

# *The* **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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## **THE THREE 'WITNESSES'**

THERE still seems to be a fair number of young Mormon missionaries in the locality and indeed there seems to be a general campaign throughout the whole of Britain geared to extending the numbers of the Mormon Church. Many of us here in East Lothian have been having conversations with them and asking questions. A good question to put to Mormons concerns the incredible circumstances which surround the three main witnesses to the Book of Mormon and whose names appear, as such, on the Book. All three 'Witnesses' subsequently left the Mormon Church and I find that it is a good question to put to Mormon missionaries, i.e. "Why should I join the Mormon Church if the actual witnesses discarded it?"

The three witnesses to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon were Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery (who also acted as Smith's scribe) and David Whitmer. It is claimed that an angel showed them the plates in answer to their prayers. "He turned over the leaves one by one" wrote Smith, "so that we could see the engravings distinctly". (Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story). It surely must be a staggering surprise to anyone to find that all three witnesses subsequently left the Mormon Church.

It is said by the Mormon Church that although these men left the Mormon Church they have never renounced their testimony. Perhaps this is because no man likes to admit that he has been taken in by a plausible and well contrived fraud. It is however very surprising that all three should leave the church - one became a Methodist and a Methodist preacher officiated at his funeral. If it is true that these men seen and handled the plates and spoke to the angel when the angel showed them the plates, and therefore knew that the Book of Mormon was true, and Joseph Smith was the chosen prophet of God, how could they later turn aside from Joseph Smith and leave the Mormon Church. As a matter of fact Joseph Smith later had hard things to say about his witnesses. In a publication called 'Times and Seasons' edited by Joseph Smith Jr., Smith says that they (the witnesses) were engaged in circulating false and slanderous reports against the Latter Day Saints in order to drive them from their homes and gain the spoil. Who could believe people who were spreading false and slanderous reports? Such were the men who are the 'witnesses' to the Book of Mormon, for Oliver Cowdery was one of these men, and actually wrote the Book of Mormon. In the same publication (Times and Seasons) Cowdery is accused by Hiram Smith (a brother of Joseph Smith and witness to Book of Mormon) of robbing and plundering a helpless old man and lying about a note for 165 dollars. If Cowdery was innocent then Smith was lying - both were witnesses to Book of Mormon. Regarding the

witness Martin Harris, (in 'Elder's Journal', Aug. 1838, page 59) Joseph Smith Jr. describes one Granny Parrish who arose as a false prophetess and led away the gullible as her lackies. Amongst the gullible is listed Martin Harris, who was not only a witness to the Book of Mormon but put up the money to have it printed. Here, he and his fellow lackies are said to be involved in, "all kinds of abominations, swearing, lying, cheating, swindling, drinking, with every species of debauchery". Apart from the other things, it is true that a reliable witness is hardly likely to be given to lying, cheating and swindling. If Smith says that Harris was a gullible lacky in religious matters then that does not say much for him as a witness to the Book of Mormon.

These 'witnesses' were never allowed to state what they actually saw in their own words but were required only to sign a short statement already prepared for them to sign. Mr. Lund, a Mormon Church Historian says that the only actual signature on the original document was that of Oliver Cowdery. Everything purported to have been said by the witnesses was made known after they were dead. The only thing Oliver Cowdery left on record (and there is doubt even about that) is the alleged statement, "I behold with my eyes and handled with my hands the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. I also saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the Holy Interpreters, the Urim and Thummin" This statement he is alleged to have made at the Council Bluffs Conference in Iowa on 21/10/1848. Nothing was mentioned of his statement until Bishop Reuben Miller published it (Cowdery didn't publish it) in 1859 - Cowdery died in 1850. Indeed the 'witnesses' said nothing, apart from having 'signed' the 'testimony' and anything else is hearsay evidence given years after the witnesses were dead. However, after Oliver Cowdery left the Mormon Church he did publish a tract entitled "Defense in Rehearsal of My Grounds For Separating Myself From the Latter-Day Saints" published on March 3rd, 1839. He stated, "There was a time when I thought myself able to prove to the satisfaction of every man that the translator of the Book of Mormon was worthy of the title 'Prophet of the Lord'. He held over me a mysterious power, which even now I fail to fathom. But I fear I may have been deceived and especially so since Satan has led Joseph Smith astray. Then, when the church of Christ was set up by revelation, he was called the first elder, and I was called the second elder when he added the Priesthood, about which I am now beginning to doubt. I am beginning to doubt whether I had any priesthood. And what served to render affliction past expression, and it is bitterness to me, was that it was from his hand I received baptism by the direction of the angel of God: whose voice, as it has since struck me, did most mysteriously resemble the voice of elder Sidney Rigdon, who I am sure had part in the transactions of that day, and he appeared to be the angel of John the Baptist". Was Oliver Cowdery telling the truth? If he was not, then can his word be accepted at all? Is he acceptable as a reliable person? He says that the 'angel's' voice did most mysteriously resemble the voice of elder Sidney Rigdon, who, he was sure, had a hand in the transactions of that day. And this is from the man who was the only signatory to the prepared 'witnesses' statement. Oliver Cowdery never wrote anything in favour of the Mormon Church and never returned to it. He became, rather, a Methodist and a Methodist preacher officiated at his funeral.

God in an alleged revelation to Joseph Smith said (in Covenants & Commandments Chap. 5:11-14) of the three witnesses that, "I will give them power that they may view these things as they are. And to none else will I grant this power..." God said that to none else He would give this power but later, when the three witnesses gave Joseph Smith trouble Joseph Smith recruits eight more witnesses. After saying that He would grant this power to the three among this generation, did God change His mind? - had He made a mistake? In the same Chapter (5) verses 25-26 God commands Martin Harris as to what he has to say, as a witness. "He is to say no less and no more than that the things Joseph Smith has shown him are true of a surety for he has been shown them by the power of God and not man. But, if Martin Harris will not say this he will be regarded to have broken his covenant with God and will be condemned". One might gain the impression from all this that these men were being manipulated by Joseph Smith. The same Martin Harris is described (again allegedly by God in a revelation to Joseph Smith) as 'a wicked man' (Chap. 3:12). It should also be remembered that the visions and visitations to Joseph Smith from God and angels were unwitnessed and we have

only Joseph Smith's word for it, (until the three witnesses that is,) but whereas the revelations are said to have begun in 1819 the witnesses only became such in 1829 - ten years later, which is a long time. It is also of interest to know that in a publication known as "The Deseret News", published by the Mormons, in the issue of August 15th, 1942, page 6, the printer who made up the type-face of "The Witnesses' Testimony" spoke to Martin Harris at the time and this is what was said, "Martin Harris was in the office when I finished setting up the testimony of the three witnesses, Harris, Cowdery, and Whitmer. I said to him, "Martin, did you see those plates with your naked eyes?" Martin looked down for an instant and raised his eyes and said, "No, I saw them with the spiritual eye". Yet in the "Testimony of The Three Witnesses" which prefaces every Book of Mormon the witnesses clearly allege that they saw the plates (and we are meant to assume that they saw them with their physical, naked eye) and they say that they saw the engravings and that the angel came all the way from heaven to show them the plates. Then later, when challenged, Martin Harris admits that he did not see them with his physical and actual eye, but with the eye of faith.

David Whitmer who also later left the Mormon Church condemned polygamy, and condemned the concept of one man being over the church of Latter-Day Saints (as Joseph Smith was) condemned the way the church was organised with its hierarchy of officers, and condemned the change of name and contended that the scriptural name was 'church of Christ' not the name the present church has. Joseph Smith said that God had commanded polygamy (although he dropped it for political reasons after 'marrying' about 48 wives or so) - and so, if Joseph Smith said it came from God and David Whitmer condemned it - then David Whitmer didn't believe Joseph Smith.

Naturally, converts (or potential converts) to the Mormon church are not informed of these things. Unlike the Bible, the Book of Mormon needs witnesses, and it is upon the testimony of these three men that the Mormon Church depends, nay STANDS. And yet, after allegedly seeing the plates and handling them and chatting with God's angel, whom God had sent all the way from heaven, they found it possible to leave the Mormon Church. Oliver Cowdery who actually penned the Book of Mormon preferred the Methodist Church. Surely the actions of the three witnesses speak more loudly than their "Testimony". EDITOR

## THE FORGOTTEN PLEA

An appeal to the Association Churches (from the words of Thomas Campbell).

BY the end of this year the Lord's churches within the 'Association' will have to decide whether or not to join the United Reform Church. In making this decision may they realize they also have the alternative to return again to the teaching of the New Testament alone, and in so doing seek, "To promote the restoration of New Testament christianity". This was the claim made in the Title block of the early issues of the 'Christian Advocate'.

It is strange that a group which claims to a large extent to rest on the 'Declaration & Address' produced in 1809 by Thomas Campbell should have moved so far away from the ideals proposed by it. The plea made by Thomas Campbell is as relevant today as when it was made. For this reason I have extracted what I believe to be the principle concepts from the Address and also the Appendix. The latter unfortunately is omitted in the Associations edition of 1951 because of its "wearisome reading". It is hoped that there may be some of honest heart within the Association who will have the courage to return to its original plea. Brian. J. Boland.

### PART I CHRISTIAN AUTHORITY (Thomas Campbell)

"We propose to patronize nothing but the inculcation of the express word of God, either as to matter of faith or practice; but every one that has a Bible, and can read it, can read this for himself. Therefore, we have nothing new".

“Our desire, therefore, for ourselves and our brethren would be, that, rejecting human opinions and the inventions of men as of any authority, or as having any place in the Church of God, we might forever cease from further contentions about such things; returning to and holding fast by the original standard; taking the Divine word alone for our rule; the Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide, to lead us into all truth; and Christ alone, as exhibited in the word, for our salvation; that, by so doing, we may be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

“Tempting to inculcate anything of human authority, of private opinion or inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith, or worship, of the Christian Church or anything as matter of Christian faith or duty, for which there can not be expressly produced a “Thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent”.

“Dearly beloved brethren, why should we deem it a thing incredible that the Church of Christ, in this highly favoured country, should resume that original unity, peace, and purity which belong to its constitution, and constitute its glory? Or, is there anything that can be justly deemed necessary for this desirable purpose, both to conform to the model and adopt the practice of the primitive Church, expressly exhibited in the New Testament? Whatever alterations this might produce in any or in all of the Churches, should, we think, neither be deemed inadmissible nor ineligible. Surely such alteration would be every way for the better, and not for the worse, unless we should suppose the divinely inspired role to be faulty, or defective. Were we, then, in our Church constitution and managements, to exhibit a complete conformity to the apostolic Church, would we not be, in that respect, as perfect as Christ intended we should be? And should not this suffice us?”

“Who would not willingly conform to the original pattern laid down in the New Testament, for this happy purpose? Our dear brethren of all denominations will please to consider that we have our educational prejudices and particular customs to struggle against as well as they. But this we do sincerely declare, that there is nothing we have hitherto received as matter of faith or practice which is not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, either in express terms or approved precedent, that we would not heartily relinquish, that so we might return to the original constitutional unity of the Christian Church; and, in this happy unity, enjoy full communion with all our brethren, in peace and charity.”

“To cease from all such things by simply returning to the original standard of Christianity, the profession and practice of the primitive Church, as expressly exhibited upon the sacred page of New Testament scripture, is the only possible way that we can perceive to get rid of those evils. And we humbly think that a uniform agreement in that for the preservation of charity would be infinitely preferable to our contentions and divisions; nay, that such a uniformity is the very thing that the Lord requires if the New Testament be a perfect model, a sufficient formula for the worship, discipline, and government of the Christian Church. Let us do as we are there expressly told they did, say as they said; that is, profess and practice as therein expressly enjoined by precept and precedent, in every possible instance, after their approved example; and in so doing we shall realize and exhibit all that unity and uniformity that the primitive Church possessed, or that the law of Christ requires”.

We understand it as extending to all prohibitions, as well as to all requirements, “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar”. We dare, therefore neither do nor receive anything as of Divine obligation for which there cannot be expressly produced a “Thus saith the Lord”, either in express terms or by approved precedent. As for our part, we dare no longer give our assent to such proceedings; we dare no longer concur in expressly asserting or declaring anything in the name of the Lord, that he has not expressly declared in his holy word. And until such time as Christians came to see the evil of doing otherwise, we see no rational ground to hope that there can be either unity, peace, purity, or prosperity, in the church of God. Convinced of the truth of this, we would humbly desire to be instrumental in pointing out to our fellow-christians the evils of such conduct.

First, to determine expressly, in the name of the Lord, when the Lord has not expressly determined, appears to us a very great evil. (See Deut. 18:20) "The prophet that shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commended him to speak, even that prophet shall die". The apostle Paul, no doubt, well aware of this cautiously distinguishes between his own judgment and the express injunctions of the Lord. (See 1 Cor. 7:25 and 40). Though, at the same time, it appears that he was as well convinced of the truth and propriety of his declarations, and of the concurrence of the Holy Spirit with his judgment, as any of our modern determiners may be, for "I think", said he, "that I have the Spirit of God"; and we doubt much, if the best of them could honestly say more than this; yet we see that, with all this, he would not bind the Church with his conclusions; and, for this very reason, as he expressly tells us, because, as to the matter on hand, he had no commandment of the Lord. He spoke by permission, and not by commandment, as one that had obtained mercy to be faithful, and therefore would not forge his Master's name by affixing it to his own conclusions, saying, "the Lord saith, when the Lord had not spoken".

TO BE CONTINUED

## ASK

"Open to us Thy Word,  
Thy precious thoughts reveal,  
Thy purposes and ways explain,  
And teach us all Thy will".

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" Ephesians 3:20.

**ASK ..... WHAT DO I ASK? ..... DO I ASK FOR POSSESSIONS?**

For our meditation this month we ask your attention to the parable of a rich farmer, who was: **RICH FOR HIMSELF – BUT – NOT RICH TOWARD GOD.**

"And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" Luke 12:13-20.

We have in this parable the picture of a successful farmer, one who no doubt had worked very hard, and perhaps long hours, and as a result the ground "brought forth plentifully". Unfortunately he left out God, listen to him, "my fruits", "my barns", "my goods", "my soul". No mention of God by him, as he sums up the situation. Was it not God who had said:—"Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so". Genesis 1:11 Evidently he did not stop to give God thanks for the rain that helped his harvest, it may have helped him to read Leviticus Chapter 26:3,4. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit." He also forgot the effect of the sun had on the bumper harvest:— Deuteronomy 33:14 "And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon". Would it be true to say that only a knave or a

fool, would think that possessions brought life, so the Lord Jesus gives us this truth: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth". Time and time again, we hear of men who have an abundance of possessions, but who do not possess the life the Lord Jesus talks about.

Campbell Morgan dealing with the term used for the word life said:— "Now the arresting fact is that uniformly in the New Testament, when life is spoken of on its highest level, as eternal life, the term used is not bios, but zoe. Zoe, therefore, is essential life, life in itself, with all its mystery and its marvel, its possibility, and its power. So here our Lord employed that word, and declared that a man's life, his essential life, does not exist in things possessed". Campbell Morgan further said:— "Life does not consist in things, whatever their abundance may be".

The Apostle Paul said:— "For to me to live is Christ" Philipians 1:21.

Jesus said:— "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" John 10:10. How often we are concerned about laying up for ourselves treasures upon the earth let us not forget the advice of the Lord Jesus when he said:— "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" Matthew 6:20,21;

#### ASK ... WHAT DO I ASK? ..... DO I ASK FOR POSSESSIONS?

The teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ is that it is possible that a man can have possessions without having life, and that a man can have life without the abundance of possessions. How often have we received the lesson the Lord wanted to teach us by our children or someone other than our own. How many times have you seen your child, perhaps particularly at Christmas time, leaving the expensive presents and playing with something that has cost next to nothing.

Many years ago, I travelled for a certain Grocery firm, the branch shop was in Chorley, Lancashire. My job was to visit the homes of customers for orders. One day I went into the home of what I thought a very rich lady. Whilst I waited for the lady to give me the order, I started a conversation with her child aged about four years old. He had in his hand what looked like a rather dirty little doll. To pass on the time, I talked to him about the doll, and the conversation went something like this.

"I would like that dolly!"

"No" the child replied, "that's my dolly!"

"Well, it doesn't look worth very much, do give it to me."

"No", he again replied, it's my dolly".

So I thought I would try the boy just once more, and said:

"Well do give it to me, I would like it very much!"

The little chaps patience was by this time exhausted, and with a look that told me not to ask anymore, said very firmly, "No, its my dolly", and drew it to his breast, and said, "but wait a moment I'll bring you one". And before I could say "Jack-Robinson", as the saying goes, the boy was back, bringing a much more expensive doll than he had in his hand, with the words, "there you have that one". The lesson of course is a simple one, but a profound one. The price of the doll to the boy, was not of any importance at all, and that child taught me, that a child's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

I suppose it would be true to say that many of us place too much importance on 'things', 'possessions', 'treasures', 'riches'. Of course it is nice to have a house with all the things that help to make life easier, nice to have a successful business, and a car, and a telephone. But these "things", do not bring life. These things may be necessary, but there are others far more important.

#### ASK WHAT DO I ASK? ..... DO I ASK FOR "THESE THINGS".

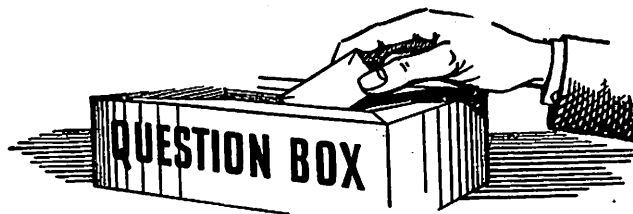
Shall we quote at length from the second letter of Peter Chapter verses 3-15 and note the "these things", that are of supreme importance (RSV) "His divine power has granted to us ALL THINGS that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to

his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through THESE you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature. For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if THESE THINGS are yours and abound they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks THESE THINGS is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore I intend always to remind you of THESE THINGS, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to arouse you by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. And I will see to it that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall THESE THINGS". The Apostle Peter wrote those words for the children of God:—"To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" 2 Peter 1:1 RSV. "THESE THINGS", "faith", "Virtue", "knowledge", "self-control", "Steadfastness", "godliness", "brotherly affection", "Love", are the things that are of utmost importance, and are available for the deepening of our spiritual life.

Would it be out of context if we draw your attention to the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you".

May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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I AM "aware that the qualifications for Elders are equally important, but the one I am most interested in is the one relating to marriage, and my question is, 'Does an Elder have to be a married man according to the Word?'"

THE qualifications for church government have always elicited differences of opinion; the arguments have been long and fierce concerning them. Some of the difficulties have been through sincere misunderstanding. In other cases people have come to the Word with preconceived ideas and they have tried to make the Word fit their ideas. Some have even seen the qualifications as so exacting that they are quite sure that no living person can achieve the high ideals set forth. The only thing that we can do is to approach the Word objectively and try to follow the guidelines which it sets out.

Society is changing rapidly. It is my considered opinion that in the immediate future the church will be presented with problems which may prove very difficult to eliminate. Marriage, re-marriage, separation, and divorce will, I believe, be among the most severe of those problems. Today the institution of marriage is under attack. The ramifications of this attack will be seen not only in church membership but also in church government. Hence we need to know as precisely as we can what the Word teaches regarding the problems which beset

us. So in this particular question we need to ask ourselves what the teaching is, and to explore the practical implications with which we shall be confronted.

#### The husband of one wife

The main teaching for the qualifications of elders and deacons is found in 1 Tim. 3:2-13. In both cases (elders and deacons) the scripture is quite explicit, 'the husband of one wife'. On the face of it, that seems to be perfectly straight-forward, but when we begin to examine some of the practical situations which could and do exist we begin to realise that this statement can have some complexity. Let us examine some of these situations in order to explain what is meant.

1 Suppose a man was appointed to be an elder and before very long his first wife died. He could practice digamy, but only in the Lord. (Digamy simply means the taking of a second wife, as distinct from bigamy which means having two wives at the same time). In the second and third centuries the idea developed that if the first wife of a husband died then the husband should not re-marry. But this was a later idea, and to read later ideas back into the New Testament is not a method of interpretation that could be recommended.

You can see the issues which are raised, though. When the first wife dies, the elder was the husband of one wife so long as she lived, but when she died he was no longer a husband in the technical sense but a widower. This raises the further question, 'Can a widower in that sense still remain an elder and fulfil the qualifications as laid down?

But some will ask, "If an elder re-marries in the Lord is such a one the husband of one wife or of two wives?" Some have the idea, and perhaps this was the origin of the ideas in the second and third centuries, that 'the husband of one wife' means the husband of a single wife, and that consequently re-marriage would be unscriptural. If we look at 1 Tim. 2:5 we read, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus". Now the phrase 'one God' means a single God and no other, but the word 'one' in 1 Tim. 3:2 is not the same word. The phrase 'one wife' is *MIAS GUNAIKOS* and has the literal meaning of one at a time.

2 It is true to say that a polygamist and bigamist would be excluded from church government under the qualification 'the husband of one wife'. In the early days of christianity polygamy was still practiced among some Jews, and so far as the Greeks were concerned the keeping of hetaerae, or women other than the lawful wife, was common. But certainly I would say that this practice would be condemned by the Scripture under consideration.

3 Some would say that re-marriage after divorce would disqualify a man from becoming or remaining an elder, especially divorce on any grounds other than fornication. There are some who would say that divorce on any grounds other than fornication would raise the question as to whether the particular brother or sister should remain in fellowship at all, but if this is so why does Paul have to find it necessary to insist on 'the husband of one wife' because a divorced man who re-married could have more than one wife living at the same time. It is the law of the Land which says otherwise, not the law of God. An interesting point that needs some thought.

4 If a man is to be 'the husband of one wife' then the first requirement surely is that he be a husband. The scripture does not indicate one who has been a husband, nor one who will be a husband, but one who is a husband. Therefore, the Scripture implies that an elder must be a married man, he must have only one wife; he must not be a polygamist or a bigamist; nor must he be married after divorce (this latter idea must be looked at in some detail after giving thought to the circumstances of each individual case of re-marriage. Furthermore, I do not extend this idea to church membership because I think that the apostle differentiates between eldership and ordinary church membership).

#### He who ruleth well

The further qualification 'One that ruleth well his own house' adds weight to the fact that an elder should be a married man with children. I am not here arguing the point as to how



well an elder rules his own household, each elder must make his mind up on that point and take the necessary action, but I am saying, as the Scripture says, that a married man with one wife and children who rules his household successfully should have the best chance of all of ruling the household of God.

There is a further case which I think we ought to consider. We may have the case of an elder who has ruled both his household and the church well, seen his children become believing children, and then late in life finds himself widowed, Should such a one be discharged from his office of elder? Speaking personally, I would say that such a situation would have to be left to the individual and the community of saints to which he belongs. It may very well be that he himself would want to relinquish his role as elder and assume an advisory role if and when needed. It seems that sometimes elders cling to office when mentally and physically they are no longer capable of discharging the responsibility effectively. Furthermore, they may no longer fulfil the qualifications.

If the development of the church is being fulfilled, then there should be no difficulty in finding men who are the husbands of one wife married and ruling the household and the church well, and fulfilling all the other qualifications.

(All questions please to Bro. Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.)

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

NOVEMBER 1977

6-Psalm 106:1-23	Romans 3:19-31
13-Psalm 32	Romans 4
20-Genesis 3:1-21	Romans 5
27-Genesis 2:1-17	Romans 6

### HOPE IN A HOPELESS SITUATION

THE ordinances of the Mosaic law proved impossible to keep, and only showed up the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom. 7:13). However proud the Jews might be of possessing God's own and specific instructions for a good life, they found them a heavy burden, and realised failure (Acts 15:10). However conscientious a Gentile might be in an effort to do right always according to his knowledge, what a dark and degraded society even civilisation had become (Eph. 4:18 & 19). While today civilised society has become used to and conscious of ideals born of the gospel, man still remains in the main condemned in his own sight and of course in God's. It remains true that all have sinned and come short (3:20). But the revelation of God's grace through Christ opens up a new way to everyone who believes. Man need not continue in the dark. This message of love brings results even on the material plane, and its acceptance and

application brings forgiveness and NEW LIFE, LIFE MORE ABUNDANT. Can a just God forgive sin? "Mercy glorieth against judgment" (James 2:13). There is a conflict between these two, so to speak. To maintain justice (righteousness) and yet to forgive sin it is essential that there should be no condoning of it. How well we know that "softness" in dealing with crime, encourages it. So in the infinite sphere of divine rule we have God in the person of His Son bearing the penalty of human sin. This tremendous exhibition of divine love and forbearance, impossible to measure, conveys the message of the fearful and destructive nature of sin and the unbounded love of God. There is no question at all of man deserving any consideration. It is entirely a matter of grace on God's part. Nothing we can do can earn or merit forgiveness, We accept through faith in Him what He has provided. The acceptance has to be real if we are to receive the blessing, and we do have the power to reject the offer. "By grace are ye saved through faith (Eph. 2:8).

### Abraham and David

Abraham is father of the Jewish race according to the flesh (and ours according to the spirit of course), and Jewish believers in particular would regard him with veneration and admiration as the friend of God. What was his position in relation to the law of Moses? This question may not interest us in the way it would interest the Jewish believers but Abraham's relation to the old covenant

illustrates the principle on which God forgives. Did he gain credit with God by his achievements? The Scripture says "Abraham believed God, and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). It was Abraham's complete trust in God which gave him justification in God's sight, and this was before he exercised that faith in offering up Isaac. That righteousness was "counted" to him shows he had not earned it by perfect obedience. His obedience - to mention two acts of faith - in leaving Ur, not knowing where he was going, and offering Isaac - was the result of his faith. David having sinned greatly before God, found comfort in forgiveness by God's grace, not by deserving it. The forgiveness, justification, or righteousness was not earned, it was given. Neither circumcision nor the law had been instituted to affect Abraham, and David living under both calls blessing upon the man to whom justification was imputed, not earned by obedience to the law. We read Psalm 51 and see that repentance preceded forgiveness and finally sacrifices were acceptable after forgiveness (see v.19). Here is where we must remember that behaviour according to faith followed it. Had Abraham refused to go out of Ur, or have refused to sacrifice his son, his faith would not have been genuine, or had David refused to acknowledge his sin. So it is in acceptance of the gospel message, unless it is followed by repentance and obedience in baptism and further by confessing the Saviour and walking the new life in Him, forgiveness cannot be claimed. The lives of both Abraham and David were stained with sin after their initial exercise of faith but it was sin for which they had no desire for nor wish to continue. Owing to human weakness we likewise have to struggle to maintain the new life in Christ, relying upon the divine grace for help in times of temptation.

### Amazing Grace

These words epitomise the gospel. We feel we cannot better the statement of the case by Paul in ch. 5, verses 6 to 8. We cannot conceive the greatness of the position held by Jesus in the heavenly regions where God reigns in supreme majesty, nor can we measure the joys of heavenly fellowship. The highest place that heaven affords is His by filial right" but He counted it not "a thing to be clung to" that equality with God (Phil. 2:8) but willingly emptied Himself of that glory and chose to be

Immanuel (God with us) in human form - not just to be with us but to bear, with our sinfulness and selfishness, and to bear the excruciatingly painful death upon the tree besides an immeasurable burden - the sins of the human race. "Delivered up for our offences and raised for our justification" in order that we might be justified just by putting all our trust in Him and living in peace and harmony with God Who abhors sin but loves the sinner. It is surely most wonderful. Shall we ever sufficiently appreciate this grace, and bring ourselves into complete submission to His will? Sometimes we allow some insult to sting us into violent evil thoughts against our brother sinners, while our Saviour was smitten and spat upon without resentment Who never sinned at all. Sometimes evil thoughts dominate our minds, and we say bitter things, or allow slander to be repeated. Truly it is written "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8). We must grieve the Holy Spirit at times, and when we seek forgiveness have that further promise of amazing grace "If we confess..." (1 John 1:9). May our consideration of the chapters we read this month bring home to us the question "Shall we continue in sin?" (6:1) and fill us with the longing never to grieve "Him we adore".

"And can it be that Christ in me doth condescend to dwell?

That He is mine the Lord divine, Jesus, Immanuel?

That his dear love so far above all other rises high,

That every part of my poor heart He deigns to occupy?

(Hymns for Churches of Christ No. 655.

Author G. P. M.)

R. B. SCOTT.

In Last months article, About The Readings, on page 106, second column, last line but one, insert "not" after "It can".

IF we work on marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal souls, if we imbue them with principles, with the just fear of the Creator and love of fellow men, we engrave on those tablets something that will brighten all eternity.

# NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Capetown:

Thomas. W. Hartle (Evangelist)  
101 Millborough, Upper Mill St.  
Gardens, Cape Town 8001.  
Rep. S.A.  
8/9/77

Dear Brethren in Christ,

This is just to advise you, that after a very lengthy period of time, and of deep heartfelt and prayerful consideration, have decided to relinquish my services as Full Time Evangelist and Secretary for the Church of Christ 32 Church St. Woodstock, Cape Republic S.A.

My reasons for having so done and decision taken is with a personal conviction and satisfaction that it shall be best for my future and as far as my health is concerned, and which also includes the membership of myself, wife and daughter.

What my plans are for the future I have not, and cannot decide immediately, but as has been our "family pattern over these many years of Christian service and experience shall leave it to the Lord to direct, guide and undertake for us, as a family accordingly at His own appointed time!" And we have proved this to be one of a living reality, to "trust a God who shall ever remain dependable, in having heard and answered our prayers (Eph. 3:19-21).

At this stage I would ask you to share in your prayers on our behalf as a family that we shall at a future time Lord willing, have cause to rejoice". With Christian greetings of love in the Saviour's precious name!

1 Cor. 15:58  
Psalm 33:12  
Genesis 31:49

Yours in Christ  
T W. HARTLE

P.S. Please note that all personal correspondence and bulletins for me to be kindly addressed to my above address. Thank You!

Manchester: I am sure the brethren will be as pleased as we are that Kenneth Eric Thompson the husband of our Sister Shaheen Thompson, decided to open his heart to Jesus and was baptised on Sunday the 4th September 1977.

We are grateful to brother and sister Lewis for preparing the baptistry and to the brethren at Stockport for the use of their building.

Ken will need our prayers because he is making a clean break from a way of life, accepted as normal by all his friends in his home town. He and Shaheen are relatively isolated from Churches of Christ and would be grateful for any moral support the brethren can give them.

They break bread at home. Anyone wishing to meet with them is advised to ring Shrewsbury (0743) 65636.

We thank God for Shaheen's persevering faith and for the kindly influence of brother and sister Raymond Lyons and their young friends which was largely instrumental in Ken making his decision to go all out for Christ.

Brother and sister Lyons together with three young christians have been spending their annual holiday, largely at their own expense, with some help from interested brethren, assisting the church in Stockport and at the same time running a 'Vacation Bible School' in our home. Some twenty or so children attended these sessions in our house, to sing choruses and hear Bible teaching.

We are now running a weekly Bible study mainly for young people, every Thursday evening. The church at Stockport more than ten years ago withdrew from the Association for fundamental reasons. They are now very small in number and mainly pensioners. They are in process of finalising the sale of their building to an "evangelical" group and most of them intend meeting with this group;

However, brother and sister Lewis have resolved to try and purchase an old Methodist Manse, when it comes on the market, to live and worship in. This would involve them selling their own house.

The vacation Bible School sessions at Stockport were attended by over thirty young people. Allan Ashurst, Manchester.

## CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

THE winter session begins again with this issue of the Scripture Standard. We shall be pleased to have from those who have come thus far in this study of the New Testament Church, their replies, and extend a warm welcome to anyone who may wish to start out on the search for the Church of Christ of New Testament days, to send for the question papers to: E.JESS, 34 Charles Street, Penicuik, Midlothian EH26 0HH.

## ACTS XIII 15-41.

1 'Ye that fear God' (verse 16). To whom did Paul address himself thus?

2 Give in your own words Paul's epitome of the history of the Jewish nation.

3 How did Paul set forth proof of the resurrection, to the Jews at Antioch?

4 Cite the quotations in vv. 33-35.

5 In verses 38-39 Paul outlines salvation and how it can be obtained. Describe in your own words these verses.

6 Where is the quotation in verse 41 found?

7 What was Paul's purpose for referring to this (vv. 40,41)?

Answers, which should be written on one side of the paper only, should be returned to:- E. JESS, Esq., 34 Charles Street, Penicuik, Midlothian, EH26 0HH.

## COMING EVENTS

Kentish Town: Anniversary Meetings on Saturday, October 8th, with Bro. L. Daniell 3 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. Tea between sessions  
A Cordial Invitation to ALL

Special Meetings with Bro. Steve Kearney from Dublin. Wednesday to Sunday, October 12 to 16th Weekdays 7.30 p.m. Sunday 6.30 p.m.

## A ROAD SWEEPER'S EXAMPLE.

George has been a road-sweeper for many years, and is known as a good worker. A few years ago his name was in the newspapers because of the way he spent his holidays; he had swept Times Square, New York, and Red Square, Moscow, just for the fun of it. It was also found out recently that he had regularly swept the courtyard of the block of flats where he lived, without pay and in his own time. As a Council official said, "George would sweep anything", We do not know whether he has any religious beliefs, but he has certainly grasped the Christian attitude to daily work. How does our record stand?

Miss. R. M. PAYNE, Reading, Berks.

Those who think it permissible to tell white lies soon grow colour-blind.

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