

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Last month I mentioned questions put to the Mormon Church, which have gone unanswered, and perhaps some readers suppressed a yawn. Yet millions of very fine people in the Mormon Church have been hoodwinked into the Mormon faith on the boasted merits of that same Book of Mormon. If, therefore, the Book of Mormon can be shown to be a fraudulent document (and it easily can) then that may help somebody somewhere. The young Mormon missionaries usually begin their 'sales pitch' with the 'two-sticks' routine (Ezek. Chap. 37) alleging to show that the two sticks mentioned therein refer to (i) the bible, and (ii) its 'companion volume'; the Book of Mormon. The 'sticks' in the chapter do not, of course, refer to books at all, but as v.22 shows, represent **nations**. These same missionaries, will later brain-wash their converts into regarding the Book of Mormon as **superior** to the Bible and will gradually drop the Bible from any further consideration. Thus the matter is a serious one, especially since human-beings find it much easier to believe a lie than to accept a truth. Clearly the Book of Mormon does not, even remotely, resemble the Bible or qualify in any shape or form as being worthy of any kind of comparison with it. The Bible is unique and stands supreme.

This, apparently, is 'The Year Of The Bible' and the National Bible Society of Scotland has a whole net-work of Committees throughout the country organising special events to promote interest in the Bible. The Book of Books is being brought to the attention of pupils in schools and colleges, with Bible Quizzes and Bible-Reading Competitions: and to the general public by radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, Wayside Pulpits and the like. Indeed, Mr. Colin Hay, of the National Bible Society of Scotland, has just been to China to celebrate the opening of the new Amity Printing Press where the first batch of 100,000 Bibles for the Chinese have just been completed and where another 100,000 Reference Bibles are about to be started. Scotland used to be renowned for its knowledge of the Bible, and the literacy of its denizens, especially during its 'Age Of Enlightenment' of a century ago, and in those days even an expensive education was regarded to be dimly incomplete without a thorough working-knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Angus MacVicar describes how (not so very long ago) his sister Rona (in her first year as a teacher in Campbeltown Grammar School) encountered a senior colleague in one of the corridors. This formidable lady, having just taken a 'religious education' Class was carrying a Bible in one hand and a 'Lochgelly' strap in the other. Rona's eyebrows must have gone up. But her colleague paused only long enough to smack Bible and strap together, and say, "Think about

it Rona. The foundations of Scottish education". By now, of course, the strap has been outlawed; the teachers are being intimidated (and physically assaulted) by the pupils, and the Bible is relegated to receiving perhaps a brief review during a general discussion of 'Religions Of The World'.

THE NON-PRINT MEDIA

It is perpetually claimed that the Bible is still the 'best seller' but surely most Bibles must be given simply as a memento of a birth or marriage etc. It is difficult to believe, when one looks around at the fall in standards today, that Bibles are being read and acted upon. I am informed that 'The Lifestyle Survey' found that a Bible is present in eight out of ten homes in Scotland, but eighty per cent of the population admit that they never read it. It seems however, from surveys taken, that book-reading **in general** is also declining and that eighty per cent of the population would now balk at the thought of reading a book with hard covers. Even newspaper owners have, more and more, to sensationalise the contents of their tabloids to persuade the public-at-large to read them. Librarians tell us that amongst those that do still read books, popular reading tastes continue to move steadily down-market. It seems, if we have not noticed it already that the **non-print media** has taken over and the world would now rather **watch** than **read**. Watching the television screen apparently calls for much less effort than reading words. Thus there is a real shift away from reading and some will not read anything **at all** unless they have to: (to fill in forms etc.). It certainly is true that the television screen and video-recorder hold the centre-stage and myriads of children, from infancy, are reared on a regular diet of foul and foolish drivel endlessly produced by get-rich-quick entrepreneurs who care little for the moral or educational value of what they are churning out. Some small children even have their own T.V. sets, in their own rooms, and closet themselves away for hours, emerging only for meals. I suppose that what is happening here in Scotland is fairly representative of Britain as a whole. What a far cry all this is from the description given by Burns in his poem "The Cotters Saturday Night", describing how a large proportion of the rural population used to engage in household worship and family readings from Holy Scripture in the evenings. Most of the 'Cotters' nowadays are more likely to be found in the pubs and drinking Clubs on a Saturday night, and their children at the disco: and if not, are likely to be glued to the square-eyed monster. The Bible may still be a best seller but it seems difficult to believe that people buy it to read it.

THE BIBLE SURVIVES; AND WILL SURVIVE

It must also be true to say that general Bible-reading has taken a knock since the days of Charles Darwin, and the false impression still persists that science discredits the Bible. Darwin's theory was never any more than his own personal theory: certainly not shared by all scientists, and we may be sure that as time goes on, and science learns more and more of Life's secrets and history, that Darwin's writings will end up in the same dustbin as the flat-earth theory. Nothing discovered by true science has ever contradicted one word written in God's Holy Word. Likewise, nothing unearthed by the spade of the archaeologist, (in the form of artifacts or written statements on plaques, monuments etc..) has ever controverted one word of the Bible. Indeed every successive scientific fact discovered, and every successful excavation by archaeologists, year by year, far from discrediting the Bible, combine only to **confirm** the Bible, and to illustrate its uncanny accuracy in any statement it makes, whether scientific, historical, geographical, prophetic or any other kind. In many cases the Bible has pre-empted the scientist and archaeologist by stating the fact long before it was ever discovered by man. Nevertheless the idea persists that there is a conflict between science and the Bible and children are taught much more about the theories of Charles Darwin, and

the necessary consequences of his 'evolutionary' views and these teachings militate severely against children, in later life, having much respect for the Bible.

Likewise the Scriptures have suffered badly at the hands of the sceptics of the last century, like Paine and Voltaire (although, however, we are reminded of the claim that the printing press employed to print the views of Voltaire is now used to print copies of the Bible.) Worse still, perhaps has been the effect of the damage done by the 'men of the cloth'. I suppose we can readily understand the motives of the sceptics and we can lightly dismiss their attacks on God's word, but 'the man in the street' must find it difficult to take the Bible seriously after listening to clergymen (including learned Bishops) referring to the 'myths', discrepancies, inaccuracies, in the Book, and stoutly denying the fact of the Virgin Birth, the miracles and the resurrection. After years of censure from the Higher Critics; and the seeds of doubt sown by the clergy, it is small wonder that the ordinary citizen casts a jaundiced glance in the direction of his Bible. Never-the-less, the Bible, however mute and vulnerable, is still with us, quite unscathed from all the deadly assaults upon it over the centuries, and we have Christ's assurances that whereas heaven and earth shall pass away the Word of God remaineth, for ever and ever. It certainly is an anvil that has out-worn a great many hammers.

CAUSE FOR HOPE

If 'advanced' countries here in the western world are too enlightened to pay much attention to the Scriptures, it is pleasing to note that there seems to be no lack of interest in some less sophisticated countries. I was reading in "Life and Work" just the other day, that the Bible Society is overwhelmed with a demand for Bibles in **Angola**. Two people arrived at the Bible Society at Lunda seeking a Portuguese Bible. Alas! there was only one left out of a consignment of 1,000 which had arrived a few days before. Neither purchaser would give way to the other but they eventually agreed to tear the remaining copy in half and regularly share it. Happily the Bible Society salesman, solved the problem and agreed to sell one of them his own copy, and give the other customer the new copy. The Bible Society in **Brazil** during last year distributed 110 million Scripture 'Portions.' Some of these were given away by Christian Footballers (called 'Christ's Athletes') who, in front of the television cameras, hand New Testaments to their opposite numbers, in the opposing team, just prior to the game. The Bible Society in **Korea** intends to distribute 50 million Scripture 'Selections' in the Korean language again this year, as last year. Christians distribute them to their friends and it is not unknown for some to win a hundred others for Christ in a twelve-month period. In **Nicaragua**, since the 1979 revolution, the annual distribution of Bibles has increased from 8,000 to 40,000 and this year the Bible Society plans to issue 99,000 Bibles; 99,000 New Testaments and 2 million Scripture Selections. These figures are very encouraging; especially when we remember that some of the countries involved have strong associations with the R.C. Church, and the R.C. Church has a traditional disposition to discourage the people from reading God's inspired Word. Even the **Soviet Union** is, this year, accepting more Bibles than ever before and will receive 100,000 Bibles (98,000 in Russian and 2,000 in the Ukrainian language). They have been delivered to the Moscow Headquarters of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians, and this is intended to contribute to the celebrations of the 1,000th Anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in Russia.

When we see the efforts and enthusiasm of others in the propagation of God's Holy Word in the world surely we should be encouraged to greatly increase our own efforts in this vital cause. Can we be satisfied that others may do more to spread God's truth than we do?

CAUSE FOR ACTION

We can have no excuse. Conditions could not be better for the preaching of God's word: certainly not in this country where we are blessed with every freedom. We have no repressive political regimes to contend with; and relative prosperity prevails. The population are almost entirely literate and Bibles are relatively cheap, light and easily transportable. We have come a long way from the days when a copy of the Scriptures was ponderously etched, with a quill pen, on heavy parchment, in the dim light of a guttering candle, and proved so expensive to make that its scarcity meant that the ordinary man rarely clapped eyes upon a copy. Prof. Robert Davidson reminds us that although the church is 2,000 years old the Bible has only become readily available since the invention of the Printing Press, and that Tyndale's Bible (in 1525) was the first printed on a press; the first printed in English and the first translated from the Greek. Prior to that time (and for some 1,500 years) Christians were very unlikely ever to have seen a copy of a Bible, and if they had it would have been in Latin and the chances of their being able to read it in English, much less to read it in Latin, would not have been very high.

There is, therefore, no excuse for us if we fail to spread abroad the Word of God. Conditions certainly could not be better. The Bible is the most wonderful thing the world affords. Let us make more effort to share it with others and increase our activity in the preaching of the gospel. The apostle Paul, who had to contend with constant personal danger and almost insuperable difficulties took the good news into extremely hostile environments. His attitude was, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel of Christ". Surely that was an outburst with which we can all identify. Men go to great lengths and spend vast sums to circulate error. Should we not try to do, at least, as much in the spreading of the truth?

THE ANVIL

LAST eve, I paused beside the blacksmith's door,
 And heard the anvil sing the vesper chime,
 Then looking in, I saw upon the floor,
 Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.
 'How many anvils have you had,' said I,
 'To wear and batter all those hammers so?'
 'Just one,' he said. Then with a twinkling eye,
 'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.'
 So then I thought, the anvil of God's Word
 For ages sceptic blows have beat upon,
 And though the noise of falling blows was heard,
 The anvil is unharmed. The hammers — GONE.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

THE MOULDING HANDS

(Jeremiah 18: 1 - 4)

"JEREMIAH was one of the loneliest men that ever lived. The book called by his name is full of poignant and dramatic pictures of this lonely man with the sad face. He has given us one picture of God so full of understanding and beauty that it has become one of the most precious in the gallery of life. In this picture you do not see the face of God, or His form: you only see His hands. And these hands are stained

with clay, for they are the hands of a moulder. The God of the moulding hands. How expressive! What wonderful things have been made by God's hands. His hands fashioned the stars and spread the sky as a curtain. The leaf on a tree, the throat of a bird, the ripple on the stream are all the work of His hands. God is a worker. The moulding hands of God reveal His purpose and patience. He sees the end from the beginning, and nothing can ultimately wreck His purpose. 'No one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.'

Gardner Miller.

UNWANING TREASURE

"Ah, yes, we have in Him unwaning treasure, –
 Forgiveness, love, compassion, matchless grace;
 May it be ours to give Him back some pleasure,
 As daily in His will our steps we trace."

J. Danson Smith.

THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD

"The greatest of these is LOVE" (1 Corinthians 13)

"It is like light. As you have seen a man of science take a beam of light and pass it through a crystal prism, as you have seen it come out on the other side of the prism broken up into its component colours – red, and blue, and yellow, and violet, and orange, and all the colours of the rainbow – so Paul passes this thing, LOVE, through the magnificent prism of his inspired intellect, and it comes out on the other side broken up into its elements. And in these few words we have what one might call the Spectrum of Love, the analysis of Love. Will you observe what its elements are? Will you notice that they have common names; that they are virtues which we hear about every day; that they are things which can be practised by every man in every place in life; and how, by a multitude of small things and ordinary virtues, the supreme thing, the **summum bonum**, is made up?

The Spectrum of Love has nine ingredients:

- Patience** "Love suffereth long."
- Kindness** "And is Kind."
- Generosity** "Love envieth not."
- Humility** "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."
- Courtesy** "Doth not behave itself unseemly."
- Unselfishness** "Seeketh not her own."
- Good Temper** "It not easily provoked."
- Guilelessness** "Thinketh no evil."
- Sincerity** "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

Patience; kindness; generosity; humility; courtesy; unselfishness; good temper; guilelessness; sincerity – these make up the supreme gift, the stature of the perfect man. You will observe that all are in relation to men, in relation to life, in relation to the known to-day and the near to-morrow, and not to the unknown eternity. We hear much of love to God; Christ spoke much of love to man. WE make a great deal of peace with heaven; Christ made much of peace on earth. Religion is not a strange or added thing, but the inspiration of the secular life, the breathing of an eternal spirit through this temporal world. The supreme thing, in short, is not a thing at all, but the giving of a further finish to the multitudinous words and acts which make up the sum of every common day."

Henry Drummond.
 Selected by Leonard Morgan.

WHY I CHERISH THE BIBLE

The Bible is the source and inspiration of all that is best in our democratic way of life.

The chief function of the Bible is to lead men to Christ. But the Bible has many by-products, such as good schools, good roads, better houses, better living conditions, freedom, respect for the rights of men and democracy. Someone has said, "Democracy was born at Bunker Hill." Another said, "Not Bunker Hill, but Bethlehem." The Bible also promotes the sacredness of human personality, the dignity of honest labour, the worth of the individual, the principle of equality, the sanctity of the home and the love of freedom. Where the Bible is believed and obeyed these by-products will be found. In those countries where the Bible is not exalted, these things will not be in evidence.

Horace Greely said: "It is impossible to enslave mentally or socially a Bible-reading people. The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom."

I cherish the Bible because it gives a true picture of myself

Robert Burns, the ploughboy poet of Scotland, expressed a desire to see himself as others saw him. This might be pleasant for us all and again it might not be. Our supreme desire should be to see ourselves as God sees us. James refers to the Bible as a mirror into which we can look and see ourselves as God sees us. (James 1: 23-25). Every man's portrait is in the Bible. The non-Christian is pictured as an enemy of God, separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, stranger from the covenant of promise, and having no hope and without God in the world.

The unfaithful Christian is pictured as an apostate, an unfruitful branch, a foolish virgin, an erring Christian, one whose heart is not right and one who is perishing.

In the Bible, the faithful Christian is revealed, as the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the apple of God's eye, the soul winner and the good and faithful servant.

The Bible not only shows me my failures and sins, it shows me my possibilities and capabilities. It shows me not only what I am, but what I can become.

I cherish the Bible because of its transforming influence on life

Until recent years, the term "Hottentot" was one of reproach. He slept in his hut or hole in the side of the hill. He ate wild berries and roots of plants. He sold his wife and children at his pleasure. When his mother became old, he took her out into the forest to die or to be eaten by wild beasts. England wanted to civilise the barbarian Hottentots by teaching them the arts — how to build houses, plant corn and cook food. This method failed. Then England said, "We will teach them how to read and write." They took Africanus, the chief of the tribe, to England and taught him to read and write and wear clothing and be polite. When he returned to his tribe he found his men at war with another tribe. He threw off his clothing, donned the garb of a warrior, went to battle, conquered his foe, split open his head, drank blood out of his skull, and fastened his teeth into the quivering heart of his enemy. David Livingstone said: "Let us try God's plan and teach him the gospel." This was done with marvellous results.

Do you suppose that any man ever said, "I used to drink, swindle, lie, steal, abuse my family, but I came under the influence of some books on atheism and infidelity. Now, I'm a changed man, I go to church, pay my debts, treat my family well. I live a clean life as a result of these books." You have never heard of such and never will, for only the word of God has power to transform a man's life. (Isaiah 2:2; Rom. 1:16).

I cherish the Bible because it furnishes encouragement, guidance and power for daily living

The Psalmist declares: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105). I can testify with William Gladstone, who said, "On most

occasions of very sharp pressure or trial, some word of Scripture has come home to me as if borne on angel's wings."

The Bible shows me how to meet, and overcome the difficulties of life. It helps me to master fear, worry and despair. It shows me how to conquer temptation. I company with Job and learn the secrets of patience. I look at Abraham and have courage to walk by faith and not by sight. I walk with Moses and gain fresh confidence for doing good. I fellowship with Daniel and am encouraged to be morally independent. I stand with Joseph and see the folly of vindictiveness. I associate with Paul and learn how to handle handicaps. I commune with Simon Peter and am heartened to try again after I have failed.

Finally, I cherish the Bible because it tells me about my Saviour

To many people, the Bible is just writing, but believers see in it the face of Christ. When I read the Bible I am confronted with the Man of the ages.

In Genesis, I see him prophesied as Shiloh.

In Exodus, I see him as the lamb of the passover.

In Psalms, I see him as the shepherd.

In Canticles, I see him as the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley and the chiefest of ten thousand.

In Job, I see him as the Daysman.

In Isaiah, I see him as the suffering servant.

In Daniel, I see him as the holy one of God.

In Jeremiah, I see him as the branch of righteousness.

In Matthew, I see him as the promised Messiah.

In Mark, I see him as the miracle worker.

In John, I see him as the Word, manifested in the flesh.

In Acts, I see him as as the prince of life.

In Romans, I see him as the deliverer.

In First Corinthians, I see him as the wisdom of God.

In Colossians, I see him as the first born of all creation.

In Hebrews, I see him as the image of God.

In First Peter, I see him as the chief bishop of souls.

In Revelation, I see him as Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

J. M. Powell.

EXCELLENCY OF SPEECH

In the Bible we have many various descriptions of life: its importance; its brevity and the use we make of it.

Job said: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7:6) and refers, of course, to our relatively short life-span. The Psalmist said, "We spend our years as a tale that is told" (Ps 90:9), and that tale can be short, long, false or true. James said, "For what is your life. It is even a vapour that appeareth a little time, then vanisheth away."

Since life is so short we must make the most of it and the most of ourselves. Our lives should be lived to the honour, praise and glory of God. Our words and actions can make or mar, and we should cultivate our personalities that they might be pleasing to behold. Just like a picture. As we walk around the art galleries some paintings charm us while others jar. Solomon said, "**A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.**" (Pr. 25:11). Thus we can paint a picture by the words we speak, and frame it by the lives we lead. What kind of pictures do our words, and our lives produce?

We notice Solomon's choice of metals — gold and silver. Solomon's vast treasure house consisted in untold quantities of gold and silver and yet he recognised their value: and the value of words fitly spoken. Thus he drew this telling comparison — fitly spoken words are like apples of gold in pictures of silver. Words, of course, are not the only but are the most effective way of expressing the inner man: our feelings and our thoughts. They are, therefore, very important. Jesus said, “. . .for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Mat. 12:34). Words carry great responsibility and politicians have to be most guarded in their choice of words, especially in world diplomacy. Imagine what might result from ill-considered words uttered at a Summit Meeting. With words we can make others glad, or sad. Paul advised the Christians at Thessalonica thus, **“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how to answer every man.”** Is our speech always gracious: and seasoned with salt? One translation says, “gracious words, seasoned with salt, having character, not insipid, and not as a tablebearer.”

James agrees with all this and uses an illustration from nature, “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can a fig tree bear olive berries? Either a vine figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.” (James 2:8-12). No fountain can produce salt and fresh water at the same time; and no fruit tree can bear fruit not its own. James' conclusion is, “be swift to hear but slow to speak and slow to wrath.” Truly we are hurt by words more than anything else.

Paul, advised the evangelist Titus that in “all things” he should show himself to be “a pattern of **good works;**” in the matter of doctrine to show “incorruptibility, gravity and sincerity” and in speaking to display only, **“Sound speech, that cannot be condemned;** that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.” (Titus 2:8).

Christ's Example

Where do we find the finest example of words fitly spoken framed by actions of a most beautiful life. Surely Jesus was the supreme example of apples of gold in pictures of silver. Never man spake like this Man. “And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph's son?” (Luke 4:22). And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power.”

Solomon said that there was a time to speak and a time to remain silent, and we notice Jesus, quite often refrained from speech, especially at His trial and crucifixion. Isaiah prophesied that He would be led as a lamb to the slaughter and, as a sheep is dumb before its shearer, so He (Jesus) would open not His mouth. And so it was. He was mocked, ridiculed, abused, spat upon and eventually nailed to the tree but He brought no railing or cursing against all the forces of hell hurled against Him. His words from the cross were, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”

The old adage says, “Think twice before you speak” and that seems to have had its origins in the Bible, as so many old adages have. May it be that we shall be swift to hear but slow to speak, and that we shall not bless God and curse men. May it be that we shall refrain our speech from evil and from clamour, but that it will be seasoned with salt and gracious to the hearer. Sound speech that cannot be condemned. Then shall our words, fitly spoken, be like “apples of gold, in pictures of silver.”

Our Neighbour's Bible

I am my neighbour's Bible
 He reads me when we meet
 Today he reads me in my home
 Tomorrow in the street,
 He may be relative or friend
 Or slight acquaintance be
 He may not even know my name
 Yet he is reading me,
 Dear Christian friends and brothers
 If we could only know
 How faithfully the world records
 Just what we say and do,
 Oh! we would make our records plain
 And labour hard to see
 Our every neighbour won for Christ
 Through reading you and me.

WILLIAM BLACK, Dalmellington.



Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

"In view of the acts of brutality and violence by soldiers seen on TV newsreels recently, how can the Christian begin to understand the teaching of Paul in Romans 13:1-7?"

When the reader examines this passage of scripture he will see that it refers to the responsibility of Christians toward the governments of the States under which they may be called upon to live. We shall examine the implications of the teaching, but I am convinced that we cannot arrive at a proper exegesis of the passage without considering it in conjunction with Romans 12:17-21.

This question is not easy — none that are sent to me are — because it raises many secondary questions, e.g., Is it right for a Christian to be a member of the police or the armed forces? Has the Christian the right to rebel against the State if he considers that obedience would not fulfil his best Christian objectives? Has he the right to take the law into his own hands? Can the State be held to be as culpable as its representatives? These questions — and there may be others — spring to mind quite readily. I shall not attempt to give a 'Church of Christ' answer, even if there were such a thing, but we shall examine the text in some detail and draw from it some conclusions which may be indicated.

Rom. 12:17-21

We might say that what is indicated here is a path of peace and non-violence. Evil, no matter in what shape or form, must not triumph over good. In verse 17 the phrase 'render to no man' means 'give back to no man evil for evil.' This echoes the teaching of Jesus in the so-called Sermon on the Mount when He says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil" (Matt. 5:38,39). Furthermore, in 1 Thess. 5:15, Paul says, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."

Paul now turns his attention to what I call 'Divine protectionism for the Christian'. Verse 18 says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men". Paul here is literally saying, 'so far as what proceeds from you'. He uses a similar phrase in ch. 1:15 when he says, 'So, as much as in me is'. He knows that we as individuals are all different; that some of us are quick-tempered, hot-headed, not prone to think before we speak or act, and that in certain circumstances we might mete out punishment which we considered to be appropriate but which from God's point of view would be tantamount to rendering evil for evil. Paul seeks to rectify this defect in us by quoting a passage from Duet. 32: 35 where God says, "To me belongeth vengeance and recompence". What he is saying in effect is, "don't avenge yourselves, dear brethren, give room for the wrath of God: He will recompence". This is God seeking to protect us from ourselves. Personal vindictiveness is condemned. God is saying to us through the Apostle, "all your part is to live peaceably with all men".

Why does Paul teach this non-retaliatory approach? Well, he explains, "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire in his head". The phrase 'coals of fire' is interesting; the Greek words are ANTHRAKAS PUROS from which our word 'anthracite' has come. We know that anthracite contains much carbon and burns with a hot smokeless flame. Paul uses the metaphor here to teach that if we do good to our enemies instead of evil, then like 'coals on the head' we shall cause 'keen anguish' to the recipient; it might even turn him to repentance. So there is some point in trying to overcome evil with good.

So how can we summate Rom. 12: 17-21? Simply by saying that God's intention for the Christian is that we should try to live in peace with all men, and that we should not take the law into our own hands. He does not condemn punishment because He says, "I will recompense". What we have to ask ourselves is this: does He intend that **all** punishment for evildoing should be administered by Himself **in the future**, or has He arranged, in the interim, a means whereby punishment for evildoers can take place now? It is, I believe, at this point that the teaching in Rom. 13: 1-7 becomes relevant.

Rom. 13: 1-7

Paul starts this section by making a distinction in the use of the word 'power'. "Let every soul (man) be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God". The highest power is God Himself. Jesus had this power. Mark records that when He healed the sick of the palsy He said, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine own house" (Mark 2: 10,11). Because Christians are subject to the highest power (God and Christ) Peter teaches that for Their sakes we have to "Submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Peter 2: 13,14, but read on the rest of the chapter). Here we have the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do well given into the hands of governors or those appointed by them; these, and others, would be the 'powers that be' (the existing authorities) ordained by God. Such powers, presumably, would constitute good government and would establish and maintain law and order. Furthermore, according to Paul, if we are found to be resisting the power then we would be guilty of resisting the ordinance of God.

There are some fundamental points to be noted here. First of all Paul is not giving blanket approval to everything that rulers do; he is speaking about the **ideal** set by God for rulers. They are to be a 'terror' to the evildoer, and to give praise to those who do good. The Christian knows and teaches that it is 'a fearful thing to fall into

the hands of the living God'; as Isaiah says, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Isa.8:13). God, by ordaining the existing authorities, expects them to punish the evildoers and reward those who do good; whatever extra punishment He may see fit to inflict at some future date is His prerogative, and His alone. It would seem to follow, of course, that if rulers, as heads of state, perpetrated evil, and encouraged others to do so, then **they themselves** would fall under the stricture of God; we must not forget that people like Nero, Caligula, Hitler, etc., were supposed to be 'ministers of God for good' (v.4), but even though we might say that in their executive roles as 'ministers of God' they were supposed to execute God's will, it is patently obvious that instead they fulfilled their own evil desires; that, God will never tolerate. It is said that the Emperor Trajan, when sending out a governor to a province, gave him a dagger, with the words, '**For me. If I deserve it, in me!**

Secondly, it must be very clear from what we have said up to now that the power of the state in its role as punisher of evil-doers must act within the parameters laid down by God; tyranny must not be disguised as law and order. If we take the example of the acts of unbridled violence by soldiers of a state as seen on T.V. then we can only conclude that the state which they represent as custodians of law and order must punish them as evil-doers, otherwise if they do such things with the **approval** of the state, then the state and its governing officials become as culpable as they are. This further implies, of course, that if a state becomes guilty of wrong-doing then there should be some judicial assembly of states whose purpose is to restrain the offending state from inflicting by force damage and destruction on a non-offending state; this was attempted in the past through the old League of Nations, and more recently through the United Nations Assembly. National and narrow self-interest has been the rock on which these laudable efforts have failed: perhaps we shall be able to do better in the future.

No Contradiction

So there is no real contradiction between the two passages we have considered; they are complementary to each other. Our loving Father seeks to protect His children from doing evil by our taking punitive action against our fellow-men; **He** will arrange the punishment, and one way that He does it is through the ordination of the secular authority. We have to respond to that authority, for as Paul says, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Rom. 13:2).

The Christian must be a peace-maker. In all of his actions and thoughts he must be seeking to overcome evil with good, and this must be apparent to all. If the world sees the Church engaging itself in bitter, internecine struggles, then how can it reason that Christ and His Church have the answers to cruel, vindictive, sinful men. It is futile for us to say that Christ has all the answers – which indeed He has – if His followers contradict in their lives the essence of the things which He taught.

Just one further thought. There have been many Christians who, in the past and in times of war, have felt compelled to object to the legitimate demands made by the state on them; they have done it for conscience sake. In non-enlightened days the state inflicted cruel punishment on them, but I am convinced that a state which seeks and rewards the good of its citizens will always leave a way open for those who seek the path of peace and goodness.

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

WOULD THEY DO AS WELL?

We are constantly told by those who deny the historicity of many Old Testament narratives that, on the supposition that they are fictitious, their value is not impaired; they still teach the same lessons and with the same force. They are compared to the parable of the prodigal son, which, it is said, has as great value as if it were a true story. They are also compared to a certain class of novels which enforce moral lessons with great power, though they are known to be fictitious. This is a very plausible plea. It is doubtless believed by those who urge it, and it is readily accepted by those who are this way inclined. But is it true?

The comparison involves the assumption that the moral force of a real example and an imaginary one is the same. The moral force of Abraham's example in offering Isaac at the command of God has been felt by all believers in all ages. We are asked to believe that it would have been equally effective had all believers in all ages understood that Abraham never offered Isaac — that the story is a fiction. Let a man preach from that text a sermon intended to arouse his hearers to personal sacrifices in the service of God, closing with the statement that the story is all fiction, and see what effect his sermon will have.

The difference in effect of the two classes of narratives is this: That in moral fiction we are told how men *ought* to act, but in true narrative we are told how they *did* act. The former has the force of precept; the latter, the force for example. The hearer or the reader can parry the force of the former by answering, Oh, that is well enough to talk about, but nobody ever acted in that way, and you must not expect me to do it. But the force of the latter can not be voided, because what one man *has* done another *may* do.

As to novels, dramas, and all such literature, their moral effects are grossly exaggerated. While they often move the feelings very deeply, they seldom show fruit in actual life. The inveterate novel-reader, and the constant attendant on the playhouse, are among the most selfish beings. They learn to indulge in emotion as a luxury, and not as a stimulus to active benevolence. The lady who heard the play of "The Three Orphans," which had a great run a few years ago, and wept profusely in sympathy with the unfortunates, and then, as she started home, spurned from her presence three real orphans who stood at her carriage door, is a fair representative of the whole class, and a good illustration of the practical value of fiction.

As to the story of the prodigal son, the assumption that it is fiction is without a shadow of foundation. Amid the countless multitude of rich men with two sons, both of whom have acted parts almost identical with those of the parable, it would be strange indeed if none had ever done precisely what the parable narrates. The Lord's parables were realities, and not fictions. No man can prove of a single one of them that it had not actually transpired. There is a double deception, then, when men assert that the narratives of the Old Testament would be just as effective if regarded as fictions, and then appeal to any of the parables as examples in point. As well declare that a picture of a thunderstorm, or an imitation of one by an orchestra, would as thoroughly purify the atmosphere as the storm itself. In an actual event there is the power of an example. In a fictitious narrative there is only the power of a supposed example.

From "Biblical Criticism" by J. W. McGarvey 1898.

A child may be forgiven who is afraid of the dark. The tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 1	Prov. 3, 1-20	Eph. 1, 15 to 2,10
May 8	2 Chron. 6, 1-21	Eph. 2, 11-22
May 15	Isaiah 25	Eph. 3
May 22	Psalms 68, 1-20	Eph 4, 1-16
May 29	Micah 6	Eph 4, 17-32

Prayer for Powers

Thanksgivings, stimulated by news from the battle-front of works of faith and labour of love, and the great need of powers for the further development of efficiency in the functioning of the body of Christ. The need for wisdom and revelation of knowledge of God for the enlightening to realise the power of God's calling, His inheritance which He has brought to us — being thus possessed by us, and the supreme power shown by the glory of His raising of Christ to the highest place that He now has in the heavenly places. Can we realise what this means "filled with all the fullness of God"? Who is above every authority, including the great honour of being Head of the Church, and we are with Him because it is "To us-ward who believe" through faith in the full sense — absolute confidence (2,8).

Out of Darkness

The new birth and the new life are exhibited only by the greatness of the power. Quickened; brought to this new life out of what we must now regard as death. The powers of darkness have been overcome by the powers of the supreme ruler of the universe, now sitting with Christ in the heavenly places. Most of the members of that church had been under the domination of heathenism, so they had been out of any thought of God of fellowship with moral goodness. So out of this place of gloom they had been brought to join in a fellowship of love with enlightened godliness to sit with those who had learned to love God with others brought to life by the gospel through Christ's sacrifice. They have become God's WORKMANSHIP for only His power could suffice to change them.

The New United Body

God's design was to bring together into one the body all who became by faith united; by the same holy apostolic FAITH. There could no longer be CIRCUMCISION and UNCIRCUMCISION — but ONE BODY — THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. God's great work in this vital change had brought Paul's readers out of so desperate a condition and he reminds them of the contrast in relationships. From being turned away totally from their hopeless condition to share with Christ His heavenly place, raised and united with the ALMIGHTY; position of kinship with God Himself. Thus brought out of darkness and obscurity into the glorious fellowship with apostles and prophets, and become part of the building which, so to speak, houses the Creator of heaven and earth. This has brought the thought of the Temple into mind, a figure familiar to Jewish folk, and known as something sacred and central to Jewish hearts. So here is the place constructed to represent spiritual truths. So the construction is figuratively to design where we have the cornerstone in control of its construction for all the parts to be in line EVERY part contributing to its beauty and form.

Paul's part in the Divine Design

Turning to the further share in God's work with him he reminds his Gentile (and largely also Jewish) readers of the tremendous measure of eternal wisdom and exercise of grace through all ages WORLD WITHOUT END, though so humble as to recognise his own littleness. He seems to extend the description as being immeasurable and yet wants to pass on comprehension of breadth, length, depth and height, which he knows are beyond comprehension — in the same way as earlier we have asked — a fullness which certainly baffles description. What is the divine fullness? But this letter does ask for very great gifts of God in spiritual powers, with which we began our comments. This suf-

fering servant of God longs to share fully in the blessings of this most wonderful salvation, hidden for so long but now revealed that all men may learn how great is this fellowship in holy things. Not only has provision been made for Jew and Gentile to be in the glorious fellowship of saints, but the gospel has opened the way for **all** who hear the good news. But the prospects of blessing and eternal life are for **all who believe**. The church becomes one great body of those who share in growing together, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love may comprehend the incomprehensible, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge".

The Oneness of the Church

This is expressed in seven points: body, spirit, hope, love, faith, baptism, God and Father. We do realise that if the body is to function properly it must work together in deep harmony, all the parts fitting into place. God has provided for this by sending the gifts from heavenly wisdom. We are reminded that it is to the triumphant Christ that provision is made for growth in grace. The purpose to be fulfilled is the development of personal holiness. This can only be accomplished by constant recourse to the word which is kept in the heart, and fostered by application of the divine grace. These explanations and instructions are packed tight with spiritual power, and further teaching of prohibition of evil thoughts and feelings as so closely gathered together in the following verses, of a rather negative character, if we may be allowed so to describe them. What we must not do and, positively, what we must do. The apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers must play their parts with the further workers for perfecting of the saints, those consecrated souls who have surrendered to Christ's claims and given themselves to service of God as the prime objects of living. Thus they grow into a glorious image of likeness to Christ Himself, the fullness of the divine

likeness. It is a matter of growing into HIM, "From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." One cannot think of a more concise and exact picture of harmonious and orderly management of a body — the church — God's church.

Paul's Sermon on the Mount

How delightful are the mixed prohibition and commandment. The picture of the walk of other Gentiles is in contrast with the behaviour of the new man, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. We may misunderstand if we think God commands anger. At least however, He requires it to be short. (4, 26, 31). Concluding these inadequate comments, we look back and wonder — as so often in such questions, and feel the most wonderful extent and scope of the precious WORD, recognising we have the most adequate and precious possession, and are reminded of the WRITER'S comment with which it is crowned, "I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written."

R.B. Scott.

A TRIBUTE TO

THE LIFE OF JOHN GEDDES

Our hearts are saddened by the death of one who was dearly beloved in the Lord. Our loved ones pass away, yet, it is a wonderful thought that although they are dead, they still speak through the lives they have lived. Patience Strong said: "and yet I shall not be alone. Some part of you will still remain."

We thank God for the precious gift of memory, how dearly would I like to recount the wonderful times of rich fellowship spent with the brethren at Buckie. It has been my privilege for a good many years to have met John and I have grown to love him as a brother beloved in the Lord. His love and service for the Master he loved, others at Buckie can better than myself testify.

I think it was Rutherford who said:-
"They lose nothing who gain Christ."

"As some rare perfume in a vase of clay
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own,
So when Thou dwellest in a mortal soul.

All heaven's own sweetness seems
around it thrown."

"Long Long may the heart with such
memories be filled,
Like the vase in which roses have once
been distilled,

You may break, you may shatter the
vase as you will,
But the scent of the roses will cling round
it still."

May the Lord's richest blessing, He
who wept at the grave of Lazarus, be
with Betty, his family, and the Church
at Buckie.

Leonard Morgan.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dennyloanhead: The church here indeed have cause for rejoicing in that, on Tuesday 1st March, 1988, a young person Lee Scolin, was baptised into Christ, for remission of sins, having confessed his faith and belief in Christ.

We pray that our young brother will grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and that he will be a willing worker in the Lord's service.

We are truly thankful and grateful to God for the increase that He has given us at this time, and it will encourage us, and brethren elsewhere, not to weary in well-doing, and the proclaiming of the gospel.

To God be the praise and the glory.

Joe Malcolm. (Secretary)

Slamannan: Bro. and Sister John B. Wilson are moving to Inverness. Our hearts are saddened to lose them from our midst but yet we rejoice with them on John's achievement in gaining promotion at work.

Their presence and involvement in the Lord's church has been beneficial to everyone and certainly they will be greatly missed.

Our prayers go with them, and may God continue to shower His blessings upon them.

Grace Sneddon. (Secretary)

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place on 5th March at Dennyloanhead where a goodly number gathered in pleasant fellowship to discuss the subject of a Woman's role in the Church and is it as important as Men's? The chairman for the day was Peter Sneddon and the speakers were to be John Colgan, Tranent, and Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline. Unfortunately brother Colgan could not be present and so we had only the one speaker. Bro. Pearson dealt very well with the subject and stressed that a sister's role was subordinate but certainly not inferior. During the discussion which followed many questions were asked and most of them were answered. A great time was had by all. The sisters excelled themselves in the provision of refreshments. The next meeting will, God willing, be on 28th May, at Wallacestone when the subject will be "Does the Bible guide us as to what bread should be used at the Lord's Table"? (Substantially the same question came up a few years ago). The Chairman will be Mark Plain and speakers Bro. J. Moncrieff, Haddington, and Bro. D. Cahlmers, Dalmeilington. It was suggested that additional brethren should subscribe their names to the list of speakers for these meetings.

H. Davidson. (Secretary)

OBITUARY

Buckie: As we go to press we have heard of the sad passing of brother John Geddes. We share the grief of all the brethren there and send our sympathy and prayers to Mary and all those who mourn. No doubt we shall have more details next issue.

Editor.

COMING EVENTS

New Cumnock: The church here intends, God willing, to hold a short gospel MISSION on 3rd, 4th and 5th May, 1988, in the TOWN HALL, at 7.p.m. each

evening. Speakers: Andrew Sharp (Newtongrange) Dean English (Livingstone). Please support us with your presence: if not, by your prayers.

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

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

SOCIAL

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

A warm welcome awaits all who can join us in happy Christian fellowship. Singing items greatly appreciated. Please contact Sister Mary Geddes, "Elmbank", Ianstown, Buckie. Tel. No. 0542-33793.

THOUGHTS ON TIME

Time like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away:
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

Viewed broadly time has three dimensions - Past, Present, Future. "Distance (in time as well as in space) lends enchantment to the view." A distorted vision of the past tends to draw our eyes from the realities of the present and to fill our minds with satisfaction, for it magnifies

our achievements and minimizes our failures, eventually lulling us into self-satisfied complacency.

On the other hand if we realise the error of dwelling upon the past — the time which has gone beyond recall — we draw our minds forward, we find it all too easy to swing into rosy visions of the future. Very quickly we are lost in radiant views of those adventures we propose; of the deeds we intend to perform; of the sacrifices we mean to make. But, the time is not yet ripe for all these things.

We are so like the pendulum of a clock, swinging from one extreme to the opposite. We would like to stop the clock, Oh that we might realise that the past has gone for ever and the future never arrives: all we truly have is NOW ! Paul writes "Already it is time to wake out of sleep." Or as J. B. Philips translates, "wake up to reality !" God says " NOW, is the accepted time; NOW is the day of salvation."

If we are to adventure for the Lord, it must be NOW; If we would do a gallant deed, it must be done TO-DAY; if we would sacrifice, be it treasure (sold to give to the poor); be it sinful desire (resigned unto the purifying of the soul 1 John 3:3); be it righteous freedom (not excused to avoid offending a weaker brother); it must have immediate implementation. DO IT NOW !

PAUL JONES

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