

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

At last the Church Of England have taken the step, long in the offing, to admit women into the priesthood. It has not been, by any manner of means, a smooth process (these things never are) and there is talk of an impending split with many members moving elsewhere, especially into the fold of Roman Catholicism. There always was a close affinity between the C. Of E. and the R.C. Church (indeed some would say there was very little difference) but the difference is much greater now for the R.C. Church could never countenance women priests. The prominent Bishops in the C. Of E., who have been pressing for the change (and many have been resisting it) are claiming that the Holy Spirit has "for some time been pushing the C. Of E. in this direction", but a commentator on children's T.V. was nearer the truth, I think, when he said that the C. Of E. "were moving with the times" and as there were women solicitors, women doctors, women surveyors, etc. why not women priests.

In spite of the great power wielded by many Church 'Leaders' the 'rank and file' membership quite often exert their own strong pressure and the leaders have got to give way (slowly), but hurriedly find scripture to justify the change. Even the very strong arm of the Pope has been twisted recently, more than once, on issues like divorce, abortion, contraception, etc. If we look down the corridors of time, even recent times, we see fairly similar changes having taken place much nearer home, and, let's face it, "the people love to have it so". I was asked, the other day, in general conversation, if I approved of women priests and replied that I not only didn't favour women priests but didn't favour male priests either. It was then suggested to me that if I did not approve of priests I would surely approve of protestant 'Ministers'. In saying that I didn't approve of them either, I had the opportunity of explaining that the N.T. clearly teaches **the priesthood of all believers**: i.e. **all Christians** (men and women) are priests unto God and **all disciples** (men and women) are ministers. It is thus as erroneous to call any man **the priest** as it is to call any man **the minister**.

Priesthood Of All Believers

In his excellent booklet "Talks On The Tabernacle" brother W. Crosthwaite says, "Under the new and better covenant **all believers are priests**. Strictly speaking Christianity has not a priesthood; **it is a priesthood**." Bishop Lightfoot (C. Of E.) said, "The only priests in the N.T. designated as such, are the saints, **the members** of the Christian brotherhood". The apostle Peter (and the R. C. Church place great store upon him being the first among priests) did not seem to know of any special priesthood, for he said, writing to ordinary believers (if such are ordinary) "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, **to be a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual

sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (I Peter 2:5,9).

Thus Christians, each and every one, are priests unto God and their function is to offer up sacrifices (not material ones) but spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God (which certainly may entail the sacrifice of material possessions). Those who take the name of Jesus, each one, compose a spiritual house; an elect race; a **royal priesthood**; a holy nation — indeed a people for God's own possession. These are the words of the apostle Peter, not mine. The R.C. Church obviously require a literal altar at which their priests can officiate, and they claim that their erring daughters, the protestant denominations, have got rid of their altars merely to replace them with pulpits. This is, of course, largely true and the clergy/laity syndrome is equally wrong whether it be found in the R. C. Church or elsewhere. The 'Minister', whose jealously guarded domain is the pulpit is as equally superfluous to the N.T. order as is the Priest whose domain is the altar. In his brilliant book on this subject, "The Royal Priesthood", brother W. Carl Ketcherside says, (quote) "In the original church of God there was no distinction between clergy and laity. God's clergy (portion or lot) consisted of God's laity (people). Every member of the 'laity' was a member of the 'clergy' and vice versa. **Each** person in the divine arrangement was a minister of God. One 'entered the ministry' by coming into Christ. The holy and unblemished church can never be restored until those who love the Lord recapture in the fullest sense the picture of 'a priesthood of all believers' free from the taint of a special caste. The religious world in general has lost the pattern of the corporate worship of the original community of baptised believers. The early church gathered around a table: the modern church sits before a pulpit. The Lord placed the table in the church so it would remember its debts to Him; the clergy placed the pulpit in the church to bring it in debt to them. In the early church they all spoke one by one: today all speaking is done by one. Then the spirit was kindled; now, it is quenched. Then they claimed to love each other and talked about Jesus: now they claim to love Jesus and talk about each other. In those days all exerted an effort to exhort; now all must be exhorted to exert an effort. The primitive church did not ask the world to come and get the gospel; they took it to them. They gathered to eat the Lord's Supper, then scattered to preach the Word. Wherever there was a Christian and a sinner there was a gospel meeting Much of the irreverence, formality and cold ritual of these days is the result of a loss of the significance of a priesthood of all believers. To restore the primitive community of saints a great reformation of thought is essential." (unquote). I only wish that I had more space to quote from this book of our American brother — it is packed with interest and challenge. It certainly is true that both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have their varied forms of clergy and that the 'average member' is excluded to the point of being merely a listener and spectator. This is not to say that the 'average member' knows any better, and indeed may prefer it to be so. But is the Lord happy to have it so, and where do 'Churches Of Christ' figure in all this?

Entering The Ministry

It is not impossible to hear someone say that their son intends to "enter the ministry". As brother Ketcherside says, elsewhere in his book, "Christians can't 'enter the ministry' for **they are already in it.**" All are baptised into Christ's ministry (service). In the N.T. 'to minister' merely means to **serve** (in any capacity). "A minister" can, therefore, be male or female and simply means 'one who serves' (the Lord). We are not in the church to be served (ministered unto) but to serve. Jesus Himself said that He came not to be ministered unto **but to minister** (to serve), and the servant is not greater than his Master. Paul's friends were allowed to come and **minister unto him** while he was in prison, and this had nothing to do with preaching but meant the

provision of food, clothing, company and comfort. Paul, in his own turn, could say (referring to his hands) "these hands have ministered to my needs". Angels are 'ministering spirits' (angelic servants) sent by God when circumstances require it. "The ministry" is, therefore, our own personal sphere of activity for the Lord. The House Of Stephanas was 'addicted to the ministry'. There are many kinds of addictions today but perhaps not so many are addicted to the work of the Lord. **We are all ministers** (or stewards) of the manifold grace of God. This being so, it is sad to see that in some congregations one man claims to be 'THE minister' and this surely is a reflection (although it may not be intended) upon all the other ministers in the congregation. It is not a new trend. David King as far back as the 1870's on the subject 'The Minister' says (Memoirs p. 254) "What is that office in the Church Of Christ which entitles the person who fills it to be termed THE MINISTER? The answer is short and simple — There is no such office: and therefore, no such officer". The issue was also much discussed when I was a much younger person and probably two of the best articles on 'The Minister' appeared in the 1953 "Scripture Standard", in the April and November issues, by bren. A. E. Winstanley and W. H. Cummins respectively. Bro. Winstanley says, "THE minister where he exists, is the man hired to do the preaching for a congregation. In many assemblies bearing the name "Churches Of Christ", both at home and abroad, such a man 'fills the pulpit'. Most (if not all) gospel proclamation is regarded as the prerogative of this special class. Often well nigh all the exhortation at the Lord's Supper is limited to 'the minister' too. Is this a New Testament arrangement? Is it scriptural for a Church to hand over the edifying of the Church, or the public preaching of the gospel, to any one man? The answer is emphatically: NO!" With these sentiments of Albert's most readers will heartily agree. **All Christians** must exercise their abilities, whatever these might be and to whatever extent the recipients have them. Paul certainly seemed to be referring to **all church members** when he said, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ and every one members of another. Having then gifts (differing according to the grace given to us) whether prophecy let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation; he that giveth let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness." (Romans 12:5). We have been saved to serve. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as the ability God giveth." (I Peter 4:10,11).

Spiritual Sacrifices

A great honour has been bestowed upon us all. We have been rescued from the pit of destruction and our feet placed on firm ground. We have been elevated from rags to riches: brought from darkness into light. We have been transformed from sinners to saints: from enmity with God to friendship. From us have been shorn the shackles of Satan and we have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. We have been given a **ministry**. God's **priesthood**, like greatness, has been thrust upon us. How much do we value the change.? How well do we respond to our new status.? **All Christians** are Christ's ministers and **all Christians** are His priests.

Priests (in all past economies) were ordained to officiate at the altar of sacrifice, and offer oblations (Heb.8:3). N.T. priests are no exception. What sacrifices are we to offer? :-

- (1) "Through Him, then, let us offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually: that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." (Heb.13:15). This is surely quite self-explanatory and involves the praising of God, in hymns, and prayers.

(2) In the next verse (Heb. 13:16) we read, "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." To 'communicate' in this verse means to be liberal and share one's goods. Thus, this sacrifice (with which God is well pleased) means to **do good to others**, and be liberal; even generous.

(3) "I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Rom. 12:1) What is our reasonable ministry (service)? It is to present ourselves to God, as living sacrifices i.e. give ourselves entirely, unreservedly, into his employ, as faithful servants. O.T. priests offered sacrifices which were dead (had been killed) but we are to be living sacrifices i.e. as long as life shall last.

In short, every day, as priests we must offer to God our words (praise); our deeds; and our lives. We have been saved to serve. This is the priesthood of all believers.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Cor. 4.7.

"WHAT treasure? The 'light of the glory of God.' But why put such a resplendent treasure into commonplace earthen vessels? In order that we may not think more of the vessel than we do of the treasure it contains. It is possible for a man to think more about the binding of a book than of the truth which the book reveals; and so God often enshrines His truth in books of very poor and unattractive binding. God likes to show His loveliest flowers in very plain and commonplace pots. He likes to put a handful of His jewels into an almost forbidding casket. He likes to kindle the light of His glory on very ungainly lamps. And why? That the treasure may not be eclipsed by the fascinations of the vessel which holds it; that the truth may not be obscured by the personal or social grandeur of the man who proclaims it; that the divine may not be lost in the boastful protrusion of the human; 'that the exceeding greatness may be of God, and not from ourselves . . .' Eloquence may be a wind-bag. Stammering lips may be burdened with the very fulness of God. I do not wish to disparage the great ministry of eloquent speech; I believe that God often puts His apples of gold into pictures of silver, and His beautiful revelations into beautiful speech. But I wish to emphasize the peril that the golden vessel may draw attention to itself, and fix the admiration there. Eloquence may point to itself, while 'contemptible speech' may point to God . . . a speaker may bury his Lord in flowery language, so that we pay compliments to the speaker when we should be worshipping his Lord. Thus the Lord chooses the plain, unlettered man, who cannot paint flowers and speak them, the rough, uncultured man who can just put out his finger and point to the King."

J. H. Jowett.

A DELUSION

"There is no greater mistake than to suppose that Christians can impress the world by agreeing with it. No; it is not conformity; it is not being able to beat the world in its own way; but it is to stand apart and above it, and produce the impression of a holy and separate life. This only can give us a true Christian power." B. A. 1891.

Dr. Bushwell.

DANGER AND SAFETY

"A young gentlemen was one day riding in a fine steamer down one of the world's broad rivers, when he fell into conversation with the Pilot. "How long," he asked,

"have you been a pilot on these waters?" The old man replied, "Twenty-five years; and I came up and down many times before I was pilot." "Then," the young gentleman said, "I should think you will know every rock and every sandbank in the river." The old man smiled at his friend's simplicity, and replied, "Oh, no, I don't; but I know where the deep water is." — Great Thought.

"Even so is it with the experienced Christian. He does not know all the dangers of the way, but he knows where the place of safety is, and that is infinitely better." — B. A. 1891.

BEECHER'S SAYINGS

"Of all battles there are none like the unrecorded battles of the soul." "If a man is fit to go higher, he will show it by being faithful where he is." "He who is false to present duty breaks a thread in the loom, and will find the flaw when he may have forgotten the cause." "God did not make men perfect. He made them pilgrims after perfection." — B. A. 1891

I AM A SELF-MADE MAN

Horace Greely was once accosted by a half-drunken congressman who staggered up, and exclaimed, "I am a self-made man." Horace replied that he was glad to hear it "for," said he, "that relieves God of a great responsibility." — A. & F.

SHARING

"Huber, the celebrated naturalist, tells us that if a wasp discovers a deposit of honey, or other food, it will return to the nest and impart the good news to its companions, who will then sally forth in great numbers to partake of the food which has been discovered." — A. & F.

GOD'S DAY

During the week we have our cares and business, and our hands are full of work that must be done. If there is no interruption in this secular life, we are apt to be made worldly minded, losing all interest in spiritual things. It is a proper enough thing for a ship to be in the sea, but when the sea gets into the ship there is an end of sailing. Christ wants us to be in the world, but He does not want the world to get into us. On the Lord's day, therefore, we should run our barque just as completely as possibly out of the world's troubled waters into the peaceful bay of spiritual rest and enjoyment. One who faithfully uses the Lord's day will be safe amid the world's unspiritual influence. A well-spent Sabbath will keep up the tone of the life amid the most intense pressure of week-day duty. No Christian who really desires to be true and faithful dare lose the Sabbaths out of his week, or fail to use them right.

J. R. Miller.

Selected by Leonard Morgan

THE CHURCH TODAY

The absence of elders (and deacons) among us hinders the ministration of the word of God, the lack of spiritual ambition and concern in our evangelists does not augur well for the growth of the church and the inefficacy of our teachers is the cause for the dwindling of many of our congregations. With such characteristics we have got an effective recipe for a weak church which does not prevail with God and so cannot overcome the world. Definitely this is not the plan of God for the church of His Son and therefore means that we need to retrace our steps to fall in line with God's plan for the Church.

The problem with the church of Christ today is not only demonstrated in our leadership characteristics; it is not all congregations that have elders and deacons that are doing well; some of our elders or deacons would not have been ordained if we heeded the instructions of Paul in I Tim. 3:1-15. We should proceed therefore and

look at another area where our backsliding is aptly demonstrated – the spiritual state of our churches.

God has granted me grace to worship in many congregations of the church of Christ – both in my own environment and abroad; in congregations with elders (and deacons) and those without. In many of the churches there is only one feeling that I am left with – that our worship would have passed well for a decent social function. Or how should we explain the tenacity with which we protect the form and order of our worship service when it does not matter whether or not the sermons edify the hearers.

It is my considered opinion that the churches of Christ today place too much emphasis on the form of religion. We even fight over it; do you know that some brethren would travel many miles, pass some churches of Christ to worship in another because of some minor differences in the form or order of service?

When I think of the paramount importance that is attached to the form of religion in the churches of Christ my mind is always taken to the pharisees. In Mark 2: 23-27, Jesus had a dialogue with the pharisees which relates to the form of their religion I have often wondered whether the church of Christ is not, today, at the same stage that the pharisees reached in those days. For if we hate our brothers and do not fellowship with them on the basis of form and if we condemn and judge our sisters because their order in service is different from ours, how then is our situation different from the Scribes and Pharisees?

Do not misinterpret me: Jesus did not condemn the teachings of the Pharisees. In fact, he encouraged men to obey their teachings. (Matt. Chapter 23:3). What Jesus condemned the pharisees for are that: (see Matt. Chapter 23).

- vv: 23 – They had wrong emphasis (they respected the carnal part of religion (Mark 2:23-27) more than the spiritual relationship with God).
 - Their teachings did not encourage justice, mercy and faith in their hearers (how true of the church of Christ today).
- vv: 24 – Their leadership was without any godly purpose but to enforce that rulership (see vv 5).
- vv: 27 – They were more concerned with the outward elements of religion; they did not know that man's religion must begin with his heart (vv 26 ; John 4:24).

Have these characteristics not grown among us who claim to practice the New Testament religion? Or, why are there among us so much doctrinal differences and dissensions which are based on forms and procedures and NOT on matters of repentance, faith, salvation and the attainment of the resurrection of the just? It must have been like that among the Pharisees, because it appears that our thoughts are light and non-reflective when it comes to matters that require change in lifestyle, sacrifice and mortification of the flesh. We would rather occupy our time and dissipate our energy on the cosmetics of religion that there might be no time left for us to search our hearts for righteousness.

But I say this to you, upon the authority of the word of God, that a man shall not enter the Kingdom of God according to his adherence to the form of our religion but according to the regeneration of his heart. The Pharisees kept true to the form of religion as Moses left it to them, but Jesus called them – ‘child of hell’ (Matt. 23:15).

“If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. It is earthly, sensual and devilish. For where envying and strife is there is confusion and every evil work”. – James 3:14-16.

Dearly beloved, is the church of Christ in which you worship like many others around the world with envyings, strife arguments, quarrels and sometimes fighting, sometimes within the same congregation sometimes between many congregations? This maybe a clear sign that we must now urgently return to that state where we only adhere to the truth and when we no more worship God with the wisdom of this world.

“But the wisdom that is from above,
is first pure, then peaceable, gentle,
and easy to be entreated, full of mercy
and good fruit, without partiality and
without hypocrisy.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”. James 3: 17,18.

The time has now come when the words of Jesus in John 4:24 must be understood and applied in the correct perspective. Our worship is not limited to Sunday mornings and so truth cannot be limited to the procedures we undertake during that period of between two to four hours in a week. Jesus is the Truth and they that worship Him in truth are those that abide in His words (John 15: 4,7) during Sunday mornings and at all times. Yes our procedures during the Sunday worship service should also be according to His words but we cannot be justified if we harbour hatred and strife for all our life because of procedures practised for only about 3 hours in a week. But when Jesus comes back shall He still find faith among us? Are there still some among us that sincerely desire to worship God? Do we still worship God in truth and spirit? Is our desire now, not just to satisfy the practice of our own church – to gain the acceptance of our fellow worshippers and achieve the recognition of our preachers? Sometimes I wonder whether we still believe in God in the church of Christ today. I also wonder whether the following passages would not be applicable to us:

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth,
and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is
far from me” (Matt. 15:8)

“Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.”
(II Tim. 3:5)

That is why I think so: we claim to be the true church – the New Testament church, the very church established by Jesus and we believe we are the legitimate custodian of the truth of Jesus – the channel by which men and women are drawn to Jesus. We rejoice in these claims among ourselves, we thank God for it in our prayers, we stand on this knowledge to challenge the christian world but we do not obey the command which is in the very heart of Jesus Himself – “go and make disciples of all nations” and when we are asked why we do not spread the words, the usual answer that we give is that people are no more as willing to accept the gospel as in the past. Are we not, by this answer, effectively saying that the gospel does not have the power to save men as in the past?

A typical church of Christ has dwindled in number during the last 12 months. If it did not dwindle, it would not be because that church evangelised its environment and gained new converts. It would usually be because of one or combination of the following factors:–

- Young men got married and brought their new spouses into the church;
- Young couples had children thereby increasing the number of members;
- New people came in because such people have just moved from another part of the country where they were members of another church of Christ.

The new people brought in on account of these factors would usually replace those who withdrew and sometimes with a net gain.

This church does not evangelise; its members do not know that the most important

requirement of Jesus in their lives is that they win souls; they are not encouraged to bring their friends and neighbours to gospel meetings; they do not have house fellowships with the aim of converting their neighbours. The members of this church are not organised into preaching groups; they do not go into trains, tubes and buses to show the way-farers the path of salvation; they do not go to market places (or shop centres) to proclaim the gospel; they do not knock doors to distribute tracts and they neither believe in, nor hold gospel campaigns.

This church does not preach the gospel but when asked why they do not increase in number say that the world does not want the gospel anymore. In other words the gospel does not have the same power to convict sinners and bring them into repentance as before.

Brethren, we deny the power of the gospel and we wrongly accuse the world. How can we say that our neighbour does not want to hear and obey the gospel when we never invited him for gospel meeting; we never presented her with a gospel tract and we are so ashamed of our faith that we cannot open our mouths to preach to these neighbours – to tell them of God's judgement upon all mankind (for all mankind are sinners); and that God's provision of salvation is only in Jesus.

It is interesting to note that while the church called by the name of Christ is held back from making disciples of all nations those churches which we describe as "wordly," blossom with neophytes. So do the false religionists increase in membership. Let us get to work and change all that.

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(These comments sent in by our African brother are of interest. Editor.)



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I hear so much talk these days about 'progressive revelation' and how that the doctrine of the Church should change in order to accomodate modern thinking. What would be your answer to this?"

I am not quite sure what 'progressive revelation' means because the apologists of this doctrine never really say. However, we do know that 'progressive' is defined as 'moving forward; proceeding step by step', and that 'revelation' means, 'the disclosing of knowledge to man by divine agency' so I suppose what is meant in the Christian sense is that God is uncovering various aspects of His Divine Will step by step down through the ages and that He will continue to do so until the end of time. The flaw in this teaching ought to be obvious to everyone because it means that no man in **any** age has ever known the **complete** Will of God, and no man until the end of time will **ever know** the complete Will of God unless that cataclysmic event coincides with the final bit of revelation from God.

It is also interesting to speculate how this additional revelation should come. Will God reveal it to individuals, to the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to any latter day Mahdi, or will it be through any of the many groups of activists throughout the world. We have all seen the effects of the theory of so-called doctrinal development – the theory which promotes the idea that doctrine and theology can change and

develop – and we are currently seeing this theory being put into practice in attempts to unify the differing strands of doctrine in the major religious groups. Documents like ‘Faith in the City’ indicate the more liberal, political, and pastoral aspects of the Anglican church particularly, and in order to accommodate this shift in emphasis, doctrine and theology will have to change. We can see this in the inevitability of the ordination of women as priests; in the explaining away of God as a Person and the emergence of Him as some kind of ‘force’; and in the denial of the Virgin Birth of Christ, and in His resurrection being explained as some kind of cosmic trick. We can expect other changes of doctrine and theology in the future. Church leaders no longer lead; they bow to the so-called ‘reforming’ attitudes of peoples who have long since ceased to believe in the immutability of the counsel of God.

Is Revelation Progressive

I think we all understand that progression is possible only until final fulfilment occurs. For example, certain diseases will progress in the body until they become terminal; when the disease has fulfilled itself, progression will cease and the person will die. Likewise we see the progression of the revelation of God through the O.T. and into the New, culminating in the coming of Christ. As the writer of the Hebrew letter says, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb. 1:1,2. NIV).

So in Christ we saw the embodiment of God Himself, “full of grace and truth” But that wasn’t quite the end of the revelation; shortly before Jesus left His sorrowing Disciples He promised them that another “comforter” should come (read John 14: 15-26. In that discourse, note the words of Judas, ‘Lord, why do you intend to show (reveal) yourself to us and not to the world’ v. 22). Later, in the same Gospel record, Jesus answers the question posed by Judas (read John 16: 1-15). You will notice that Jesus told the Disciples (later to be the Apostles) that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all the truth, and would bring to their remembrance all that He (Jesus) had spoken to them. So with the Apostolic Era we have the complete scenario of revelation from the Godhead (God, Christ, the Holy Spirit). It must be said, of course, that the Apostleship of Paul, who wrote most of the recorded N.T. letters, is well attested to in Scripture and cannot be mistaken.

So at the end of the Apostolic Era the revelation, which had progressed until then, was completed and ended. All the truth had been revealed. What man had to do was to interpret the revealed Will of God (the unchanging Will, we might add) in the light of every age in which he has lived since then. And therein has lain the problem and the tragedy of interpretation.

What Did God Reveal

Before we answer this further question let us think why God **needed** to give any revelation at all. Man was lost in sin — for which the penalty was death and eternal separation from God — and could do nothing to save himself, therefore, unless He wanted to lose His whole creation, He had to act. A vicarious sacrifice was needed to remove the guilt and consequences of sin, and so God ‘stepped down’ from Heaven in the person of His Son and died on the Cross, the Guiltless for the guilty. It was also necessary for man to know that he still had the power of choice, to live or die. Further, God needed to re-state the type of life that man should live if, in fact, he chose life in Christ. It was essential from God’s point of view that man should know and understand these things, hence revelation was necessary. The question we now have to address ourselves to is “what did God Reveal”?

If we posed this question to a group of Christians we might get the answer, “well, He revealed enough to ensure our salvation.” If pressed further, they might direct us to Acts 2:38 which reads, “repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of

Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Obedience to a textual directive, it is said, would produce salvation. But do textual directives comprise the whole of revelation? Surely God intended something in addition to this, important though the text is.

The plain and simple answer is that God revealed **Himself**; we have been shown His essential nature. Sometimes we shy away from Scripture because we say that there are some things that we are meant not to understand, consequently, we stop looking. But when we examine the Bible from Genesis to Revelation we see our Divine Creator laid bare before our wondering eyes. We see His creative power, integrity, long-suffering, steadfastness, love, compassion, wrath, endurance, majesty, righteousness; need we go on. And yet, there are those who say that He is so far above us that we can never really know Him; all we have to do is exactly what He tells us to do according to the text of the Bible. Well, all I can say is this; if Christianity means just appropriating to ourselves the text without appropriating the One who is revealed by the text, then small wonder that it is meeting with no great success. If a prospective employer had as many facts on an application form about a prospective employee as the Bible has about God, then he wouldn't consider it necessary to hold an interview in order to find any further information. The very heart and nature of the Godhead is uncovered to our understanding. Oh, why do we not read it, and revel in it? Furthermore, there is a wealth of information revealed to us so that we can live our lives in the benign and spiritually affluent ways of God. Leaping out to us from the written page we see our God and His Christ, and we are amazed at the scope of His Revelation. Why do we linger in the shadows?

The Doctrine of Change

People living in the 20th century cannot countenance that the 17th century could be classed as 'modern' when contrasted with, say, the 12th century. Does 'modern' man of any historical period think that the Christian doctrine should be changed and brought up-to-date in order to accommodate his modernity. Has God made a mistake in failing to appreciate that the 20th century would be different from its predecessors? This is what the apologists for a modern theology would seem to affirm. God failed to see that promiscuity would be rampant in the 20th century so His teaching about chastity and marital fidelity must have been wrong for us; what a peurile argument this is.

I read recently of one Anglican apologist who was commenting on the fact that the Anglican church in its training of the clergy had switched the emphasis from theology to pastoral expertise. He went on to say, "It is ironical, then, that our chief pastoral difficulties should be caused by a specific theological deficiency." Referring this statement to sexual promiscuity I take it to mean that the doctrine of Christian morality should be eased so that the pastoral care of those who live immoral lives would become easier to deal with. If this is the result of modern thinking then we can truly say that the Will of God has been really subordinated to the will of man. God has finally been relegated to non-league status and by people who purport to lead others in His name. In all the welter of advice and information about means of containing the A.I.D.S. virus I have listened in vain for someone to champion the God-given doctrine of chastity and morality, but no, all we hear are means of making immorality safer. What was it Jesus said about the blind leading the blind?

Brethren, let us stand firm. The latter part of the 20th century has been characterised by falling standards in many areas. Let it never be said of us that we stood idly by while people trampled underfoot that glorious revelation that God gave and which cost Him so much.

(All questions, please, to

Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan, Lancs. WN3 6ES)

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

The Minister

The "located preacher," "the pastor" or "the minister" is everywhere met with, and the vast number in "the profession" suggests that the occupation is considered desirable, lawful and profitable. This office generally passes unchallenged and the attempt to establish "the Divine right of the minister" is rarely undertaken. A few "stones from the brook," or river of life, may lead "the minister" to review his position or dislodge him, and lead him to work with his hands (1 Thes. 4:11-12, 2 Thes. 3:6-15). He may also offer good Christian service "without money and without price." Our Saviour taught: "it is happier to give than to receive;" working with the hands was commanded (Acts 20:28-35), and warned of grievous wolves!!

Status of "the minister"

Money, time and effort are expended "to produce" him. After graduation, he expects to take charge of a "vacant Church." The uninitiated and possibly financially poorer folk are instructed and encouraged to support him. He is thought to have a thorough knowledge of the Bible and to be an authority upon Christianity. Is his service a benefit to man? Do results justify his official position? Does the large number of capable advocates for Christ, and a regiment of soldiers, prepared to do battle for Christ's Kingdom, emerge from his ministry? By these tests, it would appear that dismal failure results from his work. Also, actually, a real shortage of teachers and workers for Christ is evidently due to his appointment. Tongues must be silent, that "the minister" may be heard! Resignation or dismissal of "the minister" is usually a calamity, unless a successor is speedily installed. Note the joy, upon the induction of "the new minister," into *the empty Church*: and how much greater the welcome accorded a "real reverend"! The increasing number of "women pastors" and "child pastors" shows growing dissatisfaction with present arrangements and rebellion against "ministerial" authority. *Ichabod* accurately describes much of mis-named religion! Did God appoint "the minister"? From early times a petty trade was made with the Word of God, and today many claim the right to be paid as "the minister," etc. Apostles taught that elderly, well-behaved and experienced Christians, who were capable teachers of Christianity, were to be "elders," "pastors" (shepherds) or "overseers." These names viewed their Christian duties from different angles. "Elder," or experienced old man; "pastor" (shepherd) or guardian; "overseer" (foreman), or helper, encourager, corrector. Originally, Christ endowed miraculously, apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists and teachers, to perfect the saints, not one special class of saints, but all saints, to build His Body, the Church, and to educate Christians to be men in mind and service (Eph. 4:11-16). The work was well commenced by living apostles and their writings in the Bible carry it forward. Proficiency in the Christian life can be attained by diligently reading and obeying their words.

"The minister" may suggest he occupies the position of "the elder," and demand payment for his services. Can he bend 1 Timothy 5:18 to fit his request for remuneration? Look at Paul's argument: (1) The ox gets corn for his labour; (2) the labourer gets wages for his labour; (3) the ruling and teaching elder gets "double honour" for his work. There is here no authority to pay "elders." Even our dear Scots brothers cannot render the passage, "let elders have double pay"! Elders were taught to work with their hands so as to feed themselves and others (Acts 20:32-35). Peter's teaching is equally conclusive: "don't be elders for filthy lucre" (1 Peter 5:2-5) Who can remove the filthiness? Since elders have "double honour," who has honour (single honour)? Elders (old men, 1 Tim. 5:1) were to be treated as fathers, and in accord with Christ's law, were to have honour (single honour). An objector asks (a) "was Peter paid" and (b) "how did he live?" God has not provided answers to these two questions, yet

Peter said, "don't be elders for filthy lucre"!

Can public worship be reverent and decent without "the minister"? Numerous assemblies of Christ in Britain and elsewhere are the conclusive and best answer. Where "the minister" reigns, he mounts on the bushel as his right, beneath which lie hidden the talents and capabilities of his flock. Oratory and eloquence may flow from "the minister," but the Church needs sound speech calculated to produce a manly race of Christians, sound in truth, sincerity and every Christian service in perfection. God's golden plan is: every Christian a worker (Eph. 4:16); the tinsel method is: "the minister" must do it!

Godly elders can assist younger Christians to put on, and keep on the whole armour of God and help them in their Christian life. The battle is still raging and Christ calls every soldier to "fight the good fight." It is good to see zealous young Christians qualifying for service both in and out of the assembly. Lazy members refusing to prepare for battle will be subdued by ambitious men who will turn them away from Christ into perdition. Beware of apostasy!

Who will qualify for eldership in the Lord's Body? Joy follows painstaking unselfish work as the flock grows in the knowledge and love of God and in usefulness. Elder's efficient service receives double honour now, and the Chief Shepherd, Jesus, promises unfading glory in the coming age (I Peter 5: 1-5).

Apostles of Christ are his "heralds," "ambassadors" or "preachers" (the herald or preacher is *kerux*) and their preaching is in the New Testament. He appointed their food and drink from the gospel (I Cor. 9 1-15). See the illustration from soldiers, farm workers and cattle. Paul robbed (stripped) Churches in order to announce Christ (2 Cor. 11:8). Those evangelising, where Christ is unknown, should also live "of the gospel"! You will see how different this work is from that of "the minister"!!

W. H. Cummins.

(sent in by bro. Allan Ashurst who greatly admired the late bro. Cummins).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

May. 3	Gen. 1	John 1,1-18
May. 10	Isaiah. 41,1-11	John 1,19-34
May. 17	Isaiah. 6	John 1,35-51
May. 24	2Kings. 4,1-17	John 2
May. 31	Psalm. 139	John 3,1-21

INTRODUCTION

How did a fisherman attain the divine grandeur in literary skill to write such superb truth in superb language? There is a divine grandeur in the language of the Authorized Version, but these godly men were tools in the Writer's hands, and he was a tool (what an honour!) in the Divine hands to express "wonderful WORDS of LIFE". As we read through first chapter to third, will we appreciate all this, and bow in reverence before such supreme beauty of expression of truth?

THE FORERUNNER

"A man sent from God" in answer to prayer over a period until it became humanly impossible, but so born as to astonish all the people of the hill-country of Judaea. He gave himself to God from his earliest days, a lonely man given to God's service in preparation, filled with the Holy Spirit to fulfil a divine purpose, unique in the world's history. He was stern and brave to warn, rebuking a king and to rouse a whole nation into expectation of judgement to come. He suffered imprisonment and death. He was the personal messenger of the Messiah, the Son of God. Those who knew scripture best (?) rejected his message, and brought condemnation and destruction upon their nation.

DISCIPLINE

The work of John and that of Jesus naturally overlapped for the work of witnessing to Jesus became a close personal testimony as the voice from heaven, and

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD

the descent in the form of a dove, gave John the divine assurance that the Christ was verily revealed as before him. John won many disciples by his preaching and many of those who heard and believed passed, later, into the teaching and obedience of Jesus.

Indeed this is illustrated in the case of Andrew and (we suppose) John himself through whom came Peter. Jesus seems to have called only Philip, the others came by recommendation. On a third day Jesus with His mother, His brethren and those who were identified with Him came to Cana, and were all invited to the marriage where His first public SIGN was given at His mother's request. John was present and remembers the wine with sweetness and best taste supplied in abundance. Both in Galilee and at Jerusalem He showed His glory in teaching and healing but indicated also His righteousness in casting out the business and money changers out of His Father's House. This He did also on His last visit — the Passover Feast when He was crucified — His hour having then indeed come!

NICODEMUS

Here we have a representative of the most eminent and deeply religious Jews of the time. We have seen how every approach of Jesus to the religious authorities was rejected from the beginning of His ministry. They were deeply divided in their acceptance or rejection of the real teaching of the law, having forgotten the fundamental principle of loving God and your neighbour, confusing attention to need for cleanliness of body; with need for loving one another out of purity of heart. We can all err in the same way in observing presence every Lord's Day at the Lord's Table without the strictest observance of a forgiving spirit and utter unselfishness in our relationship with one another. So with the Pharisees: baptisms before eating to keep the hands clean was more important than loving one's neighbour as oneself, and washing pots more important than cleansing of the conscience

day by day by a humble and contrite spirit. We have glances at Nicodemus in chapter 7:50 and 19:59 which show him to be a thoughtful man and not a deliberately hostile enemy of Jesus. By no means all Pharisees were like that. The astonishing nature of God's interference in Jewish affairs made Nicodemus ashamed of being thought sympathetic with the prophet of Galilee. His visit by night did not cancel his view — "no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with Him". He still asked "Doth our law judge any man before it hear Him"?, and he was prepared to be identified with the mourners to preserve His dead body! His fellow councillors knew what Jesus said about that. So he too knew it. Those who knew and loved Jesus most, also suffered this appalling unbelief. We cannot help thinking — did Nicodemus know how they "made it as sure" as they could (Matt. 27, 22-26). Did he know how sure it was?

THE ANSWERS

Nothing but a new birth and life can satisfy the unbelievers. A revolution of thought is required which begins with a new life. Those who refuse to recognise God's rule in their life as requiring change of a radical kind, as required to bring humankind into harmony with the life and character of Jesus Himself, cannot even see what it is like. With their eyes fixed upon worldly conditions and rule, can never submit to the rule of love in the heart, which is a heavenly reality and can only function when the spirit of God rules in the heart and mind. "This change", Nicodemus, "you should understand because you are a teacher of Israel, and the law of God is a spiritual power now being exercised by God's Son in your sight and hearing. He has to be lifted up for all to see as God's supreme sacrifice of love. **THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD**" (John 1, 30).

THE GOOD NEWS

The heavenly things are made known in the person of God's Son. The

Life is revealed in the Son of Man and is communicated to man by the Word of God bringing LIFE to those who hear and believe. The spirit of God is given to those who accept the message of love and by the new life is born and grows in likeness to Jesus, but it is never faith only, it is acceptance of truth, bringing conviction of sin, repentance and obedience of sin, and is fed on the word of life. Knowledge of Jesus brings about the new life.

R. B. Scott.

"CHAT WITH AN OLD PATHER"

Recently I received some copies of the "Scripture Standard" containing the interview between Br. Ian Davidson and my father. I enjoyed reading the material, and even learned some things about my father's early history which I did not personally know. However, in fairness to my own family, and the faithful Christians who teach at the British Bible School, I must correct an erroneous impression which might be gathered from the interview.

I do this because in years to come many will consult bound volumes of the "Scripture Standard" to glean information about the churches in these times in which we live. And no Christian would want misrepresentation to take place, no matter how innocently it was presented.

On page 59 of the May 1986 issue, in reply to a question about what went wrong with the churches after the First World War, my father stated: "...when Overdale came along with its modernist teaching, that was the beginning of the rot." To which we would all agree. On page 125 of the September 1986 edition, in reply to a question about what he thought of the Bible School in Corby, my father replied, in part, "Well, I just think the same of it as I thought of Overdale."

From these two statements it might be implied that the school in Corby is involved in modernist teaching in rela-

tion to the scriptures. Nothing could be further from the truth! It would be an unjust reflection on the elders of the church in Corby and on the whole teaching complement of the school if this inference was not cleared up. No modernist teaching of any description is indulged in, or would be allowed, in this school.

I trust the readership of the "Scripture Standard" will accept this assurance with the same sincerity in which it is given — just for the record.

Joe Nisbet,
35 Kingsbrook,
Corby, Northants.

(I received the above from Joe a few days ago and am very happy to print it. Unfortunately brother Tom is no longer here to defend himself, or to explain exactly what he meant, but I am sure that Joe knows, as I do, that his father was not referring to 'modernist' teaching but had a conscientious objection, per se, to all Theological Colleges and Bible Seminaries. This was not heresy on his part: many of the 'Pioneers' here, and in the USA, held the view, and many Christians still do. May I also just say that this series 'Chat With An Old Pather' (printed last year) was intended to be a piece of church history (indeed social history) for the interest of generations to come. Most readers enjoyed it, especially abroad, and 'could not wait' for the next instalment. A few were critical and took me to task: e.g. for printing Tom's statement that his father was a heavy drinker prior to his conversion. May I take this opportunity to apologise to all those who had their sensitivities outraged: even with the truth
Editor.)

AN APPRECIATION

Bro. Fred Proud,
Kentish Town, London.

I received news of the sudden death of Fred with much sadness. My heart goes out at this time to Dorothy and Sally who will be experiencing a deep sense of loss. The whole congregation

at Kentish Town will be sharing in their grief. May the Lord strengthen them all.

I recall my arrival at Hope Chapel one night many years ago. I was soon informed of a baptism the previous Sunday. Fred had taken the most important decision in his life: to become a disciple of Jesus. How delighted I was to welcome him that night as a brother in the Lord. So he remained until his death.

I shall never forget the hospitality shown to me by Dorothy and Fred when I stayed with them in October 1984 during the 113th anniversary meetings of Hope Chapel. To say I felt completely at home is an understatement. They could not have been kinder or more considerate. We talked a lot, ate a lot, and shared a lot. Life is far richer because of such fellowship in the Lord.

Brother Scott wrote of Fred last month: "He will be greatly missed". I echo his words, but am strengthened by the fact that Fred has not gone away, but gone home to be with Jesus, which is far better.

I look forward to meeting my dear brother once again in that "land that is fairer than day". Meanwhile, I only have happy memories of him. I am certain I share them with many others.

Love and best wishes again to Dorothy and Sally.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

THANKS

Sally and I would like to express our sincere thanks to all those who share in our grief.

Fred's sudden passing came as a great shock because although 72, he lived a very active life, and had no indication of health problems.

We are overwhelmed by the number of cards and letters we have received. To know that so many loved him and that so many are praying for us, is a great comfort at this time. We think of the hymn "Blest be the tie that binds"

We are thankful to God that he did not suffer, and we have so many happy

times to remember. "Blessed are those who die in the Lord."

We hope to acknowledge the cards and letters in due time.

Bro. Geoffrey Daniell from Bristol, led a very moving and fitting service at Hope Chapel and at the graveside at Cheshunt.

Our thanks to Geoffrey and the many relatives, brethren and friends who joined us.

Dorothy Proud.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting was held at Brightons on 7th March when the subject under discussion was 'Divorce and Remarriage'. Brother Graeme Pearson occupied the chair and the speaker was John Kneller, Tranent. The other speaker was to have been brother David Chalmers but unfortunately David could not attend. The next meeting God-willing will be held at Tranent, on Sat. 9th May (4 p.m.) when the subject will be "What is Meant By The First Resurrection" of Rev. 20. The Chairman will be James Sinclair (Sen.) and the speakers Ian Davidson and John Kneller.

H. Davidson. Sec. Cape Town, R.S.A.: It's once again as always when convenient to send a news item. Well all I'd like to say is that where I am labouring the work continues to be going along very well" attendance-wise, members and visitors, friends and neighbours, and we are still prayerfully and hopefully looking forward to more precious souls turning to the Lord, which I think I did mention in my last news items. However, a lady whom I was requested to visit about two months ago, and who has never missed a service every Sunday since, was baptized on the Friday . . . afternoon the 6th February, witnessed by a few of our members.

Then a young brother at our congregation whom I have trained, encour-

aged, the grandson of the lady in whose home we conduct our weekly Bible Study and cottage meetings, endeavoured to encourage his friend at the school where he goes. So it was then on the 10th February 1987, that his friend was also baptized witnessed by a few of our members.

So as a congregation, we praise and glorify God, that our hopeful looking forward and prayers had become one of a REALITY on those two dates, and we are praying that it might touch the hearts of others, of whom I am aware, to decide soon to give their lives to Christ in obedience to the gospel, Lord willing. So up to date since April 1979, to the praise of God we have witnessed 30 baptisms. "It may not seem a lot BUT at least there has been progress".

T. Hartle.

A BIRTH

Brother and Sister Sharp, junior, of the church that meets at Newtongrange, wish to announce to the brethren and the world that their firstborn has arrived. He is a healthy 9lb 9½oz baby. Andrew-John was born 10 minutes after midnight on Sunday 8th March 1987, at the Eastern General Hospital, Edinburgh. Both Brian and Nancy wish to thank all who enquired after them. Both mother

and child are well. The father is still recovering.

(Footnote)

The new grandparents Sharp and Wilson are truly delighted. Bro. A. P. Sharp is temporarily at a loss for words and is slowly recovering (only another 500 to tell). Bro. J. Wilson we think, is well, but can't tell until we get him down from the ceiling. Andrew-John is blessed with a strong pair of lungs; (I wonder who he inherited them from).

We all thank God for His blessing at this time.

A. P. Sharp. Sec.

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 for me?

Nazareth was just a little place,

And so was Galilee."

Harris & Irving Reminder.

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