 88' we would be pleased to get your cheque for 1989!

Thank you for your support and encouragement.

BALANCE SHEET 1988

INCOME		EXPEDITURE	
Bank Balance 1/1/88	£446.46	Printing (12 issues)	£3196.00
Subscriptions	2477.86	Reading Cards	42.30
Gifts	1595.28	Bound Volumes	244.40
Bank Interest	23.72	Postage/Stationery	410.00
			£3892.70
		Bank Current A/c.	644.49
		Bank Deposit A/c.	6.13
		(at 31/12/88)	650.62
			£4543.32
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Audited by J. H. Currie, 13/2/89
J. K. Kneller (treasurer)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Apr. 2	1 Chron. 16:7-36	Mark 9:14-29
Apr. 9	Zech. 13	Mark 9:30-50
Apr. 16	Gen. 2	Mark 10: 1-16
Apr. 23	Ecc1.5:8-20	Mark 10:17-31
Apr. 30	1 Kings 3:5-15	Mark 10:32-45

The Healing of the Demoniac Son

Alexander Campbell has written: "One of the most palpable evidences we have of a spiritual world around us, and of a spirit within us – not mere breath or blood, but a real spirit, a positive entity or being distinct from the Body, but capable of living in it as an animal within a shell, or a man in his clothes – is found in the history of demons and demoniacal possessions."

In this portion of scripture we read of a young man possessed by a dumb spirit. How did it affect him? "Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid". (9:18, N.I.V.). The disciples could not cast out the evil spirit. Jesus later told them why. "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (9:29). His words clearly indicate that there were various kinds of demons or evil spirits around at that time.

Demonology is an important subject and worthy of a great deal of attention. Few commentators have addressed

themselves in detail to it. Here are a few points for consideration:

1. Demons were fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 12: 7-9).
2. Demons were intelligent personalities (Mark 5: 9,12).
3. Demon-possession was distinct from insanity (Matthew 4:24).
4. Demons were of the infernal region (Philippians 2:10).
5. Demons knew Jesus (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24, 34; 3:11; Luke 4:41; Acts 19:15).
6. Satan was their chief (Matthew 12: 22-30).
7. God's power was greater than their's (Matthew 8:32; 9:33; 17:18; Mark 1:26, 34; Luke 8:2; Acts 5:16; 16:18; 19:12).

Jesus' Foresight

Jesus foretold His suffering and His death (9:31; 10: 33-34). Did this make things easier for Him? I think not. Later, for example He prayed earnestly in the garden of Gethsemane: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee: take away this cup (of suffering) from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). The willingness of Jesus to suffer and die for sinful mankind simply staggers the mind and stirs the heart. Obedience to the Father was the essence of His life. He declared: "Not my will, but **thine** be done!" The sinner boasts: "Not thy will, but **mine** be done!" What a contrast!

Temptation

James wrote: **"Blessed is the man who endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death"** (1:12-15). Paul affirmed: **"There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you, will be able to bear it"**. (1 Corinthians 10:13). A statement by the Hebrew writer should be noted in all this **"For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted"** (Hebrews 2:18).

A prayer by William Barclay is appropriate here. "O God, our Father, whatever comes to us make us able to stand on our feet, and to face it with steady eyes. Help us to be sure that we will never be tried above that which we are able to bear. Help us to be sure that Thy grace is sufficient to make even our weakness able to face and to conquer anything that can come to us. Make us sure that in the valley of the deep dark shadow Thou art there to comfort and to support; and that when we pass through the waters Thou art there to hold us up, and to bring us through them to the other side: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen".

Jesus' language on cutting off sources of temptation is very vivid (9: 43-50). The picture is one of spiritual surgery J. D. Jones wrote: "We must shrink from no spiritual surgery to save the life of the soul". After all, eternal life is in the question and joy through eternity.

Marriage and Divorce

Marriage is a Divine institution. The Bible reveals that God ordained it, Jesus

sanctioned it, the Holy Spirit validated it and the apostles regulated it. It dates to Adam and Eve and Jesus confirmed this fact in His discussion with the Pharisees (10: 6-9). Alexander Campbell in his debate with Bishop John Purcell on **The Roman Catholic Religion** said: "Marriage is the oldest and most venerable institution in the history of man. God Himself instituted and celebrated it, on the flowery banks of Eden in the state of primeval innocence and bliss. It was then and there said: 'It is not good for man to be alone'. I believe with Paul that marriage is honourable in all. And as for purity: earth knows no purer, no holier state than that of holy wedlock."

Divorce is another matter. The Pharisees tempted Jesus on the question (10:2). He asked what Moses had commanded and they answered correctly: "Moses suffered to write a bill of divorce and put her away" (4). Jesus responded: "For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept" (5). Later to his disciples He said: "Whoever shall put away (divorce) his wife, and marry another, commits adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she commits adultery" (11,12). Much ink has been spilt on these statements by Jesus. I have read many books that attempt to explain them and many that attempt to explain them away. But surely Jesus' teaching on divorce is clear, plain and simple. Go back and analyse His words again. Dear reader, how readest thou?

The Rich Young Ruler

Riches in themselves are not evil. Jesus condemned those who trust in riches (10:24). Paul later wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy: **"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a**

good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6: 17-19).

This young man lacked one thing: "Go your way", said Jesus, "sell whatsoever you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross and follow me" (10:21). Jesus spoke by example. Paul wrote of Him: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that through His poverty ye might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). In response to Jesus' words the young ruler "went away grieved: for he had great possessions" (10:22). We should learn from this incident. Jesus said: "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness: and all these (earthly) things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Also, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Gain Through Loss

Christianity is not just a "pie-in-the-sky" religion. There are rewards for the Christian on this earth. Having faith in Jesus can mean the breaking of family ties. But cheer up, because the Christian can gain "a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and friends — and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life" (10:30, N.I.V.). The family of God is the greatest family in the world. Personally, it is a joy and a privilege to be a member of it.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

SERMON ILLUSTRATION

The figures of the Bible are not mere graceful ornaments — arabesques to grace a border, or fairy frescoes, that give mere beauty to a chamber or saloon. They are language.

Human speech articulate is marvellous beyond all our thought; but human words are not sufficient even for human thoughts and feelings. All high and grand emotions scorn the tongue, that

lies as helpless in the mouth as would be artillery to express the sound and grandeur of mountain thunders in tropical storms. All deep griefs, and for the most part, tender and exquisite affections, are voiceless.

Then it is, if any speech is attempted, that nature yields another language, and figures, word-pictures, and illustrations, if they do not express, at least vividly suggest truths far beyond the reach of words or the compass of sentences such as men frame for the common use of life.

The Bible stands far beyond all other books in this use of the language of nature. The great globe is but an alphabet, and every object upon it is a letter; and, from beginning to end of the Bible, these sublime letters are used to set forth in hieroglyphic the truths of immortality. And there is this nobility in the use of natural objects for moral teaching, that to the end of time, and to all people, of how different soever language, the symbol used is the same. Artificial hieroglyphics differ with age and nation. The Oriental cities had their special characters — the Egyptian his — the Aztec his; and they differ one from another, so that one could not have read the written signs of the other. But the sun, the mountain, the ocean, the storm, the rain, the snow, the winds, lions and eagles, the sparrow and the dove, the lily and the rose, grass, earth, stones, and dirt, are the same in all ages, in all latitudes, to all people. And those truths that are expressed in the figures drawn from the natural world have relationships, and they are the most universal of any in the Bible, and the most frequent.

—Beecher.

About three years before the death of Rowland Hill, two gentlemen entered Surrey Chapel. They had long been friends, and one of them was shortly to leave this country for India. He was living "without hope and without God in the world." His companion was a decided and consistent Christian, and earnestly desired his friend's salvation. This

pious friend, as the time drew near for the young man's departure, begged of him to grant him one special favour, namely, to spend with him his four last Sabbath evenings, and to accompany him to the sanctuary. The request was complied with, and many prayers ascended to God that the sermons might lead the wanderer to the Saviour. The first, second, and third sermons were heard, but no impressions were produced. When the last Sabbath arrived, the Christian felt increased anxiety for his friend's soul. He took him to Surrey Chapel to hear good Rowland Hill, and secretly prayed that the preacher might be in a solemn state of mind, and not be permitted to indulge in eccentric remarks.

The vulnerable preacher gave out his text: "We are not ignorant of his devices;" and immediately told the following tale:— "Many years since I met a drove of pigs in one of the streets of a large town, and, to my surprise, they were not driven, but quietly followed their leader. This singular fact excited my curiosity, and I pursued the swine, until they all quietly entered the butchery. I then asked the man how he succeeded in getting the poor, stupid, stubborn pigs so willingly to follow him, when he told me the secret; he had a basket of beans under his arm, and kept dropping them as he proceeded, and so secured his object. Ah! my dear hearers, the devil has got his basket of beans, and he knows how to suit his temptations to every sinner. He drops them by the way; the poor sinner is thus led captive by the devil at his own will, and if the grace of God prevent not, he will get him at last into his butchery, and there he will keep him for ever. Oh, it is because 'we are not ignorant of his devices' that we are anxious this evening to guard you against them!

The Christian friend deeply mourned over this tale about the pigs, and feared it would excite a smile but not produce conviction in the mind of his unbelieving companion. After the service was over

they left the chapel, and all was silence for a season. "What a singular statement we had to-night about the pigs, and yet how striking and convincing it was!" remarked the young man. His mind was impressed, and he could not forget the basket of beans, the butchery, and the final loss of the sinner's soul. He left this country, but has since corresponded with his friend, and continues to refer to this sermon as having produced a beneficial, and it is hoped an abiding impression on his mind.

— *Memoir of Rowland Hill.*

COMING EVENTS

Kirkcaldy : Annual Social on 8th April, 1989 at 3.30 p.m. Speaker Graeme Pearson.

Tranent : Annual Social on 18th March, 1989 at 4.00 p.m. at Loch Centre. Chairman : Mark Plain (Snr.). Speakers : Jack Nisbet (Haddington), David Ferguson (Mayfield). All Welcome.

Peterhead : Annual Social on Saturday 22nd April, commencing at 2 p.m. Speakers: Bro. M. Ireland and Bro. A. Ferrie. Those intending to be present please inform Secretary. All Welcome.
Andrew Brown (Sec.)

TEXT OF LECTURES AVAILABLE

Brother Roy Davison writes saying how much he enjoys reading "Scripture Standard" and asking to print the following:—

"CROSSROADISM and The World-Wide Hierarchy Weighed and Found Wanting" — The text of a series of 5 LECTURES on the above subject given in Ghana and Togo, in West Africa, by Roy Davison, Postbox 47, Wellen, B-3830, Belgium. If possible please enclose £3 to cover costs.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

The Secretary of the church at Peterhead is now Andrew Brown, 70 Catto Drive, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, AB4 6R2.

TRACT – WHAT THE ARTIST LEFT OUT

The above tract has now been printed: (50,000) and I would like to thank all the churches and individuals who contributed, and made the re-print possible. We would now like to distribute this huge quantity of tracts to the various churches (and any individuals) and so we would ask all those interested to indicate the number desired and a reference point (i.e. name and address for delivery) as soon as possible. Thank you.

(Editor).

AN ANCIENT BIBLE RIDDLE ????

God made Adam out of the dust,
But thought it best to make me first:
So I was made before the man
To answer God's most holy plan.

My body He did make complete,
But without arms, or legs or feet.
My ways and acts He did control,
Yet, I was made without a soul.

A living being I became,
And Adam gave to me my name;
When from his presence I withdrew,
I never more of Adam knew.

I did my Maker's laws obey;
From them I never went astray.

Thousands of miles I roam in fear,
And seldom on the earth appear.

But God did something in me see,
And put a living soul in me,
That soul from me my God did claim,
And took from me that soul again!

And when from me that soul had fled,
I was the same as when first made.
And without hands, or feet, or soul,
I travel now from pole to pole.

I labour both day and night,
To fallen men I give much light,
Thousands of folk, both young and old,
May by my death a light behold!

And though I have no skin and bone,
I have no land to call my own,
To heaven I shall never go,
Nor to the grave, nor hell below.

Now as these lines, my friends, you read
Search the Scriptures with great heed,
And if my name you cannot find,
It's very strange – you must be blind.

Knowledge is proud that he has learned
so much; wisdom is humble that he
knows no more.

Do good to thy friend to keep him, and
to thine enemy to gain him.

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