

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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COUNTING NOSES

THERE seems to be a common tendency amongst men, and it is perhaps understandable although not necessarily excusable, to count up the number of persons who adhere to, or have adhered to a certain point of view, or theory, or religious persuasion, as proof of the correctness of such point of view, theory, or religious persuasion. And of course in the words of the song, 'It ain't necessarily so'. Is the majority always right? Perhaps we have been influenced by the advertising slogan that, "Three million people can't be wrong". If three million people can't be wrong then it follows that the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church must be right, for there are catholics in the world far in excess of three million. We could take the matter a little farther and come to the conclusion that non-believers in Christ far outnumber believers in Christ, therefore we are on the wrong side if we are believers in Christ. Foolish though the practice evidently is it still persists and men still count numbers as evidence of rightness and wrongness. The 'man in the street' as he surveys the many different church sign boards and listens to the many discordant voices each claiming to be exclusively right must surely be excused for looking at the numbers of adherents and at their progress and prosperity. To him it is almost the only criterion he can use. Surely however, it would surprise us to hear of members of the Lord's body talking in this way. Surely we know better than this? Surely none of us would try to equate numbers of members with faithfulness to God's word?

The Roman Catholic Church have vast numbers of members. It is true that many of them are nominal members, but, let's face it, every church has nominal members. Occasionally we hear the boast that, 'We are the fastest growing religious body in the world'. From my limited knowledge and observation I would suggest that if we are going to be impressed with a 'fast growing' religious body we must surely plump for 'Jehovah's Witnesses' as they must certainly come close to taking that distinction. The Mormon church never fails to impress me with its zeal, its large numbers, its high standard of moral behaviour and its giving. By its tithing it is probably the richest religious body per head of membership. Perhaps the point has now been made. Most of us would conclude that numbers mean nothing. A vast number does not prove that God's approval resides there and conversely neither does a small number prove that God's approval lies there. Numbers mean nothing by themselves and it is only by analysing any group in the light of God's word that we can draw any conclusions on the matter. By God's word alone do we stand or fall - counting noses is of little avail. Sometimes, in addition to looking at the numbers of

adherents, men look within the ranks of a church to see who is arrayed there. How many personalities, how many intellectuals, how many scholars? Every generation of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism has produced a crop of scholars and intellectuals so where does that take us? What do the scholars and the intellectuals do? — they bend the truth of God to suit the situation, the Roman Catholic scholar and the Protestant alike. It is fallacy, therefore, to take comfort and confidence from the fact that one is, in whatever religious body one may be aligned with, surrounded by intellectuals and scholars. Christ is the only One in whom we can have confidence, and His word is the only guide as to whether we have His approval or not.

Again, the feasibility of us being true servants of God is often measured by progress and prosperity. I recall, years before I was a member of the church, of hearing a group of New Testament followers of Christ being referred to as "That crowd that meets in the wee tin hut", and this illustrated to me the great difficulty that men have in accepting that those meeting in the tin hut, few in number, could be right and more acceptable to God than the occupants of the plush seats in the local cathedral.

Another regular phrase heard these days is 'Oh, they are only a small minority.' God's people have often consisted of a small minority. Only a small minority entered the promised land. In the days of Ahab there were four hundred prophets claiming to be prophets of Jehovah who said that if he and Jehosphat went up to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, the Lord would prosper them, while a small minority (one called Micaiah) said the opposite. Ahab had four hundred to one in favour of his enterprise, yet he went and lost his life, as the one and only prophet said he would; Elijah said to the people (1 Kings 18:22), "I even I only remain a prophet of the Lord: but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men". We all know how the narrative continues and of the ensuing contest in which Elijah triumphs in no uncertain fashion over such colossal odds. One person must surely be the smallest minority imaginable, but God's approval lay there. One man, plus God, can take on the whole world. As Paul says in Rom. 8:31, "If God be for us who can be against us"? Many of God's servants have formed small minorities. Noah comes to mind, as does Lot, and many others in the Old Testament halls of fame. The apostle Paul's sad statement comes to mind (2 Tim. 4:16), "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge". Some of us have never experienced the loneliness of being out on a limb or of forming the really small minority such as Paul formed on that occasion. We can but salute all such and all those two's and three's in the little tin huts who don't get much company and don't get much in the way of 'church programmes' but who plod on year by year and remain faithful. Jesus recognised that there might happily be packed meeting houses but He also foresaw the small groups and He said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." That promise is as true today as it was in the special circumstances of those days. Jesus knew about small groups for He had nothing else but small numbers around Him, and when He was on the cross He was forsaken by the Father. On the subject of counting noses Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it".

Let it not be said that this writer rejoices in small numbers of church members or is happy and satisfied with the evangelistic efforts put forward in these islands. Doubtless no member of the church is really satisfied with small congregations or ever satisfied with the quantity or quality of the propagation of God's word. We ought to be striving to do more and thinking of more effective ways of reaching the world with the gospel. This short article is intended to make the point that the

evidence of numbers, prosperity and apparent intellectuality means nothing and proves nothing. A large number does not necessarily signify a position of error nor does it necessarily indicate that right is on its side or that God's approval resides there. After we could easily increase our numbers by taking a more liberal view of God's word. It is by God's word that a congregation stands or falls and by what it teaches, preaches and practices. We can be sure that God does not count noses.

EDITOR

MESSAGES FROM THE PAST — 1837

Selectons from a Sermon by WILLIAM JONES from a book PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.
Prepared by Leonard Morgan.

THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY

TO the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isaiah 7:20.

...Lastly, to offer some directions, how to abide firm by the rule of the law and the Testimony. And —

1 Let me earnestly beseech you, to make it your study to know and understand the Holy Scriptures. Let the word of Christ, or the doctrine concerning him, dwell in you richly, in all wisdom. Fill your minds and memories with the sacred truths of revelation, so as to become 'mighty in the scriptures'. Treasure them up in your hearts, that you may be prepared, on every occasion, to bring forth out of this treasury of divine knowledge according as the exigency of the day may require, speaking a word in season to him that is weary. It is not sufficient that we admit in general, that the Scriptures are a complete and exclusive rule for the conduct of Christians; we must make ourselves well acquainted with that rule, otherwise we shall not be able to apply it properly, either for our own direction, or the trial of the sentiments and practices of others. "Thy words were found of me", said the prophet, "and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me, the joy and rejoicing of my heart", Jer.15:16. "I rejoice at thy word", says the Psalmist, "as one that findeth great spoil" Psalm 119:162. "O how I love thy law: it is my meditation all the day", verse 97. We should imitate this example, and cultivate a love of the word of God.

2 Endeavour to have constantly upon your minds, a deep and abiding impression of the truth and importance of every thing that is therein revealed as matter of faith and duty. Remember that it is the word and will of God, by which we shall all of us shortly be judged. Take it daily as a lamp to your feet, and a light unto your path, and say with the Psalmist, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart," Psalm 119:111. It is the character of the favourites of God that they "tremble at his word," Isa. 66:2. We cannot truly fear God, and at the same time, trifle with his word in which he speaks to us from heaven. If we are solemnly impressed with the consideration, that the Holy Scriptures are the voice of Jehovah to us, they will awe the conscience, and have a commanding influence over the judgment — we shall receive them, not as the word of man, but as they are in deed and truth, the very word of God; and thus receiving them, they will work effectually in us, as they did at the first in those who believed, and knew the grace of God in truth.

3 Beware of the influence of your own corruptions, in darkening your minds, and filling them with prejudices against the meaning of the word of God. Many professors seem more disposed to teach their Bibles, than to let their Bibles teach them. If a doctrine demand their assent, or a duty claim their obedience, which does not happen to fall in with their own notions of fitness and propriety, they immediately proceed

to adjust matters by the standard of their own reason, instead of submitting their reason to the Law and the Testimony. This is an evil which Christians cannot be too strongly guarded against. Christianity is a very simple thing: it consists in believing as we are taught by Christ and his apostles, and in practising as we are bidden by them, and doing all these things without murmurings and disputings. In no other way, can we be "the children of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation". Cultivate, therefore, humility, honesty, and sincerity of heart, and see that your faith stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, which raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

4 Beware of holding anything as a matter of indifference, which God has revealed as a matter of faith and duty. It is no doubt true, that all things are, not of equal importance in the religion of Christ. This, however, can never warrant us in treating with neglect any of the sayings of Christ or his apostles, as things beneath our regard. We should ever keep in mind, that "obedience is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams". It ill becomes those who have been purchased with the Saviour's blood, to take upon them to decide, how far he is to be believed and obeyed. His religion contains no non-essentials, which his disciples may neglect with impunity, when it is in their power to attend to them; for it is essential to the character of a Christian, that he "observe all things, whatsoever Christ has commanded". And—

5 To conclude: let all who would turn this subject to profit, be earnest in their supplications at a throne of grace, for the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit, that their understandings may be opened to understand the Scriptures; that God would give them to see the wondrous things contained in his Law; that he would sanctify them through the word of his truth, working in them to will and to do of his good pleasure. What abundant encouragement have believers to abound in this duty and privilege: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you". And, finally, let us beware of resting in mere speculation on the doctrines or duties of revelation; but seek after a practical influence of the truth on our hearts and lives; remembering, that it is not the mere hearer, but the doer of the word, that is accepted of God. "If any man will do the will of my heavenly Father", said Jesus, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself". An empty, fruitless speculatist, does not see the importance of revealed truth, and wants that spiritual discernment, which alone can distinguish the voice of Christ from that of strangers.

MAN'S GREAT ADVERSARY

AN "adversary" is more than an opponent — he is an underhanded antagonist, a vengeful foe, bent on grief and loss for somebody else than himself, such as an unprincipled shyster (Matt. 5:25) or a vindictive person apart from the court (Luke 18:3). Man has many disturbers, but there is a particular one, above all these, and more destructive, of whom the Bible warns, the world seems unafraid, and even members of the church neglect to beware of him.

He is the devil

This foul fiend is the arch-enemy of mankind — more, no doubt, to seek revenge against God than to obtain man as a servant. Adam and Eve met him to their sorrow. Job dealt with him, calling him his adversary (Job 31:35). The apostle Peter definitely identifies him — "your adversary, the devil" (1 Peter 5:8). The Greek term, *diabolos*, applies ever and only to Satan, and is always in the singular — there is ONE devil!! The plural, devils, is from *daimon*, and really means "demons". Satan is "the prince of devils", the sovereign of the gods of this world.

He is real

The scriptures reckon him so. He is not a figment of the imagination, the villain of fables, or some generality of evil — he is a real personality, as much so as Christ, though very unlike him. He conversed persuasively in Eden; he dealt with Job in arrogant style; he tried the Lord with brazen insolence; he desired to sift Peter as wheat; he wrecked the life of Judas; he filled the heart of Ananias to lie; Elymas was under his control; he was even an opponent of the apostles and the gospel. The Bible attributes to him a seat of government, a synagogue, messengers, and ability to work miracles. He is, indeed real.

He is mighty

Satan is sudden in his striking, potent, and thoroughly destructive. His possessions are great — he offered Christ the "kingdoms of the world", and who questions his ability to deliver? He is called the prince of demons, of the world, and of the power of the air. He has dominated death — Jesus died that he might "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). We cannot comprehend his full might, but enough to fear him.

He is acutely cunning

Satan appears in varying forms — as a serpent, a wolf in sheep's clothing, a roaring lion, an angel of light, or through messengers, whichever is to his advantage. He strikes with enticing words, appealing to the lusts of the flesh, the eyes and the pride of life. He is the father of lies and a master at half-truths. He prefers to deal stealthily from ambush, rather than a frontal assault.

He never gives up

For some six thousand years he has worked persistently, he always keeps trying. He twice tried, unsuccessfully, to break Job's allegiance to God. He made three contemptuous assaults on our Saviour, then left Him, out "for a season" (Luke 4:13). He copies the Lord's ways, is well organized with agents in key places, "rulers in darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). When he flees, it is but to regroup his forces. Be alert to his devices.

He has nought to offer

Beyond "the pleasures of sin for a season", he can offer nothing. Those who invest with him, gamble with nothing, those who walk with him are bound for the lake of fire. Why allow him to wreck your life, and rob you of comfort in death?

We can overcome him

God gives the rules. We must be sober and vigilant (1 Peter 5:8), not grant him "an advantage of us" (2 Cor. 2:11), abide in "the simplicity in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3), never "give place" in our lives "to him" (Eph. 4:27). "put on the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6:11), "fight the good fight" (1 Tim. 6:12), and "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Remember God will limit him and in temptation "always provide a way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13).

From "The Visitor"

MARY, Queen of Scots once said to the reformer, John Knox, referring to his teachings and those of the priests, "You interpret the scriptures in one way and they in another; whom shall I believe, and who shall be the judge?"

"You shall believe God", said Knox, "who plainly speaketh in His Word; and further than the word teacheth you, ye

shall believe neither one nor the other. The word of God is plain in itself, and if there appears any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost, who is never contradictory to Himself, explains the same more clearly in other places, so that there can remain no doubt but as to such as are obstinately ignorant."

McCrie's Life of John Knox, p. 228

WHY DO I ATTEND EVERY SERVICE OF THE CHURCH ?

I go to every service of the church because Jesus is there.

Where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Jesus has never forsaken an assembly, and I want to be like him.

I go to every service of the church because I am made stronger.

Power is given in worship to live a nobler life. There one is fortified against falling away. There is the sweetest fellowship on earth. There souls are made fit for heaven. There strength is given to bear the burdens of life. Why should I want to miss any service?

I go to every service of the church because God wants the church to grow.

The church always grows when members put God first by loyal attendance. Since the church is the saved, the growth of the church means salvation of the lost. Here is a way all can help in the finest work on earth.

I go to every service of the church to set a good example.

Many are looking my way and following my steps. Influence is either good or bad — there is no middle ground. Any hour the church meets, my influence is with or against the Lord. When I neglect a service, my influence is for Satan. If I attend, it is for the Lord.

I go to every service of the church to prove my love and gratitude.

So boundless was the love of Jesus for the church, he gave his life for it. If I would be his disciple, I must also prove my love. Since God has given me a multitude of blessings I do not deserve, it is indeed a small sacrifice to return a few hours in public worship. One who truly loves God does not ask if he must attend all services. His love compels him to. If I show love to God by attendance, I show lack of love by absence.

I go to every service of the church to obey God.

The Bible says, "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together" (Heb. 10:25). The first Christians met weekly and often daily (Acts 20:7; 2:45; 19:9). Any service where the Bible is taught, prayer is made, and God is worshipped, is good, and "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not to him it is sin" (James 4:17). If it is good to be present for all services, it is bad to be absent from any.

I go to every service of the church to put first things first.

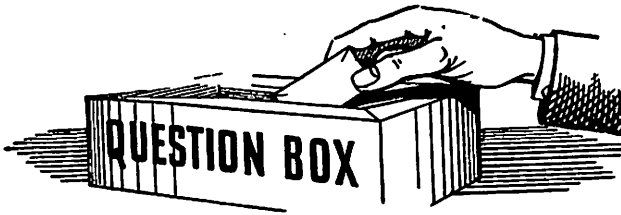
"Seek ye first his kingdom." (Matt. 6:33). Jesus said the church must be first to the Christian, even before seeking food, clothing, and drink. Nothing could be so important as being a faithful member of the Lord's church!

I go to every service of the church because it is safe to do so.

All who forsake an assembly wonder if they sin, but I know I am perfectly safe in attending EVERY service. Yes, dangerous risks are taken in forsaking ANY assembly of the church; Christ may return in that hour, death may come, a life of neglect may begin, and others may be lost by a bad example.

I go to every service of the church to abound in the Lord's work.

A true Christian wants to do ALL he can and not as LITTLE as he can. Even after doing all possible, I am still an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10). Since the assemblies of the church are vital in the Lord's work, I must abound in attendance. "Finally, my brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always ABOUNDING in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). From The Visitor.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“WHAT rules should be used for the interpretation of the Bible. What answer would you give to the person who says, ‘How can you be sure that your interpretation is right’? ”

We shall start, as usual, by defining our terms and illustrating by example how the definition is related to Bible teaching. One of the Greek words used in the N.T. is HERMENEUO from which we have the English word HERMENEUTIC which means ‘of interpretation’. It denotes to explain, interpret, and is used of explaining the meaning of words in a different language, e.g. in John 1:38 we read, “Jesus said, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest thou?” The same word is used in Heb. 7:2 concerning Melchisedec, “first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace”. In Luke 5:41 we have the record of the healing of a damsel by Jesus, and this provides us with an example not only of the interpretation of a name, but also of a sentence, for we read, “And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, TALITHA CUMI; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise”. These examples show us that this type of interpretation, from one language to another, is usually done for us in the Bible and should not cause us any trouble.

Another word which sheds some light on the subject is DIERMENEUO and this signifies to explain fully, to interpret fully, to expound. An example of this is recorded by Luke and involves interpretation by Jesus to the two on the road to Emmaus. In this passage we read; “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded (he interpreted, R.S.V.) unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” Luke 24:27. There are several points to notice here; (1) in Moses and ALL the prophets, ALL the things concerning Jesus were in ALL the scriptures (2) the two to whom Jesus was talking had not detected and had certainly not understood these things, (3) they needed to have these things explained to them. We shall return to the implications of these points. A further example of the use of this word is found in the teaching of Paul to the Church at Corinth concerning the speaking in tongues. Paul lays down fairly stringent rules regarding this and expressly states that if there is no one present to interpret then speaking in tongues should not take place. We know that speaking in tongues was limited to the early days of the church, but the point is well made that if anything was said without there being full understanding on the part of the hearers then this was virtually useless for edification. See 1 Cor. 14 (it is well to read the whole chapter).

How Specific is the Bible?

We have commented at some length on the foregoing in order to show that we are not always clear in our use of the word interpretation. If we mean by interpretation of the Bible that we are allowed to put our own construction on the words contained therein, then it seems to me that we are on extremely dangerous ground. Religious groups down the ages have done just this and we have ended in the spiritual morass in which we now find ourselves. God intended that the Bible should be the specification of His Will and His alone. The ones who delivered God’s message were not allowed to put their own construction upon the ‘God-breathed’ they wrote. See 2 Peter

1:20,21. Could it reasonably be otherwise? When an interpreter translates from one language to another does he take the liberty of changing the message? If he did then we would not have the original but rather what the interpreter's opinion was of the original. Isn't this what has happened because of so-called interpretations of the Bible? God is His own interpreter. Isn't this why Jesus came, and why he always insisted that the things he said and did were commanded by the Father?.

How Discerning are We?

Jesus said to the Jews of his day, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me". John 5:39. This is perhaps our most important rule. We must search, and search diligently. We must be like the Bereans of old. They were nobler than those of Thessalonica because they searched the scriptures daily Acts 17:11. But the warning of Jesus is a sobering thought for us. They searched the scriptures. They knew about the Messiah. But with all their searching THEY DID NOT IDENTIFY JESUS OF NAZARETH AS THE MESSIAH. I wonder why this was? Could it be that their minds were prejudiced? This might be our second rule when we come to God's Word. We must come with a ready and unprejudiced mind. We must not use the Bible to support previously held and long-cherished opinions. Opinions are a pestilence. They generally seek to satisfy the ego rather than God. The truth of God is ratified in the blood of Christ. It is revealed in the pages of God's Holy Word. We have to find it. We have to agree upon it. The phrase 'we must agree to disagree' makes a mockery of that for which Christ died because it seeks to perpetuate disagreement in the Body of Christ and this, I am sure, God finds intolerable. We come to the Bible and we employ what I call the 'skim and dip' method; we skim over much of what we ought to understand and dip in for the bits that strengthen our own particular theories and ideas. This will not do. History has proved this to our detriment. A third rule that we might want to remember when we study the Bible is that God is unchanging, and His counsel to man throughout the different dispensations is also unchanging. The God of the old covenant is also the God of the new. We don't change God's from Malachi to Mathew, and I feel sure our study will be better if we appreciate this fully.

What is Right and Wrong?

When I first attended a gospel meeting in an assembly of Christ I revolted because the message came across loud and clear that 'they' were right and I was wrong, whereas I understood the message as something DIFFERENT to what I had heard before. Surely, this is the idea, isn't it? When we study denominationalism we see differences of what we call interpretation, but these differences are not differences in the Word but rather they are differences of opinion about the word. The tragedy is that our opinions lead us into entrenched positions from which we find difficulty in withdrawing, when really we ought to be searching the Bible together for the definite message that God has put therein. Right and wrong are emotive words. If someone asked me how I was sure that my interpretation was right I think I would answer; "Well friend (or brother) we see things differently. Let us open the Bible, search it with open mind and not leave it until we are agreed about what it is saying". I am sure that this would be more profitable than expending our ammunition across a spiritual no-mans land and engaging ourselves in an internecine struggle.

An Example

We can conclude by giving an example of what we have been considering. We know the controversy that has raged over the statement by Jesus in Matt. 16:18 'I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church'. Applying our rule of searching the scriptures we find that Andrew brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus who said unto him, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona:

thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone" John 1:41, 42. Now in the Matt. 16:18 passage two of the important words used are PĒTROS which is the Greek word for Peter and which denotes a stone that might be thrown or easily moved; and PETRA which denotes a mass of rock such as might be used for a foundation (for the nature of this see Matt. 7:24,25). So the question is posed. Is Christ to build his church on a stone that can be easily moved; or on a mass of rock which cannot be moved? When we continue our study with unprejudiced mind we learn that Paul speaks about foundations to the church at Corinth, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" 1 Cor. 3:11. It was Peter himself who stated the true nature of Christ; "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God". Wasn't it the same Peter who quoted the prophecy of ISAIAH (1 Pet. 2:6) and wasn't it the same Isaiah who had prophesied so many years before, "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Sion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" Isaiah 28:16. The sincere and open-minded searcher would soon learn that it is Christ on whom the Church is built and not Peter.

Isn't it amazing how simply God interprets His will, and how confused we make the issue when we put our own construction on His words. Perhaps we shall learn to do better in the future, by His help.

All questions please to Brother Alf Marsden, 66 Mitchell Street, Newtown, Wigan, Lancs.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

MAY 1974

5—Exodus 23:1-13	Luke 6:20-38
12—Psalm 37:1-22	Luke 6:39-49
19—Genesis 13	Luke 7:1-23
26—Malachi 3	Luke 7:24-49

CONTRADICTIONS

WE bear in mind that Jesus had spent a night in prayer and in the morning had made His choice of twelve men to be His ambassadors in a hostile world. It was an occasion of great moment. He knew what was before them. He knew that one of them would betray Him. They were comparatively "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13), several were fishermen, one was a clerk. Jesus however "knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man" (John 2:24), and therefore His choice was utterly right. The thought of the age-lasting results of the work of these men astonishes us, and knowing our own weakness, we do know that they did have "power from on high" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8) to enable them to carry out His will.

With this thought we begin our readings this month with the contrast between the worldly idea and the truth. Of all the stupid notions for setting on foot a world wide campaign, this must be the most foolish. So we think how fortunate are those who have plenty of money, who have security in this world. How can a man who has to scrape and save to keep going be happy. Jesus says, blessed are such. The eternal and spiritual kingdom belongs to them. What can make a man happier than plenty of food. Present hunger means future plenty, says Jesus. We must have joy in life or it is not worth living but Jesus says you are more blessed if you weep. Most of us want to be popular. It is horrible to face continuous enmity but Jesus says if we bear His name and are hated for it, this is cause for ecstatic rejoicing.

As though not satisfied to have made such astonishing statements, He adds emphasis to make His teaching plainer still. The joys and comforts of this life are not to be prized by those who choose His yoke. Whether Matthew's account of the "sermon on the mount" refers to the same occasion or not, we observe primarily "He lifted up His eyes on HIS DISCIPLES" but also the people were

present (Luke 7:1). The crowds that followed Him (6:17-19) were composed mostly of those feeling need. They would be the humbler folk, "the common people (Mark 12:37)". While thus His disciples were taught, so were the people given consolation for times of trial and sorrow.

Further Jesus is contradicting all the natural instincts. Hate is the natural reaction to enemies or those who harm us, and the return of evil for evil our instinct even as children. The offer of the other cheek is regarded as a sign of cowardice and fear. Only the softie gives things away. It gives us serious thought when faced with robbery and violence, and we wonder whether we ought not to reconsider some of our ideas of compromise. The very positive application of love is held out to the disciple of Jesus as having the highest reward, and the failure in whatever degree a slipping back from imitation of the Almighty God Himself. Jesus is the literal embodiment of His own teaching.

A simple children's hymn gives us good instruction:—

"Then we may stay the angry blow,
Then we may check the hasty word,
Give gentle answers back again,
And fight a battle for our Lord".

Men and women of the world laugh at this but the apostle Paul wrote "When I am weak, then am I strong". Another hymn writer gives the thought of Christ "Should teach His brethren, and inspire to suffer and to die". The Christian cannot have the worldling's attitude or thought.

Comparisons

Blindness and light present a lesson for the disciple to make him follow the true teacher. A false teacher will produce false disciples. They will be lost. The only reliable teacher is Jesus Himself. Every disciple earnestly strives to grow into His likeness. There can be no greater ambition. Fault-finding is the easiest profession. The beam and the speck of dust teach us to look carefully at our own faults before we start on our neighbour's. It is a temptation to take notice

of the wrong-doing of others, or to retaliate when our own faults are pointed out. The Pharisee who had the highest moral standard — and the Christian certainly has that — proved to be the most critical and mercileous person. Correction in love is one thing. Self-righteous bitter hostility quite another to be avoided at all costs.

Trees produce according to their nature and life. Unless the new life in Christ is born in us of the incorruptible seed through the word of God (1 Peter 1:23), the quality of our life will remain worldly. How deeply we need to cultivate the teaching and example of our Saviour.

R.B. SCOTT

Fred SOMEBODY, Thomas EVERYBODY, Peter ANYBODY, and Joe NOBODY were neighbours, but they were not like you and me. They were odd people and most difficult to understand. The way they lived was a shame. All four belonged to the same church, but you would not have enjoyed worshipping with them. EVERYBODY went fishing on Sunday or stayed home to visit with friends.

ANYBODY wanted to worship but was afraid SOMEBODY wouldn't speak to him So guess who went to church NOBODY.

Really, NOBODY was the only decent one of the four. NOBODY did the visitation. NOBODY worked on the church building.

Once they needed a Sunday School teacher. EVERYBODY thought ANYBODY would do it, and NOBODY thought SOMEBODY would do it. And you know who did it? That's exactly right NOBODY.

It happened that a fifth neighbour (an unbeliever) moved into the area. EVERYBODY thought SOMEBODY should try to win him for Christ. ANYBODY could have made an effort. You probably knew who finally won him — NOBODY.

This little parable brings to focus again the fact that each of us is personally responsible for God's work. If we leave it for SOMEBODY or EVERYBODY or ANYBODY, NOBODY will do it. Let's work til' Jesus comes. Copied

"ARTICLES WANTED"

Some time ago I heard a brother lament that there were too many borrowed articles in the 'S.S.' The editor of any paper no doubt deplors that situation. A request for articles has been made several times but only brother Jess has made a recent response. I am hoping for an article from the brother who thinks that the 'S.S.' has too many borrowed articles. It's your paper, brethren, so please send along your material for printing. Long or short, it matters not as long as we share our knowledge with one another. Editor.

A NICKEL

I am a nickel. I am not on speaking terms with the candy man. I am too small to get in the movies. I am not large to buy a neck-tie. I am of small consideration in the purchase of gasoline. I am not fit for a tip. But, believe me, when I go to church I am SOME money.

From an old Gospel Advocate

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Easthouses: The brethren at Easthouses rejoices once again when on the 6th of March two souls gave their life unto Christ through baptism. Rejoice with us brethren for Bro. and Sis. Andrew and Dora Kerr. (Husband and wife)

Rejoice with us also at three souls being restored unto the Lord. On Lords Day 10th March the following desired to have fellowship with the Easthouses church, Sisters, Jeanette and Pat Kerr and Bro. David Kerr. All thanks and praise to God. Bro. FERGUSON.

(The editor very much regrets that this news item appeared in the wrong column last month.)

Motherwell: The church at Motherwell is pleased to report that Anne Purcell put on her Lord in baptism. Our young sister is the daughter of brother and sister W. Purcell and grand-daughter of the writer. We trust and pray that Anne will be a shining light in the kingdom of our Lord. L PURCELL.

11th May 1974, Peterhead Church Social

The church in Peterhead extend a hearty invitation to all, to their Church Social. This will be held in the Rescue Hall, Prince Street, Peterhead.

The afternoon meeting will commence at 3.00p.m. tea will be served about 5.00p.m. and the evening meeting start about 6.00. The speakers are to be Bro. Tom Nisbet of Haddington and Bro. Frank Worgan of Corby.

OBITUARY

IT is with regret that we record the passing of brother Wilfred Daniell of Queen Victoria Road in Bristol, who died very suddenly while at work. He was in his sixty eighth year. Brother Daniell was a faithful and generous contributor to the 'Scripture Standard' for many years and sent copies to workmates baptized at Bedminster. In his later years brother Wilfred became slightly isolated from the church but was, at Bristol, present on special occasions. We commend his wife, family, brethren and friends to the consolation to be found in our Lord and Saviour. J.R.G.

Brighton: We are saddened to report the death of Charles Hudson on March 29th, who will be greatly missed in a declining congregation. He had suffered for a number of years with heart trouble but was always anxious to fill his place at the Lord's Day services, and was of great value in the preaching and teaching of the church.

The funeral took place on April 4th at Worthing, and our sympathies go out to his wife and family. W.I.A.

To Remain a Child?

Everywhere pictures, articles, stories, conversation portray "manliness" as the ability to seduce a woman or to successfully fight another man. The "real he-man" is the one who drinks and smokes and swears and fights and "makes love."

The "successful woman" also drinks, smokes, swears, shows off her body, and "knows how to make a man happy".

Our books, our movies, our plays, our magazines are full of illicit sex, violence, drugs — the abandonment of self-control in every sphere of life.

Self-control has always been a mark of adulthood.

Today we are substituting lack of control as the mark of adulthood. Some call it civilisation, claiming, for example, that "we are becoming civilised when we allow nudes in movies and acts of homosexuality on the stage".

We throw restraints out the window and boast about our "maturity" while doing so.

But the fact of the matter is that lack of self-control is childish. We expect children to fight — to overeat — to throw temper tantrums — to be uncontrolled in a variety of ways.

And we also expect children to grow out of these attitudes and actions.

The real he-man is the one who has the courage to say "no" when the whole group is drinking — to turn away when the group is telling dirty stories — to wait for his sexual satisfaction until he is married.

The genuine woman is the one who keeps her language clean and pleasant — who wears modest and becoming clothes — who rejects the men who try to entice her.

Are you mature? Are you an adult? Are you a real man or a real woman?

The real criterion is how well you control your thoughts — your passions — your temper — your words — your acts — your very lives.

From "The South African Christian".

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