

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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May 1988 be a Year of Blessing
for all our Readers.

*'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no
sorrow therewith,' (Prov. x 22. R. V.)*

SELF APPRAISAL

There used to be (and there may still be) an early morning radio programme which urged listeners, every day, to 'Pause For Thought', and a few minutes were devoted to a (not always) pithy message from the network clergyman. One does not know what effect this had on the nation but the idea of pausing for thought each morning seems a good one. As we gulp down a few corn-flakes each morning and dash to work, completely pre-occupied with our thoughts and worries as we clock-in for the day's toil, it must surely be a good idea now and then to stop short, and consider what it is all about. Some of us, I suppose, are so wrapped-up in our own little private worlds that we never have time to think of the really important matters in life; and to consider where we have come from, why we are here, and where we are going to in the next world. It is unfortunate that some of us are induced to pause for serious thought only at such 'down to earth' occasions as funerals and the passing of a loved one.

If we can't be persuaded to pause for thought each day, surely we can find time to do so once in the year. We have entered a brand new year, and January is an excellent time for self-appraisal and to take stock. Indeed most businessmen close shop for a few days annually so that they might take stock, quite literally, and make appropriate plans for the better success of the business in the time to come. As individuals, and disciples of Christ, we also can profit from an annual reflection upon our spiritual growth (or lack of it) and form real proposals for an improvement in the year ahead. January is, of course, the gateway of the year and dedicated, as every schoolboy knows, by the Romans to their deity Janus. Janus was the keeper of doors and gates, having two faces and able to look back and look forward at the same time. Actually, it seems a most natural thing that having reached the end of one year, and the start of another, that we should look back over the last twelve months and recall its successes and failures, its sadnesses and joys, and look with trepidation or relish

to the oncoming year. As someone has said, we are a year nearer home as we travel 'onward and upwards'. Every so often the mountaineer rests on the slopes and looks back with satisfaction over the many dangers and obstacles he has overcome, and glances upwards at the peaks yet to be scaled with keen anticipation. On a slightly less dangerous level, the simple ploughman also looks back over the furrow he has just completed to see how straight, or otherwise, it might be. Each year is another furrow ploughed in the field of our experience, or another chapter written in the book of life. The Psalmist said that life was 'like a tale that is told' and each year is another written chapter in the unfolding tale of the lives of each one of us. Some tales are short; some are sad; some are romantic; some are heroic; some are triumphant; some are bitter; and some are hardly worth the telling, but we can endeavour (even in unfavourable circumstances) to make the next chapter a bit more interesting, productive, and more well-pleasing to our Maker. January is, therefore, a good month for looking back (retrospection); looking inward (introspection) and looking forward (inprospction).

IN RETROSPECT

'Looking back' is intended to be only a brief glance, and only for the purpose of self-appraisal: a look at our mistakes and failures so that we might not repeat them. After being rescued from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites quite often 'looked back' but not to profit from mistakes. They looked back in longing again for the 'fleshpots of Egypt'. (Ex. 16:3). Is there a possibility that anyone rescued from sin and Satan would want to return thereto, and look back in longing to the 'fleshpots of Egypt'? Peter says, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it has happened unto them according to the true proverb, (Pr. 26:11) The dog is turned to his own vomit again: and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (11 Peter 2:20).

The angels rescued Lot, his wife and two daughters, from the destruction of Sodom with these words, "Escape for thy life: look not behind thee; neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed." But Lot's wife 'looked back' and was transformed into a pillar of salt. "Jesus said, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." (Luke 9:6).

Our retrospection is not therefore a longing to return to our former enthrallment to sin and shame, but a glance back down the year to build on our successes and to avoid a repetition of our failures.

INTROSPECTION

It is always easy to see the faults in others. Instead of confessing our own faults to one another (James 5:16) we are more inclined to describe the faults of others to everybody and this seems to be a common human weakness. Self-examination should help to redress the balance somewhat, but only if we are honest in our self-evaluation; and that's not always easily determined. The poet Burns remarked on the unlikelihood of us ever being able to see ourselves as others see us. God has not given us such a gift, and perhaps if we could see ourselves as others do, we would try to do something about it. And how does God see us - is it a pretty sight? Paul said (regarding the breaking of bread) "But let a man examine himself". Examine himself: not his neighbour. There is no deception as natural and as easy as self deception and if we are incapable of seeing, and acknowledging our own failings then self-examination will not be of much benefit to us. John says that if we think we have no faults (or sins) then we certainly "deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Accordingly, our aim in introspection should be to examine ourselves, identify our

faults and resolve to eradicate all things that stunt our spiritual growth. Self-praise and 'self-appraisal' are, of course, two quite different things.

In the last words of his final epistle to the Corinthian Christians, Paul urged, **"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"** (Cor. 13:5). Do we know our own selves? Are we truly conscious of Christ in us? Is it evident to us, let alone to others? Paul says, "Examine yourselves: prove yourselves: that ye are in the faith". Self-deception, like any other form of deception, is incredibly subtle and the only safe course in our self-analysis is to look at ourselves in the mirror — the mirror of God's word. There are doubtless some who look in the mirror with the time-honoured question, "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of us all", but those who look into the perfect law of liberty will receive an honest estimate of themselves, and will learn that there is none good, but God. It will also be helpful, not only to measure ourselves by the divine standard of God's word, but by the stature of His Son, and our Saviour. How far short do we fall when measured against the standard set by Jesus?

IN PROSPECT

Although Paul recommended self-examination, and doubtless engaged in it himself, he was continually looking to the future and planning forthcoming efforts in the service of Christ. Paul was a man of action and certainly not one given too much to a contemplation of the theological navel. Paul was totally committed to the furtherance of the gospel. All his eggs were in just one basket. He said, **"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus"**. What was the 'one thing' that he pursued — the prize of the high calling of God. He did not look back longingly at the things he had left behind, but launched himself forward (as a runner to the finishing tape) that he might snatch the victory. What were the things he had left behind? To the Phillipians he said that he left behind all worldly prestige and patronage; monetary gain, a very promising career; personal popularity and esteem, and considered them as loss (indeed as dung) that he might **win Christ**; and be found in Him; that he might truly **know Christ**; and the **power of His resurrection**; and the **fellowship of Christ's sufferings**; and that by any means he might attain unto the **resurrection** unto life everlasting in heaven. These things he had left behind, together no doubt with the memories of any failures and the beatings, tortures and privations he had suffered in his missionary journeys. "Forgetting these things which are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God".

This reluctance to dwell on the past, but to forge ahead in the future, Paul recommended to all. **"Brethren"** he said, **"be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an example. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things). For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."** (Phil.3) Shall we, then, resolve to walk as Paul walked, follow his example, and not walk as the enemies of the cross of Christ and those who "mind earthly things".

A NEW YEAR BECKONS

Yes, January is the gateway to another year; to another chapter of a tale that is told. Many 'New Year Resolutions' will be lightly made and just as quickly broken. What will we resolve to do for the Master? What objectives and targets in God's service have we made and set? We must work while it is yet day for the night cometh when no man can work. Paul counselled the Christians at Rome to look at the time:

for it is later than we think. He said, "... knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." (Rom. 13:11).

Let us pause for thought.

Another year is dawning,
Dear Master let it be;
In working or in waiting,
Another year with Thee.
Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training,
For holier work above.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

"MY LORD AND MY GOD"

"Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless but believing." How Thomas would hate himself when his own scornful unbelieving, contemptuous words came back to him from his Master's gracious lips! How utterly odious his own words would sound as his Master repeated them. And worst of all when his risen Master humbled Himself to meet Thomas's unbelieving words and to satisfy them! Thomas would have killed himself with shame and self-condemnation, had it not been given him at the grandest moment of his whole life to say, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus saith unto them, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!" Now, my brethren, do you clearly understand and accept this peculiar blessedness of believing without seeing? Do you clearly see and fully accept the blessedness of a strong and an easy acting faith in things of Christ? Faith is always easy where love and hope are strong. What we live for and hope to see, what we love with our whole heart, what we pray for night and day, what our whole future is anchored upon, that we easily believe, that we are ready to welcome. In that case our faith is to us nothing less than the substance of the thing hoped for; it is the evidence of the thing not seen as yet."

Alexander Whyte.

WHEN HE WAS REVEILED, REVEILED NOT AGAIN

"I beseech you, therefore, in the bowels of Jesus, set before your eyes the patience of your forerunner Jesus, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously (1 Peter 2.23). And since your Lord and Redeemer with patience received many a black stroke on His glorious back, and many a buffet of the unbelieving world, and says of Himself, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked of the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 4:6); follow Him, and think it not hard that you receive a blow with your Lord. Take part with Jesus of His sufferings, and glory in the marks of Christ."

Samuel Rutherford.

ADVICE FOR PREACHERS

— and I am satisfied that he spoke the truth.

"Mind, then, when your text is chosen, that you understand it and see right through it; that you know precisely what you want to prove, what you want to preach,

what you want to establish and you want people's minds to carry away. If you yourself begin in a fog, you may depend upon it you will leave your people in darkness. Cicero, one of the greatest ancient orators, said long ago, – "No one can possibly speak clearly and eloquently about a subject which he does not understand," Archbishop Whately was a very shrewd observer of human nature, and he said rightly of vast numbers of preachers, that "they aimed at nothing, and they hit nothing. Like men landing on an unknown island, and setting out on a journey of exploration, they set out in ignorance, and travelled on in ignorance all the day long."

J. C. Ryle.

GO INTO ACTION

"William James said this: "When once a decision is reached and execution is the order of the day, dismiss absolutely all responsibility and care about the outcome." (In this case, William James undoubtedly used the word "care" as a synonym for "anxiety".) He meant – once you have made a careful decision based on facts, go into action. Don't stop to reconsider. Don't begin to hesitate, worry and retrace your steps. Don't lose yourself in self-doubting which begets other doubts. Don't keep looking back over your shoulder."

William James & Dale Carnegie.

YOURS PRESSING FORWARD

"Some workers," remarked a Kilmarnock superintendent, "could sign, 'Yours standing still,' others 'Yours going back,' Paul could sign, 'Yours pressing forward'" (Phil. 3.14).

T.W.T.

THY GREAT NAME WE PRAISE

"Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise."

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

**NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE WORK
OF CHRISTIAN WOMEN**

This article is designed to be a summary of New Testament teaching on the work and sphere of Christian women. It is not combative, but inductive. It is not a review of the thoughts of others, but a presentation of what the writer has learned from the Scriptures. It is an effort to show, independently of Conference Paper and of conflicting sides, what the Word of God says on the subject. What then is the position of women as taught in the New Testament? What work is woman there reported to have done? What is she encouraged to do? In what sphere did she toil? Wherein did she serve her Lord? What did she do during the ministry of the Lord and of His apostles? What is her labour in connection with the Church and the evangelisation of the world? What may she do, what ought she to do, towards the propagation of Christianity?

(1) **Women ministered to the Lord.** — 'There were also women looking on afar off: among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who also, when Jesus was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women who came up with him unto Jerusalem' (Mark 15: 40-41). 'And many women were there, beholding afar off, who followed Jesus from Galilee ministering unto him: among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children' (Matt. 27: 55-56). 'And the twelve were with Jesus, and certain women, who had been healed

of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who ministered unto him of their substance (Luke 8: 1-3). The facts of these verses may be summarised thus: (1) women accompanied Jesus throughout Galilee; (2) they accompanied Him from Galilee to Judea; (3) their object in accompanying Jesus was to minister to Him; (4) the women who ministered were many; (5) their ministry consisted in supplying the temporal wants of Jesus; they provided Him from their own substance with the necessaries of life, Happy women! to have had the honour of supplying the wants of Him who though He had been rich, for our sakes had become so poor that He had not where to lay His head. The ministry of women is for ever ennobled by these brief records.

(2) **A woman of Samaria told her neighbours about Christ.** — The women 'went away into the city, and saith to the men. Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?' 'And from that city many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the woman, who testified, He told me all things that ever I did' (John 4:28-29, 39). The women quite naturally told the men of the city of the wonderful stranger at Jacob's well, invited them to see Him for themselves, and to say whether He might not be the Messiah. Anything like a public meeting, addressed by a woman, is not in the chapter. There simply was neighbourly converse between the inhabitants of the same town. The woman, as any other woman then and since, conversed of the latest news with those whom she knew.

Have we not here a fine example of what Christian women might constantly aim at? — speak to their neighbours of the Saviour. Their own knowledge of Him, and experience of His saving power, might be often made a theme of conversation, instead of the latest novels, novelties, fashions, and passing trifles of the world. Such conversation would diffuse a heavenly influence all around.

(3) **Women told of the resurrection.** — Matt. 18: 1-10 records that two Marys were twice instructed to go tell of the resurrection. An angel said, 'Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him.' And they 'did run to bring His disciples word.' Jesus afterward appeared to them and said, 'Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.'

Mark 16:1-11 gives another report. The white-robed young man instructed the women to go tell the disciples and Peter, that Christ was going before them into Galilee. With some additions and slight variations, it resembles Matthew's account. There is added the appearance of the Lord to Mary. And when Mary had seen the Lord, 'she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.'

Luke reports that the women 'returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest.' The women named are Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women' (chap.24:9-10). A number of women must have published the glad tidings of the resurrection of the Redeemer.

John's account contains an earlier report by Mary Magdalene. 'She runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them. They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him' (chap 20:2). After she had seen the Saviour, John says, 'Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her' (verse 18).

There were at least three distinct reports by the women: (1) Mary's report that the body was taken away; (2) the report of a number of women of the vision of the angels; (3) Mary's report of having seen the Lord. But in no case was there a public proclamation by the women.

(4) **One woman along with her husband instructed a public speaker** — Apollos

'began to speak boldly in the synagogue; whom when Aquilla and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly' (Acts 18:26). Priscilla is as much credited with the improvement of the eloquent Apollos as her husband Aquilla is.

(5) **One woman was a servant of the Church** — 'I commend unto you Phebe our sister, who is a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea' (Rom. 16:1). Servant is here a translation of *diakonos*, deacon. Phebe was a deacon, a minister or a servant in some way, although no-one can tell what ministry or service she rendered. It needs not that one be a public speaker to be a minister. A chapel-keeper is a minister; a visitor is a minister; in many ways women may be servants of the Church.

(6) **Some women were co-labourers with Paul.** — He entreated a certain true yolk-fellow to help those women who laboured with him in the Gospel (Phil 4:3). We are as ignorant of the labour they performed as we are of the ministry of Phebe. Labour in the Gospel is not restricted to speaking, and still less is it restricted to public speaking to a mixed congregation. Women might be co-labourers in a dozen ways without ever taking the platform along with men.

(7) **Women had the gift of prophecy.**

(1) Prophecy by women was predicted (Joel 2:29). Upon the handmaids, said God, I will pour out My Spirit. Acts 2:16-21 gives the full quotation from Joel as explanatory of what happened on Pentecost. Although women no more prophesied on the day of Pentecost than the sun was darkened and the moon changed into blood, there was nevertheless the beginning of that outpouring of the Spirit which was to be for women as well as men, for all flesh, and not only for a few Jews.

(2) Philip's four daughters prophesied (Acts 21:9). More is not said of them, but the simple declaration is a clear accomplishment of Joel's prophecy respecting women.

(3) Anna was a prophetess, and spoke of Jesus to all them that were looking for redemption (Luke 2:36-38).

(4) Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied (Luke 1:41-45).

(5) Mary was manifestly equally inspired (Luke 1:46-55).

(6) Regulations were given by Paul to guide women while prophesying. 'Every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoureth her head: for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven' (1 Cor. 11:5). The undoubted implication is that women were wont to prophesy. The passage, however, is silent as to where the women exercised the gift of prophecy.

What was this prophecy with which women were endowed, and respecting the exercise of which Paul gave instruction?

(a) Teaching and prophecy were different things (1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11). Prophets are second; teachers are third. In Ephesians, teachers are further removed from prophets, evangelists and pastors coming between them.

(b) Prophecy springs from revelation (1 Cor. 14:29-31).

(c) Prophecy was a gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:17-18).

(d) Prophecy was one of the miraculous endowments (1 Cor. 12:10).

(e) Prophecy disclosed hidden things (1 Cor. 14:24-25).

Prophecy was a bringing to light of what ordinary, unaided mortals could not see: it was an inspiration of the Spirit, revealing something otherwise unknown.

(8) **Women Prayed (1 Cor. 11:5-13)** — These verses manifestly imply that women were in the habit of praying. But as in prophesying, there is no indication where they prayed.

(9) **Women should teach** — Paul wrote to Titus that the aged women were to teach the young women (Titus 2:3-4). Teachers and scholars are both named as of one sex. Paul encouraged women to teach women, and even named some subjects of instruction.

(10) **Widows indeed** — 1 Tim. 5:3-16 speaks of 'widows indeed' and contains special instruction respecting their support. No widow was to be chosen or taken into the number, no woman was to 'be enrolled as a widow,' unless

- (1) She was sixty years of age.
- (2) She had only been once married.
- (3) Had a good report for good deeds.
- (4) Had reared children.
- (5) Had been hospitable.
- (6) Had washed the saints' feet.
- (7) Had relieved the afflicted.
- (8) Had diligently practised every good work.

Such conditions of enrolment seem very stringent, if the enrolment was only to an obtaining of pecuniary assistance from the Church : and yet they may have been requisite to secure justice and purity, if the list was meant to include life-long pensioners on the Church's fund. That indeed is all that is distinctly taught in the passage. But the foregoing qualifications, partly resembling the qualifications of elders and New Testament ministers, deacons or servants, make one wonder whether the widows indeed were not a kind of elderesses or female ministers. Were they appointed to do work, and be supported in it ? The supposition that they were workers receiving pecuniary support, seems best to explain everything in the passage. It is a not unnatural advance on the injunction of Titus 2, that the aged women teach the young women. To Timothy there are two additional points : (1) that the aged women be recognised — a chosen, enrolled class : (2) That they be supported. But, after all, what is actually taught, that the widows indeed be enrolled and supported, should be distinguished from the hypothetical, that they constitute a special ministry or class of Church workers.

The preceding tenfold enumeration includes all that is known to me of the work of women as recorded in the New Testament. A re-examination of this classification may enable us to put it in more brief portable form.

One thing at the least of the foregoing is impossible today. There can be no prophesying. There is no living prophet, male or female. No-one has now any revelation given by means of inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What Elisabeth, Mary, Anna, Philip's daughters, and women in Corinth did, is not now possible to any woman. Prophecy has ceased.

Ministering to the Lord, as previously described, is likewise an impossibility. The Lord has gone. Human eyes cannot behold Him : women's hands cannot reach Him. The nearest approach to that ministering of which I can think, is to minister to those who are carrying on His work. He who esteems as given to Himself a cup of cold water given to one of His brethren, will not overlook any service rendered to His co-labourers. It has been said that 'we have scores of clever, consecrated and amiable women in our ranks, as we have also the religious communities around us, who are pining away with dyspepsia, in luxurious drawing rooms,' etc. I am slow to believe that there are so many idle christian women : but if things are so, it might be useful to inform such suffering loungers that there are scores of brothers honestly doing their best in the Lord's work, who would be much encouraged and improved by some womanly ministrations. Amiable women, and especially consecrated amiable women, need never suffer from dyspepsia, if activity is a cure. Public speaking would probably accelerate the disease, particularly in delicate creatures accustomed to 'luxurious drawing-rooms' : whereas a little manual ministering would have a beneficial effect in removing both bodily and spiritual dyspepsia.

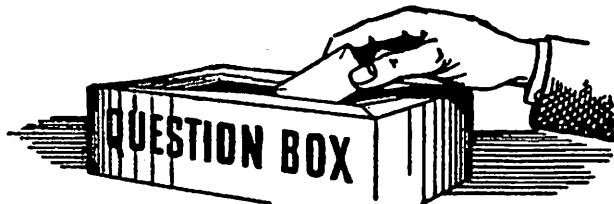
A further reduction of the foregoing classification may be effected, and nothing be lost, by putting 2 and 3 under one head. They are both examples of women conversing with their acquaintances and neighbours.

The whole ten may now be put more briefly, thus :

1. Women should pray.
2. Women should teach women.
3. They can effectively converse on divine things with their acquaintances and neighbours.
4. Wives, along with their husbands, may often be useful in instructing public Speakers.
5. They can minister to the comfort of other servants of the Lord in dozens of ways that only woman's ingenuity can devise.
6. And in such ways they are co-labourers in the Gospel, and servants of the Churches.
7. The widows indeed might be specially useful as ministers for the Churches.

And now having classified thus what is said that woman did and should do, let us next observe the boundaries of the field to be occupied by her.

A Reprint of Alexander Brown's article.
The remainder will appear next month (D.V.)



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“How can we break down the invisible barriers so many people put up when we attempt to convey the Good News about Jesus” ?

There is so much in the answer to this question that it is difficult to know what to include and what to leave out. Verbal communication, and I take it that this is what we are talking about, is a means of sharing knowledge and information with someone else through the medium of words. This is **never** easy at the best of times, but when we have to speak about the Gospel it becomes much more difficult, especially when we realise that there is no common ground between the participants.

The usual practice as I have seen it in the Church over the years is for someone to say, “Oh we’ve got a mission coming up soon; we’ll go out on the ‘knocker’ next Tuesday night and try to get some ‘outsiders’ into the meetings.” So Tuesday comes along, and the ‘invading’ party gathers. Some go out with fear and trepidation, others with a brashness which is almost unbelievable. Most are totally unprepared, and probably none have thought about those invisible barriers which our questioner mentions. So what is the outcome? Well, you’ve guessed it; a sense of disappointment and lack of achievement. There **must** be a more objective approach, whether we are going out on the ‘knocker’ or talking to people in their homes, or any other place for that matter. So what **are** some of the barriers, and how do we break them down ?

Barriers Erected by Ourselves

It is perfectly true that we ourselves can erect barriers without knowing it. In the first place we must remember that we are not trying to sell to people a latter-day, trouble shooting supremo. We do not advance the cause of Christ by saying to people that **he** is the answer to all the **world’s** problems, and to all **their** personal problems in particular. We may understand the sense in which these statements would be true, but many people wouldn’t. What we **must** tell them is that Jesus is the answer to the

greatest problem which afflicts mankind, *i.e.* the problem of the universality of sin. We must make them understand that **they** are part of this problem, whether they realise it or not, and that only the love of God as expressed in Christ can relieve them of the burden of guilt.

We must also guard against erecting the barrier of self-imposed austerity; that pious, over-bearing attitude which tends to mark us out as the harbingers of a religious system to which people must come if they are to have a successful Christian life. The messenger of the Good News is supposed to be someone who **rejoices** in that News. The salesman whose attitude suggests that he has no confidence in that which he is selling, will not do very well. Likewise, the Gospel-promoting Christian, whose attitude suggests apathy and disinterestedness, may as well stay at home for all the good he will do. We must believe that our personalities may create problems in the person to person situation, and that consequently we may have to change our approach.

Barriers Erected by People

There is one barrier which is **always** present in any person to person communication, *i.e.* that people see things in a different way; that each has his personal viewpoint. We neglect to appreciate this barrier at our peril. What is extremely important from our point of view may have no importance whatsoever to the person with whom we are talking. I have heard Christians say, after speaking about the Gospel to people, "Why does he not see the importance of what I'm saying. How can he be so blind?" The short answer is, of course, that we have been hitting the barrier and not the person.

How do we get around this problem? Well, it is usually obvious that we need information from the person concerned. How do we get it? One sure way to get **some** information is to ask 'open-ended' questions. Such questions usually start with words such as, When, Why, Where, How, Who, etc. Here's an example to illustrate what I mean. Q. Are you interested in Christianity? A. No. End of dialogue, and probably end of conversation if the interviewer is inexperienced. It would be far better in order to start the dialogue by framing the question something like this. "What do **you** think about Christianity?" The inflexion of the voice to stress 'you' makes the question personal. The person **has** to say something. Once the initial break-through has been made it is then up to the skill of the interviewer to keep the dialogue going. Remember, if you need information, ask 'open-ended' questions.

Another barrier which is sometimes raised is the 'Get-rid-of-him-quick' barrier. This is usually raised when the person has been drawn away from something which is claiming his interest at that particular time. Whether we like it or not, many people today are suffering from computer/television/video addiction; we may not like it, but I believe we would be wise to acknowledge it when we are planning door-to-door visitations and other activities in which we want people to be involved. There are great national occasions which are televised and watched by millions of people, and surely we are asking for the 'boot' away from the door if we intervene during the times of these broadcasts. I have known Christians who have deliberately arranged for open-air work and door-to-door visitations at these particular times. I can understand their reasoning, but surely when we go out like that the objective is to gain the interest of people, not to demonstrate **our** fidelity to Christ irrespective of occasion. We must tackle problems as they are not as we expect them to be.

Feedback

If we are to prevent, break down, or get around barriers then we dare not neglect the value of 'feedback'. Verbal feedback is what a person **says** to us during a conversation. Non-verbal feedback is what a person expresses by bodily posture or facial expression. Whichever it is, we have to interpret it correctly. For example, we can usually tell by a persons bodily posture or facial expression whether or not that person

is bored or puzzled. If we see that then we have to do something about it. Are we using the right sort of language; are we talking about the Godhead, and Divinity, and Ecumenism, when we should be talking about love, compassion, and friendship. We have to pitch the level of what we are saying to the level of the person to whom we are talking; verbal feedback will usually tell us at what level we can pitch it.

Do we ever think about the physical location of the conversation that we want to have with people? We may want to talk with our neighbour about Jesus and the Church. It would be less than effective if we tried to do it over the garden fence when a biting east wind was blowing and our neighbour was not suitably clad against the cold. Or try to imagine how you have felt when someone from another religious group has tried to keep you talking at the door on a cold day or night when you have just left a warm room, probably in your shirt sleeves. Jesus and His Apostles always chose their places well when they wanted to communicate with the people; we should try to do so as well.

Planning

Good communication does not occur by accident. It requires careful thought and planning. If we are to prevent or overcome barriers then we must know what these barriers are, and we must have given some prior thought as to what we are going to say. Perhaps a few simple rules will help us in our promotion of the Good News.

- a) Be clear as regards our objectives.
- b) Think in advance what we want to say and the best way to say it.
- c) Think clearly before we speak.
- d) Separate the essentials from the non-essentials.
- e) Listen effectively for verbal feedback, and watch for non-verbal feedback.
- f) Appreciate that the person to whom you are talking may have vital information to give or important questions to ask.

If we can put into practice some of these points then I feel sure that we shall go a long way to breaking down some of the barriers which exist. Remember! Knowing **how** to communicate is as important as knowing **what** to communicate.

(All questions, please to:

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

AN OLD PUZZLE

It seems that the time will never come when men will be content simply to believe certain incomprehensible statements of the Bible, and cease to raise speculative questions about them. Here follows a communication in which an old question of this kind is presented, whether for the satisfaction of the writer or for some one who looks to him for guidance, I am not informed.

"DEAR BRO. MCGARVEY: Will you kindly give the readers of the *Christian Standard* in the department of "Biblical Criticism" what you understand to be the general belief of the Christian church on the nature of Christ and his relation to the Father?"

Does John 1:1 teach that Jesus is "the very and eternal God." How could the Word be God and at the same time be *with* God?

If Jesus was not the one God of the Decalogue, are we to understand that there are *two* Gods.

When Jesus said "I and my Father are one," did he mean to say that they were one in *person*."

John 1:1 certainly does teach that Jesus, in his pre-existing state, was God. It also teaches that "by him were all things made that was made and without him was not one thing made that was ." As he did not make himself, he was not made at all, but was eternal. He was God then and he was eternal: but whether he was "very" or not the text does not inform us.

To the question, "How could the Word be God, and at the same time with God." I am not able to give an answer : and if the question had been, "How could God be in the beginning?" I could not answer that. I can not tell how God does anything or even how he exists. I can as easily explain how the Word was God and yet with God as I can explain how God himself was there. When I am told on competent authority anything about an incomprehensible being, 'I can believe it : but from the very fact that he is incomprehensible I shall be forever unable to explain it.

To the question. "If Jesus was not the one God of the Decalogue, are we to understand there are two Gods?" I can unhesitatingly answer, No. If he was in the beginning with God, and was God, as John asserts, there was, and is, only one God. And that there is only one God is a fundamental doctrine of both the Old Testament and the New.

When Jesus said "I and my Father are one" did he mean to say that they were one in person? No. Jesus as a person, was then living in the flesh among men and offering prayers to his Father in heaven. They were one in some other sense than in person, and if we never find out exactly what the other sense is, I don't think it will hurt us.

I am not sure that I have given these answers precisely according to the wish of the querist: for he asked me for the "general belief of the Christian Church" on the the subject. I prefer in all such matters, to tell what the general belief of the Christian church *ought* to be, rather than what it is. It ought to be what the Scriptures teach, and I aim to give this.

From 'Biblical Criticism' by J. W. McGarvey, 1898.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Feb. 7 Gen. 18 John 20, 19-31
 Feb. 14 Zech. 13 John 21, 1-14
 Feb. 21 Ezek. 33;1-20 John 21, 15-25
 Feb. 28 Dan. 12 1 Peter 1

DOUBTING THOMAS

Thomas for some reason, was not with his fellow disciples when Jesus appeared unto them. Later they told him: "We have seen the Lord." However, he would not accept their testimony until he himself had seen his crucified Master. The encounter occurred a week later and it led Thomas to exclaim to Jesus: "My Lord and my God!" Jesus replied: "Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are they who have not seen, yet have believed."

Dear reader, are you one of the blessed ones? Do you believe on the Lordship and Divinity of Jesus on the basis of the written testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? Are you one who walks by faith and not by sight? Have you found that life which comes through belief in the Son (20:31).

JESUS AGAIN APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES

Paul later wrote: "...He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures... and he was seen of Cephas (Peter), then of the twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time (1 Corinthians

15:4-8). There was no doubt that the Master had overcome the grave as He had prophesied (Mark 9:31). Herein lies my hope.

That John was a fisherman is clear from chapter 21. He details the exact numbers of fish caught — 153 (21:11). I would not have bothered counting them, but a fisherman would.

CHRIST QUESTIONS PETER

I once did a study in depth of Peter. I think it stemmed from discussions with Roman Catholics, who, of course, believe he was the first Universal Father (Pope). My studies led me to a greater admiration of the work of Peter. There is no doubt he was a great figure in the early church. But he was never, as far as I can see, "The Bishop of Rome," "Vicar of Jesus Christ," "Prince of the Apostles," or "Supreme Pontiff."

In reading *Clarke's Commentary*, I see he quotes a Bishop Pearce on Jesus' words to Peter: "Do you love me more than these?" Pearce thought the words referred to the provisions they were eating or to the secular employment. So also did Alexander Campbell. In his debate with Bishop John Purcell he said: "Peter had erred. He had become discontented — had forgotten his duties to His Master, and had betaken himself to his former occupation of fishing, and induced the rest to join him. Christ asks him solemnly, 'Do you love me more than these fish, these boats, nets, apparatus, or these victuals, this worldly employment? If so, cease to spend your time in providing food for yourself: but feed my sheep and lambs, and I will provide for you.' Besides, he having caught nothing till the Master appeared, was a very striking lesson, which I presume Peter never forgot."

Note, Jesus asked him the question three times. I recall Peter's earlier denial of his Lord (Matthew 26:69-75).

I PETER

Author: Peter the Apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). His name means "Rock." His father was Jonah and his brother

was Andrew. He had an unnamed wife (Matthew 8:14). Peter was a fisherman by profession. But we read in Matthew's gospel: "And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He said unto them, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' And they straightway left their nets and followed Him." (4:18-20).

Peter is mentioned on numerous occasions in the gospel records and Acts, very often with James and John.

Date: Unknown. Many Commentators suggest a date in the mid 60's A.D.

Place: Babylon (5:13). F.C. Thompson has written: "The Babylon referred to here may or not have been the city on the Euphrates river. Many think it was Rome, figuratively called Babylon."

People Addressed: "The strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia..." (1:1).

Purpose: In obedience to Jesus' commandments to encourage and strengthen the brethren (Luke 22:32) and to feed the flock of God (John 21:15-17).

Key Word: "Suffering."

Central Theme: Victory over suffering as exemplified in the life of Christ.

OUR LIVING HOPE

What is hope? It is desire combined with expectation. Hope looks forward and the Christian hope is for future good. We see in this passage that the Christian's inheritance is reserved in heaven. Heaven, of course, is the dwelling place of God. Where God is, heaven is. To be in heaven for ever is to be with God for ever. I see this as synonymous with eternal joy (Revelation 21).

Paul once wrote: "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:17-19).

MESSIANIC HOPE OF THE PROPHETS

In Revelation 19:10 we read: "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The prophets of Israel again and again spoke of the coming Messiah. For example, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7); "For thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10); "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psalm 110:1). Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled these passages and countless more.

EXHORTATION TO HOLINESS

It is written: "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1:16). To be holy is to be different. The temple was holy because it was different from other buildings; the priest was holy because he was set apart from other men; the sabbath day was holy because it was different from other days. The Christian is holy or different because he is in Christ. As one writer has put it: "He never forgets the presence of Christ; he walks ever with Christ; he makes no decision without consulting the guidance of Christ; he is in Christ just as really as he is in the air he breathes." There is a title of the Christian which sums all this up — **saint**. The word "saint" and "holy" are a translation of the same Greek word — **hagios**.

THE COST OF OUR REDEMPTION

Slavery in the Roman Empire was very common. Indeed, no people in recorded history owned so many slaves or relied as heavily upon slave labour as did the Romans. It is said that by the second century A.D. eight out of ten of the men, women and children who walked the streets of Rome had slave blood in their veins.

How did a slave obtain freedom in the Empire? One way was to buy his way out. For years he could save up

some money (*peculium*) in a temple from any small payments or tips and then pay-off his master. The slave would become the property of the god and, therefore, "free of all men." Jesus provided the ransom to free all from the slavery of sin. The ransom was not silver and gold, but His precious life-blood (1:18,19).

THE POWER AND PERMANENCE OF GOD'S WORD

Brother Graeme Pearson and I held special talks at Motherwell this year on **The Bible**. Our studies overwhelmingly convinced us of the inspiration, veracity and trustworthiness of the Word of God. We read in history of how men tried to destroy the Word. But history also proves Peter's statement: "The Word of the Lord endures for ever" (1:25).

The Word is likened unto incorruptible seed (1:23). By this seed we can be "born again." Remember the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... Except a man born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God... You must be born again" (John 3:3-7).

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The Mutual Benefit Meeting took place on the 5th December at the Meetinghouse of the church at Motherwell, when a goodly number came together to discuss the subject — "As citizens of the U.K. what are our duties to the State, and are we ever justified in disobeying the Civil Powers.?"

James Sinclair (Sew.) occupied the chair and the speakers were to be Bro. Hugh Davidson, Motherwell, and James R. Gardiner from Haddington. Unfortunately Bro. Davidson had 'flu and could not attend and so Bro. Gardiner was the only speaker. An hours discussion of the subject produced some lively

discourse and interesting questions. A very enjoyable time of fellowship was had by all.

The next Mutual Benefit Meeting, will, God Willing, be held at Dennyloanhead Meetingplace, on 5th March, 1988, when Peter Sneddon will be in the chair, and the speakers will be John Colgan, Tranent, and Graeme Pearson, Motherwell. The question for discussion will be "What role do women have in the Church of Christ; and is it equally important to the role of men."

I. Davidson.

Manchester: We rejoice to announce the addition of two more souls to Christ's kingdom. On Friday, 27th November, Isabel Teo, a student at Manchester University, and Peter Alton from Irlam put on their Lord in Baptism. We rejoice again at their new births.

Arthur Barry, Evangelist.

Kitwe, Zambia: One African preacher awoke the Woodhall household in Kitwe at midnight requesting overnight accommodation. He wanted — and was able to preach Christ on Radio Zambia the next day. The Churches of Christ are on Radio Zambia every day in English or an African language. Chester Woodhall had several visitors in one day as a result of his sermon being broadcast the previous Sunday. There have been conversions to Christ as a result of the radio ministry.

Angela Woodhall,

P.O. Box 2297.

Church of Christ,

KITWE, Zambia.

OBITUARY

Cleveleys: We are saddened to have to report the death of a dearly-loved sister in the Lord Jesus, Christina F. Steele, aged 76 years. She was the widow of the late Bro. John B. Steele.

Kirsty, as she was affectionately known to many of us, had been in a private nursing home in Blackpool

following a stroke suffered a little over twelve months ago. She died peacefully in her sleep during the night of November 16/17th.

She will be remembered in several of our Scottish congregations with whom she met, particularly perhaps, Motherwell. After the death of her husband, John, she moved south of the border to take up the position as matron at a Blackpool boarding school. She has been a faithful member of the church meeting in Cleveleys for the past twenty odd years and will be missed for her keen sense of humour which remained with her even when her mind had been affected by the stroke.

We give thanks that she died in the Lord and commend her son Robert and his family to your thoughts and prayers.

Eric Winter, Secretary.

COMING EVENTS

The Church at Manchester would like to give advance notice of a —

MEETING IN MANCHESTER — 1988

A two-week campaign will include a 3-day Holiday Bible School, and culminate in a Gospel Meeting on Friday, Saturday & Sunday, August 5th - 7th at Stretford Grammar School.

Our Theme will be "Our God is Alive."

A. Barry.

THANKS

Brother and Sister John Geddes would like to thank all the brethren for their concern, and for their prayers, letters, 'phone calls and visits during John's stay in hospital and at home.

Elmbank, 3 Crown Street,
Iainstown, Buckie.

AN APOLOGY

I would like to express my sincere apologies to all of the readers of the SCRIPTURE STANDARD. Some of the things I wrote in my article were rash

and very poorly reasoned. But more than that I did upset the church, especially the congregation at Longshoot, Wigan, of which I was a member at the time I wrote the article.

I would also like to apologise to Bro. Carey; I hope that he will forgive me for the things I wrote.

I would also like to apologise to the Editor and Staff of the SCRIPTURE STANDARD. It was not my intention to attack the magazine, because I believe it is an excellent publication. I know Bros. Alf Marsden and Leonard Morgan, both of whom I respect enormously. Recently I had the great privilege to meet Bro. R.B. Scott.

I would like to state that I:

- (a) believe that there should be one cup at the Lord's Table,
- (b) believe that women should wear head covering in worship,
- ~~(c) cannot find any authority for the use of musical instruments in worship in the New Covenant Scriptures.~~
- (d) believe that New Covenant Scriptures are the Authority to which we turn to for Faith and Practise today, without in any way denegrating the value of the Old Covenant Scriptures.

I have appreciated the articles which have been published since, including the Editor's which exposed the flaws in mine.

I pray that the Church which Christ bought with His own blood, will become more united and that men's ideas will cease to govern Her.

Stephen Woodcock,
29 Steyning Close,
Corby, Northants NN18 0NE.

STRENGTH

In closing his exhortations to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul wrote, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (6:10) Strength is a relative thing. The strong child is weak compared to the strong boy; the boy is weak beside the man, and the physically strong man, who is without God, is weak beside the man who places his trust in God. It is said that Paul himself was weak physically. Spiritually he was a giant. The apostle gives the secret of this all-important inner strength in these words: "Put on the armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (6:11.)

L. D. Harless

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