

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE WORD OF GOD FOR 1971

Habakkuk 3:17-18

**"Though the fig tree do not blossom nor fruit be on the vines,
The produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food,
The flock be cut off from the fields and there be no herd in the stalls,
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."**

THE prophet is saying that, though the most essential things in life be taken from him—even if there be no food supply—he will still "rejoice in the Lord, joy in the God of my salvation." He will not only keep his faith in God, but, as Job said "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The faith and trust in God of these men did not depend upon how God acted towards them. There was no thought of "If God does such a thing for me, then I will believe in Him and trust Him." There were no provisos limiting their faith. If ill came upon them their faith did not wither and die. With them whatever happened could not alter the unchanging faithfulness of the living God. "He cannot deny himself." They looked to Him: although the foundations were knocked down from under everything, all comforts and necessities be taken from them, even life itself, all these experiences did not change "the Lord who changeth not." And the faith of Job and Habakkuk not only sustained them, although everything would seem to be against them, but they gave glory to God. It was not the strength of their faith, and certainly not credulity. It was the absolute guarantee they had that God is real, has undertaken to keep His people, and that that guarantee becomes a certainty that nothing can alter.

With such a faith let us enter into 1971. We may be anxious; we may fear the coming year. We cannot help but do if we look only at the circumstances of our daily lives. But those "holy men of God" saw God as more real than their daily circumstances. Of Moses it is written, "he undured as seeing him who is invisible." And Paul writes, "We look not at the things which are visible, but at the things which are invisible. For the things visible pass away, but the things invisible are eternal." In other words, it is those who have this outlook who are the "realists," not those who are controlled and enslaved by the temporary machinery of our civilisation. This is not Robert Browning's airy-fairy optimistic attitude of "God's in His heaven, All's right with the world," but rather a strong, deep, unswerving assurance in God's ways and word. And so into 1971 we go, with the hymn in our hearts:

**"I know not what awaits me; God kindly veils my eyes,
And o'er each step of my onward way He makes new scenes to rise:
And every joy He sends me comes a sweet and glad surprise."**

EDITOR

CHRIST'S BODY, THE CHURCH: I

R. K. Francis

THERE is nothing on earth to be contemplated that is so sublime as the Church of Christ. Weak in power and few in numbers, as she may appear to the superficial observer, she is nevertheless of a grandeur transcending that of the kingdom of Alexander, or of the empire of the Caesars, or of the allied glory and greatness of all the dynasties of the earth. She, by no accident, or mere chain of human sequence, is an international body, bearing witness of a supernatural life to all men. The Church of Christ is the visible family of God on earth, having laws, ordinances, manners, and customs of its own. For centuries kingdoms and peoples and tongues had been but as preparatory characters uttering or acting the prologue of the sublime drama of Redemption, "to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places* might be made known through THE CHURCH the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Eph. 3:9-11.

The Church is the Lamb's wife, and beautiful are all her adornments. All her garments are of celestial origin, and she follows her bridegroom with confidence and hope. She follows Him whose garments were dipped in blood, and who trod alone the winepress of the wrath of God. She follows Him to the mountain, the grove, the garden, the cross, and the sepulchre; and while she hopes she weeps: yea, she follows Him with her faith up to the seat of the mediatorial glory, and she knows that her Redeemer lives.

Marks of the Church

Christ was the Founder of a religious community, the Head of a corporate body. In the gospels we find direct anticipation of such an institution. At Jerusalem the Christians at once realized the spirit of brotherhood in its fullest sense: they united in a Church. Christianity is essentially a social religion. The Christian is not a morose hermit vegetating in a mossy cell; he is a Church member, enjoying fellowship with companions and diligently ministering to their welfare. The disciples of Christ, under apostolic teaching, formed a community of brethren, who were associated upon a broad basis of equality, all of them being illuminated and directed and united in the one Spirit.

In Matt. 16:8, the Lord points forward to the Church; in chap. 18:17 He refers to the moral relations among the members of the same. The principles He there lays down involve church discipline. But this ordered system, so anticipated, is one differing from Israel's of old. Our Lord's intention to found a new separate society is seen also in the institution of the Supper, an ordinance which secured that His disciples should hold religious fellowship as a distinct body. Then the command to immerse all disciples equally bears witness to the Saviour's wish to found a separate visible society. And as the secret of the Gospel lies in the Person of Christ, as unfolded in His life and death, so in a deep sense is He the seed of the Church. As was He in character and spirit, such must His society be. To understand this society, therefore, we must apprehend it in its essence and its end. This society is an organism consciously and voluntarily compacted by reasonable beings; an organism which is the result of choice, not of necessity. We find the Church not merely a form, a vessel, an appendage, but a part of Christianity: she has the stewardship of grace.

A Called-Out People

Concerning the term "church," the word "ekklesia," usually translated "church," is found in the New Testament some 115 times. It is derived from "ekkaleo" to call out; and is composed of two Greek words, "ek," a preposition meaning "out of," and "kaleo," the verb "to call." Its literal meaning is a convened assembly. Its primary meaning is "An assembly of the people called out by the civil magistrate," and from this derives its other usages. But the ordinary classical sense of the word does not

necessarily throw light on the nature of the institution called in the New Testament the Church of Christ. The word does not, by virtue of its inherent meaning, carry with it the idea of any particular church. The student of the New Testament scriptures will know that for a church to be a Church of God in Christ depends upon its foundation, polity, and character. The term "church" is used throughout the New Testament with reference to a body of people called out—separated from the mass of mankind through their having believed in Christ as the Son of the Living God, and obeyed from the heart the conditions upon which He promised salvation, or in the language of the Apostles, the remission of sins. This institution is no mere continuation or modification of the Mosaic economy. This Church proceeds from Christ as a stream flows from its fountain: we owe this institution to Him and to none other. It is not man's creation. Christ thought of it, He purposed it, He created it. It did not exist before Him. It cannot exist without Him. He made it and sustains it.

Uniqueness of the Church

In the Divine purpose the Church existed at the same time as the fall of man; but in its actual, chronological manifestation, not only to the inhabitants of the earth, but to "the principalities and powers in the heavenly places," it dates from the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, about Anno Domini 33.

It was then a new institution, not merely so in point of time, but unique. Nothing of the kind had ever before been known. The Saviour in Matt. 16:18 puts His name upon this society, saying, "My church"; and Paul, in Eph. 1:23, calls it "Christ's body"; so that ownership is once and for ever settled.

The constitutional creed-truth of the Church is the shortest and yet the most comprehensive that anyone ever read. As declared by Peter and accepted by Christ, it is that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God. Those who accept this organic truth are admitted into the Church through the initiatory rite of Christian baptism, commanded by Christ. "On this rock," said the Messiah, "I will build my Church." Here the Lord implies that He was founding an organized society, not merely preaching a doctrine. The publication of that great truth, declared by Peter, won its trophies from the centre of Jerusalem to the waters of the Tiber; from the publicans and sinners of Galilee to the members of Caesar's household.

The disciples welded into an organized community are Christ's means of executing the work He began in His own Person. It is, therefore, obviously a mistake to talk of the "invisible church," or the "universal church," for the word "church" is a word of bounded and limited meaning. As well speak of the invisible city of London, or the universal city of Glasgow. The fact is, believers in Christ form a community apart from all who obey not the gospel. They are the "ekklesia"—the called out of God and of Christ—God's peculiar and separated people. As such they are strictly charged to maintain inviolate their convocational separation from the world and from false professors. As the ecclesia of God, they are the only true, acceptable, and divinely authorised worshipping assembly. Christian service and worship are theirs alone. On Pentecost, in response to the heralds of salvation, three thousand came out from the greater mass, not as a temporary assembly, but for permanent session as that entirely *New* institution of the New Covenant known as the Church of Christ. Were this but understood, churches based in part upon the Old Covenant and upon flesh would be abandoned as adverse to the letter and spirit of Christianity.

(To be continued)

"It is most important for our young men, as it is for our nation, that they be taught in their homes from their early youth that a man has work to do; that one who merely seeks his own pleasure

proves himself unworthy of a place in the world. Rapidly increasing wealth and unwise parental love are as ever leading to our indulgence and many weak, worthless lives." *Samuel Fessenden Clarke*

“THE BRETHREN” SAY

[This month we print the first of several articles appearing in a New Zealand newspaper in 1963. Under the heading “THE BRETHREN” SAY we reprint the articles by a preacher of those who call themselves “The Brethren,” and in reply the case from the scriptures is presented by Bro. Sam Wilson, now living in Auckland, N.Z., who has in the past often written for the “S.S.” Subsequent articles will appear in the “S.S.,” God willing.—Ed.].

TRUTH FOR THE TIMES: THE REPENTANT THIEF

“AND one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.

“But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

“And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:39-43).

The Bible records only this one case of conversion in the closing hours of life.

This fact should bring home to every reader the folly of putting off the day of decision.

God promises no man tomorrow. He says:

“Boast not thyself of tomorrow: for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” (Proverbs 27:1).

And again:

“Behold NOW is the accepted time; behold NOW is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

And again:

“TODAY if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” (Hebrews 3:7, 8).

The conversion of the repentant thief, however, is an event of supreme significance for any reader who is nearing the end of life and who turns to Christ in sincerity and faith.

This passage of Scripture clearly sets forth the following important facts:

1. The mercy of God is infinite.
2. A man's works have nothing to do with his salvation. (The dying thief was an evil-doer till his last day).
3. Baptism and sacraments have no part in man's salvation. (The penitent thief was not baptised; he received no sacrament).
4. Christ is the only Saviour.
5. Salvation is the free gift of God to all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone as their Sin-bearer and Saviour.

“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23).

THE SCRIPTURES SAY

TRUTH FOR THE PRESENT TIME (2 Peter 1:12)

THE promise Jesus gave to the penitent thief on the Cross was according to the time then present, for He had power to forgive sins on the earth. (Luke 5:24).

After Jesus died on the Cross, was buried and raised again from the dead, He promulgated His law for the time now present.

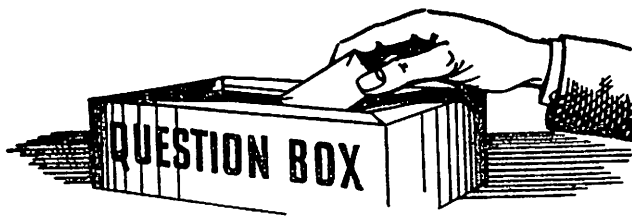
Before ascending to His Father in heaven, He commanded His apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved . . ." (Mark 16:16). See also Matthew 28: 19, 20: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

According to the commandment from Jesus, the 12 apostles waited in Jerusalem till Pentecost when the Lord sent down the Holy Spirit on them, who preached the gospel in its fullness. When the convicted multitude cried out "Men and brethren what shall we do?" they were not told there was nothing to do, but Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, told them to "repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:38, 39).

Here the Holy Spirit says that repentance and baptism are for remission of sins. The apostle Peter, again writing in his 1st Epistle 3:21, says: "Baptism doth also now save us."

From this we see that baptism, as well as faith, repentance, confession, etc., is for salvation and is truth for the present time.

S. WILSON



Conducted by
James Gardiner

"Churches of Christ have been criticised for their stand against infant baptism and for permitting, at the same time, young children of nine years old to be immersed. Is it possible for such a young child to be a 'disciple' before baptism to fulfil the requirements of Matthew 28:19? Further, if the parents are not members of the church can these young children reasonably be expected to remain faithful, particularly in view of 2 Peter 2:20, 21?"

The question conveniently consists of three sentences and I will try to divide my answer into three parts, each part dealing with a sentence in the question.

(1) Infant Baptism Impossible According to Scripture

Yes, I have no doubt at all that churches of Christ have been, and are, criticised for standing against the practice of many religious bodies—infant baptism. It is news to me, however, that they are also criticised for immersing young children of nine years old, but the questioner has apparently come across such criticism and so I wholeheartedly accept that this is so. Criticism in the first case is completely unjustified but may be justified in the latter case—it all depends on the nine-year-old child.

The churches of Jesus Christ have always deprecated the practice of infant baptism, on the simple grounds that the practice has no scriptural authority, and is culpably misleading to the person concerned in convincing him, all through life, that he is a baptised person. Infant baptism is an error which is the logical descendant of another religious error—the doctrine of original sin. Space does not allow of a full discussion of the subject, but a few further remarks might be helpful to someone new to the subject. The "original sin" theory is that at birth we are born with the guilt of Adam's

sin upon us (see Rom. 5:12, which says "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"). We notice that *death* was the consequence of Adam's sin and so death (the *consequence* of Adam's sin) passed upon all men. Therefore the *consequence* of Adam's sin is upon us at birth (in that we will die physically) but the *guilt* of Adam's sin does not pass upon us. We are born guiltless, pure and innocent and remain so until we become old enough to transgress God's laws and will. Each person will answer only for the deeds done in his or her own body. Psalm 51:5 is another verse often quoted to justify the theory of original sin, where David says "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." We notice that David says he was *conceived* in sin—he does not say that he was *born* a sinner. If sin in any way attaches to a conception all and any guilt lies with the parties to the union and not with the resultant child. Neither is it a sin to be born, as adherents to this doctrine often declare. In the beginning God commanded Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28) and so "the sin" in the Garden of Eden was disobedience to God in respect of the eating of fruit from a tree and had no reference whatever to their sexual union.

The Bible definition of sin is "a transgression of God's laws" (1 John 3:4) and "all unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). There are sins of commission and sins also of omission (see James 4:17). A moment's reflection should convince us that a new born infant can't commit sin either by commission or omission, is completely ignorant of God's laws and is thus perfectly sinless in God's eyes. As baptism is for *the remission of sins*, and salvation from sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16) then obviously baptism was never intended for babies and can render them no service. The Roman Catholic church and many of the denominations believe that if a baby dies, even shortly after birth, it will be consigned to "limbo" because of "original sin," and this the churches of Christ deny and oppose. A nurse here once told the writer of a case where the local priest telephoned the hospital to say he couldn't manage to call to "baptize" one of the newborn babies there, and, as it was considered an urgent matter, would she please do it—and he commenced to give her instructions as to how she should go about it. This illustrates perhaps the serious way in which infant baptism is regarded in some quarters.

Apart from the fact that babies are not fit subjects for baptism in that they have no sins for remission, we find, as we might expect, that the New Testament teaches that the privilege of baptism is reserved for:—

- (1) *Taught persons* — "Go ye therefore and *teach* all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19);
- (2) *Believing persons* — "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest" (Acts 8:37);
- (3) *Penitent persons* — "Repent ye and be baptized every one of you . . ." (Acts 2:38);
- (4) *Confessing persons* — "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Confession is to be made with the mouth (Rom. 10:10).

The above facts from the New Testament place it beyond doubt that small infants are not fit candidates for immersion and that therefore the practice of baptizing infants is contrary to the intentions of Christ. Sometimes "household" baptisms are quoted as giving sanction to the practice, but if we look again at these instances we shall see that these households contained only those who could hear the gospel and believe it.

This brings us to the question of criticism being aimed at the immersion of a child, say nine years old, and prompts us to ask, "At what age a child comes within the scope of Christ's commands?" To my mind, this age is determined not so much by the age at which the child becomes capable of sin but rather the age at which the child can understand the facts concerning Christ and His way of redemption; and these ages could well differ in the case of the *same* child. Again this qualifying age would differ in *different*

children. Some children are more perceptive than others, and some children have better opportunities of learning the facts about Christ than others. John Stuart Mill, the noted English economist, was a very perceptive child and by the age of three he had mastered the Greek alphabet and Latin grammar; by eight years of age he was a veritable scholar. By contrast, another child might still be striving to talk at three years. I therefore say that it all depends upon the aptitude and intelligence of the child as to whether they are proper subjects for baptism at nine, or eight, for that matter. Criticism of a nine-year-old would be justified if baptised "just to please Grandad," or to "join the church" or because big brother John had been baptised, or other evidence of ignorance about what had been done. I know personally some children baptised about that age, who most certainly appear to know what took place and why. Age is therefore unimportant, provided there is complete awareness of what is transacted in obeying the gospel.

(2) Baptism Is By Understanding, Not By Age

"Is it possible for such a young child to be a 'disciple' before baptism to fulfil the requirements of Matt. 28:19?" My understanding of the matter is that one becomes a disciple *after* baptism. A disciple is one who is prepared to be disciplined by the teacher or master. There is a specific mode of entry into the discipline or school of Christ, and this involves being immersed prior to entry. Certainly we have to be taught about Christ before we can believe in Him and make a decision to follow Him (as a disciple) but after we have decided to follow Him we must do so with "a clean sheet" and first "wash away" our sins in baptism. Obviously the questioner means "Can such a young child as a nine-year-old understand such things?" I have no doubt that *some* such children can—John Stuart Mill, I am sure, could have!

(3) Parents Not Members of the Church

If the parents of such young persons were not members of the church,, I agree that this would be a distinct disadvantage to the continuing fidelity of the child; but if the child had the required grasp of the gospel facts and a real faith in the Master, there seems no reason why, with the help and encouragement of church members, he or she should not continue faithful. This would be especially true if the non-Christian parents of the child had the child's true interests at heart, and it would certainly put the child's faith to the test.

The alternative would be to refuse nine-year-old children immersion even when confronted with the fact that they were fully aware of what baptism is all about. Who would be prepared to do this, I wonder?

(Questions, please, to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JANUARY 1971

3—Joel 2:12-32	Acts 2:1-21
10—Psalm 16	Acts 2:22-47
17—Deuteronomy 18:9-22	Acts 3
24—Daniel 3:8-28	Acts 4:1-22
31—Psalm 2	Acts 4:23-37

THE WORK OF JESUS CONTINUED

WE are now reading a very different writer's work from John's. We are quite

certain he is no less one of those "holy men of God" who wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). It has always seemed that the character of these individual men shines through their work, and yet it is God speaking to us, revealing Himself. The only source of inspiration for us is through their work. This is not "bibliolatry." Mere attention to words is fruitless unless their meaning is taken into our innermost thoughts, thus springing to life in us.

Luke's work in the gospel required a sequel. That records what Jesus "*began* to do and to teach." Here in "Acts" we

read of some of His further work. We quote repeatedly His words to His apostles—"He that heareth You heareth ME" (Luke 10:16) and see also Matt. 10:40. Many stumble at the thought of listening to Jesus in the words, for example, of Paul, especially if the words are unacceptable. But where are we if we are the judges as to which words we should receive? Scholars can indeed help so long as they keep close to "what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6), interpreting or speculating humbly. We must never belittle the wonderful work they have done to enable men and women to understand in their own tongue the "wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11).

John's writings have their special authority and charm. We have all learnt this as we have considered his chief work in the past year. Now we shall be considering Luke's in a different story, yet a very important and necessary one. I would respectfully recommend our readers to read carefully the translator's preface to "The Young Church in Action" by J. B. Phillips (published by Geoffrey Bles). Anyone earnestly endeavouring to comprehend the beginning of the Christian community must have this foundation study, and of all persons a translator with the special thought of exposing the truth in the clearest way to his contemporaries has a right to his "preface."

We have in this month's readings three subjects of importance. There are the baptism in the Spirit, the first gospel address, and the results. We look first at the fulfilment of the promise made by God through John the Baptist—"I indeed baptise you in water unto repentance . . . He [Jesus] shall baptise you in the Holy Spirit, and in fire" (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:16). Whatever other fulfilment we may feel there is, it is quite categorically stated that the experiences of the apostles on the day of Pentecost is so (Acts 1:5). Some confusion has arisen from the appearance of the cloven tongues "as of fire" (2:3). It is thought this fulfils the promise of "baptism in fire," but the connection between this baptism and the unquenchable fire of vengeance is surely more obvious. We bear in mind that the tongues were not of fire. They *appeared* like it, and perhaps signify the spiritual

fire which took possession of the apostles then. It was a baptism in spirit—the spirits of men dipped in the Spirit of God. All Christians are bidden to be filled with the Spirit, but there is no command at all connected with baptism in the Spirit. Perhaps there is especially at the present time some misunderstanding of this subject because the question of healing of bodies is so much to the fore—and of course rightly. No one denies a close connection between body and mind. Healings today, however miraculous they are, cannot be rightly compared with those practised by Jesus and His apostles—immediate and unquestionable.

It will be observed that I have used the word "in" not "with" in connection with baptism. You cannot pour or sprinkle a man. You can dip him. The words used in English or Greek with baptism make anything but dipping impossible, and there are Greek words for both pouring and sprinkling, never used of baptism.

With regard to the preaching of the gospel, some have supposed that this occasion must be regarded as unique in most particulars, and of course we agree the circumstances can never be repeated. The main message however must always remain the same. The apostles were instructed to remain in Jerusalem until endued with power from on high because the truth must be so startling that it required divine backing. The fact of one condemned and executed as a criminal being raised from the dead, and declared to be the Son of God is so stupendous (and perhaps familiarity has dimmed our sense of this) that only supernatural evidences could satisfactorily prove it. This was amply provided in three ways at least. First, to the senses in what was seen and heard; secondly, in the proof derived from the prophetic scriptures; and thirdly, in the skill and earnestness accompanying the testimony of the speakers.

The listeners knew Jesus. His words and works had convinced all open to conviction that He had divine approval as a man. Readers of the New Testament have the same opportunity today in a different way. They also knew who the disciples were (comparatively unlearned and ignorant men—4:13). They respected the scriptures as God's word, and so the

facts presented by Peter brought conviction of sin.

The results immediately following include what we might call success and opposition. A new kind of life was begun in many hearts. Love for all that was good poured into so many lives where the news of divine love and forgiveness took hold that a new community arose among the people. Miracles of healing like those of Jesus were abundant. Division took place between those who believed and those who did not (2:44). The authorities who had crucified Jesus were nonplussed and began to take hostile action. They could not deny the proofs, or produce the body. They determined to suppress it, and so the disciples began to share their Master's suffering—and joy! (John 17:13; Acts 5:41).

R. B. SCOTT

Criticism is the disapproval of people not for having faults, but for having faults different from our own.

CORRESPONDENCE

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Bro. Carlton Melling,
Editor,
"The Scripture Standard,"
133 Long Lane,
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8th December, 1970

Dear Brother Melling,

May I draw your attention to the following statement in December issue of the *Scripture Standard*?

"The *S.S.* is the only paper in this country which carries news of the churches and through which you can announce your forthcoming events."

This statement is not true. As you know, both reports and announcements from the church in Loughborough and elsewhere have been refused by you as Editor. Surely, this being the case, you should ensure that this statement is not repeated—indeed, that a correction be published. On the other hand, if you have changed

your policy and are now prepared to receive reports and announcements from congregations which use American preachers, should you not publish a statement to that effect?

One other thing. The *Christian Worker* prints many reports and announcements from many individuals and congregations, so the claim that the *S.S.* is the "only paper in this country which carries news of the churches," etc., is very misleading. It is my sincere hope that you will not allow the *Scripture Standard* to be used to make such statements. In writing this letter I desire only that the facts be made known.

Yours in service,

A. E. Winstanley

[Brother Winstanley is an experienced editor, and he knows that any editor has the right and authority to include or exclude any written contributions, of whatever nature, sent to him. We have simply exercised that right, and we accept the consequences. Our sole reason for declining "reports and announcements from the church in Loughborough and elsewhere" has been that we were concerned not to encourage the divisions among us resulting from teaching and methods which we regard as foreign to the New Testament. To this policy we adhere, although it has cost us much.

We have been inconsistent, perhaps even unfair on occasions. But when a firm decision is made, such results in carrying it out are at times inevitable. We have striven to avoid giving offence, but in the end some brethren have been offended. For this we are deeply sorry, but we believe we are following the right way for the churches and the *S.S.*

As regards the *Christian Worker*, we had no idea or intention of including such publications under the heading "paper." We meant, of course, in the sense of magazines similar to the *S.S.* For any offence given to Bro. Winstanley or to readers of the *C.W.* or similar publications we are wholeheartedly sorry, and we assure you that no offence was meant. So far as this editor is concerned, I remember having seen only two issues of *C.W.* previous to the one Bro. Winstanley enclosed in his letter. We are not, apparently, included on Bro. Winstanley's mailing list!—ED.]

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Hereford.—Although late news, we are none the less happy to learn through Bro. Paul Jones of the baptism of Alan Harding, husband of Sis. Jill Harding. We pray that Bro. Harding will be of good service and help in the small and faithful assembly in Hereford. *Editor*

Mayfield (Midlothian).—We announce the establishment of a church here in Mayfield.

With the blessing of the church at Newtongrange, a few brethren have gone forth on the Lord's work in the district. The brethren hold a Sunday School of 34 persons, this having been established prior to the church. We have also made contact with the Old Folks' Home in the district, and arranged for a service to be held (D.V.) each third Sunday of the month. Good progress is being made with the old and the young.

The church meets at the local school for worship and Sunday school. A bible study meeting is held on Tuesdays in a brother's home. A small hall has been given to us for use with the young on Mondays and Wednesdays, Sunshine Corner, etc. Meetings commenced on November 8th, 1970.

The nearby churches are to help with the gospel preaching plan. We hope and pray that when financially sound we will be able to hold a few gospel missions.

We seek the support and prayers of our brethren in this venture for the Lord.

I do hope that you will be able to make an announcement in the *Scripture Standard* on behalf of the church here at Mayfield. Yours in Christ's service.

Andrew P. Sharp, Secretary

Slamannan.—During the recent mission of Bro. Paul Jones we were cheered by the immersion on 8th November of two young brothers, John and Robert Wilson, both sons of Bro. & Sis. Peter Wilson.

We trust these additions will give us courage to go forward in the good work, and that in future we may be blessed with yet further results. *Mary S. Neilson*

Stretford (Manchester).—We are happy to announce that again the gospel has borne fruit in that a young man, Paul Barrett, has responded to the Lord Jesus Christ and was baptised at Scholes, Wigan, on Saturday, 7th November, 1970. Paul is a striking example of the power of our Saviour's love, that it is able to reach all. It has meant a break from a past, much of which he does not care to remember, and an entry into a new life for which he has had very little preparation. We ask that you rejoice with us and pray the Lord that he will guard Paul from temptation and help him to spiritual maturity. Paul's zeal is such that we feel that he could develop into a fine worker for his Saviour.

We are often asked how many of us there are in the church here. Since we started breaking bread on our own two years ago, there have been six baptisms, one of whom meets at Kirkby-in-Ashfield Notts., and eleven of us now break bread, which include a brother from Stockport who comes over to help us. We thank our Father for his abundant mercy through our Saviour Jesus the Christ.

Tranent.—With joy we report the baptism on 30th November of Sheila Gardner, daughter of Bro. & Sis. George Gardner. We thank the Lord and pray that our young sister will be blessed with a long life in the Master's service.

Woodstock (Cape Town).—On 12th October, 1970, Fransina Shaba, wife of Bro. Shaba, was baptised.

OBITUARY

Hereford.—A great chapter has ended for the small church in Hereford. Sister Alice Sprake died on 23rd October, 1970, at the age of 73 years.

The history of the church goes back three-quarters of a century. It came into being through the study of the scriptures; first by the mother of Sister Sprake and later by her own devotion. The elder lady realised the error of christening and refused to allow her children, of whom Alice was the youngest, to be subjected

to the rite. The mother died when Alice was only fifteen years old, but not before she had planted the seeds of truth in her daughter's heart. Alice became Mrs. Sprake, wife of a Wesleyan local preacher. She was earnestly seeking for salvation and for the true church. She asked the Wesleyans for immersion, but was discouraged when they very reluctantly agreed but strictly charged her not to tell others that baptism meant immersion. She rightly contended, "If it's right for me, then it's right for others."

After a short married life Mr. Sprake died in 1924, leaving two daughters. In the course of her business—shorthand and typing—Sis. Sprake came into contact with Will Groom, a Christadelphian. But little satisfaction was possible for these people demanded a denial of the pre-existence of Christ which Mrs. Sprake refused to give. Hopes of the small assembly were raised again when William Robinson of Birmingham (Principal of Overdale College) visited them, but these hopes also faded when at the end of their discussions the desire was expressed of finding a church which kept to the teaching of the New Testament and Brother Robinson replied, "If there is one, I don't know of it."

In 1937 Sis. Sprake's daughters were immersed for the remission of their sins, and about that time contact was made with the "Old Paths" movement. Then it was that they found their home. Some six or seven souls were meeting regularly to break bread each Lord's Day. They came under the teaching of Brothers F. C. Day and George Hudson, with others of like faith, and the church grew. Meetings were held in a large garage, converted for the purpose, which adjoined the Sprake's home. The younger of Sister Sprake's daughters, Glory, married and in turn has been blest with four girls. Jill, the eldest of these four, married in 1969. On 29th July, 1970, the church rejoiced to hear the good confession from the lips of Alan Harding, Jill's husband. He was immersed at the local swimming bath.

The church in Hereford mourn the loss of the one so largely responsible for the commencement of the church there, but they rejoice at the outcome of her tenacious faith and the glorious hope which is hers in Christ Jesus. We commend those who

are left to the One who never fails, our Heavenly Father. P.J.

* * * *

All "S.S." readers who knew Sis. Sprake will read the above news, as I did, with real sorrow. Our sister on a few occasions visited the Hindley Bible Schools some 15 years ago, together with her daughter Grace. Those occasions were to them times of rich fellowship as we were taught together the word of God and shared in the power of the gospel.

Perhaps the outstanding virtue of Sis. Sprake was her deep humility and consequent desire and readiness to learn from scripture from any fellow-disciple. It mattered not that her own scripture knowledge was so profound: the simplest lesson she could learn from those less well-versed in scripture she eagerly assimilated. One had often the feeling that "I have need to be taught by you, and do you come to me?" One even learned from her questions, in that they set one thinking as to their answers. She loved discussion, not for the sake of controversy but in order to grow in the knowledge of the Lord through His word. To her that word was absolutely authoritative and final. Even though different views were held on some matters of scripture, those views were advanced in such love and reverence for scripture that one could differ without anger or enmity resulting.

She was utterly loyal to her Lord and His church. Her service was chiefly carried out in the small, isolated and struggling congregation in Hereford. It is largely through her faithfulness and the faithfulness of her family circle that the cause of Christ there has been maintained for so long. "Blest be her memory and blest her bright example be."

I treasure still some of the letters she wrote to me and the Greek New Testament which I received as a gift from her. She was a loyal supporter of the "S.S." and its work, finding it a vital link with the work of the churches in other parts.

Slamannan. — On Thursday, December 10th, 1970, Sister Agnes Sneddon, née Rae, passed away. She was in her 94th year. Interment at Slamannan on Saturday, 12th December, 1970, (An appreciation will appear next month). *Editor*

COMING EVENTS

Tranent.—Annual Social in the Town Hall, Church Street, Tranent, 6th February, 4 p.m. Speakers: Bros. Jack Parker (Scholes, Wigan) and David Chalmers (Dalmellington).

A warm welcome to all.

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