

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## LOVE, TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING

About two years ago I mentioned the fact that the Church of England was voting on a proposal to introduce women into their priesthood. Initial results were tilted against the proposal, but, in my great wisdom, I predicted that all the opposition would be gradually broken down with soothing words, gentle threats and a bit of flattery. It has all now come to pass. Those seeking this innovation have won the day, and the first batch of women priests began their priestly duties yesterday. It is always fairly easy to introduce an innovation but quite another matter to have it removed. Thus for the first time since the reign of Henry 8th (16th Century) we have women priests in the C. of E. and surely it must be baffling to the more thoughtful members of that church that, after managing without women priests for about 400 years, they are now so vitally necessary that the church is quite prepared to splinter itself over the issue. Lip-service is quite often paid to "unity" but when the "chips are down" and a vested interest is determined to have its way, then division is apparently quite an acceptable price to pay for "progress." The division in the C. of E. is obviously deep and much disappointment, disbelief, disillusionment, unhappiness and even bitterness has been engendered amongst not only the clergy but amongst the ordinary members: all from something which, to us, would appear to have been quite unnecessary.

As a consequence, large numbers are leaving the C. of E. and going elsewhere, but mainly to the R.C. Church. It has been said that the C. of E. "is the Tory Party at prayer" and this may well be true. Certainly some prominent members of the government have been lately in the news, as they transfer their membership. John Gummer, Minister for the Environment, was interviewed the other day as he queued up to join the R.C. Church. Mr. Gummer, always a very active and vocal opponent of women in the priesthood, explained that he could no longer regard the C. of E. as the "established church" but "merely as another of the denominations". It was suggested to him by reporters that he might merely be jumping from the frying-pan into the fire; especially as there are strong elements in the R.C. Church pressing for women to be allowed into the R.C. priesthood. Mr. Gummer was also asked how he would cope with all the new doctrines he would now have to embrace; e.g. transubstantiation, purgatory, Virgin Mary, immaculate conception, Papal infallibility, etc., etc., and replied that he would have to prepare himself for all that. This surely illustrates that there are few limits to what we can swallow when we have to, or when we want to. Meanwhile, Dr. Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has been actively spearheading the introduction, is now apparently wringing his hands in anguish

at the disruption and asking that everyone should show "Christian love and understanding".

I mention these things not only because we are seeing history made, but because it is an **object lesson** to us as to how easily innovations can be introduced into religious establishments. This event, in years to come, will be looked upon as one of the most momentous changes ever made in the C. of E. and certainly the most significant innovation since, perhaps, their introduction of instrumental music. This is how churches **add** innovations (but seldom renounce them) and this is the stuff of which denominationalism is made. And it all seemed so easy.

#### **PRACTICE: DOES IT MATTER?**

By a strange coincidence, the subject which came up for discussion at our recent Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting (of the churches in the Slamannan District), a few weeks ago, was along the following lines: "When we are baptised into Christ are we brethren in Him, or does it depend upon what we practise"? As these questions are put forward anonymously we could only speculate upon what the questioner had in mind. My own view was that the question was suggesting, rightly, that when we are all baptised (assuming that our baptism is, in all respects, scriptural) we are all baptised into the one body, the Church, and are thereby brethren. The question seemed also to imply that that close brotherly relationship can, however, be adversely affected by what we all eventually **practise** (religiously). The C. of E. scenario of disunity, outlined above, is not, unfortunately, unfamiliar to Churches of Christ and it is well documented historically that, although we all **start off** as brethren in Christ, we often **end up** at opposite ends of the Churches of Christ religious spectrum, and become divided on questions such as instrumental music; missionary societies; "Herald of Truth"; leavened bread; individual containers; bread breaking; head covering, etc. etc. History also shows an affinity between the C. of E. experience and that of the Churches of Christ in that a group, with a strong vested interest, can 'bulldoze' any innovation through, regardless of protests or the likelihood of division, and that when division eventually comes, there is a ringing of the hands with cynical pleas for "Tolerance, Christian love, and understanding." As the question suggests, we are **all brethren by virtue of our baptism**, and obedience to the gospel, but our fellowship thereafter is strongly influenced by **what we practise**.

By another strange coincidence, the above question and sentiments thereon, were quite dramatically confirmed a week later, by events in Edinburgh. For some days prior to the actual screening, we were warned on our TV sets that a complete exposé of "an American cult called the Church of Christ" was to be shown on a certain evening and "the lid was to be lifted off." Several brethren phoned the studios to complain about the proposed terminology. Realising that the proposed programme was already "in the can" and could not be altered, I asked the studios to add a verbal postscript to the film stating that Churches of Christ had been in the world for 2,000 years; had been in Britain two or three hundred years since records were kept; and were not a cult; not even an American cult. When the programme was eventually screened it was at once obvious that the purpose of the film was to "warn" Scotland in general, and Edinburgh in particular, about the activities of the "Crossroads" segment of the Churches of Christ. It was claimed that this group had wrought havoc amongst English university towns and had come north to Edinburgh to focus their recruiting activities on Scottish universities. Clearly the intention of the film makers was to paint as black a picture as possible, and in this they certainly succeeded, albeit they were a bit unfair at times. The term "cult" was used interchangeably with "Church of Christ" and, more than once, a reference was made to the cult at Waco, implying some similarities. Ex-members of this "Crossroads" Church of Christ in Edinburgh were interviewed and most of them spoke in terms of having "escaped" from a very

unwholesome predicament at the hands of nasty "Christians." Complaints from ex-members not only included methods of recruitment, but also the regimentation of members, who were required continuously to report to 'superiors' in the church, and give them all kinds of very personal information, including, in the case of married couples, minute details of their sex lives. One elderly couple related the "loss" of their son to this "cult" and how they were ostracised by their son on the "cult's" recommendation (all very reminiscent of a few years ago when parents lamented children "lost" to the "Moonies"). Some ex-members reckoned that "money-making" seemed to get a high priority in the church, with very strict adherence to tithing: and some spoke of various other forms of pressure put upon them by the leaders, resulting in fear, unhappiness and mental breakdown. They say that any publicity is good publicity but I doubt, after that programme, that any in Mr. Gummer's queue (to join the R.C. Church) could, have been persuaded to leave it for Churches of Christ. The following day most Churches of Christ in the country (if not all) were denying any affiliation with the "cult" of the film. The TV studio switchboard received a great many calls from members of various congregations renouncing any association with the "cult" and, as a result, the TV company, later that day, screened a statement from a member of the congregation at Stirling, disclaiming any association with the "Crossroads Church."

Thus it seems that, whereas we all start off as brethren in Christ, by virtue of our obedience to the gospel, we can thereafter, by reason of what we practise, place a barrier between ourselves and our brethren, and make fellowship difficult, if not impossible. This has surely been proved by the general reaction to the "Crossroads" Church, if by nothing else.

#### "THOU KNOWEST THE PEOPLE"

Human beings, in their vanity, are impressed by "majorities" and by large numbers. This is natural, I suppose, and church members feel much more comfortable and confident in huge congregations, than with "the twos and threes". Indeed it was mentioned, in a church magazine a few weeks ago, that some congregations in the USA were complaining about carloads of members passing the doors of small struggling congregations to reach the large and vibrant ones. Another weakness of the human animal can, I think, be summed up in the current expression, "If you can't beat them, join them" and people often wait to see which side of a controversy is likely to prevail, before they make their move. A famous advertisement used to say "Five million people can't be wrong" and, of course, if that were true Rome would be the headquarters of the true church, and Hitler would have been the Saviour of the Third Reich. The decision by the C. of E. in the priesthood affair, was actually reached by a very slim majority of votes but such was the fervency for the move that, as one official said at the time, "Just one vote would swing it". This illustrates that the question of whether the proposal was scriptural was of little consequence: the democratic vote: the voice of the people was all it took. If "the people", in sufficient numbers, want something, they will have it; regardless of the consequences. Moses discovered this sad fact more than once. When he chided Aaron for allowing the making of the golden calf in his (Moses') absence, Aaron replied, "Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot. Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief". "The people" are still set on mischief today, and there are not a few golden calves being made. Leaders know that if the people are not given what they want they will eventually take it. It's called "people power" and, quite apart from the C. of E., the Pope is also struggling to maintain the status quo. The vast membership of the R.C. Church is becoming increasingly restless; is challenging the Pope's authority and pressing for a relaxation of the present restrictions on abortion, contraception, divorce, etc.; and seeking the abolition of celibacy in the priesthood, and more recently, the inclusion of women in the priesthood. In short,

the Pope and all other church leadership, is being forced "to change with the times" in a world which now congratulates homosexuality but spurns marriage; empties the churches and fills our jails. Clearly "it is not within man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Jeremiah also said, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might: let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let the man that glorieth glory in this: that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth loving-kindness, judgement and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight sayeth the Lord". (Jer. 9:22).

God is not impressed with majorities or large numbers: indeed the Bible seems to speak of minorities. Only eight souls were saved in the great flood and precious few entered the Promised Land. Elijah, at one time, was vastly outnumbered by 850 prophets of Baal but yet prevailed, because he had God on his side. Micaiah, on one occasion, was out numbered by 400 other prophets who all agreed on a view which was in complete opposition to the view of Micaiah. Who would have believed that every one of the 400 prophets were wrong, but they were! And so, rather than being impressed by "large majorities" and big numbers, we should, perhaps, be suspicious of them.

#### VERY RECENT INNOVATION

Is it not truly remarkable that after 400 years without women priests the C. of E., apparently can not now function without them? Surely the average member of that church must ponder this matter. Obviously the clergy have been able to "talk them round" and give a plausible explanation. How is it possible that such a thing could ever be explained, and how gullible would members have to be? True, some have not accepted the change and have not been "talked into it". However, it must be very difficult for the rebels to find a church which is not susceptible to religious innovation, and they may well find that all denominations are "fair game" for modification and that "the winds of change" are blowing quite freely through most religious bodies. This is, as I say, a **good object lesson** for us, and we should ask ourselves how vulnerable we ourselves, might be in such a situation, and how easily we might be "smoothed over".

What has been said of women priests is just as true of instrumental music in the worship. For hundreds of years most denominations managed quite well without the instrument. It is incredible to think that **until recently** (100 years or less) the only churches to use instrumental music were the C. of E. and the R.C. Church. John S. Curven, in his book *Studies in Worship Music* p.179, (written just around 1880) says, "Men still living can remember the time when organs were very seldom found outside the Church of England. The Methodists, Independents and Baptists rarely had them, and by the Presbyterians they were stoutly opposed. But since these bodies began to introduce organs, the adoption of them has been unchecked. Even the Presbyterians are giving way, and if we read the future by the past, we can hardly doubt that, in a few years, unaccompanied singing will very seldom be heard. Yet, even in the Church of England itself, organs did not obtain admission without much controversy."

It is sad to relate that while Curven was describing the situation in Britain, the Restoration Movement in the USA was being split by the introduction of the instrument just prior to the 1870's, and organs were being used in the Churches of Christ.

It is also sad to relate that, about 30 years later, (in 1894), "individual containers" were invented and patented by the Rev. J. G. Thomas, and soon thereafter placed upon the Lord's Table in Churches of Christ. As we watch members of the C. of E. agonise over why, after 400 years, women priests should be so vital, we should, in our turn, wonder why Churches of Jesus Christ, after 2,000 years should suddenly find it necessary to import into their meeting-places organs and multiple containers:

both of which caused great division at the time and still do. It's a good question. Will we ask it? What's more to the point, will we get an answer? We imagine that members of the C. of E. should ask the question, but surely there's much more reason for Churches of Christ to ask the question. Churches of Christ are, after all, not averse to clubbing the denominations for their innovations, and calling upon all religious people "to get back to the Bible" and to ditch any religious practice not in the N.T. Is it fair to decry the denominations for something we do ourselves?

#### CONCLUSION

But, someone asks, "What does it matter. As long as we are sincere there's no harm in these things. Let's not quibble over details." There's no space left to deal with this attitude but God has always been interested in detail. Many died in the O.T. through lack of attention to detail. Paul exhorted those in Thessalonica to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." Paul also wrote at length to the various churches on the 'details' of the Christian faith. Paul was not present with the twelve at the institution of the Lord's Supper but received from the lips of Jesus a special and "detailed" description of what took place on that occasion: almost verbatim of Luke's account. Why should Jesus describe it to Paul, and Paul describe it to the Corinthians, if "the manner" was not regarded as very important. "I'm sure the C. of E. sees no "harm" in women priests but the question is not "are they harmful" but "are they scriptural." Every member of the Church has a duty, I believe, to regularly review what they believe and practise and should ask themselves, "Is the congregation of which I am a member a faithful copy of the N.T. original, or is there a practice in my congregation which has originated since N.T. times, and which may well have originated in one of the denominations: and if so, what should I try to do about it.?"

As I write, the Panel of Doctrine of the C. of Scotland has just announced its decision that "marriage is not to be assumed the only form of sexual relationship," and that as "love and commitment" exists amongst Lesbians and Gays such should be accepted, and the term "living in sin" should now be abandoned. All the Panel has to do now is "smooth over" the average member with skilful wording, which, doubtless it will. "The people" want it and, as usual, those who oppose it will be asked to show "Tolerance, love and understanding." So it goes on.

EDITOR.

### GLEANINGS

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

#### KNOWING

"I know how anxious thought can press,  
I know the weight of carefulness;  
But now I know the sweet reward  
Of casting all upon my Lord,  
No longer bearing what He bears,  
Because I know that Jesus cares."

F.R.H.

#### THE LAMB OF GOD

**"And I beheld, and, lo . . . a lamb as it had been slain."** (Rev. 5:6).

"As it had been slain" leaves no doubt that Christ's death, and nothing else, is in the seer's mind; and to that fact he would lead us as the centre point of all else which we can know about Him, and as the foundation of all that He has further to reveal of His glory and power.

That symbolical representation is a vivid and picturesque way of saying that, in heaven as on earth, Christ's sacrifice is efficacious and necessary. Much besides may be contained in the symbol, but this is plainly its lesson, that there is no heaven nor any cleansing but through the blood of the slain lamb.

**“CHRIST’S SACRIFICE IS MEN’S NEED”**

“For earth and heaven, to the last moment of time and all through the dateless cycles of eternity, Christ’s sacrifice is men’s need, and is present before the throne as the medium of all blessings to sinners, and who struggle to be saints, and to saints there who were sinners.”

Purity, peace, life and all other Divine gifts, are ours and theirs, because the **“Lamb as it had been slain”** is before the throne. **“This Man, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.”**

This is the aspect of Christ with which we must begin, if we would know Him in the full greatness of His gifts and sweep of His work. Unless we do, we shall have but an unworthy conception of His wondrous love and an inadequate estimate of His all-prevailing power.

The Christianity which strikes out the sacrifice on the cross from its idea of Jesus, has not fathomed the depths of His mercy nor of our need.

The wounds of humanity are not to be staunched by one who is but a meek and pure pattern man, however stimulating and loveable such a figure may be, but need, for their binding up, a wounded hand.

“A Christ without a cross is an impotent Christ, He can neither bless nor sway.”

**THE SHEPHERD — LAMB**

**“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”** (Rev. 7:17).

There is a striking anomaly, and at first sight incongruity, in that daring symbol, that the Lamb is the Shepherd. But the reality underlying the symbol is that Jesus Christ, by his death, becomes the Guide, Protector, and Nourisher of men. We may perhaps venture still further to draw from the incongruity of the symbol the great truth that the Leader of men is one in nature with the men whom He leads. The Shepherd is himself a Lamb, and is our leader just because He shares our nature. But that is not the intention of the seer, and can only be taken as a permissible play of allusion on our parts.

**WE ARE ON FIRMER GROUND**

We are on firmer ground when we see in this sweet metaphor the thought that the Christ who died and reigns is the eternal Pattern for us, whether on earth or in the calm perfection of Mount Zion. Here we have to go after the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, who has left us an example that we should tread in His steps.

Here we follow afar off, lingering, straying, and all unfit to tread in His footprints. There **“they shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,”** with complete imitation, and steps not unequal to His. But for both states to follow Him is blessedness and to be like Him is perfection.

Nor shall that future be without advance. There will be growing approximation to Him, a more perfect conformity to His Likeness, a fuller appropriation of His life, and an ever-increasing nearness to Him which shall fill eternity with freshness, and make its joys and service ever new.

**THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS**

The symbol suggests that the slain and enthroned Lamb is, by both characteristics, the Source of security and the author of nourishment. True, there will be no outward dangers to guard against; but the reason why **“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat”** is **“for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd,”** and therefore are they safe from evil, and replenished with all good.

He is the eternal Source of satisfaction for heaven as for earth, and is Himself

the Fountain of living waters to which He leads the flock. Heaven is Christ, and Christ is heaven.

The future state of the redeemed is stable blessedness and full delight, not because of physical changes or added glories, but because Christ is theirs, and the full issues of His cross and reign are reaped by them in their following the Shepherd - Lamb, and sharing with Him His glories.

It is of the utmost importance for the vigour of Christian life to keep clear and vivid that present activity of our Lord. We have not only to look back to the cross, but upwards to His throne . . . The nobleness, peacefulness and strength of our lives largely depend upon our having that vision of the enthroned Jesus ever before us.

Alexander McLaren.

### BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

Behold! behold! the Lamb of God	On the cross;
For us he shed His precious blood	On the cross;
O hear His agonising cry — ‘Eli, Lama, Sabachthani.’	
Draw near and see your Saviour die	On the cross.
Come, sinners, see Him lifted up	On the cross;
He drinks for you the bitter cup	On the cross;
The rocks do rend, the mountains quake,	
While Jesus doth atonement make —	
While Jesus suffers for your sake	On the cross.
Behold His arms extended wide	On the cross;
Behold His bleeding hands and side	On the cross;
The sun withholds his rays of light,	
The heavens are clothed in shades of night,	
While Jesus conquers in the fight	On the cross.

J. Hoskins.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

## PROPHET NUMBER 401

The story that suggests our title comes from 1 Kings 22. It is often used by preachers as a foundation for a good sermon. Jehoshaphat had gone down to see King Ahab. Jehoshaphat had a fairly good name as a king, and as a man who kept the will of God. To the contrary, Ahab was a very wicked man with a terrible reputation. Jehoshaphat was in bad company and it got him in trouble. It usually does, and we are warned by Paul that “**Evil communications corrupts good manners**” (1 Cor. 15:33).

Jehoshaphat had probably gone down to visit Ahab because of a marriage that had taken place between members of the two families. A lot of things will take place because of bad marriages. Young people, take some time for planning your marriages. Be careful when picking out the mate you will live with for the rest of your life.

While Jehoshaphat was there, he was treated royally. Ahab spun a web for him much like a spider would spin one to trap a fly in. He treated Jehoshaphat so well that when he proposed joining ranks to go up to Ramoth-Gilead to war, there wasn't much that Jehoshaphat could do but agree to go. After he had fully (evidently unhesitatingly) agreed to go, and had offered all of his horses and soldiers, then it was . . . yes, then it was, that he began to wonder what God would have to say about it.

### CONSULT GOD FIRST

Jehoshaphat was very much like a lot of people today. We too often make up our minds about religious matters, suiting ourselves, and then we try to make God's will match ours. You notice this: when a man makes up his mind about a matter

without considering God, though he may have after-thoughts and “go see what God has to say about it” he usually goes ahead and carries out his plans regardless. He has already shown us his mind about God when he left Him out in the first place. Consult God first, see what His mind is, then make your plans and decisions **match His**.

#### **AHAB HAD 400 PROPHETS**

When Jehoshaphat wanted to enquire and see what God had to say about it, Ahab gathered together 400 prophets. (No trouble finding men to agree with a godless decision.) They were all on the king’s payroll and ate at his table. There would not be one dissenting voice from these paid pastors, and Ahab knew it. So did Jehoshaphat. He knew that he couldn’t get the truth from that mob, so he asked, “**Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?**” Right here we are introduced to prophet No. 401. Hear what Ahab had to say about him. “**Yes, I have one more man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, but I hate him!**” Micaiah always told the truth.

#### **HE STOOD UNDER PRESSURE**

They were fixing for quite a show while the messenger went after Micaiah. Both the kings had dressed themselves in royal array and had seated themselves at a good vantage point. The false prophets were making plans too. They had been at work and had designed a service that ought to have convinced any doubter about their authority and sincerity. They had a leader and his name was Zedekiah. This fellow had fixed a set of horns made of iron, which I suppose, was to suggest strength, and he was demonstrating how they were going to push the enemy out of their territory and retake Ramoth-Gilead. This was the kind of scene that Micaiah was about to be ushered into.

Besides this he was having some pressure applied on him by the officer that was sent to get him. In principle he was saying, “Micaiah there are 400 prophets that have prophesied war is the appropriate thing. Now, don’t go up there and mess up the whole thing by saying something different. Get in with the crowd. Don’t stick out like a sore thumb. Don’t be against everything. Let thy word be like the word of the rest of them, and speak that which is good.” But listen to the reply of the man of God: “**As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.**” There you see his real colours. He was no average, run-of-the-mill fellow. He could care less what the others had said, even if there were 400 of them. He would just speak what God told him to speak.

#### **HE STOOD ALONE**

Like a lot of other ancient Bible worthies, Micaiah had learned that to stand with God often times would mean that he would have to stand alone. It still means just that today. You might be the only boy or girl in the class room that would admit your belief in a living God and a Saviour that died for you.

You might be the only one who would say *no* to a proposal that all the others said *yes* to. You might be the only one in the group who wouldn’t drink a beer or experiment with drugs. You might be the only virgin in the dorm or in the block. You might be the only one that will not succumb to the strong pull to follow the crowd and follow a fashion that we know is indecent and God-dishonouring. You may be the only boy that won’t let his hair grow too long, or the only girl who won’t wear her dresses too short, or put on clothing that is a duplicate of (pertains to) man’s clothing. You might find yourself the only one who won’t go to the show or to a dance. We could go on and on. Don’t feel badly about finding yourself alone in these and other things. Take a good look at Micaiah, and take heart. Remember this — when you stand with God, you never stand alone. There is recognition in heaven for the individual who will stand with God.

#### **NOT SWAYED BY MAJORITY**

A lot of people are what they are because this is what the majority believes. This should not be a deciding factor in our lives. God isn’t influenced by the crowds and



neither should we be. Truth does not depend upon the majority for its veracity. Truth is truth regardless of what any man may say. Truth does not even depend upon the church for its veracity. If the whole world would turn its back on a principle of truth, it would still be truth.

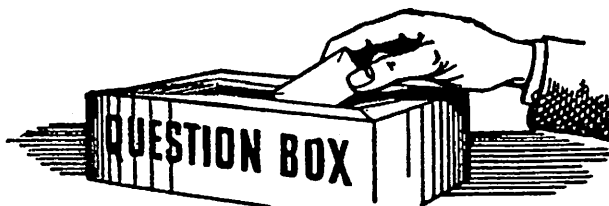
I see brethren sometimes swayed by the fact that most preachers and teachers believe a certain way on an issue. It is a good policy to be open-minded and considerate, but let only one thing have the final say in your life, namely the Word of God.

#### WILLING TO SACRIFICE

This man of God had to give up a lot just to stay with the truth. He could have had the same pay, the same rations, the same popularity as did the other prophets if he had been willing to go with the crowd. He could have escaped the ridicule, the reproof, the isolation, the ill-treatment, even the confinement, if he had just given in. But he didn't.

There is much that could be said about Micaiah, but we would just have you remember the statement he made to the messenger. "And Micaiah said, as the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, *that will I speak.*"

Larry Robertson




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"Now that many so-called 'Christian' organisations and people seem to be doubting the truth of the Bible, do you think that this could have an adverse effect on some members of the Church of Christ?"**

I feel sure that it could have, but I am equally sure that it shouldn't have. There will always be those who seemed to be impressed with the scholastic ability of some Bishop, priest, or other Biblical scholar, and will say to themselves, "Well, he is a Greek or Latin scholar, surely he must know what he's talking about." We know from experience, however, that in any sphere of thought or action there are many who have seemed to be right, but at the end of the day they have been proved to be entirely wrong. Therefore, we must not place our faith in what men think about God, but we must have a consistent faith in God, being assured that He always seeks our good, and that He, according to His revelation, will never lead us astray, Let's see if we can reinforce this.

To put it into the language which perhaps modern man will understand better, I see Jesus as the Chief Executive of God's Will. Before He left the earth to ascend into Heaven He made it plain to His Apostles that there were many things which they had still had to be taught, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). He made a promise to them, however, that after He had gone that they would be taught, "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth" (v13). He even catered for their lack of memory, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Luke also records the words of Jesus to His Disciples, later to be His Apostles, "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to

say.” (Luke 12:11,12). So God’s Will was revealed by himself in Christ, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, taught to and preached by the Apostles, and given unto the custody of those who believed and obeyed it, i.e., the Church which was born on the Day of Pentecost. That Church is the true Church, the Church of Christ, the executive arm of the Christ in the world today. It is God-given, Christ-centred, and Apostolic. With that sort of pedigree, there can be no room for doubt of the revelations of God, the Bible.

### THE EXECUTIVE ARM

This, as I have indicated, is the Church. If the Church fails, then the Message fails. But as with the Apostles, the Church also has the help of the Holy Spirit, not only to assist in the personal lives of the saints, but also to guide the Church in the interpretation of the revelation. Not to give new revelation, because the revelation is complete, but to guide us in our understanding of God’s Will. The Church has a special responsibility for the truth, as Paul made clear when he wrote to Timothy, **“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”** (1 Tim. 3:15). Here we have the idea of a column (pillar), such as the Greeks used in their temples, holding up a building or structure; the ‘ground’ is the foundation on which the structure stands. The point being made is clear: God expects the Church to support and maintain the truth. What is that truth? Well, Christ is the foundation on which the Church is built, and He said of Himself, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man can come to the Father except by me”** So we are talking about the revealed truth from God concerning the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, Paul puts the issue on a more personal level. Timothy is exhorted to **“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life”** (1 Tim. 6:12). Later in the same chapter Paul writes, **“O Timothy keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called”** (v20). While it is true that Paul intended Timothy to ‘guard the deposit’, i.e., as preacher and evangelist, it is equally true, by extension, that all Christians, including Timothy, should be included in his directive to **“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us”** (2 Tim. 1:13,14). That ‘good deposit’ was given to Timothy, and I am sure I am not stretching a point when I say “and unto us also.” Timothy was warned against the ‘pseudo-knowledge’ (science falsely so called), a probable reference to gnosticism. The Church has spent too much time on ‘issues’ and not enough on presenting Christ to the world.

### THE INERRANCY OF THE SCRIPTURES

If we present the Bible, as we undoubtedly should, as the revealed Will of God for mankind, then we must be absolutely sure that we ourselves believe it to be inerrant. After hearing some Christians talk, I’m not altogether sure that this is the case. A salesman will always achieve his best results when he is convinced that the claims for the product he is selling are absolutely true. We in the Church have set ourselves up as ‘purveyors’ of the truth concerning God and His Christ: are we totally convinced?

There is one Person who was always convinced of what He said; the Lord Christ Himself. What gave Him the conviction? Well, you may say, because He was the Son of God, but that is not the only way He put it to the people of His day with whom He had to contend. The Sadducees came to Him on one occasion trying to trap Him concerning the resurrection. There were seven brothers, the first of whom married, but who died before any children were born. According to Mosaic Law, the brother of the dead man should marry the wife in order to raise up seed unto his dead brother. The same thing happened with the other six. The question posed by the Sadducees

was, **“Whose wife would she be in the resurrection, for they all had her?”** ‘Got Him’ they must have thought to themselves.

The reply of Jesus nonplussed the Sadducees, and gives us a great degree of satisfaction when we approach the Word. Jesus said to them, **“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God”** (Matt. 22:23-33). Implicit in this statement is the fact that if they had known the scriptures, they would **not** have erred. It seems to me that Jesus here is making a claim for the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Now obviously, the Scriptures He referred to were the Old Testament Scriptures, but could there be anything less regarding the New Testament? There is an interesting confrontation recorded by John. The Jews were saying that Jesus blasphemed by saying that He was the Son of God. Jesus answered them, **“Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world. Thou blasphemest; because I said I am the Son of God?”** Did not Jesus rebuke the two on the Emmaus road when He said, **“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and (then) to enter into His glory”** (Luke 24:25,26). If they had known the Scriptures, they should have known what would happen. The very fact that Jesus could say ‘these things’ were foretold in Scripture before they actually **did** happen, proves to me anyway, that the Scriptures He referred to were accurate and unerring. The culmination of all this to my mind is to be found in 2 Pet. 3:16 where Peter brackets the Epistles of Paul with the ‘other scriptures’, seemingly suggesting that Paul’s New Testament letters had been twisted by his detractors just as the Old Testament Scriptures had been twisted. As Paul asserted to Timothy, **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”**, (2 Tim. 3:16,17). That is why we can rely on the Scriptures, both Old and New. They are Spirit-given, and therefore God-given.

You will have noticed, however, that the Jewish leaders, and the two on the Emmaus road, were rebuked by Jesus for **not knowing** the Scriptures. For the Christian, especially, it will be futile to plead ignorance of the Bible when we stand at the bar of judgement. We shall be indicted on two counts: not knowing the revelation for ourselves, and consequently not being able to pass it on to others. Dear brother, sister, take your Bible out of its place of repose. Read it and study it. Within its pages you will find history, high drama, the greatest love stories you have ever read, but most important, you will find Salvation and the Way of Life. God has given it into the keeping of those who love Him, so that its Message can be blazoned across the world for the benefit of all mankind. That being so, you can rely upon it, irrespective of what the cynics say.

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

## TRUE RELIGION

If someone were to ask you what is true religion, how would you answer? You might reply that true religion is attending each and every worship activity of the Church. Maybe you would answer that true religion is being correct in doctrinal matters, and being right in approaching God in worship. As good and important as these things are true religion goes much deeper. How we worship God is important. But just as important, if not more so, is the life from which worship springs forth.

In Amos 5:21-24, God is having a controversy with His people. It seems as though outwardly and formally, the Jews were worshipping God. They had their solemn assemblies, burnt-offerings, meal-offerings, peace-offerings and even singing. The

Jews mistakenly thought their “worship service” somehow made everything right. But God hated their feasts, and did not accept their worship. In Amos’ day the Jews had no mind to conform to God’s will. There was corruption and total disrespect for God, even though they continued sacrificing to Him. As it has been said, God demands right and not just rites. If true religion is mainly found in the outward, the Jews would never have been condemned so severely.

Many years later when Jesus came into the world, he didn’t come to give us more religion per se. He showed us how to live by making our religion real. By this time the Jewish Culture was so divided religiously there were five sects. The Pharisees were by far the largest and most influential. In many ways they were a lot like us. They were literal interpreters of the Scriptures, they believed in moral purity, they believed in angels and also in the resurrection of the dead. But because they were so literal in their interpretations sometimes they went to seed! They were arrogant and judgmental. Whatever the Pharisees had, they didn’t have true religion. They had a form of religion, but were lacking in the inner spiritual devotion to God.

In Matt. 23:23, Jesus said, **“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe the mint and anise and cummin; and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.”** Notice that Jesus didn’t chide them for what they had done, but Jesus does chide them for leaving undone the weightier (more important), aspects of the law. And notice further the things they had left undone were concepts which stress a relationship between our fellow-man and God. In other words, true religion seems to be found in a certain way of living. If your life on a day-to-day-basis doesn’t reflect the principles covered in Matt. 23:23 it doesn’t matter how “correct” your Sunday religion is; you’ve missed the entire point of Christianity.

Is it possible to be correct on the outside and still be condemned? Yes, the Jews had been guilty of this several times. Unless we have the very essence of religion in our everyday life, it won’t matter what we do in our worship activities. Do you have true religion?

**“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micaah 6:8).**

D. Boswell

## MY JOHN 3:16 TOOTHBRUSH

I visited a Christian bookstore the other day. I have to make a couple of visits each month — not always to buy — but to keep up with what’s in print.

While browsing I walked by the gift counter and some of the gift items caught my eye.

I could have bought a John 3:16 toothbrush.

I thought about a “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” comb.

I was startled and amused by a small picture of a strange looking man. Then I realised was looking at my reflection in a “Smile, God loves you” purse mirror.

And the pencils! The pencils had Bible verses written on them. I thought about buying one for my wife to make out the grocery list with. An appropriate verse would be “Man shall not live by bread alone” but the nearest thing I could find was “I am the bread of life.” I stifled the urge. She’ll just have to stick to her “Walker and Creighton Ford” freebie ballpoint.

Bumper stickers abounded. There was the “Smile God loves you” sticker and the ever present “Honk if you love Jesus.” They were sold out of “In case of rapture this vehicle will be unoccupied.” I looked for one with the message “This car stops at all Christian bumper sticker racks” but evidently they didn’t carry that one.

The little boy in me chuckled as I bounced a “Go into all the world” rubber ball.

But in laughter there is sorrow. How like us these trinkets are! How many times do we try to find peace in a slogan, a disjointed Bible text or a smiley face button!

Paul who lived in the days of phylacteries, said, **"I count all things but loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."** He realised Christian maturity did not come through formulas and pat answers but through living Christ.

Mottos, marked Bibles, and proof texts are a sign of Christian immaturity. Real maturity comes through the daily uninspiring grind of living with and for Jesus.

D. Crawford

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 1	Genesis 50:15-26	Heb. 11:1-22
May 8	Exodus 14:13-31	Heb. 11:23-40
May 15	Proverbs 3:1-20	Heb. 12:1-17
May 22	Genesis 4:1-16	Heb. 12:18-29
May 29	Psalms 118:1-23	Heb. 13:

### FAITH

Hebrews chapter eleven is a great chapter of faith. We read **"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"** (11:1). This is a description of faith, not a definition. As one writer put it: "Actually the writer is pointing out to us the ingredients of faith. As respects those things for which we hope, faith is a firm conviction as respects the realm of the unseen it is a firm confidence. But I can list the ingredients of a cake without defining cake."

Faith implies reliance upon God and obedience to God. **"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him"** (11:6). Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Rahab and many others were great examples of faith: and what should be remembered is that they lived on the other side of the cross.

It is difficult not to single out Abraham in the great catalogue of chapter eleven. Indeed, it was he who was called the very father of the faithful. He was the first person of whom it is said that he believed God and his belief was counted unto him for justification. Paul wrote of him in the Roman letter: **"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith,**

**giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform"** (Romans 4:20,21). Like Abraham, I want to trust in the Lord completely. I want to have removed from me all doubts and fears and become a truly loving and faithful servant, no matter the cost, and no matter what people will think of me. I want my faith in God to grow stronger each day so that one day I will hear the glorious words: **"Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter you into the joy of your Lord"** (Matthew 25:23).

I am deeply saddened that many in the world today have no faith in God. The consequences of atheism and agnosticism are felt everywhere. A spiritual revolution is required. The Christian faith is the only faith that can provide this. I pray that more and more will come to declare: **"I believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God."**

### CHAPTER 12

Hebrews chapter twelve can be divided thus: The Race and the Goal (1,2); The Standard of Comparison (3,4); The Discipline of God (5-11); Duties, Aims and Dangers (12-17); The Terror of the Old and the Glory of the New (18-24); The Greater Obligation (25-29).

The first two verses reveal that the Christian life is like a race with a goal. Paul wrote: **"I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 3:14). In this race, the Christian is inspired by the **"great cloud of witnesses"** who are like the crowd looking down on the runner. Each Christian runs with **"patience."** This the Greek word **hupomone** and means steadfast endurance. The handicap can be sin, which must be laid

aside. The example for every runner is Jesus Himself, **“who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (12:2).

Just as the athlete is subject to discipline so is the child of God. Discipline is for our own good, although we do not always see this at the time. If our heavenly fathers never corrected us then surely we would not be such good sons and daughters. This life is but a preparation for the next and the chastening of the Lord is to keep us in the right road that eventually leads to Him.

We have in this chapter a contrast between the old and the new (18-24). Remember that the Hebrew writer is trying to get across to his readers that the New Covenant is far better than the old. He even goes to a time before the Old Covenant was established — to the days of Abel. When Abel was slain, his blood upon the ground called for vengeance (Genesis 4:10). But when Jesus was slain His blood spoke of reconciliation. As William Barclay has commented: “His sacrifice made it possible for man to be friends with God.”

Verses 25-29 speak of “The Greater Obligation.” When the law was given, the earth did shake. **“And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace and the whole mount quaked greatly”** (Exodus 19:18) Haggai (2:6) prophesied of another shaking of the earth with the heavens and his words refer, I think, to the happenings on the last day. But what remains? Albert Barnes suggests the eternal principles of truth, of law and of righteousness. Other commentators: the relationship of the Christian to God. So we must serve the Lord in reverence and godly fear, which is the great obligation laid upon us. If we do so, then we shall escape the judgement to come and be received by God into His eternal glorified kingdom.

## CHAPTER 13

In chapter thirteen we read of The Marks of the Christian Life (1-6); Loyalty to Elders and to Christ (7,8); The Wrong and the Right Sacrifice (9-16); Obedience and Prayer (17-20); A Prayer, a Greeting and a Blessing (20-24).

The Hebrew writer points in the early verses of this chapter to the importance of brotherly kindness, hospitality, sympathy, purity in marriage and contentment. For example, he says: **“Marriage is honourable in all and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”** (4). Think of those words in the light of what is happening in our society today. People talk of marriage as just being a piece of paper, which, of course, is totally absurd. Marriage is a holy state designed by God for the welfare of human society. History has clearly shown that human society can only be strong and happy where the marriage bond is held in honour.

The word sacrifice is a strong one. We read: **“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”** (15,16). Under the Old Covenant priests offered sacrifices; under the New Covenant priests offer sacrifices. Every Christian is a priest of God. The Scriptures clearly teach this priesthood of all believers. Peter wrote: **“You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”** (1 Peter 2:5). Again, **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God’s own possession; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of the darkness into His marvellous light.”** (1 Peter 2:9). All these verses are worth meditating upon.

**"Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly"** (18). Honesty is becoming a rarer commodity nowadays. I used to hear these statements a lot: "Honesty's the best policy" and "An honest man's the noblest work of God." One of the Greek words for honesty is *kalos* (actually used in verse 18). William Barclay has written: "The basic idea of the word *kalos* is the idea of winsome beauty; and we are bound to see that nothing can be *kalos* unless it be the product of love. Deeds which are *kalos* are the outcome of a heart in which love reigns supreme . . . There is no English word which fully translates *kalos*: there is no word which gathers up within itself the beauty, the winsomeness, the attractiveness, the generosity, the usefulness, which are all included in the word. Perhaps the word which comes nearest to it is the Scots word *bonnie*."

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Slamannan District:** The Mutual Benefit Meeting of the Slamannan District took place on Saturday, 5th March, 1994 in the meetinghouse of the Church at Dennyloanhead when the question under discussion was "When we are baptised into Christ are we brethren in Him, or does it depend on what we practise." Bro. Joe Malcolm was Chairman and the speakers were Bro. Harry McGinn and Bro. David Chalmers. As usual much more emerged from the subject than was, perhaps, expected and a most enjoyable time was had by all those attending. Our next question will be "What did it mean to be a priest under the O.T., and what does it mean to be a priest under the N.T.?" The meeting will, God willing, be held on 14th May in the Church meetingplace at Haddington, when the speakers will be Bro. John Kneller,

Tranent, and Bro. Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline. James R. Gardiner will be Chairman. We thank the Church at Dennyloanhead for their usual splendid hospitality and refreshments.

H. McGinn (Sec.)

## COMING EVENTS

### Kirkcaldy Annual Social:

April 16th at 3.30 p.m.

Speaker: A. E. Winstanley.

### Kirkcaldy Ladies' Day:

April 30th

Speakers:

Pat Moncrieff (Haddington)

Barbara Starrs (Newcastle)

Theme: Prayer

Registration & Coffee 10.00 a.m.

Contact: Fay Hughes (0592) 263531

### FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND

Longshoot, Wigan

27th - 30th May, 1994

Theme: "God's Glorious Plan

For The Fulness of Time"

The 1992 Week-End was enjoyed by all and it is expected that the coming Fellowship Week-end will be even better.

Accommodation is on a first-come-first-served basis so early booking is advised.

Contact either:

D. Melling on (0942) 204744 or

R. Marsden on (0942) 207953.

D. Melling.

## GHANA APPEAL CONCERN

The Ghana Appeal was never intended to be anything other than a request for those who wish to help our brethren overseas to do so. I cannot think of any particular appeal where I may have been accused of putting any "pressure on" to increase the collection. To the contrary, I am amazed at the generosity of the brethren in the giving of not only money, but clothes, glasses, books, toys, postage, etc. There is no doubt in my mind that this appeal has been successful, churches have grown,

the word of God has been enthusiastically spread and there has been a hunger to learn more. I freely admit that it has not all been plain sailing, mistakes have been made, there has been a learning curve but to date we have overcome the problems.

I am becoming quite concerned about the present level of requests for assistance. We are very happy and we rejoice that the Church increases but as the Church grows so also do the needs. The funds are no longer supporting the Ghanaian requests. The number of requests that I have to decline through lack of funds is on the increase and I cannot say that I enjoy having to choose whose needs are greater. We have put our hands to the plough and we cannot turn back. We have on-going commitments especially in the Medical care area. For example there is a brother who suffers river blindness and we have paid his expenses to be treated with the latest breakthrough treatment for this in Burkino Fasso the neighbouring country to the north. Because of his condition he requires a check-up every 6 months.

We have a report of extensive damage to a church in Brong-Ahafo by heavy rain, another 2 church buildings are now completed except for their roofs requiring iron sheets to complete them.

It would be greatly appreciated if those who have contributed to this appeal in the past could continue to do

so and if possible increase their gifts. I know I have no right to ask this, I do appreciate the giving level to date but there is a real need for funds at the moment and I would not be doing my job properly unless I inform the readers of the Scripture Standard.

Cheques should be made payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and sent to 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 0DU.

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## WHERE SHALL I WORK TODAY

"Master, where shall I work today?"  
 And my love flowed warm and free  
 Then He pointed out a tiny plot,  
 And he said "Work there for me."  
 But I answered quickly.  
 "Oh, no, not there!  
 Not anyone could see,  
 No matter how well my task is done —  
 Not that small place for me!"  
 And His voice, when He spoke,  
 it was not stern,  
 But he answered me tenderly,  
 "Disciple, search that heart of thine  
 Are you working for them or me?  
 Nazareth was just a little place,  
 And so was Galilee."

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