

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

I asked the New Year for some motto sweet –
Some rule of life with which to guide my feet:
I asked and paused; he answered sweet and low
“God’s Will to know”.

“Will knowledge, then suffice, New Year?” I cried;
And, ere the question into silence died,
The answer came: “Nay, but remember, too,
“God’s Will to do”.

A HAPPY NEW LIFE

Well, since last month’s issue, we now know that those in the C. of E. who were pressing for women priests have won the day: albeit their vote succeeded only by the smallest whisker. Now members of the C. of E. can say that they have something entirely “new” in their church: indeed something undreamt of since Henry VIII’s day. It’s not scriptural but it’s “new” and that’s all that seems to matter.

The world lives and thrives on that which is new. Indeed the central theme of media advertising (from junk foods to soap powders) is that “It’s new!” We have, therefore, to apply a little intelligence in discerning exactly what is actually new, and what is just something old but in a new wrapper. There is, in fact one accredited school of thought that says that **nothing** is really new. One of the very wisest of men said, “.... the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. The thing that hath been, is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which will be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said. See, this is new? it hath been of old time, which was before us.” (Ecc. 1:9). This was Solomon’s findings and is certainly largely true of the general levels of human endeavour. As young men in the church we sometimes, no doubt, had the conceit to

think that we were advocating some new thought (something centuries of Bible students had missed) and yet it had all been said and done a very long time ago. As long ago as early in the first century Paul in Athens, came across philosophers and religious pundits who used to gather (like Speaker's corner in London, I suppose) to be enthralled or titilated by some new thing ("For all the Athenians which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear, some new thing") (Acts 17:21). So, even in the realms of religion, that which is new is exciting and widely sought after today. Consequently the cults are flourishing: especially those which specialise in the occult, mystery and sophisticated hocus-pocus and which operate behind closed doors. Also popular are those whose meetings are punctuated with banging of tambourines and dancing in the aisles. We are back to the state of the Athenians and are only 'turned on' by the spectacular new thing. At one time men used to "search the Scriptures", to find God's truth. Nowadays people are searching the churches, hopefully to find one that will prove suitable to their taste. What are people looking for? What should they be looking for? Surely we should all be looking for the Church that Jesus built, and not merely one suitable and convenient to our plans and our lifestyle. Yes, people are looking for something "New."

Old, Yet Ever New

I am sure that a feeling predominates in the world that the Bible is an old book (which it is) and is, therefore, a thing of the past: a closed history of a derelict nation written in a dead language. There is certainly nothing dead about the language of either the O.T. or the New and no Book in the world could possibly be more relevant today, not only to the Jews but to Gentiles, to every nation under heaven. The Bible certainly records ancient history but it has always been ahead of its time (even stating scientific facts before men discovered them). It is not dead, it is dynamic. It is full of "things old and new" (Matt. 13:52). God's last testament is called the NEW testament and is so dynamic and futuristic that it will never age. It can never get out of date. The N.T. abounds in new concepts and new revelations and contains the very last words of God to man, and so it can never get old. It will never be added to, or subtracted from, and will usher mankind into the next world. God's word is not only perennial, it is eternal, and although heaven and earth are destined to pass away, God's words will abide and prevail. God, in His unlimited grace, has opened up a new and living way in the reconciliation of man to Himself: not just New but living (dynamic).

A New and Living Way

There are, of course, "new" things in the N.T. The N.T. is, in itself, quite new: being the NEW Testament (or will) of God. It introduces us to a whole variety of 'new' concepts, quite unknown to the Jews.

The Jews had had many minor Covenants, and a National (Mosaic) Covenant, but today, since Christ, there is a NEW Covenant which embraces everybody (not just Jews but all other races of men) and which is offered to the world, entirely free of charge, as the gracious gift of God. All that is asked of men is that they accept it.

The gospel of Christ is also 'new' for it offers "a new and living way" (Heb. 10:12) back into fellowship with God. Not just a new way back, but a living way.

There is also a completely unique and 'new' opportunity for men and women to be reborn. This truth not only astounded Nicodemus as being something quite impossible, but has had a similar effect on every generation since. However, it must be true to say that most men and women, have, at some point in their career, surveyed the mess they have made of their own lives, and sometimes the wreckage they have made of the lives of others, and have longed for the opportunity to cancel all that has gone before, and to start again from scratch. To start life again with a clean sheet. This desire is not just some kind of forlorn pipedream: it is a complete reality. Indeed it

is one of the many basic elements of the 'good news' of the gospel: i.e. the forgiveness of sins, and the opportunity to start life again with a clean sheet. Upon acceptance of Christ, and upon our resolve (or repentance) to conform our lives to Christ's will, we can literally wash away our past lives in the bath of regeneration, and **arise to walk in NEWNESS of life.** (Rom. 6:4). As Paul himself was urged by Ananias, "**Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised (immersed) and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**" (Acts 22:16). Old ways must be dispensed with, and a new way of life be embraced in Christ. Paul said, "**PUT OFF all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouths. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the OLD man with his deeds. And put on the NEW man, which is renewed on knowledge after the image of Him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all. PUT ON therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**"(Col. 3:8-13).

Thus followers of Christ will become "New creatures" by the "New birth" (for we must be born again John 3:3-7) and adopt new knowledge, new thoughts, new standards, new attitudes, new aspirations, new hopes and new conduct. Many aspects of our old lives must be "Put off" and many better patterns of behaviour must be "Put on", to adorn.

"New" Attitudes

At the start of this, another year, it is common to shake hands and to wish one another "A Happy New Year". My esteemed father-in-law (the late Bro. Tom Nisbet) used to say to non-Christians that he would much prefer to be wishing them "A Happy New Life" in Christ Jesus. To become a follower of Christ, and to take Him at His word in faith, would certainly transform our lives and make for a **very happy new life.** Our attitudes would most certainly change.

Our Attitude to LIFE would change: and our lives would take a completely new direction. We would seek to consider others, and live unselfish lives. Jesus came to give men life and to give it more abundantly. In seeking to copy His life we would become like Him: happy within ourselves and harmless to others. Instead of being conformed to this world, we would endeavour to be **transformed**, by the renewing of our minds under the influence of the Spirit of God.

Our attitude to people would change: We would seek their good (not their goods) at all times. We would not lie to them, or steal from them, or slander them, or cheat them, or exploit them in any way: but rather we would seek to help them along life's way. Jesus taught that we should "**love our neighbours as ourselves**" and that we should do unto others as we would want them to do unto us. If everybody followed this golden rule what a happier world it would be.

Our attitude to MONEY would change: Everybody needs money and we would still have to work to get it, but it would never become our God. Indeed the richest men are usually the most unhappy. Paul reminds us that just as we brought nothing into this world, it is just as certain that we shall take nothing with us when we leave it: except our good works. There is nothing wrong with money: it is the love of money that is the root of all forms of evil. Human greed certainly causes all kinds of evil, unhappiness, cruelty and death.

Our Attitude to WORRY would change: It is difficult not to worry in a troubled and stressful environment, but at least Christ's followers have the resources of Christ behind them. They can lean upon Him. The apostle Peter says that we should "**cast our cares upon Him, for He careth for us**" (1 Peter 5:7). Paul urges us "**In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made**

known unto God." Jesus also pointed out that although sparrows are cheap in the market-place, the death of one does not go un-noticed; "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." And the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Our Attitude to DEATH would change: and we would see it not so much as the end of existence, but the gateway to a higher and happier life. The cynic says that if Christians think so highly of heaven why do they seem so reluctant to die and go there. We have, I suppose, a natural fear of death and our sense of self-preservation makes us avoid ill-health and dangerous situations. The Lord has also given Christians work to do and they are supposed to be engaged in it during their life-time. Paul says that Jesus took upon Himself our flesh, and blood, that He might die a physical death, and in the process, "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14) And so Jesus, by conquering death, has removed that fear, and released us from a life-time of dread of death. "Oh death where is thy sting: O grave where is thy victory". "Blessed (happy) are those who die in the Lord."

Our Attitude to FUTURE OUTLOOK would change: and instead of uncertain and fairly aimless lives, we would have new purposes and hopes. The world is full of doom and gloom and men despair of the future. Things get worse and standards steadily fall. Christ assures His followers of a wonderful HOPE beyond the grave. Even those who achieve fame, fortune and popular acclaim eventually admit, with Solomon, that it is all vanity, and such things are really quite hollow. But Christ's followers are "looking for that blessed HOPE and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Tit.2:13) "Which HOPE we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth that within the veil" (Heb. 6:19) Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for YOU" ... and Paul assures us that we can look forward each day to "the HOPE which is laid up for you IN HEAVEN, whereof ye heard before, in the word of truth of the gospel." (Col.1:15).

Obviously upon becoming Christians our attitude to nearly everything would change, and "new creatures" would have "new" values. Readers will be able to think of the many others we have not had space to mention.

Behold I Make All Things New

Not only is the N.T. full of new and wonderful things but it can also affect great works of personal re-newal in those who embrace it. God says, "Behold I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). That's a promise, ever in the present tense, and one which can never lapse or age. This book (Rev.) talks of the new song, the new name, the new spirit, and the new heart, new creatures, a new heavens and a new earth: all coming to pass by the power of God. "Behold I make all things new." And on a very personal level, man also can be "born anew" and experience a rebirth: the new birth. Born of water and the spirit. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a NEW CREATURE: old things are passed away: behold all things ARE BECOME NEW" so says Paul (2 Cor.5:17). No matter how low we may have sunk into sin: no matter how deep-dyed and tainted with evil we may become, there is always the opportunity for us to arise (like the prodigal son) and return to our heavenly Father. We cleanse ourselves in the watery bath of regeneration and arise, as new creatures, to walk in a completely newness of life. As Paul says, "old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." Yes, we all blot our copy-books. Those nice white empty sheets of paper are quickly covered in our mistakes, blots and blemishes. If, however, in true penitence we take our soiled and sullied pages to our Heavenly Father, He can give us a fresh sheet and we can start again. We can wash our sins away and start with a clean sheet, as innocent as a new born babe (Acts. 22:16).

For those who have already become 'new creatures' and who are 'in Christ' there lies a responsibility to "walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4). Old things are passed

away and all things are become new. The old style of life must go, and a new and better must begin and continue. We must serve God, not in the oldness of the letter but in the newness of spirit (Rom. 7:6). Each new day gives us new opportunities to live better lives than we did the day before: for God's mercies are "new every morning" (Lam. 3:23). Each year, likewise, is one of those milestones on life's journey, whereby we can pause awhile, reflect upon the year gone past, and gaze upon the new year stretching out before us. As the challenge of this brand new year beckons to us may we make a really determined effort to make 1993 a very prosperous and profitable year in the Saviour's service.

Jesus offers YOU; a "Happy New Life".

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

CALLED OUT

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9 (R.V.)

I COULD NOT DO WITHOUT THEE

"I could not do without Thee!

For oh! the way is long,

And I am often weary,

And sigh replaces song.

How could I do without Thee?

I do not know the way;

Thou knowest and Thou leadest,

And wilt not let me stray."

WE QUOTE — G.H. HOLMES

A PRECIOUS TREASURE

"Again, the Bible should be read regularly. Some portion should be read and contemplated every day, and its beauty and attractiveness will grow upon us. We ought to esteem it as a precious treasure, and to make it the man of our counsel. It is said that the pioneers of the restoration movement to primitive Christianity, the movement with which we stand identified, were men of one book. Their chief delight was in the law of the Lord. They read and pondered that book above all books, the result being that they evolved characters that were notable for piety and Godliness. So we, following in their steps, should give the Word of God the first place in our reading and thought.

A SEASON OF GREAT SPIRITUAL REFRESHING

Another means of grace designed to feed the soul is the divinely appointed institution, the "Breaking of Bread." Here, gathered around the table of the Lord, we experience a season of great Spiritual refreshing. It is as an oasis in the desert of the weary traveller. Rightly attended to, it brings us into close fellowship with the Saviour, and forcibly reminds us of His wonderful love, and of the tremendous price paid for our redemption. To contemplate God's great love in the sacrifice of Jesus helps us to a fuller consecration to Him; and is calculated to increase our faith, brighten our hope, and intensify our love. It is a means that deepens our spirituality and increases spiritual vitality. Being arranged by divine wisdom, surely we shall not impugn that wisdom by persuading ourselves that we can dispense with it. No; but as often as the Lord's Day comes our presence should be at the Lord's table, and nothing which is within our control should deter us.

WE MUST LIVE IN A SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE

Now let us turn our thought to another important condition of growth which

suggests itself to us. We must live in a spiritual atmosphere, in a heavenly environment. Speaking of the body, the law of nature makes it imperative that pure air must be inhaled into the system, if natural life and growth are to be sustained. We all feel and know the bracing and exhilarating effects of pure fresh air. When the body has become run down by the exacting business of life, the brain fatigued, and we seem completely undone, we resort to this means — rest and fresh air, in order to recuperate our strength and vigour, and energy, so that, being renewed, we may enter with new zest into the business and various callings of life

THE SPIRITUAL REALM

Turning our thought again into the Spiritual realm, this same law is equally applicable. If the soul is to grow, its surroundings must be adapted to its growth, while adverse conditions will check the growth and chill Spiritual life. This being so, what is the atmosphere in which a Christian should live, so as to assure growth and grace? It is walking, communing, and living with God; it is the fellowship of God in the soul.

A PRAYING SOUL IS A GROWING SOUL

Now, this holy communion with divinity is only attained and sustained when we use the great and priceless privilege of going to God in prayer. This is the means by which we hold converse with our Father in heaven. God speaks to us through His Word; we speak to Him in prayer, and by this our communion with Him is set up. A praying soul is a growing soul; in fact there can be no growth without it. What breath is to the body, prayer is to the soul of the Christian. By prayer we unlock the door of heaven, and, forgetful of earth, enter into close fellowship with God. The blessed and hallowed influence, the Spiritual renewal, the energy and inspiration, brought into the life by this Spiritual exercise is experienced by all prayerful souls. As the bright and breezy atmosphere of the hills invigorates and renews physical strength, so from the hills of God cometh our strength. **“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up as on the wings of eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”** By prayer we scale high mountains ascending far above the mists and chilling winds of worldliness, the ice-bound regions which freeze up the soul into the warm sunlight of the Divine presence.

ALONE WITH GOD

Jesus Christ Himself, our Exemplar, prayed much. Oftimes He resorted to the mountain side, and was alone with God. He knew the value and necessity of prayer. By this means His soul was strengthened and fortified to meet all the severe trials to which He was submitted. He poured out His soul unto God, and the strength which comes only from God was vouchsafed to Him. What a picture of deep pathos Gethsemane presents. The mental agony of the Saviour, so great that it caused a blood-like sweat; the cross and all the depths of suffering leading up to it were all present before Him. Yet from this dark scene He emerged with strengthened soul — the result of prayer.

GROWTH IN GRACE IS CLEARLY SEEN

Now, if Jesus felt and illustrated by His example the need of this condition to the life and strength of the soul, surely His followers cannot afford to under-value its importance. Each day should be opened by prayer, asking for divine blessing and guidance and strength; and at its close, with gratitude for mercies given, to commit ourselves into His loving keeping. One, perhaps, cannot conceive of a Christian doing otherwise, but prayer must not be limited to morning and evening. It is when in the midst of keen trial, when our adversary is marshalling his forces against us that we need to communicate with God for grace to help us to resist, and as sure as we ask so sure shall we receive. The soul that lives by prayer meditates much on the divine and concentrates itself upon God, makes its impression upon the life and character, and growth in grace is clearly seen.

The heart that talks with God in prayer
 Unconsciously imparts
 Some portion of the truths learned there
 To other minds and hearts.

It needs no utterance of a word,
 It needs no pen or book;
 What God speaks to the heart is heard
 In every act and look.

Pray much; in pleasure, toil or rest
 Call on that unseen force,
 And let your heart kneel in your breast
 Communing with the Source."

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

MOTTO FOR NEW YEAR

"HE that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs xi 30)

Time, as it swiftly passes along makes one continuous and imperative demand upon us, namely WORK. In New Testament times, it is very clear that all the followers of the Lord were workers. There was no such distinction known then as is known now – Christians and Christian workers. This is a distinction that ought not to be. If not Christian workers, they are Christian drones or Christian cumberers.

God 'will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality eternal life'. In that day no professions, however fair, no ceremonial observances however imposing: nothing but sterling worth – not conventional worth, not the thing that passes current amongst men for worthiness, but that which can be weighed in God's balance, that which will ring true when God tries it – only sterling worth, will abide that testing day.

The motto calls attention to a kind of work that cannot be equalled in importance for beneficial and lasting results. It is a work in which all Christians can engage, and for the doing of which all believers are responsible. The work is nothing less than *soul winning*. There cannot possibly be any higher work than that; and certainly the servant of the Lord is not justified in aiming at anything lower.

It is little use seeking to change men's lives without changing their hearts and consciences. It is impossible to bring about a new heaven and a new earth as the result of Acts of Parliament. Only as the reward is right and that can only be right as and when the soul is won for the Saviour – only in this way is the highest, most blessed, and most permanent good done to men.

Soul winning, then, is a work *par excellence*, all other must take a back seat. It therefore calls for the best of our time, talent, and thought. To make a fortune, to build a city, to found an empire, equals not in the estimation of the Lord the work of soul winning.

The method to be adopted to succeed in this work is indicated by the word 'winneth.' 'He that *winneth* souls is wise.' The word in its connection is full of meaning. Not by physical force can the work be done. We cannot either frown or dragoon persons into the love of Jesus. We cannot drive them into an obedience of the faith. We are not to use the lash, but we are to *win* souls. If we are to lay hold of the heart, to gain the affections, we must use the *persuasive* power of the Gospel.

We shall do well to copy the example of the Lord Jesus. He sets us the perfect model in the method of winning souls. The way in which He speaks of His Cross breathes persuasion. 'I, if I be lifted up, will *draw* all men to me.'

He expected that His Cross would *charm* men, that it would eclipse the heroism of the world, and strip it of its glamour and attractiveness. Where there is the same tender winning spirit, then plain straight talks can be had with those whom we are surrounded, and they will not be resented to the same extent as they would be if mingled with wrath and denunciation.

In prosecuting this important work, *character* is a principle factor. The Revised Version renders the motto 'He that is *wise* winneth souls.' It takes a wise man to do the work. He who would be a winner of souls must so live before the world as to attract it to the Saviour. He must 'walk in wisdom towards them that are without.' Christians are placed in the world in order to attract the ungodly to Christ. Jesus said 'Ye are the light of the world, so let your light shine that ye may be seen of men.' The Christian man must not live so as to give the lie to his profession. He must act out his belief; the life and the lip must be in happy and honest harmony; and both in complete and continuous submission to the law of the Lord.

Soul winning cannot be affected by compromise. 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.' To enter into unholy alliances with the world to compromise with sectarianism, for the sake of being accounted generous and large-hearted, means weakness to all efforts of soul winning. Favour or popularity gained by connivance with wrong — in business, in politics, in social circles, is treason to the Lord.

He who walks closest to Christ will have the most power to win souls. It is when Christ is seen incarnated in our conduct that we have power with God and with men.

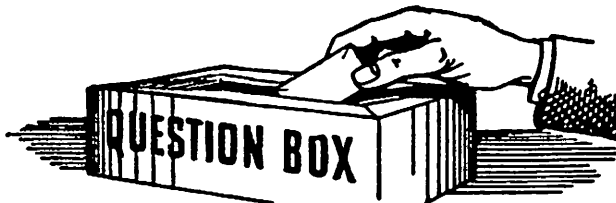
They that are wise in their walk and wise in their work may turn many to righteousness. They that are wise to win souls shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.

Let all the members of the brotherhood rise up to the dignity and responsibility of soul winners. Let all the Gospel discourses be studied and delivered with that one end in view. Let all Sunday School teachers think over their lessons, and face their classes with the thought of soul winning dominating them, they toil amongst the grandest soil that the Church has got to cultivate — the children's hearts. Let all who profess and call themselves Christians equip themselves for this important work.

We are not working alone in this matter. Our leader said. 'All power is given unto me.' That power is for our use. We do not live beneath wintry sky, we live beneath a living heaven. Shall we take the motto with us down through the year, and with the help of Him who had said 'All souls are mine,' seek to win the souls of our relatives, friends and neighbours to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

BARTLEY ELLIS

(Extract from article written in 1900)



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Could you please explain what Paul means in Col. 2:14 when he says, “Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us”

It is difficult to understand the import of Paul's letter to Colossae without some background knowledge of the situation as it was when the letter was written. You will no doubt remember that when Paul was at Miletus he called the elders of the church at Ephesus to him and warned them about the 'grievous wolves' which would enter

into the Church, not sparing the flock (See Acts 20:17-31). He had done battle with the Judaizing teachers, and now he has to ward off the onslaught of others who were trying to destroy the Church.

Paul was acutely aware of the peril to the Gospel by Gnosticism. The Docetic Gnostics held that Jesus did not have a real body, but a phantom one. They could not accept the concept of absolute purity being encapsulated in an impure body of flesh. In v8 of Col. 2, he warned against this deceitful Philosophy, **"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."** In Phil. 2:5-11 he had set out in clear terms both the humanity and the deity of Jesus, and in a letter to Colossae he does so again, **"For in him (Jesus) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"** (v9). Isn't it surprising that even today there are many who try to deny the deity of Jesus Christ; they say He was just a 'good man' and nothing more. The message of the N.T., however, is clear and unambiguous, as we shall see when we look at the evidence. Jesus was Son of Man and Son of God.

PAUL'S ANSWER TO GNOSTICISM

Paul's answer is that Jesus is supreme, and that His Headship and authority far exceed 'all principalities and powers', and that all who accept Him as Saviour are 'complete' in Him. This word 'complete' is the Greek word **PLEROO**, and literally means 'to be made full; the teaching of Paul seems to be that we can only be 'made full' in Christ, and that only because of His fulness. Remember that Paul asserts that the fulness of the Godhead is embodied in Christ, and this at once tells us why He has the authority and power to speak and act as He does. We ought to look a little more closely at this because it impinges very much on the answer to the question.

In Col. 1:17-19 Paul is quite definite about the status of Christ, **"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell"**. This statement at once dispels the notion that Jesus usurped authority and power from God, and that of His own volition He grasped at things which were not His by right and gift. It is only when we begin to know Christ as the Saviour, with power to save, that we can apprehend God in the completeness of His Being, as Paul explains in Eph. 3:19, **"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"** Well might John say at the beginning of his Gospel record, **"And of his fulness (Christ's) have all we received, and grace for grace"** (John 1:16).

In Col. 2:12 we can see the complete unity and co-ordination of purpose toward those who acknowledge Jesus as Saviour and are obedient to His directives regarding salvation. The true circumcision, as Paul explains in v11, is that demonstrated by Christ, i.e., the circumcision of the heart. When this happens, there is a complete surrender by the individual to the Lord, which in effect says, "Lord, what will you have me to do"? It is this surrender which puts to death the 'old man' of sin in the rites of believer Baptism, and brings to glorious reality the God-life of the 'new creation in Christ Jesus', as v12 says **"Buried with him (Christ) in baptism, wherein also are ye risen with him through the operation (working) of God, who hath raised him (Christ) from the dead"**. Let no one say that immersion into Christ in baptism is merely a 'sign'! Therefore understanding the united power of God and His Christ, we can have full assurance of the reality of what follows, namely,

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

According to Paul the situation, apart from Christ, is that every person is dead because of sin, and therefore alienated from God. It is sin which alienates, so consequently the sin needs to be forgiven so that cleansing can take place. Fundamentally,

because of the sin of Adam, mankind has become flawed; that flaw needs to be removed, and according to the teaching of the Bible this can only be done by accepting Christ as Saviour and relying on the efficacy of the sacrifice which He made on our behalf on the Cross at Calvary. WE have to become 'dead to sin' and we do this by being 'buried with Him in Baptism'; it is then that we meet, metaphorically, the blood which He shed for us on the Cross, and so we are **cleansed in the blood of the sacrificial 'Lamb'**". This should not be looked upon as a 'mechanical' formula for salvation by merely conforming to the 'letter' of what is required of a person for salvation; it must be preceded by true repentance from the heart with a corresponding willingness and intention to go on 'confessing Christ' all through one's life; I am fully persuaded that without this, the overt act of being immersed in water is meaningless. I believe we are now in a better position to appreciate what Paul means in Col. 2:14.

COMPLETE ERASURE

Samuel Bagster in his Englishman's Greek N.T. renders this verse, "**having blotted out the handwriting in the decrees against us, which were adverse to us, also it he has taken out of the midst, having nailed it to the cross**". To 'blot out' means to wipe out or wash out completely. The idea behind the words is quite interesting.

Some ancient manuscripts were rubbed or scraped and written over again; these were called 'palimpsests'. Hence, the original writing was 'blotted out' and some thing new took its place. The word 'handwriting' is the Greek word CHEIROGRAPHOS (CHEIR, hand; GRAPHO, writing), and this word is rendered 'bond' in Col. 2;14; so what we have is, "**Having blotted out the bond in the decrees against us**". This 'bond' or 'debt' had to be paid, and the responsibility devolved on the person(s) who accepted the bond; Paul gives a clear explanation of this in Philemon 18, 19; "**If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it**". Paul accepted the bond or debt relative to Onesimus. The legality of the bond was not in question; it had to be met.

Now it is quite evident that so far as the Jews were concerned 'the bond in decrees' was the Mosaic Law; it was 'against' them because they had accepted it. Exodus 24:3 says, "**And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgements; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do**". Therefore, the 'bond in Decrees' was against them. That this bond (the Mosaic Law) was taken away by Jesus is made clear by Paul in Eph. 2:15, "**Having abolished in his flesh (by His sacrifice on the Cross) the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances**".

You will note, however, that Paul says, "**the bond in decrees against us, and this is evidently referring to Gentiles also**. It is obvious that the Gentiles did not come under the Mosaic Law, but Paul explains that they gave moral assent to God's law written in their hearts (See Rom. 2:14-16); so that was against them. Therefore, he can say in the Ephesian letter that the sacrifice of Jesus was "**to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby**" (Eph. 2:15,16). So in obedience to the Gospel, both Jews and Gentiles can come into the Church, and can constitute the New Israel of God. Jesus took the bond which was against us, which should have been met by us; He took it 'out of the midst' and nailed it to the Cross: it was as if He had written across it, "**PAID IN FULL BY ME**". Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Never be ashamed that you belong to such a God and Christ.

And don't forget. Paul says that the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross 'spoiled' (stripped off) the principalities and powers; He made a show of them; He triumphed over them. The powers of Satan and darkness were trampled under foot by the power of God and His Christ. It was done 'openly' so that all might see. You, perhaps, who read this and have not bowed the knee to Christ, "**Do you see it**"? If you do, then

you ought not to hesitate to accept the victorious Christ as **your** Saviour.

Well, dear questioner, I hope my explanation has helped you a little; it's done me good, anyway.

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

THE DENOMINATIONS

9.—THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

The Society of Friends originated with the preaching of George Fox (1624-91), but some of the things he advocated go back into the sixteenth century, especially his doctrine of 'the inner light'. Calvin was acquainted with groups of people who held the same doctrine. Fox began his work in a troubled period and a period when the spiritual life of most Church-going folk was at a low ebb. No doubt, in his early preachings he was violently iconoclastic, denouncing all Parish Churches as 'steeple houses'. His teaching was based upon the mystical doctrine of 'the inner light', which according to some interpretations is adequate apart from the Scriptures altogether. It is doubtful, however, whether this was Fox's intention, for he himself undoubtedly drew many of his emphases from the New Testament, and closely associated the 'inner light' with the Spirit of Christ. It is much more in accordance with facts that his intention was, first to draw men away from the 'dead letter' of Scripture, and, secondly, to react against prevailing doctrine of the total depravity of man by asserting that in every man there was the Divine spark. This interpretation of the matter would be more in accord with Barclay's *Apology*, the seventeenth century theological defence of Quakerism.

Characteristics.

It remains a fact, however, that whilst Quakerism has in the main, throughout its history, been soundly Christian, there have been and are Quakers who sit very loosely to the Christian tradition. In America, but not in this country, this difference actually led to a split in the ranks. The fact that Fox stuck closely to many New Testament insights is shown in the way in which certain attitudes came to be characteristic of the Quaker way of life. Such were the refusal to take the oath, the refusal to bear arms, insistence on the simple life which in early days was carried to the extreme of peculiarities of dress, the refusal to do deference to dignitaries, integrity in business, and plain speech. Quakerism has always been sure that life is more than creed, but not, I think, in the sense that creed (i.e. fundamental belief) does not matter for life. Early Quakers were reacting strongly against the current theological confessions demanded of those entering the Church. All through their history they have been famed for their high sense of duty, their integrity of character, especially in business transactions, their unostentatious industry, and their simple way of life.

Attitude to Sacraments

As Quakers dispensed with the creeds and confessions, so they dispensed with the Sacraments. This, I think, was largely conditioned by the circumstances of the time. Sacraments were mainly talismans, either carrying with them spiritual boons or political rights. Whilst deeper teaching was available, amongst the common run of people they were thought of in a definitely unspiritual way. Strangely enough, however, Quakers clung to Sunday observance, changing the pagan name Sunday to 'First Day' or 'Lord's Day', though they were anti-Sabbatarian and remained so except during a period of their history when overcome by the Evangelical Revival. In more recent times they have adopted the view that the whole of life is sacramental, and no one part of it must be singled out. Their objections to sacraments is not based, therefore, on the idea that the material can bear no spiritual significance, but rather on the fear that the sacramental principle, seen at a point of intensity in the actual rites of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, will not be carried through into the whole of life.

Polity

In the seventeenth century Quakerism suffered much persecution and as a consequence early spread to America, where it has grown much more rapidly than here. It also found a lodging place in Ireland, but scarcely any in Scotland. More recently it has found a lodgment in several European countries. It has generally made its appeal to people of culture and substance and, almost from the beginning, has been keen on education. Quaker boarding schools are some of the best in the country. It probably contains a larger proportion of professional men and women in its membership than any other Church. Friends are organised in 'Yearly Meetings' in countries or States, the two oldest being those of London and Dublin. America has twenty-eight such meetings. The executive of the London yearly meeting is known as the "Meeting for Sufferings", holding its sessions at Friends' House, Euston Road. Each area has a 'Monthly Meeting' which appoints Elders, and 'Monthly Meetings' are organised in 'Quarterly Meetings'. The polity is strictly speaking more presbyterian than congregational. Nowhere is there any distinction between clergy and laity. Application for membership must be made to the 'clerk' of a 'Monthly Meeting' and the test of fitness is general agreement with *The Friends' Book of Discipline*.

Worship and Life

Friends are famous for their interest in philanthropy and in social reform. There is no distinction between men and women so far as office and work is concerned, and for their size they probably have a larger number of men and women who have achieved great things than any other Church. In this country they number 21,222 (1961). Their way of worship differs from all others. In the early days certain ecstatic elements entered in, but these were soon brought under discipline. Their worship is characterised by quietness and often by complete silence. They assemble in silence and 'wait upon the Spirit'. No one directs the worship. One here and one there may be 'moved' to utterance in prayer or exhortation, but sometimes no one is so 'moved'. The worship ends by those who are considered leaders shaking hands. In strict Societies there is no hymn singing, but in many American Societies there is hymn singing and even paid Pastors. In the evening many Societies hold meetings not unlike Free Church services with hymn singing and with instrumental accompaniment in some. But this is not considered as the worship meeting of the Society itself. Under the influence of the late George Cadbury, friends in this country were brought in to the Evangelical Free Church Council, and both here and in America they share the work of the British Council of Churches and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ. In the last hundred years Missionary activity has been kept coupled with famine relief and other rescue work, and their Pacifism takes a practical turn in the work of the Friends' Ambulance Unit.

W. Robinson.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Feb. 7	Lev. 14:1-20	Matt. 8:1-20
Feb. 14	Jon. 1:	Matt. 8:18-34
Feb. 21	Hosea 6:	Matt. 9:1-17
Feb. 28	1 Kings 17:8-24	Matt. 9:18-34

A LEPER HEALED

We read of a number of lepers in the Bible including Naaman, military commander in chief of the Syrian army; Miriam, sister of Moses; and Uzziah (Azariah), a king of Judah. E. Master-

man has written: "No other disease reduces a human being for so many years to so hideous a wreck". Flavius Josephus once commented: "Lepers . . . treated as if they were, in effect, dead men". Albert Barnes pointed out: "No disease with which the human family has been afflicted has been more dreadful than that which is often mentioned in the Bible as the leprosy".

In Palestine in the time of Jesus, the leper was barred from Jerusalem and from all walled cities. In an open place it was illegal to greet a leper and, indeed,

no one could come nearer to a leper than four cubits. If the wind was blowing towards a person from a leper the leper had to stand at least one hundred cubits away. Another commentator wrote: "There never has been any disease which so separated a man from his fellow-men as leprosy did". The remarkable thing in all this is that "Jesus put forth his hand and touched him" (8:3). More remarkable was the fact that He healed him, thus showing the power of Jesus over physical disease.

The Saviour said to the cleansed man: "But go your way, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them" (8:4). Leviticus chapters 13 & 14 should be carefully read to appreciate and understand fully the Master's remark.

THE DEMONS

The word for demons in the Hebrew language is **SHEDIM**, which means "evil spirits". The Jews in Jesus' time believed they were everywhere — occupying the atmosphere and awaiting the moment to plague the unfaithful and forgetful. Demons were not myths, they were realities. Alexander Campbell was of the view that demons were the wicked, unclean spirits of dead men. Personally, I hold the view that they were fallen angels, who were cast out of heaven following the great war between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels (Revelations 12:7-9; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). It is important to note that the Greek word in 2 Peter 2:4, which is translated "cast them down to hell," is **tartaroo** and signifies to consign to Tartarus, the place where they are held in "everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

Obviously, God allowed a large number of these demons to be released from their "dungeon" at the time of Jesus and His apostles. This was done to show the sovereign power of Jesus over them. The demons dwelt in bodies and it is no surprise that in this incident (8:28-34) they did not wish to return to the "pits of darkness", but to enter the

herd of swine. They got their wish, but to no avail because, as a result of the transfer, "the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea and perished in the waters" (8:32).

The demons had cried out: "What have we to do with you. Jesus, Son of God? are you come down here to torment us before the time?" (8:29). They knew Him because they had been with Him in heaven. But their cry was one of knowledge, not faith.

MATTHEW

The call of Matthew himself is revealed in his gospel record (9:9). He was a **publicanus** or tax-gatherer for the Roman authorities. He must have been an educated man to hold down such a responsible job and I guess he could be classified as an ancient civil servant, Frederic W. Farrar has written: "He who came to seek and save the lost . . . could make, even out of a Jewish publican, the Apostle and the first Evangelist of a new and living Faith. His choice of Apostles was dictated by a spirit far different from that of a calculating policy or conventional prudence. He rejected the dignified Scribe (8:19); He chose the despised and hated tax-gatherer. It was the glorious unworldliness of a Divine insight and a perfect charity, and Matthew more than justified it by turning his knowledge of writing to a sacred use and becoming the earliest biographer of his Saviour and his Lord.

When Jesus said to Matthew: "Follow me!"; was it the first time this **publicanus** had met Him? Personally, I think not. As one commentator has put it: "No doubt Matthew had heard about this young Galilean, who came with a message breathtakingly new, who spoke with an authority the like of which no one had ever heard before, and who numbered amongst His friends men and women from whom the orthodox good people of the day shrank in loathing. No doubt Matthew had listened on the outskirts of the crowd and had felt his heart stir within him . . . So he found Jesus standing before him: he heard Jesus

issue His challenge; and Matthew accepted that challenge and rose up and followed Him". I thank God he did.

TWO BLIND MEN HEALED

I have a deep and abiding sympathy for those who are blind. As far as I am concerned, blindness is probably about one of the worst things that could happen to me because I read so much. I know a number of blind people and I am full of admiration for them all.

Most of us, of course, take vision for granted, but I have never done so, especially as I suffer from myopia (short-sightedness). My affliction has led me to study the human eye in great detail and its design is clear proof of the existence of a Master Designer. Of course, in this imperfect world, things do go wrong from time to time and serious problems result.

These men believed absolutely that Jesus could restore their sight (9:28). They were rewarded for their faith. Although Jesus had instructed them otherwise, they could not contain themselves in spreading abroad what He had done for them (8:31). I often wonder how such people felt when they heard later that He had been crucified out-side Jerusalem as a common criminal. Surely they must have declared that it was the greatest act of injustice ever carried out.

JESUS' MINISTRY

Matthew well sums up Jesus' activity during His ministry. We read "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (9:35). The apostle Paul later said of Him: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves know . . ." (Acts 2:22). And again: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38).

What is staggering about Jesus' short ministry on earth is in the fact that only a fraction of it is revealed. The apostle John wrote: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they could be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25). It is a statement worthy of much meditation.

Ian S. Davidson.
Motherwell.

HELL WILL BE NO JOKE

A thoughtless young man was recently overheard saying that he would not mind going to hell, because he would be allowed to commit as many sins as he liked there. This led the writer to ponder whether this was possible, and now that Brother Marsden has written about the subject, here are a few comments.

It would not seem possible to commit murder in hell, for the people there have died already and their spirits are now immortal. It would also seem unlikely that there is anything to steal. Furthermore, since we are told that those in heaven will be like angels, and will not marry or be given in marriage, it may follow that those in hell will not have bodies like they had on earth, and will not be able to commit adultery, rape, and so on. There does not seem much possibility of getting drunk either. There will be no comfort for those who "get a kick" out of doing these things.

The remaining sins are such things as hatred, blasphemy, lying, envy, which could well still exist there. One of the worst things will be the complete lack of hope of ever getting away from this dreadful situation. Therefore let everyone think seriously about it and not go along with the jokes which the worldly are always making on this subject.

(Miss) R. M. Payne.

NEW PHONE NUMBERS

Please note the following new 'phone numbers:-

Bro. Peter Wilson (Treas.) 0324 85124

Sis Grace Sneddon (Sec) 0324 851587

Sis Jean Neilson 0324 851282

Grace Sneddon (Sec.).

COMING EVENTS

Tranent Social to be held (DV)
on Saturday, 13th March, 1993
in Lochside Centre, Tranent
at 4.00 p.m.

Please make a note of the date
Speakers to be announced later
(This is Tranent Church's
100 years anniversary.)

Kirkcaldy: Annual Social is scheduled
for 17th April, 1993, God willing

GOD HATH SPOKEN

Since the advent of Christ the transforming reformations of life have been due to the fact that not once has that light been wholly lost. It may be starved by sin, blacked by intolerance, smothered by nationalism, dimmed by ignorance; it may be shadowed by disloyalty, but somewhere it continues to shine.

There is no other God-revealed leader for whom we need wait; no other God-inspired prophet for whom we need yearn; no other incarnation for which history is preparing the fulness of time. There is no other conqueror of injustice and tyranny for whose coming men shall strain their eyes; no other Saviour to save us from our sins and heal the aching disabilities of our lives.

Such faith is not unfounded and eccentric. It has enlisted the noblest names, inspired the holiest of deeds, informed the richest minds that have ever glorified our humanity. That faith is attained by an unbroken and unbreakable chain of evidence from the manger-cradle of the Son of God, and is anchored in the only secure foundations on which our modern civilisation rests.

GHANA APPEAL

As we begin yet another year may I thank everyone who has participated in the Ghana Appeal to date. £35,569.25p has been collected to date (7th December, 1992).

In 1993 as a result of the growth of the church in Ghana we intend to make a few changes in how the Appeal funds are distributed. A Committee in Ghana is in the process of being set up to distribute Appeal funds. Until now requests for aid have come to us and we have written to verify requests, then send the amount requested. As you can imagine we lose weeks from request until the Brethren receive the money. In future requests will go to the Committee who can quickly verify and distribute the funds.

Recently three 10kg. parcels of clothes, shoes and glasses were sent to Ghana. Today from the funds I have ordered 200 sets of Bible Correspondence Courses and twenty Concordances to be sent directly to Ghana for distribution.

If any congregation has old Hymn books not being used, there are a few congregations who will happily use them in Ghana.

In 1993 we hope to complete some of the Meeting places which are only partly built. Please continue to support this work. Contributions should be made payable to "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal" and sent to . . .

13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife.

KY12 0DU. Tel. 0383 728624

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read."

Mark Twain.

As a book the Bible stands alone and supreme: simple in its profundity and profound in its simplicity.

God wrote to be understood.

Jesus bears witness to the scriptures: and the scriptures most certainly bear witness to Jesus.

THE TWO COVENANTS CONTRASTED

Old Covenant

Included one nation (Eph. 2:12).
 Dedicated by blood of animals (Heb. 9:19).
 A law in the flesh (Gen. 17:13).
 A priesthood of men (Heb. 7:11).
 Sacrifices often offered (Heb. 10:11).
 Circumcision in the flesh (Eph. 2:11).
 Circumcision a seal (Rom. 4:11).
 Sins remembered yearly (Heb. 10:3).
 Not perfect (Heb. 8:8).
 Could not give inheritance (Gal. 3:18).
 Ministration of death (2 Cor. 3:7).
 Yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1).
 Written on table of stone (2 Cor. 3:6).
 Purged the flesh (Heb. 9:13).
 The letter that killeth (2 Cor. 3:6).

New Covenant

Includes all nations (Mark 16:15).
 Dedicated by blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:19).
 A law in the mind and heart (Heb. 8:10).
 The priesthood of Christ (Heb. 7:28; 8:10).
 Christ offered once for all (Heb. 9:28).
 Circumcision in the heart (Rom. 2:19).
 Circumcision without hands (Col. 2:11).
 Holy Spirit seals (Eph. 1:11, 13).
 No more remembrance of sins (Heb. 10:17).
 Perfect law (Jas. 1:25).
 Able to give inheritance (Acts 20:32).
 Law of Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2).
 Liberty-made free (Gal. 5:1).
 On the heart (Heb. 8:10).
 Purged the conscience (Heb. 9:14).
 The Spirit that gives life (2 Cor. 3:6).

THE PALM TREE

The scripture says "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." Let us see what this comparison means. "The palm grows not in the depths of the forest or in fertile loam, but in the desert. Its verdure often springs apparently from the scorching dust. It is a friendly lighthouse, guiding the traveller to the spot where water is to be found." The tree is remarkable for its beauty, its erect aspiring growth, its leafy canopy, its waving plumes, the emblem of praise in all ages. Its very foliage is the symbol of joy and exultation. It never fades and the dust never settles upon it. It was, therefore, twisted into the booths of the feasts of the tabernacles, was borne aloft by the multitude that accompanied the Messiah to Jerusalem, and it is represented as in the hands of the redeemed in heaven. For usefulness, the tree is unrivaled. Gibbon says that the natives of Syria speak of 360 uses to which the palm is applied. Its shade refreshes the traveller. Its fruit restores his strength. When his soul fails for thirst, it announces water. Its stones are ground for his camel. Its leaves are made into couches, its boughs into fences and walls, and its fibres into ropes or rigging. Its best fruit, moreover, is borne in old age; the finest dates being often gathered when the tree has reached a hundred years. It sends too from the same root, a large number of suckers, which in time, form a forest by their own growth. What an emblem of the righteous in the desert of a guilty world.

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