

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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PEERLESS PICTURES

Those of us who use the Scripture Reading Cards will know that we have reached Matt. Chap. 13: a juncture at which Jesus begins to speak in parables, and gives His reasons for employing them. It might, therefore, be a profitable exercise to ruminate a little on the matter of Christ's parables and on the great attraction they have for each succeeding generation. Probably the best definition ever given of 'a parable' came not from Trench, Greswell or Lisco but came from a little girl in Sunday School when she said "A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning". The Greek *parabole* simply means 'a similitude' and signifies "To set side by side. A parable is, therefore, literally a placing side by side for comparison and involves a similitude or illustration of one subject by the employment of another. The more we try and explain it the more we shall gravitate to the little girl's definition. There are, of course, other figures of speech which profess to draw such comparisons, e.g. the similitude; the proverb; the metaphor; the fable; the myth; the allegory. Paul himself refers to an allegory (Gal.4:24) and draws its application, but a parable differs from all these figures of speech in that a narrative (or story) is usually employed which is at once sensible and realistic. Fables and myths also draw upon narrative but involve monsters and lower forms of animal life (and even inanimate objects are given the power of speech. Fables usually are intended to impart some lesson in *worldly prudence* whereas parables always have a "heavenly meaning" and aspire to some lesson of a *spiritual nature*. Fables and allegories may be regarded as a species of poetical imagination whereas parables are concerned with the realities of life and teach some important moral truth.

Parables exhibit characteristics of human endeavour which have a parallel in the ideal or spiritual world, and are illustrations of a powerful kind. For example; years after hearing a good 'sermon' we may, perhaps, forget the subject of it but we are unlikely to forget the illustrations. All of our Lord's parables are beautifully appropriate, and unlike fables or myths, never jar our intelligence or sensitivity.

Parables in the Old Testament

Jesus honoured us by giving us some forty wonderful parables but He did not originate this method of teaching. Parables are mentioned about a dozen times in the O.T. but the Hebrew word *Mashal* (for parable) really means something more akin to proverbs than to the parables spoken by Jesus. However, in 2 Sam. 12:1-10, we have perhaps one of the most telling and beautiful parables in the entire Bible. Nathan, we read, was sent by God to convict David of his sin. Nathan did not bluntly confront David with his crime but first of all told him a story. Nathan described two men in a

certain city; one was rich with many flocks and herds, but the other was abjectly poor. “... poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter”. The rich man had a visitor and rather than kill a lamb of his own many flocks for a meal, he stole the poor man’s lamb, killed it and dressed it. David’s anger at this callous and wicked deed was fierce and he vowed that “the man that hath done this thing shall surely be put to death”. Consider David’s shock when Nathan replied, “*Thou art that man*”. What could have been more effective in achieving Nathan’s purpose than this simple parable? See also Judges 9:7 (the bramble).

However, it is in the N.T. that we find parables in the sense in which we usually employ the term. They are, incidentally, confined to the lips of Jesus and it seems that none of the apostles ever tried to copy this method of teaching.

The Parable’s Utility

Even prior to speaking in parables Jesus had (in previous chapters of Matthew) illustrated His teaching with ‘picture’ language, and had spoken of wise and foolish builders; of salt losing its savour; of lights under bushels; of God’s providence to birds and dressing of lillies; of new cloth on old garments; of new wine in old bottles; of children playing in the market places, etc. William Barclay describes these as “parables in embryo” and refers to some of the main advantages of parables. For instance, parables instantly get our attention for, regardless of our age, we are all like children in the sense that we like “to hear a story”. A picture is worth a thousand words they say, and yet a parable paints a picture in words. We might spend a long and fruitless time in trying to explain what is meant by “neighbourliness” but the parable of the “The Good Samaritan” gives a definition capable of being understood by even simple, unlettered, people. We might try to describe the extent of God’s love for fallen man, but the parable of “The Lost Sheep” or “The Prodigal Son” accomplish the task in a simple but very powerful manner. In short, parables help us to grasp things difficult to understand, by a contemplation of things we do understand. The parable also allows us to discover truth for ourselves. we hear the parable and we, personally, have to make our own application. In that way the truth becomes our own particular property. As we shall see, later, from the words of Isaiah, the parable was designed to withhold its truth from those too lazy, indifferent or prejudiced to search for it, and reserved its blessings for those who made the effort. This is, of course, in accordance with what Jesus taught in the ‘Sermon in the Mount’: i.e. only those who seek will find, and only those who knock will find an opening.

The Interpretation Thereof

The object of the parable is often stated but certainly not always. For instance in the parable of “**And He spake a parable unto them to this end, men ought always to pray and not to faint.**” Here the purpose is stated but mostly we are left to interpret the parable for ourselves with the help of the circumstances obtaining just prior to the parable, or just subsequent to it. For example, the parable of “**The Unmerciful Servant**” was our Lord’s answer to Peter’s question, “**How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him.**” The lesson was designed to illustrate that we who have freely been forgiven all our sins are thereby bound to an unlimited forgiveness of our fellowmen. The three parables; “**The Lost Sheep**”, “**The Lost Coin**” and “**The Prodigal Son**” were all addressed to those who had murmured against Jesus for receiving and eating with ‘sinners’, and usually the object, with a little investigation and thought, can be found.

We should remember that not all the parables involve a lengthy narrative – indeed some are extremely short and abrupt. For example we read, (Luke 6) “**And He spake a parable unto them; Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the**

ditch?" Also in Mark 7:17, after Jesus had taught that not the things entering into a man (but the things of the heart emanating from the man) defile the man, the disciples came and asked Jesus the meaning of *this parable*. No stories are involved in these but obviously the germ of a parable is present in each of these two examples. We have only to work on the hint given to us in some parables and we can visualise the rest. We can, in the mind's eye, see two blind men leading each other along the road, struggling for a while with great difficulty to stay in the road but eventually both falling into the ditch at the wayside. Likewise we can conjure up a mental picture of the pure and noble-spirited man taking his bread with unwashed hands, while the hypocrite and oppressor of the poor washes his hands meticulously before dining. Both rise from the table and return, one to his career of benevolence, and the other to his wrongs and injustice. Or again, the banquet is spread and the guests arrive in all their finery. A vain guest enters and appropriates the best seat. A more worthy but humble guest arrives later and quietly takes a more secluded position. The Master of the House notices the incongruity and asks, in the presence of all the assembly, that the two change places. Thus in each of those cases we have the substance, if not the form, of a parable and in each incident of common life an illustration of higher truth.

Reading Too Little Or Too Much Into Parables

We should make a real effort to capture the full strength of each parable. For instance, the whole beauty of the parable of "**The Lost Sheep**" is lessened if we look upon sheep with the casual disregard sheep receive in this country. By contrast the eastern shepherd loved each one in the flock, and like the picture drawn by Nathan, probably reared each lamb as if it was his own child. Thus the motive of the shepherd in the search for a lost sheep was not merely the recovery of an item of property but love and compassion for a simple straying creature, harmless and exposed to every danger. Similarly the strength of the parable of "**The Good Samaritan**" is lost if we fail to appreciate the estimation in which the Samaritans, Priests and Levites were respectively held in Israel — the contempt held for the Samaritans and the halo of sanctity which appeared to attach to the Priest and Levite. The parable of "**The Wheat and the Tares**" is weakened if we do not know that the 'tares' referred to were plants wholly different from those to which the term is now applied. The 'tares' of the parable were, especially in the early stages of growth, very similar to wheat in appearance and indeed belonged to the same family; contained very similar ingredients when analysed, but had such a different effect on the human body if eaten. Thus we must try and familiarise ourselves with this kind of information, if we are to derive full benefit from the parables.

In understanding the parables it is, perhaps, a greater danger to read **too much into them** than too little. There are those who force meanings from the parables never intended, and give vent to all kinds of fancies. For instance, in the case of the 10 virgins, it is taught by some that the fact that there were 5 wise and 5 foolish means that there will be an equal number saved to the number lost. Such a doctrine is, of course, nowhere taught and certainly not in this parable. Some believe that the 2 pence mentioned in "**The Good Samaritan**" refers to the 'two sacraments'. We really must be careful to differentiate between incidental items from those that matter in any parable. Again some believe that when the father said (in the parable of "**The Prodigal Son**") "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet" that the 'best robe' means 'The Saviour's righteousness'; that the ring refers to 'the gift of the Spirit whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption' and that the shoes refer to 'those works of our calling whereby the penitent shall be equipped for holy obedience'. Others teach (I believe Trench is one of them) that in the parable (Matt. 13:33) which likens the K. of H. to a woman who hid some leaven in 3 measures of meal, that the 3 measures of meal represents the 3

parts of the then known world, or the 3 sons of Noah, or the 3 elements of the human-being (body, soul and spirit). We must not make too much of numbers (the talents given to the servants) and be able to distinguish between fact and fancy.

Why Parables?

For many years I used to think that Jesus spoke in parables in order to make the lesson readily receivable and little realised that the very opposite was the case. Jesus did not begin His ministry with parables but began with a clear and pointed call e.g. **"The time is fulfilled, the K. of G. is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel!"** (Mark 1:15). Similarly, as in the **"Sermon On The Mount"** His teaching was unfolded at once, plainly, providing great facts and truths concerning Himself and the coming Kingdom. This open and straightforward style of teaching continued until about half-way through His ministry (about the second Feast of Tabernacles) and then we find the employment of the Parabolic style. Matthew (Chap. 13:34) marks the transition with the words, **"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables: and without a parable spake He not unto them"**. Even the disciples, so dull at times in perception, noticed the change in style and asked, **"Because, it is given to you to know the mysteries of the K. of G., but unto them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I unto them in parables; because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears for they hear."**

I believe that a careful study of our Lord's answer will assure us that He did not employ parables to withhold the gospel from the Jews but rather to make them expend some effort to find it. After all, Jesus came to save, not to destroy: He came to give, not to withhold; He came to enlighten, not to darken. However Jesus could do very little for those (who fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy) who had already shut their eyes, closed their ears and hardened their hearts against Him. God did nothing to hinder their salvation, but just as today, the bulk of humanity has no ears or eyes for Jesus. God's truth is for those who are prepared to make some effort to embrace it. To those who made the effort the rewards would be given (to those who had would be given, but from those who had not would be taken away even that little they had). Those who had ears to hear (a desire to learn) were to hear (pay attention). Now, in His parabolic teaching, some effort of will would be required of His hearers. It was not because the disciples were disciples that He explained His truths to them (while masking these truths from the worldly wise), but because they heard with a completely different spirit and attitude. Thus, even before the Great Judgement, Jesus was dividing the populace into two great classes - those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness and those who had closed their hearts to His claims. Indeed the last verse of Matt. 13 tells us that, for precisely similar reasons (unbelief) Jesus in many places, would perform no miracles.

Thus it transpires that Jesus did not teach in parables primarily because they were effective (although they were); or because they were attractive (which they were); or because they were memorable (which they were) but because they required the hearer to agonise and meditate a little to gain a foothold in the K. of H. Jesus intended to lead, not drive, men to virtue and the parables (and their solution) became a formal test of the true state of the heart of the hearer. Thus in Mark 12:12 we read that **"They (scribes and elders) sought to lay hold upon Him, but feared the people; for they**

knew that He had spoken the parable against them". In this case they had 'ears to hear' and they heard.

Conclusions

The parables of Jesus are unique and have always been considered, justly, one of the most characteristic and beautiful aspects of His teaching, full of interest to the youngest and oldest, to the simple rustic as well as to the 'man of letters'. The parables are as timeless as the teaching and span all barriers of time, language or culture. Once heard they are seldom forgotten, and the N.T. is the richer for their inclusion. As word pictures they were designed to drive home, in a telling manner some great and profound spiritual truth. As we have seen, Jesus employed them so that their meaning would not be apparent too soon and would be the reward for the honest seeker (just as a nutshell preserves its kernel as much for the earnest, as from the careless). In the closing verses of this illustrious 13th chapter of Matt. Jesus asked His disciples if they had understood these parables, and on receiving an answer in the affirmative He said, "Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the K. of H. is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." May it be that we shall be like the friendly householder and not lock up our treasures in 'the glass case' or in the cellar but that all truths we may learn, whether new truth or old (from O.T. or N.T.), shall be brought forth in due season and shared with our friends.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

TELL IT OUT

"Tell it out among the heathen, Jesus reigns above;
 Tell it out! Tell it out!
 Tell it out among the nations, that His name is Love;
 Tell it out! Tell it out!
 Tell it out among the highways and the lanes at home
 Let it ring across the mountains and the ocean foam!
 Like the sound of many waters let our glad shout be,
 Till it echo and re-echo from the islands of the sea!
 Refrain: Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is King!
 Tell it out! Tell it out!
 Tell it out among the nations, bid them shout and sing!
 Tell it out! Tell it out!

AN HIGHWAY FOR OUR GOD

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."
 (Isaiah 35:8)

THE GOSPEL IN PROPHECY

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."
 (Isaiah 7:14)

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."
 (Isaiah 9:6)

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:1-3)

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” (Micah 5:2)

FULFILLED

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

(Matthew 1: 21-23)

“And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, in Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, and thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”

(Matthew 2: 4-6)

“When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my son.”

(Matthew 2: 14-15)

THEN WAS FULFILLED

“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.”

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet saying, in Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”

Matthew (2:16-18)

“And he came and dwelt in the city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Matthew (2:23)

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Jud. And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

Matthew (3:1-3)

“Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The Land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordon, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in region and shadow of death light is sprung up.”

Matthew(4:12-16)

THAT IT MIGHT BE FULFILLED

“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”

(Matthew 8:17)

“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I

will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgement to the Gentiles.”

(Matthew 12:17-18)

“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.”

(Matthew 13: 33-35)

“But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”

(Matthew 26:54).

“But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.”

(Matthew 26:56)

“Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value.”

(Matthew 27:9)

“And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.”

(Matthew 27:35)

THAT IT MIGHT BE FULFILLED

Leonard Morgan.

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT WORD

The Bible is an inspired revelation that will last forever, and claims to be an all sufficient guide in matters of belief, practice and life.

It is most important that we fully and clearly understand this fundamental teaching of the Scriptures about the Scriptures. In this day there are many different religions and churches, all claiming to be God authorized and God approved and yet all different in belief and teaching. All men have something on which they think they should base their religious beliefs and practices. Some appeal to their own feelings, opinions, thinking and experiences, as a basis for determining right and wrong before God. Others rely upon their priest, pastor, or church to tell them what they are to think and do. Still others follow tradition. That tradition may be one established over the years by a particular church, or it may simply be a tradition held by a man's immediate family.

If God accepts and approves all of these various ideas, and if God permits man to decide right and wrong in religion on this variety of different standards, then God is partial and a God of confusion. Yet the Bible teaches us that he is neither partial (Acts 2:11; 10:34), nor a God who creates and approves of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33).

The Bible teaches that the Scriptures are the only guide God recognizes in religion. Hence, they are the only guide that man can recognize and follow, and still please God. Notice the following statements:

John 8:31: **“If you continue in my word, then are you truly my disciples.”** Christ here points out that to be a disciple of his (that is, a Christian) a man must **“continue” in HIS WORD.** To **“continue”** means to abide by, or remain within the limits of his word. Just because a man claims to be a disciple of Christ's does not make him one. Neither is one a Christian just because others say he is. One is not even a Christian because some church, or all churches, recognize him as such. One is recognized by Christ as a Christian **ONLY IF** that person **CONTINUES IN CHRIST'S WORD.** Did not the Lord himself say so?

Then John writes, **“Whoever goes onward and abides not in the teaching of Christ, has not God”** (2 John 9). God's word tells us what we must believe and do to be

pleasing to God. But if he does not abide by that teaching, he is **WITHOUT GOD**, no matter how sincere he may be. If we must “**continue**” in Christ’s words to be his disciples, and if going beyond his word means we have not God, then surely we must conclude that Christ’s teachings, or scripture, is the only guide we can follow and be saved. If this is not the case, what do these verses mean?

Other verses point out the same idea. Read Galatians 1:8,9. In this reference, Paul states that man, or angel, who preaches, or teaches, a gospel that is different from that which the inspired apostle originally preached is **ACCURSED**. This fearful pronouncement ought to cause every believer to pause and carefully re-examine what he has done in attempting to become a Christian, and what he professes to believe and do as a Christian. For if it is “**contrary to that which**” the apostles preached, he stands accursed before God! The Scriptures show clearly that it is possible to be very religious, and equally sincere in the practice of that religion, and yet be lost! Read Matthew 7:21-23. Paul’s statement in Galatians 1:8,9 points out this truth . . . the Scriptures are the only guide we dare recognize in religion.

In 2 Timothy 3:16,17, Paul shows us that the Scriptures are a **COMPLETE** guide. That is they supply man with everything he needs to know to please God. What they say is not part of God’s will for man. For “**The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.**” (Deuteronomy 29:29). It has been said that people are not divided religiously about what the Bible says, but about what it does not say. Re-read 2 Timothy 3:16,17 carefully. Notice that Paul says the Scriptures “**thoroughly furnish**” us with the knowledge of “**all good works.**” Now since the Scriptures “**thoroughly furnish**” us, they leave nothing out that we need to know. And since they leave nothing out that we need to know, they are an all-sufficient guide. Likewise, they tell us “**all**” the works God considers “**good.**” Since they tell us “**all,**” they leave none out. Leaving none out, they are all sufficient as a guide for they contain all. Read 2 Peter 1:3 and notice the same truth.

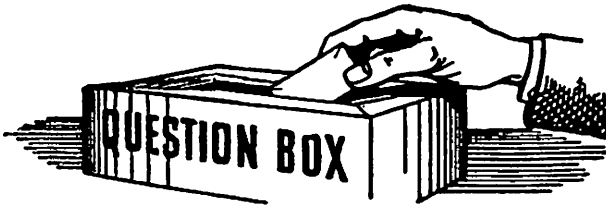
The Scriptures are a complete guide because they are “**truth.**” “**Thy word is truth.**” (John 17:17). They are not just “**some of the truth,**” but **ALL** truth, for Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into “**all the truth.**” (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit certainly must have done so, for Jesus did not lie. That the Holy Spirit did so is clear when we remember 2 Timothy 3:16,17. The Scriptures tell us “**all**” good works, and furnish us “**thoroughly.**” How can this be, if they do not contain “**all the truth**”? Jude adds, “**Contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.**” (Jude 3).

Revelation 22:18,19 says that we are **not to add to, or take from God’s word**. To add to God’s word is sin. To add practices not taught in God’s word is sinful. So to take away practices taught in God’s word is sinful. Since we are not to add to God’s word, nor take from it, there is only one thing left to do. That is **DO EXACTLY AS IT SAYS, AND ONLY WHAT IT SAYS**. Since this is the case, surely we can again see that the Scriptures are to be our only guide in religion.

R.Douglas.

WASHINGTON AND THE LORD’S DAY

George Washington’s pastor said of him: “No company ever kept him away from church. I have often been at Mount Vernon on the Sabbath morning when his breakfast table was filled with guests. *But to him they furnished no pretext for neglecting his God and losing the satisfaction of setting a good example.* For instead of staying at home out of fancied courtesy to them, he constantly used to invite them to accompany him”.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“In view of the present economic and social conditions, is the Gospel enough to convince the people of today?”

In case it should be thought that this question is from a Christian expressing doubt concerning the power of the Gospel, let me explain. The question arose out of a conversation with one of my neighbours, an intelligent man who probably could be classed as an average church-goer (Anglican, I believe). We had talked, as people do, about the state of a society which could produce actions such as the recent child-killing in Liverpool, and I had said, “Well as I see it there is only one way to stop this sort of thing, and that is for people to accept the Gospel of Christ and then live the Christian life”. Back came the answer, “Yes, you may be right, but is the Gospel enough for the people today”? My understanding of the Bible made me retort quite sharply, “It’s got to be; after all the Gospel is God’s power unto salvation to everyone who believes it”. He smiled and said, “I only attend my Church on occasions now; I suppose you would have to say that I go there out of tradition more than conviction; the arguments no longer convince me. They are rooted in the past rather than the present. Events during this century have overtaken the Gospel”. I pressed him as to what he meant by that statement, and he brought out the old chestnut about ‘if God were controlling everything then He surely would not allow all the atrocities to continue’, and then he made a very interesting remark, “You see, Alf, modern day physics has undermined our concept of creation and of the very nature of God; people no longer believe it”. I must admit I felt a little depressed after our conversation, but I consoled myself with the thought that people **do** want to believe in something or someone (false Messiahs, etc.). The trouble is, however, that we are in an infinitely worse position than our first century brethren when it comes to explaining the Gospel. We have to contend with almost 1900 years of splits, divisions, misrepresentations, erroneous teaching, self-seeking and self-elevation, and to crown it all, a latter-day explosion of humanistic science and technology which is saying to people that we need something to further our natural desires for a utopian life here on earth, but that **something** isn’t God, or His Christ.

I have pin-pointed the problem as I see it because I believe that some sort of resolution is fundamental to the promotion of the Gospel. We who profess Christianity must be aware of the fact that many people are genuinely puzzled by what they see, hear and read. They **will** ask questions, and they have every right to. The Christian is exhorted to always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks; this means we must be in a position to apprehend the questions which may come, and to know God’s revelation sufficiently well to gainsay its detractors. This, I admit, is not an easy task, but if the Word is to be ‘a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our pathway’, then we cannot restrict our understanding of the Bible to what someone tells us from the pulpit or platform every Sunday. There is nothing difficult in following the written instructions in the Bible regarding salvation; those instructions are clear, precise, and unambiguous. When, however, we get around to explaining how that salvation has been **procured**, then we enter an area of complex theology which produces many questions. A so-called ‘blind’ faith may be acceptable to some, but even God Himself calls for a **reasoned** approach to salvation. It is, I believe, this reasoned approach which we must apply in our approach to the dissemination of the Gospel.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

One of our 'reasoned' approaches must involve a relatively clear concept of the Holy Spirit. This in turn — as I have often said — involves some sort of understanding of the nature of the Godhead, i.e., God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Godhead, as I see it, is a singular name embodying the three Persons who comprise it. Functionally, the respective roles of these three Persons are clearly revealed in the Bible concerning the salvation of souls. Clearly, if the Bible is to be believed, it would be absolute nonsense to believe that in their respective roles there could be any vestige of contradiction regarding the fulfilment of the major objective, i.e., the salvation of souls; consequently, the intentions, actions, objectives, and accomplishments of the Godhead must be essentially and conclusively the same. Therefore, when Matthew records **"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"** the scripture means precisely what it says. The demarcation line, as it were, of divine effort is well illustrated in John's gospel record when Jesus spoke to His disciples. **"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you"**. (John 16:7). Later on in the same chapter, Jesus intimates that there are some truths that as yet the disciples could not bear; He goes on **"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all the truth"** (v13). If we have thought that there is de-escalating of authority in the Godhead then Jesus seems to dispel that, **"All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he (the Holy Spirit) shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you"** (v15, but read from v13). The teaching in John's gospel record reveals the true symmetry (and the resultant beauty) of the Godhead in action for the procurement of man's salvation. But, as I said, it is the method of procurement which presents us with our greatest theological difficulties.

Taking our reasoning a stage further, we are told that a person who obeys the Gospel **"shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"** (Acts 2:38). This, of course, means that the Holy Spirit in-dwells every Christian. Sceptics scoff at this idea and say, "Well, this is ridiculous: how can a Person reside with millions of people at the same time". They forget that the Holy Spirit is Spirit, and therefore time and space are irrelevant; it's like the old philosophical chestnut, "How many fairies can dance on a pin-head?" The answer of course, being any number, because fairies would occupy no space. The spirit which animates human life is prevalent in all people; the fact that we are individuals makes not the slightest difference. The Holy Spirit is the animating power of God in the new life in Christ Jesus: why should that be different?

THE POWER OF SATAN

Who would deny that gross evil stalks the world today? It is alleged that two young boys of tender age murdered a toddler; it is also alleged that two teenage girls strangled and stabbed an old lady of advanced years; rape and crimes of violence are accelerating at an alarming rate; many of us have witnessed — and are witnessing again — the evils of ethnic cleansing. It is high time that Christians began to shout loud and clear that it is **SIN! SIN! SIN!** that is the cause of all this social upheaval; the Bible says that Satan goes about **"as a roaring lion, seeking those whom he can devour"**. The fact of Satan with his associated evil, however, is looked upon as religious clap-trap by most people. They have ceased to believe in God, and they discount any such person as Satan; as far as one can see, people have reached the point when they believe in nothing except themselves, and that **must** be a recipe for disaster. The song 'Jerusalem' has immortalised 'the dark, satanic, mills'; we Christians should be telling

people that there is a more potent force of evil than that which affected the respiratory systems of many people; the power of Satan and sin destroy the soul of millions of people, and will go on sending countless millions more people to Christless graves if ignored. Societies all down the ages have got what they deserved. The Christian society has got what it deserves through neglecting and confusing the clear directives given by Christ and His Apostles in the early days of Christianity. That is why the message is so difficult to get across to people today.

GOD'S GREAT DESIGN

Yes, God has a great design; it is salvation from sin and an eternal life with Himself and those who have given their lives to Him all down the ages. To walk the 'Elysian Fields'! To be in the company of our great Creator and Redeemer in Paradise! To experience in Heaven what earth should have been like without the advent of Satan into it! That's just 'pie in the sky' says the cynic, but what's so wonderful about this life? I've lived 73 years; I've worked, married, brought up children, had a few holidays, eaten, and slept. Many people have lived and suffered pain and destitution all of their lives. And yet we cling so tenaciously to this existence because it is the **only thing we know**. You see, God is patient and long suffering because His Great Design is rooted in the fertile soil of CHOICE. He wants people to come to Him of their own free will; that's why He didn't make us automatons; it is Satan who has 'cloned' us to this world. Make no mistake, the day of grace will end; those who have not chosen God will automatically have chosen Satan. We must somehow get the message across that it is not merely the malcontents and the destitute who look for the so-called 'pie in the sky'. Many people have acknowledged the 'wisdom of God' and have contented themselves by obeying that wisdom. If people content themselves with the malevolent power of Satan, then we can only conclude that they make their choice on **what they know**; it is up to us to try to increase their knowledge of the love of God, and of His self-sacrificial actions to save them.

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

THE DENOMINATIONS

Churches with Peculiar Doctrines

2. - MILLENNIAL DAWNISM

Millennial Dawnism began with the work of Pastor Russell at Lancaster Gate, London, before the last war. It is now split into several parts, the two chief of which are 'Jehovah's Witnesses' and 'Associated Bible Students', the latter which represents itself to be the original movement of Pastor Russell. Both movements contain a hotch-potch of truth and error with certain outstanding features, which can be grasped by the simple minded, and present themselves as a ground of hope in a disillusioned world.

Jehovah's Witnesses.

Jehovah's Witnesses are known also as "The International Bible Students' Association", a title which deceives the unwary. The Press is "The Watch Tower Press", 34 Craven Terrace, W2, but the home of the movement is in the U.S.A., and its directing spirit was, until his death, Judge Rutherford. Unwary British readers should understand that the title 'Judge' may stand for almost anything in the U.S.A. The tenets are in the main embodied in *The Divine Plan of The Ages*, by Pastor Russell, but we must add to this *Light* (2 vols), *Deliverance*, *Creation*, *The Harp of God*, *Prophecy*, *Government*, *Reconciliation* and *Life*, all of which are canvassed from door to door. Before the war one year's sales in this country amounted to 350,000 books and 1½ million booklets. One does not need to be an accountant to estimate the enormous sums of

money which flowed into the treasury as a result of these sales. This is no reflection on the innocent colporteurs, who are often sincere but deluded people.

Doctrines

It is difficult to give an accurate summary of the beliefs, because the literature abounds in contradictions. Worship is offered to Jehovah-God who had two sons, Michael and Lucifer. The latter rebelled and became the Devil and is in control of the world, which is called 'Satan's organisation'. Every State is part of this organisation, but more recently a perverted American strain has come out in declaring that the British Empire is Satan's chief emissary! This is the kind of teaching which makes Jehovah's Witnesses appear to be Pacifist. But they are not Pacifists. It is simply that they will have nothing to do with 'Satan's organisation', which they identify with 'big business', the clergy and politicians. Michael became incarnate as the man Jesus and gained immortality by his death on the Cross. His second coming took place in 1914 and the Millennium was fully established in 1918. Immortality is conditional on accepting the message of the Witnesses, but a second chance will be given to the dead who will be raised to life. Eternity will be spent on this earth rejuvenated. Full membership is by Baptism (immersion) and the Lord's Supper is celebrated once a year, on Passover, according to the Jewish calendar. The chief activities of the members is propaganda, in which they are pertinacious, setting an example to all Christians, and colportage. Already 95 millions of Judge Rutherford's books have been sold, and there is no wonder that he was able to 'do himself well'! This work is highly organised. Colporteurs are either Pioneers, Auxiliaries, Sharpshooters or Company-workers. A Pioneer is a whole-time worker and a Sharpshooter is an isolated worker cut off from fellowship with any company.

Associated Bible Students

The 'Associated Bible Students' adhere more strictly to Pastor Russell, and local bodies vary a great deal in outlook, but they are all millenarian and, like the other group, admit by Baptism (immersion) and celebrate the Lord's Supper once a year. They are, however, less politically mischievous, though quite unorthodox on such doctrines as the Incarnation, the Being of God, and the Atonement. They publish two periodicals, *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom* and *Bible Student's Monthly*. They have nothing like the business acumen of the other body, but their devotees are just as tenacious in holding their peculiar perverted doctrines. Their work is carried on from 204 Broadway Chambers, Letchworth, Herts.

W. Robinson.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

July	4	Deuteronomy 19:	Matt. 18:1-20
July	11	Psalms 103:	Matt. 18:21-35
July	18	Genesis 2:15-25	Matt. 19:1-15
July	25	Exodus 20:1-21	Matt. 19:16-30

SPIRITUAL SURGERY

Jesus said: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must be that offences come! but woe to that man by whom the offence comes! Wherefore if your hand or your foot offend you, cut them off and cast them from you: it is

better for you to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if your eye offend you, pluck it out and cast it from you: it is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (18:7-9). These words, of course, are not to be taken literally. What Jesus is doing here is getting His message across in the most powerful language possible. Adam Clarke has written: "Men often part with some members of the body, at the discretion of a surgeon,

that they may preserve the trunk and die a little later; and yet they will not deprive themselves a look, a touch, a small pleasure, which endangers the eternal death of the soul. It is not enough to shut the eye, or stop the hand: the one must be plucked out and the other cut off. Neither is this enough, we must cast them both from us. Not one moment's truce with an evil passion, or a sinful appetite. If you indulge them, they will gain strength and you shall be ruined. The rabbis have a saying similar to this: 'It is better for you to be scorched with a little fire in this world, than to be burned with a devouring fire in the world to come'"

BASIS OF FORGIVENESS

God forgives those who forgive others. In other words, Divine and human forgiveness go hand in hand. Jesus had plainly said earlier: **"For if you forgive men their trespass, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"** (Matt. 6:14-15). He then told the story of the servant forgiven a great debt who went out and dealt mercilessly with a fellow-servant who owed him a debt about one five-hundred thousandth of his own debt. We read: **"Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow-servant, even as I had pity on you? And his Lord was angry and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses"** (18:33-35).

Another interesting section of this chapter is the one that deals with **"the law for personal offences"** (18:15-17). If this law had been carefully followed by all Christians everywhere, then there is no doubt that there would be fewer problems among congregations today. The Christian community is a disciplined community and the instructions are

clear. If at the end of the day these instructions are rejected then the person in question has to be disfellowshipped and treated as a heathen and a publican. This severe action is taken, of course, in the hope that the individual will come to his or her senses and do the right. (The example of the brother in Corinth is a good one to consider [1 Cor. 5 and 2 Cor. 2 & 7].).

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Here are some statements on marriage I have noted from various sources: "Marriage is the oldest and most venerable institution in the history of man. God himself instituted and celebrated it on the flowery banks of Eden in the state of the primeval innocence and bliss". "Earth knows no purer, no holier state than that of holy wedlock". "Marriage is founded in nature, reason and religion". "Marriage enables parents to recognise their children and children their parents". "On the altar of matrimony are woven all the cords of affection, all the ligaments and bands that cement society". "Destroy marriage and you destroy the happiness of man and the safety of the race". "Marriage was designed by a beneficent Creator for the propagation, perpetuity, protection and happiness of the race made in His own image".

Divorce was never in the plans of God. Jesus said: **"Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.. And I say unto you. Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her who is put away commits adultery"** (19:8-9). Personally, I believe the phrase — **"except it be for fornication"** — refers to the verb **"put away"**. Remember, Jesus was responding to the question: **"Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every**

cause? (19:3). Jesus, therefore, gives the only rightful cause for divorce — and the cause is fornication. But what of the question of remarriage? William Heth and Gordon J. Wenham in their book *Jesus and Divorce* wrote these words following a profound study of the subject: “It safest to say that Jesus gave an absolute prohibition of divorce and remarriage . . . the New Testament and the early church as a whole are not vague or confusing when it comes to the question of remarriage after divorce. It is clear that Jesus said that a man may have one wife and if someone puts away their partner for whatsoever reason they must remain single”.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

Someone once wrote: “The possession of wealth, money, material things is not a sin, but it is a grave responsibility”. There is no doubt that prosperity can easily make a man arrogant, proud, self-satisfied and worldly. The Jews in Jesus’ day, however, believed that prosperity was the sign of a good man and that wealth was a proof of an excellence of character and of favour with God”. This is why, in response to Jesus’ statements “**that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven**” and “**it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God**” (19:23-24), they asked “**Who then can be saved?**” (19:25).

The rich young ruler was undoubtedly a man who tried to live up to the commandments. Jesus never denied this. However, He did put His finger immediately on the problem: “**If you will be perfect, go and sell what you have and give it to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven: come and follow me**” (19:21). William Barclay has written: “This man was so shackled to his possessions that nothing less than surgical excision of them would suffice. If a man looks on his possessions as given

to him for nothing but his own comfort and convenience, they are a chain that must be broken: if he looks on his possessions as a means to helping others, they are his crown”. In the end man turned away in great distress. What a tragedy!

REWARDS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Peter said to Jesus: **Behold, we have forsaken all and followed you; what shall we have therefore?**” (19:27). Jesus replied: “**Verily I say unto you. That you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone that has forsaken houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life**” (19:28-29). Today, many say that Christianity is just a “pie-in-the-sky” religion. They could not be more wrong. Being in the family of God brings great rewards now, but even greater rewards beyond the tomb.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

QUOTABLE QUOTES CHRISTIANITY

A Christian: one who believes that the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbour.

Ambrose Bierce.

It is not by driving away our brother that we can be alone with God.

George Macdonald.

People in general are equally horrified at hearing the Christian religion doubted, and at seeing it practised.

Samuel Butler.

I once read about an Eskimo hunter who asked the local missionary priest, “If I

did not know about God and sin, would I go to hell?" "No" said the priest, "Not if you really did not know". "Then why, asked the Eskimo earnestly, "did you tell me".

Annie Dillard.

A Christian is nothing but a sinful man who has put himself to school for Christ, for the honest purpose of becoming better.

Henry Ward Beecher.

I believe in Christianity just as I believe the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because I see everything by it.

C. S. Lewis.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kirkcaldy On the 17th of April we held our Annual Social. It was a great day of fellowship. Our thanks and appreciation to M. Gaunt for the encouraging lessons from Isaiah given over the weekend. Attendance like last year was approximately 200. Thanks to all who took part in the programme, also to those who let me know how many expected to attend. This is always a great help.

Rejoice with us that on the 21st April Jean Abercrombie accepted Jesus as her Saviour. Jean has been coming along to services and ladies class for some time now and has studied with us. Jean is the aunt of our sister Rena Tullis.

Please pray for Jean as she begins her new life in Christ.

Ruth Moyes.

"THE LOVE OF CHRIST" DISTRIBUTION

If you will distribute 10 or 20 or more, post free, of my message "THE LOVE OF CHRIST" write or Telephone

Wigan 55456, to
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396 Atherton Road,
Hindley Green,
Wigan. WN2 4QD.

The Love of Christ

GHANA APPEAL

In the past month I have received letters from Ghana with photographs of parcels which had been sent out being opened and distributed among brethren. Funds have been sent out to pay for medical aid and building materials. Correspondence courses sent out to Ghana have arrived there. The Church at Patriensa need about £900 for their building, they have a regular 20 members attending each service.

By the time this article is published I hope to have sent out a full update (too long for the Scripture Standard) on the work in Ghana to those who have supported this appeal in the last year. Should anyone not have received this please contact me.

Anyone wishing to help in the building of a meeting place in Patriensa please contact me:

G. Pearson,
13 Fairways,
Dunfermline,
Fife. KY12 0DU.
Tel.: 0383 728624.

POINTS TO PONDER

Because of the inordinate desire to do all the talking a man has missed hearing a lot of needful information.

It is true that the willing horse gets the heaviest load. It is equally true the he develops the strongest muscles and gets the most corn.

A Christian is in the world, but not of the world. His citizenship is in heaven.

He thinks on heavenly things. He lives on a higher level. Unto the divine pattern – the life of Christ – he conforms his life.

When your neighbour's house is in flames, your own house in danger. No man can live unto himself. To a certain extent your own salvation is bound up with the salvation of others. When you lift a fellowman, you lift yourself.

COURAGE BORN OF COMMITMENT

The Christian life must be marked by conviction (Heb. 11:6). Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, came to the tomb of Jesus on the first day of the week. They had to be fully persuaded that Jesus was no longer there before they embarked on the commission to "go quickly and to tell" the good news of his resurrection. Conviction prepares us for the temptations of Satan and the trials of the world. It takes conviction to strap on any kind of armour. Taking up the shield of faith is courage born of commitment.

True commitment comes only after real conviction. Without genuine conviction we are like the plant that grew from the seed on stony ground. There is no

depth of soil. The plant will soon wither and die under the heat of tribulation. The roots were never developed.

Christ calls for complete commitment of all who follow him. Anything less than full commitment will not provide the courage necessary for putting on the whole armour of God. Consequently we will not be able to say. "I have fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith."

Jesus is our example of commitment. He was able to suffer and die because of the commitment to him that judges righteously. Because of Jesus our plight has been turned into light (1 Peter 2: 21-25).

Where is your conviction? "With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6 18-20). That is courage born of commitment.

J.L. Roberts.

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