

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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Church Union

CONTINUING our examination of the "Report of Conversations Between the Church of England and the Methodist Church" we come to chapter 4: The Sacraments. In this article, when this term is used it must not be taken as adopting it ourselves, for we believe the term is unwarranted, either by scripture or in its ordinary meaning. We use it only as the term used in the Report, as applying to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The "International Standard Bible Encyclopædia," article "Sacraments," states: "The word 'sacrament' comes from the Latin *sacramentum*, which . . . was used in two senses: (1) as a legal term to denote the sum of money deposited by two parties to a suit which was forfeited by the loser and appropriated to sacred uses; (2) as a military term to designate the oath of obedience taken by newly enlisted soldiers. Whether referring to an oath of obedience or something set apart for a sacred purpose, it is evident that *sacramentum* would readily lend itself to describe such ordinances as Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the Greek N.T., however, there is no word nor even any general idea corresponding to 'sacrament,' nor does the earliest history of Christianity afford any trace of the application of the term to certain rites of the church."

Many think the term "ordinances" is more fittingly applied to baptism and the Lord's Supper, in the sense that these are "ordained" or appointed or instituted by Jesus Christ. But even this word has a wider N.T. meaning, as is apparent from Rom. 13:2; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:10. Is there any necessity to designate baptism and the Lord's Supper as either sacraments, ordinances, rites or institutions? Cannot we speak of them as what they are—as baptism and the Lord's supper, the breaking of bread or the Lord's table—as the N.T. does?

The Sacraments

The Report says: "For both our Churches the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion (another non-scriptural term) are of "divine appointment and perpetual obligation." If we are to achieve full communion with one another, we must be assured that there is sufficient harmony in our sacramental doctrine and practice to make common worship at the Lord's Table a practical and unifying reality We do not disguise the fact that some of the usages of each Church at the Holy Communion will be unfamiliar and not fully congenial to members of the other Church, for example, the Anglican use of fermented wine, liturgical vesture and varying degrees of accompanying ceremonial." Do we observe again how strikingly it is demonstrated that divisions among denominations arise because of the practising of things outside of scripture? In other words, not on what scripture plainly sets forth by teaching and example, but on "where the scriptures are silent."

There follows a very fine statement: "The Christian sacraments are grounded in the gospel, which tells of the living God entering into human history in the person and work of Jesus Christ that he might redeem men from sin and bring them into fellowship with himself. They are therefore primarily concerned not with what man does but with what God has done. They are not the product of faith although they cannot be apprehended apart from faith. Without the gospel there can be no Church nor can there be any sacraments. It is the gospel that creates

the Church and the sacraments." To that we can fully subscribe. It is when we come to application that differences arise, by "making the word of God of no effect through tradition."

Baptism

"When we turn to the N.T. there appears to be general agreement among Jewish and Gentile Christians that baptism is the normal rite of admission into the Christian Church and this consensus of view seems to imply the association of baptism with the authority of Jesus and his own baptism . . . The relation between baptism and the death of Jesus in the thought of the early Church is to be traced to the mind of Jesus himself."

The first sentence in the above quotation is a classic understatement. It does not need "general agreement among Jewish and Gentile Christians" to establish that "baptism is the normal rite of admission into the Christian Church." We need the New Testament alone to demonstrate that. It is difficult to find here any case of a Christian whose baptism is not either recounted or definitely inferred.

The Report answers its question "What meaning are we to attach to Christian baptism in the light of the New Testament?" under these headings:

(a) Baptism is a sacrament of cleansing and repentance. (Notice the order—cleansing before repentance). The N.T. speaks of baptism as a washing away of sins (Acts 22:16). The 'washing' is connected with the death of Christ as is clear from Rom. 6:4. It is related to what Christ has done and is therefore productive of moral and spiritual consequences.

(b) Baptism is a sacrament of regeneration, for it is a sacrament of the gospel which has brought a new birth to the universe and to the individual . . . Since baptism derives its authority from the gospel, the connection with regeneration seems to be established. To be initiated into the Body of Christ is to share in the life of the new age.

(c) Baptism means union with Christ. It is death to sin and a rising to righteousness (Rom. 6:1 ff; Gal. 3:27). Through baptism we share in the death and resurrection of Christ and are incorporated into him.

(d) Baptism means admission into the Church. To be in union with Christ is to be a member of Christ and to be a member of Christ is to be of his flock—the Church. "In one Spirit were we all baptised into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13).

(e) Baptism is the seal of the Spirit. Christians are described in 2 Cor. 1:21 ff, Eph. 1:13 ff as having been sealed by God and there is good reason for holding that there is in these passages a reference to baptism. The Spirit is a seal which God attaches to his work, and baptism and the Spirit are the guarantee of our complete redemption.

(f) Baptism is received by faith which is a response to the gospel that is proclaimed and involves a confession of Christ as Saviour and Lord."

We could hardly expect a more scriptural definition of the significance and purposes of baptism. That is because the theologians have here left speculation upon their traditional practices and have stated "scripture things in scripture terms." But they go on to make void this sublime meaning by speaking of baptism as the commonly accepted practice, which makes meaningless nonsense of what the word of God says. How can infant sprinkling, termed baptism, fulfil the scriptures quoted by themselves? They show clearly what baptism means, then apply its meaning to what is not baptism at all. And, as Greek scholars, they know it.

The members of the Committee ask: "How far can this interpretation be applied to infants?" (The answer is simple: not at all). "Both our Churches regard the baptism (which is not baptism at all) of infants as a legitimate development of the teaching of the N.T. (although not a syllable of the N.T. suggests infant sprinkling). Hence it is not necessary to deal in any detail with the issues raised by those who are committed to believers' baptism alone. (A not very skilful evasion of the question) . . . In infant baptism the faith exercised is that of the Church, not of the child. (An admission that a baby cannot exercise faith needed in baptism, and that therefore it is not according to the N.T. and so not authorised of Christ)."

Enlarging on the subject of infant "baptism" the Report continues: "The child baptised is *regenerate*. That term has given rise to considerable controversy. If *regenerate* means the mature experience of a Christian believer, clearly it cannot be applied to infants. (Truly a significant admission). If, however, it relates to the initiation of the Christian life or to the fact that every child in baptism is given the status of a child of God within the family of the redeemed (this is by no means a fact), is it not a right and proper word to use? (This is a peculiar way of presenting a doctrine, especially one so fundamental as regeneration—by stating it in the form of a question, and moreover a question which suggests doubts as to

its answer in the minds of the theologians. This seems to give away their case). Certainly the child is not conscious of the new birth In any case, none of those admitted to believers' baptism would claim regeneration in the sense that their life was uninterrupted communion with God. (Whoever makes such a claim?)"

Holy Communion

Except for the use of such terms as "Holy Communion" the statement which follows is as true to scripture as is the one quoted on baptism.

"(a) In Holy Communion what signifies primarily is not what the Church does but what Christ has done, is doing and waiting to do Christ himself presides and gives himself to the life of his people. Everything that man offers is evoked by the offering of Christ.

(b) Holy Communion is an act of remembrance. 'This do in remembrance of me.'

(c) The act of remembrance leads to communion. He who is remembered is the living Christ offering to us the bread that is the life of God himself, the life that came through death. By feeding upon him, we become his body. "This is my body." It is the body offered that he gives to us and as we receive it, we become his body through which his life pulsates. Holy Communion is a sacrament of the Real Presence; catholic and evangelical could readily unite in Charles Wesley's hymn:

"Thy presence makes the feast; now let our spirits feel
The glory not to be expressed, the joy unspeakable."

(d) Our communion with Christ means that we are united to each other. We are sinners in need of a common saviour. We are branches of the same vine. We appear at the Holy Table before the face of the one Father As members of the same family we share the same loaf and become hungry for that upon which we feed.

(e) The sacrament of Holy Communion is a sacrifice. Any view of the Eucharist that implies that the work of Christ was 'unfinished' in the sense that we can add to it by anything we do, or that it needs to be done again, must be repudiated as unscriptural. The background of the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ, and Christ alone, on the Cross. It is that we represent, and represent and renew by our remembrance and communion."

As with baptism, so with the Lord's Supper, practice of both Churches nullifies much of what the scriptures are agreed to teach. Who, comparing the ornate manner of observing the Lord's Supper; the insistence upon specially ordained men to "celebrate" or be the "ministrants"; the vestments with which the "celebrants" have to be arrayed; and the fanciful names given to the simple feast, such as Eucharist, the Sacrament, or even Holy Communion, would couple these celebrations with the meal Christ first ate with His apostles in the upper room? One would not be recognised as being the origin of the other. There would not be seen any connection between the two. And so with baptism. No one observing a baby-sprinkling would connect it with what Christ did and taught in Jordan, or His disciples practised, and of which in their epistles they so beautifully showed the meaning.

Again we repeat that there can be no real unity or union until we are ready, all of us, to let go our traditional beliefs and practices, and get back to what all claiming to be Christians acknowledge to be the divine authority and the safe guide—the New Testament.

(To be continued).

EDITOR.

A Book Review

"DID THE EARLY CHURCH BAPTIZE INFANTS?" by Kurt Aland, translated from the German by G. R. Beasley-Murray. S.C.M. Press, 18/-, 116 pages.

IF you are one who thinks that a book should be sold by weight, or that its price should be related to the number of pages it contains you have probably already stopped reading, because, judged in this way, this book is expensive. Yet, although the author's own material occupies a mere 87 pages, in 10 brief chapters, I recommend the book to any serious student who is anxious to know what scholars are thinking on this very important matter.

The translator—himself the author of a much larger volume on Baptism—also writes the preface. In it he stresses that the subject of infant baptism is—much alive today and is occupying the attention of theologians of all the larger

denominations. Furthermore, these scholars are almost all prepared to make admissions as to the origin of infant baptism which would have been unheard of a century or two ago. He quotes from the works of Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Anglicans, all of whom concede that the only way they can deal with the objection that infant baptism is not found in the New Testament is—in the words of one of them—“to admit it frankly.” That is to say, no longer are they willing to undertake a historical defence of this practice.

There is one notable die-hard of the old school, though, the German theologian Joachim Jeremias. In his book “Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries” he attempts to show that this practice goes right back to New Testament times. Dr. Aland’s little book is a reply to Jeremias. The interesting thing is that whilst Dr. Aland is himself a member of a body which “baptizes” babies, he insists that there is no evidence for the practice before the third century and that any reference to it, either before or after that period, reveals it to be a novelty and certainly not an ancient practice. He deals with all the “evidence” for infant baptism which is usually flourished in the faces of those who oppose it: the so-called Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, the ancient documents. He examines the cases of household baptism and the various texts used by paedo-baptists. The conclusion to which he arrives is “that our entire sources, at least when allowed their literal sense, have in view only the baptism of adults or, at best, the baptism of older children,” cannot be contested.

In the 10th chapter he discusses the origin of infant baptism. If it is not based on the practice of the early church, how did it arise? His answer is that the practice developed along with the doctrine of inherent total depravity and, as men began to believe that children are born in sin, they began to hurry to baptize them.

It is in his post-script that the author’s denominational bias overpowers his critical faculty. He asks the question, “Infant Baptism Today?” and in answering this in the affirmative he commits the offence which he has repeatedly charged to Jeremias, namely that of pre-supposition—taking too much for granted. He says, “If belief in the sinful corruption of children from their birth is admitted by us—and to establish that is surely superfluous (emphasis mine, F.W.)—then the necessity of infant baptism follows on it.”

This, of course, is something we certainly do not admit. We believe, that if Dr. Aland could lay aside his denominational theology and bring his excellent critical faculty to bear on the subject of “original sin,” he would find as little authority for the doctrine in the Scriptures as he has for the practice under consideration in his book.

All the same, even if you do not wish to buy the book (which you could do through Brother A. E. Winstanley!), you could profitably borrow it from your local library.

F.W.

The Sign of an Apostle

“TRULY the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (2 Cor. 12:12).

The purpose of this study is to show that from the beginning of the church at Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit which was given to every believer in Christ did not necessarily mean that such gift was of a miraculous character.

In the first five chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, we do not find any mention of any man preaching the gospel or working a miracle except the twelve Apostles.

We shall examine the scriptures from the time that Jesus chose twelve disciples whom He called apostles: “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God: and when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:12, 13). Agreeably to this word in John 17:6, 7: “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.” Further in chapter 15, verse 16, Jesus says, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He shall give it you.”

In view of this great work—the high honour of preaching the gospel throughout the whole world—it was necessary that they should be endued with supernatural powers. The Lord Jesus therefore promised them that they should receive such

powers when He sent the Holy Spirit down upon them: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14 : 26). See also John 16, verses 13, 14 and 15.

The apostles were in close association with Jesus for three years, and in that time learned at first hand all that Jesus both did and taught; So He could say to them, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you."

In John's gospel, chapters 13 to 16 is found an account of the intimate relationship between the Lord Jesus and His apostles. In modern parlance, He was "briefing" them for the great task of discipling the nations. As Jesus had received all authority from His Father, so He likewise gave authority to the apostles: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me" (John 13:20). This authority to the apostles the Lord Jesus reiterated after His resurrection. In John, chapter 20, verse 21, "Then said Jesus to them again [the apostles], Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Read also Luke, chapter 24, verses 44 and 45: "And he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."

Again we read in the same chapter, verses 48 and 49, "And ye are witnesses of these things, and behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." In this connection read Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1, first eight verses.

It is important to have a clear understanding of the relation that the apostles occupied to their Lord and Master. The apostles were to serve Jesus Christ, not to please men. Accordingly, when the day of Pentecost was come, the twelve apostles were baptised with the Holy Spirit. There is no indication of any other person being baptised with the Holy Spirit at that time. From the time Matthias was numbered with the eleven, it is the twelve who are the actors in the scenes that follow, until chapter 6.

Chapter 2, verse 4 says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Then verse 7: "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold are not all these which speak Galileans?" Verse 14: "But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them . . ." Then in verse 32: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses [the twelve apostles] (chapter 1, verses 8 and 22). In verse 37: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter told the enquirers what they should do; three thousand were baptised, and we read: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine," etc.

It is still the apostles who are the actors. They were teaching the converts to observe all things that Jesus commanded. In verse 43: "And many wonders and signs were done by the apostles? Still no mention of any other disciple either working a wonder, sign, or miracle, nor preaching nor teaching. Not a scintilla of evidence that the three thousand converts received a gift of miracle power.

Chapter 3 and chapter 4 to verse 22 deals with the work of two apostles—Peter and John only. From chapter 4, verses 23 to 31, some brethren have a mistaken notion that the company here mentioned must have been a great multitude. A careful reading will show that it refers simply to Peter and John rejoining their "own company" (the other apostles). These all being men filled with the Holy Spirit, the miraculous phenomenon of all speaking the same words together was in character, as they all praised God thus at Pentecost. Note particularly: verses 29 and 30 in this same chapter could only refer to the apostles. These two verses state that which was distinctly the work of the apostles—working miracles and preaching the word. At this point was the beginning of persecution and the Holy Spirit, knowing what lay ahead for them, was comforting and strengthening them—see verse 33: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Chapter 5 still continues the record of the apostles working miracles, preaching the gospel and teaching their converts, and tells of how all these apostles were arrested and later beaten.

In chapter 6 is the first notice we have of a disciple, other than the apostles, who worked miracles and preached the word, namely Stephen. The number of the disciples had multiplied greatly. The calls on the apostles were too great for them, so they required other men who were fitted to help in the work. Seven men of high character were chosen and set before the apostles. As the apostles were particularly ordained by the Lord Jesus, so now these seven were ordained at the hands of the apostles. The apostles prayed and laid their hands on them; thereafter we read

of Stephen and later of Philip, who were able, like the apostles, to perform miracles and preach the word.

These seven men could not bestow miraculous power on others. Only the apostles had authority to do so. This is surely a sign of an apostle.

It is recorded of Stephen that he was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit before the apostles laid their hands on him; yet he worked no miracle until after the apostles laid hands on him. This is surely evidence that the three thousand at Pentecost and all converts up to this point did not receive a gift of miracle power at baptism.

The conversion of the Samaritans also confirms this. No converts at Samaria had received the gift of miracle power, until Peter and John were sent by the other apostles. After prayer and laying-on of the apostles' hands, some received a gift of miraculous power.

The only disciple who received the same gifts and power as the twelve was the apostle Paul, and he received his authority and power directly at the hands of the Lord Jesus.

From the foregoing it is clear these apostles had received authority and supernatural power for the work they had to do.

S. WILSON.

AS will be understood, opportunity comes to me as printer of this magazine to look through, before they are printed, articles sent for insertion. Reading the above, sent by Bro. S. Wilson, and noting its second paragraph, bearing upon a subject that received some attention a few months ago, I sought the Editor's permission to append what follows, thinking it the more expedient way of dealing with the matter.

I venture the opinion that possibly, not one reader of the "S.S." will call in question what Bro. Wilson writes about "Signs of an Apostle." It is well supported by the Scriptures quoted. For his second paragraph, however, which—as he plainly tells us—expresses his real purpose in writing, no scripture proof whatever is offered. So that we have Scripture for what is not in dispute, and his unsupported word for what is doubtful. Why prove a statement which scarcely calls for proof and leave that which needs it unproved? As it stands, that paragraph contains an assumption which, as such, carries no weight whatever.

Bro. Wilson doubtless believes what he writes, but there are thousands—probably millions—who believe what he believes, except that they believe it of babes and he does not. He would readily produce Scripture against these many, but he has produced none in support of his own belief. Is it because he cannot find any?

If we fully accept what Paul teaches in that sweeping statement he wrote to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:16), "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for all good works," there is no place for the gift of the Holy Spirit in this age. Paul, assuredly carried all the marks of an apostle, even in the writing of those words, for he wrote as one inspired. With the work of the Spirit manifested around him, day by day, he wrote not for his own age, but for the new era which was coming, when he and the other apostles would all have died and the gift of the Spirit would have died with them.

If Bro. Wilson will provide the "proofs" asked for, and tell us when and how this gift is "given," a reply to the points he raises in the latter part of his article may be made. W.B.

CORRESPONDENCE

[IN December 1962 the "S.S." published a pathetic letter from Bro. Severe, telling of deaths and injuries caused among the church at Wendewende, Nyasaland, Africa, through an accident. A few brethren and churches have sent help to the suffering families, among them the church in Dalmellington, Ayrshire. Here is a further letter from Bro. Severe, acknowledging the gifts.

We publish it, however, because of the

appeal coming to us again to "go over and help them" or to be ready to receive them in this country for training in God's vineyard. Coupled with Bro. Campion's letter which follows, we are shown what great privileges and responsibilities are ours. Let these appeals not fall on deaf ears.—ED.]

5th January, 1963.

DEAR Bro. Slack,—I am to refer to your nice letter of 6th December, 1962. Your letter reached me on the 19th December, and I read it to the church on 22nd. The church at Wendewende appreciates and acknowledges the cheque order for

£14 19s. 3d. the church there sent on behalf of our sick in the hospital. Your donation proves helpful.

Two of our patients were discharged from the hospital but they are weak and thin. The doctor said that they will be strong after a long time. The others are still there and it will be long and after some months, before they get to be discharged. We are glad that they are making a steady improvement, though slow.

Our plea for someone to come from there and work among us as a missionary continues to ring. The church here continues to make progress but has no experienced leader to manage church affairs according to scriptural order. The brethren over here would be too glad if the brotherhood there sent someone to work or visit us. We badly need your help in this particular request.

Our school work grows by leaps and bounds and we too need teachers and educationalists to speed their progress. If brethren there would like to come and shoulder these responsibilities, it would be beneficial to us. We people in this land need your help educationally, scripturally and spiritually.

We have two young men who passed their Std. 8 exams and are really faithful brethren. As the church in England finds it hard to send someone over, would it be possible for the church there to have these come there to train as preachers and educators for two years? Can the church support? The church in Africa feels to demand it? What is your suggestion on this matter?

I shall be grateful as to whether you would be kind enough to convey my Christian regards to the brethren there on behalf of the church here.

E. C. SEVERE.

(Extracts from a letter from Bro. F. C. Campion.)

Box 98, Blantyre, Nyasaland, 15-4-63.

DEAR Bro. Melling.—It was good to hear from you, and of the Lord's work in England.

I was surprised that my letter to you, was of sufficient interest to be published in the "S.S." but news of the Lord's work is of course, of interest to Christians, wherever one may be.

First of all you may wish to know of the progress for our Lord out here. It seems that E. C. Severe's letters and prayers have been answered. We are to have three missionary families in Blantyre very shortly, they are to arrive from America, two families should be here early in July, '63 and the other one, in January, '64. That brings the total of the Lord's workers to:—

- 2—(This year) Southern Province, Blantyre.
- 2—Zomba, Southern Province.

- 2—Lilongwe, Central Province.
- 1—Nchau, Central Province.
- 2—Muhuju, Northern Province.

As you may know, ours is a very small country, and this number of workers should be very good coverage indeed.

The Blantyre missionaries can look after the township, and be in a very good position to cover Severe's area as well as other near areas. Zomba mission is a Bible school, and takes pupils for six-month courses, as well as seeing to the needs of local congregations. Lilongwe station deals with all of the Central Province, and publishes a number of tracts in the local language. Nchau, I know nothing of, as I have not met them as yet. I believe they are supported by brethren in England, and I am looking forward to meeting them. The Northern Province is temporarily down on staff owing to leave but should be working "full blast" for the Lord again in a month or two.

The request for schooling can be met at Zomba, indeed I wish I could attend for a six-months' course, what an opportunity! I have need to put in some serious study myself.

FRANK CAMPION.

Did You Know?

THAT the nervous system of your body is like a wonderful telephone system? It sends messages back and forth, keeping your brain informed of what is going on around you. Your eyes, ears, taste, touch and smell are like windows in a house, and from these "windows" information from the outside world is sent to your brain by electric currents. A lot of wires are needed to carry this information to the brain. For instance, each of your eyes has 130,000,000 rods and 7,000,000 cones, the sensory terminals of sight, which are connected to your brain by over 300,000 separate, private, "telephone" lines.

When you look at any scene, it is broken down by these millions of sensory points, and gradations of light, shade and colour of tiny areas are sent to the brain as separate signals. The brain rearranges them, in some way yet unknown, to give us the impression of visualising the scene. So, in reality, you "see" (just as you touch, taste, hear and smell) with your brain.

* * *

A fool always finds some greater fool to admire him.

True eloquence consists in saying all that is proper, and nothing more.

The poorest education, that teaches self-control, is better than the best that neglects it.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JUNE, 1963

2—2 Kings 17:21-34	Acts 8:1-25
9—Isalah 52:13 to 53:12	Acts 8:26-40
16—1 Samuel 10:1-13	Acts 9:1-31
23—2 Kings 4:11-37	Acts 9:32-43
30—Leviticus 11:1-23	Acts 10:1-23

PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH

It is a striking fact that Saul is introduced to us by Luke when recording Stephen's death and the persecution of the members of the church to the rank and file, so to speak. Hitherto, the authorities had themselves taken action against the leaders of what they regarded as a new sect, but the people in general held both apostles and their followers in high regard. The stir made by the vigorous work and debate of Stephen resulted in more general opposition, and it seems probable that his opponents were successful in poisoning the minds of the populace by exaggerating and, in a measure, misrepresenting his attitude towards the Temple and the Law.

So the young man Saul, imbued with loyalty to Moses, took a leading part in the fresh effort to stamp out the new faith. We cannot but think that "it is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (Acts 26:14) indicates that some impression made at this time developed a growing doubt in Paul's conscience, especially as he saw the innocence and harmlessness of many of his victims. However, Jerusalem became a dangerous place for followers of Jesus and they fled, doubtless many of them in conditions of extreme poverty, into the countryside and as far as Samaria. It was perhaps their disappointment that they could not stay in their own homes, but it was God's appointment for the spread of the gospel, according to the programme laid down (1:8).

We need to make a serious mental effort to appreciate the position of these early Christians. We aim to restore the faith and practices they adopted when they were baptised into Christ. They had witnessed the miracles, many had seen the Lord after His resurrection, and "great grace was upon them all." Christian character was being developed, a strong faith in God's love filled their hearts. However, they are now having to learn that "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." The authorities unsuccessfully punished the apostles to whom these first believers looked up in humble obedience (5:13). But even the apostles were under the continuous threat of force, and now it appears the people in general had either

joined in the persecution or become indifferent to suffering inflicted, however unjustly, on the believers.

It is remarkable that in these circumstances the apostles were able to stay in Jerusalem, protected perhaps by their miraculous powers from personal violence, or kept by divine over-ruling, so that they were free to help the reduced company of disciples. The persecution flared up for a time but the cause was maintained in Jerusalem, as we see from the councils held there and the later visits of the apostle Paul. There were times of peace and progress (9:31), and the church in Jerusalem remained a centre for apostolic guidance with supporting elders, and doubtless also deacons, though not mentioned. The Roman rulers would be quick to see that believers were not rebels but well-behaved citizens, and they would therefore have the approval and protection of government.

The Gospel in Samaria

Read 2 Kings 17 for the origin of the Samaritans, and Ezra and Nehemiah for the beginning of the feud which resulted in Jews having no dealings with Samaritans. The territory being adjacent to Judea it was natural for fleeing Christians to go into Samaria as well as to pass through Samaria to Galilee. They would surely be out of Saul's way in Samaria! The work of the "deaconing" in Jerusalem would be reduced by flight, and so we find Philip taking up gospel preaching in the town of Samaria (the capital). With the miraculous endowment bestowed through the hands of the apostles, and faith to exercise it, he proved an effective worker and was most successful in winning many for Christ. Like the Corinthians (18:8) many heard, believed and were baptised.

We must remember that Jesus had been in Samaria. He had preached and worked there, and His messengers had gone ahead telling of His coming (Luke 9:51-56). The news too of His shameful death would doubtless have reached there, but the certainty of His resurrection and the news of forgiveness and eternal life through Him is now proclaimed with the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. These people had been enthralled by magic but the contrast between what they had regarded as "that great power of God," and this genuine exhibition of His power convinced them, and even the magician himself, of the truth. Restored sick folk and convicted sinners rejoiced together with Philip in the salvation of God.

This stepping out of the rut of prejudice, and finding the Word of God accepted by Samaritans brought special help from the apostles, and we shall see as we read through this inspired history, how other steps into more Christlike ways followed, until "the world became

the apostles' parish." The laying on of the hands of Peter and John resulted in miraculous manifestations, which tempted Simon into grievous sin—thinking that money could buy a gift like this. He had been used to making money from magic, and his motives were wrong. His humble request for prayer makes us hope

that he was restored to divine favour through confession and repentance.

The gospel is now spreading. Judea and Samaria are hearing it, and it may already be bearing fruit in Parthia and Media, and elsewhere—though not reported so far (2:9-11).

R. B. SCOTT.



(Conducted by
A. E. Winstanley,
43a Church Road,
Tunbridge Wells,
Kent).

AFTER THE FLOOD

DO you remember our talk about how Noah was saved? He and seven others were brought safely through the great flood. Now take your bible and read Genesis 8:15 to 9:19. This will tell you what happened when he and his family left the ark.

An Altar

What did Noah do as soon as he left the ark? He "built an altar unto the Lord" and offered sacrifice. Do you know why?

Thanksgiving

He was saying "Thank you" to God, whose goodness had saved him and the others. We understand that we do not have to build altars now, but we should be just as ready to thank God for his blessings. Just think of the things we need each day: food, clothing, home, air, water, and so many other things. Who gives us all these? God of course. James says that "every good gift . . . is from above, coming down from the Father. . . ." (1:17). So we have much for which to be thankful—and we should thank God every day.

Faith

But Noah was doing more than that. He was also showing that he believed in God. The Lord had brought him safely through the flood and Noah was letting his family see that he would go on trusting and obeying God. And that is something we must do too. We must never be afraid to let others know that we love the Lord. Sometimes it won't be easy—but do it just the same: Speak up for Jesus. Tell your friends about the Saviour. We hope sometime to study the life of Abraham. He travelled through many lands, but wherever he went he built an altar to the Lord. That was his way of showing his faith. Shall we do that too, not by actually building altars, but by telling the world that we trust God?

The Seasons

Have you ever heard anyone say that the time will come when there will be no difference between summer and winter? I have; and some people think it says that in the bible. Well, it doesn't. After the flood, God said, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (8:22). This is one of many ways in which God shows his faithfulness. The times and seasons will last as long as the earth does.

The Rainbow

How often have you seen a rainbow? More times than you can remember, I expect. But do you know what the rainbow says to us? Listen: "God said, I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature . . . and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (9:12-15).

Next time you stop in wonder, and look up at the lovely rainbow, just think about this: God is looking at it, too, and he is remembering his promise. He says, "I will look upon it, that I may remember. . . ." Some people make promises, then forget them. God never forgets; he always keeps his word. One of his most wonderful promises is that he will save us if we trust and obey Jesus, the Saviour. The Lord Jesus put it like this: "He that believeth [that is, believes in Jesus as Son of God] and is baptised [that is, immersed in water], shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Shall we follow Noah's example, and show our faith in the Lord by doing what He tells us to do?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Aylesbury.—Although we have been regularly meeting in our new building in Mandeville Road since January 13th, owing to various reasons, one of which was the severity of the winter, the formal opening could not be held at that time. The week-end of April 27th-28th however marked this joyful occasion—the fulfilment of several years of hope and endeavour.

In all about 700 people attended the four meetings of the weekend and listened to some fine messages from Brethren F. C. Day, Ralph Limb and Philip Slate. The highest attendance was on Saturday evening when about 250 people were present. Over 200 persons stayed for tea on Saturday afternoon. The meetings were well advertised and a large number of local people attended, many of whom had not attended our meetings before. We were supported by brethren from more than half the churches in England, some from Scotland, and some from overseas as far away as New Zealand.

We would like to express our appreciation to all who had a part in making this occasion such a memorable one, and for the wonderful fellowship we enjoyed with so many brethren. It was a great spiritual uplift for us all, and a very telling witness for the work of the Lord in this town.

Bedminster, Bristol.—Bro. Tom Nisbet has just completed a six-weeks' mission with us, and we are glad to report that since our previous report two more have put on Christ.

David Carey has been attending our services during the mission, and on 21st April, walked to the front and requested baptism, which was attended to immediately.

On Lord's Day, 28th April, John Williams (husband of Sister Williams, late of Newtongrange, now isolated at Bath) requested baptism, and by re-arranging our morning service, we were able to witness his good confession and baptism, and then to welcome him around the Lord's Table.

These are two young men who should be a source of strength in the Master's Kingdom.

This brings the total to four souls added to the church during the period of Bro. Nisbet's mission. In addition we have been strengthened in our faith by the messages which Bro. Nisbet has given. The difficulties facing us immediately before and during the mission were overcome and the task was done, because "the people had a mind to work."

Buckie.—The Church here rejoices in seeing another soul won for Jesus. On Lord's Day, April 28th, we had the joy of hearing the good confession of James Robertson, a young man who has earnestly sought after the truth. He was buried in baptism with his Lord the same night.

We thank God that the gospel has not lost its power, and trust that our brother may be steadfast in the faith. Brethren, pray for us as we witness for our master in this northerly part of His vineyard.

Davenport.—The Church has enjoyed the services of Evangelist Bro. Tom Nisbet for two weeks, from April 1st to 14th inclusive. Bro. Nisbet addressed the meetings and, although we cannot report any additions, we feel that his presence with us has done much to strengthen us in the faith.

Eastwood, Seymour Road.—The church celebrated the ninth anniversary of the opening of the meeting place during the weekend, May 4th and 5th. The proceedings opened with a tea, of which approximately one hundred partook. This was followed by a public meeting to which a number of friends came by invitation. We were blessed too, by the number of brethren and sisters from churches in different parts of the country. This enabled us to maintain the high standard, numerically and spiritually, we have experienced each year.

Bro. Ralph Limb presided, and Bro. Ed. Jess, of Dalmellington, and Bro. Hugh Davidson, of East Kilbride, were the speakers. Their messages, well prepared and delivered, were received by a very appreciative audience.

The services on the Lord's Day were of an equally high order and well supported by visiting brethren and sisters. Bro. Davidson exhorted the church in the morning and Bro. Jess preached the gospel in the evening at which meeting a number of friends were present. A parents and scholars meeting was held in the afternoon addressed by Bro. Jess and Bro. Davidson, when prizes were presented to scholars. Altogether it was a time of spiritual uplift. May our efforts and labours be blessed, and prove fruitful, and the praise shall be unto our God.

Ince-in-Makerfield.—Our special week-end rally (12th to 15th April) was well attended, and the talks, discussions, questions answered sessions, etc., were a great help to all present. May the influence of this teaching spread to many places.

Bro. Gary Adams, from Holland, laboured with us in a gospel effort from the 12th to 21st April, and quite a number of non-Christians heard the message faithfully proclaimed. We pray that the seed may have fallen into good ground, bringing forth fruit to God's glory.

On Saturday, 20th April, Isobel Parker (whose parents meet with the Albert Street church), obeyed the gospel by being baptised for the remission of sins.

Newtongrange.—The Church has just finished a very successful week's mission, Bro. A. E. Winstanley preaching. The attendances during the week averaged around 54 and during the week 67 non-members attended. The results so far have been one restored, but we are hoping that the word spoken will have fallen on good ground and shall yet bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Wembley.—We are happy to report two baptisms: one on the Saturday night of Aylesbury opening, the other on Lord's day, 5th May. Brother J. C. Bailey, of Canada, on his way to India for mission work, spoke to us recently.

Wigan (Scholes).—From April 6th to 14th, we held a Gospel campaign with Bro. David Dougall preaching. It is many years since we had the services of Bro. Dougall and his efforts on behalf of the Master maintained the same high standard. Great interest was shown in the Gospel meetings and attendances beyond the normal were the order throughout. Brethren from far and near assembled. The exhortations of Bro. Dougall gave us a real spiritual uplift, and our obligations and responsibilities to Christ were set before us.

Although the addresses very strongly stressed baptism, none responded to the call. The word was preached with simplicity and understanding, and we believe that we shall rejoice in the power of the Gospel in the very near future.

OBITUARY

Dennyloanhead.—We record with deep sorrow, the passing of Bro. Thomas Cooper on the 15th February. His remains were laid to rest on what would have been his 86th birthday. Bro. Cooper had been ill for some months, and bore his infirmity with great patience while his condition steadily worsened.

Our brother was a faithful servant of the Lord for more than 60 years, and was well known in the Slamannan district. His going is a personal loss to all in the small assembly which he did so much to keep going in the face of declining numbers, largely due to emigration. He has left a wonderful example to those who follow after. He has "fought a good fight; finished the course; kept the faith." His is the blessed assurance of the Lord, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The funeral was conducted in the home and at the graveside by Bro. David Dougall.

We commend those who mourn his passing to our Heavenly Father.

JOHN M. WOOD.

[We make our sincere apology to Bro. Wood and the Dennyloanhead church for the late appearance of this obituary. The fault is the editor's.]

COMING EVENTS

Pittdown, near Uckfield, Sussex.—Monday, June 3rd. Rally, Afternoon Recreation. Tea 4.15. Meeting 5 p.m. Speaker: Ralph Limb.

Edinburgh, Hyvots Bank.—Gospel Campaign. June 9th to 30th. Preacher, Bro. G. W. Bailey, Abilene, U.S.A. In charge of personal work, Bro. Ivan Stewart, Albuquerque, New Mexico. A working group of 35-40 brethren will come from U.S.A. We invite brethren to come and join us in this great effort to preach the Word. Brethren coming to work with us from other parts of U.K. will be provided as far as possible with hospitality in the homes of the brethren. Please write beforehand to Bro. George Gardiner, 15-2 Burnhead Grove, Edinburgh 9. Services will be held each evening except Fridays at 7.30 p.m. Andrew Gardiner.

Aylesbury, Mandeville Road: An intensive gospel campaign will be held in June (the Lord willing), details of which are as follows:—

Date: Lord's Day June 9th, until Lord's Day June 23rd, inclusive.

Times: Services will be held every night at 8 p.m., including Lord's Days.

Preachers: Bro. Batsell B. Baxter, of the Hillsboro church, Nashville, Tennessee, will preach every night from June 9th until June 21st. He will then go to Wembley for the campaign to be held there. Bro. Harold Baker, of Nashville, will be the preacher for the last two days of the campaign.

Personal Work: The personal work will be directed by Bro. Channing, assisted by Bro. Baker. Approximately 80 workers are coming over with Bro. Baxter, and these we hope will be joined by other workers from Britain and the Continent. We hope to be able to visit every house in Aylesbury during the campaign.

An Invitation: All brethren who will have the opportunity of assisting us will be most welcome. Accommodation can be arranged, either in a home or a hotel. Please write giving full details to L. Channing, 10 Mandeville Road, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Wembley, Gospel Campaign.—June 23rd to July 7th. Batsell Barrett Baxter, evangelist. Over 100 workers expected from the Continent, British Isles, and U.S.A. Services in Brotherhood Hall (next to Post Office), High Road, Wembley, nightly at 8 p.m. Further inquiries to Philip Slate, 279 Woodcock Hill, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex.

September Rally will (D.V.) be entertained by the Church at Beulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, on September 14th. Full particulars later. All correspondence to Bro. T. Woodhouse, 8 Shoulder of Mutton Hill, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts.

Spring Conference.—Will any Church wishing to entertain please write to R. McDonald, "Aldersyde," 10 Mardale Road, Bennett Lane, Dewsbury, Yorks.

CHURCHES OF CHRIST HOLIDAY FELLOWSHIP

To be held, D.V., from July 20th to August 2nd, 1963.

Place: Duncan Hall School, Scratby—five miles north of Great Yarmouth, on the coast.

Accommodation: Dormitories only—no private rooms available. Bookings will be limited to eighty persons.

Charges: Adults £5 per week. Children (under 14 years) £3 per week. Bookings will be accepted for only one or two weeks—no shorter periods.

Bookings: No bookings will be accepted without a deposit—one pound per adult, ten shillings for each child, regardless of period.

Subjects: A special feature of this holiday fellowship will be a series of discussion groups for young people. Young brethren at Bangor last year suggested the following subjects: (1) The Importance of Dress; (2) Dating and Courtship; (3) What to do with your spare time; (4) Attitude to Older People; (5) How to attract young people to the Lord; (6) A Christian's attitude in his own home.

Holiday Fellowship.—At Duncan Hall School, Scratby, Great Yarmouth. The six morning lectures will be on a series entitled "Facing the Facts." 1 The Colour Bar; 2 Smoking; 3 Nuclear Weapons; 4 World Hunger; 5 Strong Drink; 6 Gambling.

Information and bookings: Write to A. E. Winstanley, 43a Church Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

"SCRIPTURE STANDARD" STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Year Ending March, 1963.

INCOME

Balances at 1st April, 1962.		£	s.	d.
In Hand		20	16	11
At Bank		224	18	6
Subscriptions		379	12	3
Gifts		49	12	3
Grand Total		674	19	8

EXPENDITURE

	£	s.	d.
Printing	405	0	0
Printers' Postage	16	4	5
Secretary's Postage	33	10	0
Editor's Postage	2	0	0
Sundries	5	5	6
Cash in Hand	29	9	11
At Bank	183	9	10
Grand Total	674	19	8

I have checked all vouchers and book entries and declare this to be a correct extract therefrom, 19-4-1963.—Fred C. Day.

BIRTH

Gift of a daughter (Beverley) to brother and sister Hardy, of Morley, sister for Randall, 16th February, 1963.

MARRIAGE

On the 27th April in the meeting place of the Church of Christ, Newtongrange. Bro. Robert Hughes (Kirkcaldy) was married to Sister Fay Carson (Newtongrange).

Bro. A. E. Winstanley officiated. May the Lord bless them and give them many years of married bliss.

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EVANGELIST FUND: Contributions to R. McDONALD, "Aldersyde," 10 Mardale Road, Bennett Lane, Dewsbury, Yorks.

Secretary of Conference Committee: A. HOOD, 45 Park Road, Hindley, nr. Wigan.
NYASALAND Mission: Contributions to W. STEELE, 31 Niddrie Road, Portobello, Edinburgh, Mid Lothian.

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