

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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ISLAMIC FRUITS

It has just been announced today that the sentence of death, passed about a year ago by the Ayatollah Khomeini upon Salmon Rushdie, is still to be vigorously pursued and that every Muslim has a duty to seek Rushdie and murder him. It had been hoped that the drastic sentence by the late Ayatollah would, after his demise, have been reviewed and ameliorated by his successor: but this was not to be. Surely this is the unacceptable face of Islam and is rightly condemned world-wide. At one time we heard little about the Islamic faith and dismissed it as being restricted to, and a peculiarity of, lands on the other side of the world. With recent improvements in methods of communication, and especially the advent of T.V., we now find that the transactions of the Islamic world are rarely off our screens.

I am in no way qualified or competent to pontificate upon the religion of Islam, on its merits or demerits, but having just had a short holiday in Tunisia (an Islamic country) I have returned with the impressions of the average tourist. There will, no doubt, be some readers who have only a very vague notion about the origins and development of Mohammedism, and to those I offer, for what they are worth, the following basic, if superficial, remarks on the subject. (Brother Steven Masood and Allan Ashurst are, of course, the real experts on this topic and perhaps, at a later date, one of them could be prevailed upon to favour us with an article, or two, on "the fruits and outworkings of Islam", or similar theme).

Its Beginnings

Firstly, it should always be remembered that Christianity was already about 600 years old, when the Muslim religion was set in motion by Mahomet.

Mahomet (570-632) was born in Mecca (now in Saudi-Arabia) and although left an orphan was brought up by a poor, but kind, uncle. Many times he sojourned into Syria with trading caravans, all the time deploring the ignorance and lack of any ordered religious faith amongst his fellow Meccans and other Arabs. He was also oftentimes in discussions with Jews and Christians.

Mahomet (spelled variously as Muhammad, Mahommed etc) later married a rich widow named Khadija, and quickly rose from herd to merchant. Around 610 he began to regard himself as a prophet of God and claimed to receive visits from the archangel Gabriel. (There never has, of course, been any shortage of men claiming to be latter-day prophets and the process continues even to these modern days with Joseph Smith, 'Pastor' Russell etc., and a host of more recent Gurus and cult-figures). Mahomet denounced idolatry (common at that time) and declared that there was only one true and living God (notwithstanding that Jews and Christians had been teaching this for centuries). Indeed much of Mahomet's teachings greatly resemble things taught in the

N.T. Initially Mahomet was denounced by his family and friends and was obliged to flee to Medina, around 622. He had much more success in Medina and his following grew, so much so that he raised an army and returned a victor to Mecca in 630. Indeed, prior to his death in 632 he had subdued all Arabia. (This rapid success might have been influenced by the intimidation of force when conversion to Islam was offered). Mahomet's successors carried on the policy of making converts by force and soon the religion had spread to Asia Minor.

There are many factions and sects within Islam (about 80 in fact) and the first split came in 654 when Mahomet's son-in-law (Ali) became Caliph, and adherents were divided into Sunnites and Shiities. The Shiites insisted that the descendants of Ali are the only legitimate Caliphs, or leaders, of Islam. During the first two centuries Mohammedanism spread into Africa and Europe: particularly Spain. By the 11th and 12th centuries Asia Minor was almost completely Mohammedan and the faith had also spread into India. It was also accepted by the Turks and inspired them to military conquests which were such a menace to Europe during the 15th-17th centuries. In the 18th century they lost impetus and by the end of the First World War Turkey had almost ceased to be a European power. The faith of Islam is encapsulated in a sentence coined by Mahomet himself, viz. "There is no God but Allah, and Mahomet is his prophet", which is, I suppose a fairly predictable attitude. Currently there are well over 1,000 MILLION Muslims and since the recent bloody deposition of the Shah in Iran, and the consequent rise to power of the Ayatollahs, the Islamic faith is more aggressively militant than ever.

Their Sacred Book

"Islam" is an Arabic word which means "pious submission to the will of God" and is the name given to the whole group of peoples who accept the claims and teachings of Mahomet. Individually, they are called muslims.

The Koran (from the Arabic *qur'an* meaning, "that should be read") is the sacred book of Islam and is claimed to be revelations of God to Mahomet through visits from the archangel Gabriel, over a period of 23 years. It is alleged that after each visit from Gabriel, the 'prophet' (who, it is thought, could not write) dictated to a scribe the things revealed. His words were inscribed on palm leaves, bits of leather, whitened bones of sheep and any similar odds and ends available at the time. (Readers may feel that this, over a period of 23 years was a rather haphazard way for God to proceed in imparting eternal truths). Soon after Mahomet's death, because variant versions were beginning to appear, the Caliph Bekr (573-634) ordered the official compilation of an 'authentic' Koran.

The Koran is about as long as the N.T. and divided into 114 *suras*, or chapters. The book consists of history, legends, prophecies, moral precepts and laws. The history is chiefly about O.T. characters and many of the laws are similar to those of Judaism and Christianity. Moses, Jesus and Mahomet are named as the greatest in the line of prophets sent by God to "lead mankind into the paths of truth". It seems that Mahomet held the Bible in high regard (as well he might) and the Koran lays upon the faithful a duty of giving good treatment to Jews and Christians, i.e. "to the peoples of the Book". The Koran's main tenets are (1) there is only one God: (2) prayers must be made at least five times daily: (3) giving of alms to the poor: (4) fasting at set times: and (5) at least one pilgrimage to Mecca in a lifetime. Obviously the Koran deals with more than this, but these five points are a rough generalisation. It also prohibits gambling, drinking of alcohol, eating the flesh of the pig, lending money at high interest rates, and gives women the same rights as men, including the right to hold and inherit property.

General Impressions

Naturally, it is quite impossible in a short visit (two weeks) to any country to be qualified to comment fairly and intelligently upon it, but one does get some general impressions.

If, for instance, the women of Tunisia enjoy equal rights with men, the fact could easily escape the notice of the casual observer, for women are rarely (never) seen with men when socialising. Each evening the hotel bar was well patronised, not by tourists but with local Tunisians, but it was an all-male domain and women were not to be seen. Womean, however, were prominently to be seen as the bearers of burdens, and doers of the menial tasks, and certainly appeared to be kept in the background. Readers might also be surprised to hear that the bar was filled each evening with Tunisians in view of the strong prohibition against the consumption of alcohol: this was also a surprise to all the tourists.

One also got the strong impression that homosexuality was fairly widespread: and in fact as time went on it seemed that the hotel was the trysting place of men (locals and tourists) who were that way inclined. Indeed, this writer was persistently propositioned, in no uncertain manner, on an otherwise deserted beach, twice by the same fat and squalid individual. This may, of course, be a reflection upon my personal appearance or upon the man's desperation, but I certainly hope not. In any case, too much can not be made of this very sad situation, in view of the fact that 'homosexuality' is becoming rather 'popular' in Britain (and the world). And such men are no longer importuning in the back streets and public toilets but are proudly declaring themselves amongst M.P.'s; Universities, the Church of England, and now (would we believe) amongst Scottish Judges. Just this week the Church of England has been passing ecclesiastical declarations to make things much easier for the fairly large proportion of homosexuals amongst their clergy.

One of the main incongruities, however, must surely be the fact that Muslims must pray five times per day, but yet can't be trusted between times. As mentioned, the Koran requires muslims to engage in ritual prayers; i.e. 5 times daily every day of the week. Most tourists to Islamic countries complain of being awakened at 6 a.m. each morning with the wailing "call to prayer" (which occurs morning, noon and night) by the *muezzin* stationed on the mosque minaret. (Actually I am informed that they merely play a tape recording nowadays, and it certainly sounded like that each morning). The theme of the ritual prayers is "Show me thy straight path" and the average Muslim recites this 34 times per day. However, in spite of this desire, expressed 34 times per day, it was still not possible to trust any of the local people and one was warned upon arrival about prevalent theft and confidence tricks. Purses and wallets had to be firmly buttoned away and all cameras and bags had to be worn across the chest to prevent theft of the same, which, apparently would otherwise have been inevitable. Even then, one tourist had the bottom of the bag slit with a knife and the contents gently removed. Again, this writer, who does not part with money easily, was conned out of £5: an eloquent testimony to the skill in deviousness of Muslim traders.

The Fruits of Islam

Clearly the Koran is not given universal recognition throughout the Islamic world, for theft in Saudi-Arabia is rewarded by the cutting off of the offending hand, or hands. Had this happened in Tunisia few of the traders would have been able to handle money or goods. Similarly, in countries like Saudi-Arabia the consumption of alcohol would not be tolerated, much less its sale. Even non-Islamic visitors and workers in Saudi-Arabia (British and otherwise) are publicly flogged and imprisoned if found with a glass in their hands. It was explained that Tunisia is one of the most 'liberal' of the Islamic lands and who would disagree. It is, a 'Third World' country

and obviously very poor. It has been truly said that a nation can not rise above its religion and one had the feeling that that truism applied there. Tunisia is probably 'liberal' because its economy depends largely upon tourism, and there are, everywhere, huge modern hotels some of which can cope with almost 2,000 residents at one time. These masses of tourists demand drink and 'a piece of the action' and so bars, discos, dance-halls, night-clubs abound and are heavily patronised (by tourists and locals).

What then, if anything, can we learn from all this? How, indeed, would the 'Christian' religion stand up to close scrutiny. I suppose that a Muslim coming to Britain (and there are vast numbers here) would be extremely shocked at what goes on in a 'Christian' country. Tunisia is said to be 'liberal' in its approach to its Islamic religion, and on that basis Britain would have to be described as 'extremely liberal' (in fact totally uninhibited) with regard to the Christian religion. Thus any religious comparison between Tunisia (as representing Islam,) and Britain (as representing Christianity) fails completely by virtue of the fact that Britain is not a 'Christian' country whereas Tunisia is an Islamic one. And nowadays even amongst 'Churches of Christ' we hear of 'liberals' and 'conservatives'. Again, with reference to ritual prayers, it is surely quite possible for Christians to regard prayer as much a ritual as do the Muslims. Quite often we sing hymns quite oblivious of the words, with our minds miles away. The Breaking of Bread can also become ritualistic; with us failing to discern the Lord's body, if we are not careful. Nor is it impossible for us to engage in prayer and then later cheat the tax-man or sell a duff car. And so, in reality, any criticism we aim at Islam, we could quite as readily apply to ourselves. We can't be too critical of others when we see what passes for 'Christianity' in the world, and when we examine our own limitations.

However, when we compare the true latter-day prophet, Jesus Christ, with all the pale imitations it is then that our confidence returns. Mahomet, for all his pretensions and obvious success in drumming up a great following, was, after all, just one of the many false Christs: and it shows. Jesus said that any person (or indeed, any system) can be judged solely by its fruits, and using this criterion Islam does not emerge well. Surely the pictures the world has of Islam is one of aggressive intolerance. We see, regularly, hordes of frenzied Iranians shaking clenched fists at the world and hurling threats and verbal abuse at all the 'enemies of Allah'. This seems par-for-the-course in a country where death squads shoot a regular quota of 'enemies' and which has just emerged, economically exhausted, from a horrendous, bloody and futile war with a neighbouring Islamic country involving the needless slaughter of millions of young men, and the use of nerve gasses to kill civilians. Could we envisage Christ passing a death sentence upon any man, especially for having written a few 'blasphemous' words. Particularly could we imagine Christ commanding His disciples to seek out such a man and to murder him? Christ came to give Life, and to give it more abundantly: and to forgive men their trespasses. Islam seems to thrive on threats and to revel in death. A religion is only as good as it makes us. We can see what Islam has made of the Iranians.

Editor.

GLEANINGS

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

PAUL IN ARABIA

"It was God's Essential and Eternal Son: it was God's very deepest completest, and most crowning revelation possible of His only-begotten Son; that God, in such grace and truth, made to Paul in Arabia ...

A revelation impossible adequately to describe. A revelation made by God of His Son, most inward, most profound, most penetrating, most soul-possessing: most

enlarging to the soul, most uplifting, and most upholding: most assuring, most satisfying, most sanctifying: intellectual, spiritual, experimental, evangelical: all-renewing and all-transforming: full of truth, full of love, full of assurance, full of holiness, full of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. Jesus of Nazereth appeared to Saul the persecutor, as He had already appeared to Mary Magdalene, and to the ten disciples, and to Thomas. But God the Father His son in Paul the Apostle, as He had never revealed Him before, and as He has never revealed Him since in mortal man."

Alexander Whyte.

IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me up upon a rock." Psalm 27:5

REACTION

The time of trouble always brings a reaction, and in that reaction we are prone to lose the true balance of life. One of the best examples is a very familiar incident drawn from the Old Testament. The prophet Elijah, at the foot of Carmel, is a strong man, at whose faith and courage we marvel. We gaze in wonder at his colossal fearlessness, and are altogether un-prepared for what follows. A few words from a woman's tongue, and in fear, Elijah flees into the desert, and prays that God will take away his life as an abject failure.

'I, EVEN I ONLY, AM LEFT

The sense of desolating loneliness comes over him, and he gives expression to the anguish of his spirit in the words: **'I, even I only, am left'**. How very human, and how heartbreaking! Do you ever feel to be ploughing a lonely furrow? Have you experienced this desolating sense of loneliness? It is a terrible thing to feel you are fighting a lone battle. Yet such is the fantasy of reaction to things. But after the wind, and the earthquake, and the fire had gone, in the silence that followed, God told Elijah He had seven thousand men in Israel who had remained loyal to their trust."

Allen Murray.

REFUGE — REST — REFRESHMENT

"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and the glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Psalm: 16-17.

"Moses the grand leader of Israel's host, had left a palace and was wandering with them in the wilderness with no certain dwelling place. Looking up to the eternal God he said **"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."** In Him (God) His people had ever found refuge, tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Moses, in that far off age, spoke of God as a home, a shelter and defence and today we sing

O God, our hope in ages past,
Our hope for years to come
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

... Like Moses we could pray **'So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.'** Life is short and uncertain we need to learn to use every day wisely and well."

Edward Jess.

"YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN"

"That nothing good has come to be established amongst men, except at a price, except by devotedness and suffering, except by faith in the future and consequent pain; let us get hold of the fact that without shedding of blood there is no emancipation from any former darkness; and let us understand that all the light of life, as we know it and enjoy it, came to us by the way of the Cross, by the payment of an incalculable

price. That being so, we have a duty. At least one thing is certain, "we are not our own." There must be no longer any talk amongst people who claim to have grown out of their childhood, talk of doing what they like, of being their own masters, and so forth.

"PASS IT ON UNSOILED, UNREDUCED"

"We are here; and everything which we prize has come to us through the faith and sorrow, through the blood and tears, of those who have gone before. And we are here to pass it on unsoiled, un-reduced; nay, we are to build something greater upon their ancient foundations."

John A. Hutton.

"I COULD NOT DO WITHOUT THEE"

I could not do without Thee, O Saviour of the lost,
Whose precious blood redeemed me At such tremendous cost:
Thy righteousness, Thy pardon, Thy Sacrifice, must be
My only hope and comfort, My glory and my plea.

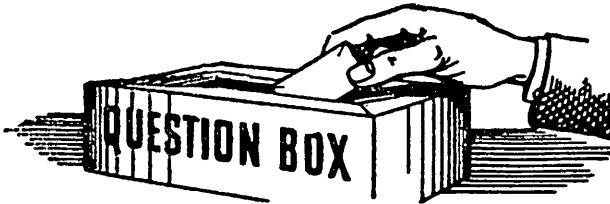
I could not do without Thee, I cannot stand alone,
I have no strength or goodness, No wisdom of my own:
But Thou, beloved Saviour, Art all in all to me;
And weakness will be power, If leaning hard on Thee.

I could not do without Thee, For years are fleeting fast,
And soon in solemn silence, The river must be pass'd:
But Thou wilt never leave me; And, though the waves run high,
I know thou wilt be near me, And whisper, "It is I."

Frances R. Havergal.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

Correction. — In last month's "Gleanings" 1980 (Miss Precious) should have been 1890.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I was brought up to believe that the Church of Christ was the true Church and the only church that had the right doctrine. Has anything changed from my father's time. What do you think?"

It is perfectly true that in the early years of this century leaders of Churches of Christ expressed themselves positively and forcibly. Although it was not said in so many words, the teaching of the Church, and the attitude of exclusion to the denominational world in the worship of the Church, suggested that many thought that only members of Churches of Christ could be saved: I am convinced that this view is held today by some Church members even though, as I say, the claim is not made in so many words.

It seems to me that if I am a member of a local community of Christians, a so-called Church of Christ, I have to ask myself a series of questions, e.g., "How do I identify other members of the Body of Christ, the Church. Is it because they believe and practise exactly those things which I believe and practise? If they don't, are they excluded from my fellowship? If they are excluded and I believe myself to be a

Christian, am I saying, without articulating the exact words, that they are not Christians? If I say that I am not expressing that view, then on what basis am I withholding fellowship"? You see how difficult the reasoning becomes, and how necessary it is for us to clarify our thoughts.

The External of Christianity

We usually identify people by their external features and other physiognomical characteristics; a face, a voice, bodily posture, the way a person moves. An internal condition can be deduced from an observation of the external, e.g., anger, frustration, indifference, boredom, etc., but such internal conditions are not easy to ascertain, and can quite easily be misinterpreted by the observer.

I have thought that we in the Church of Christ base our judgment on whether or not a person is a Christian by an application of external criteria, e.g., has he been immersed in water; does he attend meetings regularly; does he do his quota of visiting; does he insist on one container for the wine at the Lord's Supper, etc.; you know the situation as well as I do (sisters please note that the 'he' is generic and applies to you also). Perhaps our minds have been concentrated too long on the externals of what a person has to do to become a Christian rather than on the internals of what he has to be. Please don't misunderstand me; it is extremely important that a person has to be immersed in water in order to be saved; that he attend regularly and assiduously to the worship and teaching of the Church; and that he be seen to be a caring person to all who come within his orbit; but I reiterate that obedience to such external criteria is not of itself indicative of a renewed inner man. I am stating the rather obvious hypothesis that mere obedience to the external requirements of the Gospel, important though that is, should not of itself be the definitive test as to whether a person is a true member of the Body of Christ. I may be wrong in my conclusions at this point, but if I am then it means that salvation can come by mere observance of the external requirements of the Gospel, a view which I can find little evidence for in the N.T.; on the contrary, the scathing denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees by our Master rings in my ears, "**Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for you are like unto white sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity**" (Matt. 23:27,28). We would hardly class Christians today in the same category as the Scribes and Pharisees but the principle is the same: whatever appears on the outside is not necessarily a true reflection of what is on the inside.

Toward Self-Destruction

The Church as we know it, has fulfilled, to some extent, its God-directed duty to preach the Gospel to others, and there has been some success, but because of its structure and doctrine it has also moved inexorably to a weakened state because of self-inflicted wounds. One of its great strengths has been in the autonomy of the local assembly, but paradoxically, this has been the root of one of its great weaknesses. The doctrine of the Church should not change because of the many local assemblies throughout the world; after all, we are all looking at the same Word. The vital weakness as I see it lies in our misunderstanding of a much cherished role; the role of mutual ministry.

Rather sadly, mutual ministry has come to mean mutual-mouth, and with this has arisen the spectre of the diversity of interpretation. Local assemblies have interpreted the Word as they understand it, and because other assemblies have not agreed with the interpretation, fellowship has been withheld from them. When challenged about this, remarks have been made something like this, "Oh, we're not denying fellowship; they can come and have fellowship with us," the plain implication being, of course, that we are right and they are wrong, so wrong in fact that their community

of Christians is no fit place for us. My simple logic tells me that is precisely how the Church views the **denomational** world, and if we consider the denominations to be in a 'lost' condition then my contention is that we also consider some of our fellow-Christians to be in the same condition.

Let me assure you that my recent heart attack has not suddenly deranged my mind; I abhor division in the Church. I cannot and would not endorse interpretations of the Scriptures which lead Christians into practices which at the best can only be described as dubious, but conversely I will never drift into the sort of exclusivism which says that I am right and everybody who disagrees with me is wrong. I have always worked on the principle that the resolution of differences of opinion involves **talking and discussing** with people, not shunning them. The personnel manager of a factory may despise the devious ways of some of the people he has to deal with, but he has to talk with them and try to work with them for the good of the Company objectives, while at the same time trying to convert them to his point of view. How on earth do we expect the love of God to overcome an indifferent and many times hostile world, if we, His ambassadors, display contempt for each other's point of view. But I'm not saying something that we don't already know; there are literally thousands of families whose **first resort**, when they disagree, is to refuse to speak to each other and eventually to leave each other. Is it not this selfish approach which causes so many initial break-downs of marriages?

The Healing Touch

I personally want to go on experiencing the 'burning heart' of the two who travelled to Emmaus. Even though Jesus knew their lack of knowledge and their misinterpretation of the events of the day, He nevertheless joined Himself to them and talked with them. Later, when He was known to them, they were to exclaim, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures". I shall never forget walking home from a Hindley Bible School one evening with our late brother John Kendrick. Those who knew him know that he held strong views, but that evening he opened up the scriptures to me so that my heart burned within me, and even though from Hindley to Newton is quite a step, I was not conscious of my feet touching the ground. But I would not have experienced that, nor have learned so much, if I had not walked with him 'by the way', and he would have remained a somewhat enigmatic person to me. Brethren, we do not always realise what can be accomplished when walking and talking 'by the way' with others.

Perhaps this is the way we should deal with our denominational friends who, I am sure, we look upon as 'lost'. It is not the slightest use our acting as an island of scriptural authority amid a sea of unremitted sin; we need to talk **with** them, not at them. It may be a slow process and we may not achieve the results we desire, but we shall at least satisfy our own longings for the progress of the Gospel, and perhaps convince them of our love and concern for them.

But what about our own aspirations, brethren, in our appreciation of mutual ministry? It is good to have the desire to speak the Gospel, but I personally would be far happier if the same desire existed to speak it to people **outside** the Church who have never heard it, as exists to speak it in the Church to those who know it and have obeyed it. But speaking is only one part of the mutuality of our ministry. We must have understanding hearts and minds; seek the good of each other; foster the gentle and compassionate nature; understand that people believe **what** they believe just as passionately as we do; try to correct misunderstanding without arrogance. More than this, we **must** devote ourselves, each one of us, to the Church; not to the bricks and mortar of the buildings which our fathers and forefathers may have helped to build, but to the **real Church**, each other. As Paul puts it, "**But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 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" (Eph. 4:15,16).

Let me make my own position perfectly clear. I am not proposing any dilution of the teaching of the Word. The Church of Christ has a refined appreciation of the Word, and I personally have not found any other teaching in any other religious body which I could embrace with confidence. However, I am appealing for a healing process within the Church, and a sympathetic hearing of, and a reasoned argument toward, other people's point of view. Perhaps then the Church could achieve the standing in the community which it ought to have, and be seen to be the authentic voice of God, which it is.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,
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MISINTERPRETING THE WORD OF GOD

Frederick Farrar wrote, "The misinterpretation of Scripture must be reckoned among the gravest calamities of Christendom." If honest men everywhere only had a common method by which to interpret the words of the Bible then a mutual and universal understanding would prevail and a scriptural unity would immediately follow in its wake. This would be true of course, only of those who love and honour God and his holy word.

It stands as a mystery to the author, why so little attention has been given to the science of interpretation as regards the Bible. Even our own people have not invested as heavily in this as needed. As a consequence, we have experienced many sorrows, even divisions, because Christian men misinterpreted the Scriptures and drove their misconceptions like a wedge into the body of Christ.

Again Farrar speaks: "And how often has the Bible thus been wronged! It has been imprisoned in the cells of alien dogma; it has been bound hand and foot in the grave clothes of human tradition; it has been entombed as in a sepulchre by systems of theology, and the stone of human power has been rolled up to close its door ..."

Another strange fact is man's weakness to know the correct approach for a sound interpretation but to be unable to overcome his own preferences in actual practice. For example this glowing truth from John Calvin, "It is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say." Yet no man has so ignored his principle in his teaching as did Calvin.

Some Miscellaneous Observations on Biblical Interpretation

1. Jeremy Taylor wrote, "Too many scholars have lived upon air and empty nothings, falling out about nothings and being very wise about things that are not and work not." How applicable this indictment is to modern Protestant and Catholic theologians. Sound Biblical training of prospective preachers is the best insurance against this seminary syndrome.

2. "Put nothing into the Scriptures, but draw out of them, and suffer nothing that is in them to remain hid" (J.A. Bengal). This motto should be posted on the wall of every Bible classroom and preacher's study.

3. The value of commentaries: "One great use of consulting commentaries is this, that all minds are liable to error, but not equally to the same errors. Thus, the ray of truth is refracted as it enters through the dusky medium of the mind of man, but different minds having different refractive powers, we can so adjust them as to countervail the defects of our own peculiar vision, and behold correctly the distant objects which revelation discovers, and form a correct outline of the remote, though rapidly approaching realities of eternity" (James Douglas).

A serious obstacle to an objective Bible research is dependence on one or a few authorities, or authorities of all the same stripe and kind. A serious Bible student will make use of many varied authorities, always sifting carefully to ferret out truth and discard error.

4. John Milton, the Puritan poet-preacher said, "A man be an heretic in the truth, and if he believes things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his beliefs be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy." Though some might reject these words as too strong, they reflect the thoughts of Acts 17:11 and 1 John 4:1. We must never be content to base our faith, our interpretation of Scripture, just on the basis of what the "brotherhood" thinks, or a gospel journal, or a Christian School or a notable preacher says. We must search the Scriptures to see if the things are so. Likewise we will try the spirits (preachers) for many false prophets are gone forth.

May we dedicate ourselves to the noble search for a correct knowledge of the truth that makes men free.

J. Waddey.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The *Scripture Standard* has been published since 1935 and I don't suppose many at that time gave much thought to the 1990's and the continuing publication of the magazine. There never seems to have been a quiet period in all that time, but rather an ongoing battle to stay in print. That it has made the 1990's is a testimony to the work and faith of many brethren across the country. Actually our support is wider than that and we are encouraged by brethren in many countries and have much to thank God for.

We are still cheerfully operating on a shoe-string, as the balance sheet shows, and very dependent on the generosity of brethren. We hope the magazine will stimulate and provoke to greater endeavour in the Lord's service. Your continuing support is greatly appreciated.

You will notice that there is no expenditure for Reading Cards in the balance sheet. Cards have been printed and distributed but the invoice arrived too late for inclusion in this balance.

Let me remind you again to check the address label on your magazine wrapper. On the top line it gives the month and year when your subscription expires. Prompt renewal makes mailing out much easier for me and saves a lot of time and effort preparing reminders.

Thank you again for your support and encouragement.

BALANCE SHEET 1989

INCOME		EXPEDITURE	
Bank current a/c	£644.49	Printing (12 issues)	£3361.20
Bank deposit a/c	6.13	Postage	430.00
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	650.62		3791.20
Subscriptions	2051.08	Bank current a/c	206.38
Gifts	1322.36	Bank deposit a/c	63.32
Bank Interest	36.84		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	£4060.90		£4060.90
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J. K. Kneller (Treasurer).

I have examined books, receipts, etc. and find them to be correct and in good order.

J. H. Currie, (Auditor), 13th Feb., 1990.

KINGDOM AND CHURCH

C. E. W. Dorris

Do you have doubts relative to the church and kingdom being the same institution? If so you might be benefited by reading the following from the pen of W. P. Skaggs, and Published in *Christian Leader*, September 7, 1920:

"Some of the brethren seem to be becoming rather doubtful about the kingdom and church. The time was when we all knew the church and kingdom to be the same institution, but now they are getting to be somewhat unsettled about the matter. What's the matter? Has some new evidence been discovered? If so I think someone that has the record should produce it. See? Brethren know they are in the church, but don't quite know whether or not they are in the kingdom. Of course there are many things we do not know, and there are many things for us to learn, and this may be one of them. But for me, I am quite sure that the church and kingdom are the same, at least so far as this life is concerned.

"If they are not the same, then, of course, they are different in some point of being. It seems to me that this difference must of necessity be either in regard to (1) the Head, (2) the Laws, (3) the Subjects, or (4) the Territory. This difference cannot be in regard to the head, for the head of the church and the king of the kingdom is the same. Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18), but Christ is king of the kingdom (Acts 17:7; Rev. 1:5; 17:14). (2) This difference cannot be in the laws, for the laws of the bible furnish all things that pertain to life and godliness. If there are different laws in the kingdom then they do not pertain to life and godliness. I mean the laws that are different from the laws for the church. (3) This difference cannot be in the subjects, for everyone born again is in the church (1 Pet. 1:22,23), but those born again enter the kingdom (John 3:3-5). Indeed the church is subject to Christ (Eph. 5:24). The church or those called out from sin,

compose the citizenship of the kingdom (Eph. 8:19); "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (4) Neither can this difference be found in the territory, for the territory of the church is the territory of the kingdom. The Lord rules in the heart. 'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which ye are called in one body and be ye thankful.' (Col. 3:15). Again, 'I will put my laws into their minds, and on their hearts also will I write them.' (Heb. 8:10).

"I think it would be well to consider these questions. Has the Lord two spiritual governments on earth? If so, are they both necessary to my salvation? If not, then which one is necessary? And how may I become a member of it?"

"True, the church has not accomplished all its mission in the world. There is much yet to do. The future may find the world full of the glory of God, and the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of the Lord and his church, but this does not prove a difference between the church and kingdom, but only a greater work accomplished." —

From (Gospel Guardian)

Did you know . . . the Bible speaks of Christians in Galatia who had *fallen from God's grace*? (Read it in Gal. 5:4) That's right; and it really isn't so strange a passage, for Jesus insists that his people be "**faithful unto death**" (Rev. 2:10), necessarily implying the possibility of the faithful becoming UNfaithful. Heb. 3:12-13 makes it clear doesn't it; "**Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in DEPARTING from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**" Remember, these are saved people being warned against sin — *condemning sin!* If we will hear it, such passages plainly advise that it *does* make a difference how we conduct ourselves after we have been baptised. Church member or no, hobnob with the Devil and his co-horts now, and you will be their companion in eternity.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Apr. 1	Psa.107:1-15	2 Cor.1:21-2:17
Apr.8	Ex. 34:21-35	2 Cor.3
Apr.15	Jer. 38:1-13	2 Cor.4
Apr.22	Ecc.3	2 Cor.5
Apr.29	Isa.52	2 Cor.6:7-1

THE FIRST EPISTLE

Paul made reference to his first letter in this second epistle: **"I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. For I wrote to you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you ... The reason I wrote to you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything"** (2:3-4, 9 N.I.V.). I mentioned earlier that Christian love is tough. Paul in his love for the saints at Corinth did not sweep their problems under the proverbial carpet, but faced up to them boldly and fearlessly.

The case of the immoral brother is again considered (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). Paul sought their forgiveness and reaffirmation of love (2:5-10). The man obviously had repented of his evil ways in deep sorrow.

The Glory Of The New Covenant

The old covenant came through Moses. Moses is, undoubtedly, one of the greatest characters of the Bible. He was the right man for the job in leading the Children of Israel out of the land of bondage (Egypt) to the promised land (Canaan). One of the great tragedies of history is in the fact that Moses saw that promised land, but did not set foot in it because of an act of disobedience to God.

The old covenant was written in tablets of stone. We read in the book of Exodus: **"The tablets were the work of God: the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tablets"** (32:16). Also, **"And he (Moses) wrote on the tablets the**

words of the covenant — the Ten Commandments" (34:28). The latter verse refers to the new stone tablets because the first tablets had been broken by Moses out of anger for the sins of the people (Exodus 32:19). Paul wrote: **"You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts"** (3:3, N.I.V.).

Jeremiah spoke of the new covenant in his day: **"Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: which my covenant they break, although I was a husband unto them, says the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, And write it in their hearts: and will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying. Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord: For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more"** (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The Hebrew writer quoted these words from Jeremiah (Hebrews 8:8-12) and emphasised that the new covenant was superior and had, for example, a greater high priest, better sacrifices, better promises and a better hope. Altogether, it was different and better.

Paul also emphasised that the ministry of the Spirit that brings righteousness was more glorious than the ministry that brought death (3:7-8). He himself was involved in the greater ministry and gave his all as an apostle of Jesus. (Please remember that Paul was one of the great commentators on the old covenant. Anything, therefore, that he wrote in comparing the two covenants should be carefully weighed by every searcher for

truth.)

Paul: A Great Servant

Let me quote for you just some comments on the great apostle Paul. **C.H. Dodd:** In Paul the devout passion for conduct which distinguished the Jewish religion is seen liberated, enlightened, made spiritual and personal, by what Paul found in Christ ... Because of this, Paul is a great figure in the history of religion." **F.F. Bruce:** "For half a century and more I have been a student and teacher of ancient literature, and to no other writer of antiquity have I devoted so much time and attention as to Paul. Nor can I think of any other writer, ancient or modern, whose study is, so richly rewarding as his. This is due to several aspects of his many-faceted character: the attractive warmth of his personality, his intellectual stature, the exhilarating release effected by his gospel of redeeming grace, the dynamism with which he propagated that gospel throughout the world, devoting himself single-mindedly to fulfilling his mission entrusted to him on the Damascus road ('this one thing I do') and labouring more abundantly than all his fellow apostles - 'yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.'" **W.J. Dawson:** "It may be said that Saul of Tarsus, as he entered Damascus that day, carried with him the future of Christianity. For it was his genius, his intensely idealistic and yet practical spirit, his magnificent moral enthusiasm and self-sacrifice that were to do more than any other agencies to secure the domination and justify the ideals of Christianity ... When a man collects all his powers, and says, 'This one thing I do', he has clothed himself with a force before which Time and Death are impotent." **William Barclay:** "In order that Christianity might go out to all the world a unique person was necessary - and Paul was that person. Here uniquely was the man of two worlds, the man who was Jewish to the last fibre of his being, but also the man who knew the Romans and the Greeks as few Jews knew them. Here indeed

was the man prepared by God to be the bridge between two worlds, and to be the bridge by which the Gentiles might come to God." **Alexander Campbell:** "Paul was not one of the original twelve. He was not chosen to be a companion of Jesus, to be an eye and ear-witness of what Jesus said and did. He was called to attest and proclaim the truth of Christianity to the world: to the pagan world, savage and civilized. All Gentile nations were embraced in his commission. He saw Jesus, after he had spent some months persecuting Him."

Dear reader, in the light of these quotations, study again Paul's words in this portion of scripture under consideration. If they do not inspire you to greater efforts in the Lord's service, then I do not know what will.

Earthen Vessels

Paul wrote: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (4:6-7). The treasure still lies in earthen vessels and it is the task today of every Christian, who is part of the body of Christ, to make known Jesus of Nazareth, the true light of the world. A good example of God working through a human being is seen in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). It was not the angel who preached unto him, nor the Spirit, but Philip the evangelist, a man brought down from Samaria for the great task. Yes, the angel and the Spirit assisted, but the eunuch heard only Philip.

A New Creature

"Therefore", said Paul, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (5:17). I wish to point out that there are two main Greek words for new - *kainos* and *neos*. *Neos* signifies new in respect of time and *kainos* signifies new in respect of quality

or nature. Paul here used the latter term. In other words, he spoke of a complete change in the sinner – to newness of life in Christ Jesus.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

GHANA APPEAL — REPORT

To date 5th February, 1990 The Ghana Appeal has collected £10,345.80p. This has been used in the following way:—

Money for Initial Trip	£1524.16
Money left in Ghana	619.37
Money sent for registration	4,600.00
Money for Medical Aid	595.00
Tracts printed in	
Ghanian Language	400.00
Money to Brethren's	
specific needs	962.00
Money for Benevolence	168.00
Money for schooling	60.00
Megaphone & rechargeable	
batteries	303.13
Money in bank for allocation	1104.24
Cash in hand	3.00

Over and above the money collected, I have received tracts, Bibles, correspondence courses and glasses. These have been distributed as evenly as possible to the churches in Accra, Koforidua, Patriensa, Huhunya, Odunasi, Takoradi, Asuansi and Dunkwa.

David Arku-Mensah has recently informed me, that the tracts to be printed in the Ghanian language may be printed in South Africa. As far as registration is concerned, all the paperwork has been done, but they still await the outcome of the Government. There was a general meeting of selected men from various congregations, to discuss the aid being sent to Ghana. Some congregations already have land, but if they don't start building soon, they may lose what they have and possibly spoil their opportunity for the future. Therefore some money has been allocated to help out in this need and it was felt that no-one would object to this. The church in Accra (where David Arku-Mensah meets) has to date been unable to purchase a suitable

piece of ground for building. He asks the Brethren in Britain to remember them in their prayers.

There have been seven deaths in the churches since Bill and Ann returned. David informed me of two baptisms recently in Accra.

Albert Atitso's wife whose baby, Millicent died recently, has been informed that Gladys has sickle cell disease. This is someone who will be able to benefit from the medical fund. We await more information on Gladys, but meanwhile please remember her in your prayers.

There is a Brother in Ghana appealing for some money to help him rebuild his house which has been half destroyed. (His house was built 70 years ago in mud.)

We purchased a megaphone for a brother in Ghana, as some brethren prefer to use these, because apart from attracting many people to listen, many also will listen privately from indoors.

Once again may I express my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to these Ghana Appeals. I hope that this mini report convinces of the good that your donations have been put to.

If there is any aspect of this report that anyone wishes expanded, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Graeme Pearson,
13 Fairways,
Dunfermline,
Fife. KY12 0DU.
Tel. No. 0383 728624.

OBITUARIES

Slammanan: It is with great sorrow and regret that we report the death of sister Agnes Wilson on Thursday, 1st February, 1990.

Sister Agnes was a devoted member of the church for 60 years and faithful. She was a regular attender at all church meetings until poor health within the last two years prevented her. We rejoice that our sister has now gone from her pain and all her discomfort and gone to be with her Saviour.

Brother John Wilson, Slammanan, officiated at the funeral. Our deepest sympathies go out to her son John B. and Frances (her daughter-in-law), to Niall and Graeme, grandchildren. We commend them all to the care of our Heavenly Father.

Grace Sneddon (Sec.)
Newtongrange: It is with regret and great sorrow that we report the passing from this life of our beloved brother James Morris. Jim was aged 72 years and died in the early hours of Sunday, Jan 14th 1990 in the Edinburgh City Hospital. The funeral was conducted by Bro. J. H. Currie, at Mortonhall Crematorium.

Jim has been a christian for more than 50 years. In his service for his Lord he served the church faithfully and long. As Sunday school teacher and superintendent; as Preacher and teacher; and latterly as precentor: he gave of his all. In his time Jim, did much voluntary work on the church premises, being a man of many talents. Jim was much respected and loved, both in and out of the church. It was said of him that he was "a true christian gentleman."

He will be sadly missed: yet we sorrow "not as others which have no hope" but take comfort, and rejoice in the knowledge that our loss is his gain: precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

We commend Jim's loved ones who remain, to God the source of all His comfort and peace, and we pray that they shall be sustained in their hour of need.

Jim was a true disciple of the Lord and many will assuredly miss him ...

A.P. Sharp Secretary.

COMING EVENTS

Annual Social

Tranent: Saturday 17th March, 4 p.m. Loch Centre, Speakers: John Wilson (Slamannan), Peter Sneddon (Dennyloanhead).

Annual Social

Hayfield Road, Kirkcaldy: April 21st 3.30.p.m. (Tea 4.45 p.m.) Speaker: Mike Heinemeir.

Anniversary Meeting: 100th Anniversary Meeting April 7th at 6.p.m. at Brighton. Speaker: Geoffrey Daniell (Bristol). Light refreshments provided after the meeting. All welcome.

LOW COST GHANA APPEAL

My appeal this month for Ghana, is for packets of seeds (cabbage, turnip, onion, tomato and lettuce) as many of the Brethren have small plots of land on which they try to grow crops, to help feed themselves and their families. In some cases, their produce is sold by the women, in the marketplace to help supplement the family income.

Anyone wishing to help, can either send money or seeds to me at the address below.

May I thank all involved for their continued help and support in the work in Ghana.

Cheques should be made out to:—
 Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal).

Graeme Pearson,
 13 Fairways,
 Dunfermline.
 Fife KY12 0DU.

Tel. No. (0383) 728624.

P.S. Many thanks to Anon for the donation received of £40 dated 29th January, 1990. — G. Pearson.

THANKS

Bro. and Sister John B. Wilson wish to thank all those who attended the funeral service of sister Agnes Wilson, and all those who phoned or sent cards and letters at this sad time.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Bro. and Sister John B. Wilson, formerly of 39 Moraypark Terrace, Culloden, Inverness, have now moved to:—
 40 Herd Green, Knightsbridge West, Livingston, West Lothian, EH54 8PU.
 Tel. (0506) 35374.

"FORGIVE ME WHEN I WHINE"

"Today upon a bus, I saw A lovely maid
with golden hair

I envied her—she seemed so gay—And
oh, I wished I were so fair.

When suddenly she rose to leave,

I saw her hobble down the aisle,
She had one foot and wore a crutch,
But as she passed, a smile.

Oh, God, forgive me when I whine,
I have two feet—the world is mine.

And when I stopped to buy some
sweets,
The lad who served me had such
charm.

He seemed to radiate good cheer,
His manner was so kind and warm.

I said, 'It's nice to deal with you,
Such courtesy I seldom find'.

He turned and said, 'Oh thank you sir!'
And I saw that he was blind.

Oh God, forgive me when I whine,
I have two eyes—the world is mine.

Then, when walking down the street,
I saw a child with eyes of blue.

He stood and watched the others play,
It seemed he knew not what to do,

I stopped a moment then I said:
'Why don't you join the others, dear?'

He looked ahead without a word,
And then I knew, he could not hear.

Oh' God, forgive me when I whine,
I have two ears—the world is mine.

With feet to take me where I'd go,
With eyes to see the sunset's glow,
With ears to hear what I should know,
I'm blessed indeed.
The world is mine:
Oh, God, forgive me when I whine."

BREVITIES

The work of evangelism is the duty and
privilege of every church member.

The Bible is a book which will not yield
up its riches and sweetness except to him
who is a dilligent, faithful and earnest
student.

Christian brotherhood obliterates all
social and class distinctions.

All the exercise some get is jumping to
conclusions.

Do not permit your zeal to get ahead of
your knowledge.

The best of men are men at best.

Learning is like rowing upstream —
not to advance is to draw back.

Remedy your deficiencies and your
merits will take care of themselves.

He who will not reason is a bigot:
he who cannot is a fool: and he who
dare not is a slave.

Duty is the thing that one expects from
others.

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