

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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WORLDLY PLEASURES

IN the 'August' issue of the 'S.S.' I mentioned that on the final week of the Wimbledon lawn tennis championships I hurried home to watch the halfhour coverage of these championships on the tea-time T.V. Since that time I have received a letter from an overseas congregation severely censuring me for doing such a thing and criticising my editorship and articles generally. I am sorry that my articles are not of a higher standard (I have certainly never claimed to be a literary genius) but I do my best and the columns of this magazine are ever open to those who want to write articles of a better standard, The critics of the article said that my mention of Wimbledon made it more like a sports commentary than an editorial of the 'S.S.' and quoted to me "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world....." (1 John 2:15-17) and "Friendship with world is enmity with God". If these good brethren had criticised me for having a T.V. in the house I could have understood their point and gone a good way in agreeing with it, but if it is alright to have a T.V. at all I don't see what harm there is in watching a tennis-match on it. This raises again the very vexed question of what we can do and can't do while we sojourn in this world below. Very often we are in two minds as to what is a legitimate past-time and what is not (if indeed it is at all right to be passing the time when there is so much to be done). As my wife would testify I rarely watch television and when I do I watch factual programmes, where I may learn something about the world and what is going on there, and I watch sporting programmes such as golfing championships, tennis matches, football and rugby matches, etc., as from time to time they occur. Is watching a tennis match friendship with the world? Is playing tennis friendship with the world? If it is not wrong to play a game of tennis is it wrong to watch a game of tennis being played? If it is not wrong to watch a game of tennis being played outside is it wrong to watch the game being played on television? Is it friendship with the world to play a round of golf? For that matter is it "Loving the world" to play a game of 'Monopoly' with the kids. Where do we stop? Indeed where do we start? What is it to 'love the world' and what are the worldly pleasures we hear folk talk so much about.

One soon discovers on embarking on a study of this subject that the term 'World' is used in the scriptures in such a variety of senses as to make it necessary to use great care in deciding what is meant in any particular instance. Sometimes the word means the literal orb on which we walk, and sometimes it means the people who tread on it and sometimes as a distinction between mortal existence and spiritual life. For instance when we read of "...the inhabitants of the world.." we know that the word 'world' means the literal globe and when we read that God will "judge the world" we know that the word 'world' is referring to the people on it. 'Young's' Greek Concordance refers to many other meanings of the word. The word 'worldly' occurs only twice in the Bible: in Titus 2:12 and Heb. 9:1. Being an adjective 'worldly' is used to describe the lusts mentioned in Titus 2:12 (i.e. "...denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we..")

and in Heb. 9:1 'worldly' describes part of God's tabernacle (i.e. "...ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary.."). In both these cases (the only two in the bible) the word 'worldly' means 'belonging to the world' (i.e. origin). Obviously in the context of the usage of the first example (Titus 2:12) something evil and unwholesome is being referred to by 'worldly lusts', but in the second case (Heb. 9:1) although the tabernacle was worldly it was not evil. Something can be 'worldly' without being necessarily wicked or nasty. The outer tabernacle was believed by the Jews to represent the world; and the Holy of Holies, heaven. The tabernacle may have had a 'worldly' sanctuary (in the sense that it was mundane and composed of worldly materials) but it was designed by God and ordained by God to fulfil a sacred purpose. Thus we have a 'worldly' sanctuary serving the will and purposes of God. By contrast when people talk of things being 'worldly' they usually infer that anything that is 'worldly' is godless and vile. I can think of many 'worldly' (belonging to the world) pleasures which I would not consider sinful.

To my puny way of thinking, pleasures can be divided up into two main groups – spiritual pleasures and worldly pleasures. Spiritual pleasures are few in number but are the truly lasting and substantial ones. They would include the praising of God and the obeying of God's will and all that is entailed in these two statements. Worldly pleasures would include any pleasure which was not truly a spiritual pleasure and which had its origin in the world. Some worldly pleasures are to be quite legitimately engaged in, some to be avoided and others to be shunned like a plague. Therefore when one considers the question of being guilty of 'loving the world' or friendship with the world' one must give due regard to the circumstances and decide for one's self exactly what is meant by these terms. Worldly pleasures have to do with the physical, material part of man rather than the spiritual (although with man being such a complex creature they sometimes overlap). Some harmless 'worldly' pleasures which come to my mind, by way of a few examples, would be a walk in the country: a favourite meal: a game of chess: a round of golf: fresh strawberries: to watch a summer sunrise: a day's troutfishing: gardening: a pride in one's job: a car-run up into the hills: a favourite piece of music: a trip to a foreign country; a letter from a long-lost friend; an evening walk along the beach, etc. The list is endless and all these pleasures have to do with the physical and material part of man and are pleasures derived from the world. Yet, I suggest they are not unlawful or sinful. I know that some would say that music is sinful, unless church music, but I have little time for such a view. Others would say (or almost say) that it is 'worldly' to enjoy oneself or have fun and that we should laugh seldom. The British have certainly little to laugh about but it surely would be difficult to subscribe to such a gloomy view. I never play tennis (I've played a few times at lunch breaks) but I certainly see nothing wrong with the pleasure gained from playing a game of tennis. I have no objection to watching others play tennis, even on the T.V. I agree that there is a real danger of 'loving the world' and of engaging in unlawful worldly pleasures but I do not think that healthy past-times such as tennis, cricket or golf (in themselves) are likely to lead us astray.

All that we have and are comes from God. I'm sure that it is God's intention that, as far as possible and within the limits set by Himself, we should enjoy our lives in this world. Paul says to Timothy that "God giveth us richly all things to enjoy" and although much of the time we go about with long faces there is probably no good reason why we should.

EDITOR.

AN EARLY CHURCH BUILDING

DURING the last century, the remains of the Roman town of Calleva were excavated at Silchester, and some foundations were uncovered which were thought to be those of a Christian church building. This is quite probable, because, at the time when it was built, around 400 A.D., church buildings were assuming a traditional shape, namely a semi-circular end wall, and a wing thrust out on either side. This building followed that pattern, although only in a very rudimentary manner, as it measured but 42 feet by 33 feet.

Christianity was brought to Britain while it was part of the Roman Empire, and there were mainly other early buildings, but as the habit was to keep rebuilding on the same site, it is

unlikely there are any more complete remains. In this case, the whole city was abandoned after the Romans left, and the foundations are several feet below a ploughed field.

When this building was constructed, the Gospel had already been spreading for over 350 years. There had already been departures from the truth, but not in everything, especially in what was probably a small and not very rich Christian community in a remote corner of the Roman Empire. Therefore there are some points of interest in these remains. One of these is that the floor can be seen to be of plain red tiles except for one square of a black and white mosaic pattern towards the front of the hall. Although no one can say for sure what it represented, it does seem to be exactly where one would expect the Lord's Table to stand.

The other feature is a separate piece of pavement, measuring about four feet square, a few paces outside the front of the building, with traces of a structure over it and a large soakaway pit behind it. Archaeologists in the past have tried to argue that this was a place where people stood to have water poured over them, but this simply will not fit the facts, so the latest guide-book suggested that it was intended for baptism by immersion. A space measuring about four feet would presumably be large enough, surrounded by a deep wall, if people were to kneel to be immersed, and evidently a considerable quantity of water needed to be disposed of afterwards. At other sites in Britain, large lead tanks have been found which were undoubtedly used for baptisms.

We can also learn from what was not found here. There was no representation of the cross or any other symbol in the mosaic, and none of the mediaeval paraphernalia of old churches. This was basically just a very plain hall near the market place of a small Roman town, and may not have been in use for much more than a hundred years, when the population began to retreat westwards before heathen invasions and it was abandoned. (Miss) R. M. Payne, Reading

ASK

Before Jehovah's awful throne
Ye nations bow with sacred joy;
Know that the Lord is God alone;
He can create, and He destroy.

"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

ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK
ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US.

ABLE TO DO ... ABLE TO DO ... ABLE TO DO ... ABLE TO DO ... ABLE TO DO ...
THE MIGHT AND MAJESTY OF GOD ALMIGHTY LOVE

Man — A marvel of Dust and Divinity

NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" Genesis 2:7.

Campbell Morgan wrote:- "That statement contains an account of the nature of man, from which no Biblical teaching ever departs. In the previous chapter we were told the fact of his creation, and that he was created in the image of God, and placed in dominion over the restored order. Here we are distinctly told how God did the work. Glance for a moment at the last sentence: "Man became a living soul". The Hebrew verb rendered "Became" (HAYAH) is always emphatic, and means came to be, or came into existence. The statement is not that man, already existing, was by some act of God changed into a living soul. The words "A living soul" describe man as God created him. The sentence would perhaps be clearer if written thus: Man became - a living soul. In his creation God employed dust, and the Breath of lives. Thus man is composed of the material and spiritual. The physical is not all of him; neither is he complete as a disembodied spirit. His body is of the dust. His spirit is the Breath of God. Nothing is told us here as to the condition of the dust when God breathed into it. What processes were included in the forming, are not declared. It is a simple statement as to this original material of the physical.

Let it be remembered that dust is also a Divine creation, and no particle of it is ever lost, though it may pass through many changes, as did the body of our Lord in resurrection”.

Isaac Selby wrote:- “The two-fold nature of man was made clear from the very day of creation: God makes his body out of the dust of the earth, but imparts to him a spirit from himself, thus man is linked by his body to the earth, and by his spirit to heaven. The Bible recognises both these entities, and insists that both shall be nourished, the one with earthly meat, and the other with heavenly manna”.

NOW UNTO HIM THAT ISABLE TO DO

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul”.

Please note, that the language of the Bible, is certainly not the language of Darwin, for Walter Crosthwaite wrote:- “On one page of Darwin’s book, of the particular edition which I have got here, you will find this: ‘We may infer’, ‘We don’t know’, ‘We may perhaps’, ‘We may perhaps infer’, ‘We may fairly conclude’, ‘Supposing such’, ‘We may infer’, ‘It might well happen’, ‘If then, we may infer’, and ‘We may perhaps believe’. You have got nine guesses on one page”. There are those who would destroy our faith in the Word of God, but let us take courage, let us echo the words of Talmage when he said:- “no, sir; you shall not rob me of a single word, of a single verse, of a single chapter, of a single book of my bible”.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” Genesis 1:1

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” Genesis 1:26

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he them” Genesis 1:27

NOW UNTO HIM THAT ISABLE TO DO

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” Psalm 8:4.

[him?” Job 7:17.

“What is man that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY?

Because man is His own creation... a marvel of dust and Divinity. “For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” Ephesians 2:10. “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee” Jeremiah 31:3. So our loving heavenly Father, knows all about our weaknesses, our failures, our sinfulness, yet, because we are His creation, He loves us with His best, and knows the heights His children can attain, knowing the life lived by His only begotten Son. If we are still in any doubt of our value to our Creator, consider the words of our Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 10:29-31 “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows”.

NOW UNTO HIM THAT ISABLE TO DO

We are created “in the image of God”, “we are his workmanship”, He said: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love”, we “are of more value than many sparrows,” We are reminded by that mighty man of God the Apostle Paul, that He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”.

GOD IS ABLE TO DO ... ASK ... ASK ... ASK ... ASK ... ASK ... ASK ... ASK ... ASK... ASK.. I ASK GOD IS ABLE TO DO YET AT TIMES I DO NOT RECEIVE. WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY?

What answer shall we give to those who are of an enquiring mind? in the light of the words given to us by the Lord Jesus. “Ask, and it shall be given you”. Matthew 7:7.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” Matthew 7:11.

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”. Matthew 21:22.

“For every one that asketh receiveth” Luke 11:10

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full”. John 16:23,24.

Surely the Apostle James will help us to understand our problem, and help us to understand the will of the Lord for us;— “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss” James 4:3

Look forward to our next month's theme (D.V.).

ASK WHAT DO I ASK.....? ASK WHAT DO I ASK.....?

May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN

TALKS ON THE TABERNACLE

No. 6. The High Priest

CONSIDER the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus' (Hebrews 3:1, R.V.). There are points of similarity, and of contrast, between the high priest of Israel and ours.

Both were Divinely appointed

'No man taketh honour unto himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron' (Hebrews 5:4). God, who said of Jesus 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee'; also said, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec' (Hebrews 5:5-6).

Both were one with the people

The high priest of Israel was 'taken from among men'. Our High Priest became one with men. He came in 'the likeness of sinful flesh'. 'It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God'. (Heb. 2:17).

Because He lived our life, faced the temptations we have to face; and proved strong where all others have proved weak, He is able to succour (come to the aid of) all who are tempted and tried. He 'can have compassion on the ignorant and erring', and is well fitted to appear before the face of God for us.

Israel's high priests were sinners, ours is sinless.

The high priests of Israel had 'to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's'. Our High Priest, 'is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners'. 'In him is no sin'. 'Which of you convicteth me of sin?' was His challenge to His critics and enemies. That challenge has never been taken up. Christians are condemned for their failings and inconsistencies, but the standard by which we are tested is the perfect life of Him we profess to follow.

They offered animal sacrifices, He offered Himself

They continually offered 'gifts and sacrifices' which could never take away sins. 'Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But this man [Jesus] after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God' (Hebrews 10:11-12). They stood because they had continual work to do; Jesus sat down, His sacrificial work completed. Contrasting the sacrifices, the inspired writer asks, 'For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:13,14). 'How much more?' Who can measure and answer that?

'But Christ, the heavenly Lamb, takes all our guilt away,
A sacrifice of nobler name, and richer blood than they'.

Israel had many high priests, we have One

'And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this man because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore, he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them' (Hebrews 7:23-25).

Under the Old Covenant an Israelite might go up to Jerusalem, get an interview with the high priest, and unburden his heart. The high priest is sympathetic and promises to do his best; but on going up to a later feast he finds that high priest has been removed by death, and one of

a different temperament with no sympathy with his particular place, stands in his stead. That can never happen under the New and Better Covenant, for our High Priest 'ever liveth', He is 'unchangeable', 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever'. So He is able to save to the uttermost 'completely', R.V. margin), to carry us through from start to finish for 'He ever liveth to make intercession for us'.

The high priest's clothing

In addition to the linen garments worn by the ordinary priest, the high priest had robes for glory and beauty. Of these we can only speak briefly here. There was the robe of the ephod, all of blue, with a golden bell and a pomegranate alternately upon the hem. These seem to suggest golden words and fruitful deeds. Our High Priest had golden speech, 'Never man spake like this man', was the testimony of even His enemies. As to fruitful deeds, Peter summoned these up in five short words, 'who went about doing good'. Aaron wore a breastplate, with twelve precious stones, bearing the names of the tribes of Israel, 'And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast plate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth into the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually' (Exodus 28:29). Jesus has the names of His people upon His heart. 'The Lord knoweth them that are his'; and we are exhorted to cast "all our care upon him, for he careth for us'. Those precious stones remind us of the Lord's words, through the prophet Malachi, 'They shall be thine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ['special treasure', margin], and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him'. Meanwhile, our High Priest, who has offered an all-sufficient sacrifice, is our one Mediator, and through Him we have access to the Father, and we are encouraged to approach and make our requests known.

'Boldly our heart and voice we raise,

His name, His blood, our plea;

Assured our prayers and songs of praise

Ascend by Him to Thee'.

W. CROSTHWAITE

DO YOU LOVE THE BIBLE

THIS question, is both a choice and a challenge to the individual. If you say you do love the Bible, if you have not read it, then you should, why? because it is the infallible, incomparable and authoritative Word of God the Creator and that's why David could affirm by saying "For ever O Lord thy word is settled in heaven" ... "The entrance of thy words giveth light" Psalm 119:89; Psalm 105:130.

Yes, David loved it and saw its value. This Bible which you should love, tells about the best friend mankind had, and shall ever have, also the most noblest and kindest, who extends to the individual and ALL of mankind hope and security (John 14:1; 10:10; 1:11-12).

This Bible you should love, tells us about the Truest man that ever trod this earth, who proved His love towards mankind, and whole-hearted concern, and His purpose, 'raising of the dead, giving sight to the blind, dumb to speak. the deaf to hear, BUT, who was ordained to be the "lamb of God without blemish, and without spot to atone for man's sins and hopeless, lost state (1 Peter 1:18-19; Hebrews 9:12). Thus, to read about the life of this noblest, truest, best friend, his love and unexhausted concern for mankind could become to you as an individual THE MOST BEAUTIFULLEST STORY ever told.

More than this, this Bible you should read, holds the solution to all of life's problems and remedy for sin (Matt. 11:28; Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 46:1). not too great to solve or to overcome, and that the Bible is the safest guide to the confused and lost individual, And the recommended guide to human conduct, which surpasses ALL other ...which are but false and insecure substitutes (Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 1:3; Phill. 2:13-15).

This Bible you should read gives true meaning, glow and joy. BUT above ALL it offers Victory through Christ. (Romans 8:31-37; Phill. 4:13; 1 John 5:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:57). This Bible also offers a perfect destiny and Glory to a better Life with God (Rev. 21:1-3; 1 Peter 1:3-5). This Bible you should read, gives to all, to you that which contains incomparable history

and literature, with a simple testimony of that man of Galilee, Jesus Christ the Son of God, who spent days and nights... ministering and teaching human kindness and to those who suffered under the strain of sin (Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:27).

And who Victoriously arose from the grave to give to us, YOU, a life that shall never end, yea, an eternal happiness to those who are humble and willing to accept the challenge to come to Him (Rev. 3:20; 2 Cor. 6:2) while time and opportunity affords itself. This challenge to the question "Do You Love the Bible?" comes both to the sinner and to the Christian, how? Well to the sinner unsaved, he must realize the importance of having sinned and falling short of the glory of God, then to repent (turn) to be willing to confess Christ as the son of God, and to be baptized "into Christ for the remission of sins" and rise to walk in newness of life" (Luke 13:3; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4) To the Christian, the Bible is worthwhile reading, IF YOU are willing to submit to its precepts and commands, being practical in the true sense of the word (2 Cor. 5:17; Phill 2:15-17; Matt. 5:13-16; Rom. 12:1-3; 2 Cor. 3:2).

In conclusion we ask the question Do You Love the Bible? in the true sense of the word, well then decide you are going to read it, if you have neglected in so doing... believe it, and start again and endeavour by the grace of God, to believe it, and practise what it says and demands for your own good (James 1:22-25). Yes, indeed the Bible is worthwhile reading and loving (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). You see if you say you love the Bible, you cannot love the Bible without loving its Author and Saviour, and without doing what it demands and says. (John 14:15; 1 John 2:4-5). DO YOU LOVE THE BIBLE? well make sure you decide to love it today, because this opportunity only passes by now, there is no certainty of the morrow (Job 14:1; Psalm 9:12; James 4:14; Hebrews 2:1-2).

IN THE CRY OF JEREMIAH "WHY WILL YE DIE (Jer. 27:43). T.W. Hartle Capetown

CHRISTIANS

"...And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). Over a period of time words change their meaning. In the days of the early Church, to be called a CHRISTIAN meant a real test of life and character, but today it is a simple matter, which means practically nothing.

We would do well to study the origin and try to discover the true meaning of this word CHRISTIAN, of which we find three references in the New Testament. The Jewish and Gentile converts were called disciples, brethren or saints, but some say that the name CHRISTIAN was a nickname given to the believers. in Antioch, by the unbelievers.

Two experienced disciples, Barnabas and Saul, were sent to Antioch and in the resulting revival many people believed and associated with the church. Those who heard the Message of Salvation, made a decision for Jesus Christ. left the unsaved and joined the disciples – the Church – were called CHRISTIANS The key words are DECISION and FELLOWSHIP.

The second reference to the word CHRISTIAN is found in Acts 26:28 – a familiar verse – 'Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a CHRISTIAN'. Paul had described to King Agrippa, his life before conversion – his experience on the road to Damascus and his subsequent life for Jesus Christ. He had related the facts of the gospel, that Christ should die and be the Risen Saviour; becoming to Jew and Gentile the One who could turn men from darkness to light – from the powers of Satan to God. This was Paul's personal testimony and Agrippa answered, 'Almost thou persuaded me to be a CHRISTIAN' Almost – to BE a CHRISTIAN one must be fully - FULLY persuaded and accept the facts as being God's way of changing lives. The key words - PERSUADED and ACCEPTED.

The third reference, (1 Peter 4:16) 'Yet if any man suffer as a CHRISTIAN' let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God on this behalf'. Peter said, 'Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: "suggesting that we separate ourselves from our past life and urging the people of God to live soberly and prayerfully in view of the last days. AS Christ's followers, we should not think it strange if we are called upon to suffer – even to be 'partakers of Christ's sufferings' – that when His glory shall be revealed, we may share His joy - HIS EXCEEDING JOY.

Peter continues, 'But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matter. YET IF ANY MAN SUFFER AS A CHRISTIAN LET HIM NOT BE ASHAMED: BUT LET HIM GLORIFY GOD ON THIS BEHALF'.

The KEY words:—

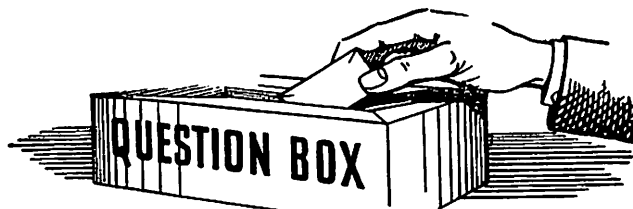
DECISION and FELLOWSHIP gave the people of Antioch the name CHRISTIAN.

PERSUADED and ACCEPTED could have made a king a CHRISTIAN.

SEPARATION and CONSECRATION are the words which Peter gave to us, in his later years.

These KEY WORDS represent the content of the word CHRISTIAN. A word which has lost much of it's meaning, but this can be restored in a reconsecrated church. Perhaps we can help in it's restoration by an example of devotion and faithful service.

(2 Corinthians 5:17) 'Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW. by the late F.R.W. KIMBERLEY.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"IF there were a referendum on capital punishment what action should the christian take. Has the statement contained in Gen. 9:6 ever been abrogated?"

BEFORE we consider the arguments which have raged around the subject of capital punishment I think we should consider what the christian should do relative to participation in a referendum. There are some christians who will have no part in the election of governments and the resolving of national issues by referenda. They argue that such things are 'of the world' and that a christian should not become entangled with them.

Personally, I have never seen the validity of such an argument. Christians belong to trades unions, works associations, trade associations, business organisations; they also save their money in banks, the assets of which, may be used for projects which most christians would not agree with. All these are 'of the world', so in order to be consistent there should be non-participation in these also. Obviously, if all christians took the view that they could not participate in a referendum then there would be no point in trying to answer the question. But I am convinced that many christians want to do the right things so far as their faith is concerned and would want to exercise the opportunity to bring into being those things which they consider to be consistent with their christian appreciation. I would indentify myself with that viewpoint and so I shall attempt to answer the question.

The Problem of Punishment

The idea of punishment is firmly rooted in scripture. In Isaiah 13:11 we have God saying, "I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant, and lay low the haughtiness of the ruthless". Further, in Jeremiah we read, "I will punish you according to the fruit of your doing, says the Lord" (Jer. 21:14). The final punitive measure by God, against evildoers is recorded in Matthew, "And they (the evildoers) will go away into eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46). Thus God's ultimate punishment is infinitely greater than that which can be imposed by any earthly court, it is eternal.

With regard to either God or man, punishment in the abstract is unthinkable. Punishment should only be inflicted because of an offence having been committed. ONLY a person in authority should be able to inflict it on other people. Punishment always involves the infliction of something unpleasant to the recipient of it.

The first punishment that most of us experience is parental punishment. One aim of this is to prevent children behaving in anti-social ways. It is also administered when some parents want

to teach their children to differentiate between right and wrong. Divine punishment is not, as parental punishment is, a means to an end. It is usually an end in itself. Divine retribution has been satisfied. The law of the land is different regarding its aims in punishment. If the law inflicts a penalty for an offence, then it is clear that the penalty is the deterrent to the further committing of the offence. If in fact the offence is committed again, then the threat to punish has failed to deter in the particular instance concerned. It is true to say, however, that the threat of punishment for offences is looked upon by many as the principal deterrent. A great number of those who were (and are) opposed to the abolition of the death penalty, based their objections on the idea that the penalty of death would deter people from committing capital offences.

As regards the moral objections to inflicting punishment, many people would argue that punishment which produced needless suffering should not be used. The penalty should not be disproportionate to the offence. In the Old Testament the saying "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" was a rule for limiting the punishment relative to the crime which had been committed; no more than an eye for an eye; no more than a tooth for a tooth. However, taking this principle to its logical conclusion we would have to say, "a life for a life", which brings us to Genesis 9:6 "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man".

The Teaching of Jesus

The decalogue was given in the law of Moses. One of the commandments was, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). A little later he said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment" (5:21). The phrase "shall be in danger of the judgment" does not mean that the offender could be found not guilty, but in the forensic sense it signifies the connection of a person with his crime and that he is danger of the penal effect of his misdeed.

Furthermore, so far as the law is concerned, guilt in one point constitutes a transgression of the whole. James says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill" (James 2:10-11). Paul also taught, "Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good" (Rom. 7:12).

It seems to me that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament are not minimising or abrogating the law; they were, rather, upholding it. The teaching concerning the limitation of the law is in respect of salvation. The law could never save; it was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Many of the principles of the Law of Moses find expression in our own judicial and penal system. Hence, our discussion on the death penalty.

The Death Penalty

We know that so far as our country is concerned the death penalty has been abolished for some years. This does not mean, of course, that the controversy has ended; as a matter of fact, there are many voices raised for its re-introduction. The problem is, should the voice of the christian be among those who want the death penalty re-introduced? Before we make any decision, we should bring all the facts into view.

Some upholders of capital punishment say that its retention protects society. But this can only be true if the death penalty deters people from committing similar crimes; it is also argued that it is uniquely successful in that the murderer is prevented from committing further crimes. The second argument is patently obvious, but what about the death penalty being the ultimate deterrent? The police argue, with some evidence, that criminals are deterred from committing capital offences by the death penalty; this may hold good for professional criminals, but murders are committed by other sections of the community who would not be classed as professional criminals. There is no real statistical evidence to suggest that the deterrent value of capital punishment is in any way proven.

Another objection to capital punishment is its finality. There is no room for correcting an error once the penalty has been carried out. If people convicted of crimes other than capital offences have later been proved to have been innocent, then this must surely hold good for capital offences also. As a matter of fact, we know that notable cases have been investigated, and on the evidence that we have today the accused would have been found not guilty of capital crime.

There is a further argument. How far should society go in barbarity? Should we have punished convicted nazi criminals by putting them into gas chambers? To kill a person in cold blood does not comply with the code of decency in the Western world. The amount of suffering endured by the convicted murderer before the execution takes place should make us think quite seriously before we rush in with snap decisions.

What should the Christian Do?

It is a difficult question to decide but I think we should remember that the New Covenant is based on love. When the Pharisees rebuked Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners he said, "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice'." (Matt.9:13). I think mercy is the key. I am well aware of the suffering and grief of the victim and relatives of capital offences such as murder, but I still think that to kill as a penalty is a barbarous act which society has moved away from, even though there are voices raised to return to it.

I would say, then. If there is a referendum, respond to it. I think that the Law of Moses is submerged in the law of love and Mercy in the New Covenant, and having moved away from the barbarous act of capital punishment let the christian record that he wants it to remain that way. (All questions please, to, Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JANUARY 1977

2-Jonah 3	Matt. 12:38-50
9-Isaiah 6	Matt. 13:1-23
16-Daniel 12	Matt. 13:24-43
23-Prov. 3:11-26	Matt. 13:44-58
30-2 Kings 4:38-44	Matt. 14:1-21

WE WANT A SIGN!

HOW often this was the attitude of the Jewish leaders. They were repeating the Devil's first temptation of Jesus. "If thou be the Son of God" - PROVE IT Matt. 4:3. Now, We want a sign; we want You to do something miraculous to prove you really are what you claim to be. This was the pet theme of Satan for his final temptation of Jesus was, 'Prove it, come down from the cross'. Matt. 27:42; Mk. 15:29-32. 'That we might see (the sign the miracle) and believe. Think of the words of Jesus to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed is he that hath not seen and yet hast believed. This must apply to christians to-day. One of the greatest evidences available to us, upon which to rest our faith in Jesus is the fates which so many were prepared to suffer, who had seen, They are our perfect sign.

The condemnation of that generation will be doubly justified and equally sever. It is Jesus who will speak the condemnation but the people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South will be the evidence raised up against them. The Ninevites and the people of Jesus day had a similar experience; a preacher with a warning of doom. The men of Nineveh repented, the Jews hardened their hearts. Therefore the action of the Ninevites will speak against the Jews on the Day of Judgment. Severity of punishment is increased because these Jews had so much more of the very thing they were asking than did the people of Nineveh, Jesus spent three years doing the works of God; Jonah but three days, Indeed, "A greater than Jonah is here". Greater in power; greater in personality; greater in example; greater in physical evidences and above all, greater in message. Jesus' message was one of Salvation while Jonah only preached impending doom. Are we not under even greater evidence to-day as we look back and see all these things so clearly revealed?

Similitudes of the Kingdom

To the Jews, whom Jesus taught, 'The Kingdom' was an established fact. Indeed it was 'The Establishment' to them. David had been its greatest King. God had promised David that his throne should be established for ever - To the end of time. No wonder the

Apostles asked Jesus, when He led them forth from the upper room for the last time; when the atmosphere around them was charged with expectancy. Obviously something vitally important was about to happen; so they put the desires of all Israel into their question, "Dost Thou, at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?"

An earthly kingdom was all they could imagine. Much of Jesus teaching was misunderstood because in that day His hearers failed to realise that Jesus - King of the Jews - was not to have an earthly kingdom but a spiritual one. 'My kingdom is not of this world', John 18:36. Many more people in these latter days have and are making the same mistake. Apply the illustrations given by Jesus under this heading, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto:" in a spiritual sense and they became lucid and delightfully instructive. Attempt to apply them to a material, carnal kingdom and they are useless and without impact or reason.

The Sower

The first of Jesus' parables on the kingdom Matt. 13:19. This is the induction of the spiritual kingdom. "How shall they believe in Him (of) whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" So, the sower goes forth to scatter the Word of the Kingdom. The seed scattered is all good. Guaranteed 100% germination. Jesus is concerned with the reception - the receptical - of the seed (the Word of the Kingdom). He gives four vivid pictures in this context.

1) Those who do not want to hear! The devil is ever ready to assist, "You don't want it? Let me take it away so that you won't be worried by it", and the opportunity goes by, may be for ever. 2) The unstable people who appear to receive the Word but without any real conviction, Converts of emotion, like sherbert, all fizz and froth but no depth. Like the proverbial Vicar of Bray, alright while there is no opposition. Comes any sort of difficulty or unpleasantness and they disappear like the dew. 3) Those who obey the Gospel without conversion. These seek to embrace Christianity but also cling to their wealth, their worldly attainments, their old erroneous dogmas of secular religion.

Yet have not sought a friend in Thee.

H. Twells

4) The good ground, the truly receptive hearer of the word. Even here there are degrees of commitment. ONE HUNDRED FOLD: All that could possibly be done. The fruit of the Spirit; that which is the result of implanting rather than the self-product (the works of the flesh), is love, joy, peace, etc. Gal. 5:22,23. Let us ask ourselves, 'Am I producing all the love, joy, peace, etc. for the kingdom? Yes, all that I possibly can, 100% or is my effort only just over half or even down nearly to the quarter mark? The Great Sower is abroad and is scattering the seed of the Kingdom but what reception does His seed get in our hearts?

The Ability to Hear

"Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom, But to them it is not given". Does this mean that Jesus deliberately hindered those who were not His disciples from understanding His teaching? In v.12 Jesus explains, but this verse raises an enigma, How can you take away from one who has nothing? But is this exactly what Jesus is saying? It is necessary to understand the two classes of people, 'he that hath' and 'He that hath not'. Elsewhere Jesus taught a parable which fully illuminates this v.12 and so explains v.11. Matt. 25:14-30. The parable of the talents. Each man received five, two or one. When the reckoning came two of them were in the first class, 'he that hath', and one in the 'he that hath not'. The two HAD because they had improved, added to, the original by their own efforts, one similarly HAD NOT and so the original was taken away. God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith, we must each build upon the original gift. God will reward honest effort. He knows the difficulties, we don't need to make excuses.

WE understand that Brother R. B. Scott has had a serious accident and is in hospital with a broken leg and other injuries. Let us all pray for his speedy return to health. We will endeavour to keep brother Scott's feature going until he is able to resume the work which he has done so faithfully and so well for such a long while. God bless you dear brother!

'And some have found the world is vain,
Yet from the world they break not free,
And some have friends who give them pain.

PLEASE NOTE: In November issue of the "S.S." page 129 should be read as page 124 and page 124 should be read as page 129.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Blackburn, Mill Hill: The brethren here rejoice in the adding of two more souls to the Church by baptism, James and Mayble Lomax put on Christ on November 7th after hearing the Gospel message. Jim and Mayble have been studying the Bible for a few months in the search for the Truth, and have seen how one becomes a christian. We pray that they shall be both workers for the Lord in their new life in Jesus.

TONY TYSON

WHEN it comes to giving, some people will stop at nothing.

CHRIST is the path if any be mislead,
HE is a robe if any needy be;
If any chance to hunger He is bread,
If any be a bondman He sets free.
If any be but weak, how strong is He.
To dead men, life He is; to sick men health.
To blind men sight, and to the needy wealth.

IT is better to think a good thought about a bad man than to think an evil thought about a good man.

IF a man were capable of discerning the wonderfully perfect nature of God, he would observe no man to be weaker than himself. Fault finding may be common. but it is never comely. Man's hope lies in the confidence that the eyes of God see more than our weaknesses.

CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

or

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Chapter 5.

- 1 What sin had Ananais and Sapphira committed?
- 2 What cities were round about Jerusalem?
- 3 'All the words of this life'. What did the angel mean?
- 4 Why would the Temple doors be open so early?
- 5 'Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine? What promise of Jesus had been fulfilled?
- 6 'To bring this man's blood upon us', verse 28, compare with Matt. 27:25.
- 7 Who was Gamaliel?
- 8 Give in your own words Gamaliel's argument against using violence as a deterrent of the Apostles' influence.

Answers, which should be written on one side of the paper only, should be returned by the end of January to E. Jess, 34 Charles Street, Penicuik.

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