

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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GOD OR MEN?

PETER and John were arrested, and brought before the Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish court), because the priests were 'grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.' Peter made a noble defence; and when the council 'saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men [illiterate persons, untrained in the schools (Weymouth)], they marvelled, and took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.' (Acts 4.) How often God has used those who were regarded as 'unlearned and ignorant' for the accomplishment of His work. There is nothing in the Scriptures to encourage us to depend on human learning and wisdom; but quite the reverse. When religious leaders were rejecting His teaching, the Lord Jesus said: 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; for so it seemed good in thy sight.' (Matthew 11: 25-26). Paul wrote, 'the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God' ['God ranks this world's wisdom as sheer folly (Moffat)] (1 Cor. 3:19).

The Churches of Christ have suffered much from the wisdom of the world, and scholarship, so-called.

After Peter's defence the council 'commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 'Then Peter and John put the council to the test by asking, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, Judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' Being released, the Apostles reported to their brethren what the council had said and done, and with one accord they lifted up their voice to God, saying, 'Grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.' They asked the Lord to help His servants to do what the rulers had commanded them not to do.

Being again arrested, the Apostles said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' They were beaten (flogged), and again commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus. But 'they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name; and daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5). The Apostles and early Christians always put loyalty to God first.

In every age Christians have been faced with the problem, God or man? In the early days of Christianity they were regarded as a danger

to the State because of their loyalty to 'another King, one Jesus.' Of Paul they said: 'We have found this man a pestilent fellow [a perfect pest] and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes' (Acts 24. 5). All God's true messengers have been regarded as agitators, disturbers of the peace, and centres of contention. Even of the Lord Jesus, they said: 'He stirreth up the people': 'If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation' (John 11. 48). They did not let Him alone, they crucified Him, and lost their place and nation.

Those early Christians chose to obey God rather than men, and for their loyalty suffered death by slow torture, by being torn limb from limb by lions, or roasted by slow fires. We owe our liberty to them. We owe nothing to compromisers and trimmers. In replying to the question, 'Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?' the Lord Jesus revealed our true attitude to the ruling powers: 'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's' (Matt. 22 : 15-22). The Lord clearly showed that whilst we are to render to rulers their just dues, there is a realm where they have no jurisdiction, no right to interfere. As Christians we are citizens of two kingdoms. By natural birth we are citizens of an earthly kingdom, but by a new and spiritual birth we have become citizens of a heavenly kingdom; we have been 'translated into the kingdom of his dear Son' (Col. 1. 13).

When the interests of the two kingdoms conflict we must be loyal to our heavenly King, even if it involves loss, suffering, prison, or death.

"Let Cæsar's dues be ever paid

To Cæsar and his throne;

But consciences and souls were made

To be the Lord's alone."

In the year 1664, the "Conventicle Act" was passed. This prohibited the holding of religious meetings after any other manner than allowed by the practice of the Church of England. Penalty for first offence, three months imprisonment, for second offence, penalty doubled, for third offence banishment to American plantations for seven years and in case of return or escape to suffer death. And they dared to meet even then. John Bunyan was arrested at one of these meetings, and was imprisoned in Bedford Jail for twelve years. When offered liberty if he would promise not to preach, he said: 'I will be here until the moss grows on my eyebrows rather than make any such promise.'

Coming nearer to our own days, many of us can remember the sufferings endured during the 1914-18 World War by those who put God first, and said as the early disciples did: 'We are Christians, and we cannot fight.' Some of our brethren were imprisoned, beaten, kept in solitary confinement on bread and water, and some were sentenced to death, a sentence later commuted to ten years' penal servitude. It is passing strange that whilst nearly all admit that the teaching of Jesus forbids all war, yet when war is declared they plead that 'this war is different.' But the teaching of Jesus is not different.

During the last World War at a Glasgow Tribunal, a pastor of the 'Four Square Gospel' people, speaking for one of their members, said, 'Our Churches have passed a resolution expressing our conviction that all war is absolutely contrary to the Spirit and teaching of Jesus, but we leave our members free to act as their conscience dictates.' 'Oh,' said the chairman, 'your members can trample the Spirit and teaching of Jesus underfoot if they care to! What do you do if you have any cases of adultery to deal with?' The pastor said, 'We separate them from fellowship at once.' 'Why?'

asked the chairman, 'in the one case, and not in the other?' There was no reply to that. But the question, God or man, applies to all departments of life. In matters of worship, conduct and service, 'we must obey God rather than men.'

Of much that passes for Christianity to-day the Lord's words can be applied: 'But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' (Matt. 15. 9). To take only one example, the Prayer Book of the Church of England speaks of 'water wherein the person is baptised,' and bids the priest 'dip him in the water.' Also it states that faith and repentance are to be 'required of persons to be baptised.' Yet they sprinkle water on infants and call that baptism. Sprinkling in place of immersion came from the Pope of Rome.

In *Articles of Religion* (xxv), confirmation is named among things, of which it is said, 'these are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel . . . for they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.' So they are 'teaching for doctrines the commandments of men'; and are obeying men rather than God. Of what a large number of things done in the name of Christianity the same can be said. When discussing matters with members of the Salvation Army, one said, 'You have baptism, and we have the flag. What is the difference?' We replied, 'Baptism came from the Lord Jesus Christ, but the flag came from General Booth.' What a difference it would make in our daily conduct, in attendance at meetings of the Church, and in what the Church could accomplish if every Church member put God first. Our King's command is, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.' How many of us are doing that? Are we making that our chief aim? Are we obeying God or man? Or are we putting self first?

EDITOR.

WAR CONTRARY TO MIND OF CHRIST.

SOME plain speaking on the attitude of the churches to war was given by the new Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, Ebenezer Cunningham, M.A., at his induction in London.

A layman, Mr. Cunningham is a foundation member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and active in the pacifist cause in Cambridge.

He told his fellow Congregationalists that 'We have to prove that our faith creates fellowship.'

This applied in particular to that greatest of all problems which faced the world today: deliverance from the fear of war.

A Threatening Cloud.

This fear, he said 'hangs over us like a threatening cloud, darkening counsel and hindering progress.

'The world is divided into camps. Each believes in its own rightness; each mistrusts the others. Each accepts as an axiom that it must be prepared, in extremity, to destroy the others or reduce them to impotence by destruction.

'So they heap upon themselves burdens which they cannot carry. So they accept uncalculated and incalculable risks, risks of disease, disorder, death; their hope is that if this or that particular phase of evil is thwarted, good may result.

'Time and time again the churches have faced this question. The councils of the churches have declared clearly from time to time that

"war is contrary to the mind of Christ." Yet there they seem to halt between two opinions. Indeed, at Amsterdam we were offered three from which to choose, with no word to guide the bewildered soul.

This was no matter on which the Church should be divided into parties holding different opinions. The call of the day to the Church was to unite for the deliverance of the world from this greatest of all scourges.

A Stirring Challenge.

'The vital issue is not one between two political systems,' Mr. Cunningham declared, 'the real conflict is between the word of life and the word of death.'

'We, the Church, have to stand now where Jesus stood, free of all party, opinion, race or politics.'

'Let us not waste our time in arguing with one another but let us gird ourselves for His reconciling work. Let us not present our faith as a mild tonic or sedative which we hardly dare recommend to our neighbours; but let us reassert it as a stirring challenge for the world to choose, with Christ and in His power, the way of fellowship and life abundant.'

Peace News.

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE.

A GOOD many letters have come in response to my articles on the great threat which the rise of militarism is to our country and to the cause of Christ. Some have been complimentary; others have been critical.

There is something much more interesting and significant about these letters from Christian people. Their writers almost all seem greatly concerned about the rise and spread of Communism throughout the world. I suppose practically all of us share that concern. But the very striking point is that none of them express the faith that Christianity has any power to deal with this problem. Rather they almost all express or imply the view that mankind is totally dependent upon force of arms and money for his salvation.

The truth, in my judgment, is that strength of arms is helpless to defend the sin-cursed, sick world from the evil growth of Communism. On the contrary, every war that is fought produces additional situations of famine, poverty, and fear which are the soil in which Communism grows.

Communism in essence, is a religion. It takes hold of human hearts, seems to distort them, holds out false hopes to them, makes them fear-ridden and fanatic. Armed might cannot remake and ennoble human hearts. In short, we are going up a tragic blind alley. We are misplacing our faith for we are putting their faith in man-centred power rather than in the wisdom and righteousness of God and in the ultimate power of truth.

I humbly make this prediction: When the shouting and the tumult die; when the horrible carnage is over; when the screams of mangled and dying women and children have died away; when frightened, cringing men crawl out of their hiding places to view the smoldering ruins of our civilization; when the dreaded four horsemen ride the whole earth at will; when all of this has come to pass, evil will be even more abundant than now. For evil cannot be overcome by evil.

It is my faith that after all of this ill-conceived effort to destroy evil with force has been tried, the battle of right will still have to be fought and won by men and women of God through the means of the gospel of

Jesus Christ. The weapons of this warfare are not the carnal weapons of destruction; they are spiritual weapons of healing. The apostle Paul describes them in this way: 'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Eph. 6:10-17).

But my friends writing to me do not speak of this spiritual struggle. I hear few or no voices raised on behalf of the power of true religion and education based on truth—the only forces that have any hope whatever to defeat Communism or any other evil that may beset the hearts of men. Does this mean that we have lost faith in the power of the gospel? Have we forgotten that this power of the cross is infinitely greater than all of the legions of Rome—that the powers of even hell itself cannot prevail against the kingdom of God?

This lack of faith although regrettable is nevertheless understandable. The following conditions in Christianity itself have tended to undermine real faith in the power of the Christian gospel.

1. The Christian message has become diluted by other teachings and other cultures until the original power has largely gone out of it. A man may be identified with Christian people and be and do almost anything one can imagine.

2. Those who profess the Christian faith are divided, often bitterly divided among themselves. There is always confusion in a variety of counsels. This division reaches all the way from the major cleavage of Catholics and Protestants to divisions within the smaller groups of professed disciples. Difference of opinion is to be expected and perhaps is inevitable. The destruction of Christian power has not come from such sincere and humble differences, but rather from the man-centred building of creeds and creed-guided organizations—all in the framework of an un-Christianlike spirit.

3. Christians do not make a serious attempt to live up to their calling. There are millions of nominal adherents, but few saints. The power of Christianity lies in a genuine incarnation of Christ's spirit and teachings in the lives of men. Conversion must make a difference if Christianity would have power. A serious attempt to live up to the high demands of the New Covenant would make a difference in human lives and would again give power to the Christian faith.

4. Christianity has become so involved in the evils of our civilization that it will not, or cannot, condemn those evils. The church should be free to teach the full message of Christ for the world, but how can a prosperous, well dressed, smug 'Fifth Avenue church' say what needs to be said in sincerity about the worship of mammon? How can our churches that are full of racial prejudice teach the message of Christ—that in God's kingdom there is neither bond nor free, Jew nor Greek, male nor female? And so on for the numerous sins of our world.

5. Perhaps most tragic of all, the church has leagued itself with nationalism—with Caesar and all his trappings. Many Christians are implying or are arguing directly what in the present great world struggle first allegiance should be given to and prime faith placed in Caesar and his armed might and that allegiance to national demands and national customs come first. The situation is understandable, for man's feverish and dangerous devotion to the all-powerful national state in these recent centuries has really become the modern religion. Consequently, this fanatical allegiance to the state has drained the power and life out of the Christian faith.

Because of these and other forces, the Christian gospel which was once the most powerful revolutionary force in the world has ceased to be counted as a great power in the struggle for men's allegiance. This, in my judgment, is a fatal error for modern man for it cuts him off from the wisdom and will of God, as revealed in the Christian message. But let us remember that this waywardness is only a phase in man's painful journey. Let us not think that the cross has lost its power. As it is lifted up it will again draw men. The desperate need is for men with sufficient conviction, courage, and independence to live and proclaim this way.

In order to regain this power we should study our New Testament anew. Perchance if we would bring our minds again to the lonely cruel cross against a Judean sky expressing God's approach to evil; perhaps if we would read again with repentant and faithful hearts the teachings of our Saviour and his ambassadors, we would have less faith in the long since decayed war machines and marching legions of power-proud Rome.

The crisis of our world is a crisis of character. The battle is for the characters—the hearts of men. The weapons of our warfare are the spiritual weapons that win and remake the souls of men. Using these weapons, our hands will be upheld by God Himself and our cause will be the cause of God. Placing our ultimate faith in any other weapons and rushing into their use may bring us under the fateful curse of ' . . . for all who take the sword will perish by the sword ' (Matt. 26:52). (For a scholarly description of how this curse has worked to destroy men and nations in the past see Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*, one of the great books of this century.)

E. V. PULLIAS, U.S.A.

PERSECUTION OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN FIRST GREAT WAR.

OUR late Brother Robert Price thus described the sufferings of some conscientious objectors who were sent to France: 'On the Compound at Etables we were horse-whipped, half-choked with sand bags being slung around our necks, thrown into dark cells. The climax came when, for half an hour, ten or twelve fellows set about us when we refused to "double." We were whipped, kicked, thrown down, thrown against the railings, shaken as a dog shakes a rat, pushed and dragged until totally exhausted on both sides, when they left off beating us. Another minute or two and we should have collapsed. We were then at once (without dinner) entrained, handcuffed, to the prison. Here we refused orders, and as a result were fourteen days confined to cells; fourteen days No. 1 diet (i.e. bread and water every other three days); and fourteen days No. 1 field punishment (i.e. we were handcuffed twenty-four hours to the day), daytime hands behind us, nighttime in front, plus having to stand in the corner of cell all day, facing wall.

Well we struggled through that, too, but you may guess what a time we had. Paul's words encouraged me much, "I can overcome all things through Christ who strengthened me".

—*Apostle Messenger*, October, 1917 (p.118).

These brethren were made of the real martyr stuff. And to think that British lads were thus so brutally treated by British soldiers! Conscientious objectors owe much to those pioneers who suffered so much; and have made the way easier for objectors to military service today. We often forget the price by which our liberties have been bought.

EDITOR, 'S.S.'

MESSAGES TO
YOUNG FOLK

FAMILY CIRCLE

BY
HAROLD BAINES

ADVICE TO ADOLESCENTS LEAVING SCHOOL

IN this, the third in our Series, I want to talk to those of you who are commonly known these days as 'teenagers,' and as you can see by the title, I am specially addressing you who are about to leave school or have just done so.

When you reach school-leaving age, you embark on life's great adventure in real earnest. It matters not whether your education is just the ordinary elementary one, or one of the higher grammar, technical or university educations, there comes the time for you to leave it and embark on the great adventure of earning your own living in what no doubt appears to be a great and wonderful world, nevertheless a bit awesome, especially when you set out from home to your first job.

It is in the work-a-day world that you are called upon to put into practice the things you have learnt at school, particularly so if you have had a specialised training for a particular job at one of the higher schools I have named.

Your education was given to enable you to master the rudiments of, say, English Grammar, Arithmetic, Reading and Writing, and generally to fit you for your life as a citizen of this country, and your generation is about the best of all generations for giving a wide field of education to boys and girls in all walks of life.

You will find, however, that educational values are not the same ones required in life. There are such things as moral and spiritual values, modes of conduct and living that only religious training and Christian instruction can give. Persons devoid of these, whatever educational advantages they may possess, can turn out to be nothing but educated rogues. My young readers will find before they have been out in the world very long there are lots of things to cause them to be puzzled, if not alarmed.

Sharp practice in business, underhand methods in factory and workshop, office and store; gambling in all walks of life among otherwise quite respectable people, bad and obscene language, vulgar tales that bring a blush to your cheek; and yet withal you will find clean living, honesty and kindness in the most unexpected places.

Leaving school is also a time of beginnings. If he has not already done so, the boy quickly learns to swear and alas, with girls too, bad habits are quickly formed. But in this talk I want to emphasise that *first time*. There is the first time to drink, the first time to smoke, to swear, to gamble

—or TO REFUSE. There is a "first time" to be tempted, a first time to overcome, and that hymn you often sing in the Lord's Day School will come to your mind :

"Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin,
Each victory will help you, some other to win."

A wise one of old said, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' (Eccl. 12.1) and happy is the boy or girl who has made his or her Creator their Lord and Master. Just as you need mental education, you also need moral and spiritual education, without which your education is incomplete and you can find this in God's Own Word, the Bible.

So, my young reader, make God's Word your Guide in this great adventure of "leaving school." If you haven't already given your life to Him, do so, yes, even before you put down this paper, decide to confess your sins and be baptised into Christ and grow up to be like Him.

Next month, I am going to talk about "Growing Up." In the meantime, remember those "first times."

"There's always a first time for playing the fool,
Always a first time for breaking a rule,
Always a first time for being unkind,
Always a first time for speaking your mind.
There's always a first time for every mistake,
Always a first time to make a heart break,
If first times could only be last,
None would know sorrow remembering their past."

THE HINDLEY BIBLE SCHOOL.

WE spent three happy days at the Bible School, and can fully endorse the impressions given by our brethren in this issue. The Hindley brethren and sisters did their part magnificently. Everything was splendidly organised, and carried through in fine order.

Before each indoor Gospel meeting an open-air meeting was held addressed by different brethren.

A special word of praise is due to Bro. Philip Partington, who toured the district with his van ; and with a loud-speaker announced the meetings.

It was wonderful to meet with, and hear a young German so ably tell out 'the old, old story.'

To one who has grown old in the service it is a great joy to know that we have so many young men with a real grip of the Scriptures, and who can so well proclaim and defend the old faith. The Lord abundantly bless and strengthen the hands of them all.

The Hindley brethren and sisters have sown bountifully, and we pray that they may reap bountifully.

EDITOR.

'What Christ means to me.'

Dieter Alten preached his first Gospel sermon in Britain on Lord's Day, May 24th, 1953. It was indeed a memorable occasion for his audience, which consisted of the Hindley congregation, augmented by many visiting brethren who were present for the annual Bible School. There was a good sprinkling of strangers also among the crowd of a hundred and twenty-five present, and all listened with rapt attention.

Bro. Alten, who was converted in Frankfurt, has acquired since then a full and expressive command of English, which he speaks with little

inflexion and with admirable precision. What rejoiced the hearts of his brethren most, however, was his description of 'What Christ means to me. It was the introductory address in his series of 'mission' sermons during the Bible School and these were his main headings:—

1. That Christ is divine yet He has a personal interest in me.
2. He has given me a new and real purpose in life.
3. He has restored my faith in mankind.
4. He has enlarged my mental horizon, particularly in giving me a realisation of war's futility and a sense of shame at my own participation in it.
5. He has changed my loyalty from my nation to Him.
6. I have thus been introduced to a world-wide brotherhood.
7. Christ's mediation before God has given me a new perspective on my heavenly Father.
8. My eyes are now opened to the relative proportions of time and eternity.
9. I now have a real religion. After a struggle I obeyed the Gospel, leaving Lutherans and other human systems.
10. Christ has given me peace of mind since applying the truth of Isaiah 53 personally. He is *my* sin-bearer.
11. I now know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).
12. Death is no longer an enemy.

This bare resumé conveys little idea of the depth of connected reasoning in this address, which was effectively punctuated by relevant quotations from the Scriptures. We have confidence that by the time this report is printed the seed will have brought forth by divine blessing a hundredfold harvest.

R. A. HILL.

'The Best Yet.'

ON the last day of the Hindley Bible School, the above phrase was heard again and again. There was general agreement on this—that the School had been the best ever. This is not to underestimate the value of former sessions but, as one brother put it, "The Bible School seems to get better every year."

To this writer, the most outstanding feature of all was that the Lord Jesus Christ had the pre-eminence. Again and again, in all the services, our thoughts were directed to Him. This happy note was struck at the welcome meeting when we were reminded of the request of the Greeks, who said, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.' And see Jesus we did. He was lifted up in all the teaching and preaching.

We began each day with a contemplation of the Saviour, when various brethren directed our minds to His glorious person, as described by Isaiah 9:6. At this morning service, many joined in prayers, and the spiritual fervour of united intercession was a tonic indeed.

In the morning lectures ('The Message of the Gospels'), the Saviour was supreme. Our hearts thrilled as we studied His divine character. We saw Him through the eyes of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—as King, Man of action, Son of Man, and the Eternal Word. And the more we heard of Him, the more we felt like exclaiming:—

'Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love, and power,
That mortals ever knew,
That angels ever bore:
All are too mean to speak His worth;
Too mean to set my Saviour forth.'

This theme continued in the morning forums. We studied together

the four items named in Acts 2:42, and repeatedly we were reminded of the great imperative of discipleship—loyalty to the Lord and His Word.

It was evident in the 'Questions Answered' sessions that brethren felt the importance of 'speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where it is silent.' So long as we hold fast to this attitude the future is bright for the cause of Christ in these islands.

The afternoon sessions were helpful in bringing to us a clearer understanding of the implications of our faith in daily life. We were well shown that discipleship affects, and ought to transform, all our relationships with others. The talk on methods of teaching children was eminently practical and useful.

The evening gospel services were wonderful. The singing (and indeed this is true of the service of praise at all meetings) was an inspiration. The preaching, by Brother Dieter Alten, centred in this phrase: 'What Jesus Christ means to me.' How powerfully the old-time message was sounded out! We humbly thank God for the evident impression made by the Gospel on many who came in to hear it. Others will write more particularly of these evening meetings. My impression was that attendances were easily the biggest the Church at Hindley has ever seen. Surely a great harvest of precious souls will be reaped from such faithful, forceful preaching.

So much more could be said, but space will not permit. One item though, must be mentioned—the magnificent work of the sisters in providing meals and hospitality. For a congregation to provide lunch and tea on the four weekdays of the School—and that for such a large company—was a tremendous achievement. It would not have been done without sacrifice, and splendid unity of endeavour. The hospitality in the members' homes equalled it too. It seems to me, that in their unselfish service, with long hours of labour behind the scenes, the sisters set a fine example in ministry. The Churches owe more to godly, devoted womenfolk than can be told here.

Certainly the Bible School represented much sacrifice in time, money, and real hard work on the part of brothers and sisters alike—not merely at Hindley, but also in the district. Well, let those brethren rejoice in the knowledge that it was well worth while. It gave us all help, encouragement, fellowship and a renewed determination to do more for the One who did so much for us. If we visitors have our way, there'll be another School next year—God willing. Surely the prophetic word was true of those happy days: 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.'

A. E. WINSTANLEY.

Impression.

I am sure that it will be the wish of all those brethren who were present for even a part of the Hindley Bible School, that a word of appreciation and encouragement should be put on record.

The fine hospitality extended by the Hindley Church has become proverbial by now, but it can never be over-rated; without it there could be no school. Let us, at the outset then, say a very big 'thank you' to the Hindley brethren for all their thoughtfulness in providing for the physical well-being of their visitors in the way they did. The catering arrangements were very good. I hope that the generous way in which we were treated (no charge for meals) was matched by generous giving to the Lord's Day collection.

Now to turn to the spiritual fare. Once again we fared sumptuously. Various new features were tried with success. The Questions Answered

period after the Gospel meeting on Lord's Day evening proved a fine way of telling out the Gospel. The discussion group method of studying the topic of 'The Christian and Amusements' showed the great possibilities of the method, given rather more time and smaller groups. Many said that the forums, which dealt with the four themes, 'The Apostles' Doctrine,' 'Fellowship,' 'Breaking of Bread' and 'Prayers,' achieved an even higher level than in the past. I wonder if perhaps this was due to having the same panel of speakers almost the whole way through the school. Forum-discussion is something of an art, and perhaps those serving there benefited by regular practice.

For the rest of the programme it was almost the 'mixture as before.' The prayer meetings were based on the five titles of Christ in Isaiah 9 : 6. The morning lectures, each seeking to give the essential message of one of the four gospels, were truly stimulating, though of course quite meaty ; this is no crime. But we have so many Churches where the majority of saints are still on milk-diet that our speakers tend to be ill at ease with a profound subject. There is a real need for us all to study deeply in the Word.

The first session after lunch each day was the well-worn and well-loved 'Questions Answered.' Many of the questions, too, were well-worn, but of course they are always new and important to someone, and should always be treated so. The second afternoon session dealt with various practical aspects of our Christian work and life, under the titles 'Singing Together,' 'Visual Aids in Teaching,' 'The Christian and Citizenship,' 'The Christian and Amusements.' These were all well received and declared to have been beneficial. There is a great need to be able to bring our faith to bear on everyday issues as this series bade us do.

I have forborne to mention speakers' names thus far (we were asked to 'see Jesus' throughout the school), but one speaker should be mentioned, I think, namely our Bro. Dieter Alten from Germany. Impressions of any sort of visits always involve people and all the speakers will live with us for that reason. However, our Bro. Alten must stand out in our memories, not because he is great, or important, or physically impressive ; but because he is a living testimony to the power and beauty of the gospel. A former Luftwaffe man, he was converted about five years ago, and has so learned Christ, both in life and lip, that he was able successfully to preach the Gospel each evening from Sunday to Thursday, in such good English that no-one could doubt a word of what he said. His messages were master-pieces of conciseness, directness, earnestness and simplicity. They were messages that the Holy Spirit was able to use to the winning of four precious souls.

The Gospel meetings are always a great experience at the Bible School, and were doubly so this year, as the brethren made it the climax of weeks of door-to-door visitation and invitation. Their success may be gauged from the fact that one hundred and ninety adults were present on the Thursday evening, and about fifty of those were non-members.

The Lord blessed us all greatly at the Bible School and we hope to show our gratitude to Him in reconsecrated lives. G. LODGE.

AUTUMN RALLY

September 12th, 1953.

Will any Church desirous of having the Autumn Rally please communicate with the secretary of the Conference Committee?

A. HOOD.

PEACE ON EARTH

Peace on earth! No nobler words could mortal pen.
Peace on earth, goodwill to men.
No nobler work for us to do,
Than help to make these words come true.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

- July 5 Nehemiah 1; 1 John 1:1-26.
 .. 12 Joshua 24:14-28; 1 John 2:7-29.
 .. 19 Deuteronomy 11:1-25; 1 John 3.
 .. 26 Isaiah 30:18 to 31:9; 1 John 4.

The Apostle John's First Letter.—This letter, unlike most of those in the New Testament is not addressed to any particular persons or localities, and begins and ends without address or salutation. Its authorship, however, has never really been in doubt, and our study of it will confirm the tradition and decision of the past. The necessity of belief of the truth, and the manifestation of that belief in obedience, genuine heartfelt obedience, is pressed upon us by the writer with forceful repetition. The positive (exhortation to right doing) and the negative (warning against error and sin) aspects of the Christian life are interwoven with beauty of thought and expression.

Introduction (1:1-4).—Having had such close contact with the Saviour in His earthly life, and being so utterly certain of His heavenly presence, the apostle lays great emphasis first on the reality of the divine revelation. Some already were suggesting that Jesus was not God manifested in the flesh—"it is so impossible for such a thing to happen." He was a spiritual emanation and did not really suffer on the cross, was the thought. It is absolutely basic to our faith that God did thus manifest Himself. The impossible did happen, and thus was brought into our life-plane that heavenly presence, making true fellowship with Father, Son and one another a glorious reality. The assurance of these truths brings joy with it. Please read John 17:20 and 21 and John 15:11.

The conditions of fellowship (1:5-10).—The message brought by the apostles through the divine inspiration is that God is absolutely good and holy. Therefore we must be walking in the light of truth. This is a condition of real fellowship and of forgiveness through the blood of Christ. We can see that otherwise God would be a partner to our sin. However, were this to be an absolute rule no one could be saved. Hence the further facts are brought to notice—first, we are all sinners, we do still sin; secondly, our recognition of this fact, and our ready admission of it to God, brings His forgiveness (through that same means of course). A rough definition of Christians and others might well be—Christians are sinners and know it, others are sinners and do not. The self-righteous are lost as long as they remain so.

How to be sure of forgiveness (2:1-11).

—This letter is surely the word of an old and experienced Christian to his beloved "children" in the faith. His great longing is for their holiness of life. Therefore he writes, reminding them of the means of forgiveness—worldwide forgiveness—and the need of a pure life filled with longing to do the divine will in the divine way. We cannot separate that from the divine word and the keeping of that, which is the result and issue of love to God. This is not new teaching. The apostles always taught it though it was obscured before the light of the gospel dawned in the full sense. We turn now to the very practical outcome—love to the brethren. If we have not got that we are still in darkness, and remain unforgiven.

Warning against worldliness (2:12-17).

—Thinking of three differing stages in Christian experience, John states his reason for addressing all. He thinks of the general body of the Church as having received forgiveness and having knowledge of God as Father; of those experienced in the warfare as having come to know the Saviour more fully; of the young men as full of new strength and victory—would that all our young men were so. For all these alike comes the warning against a love which can only bring disaster, reminding us of the Saviour's warning that we cannot serve God AND mammon. This leaves us still free, nay, obligated, to love the sinner while hating the sin, and to use the world as not abusing it. (1 Cor. 7:31). "If I be ruled in otherwise my lot is cast with all that dies."

Warnings concerning anti-Christ.

(2:18-29).—While we may feel that John was expecting the end of the age to come sooner than it has, it remains true that it is still the last hour to each one, and the urgency of living a life suited to such a time is always with us. R. L. Stevenson has expressed the thought in this way, "Let every morning be to you as the beginning of life, and every evening as its close." In the Church and then divided from it, were the false teachers, as they are now—never really in it because not really believing that Jesus is the Christ, that is the Anointed One. We have an anointing, the gift of the Holy Spirit to fill our lives, and from Him in the Word we have the knowledge we need to guard us from the seducers (verse 26). I believe there are many more ways than the obvious one in which men may deny the Son. If we throw doubt upon the word, we are doing that. Obviously our safety is in "abiding" in what we have "heard from the beginning"—one gospel, not going beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:), or going ahead too far (2 John 9).

Privilege and responsibility (3:1-10).

—The greatest honour a father can bestow

is sonship. That is what the Almighty God has done towards us. Absolute purity being the attribute of the Father, we dishonour His name when we fail to obey and imitate Him. Jesus came to bring us cleansing, and living sinful lives is inconsistent with loving and abiding in Him. While Christians do sin, they are continually also being cleansed as they acknowledge, repent and confess. If they cease to do this they cease to be God's children and revert to the Devil.

Love assures us of Christ's abiding. (3:11-24).—John returns to the subject of the practice of love in the Christian's life. This may win us the world's hate, but our own assurance of salvation is strengthened when we purposefully and conscientiously love one another. In the eyes of God who reads hearts and motives, hatred is murder, and we can understand this when we realise that only the restraints of society often enough prevent murder taking place. It is clear enough that God loves us when we accept the message of the gospel—"God commendeth his love to us . . ." It is clear enough how we ought to behave towards others if the same love is in us. We may have misgivings at times—quiet them by right actions, and prayers will be answered because they accord with His will. Faith and obedience must go together, and then we know what Spirit guides us.

How to distinguish true from false inspiration. (4:1-6).—John's reference to the Spirit which Christ has given the apostles in particular and all Christians in general, leads him to issue a warning and instruction for the detection of evil spirits. We would refer to 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:32. It is evident that some worked miracles by evil powers, so that the doctrine of such as well as their genuineness needed to be tested. There is a disposition in some quarters to belittle doctrine and insist on works, but both are equally necessary. No doubt the test given here, rightly applied in the circumstances of to-day, would prove effective. Some have given evidence of it, I understand, in spiritualist circles. It is apostolic truth in verse 6—if we know God we listen to their testimony, and we know truth from error by comparing it with their words. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Confessing Jesus involves belief in Old Testament prophecy, and apostolic witness to the true humanity of The Christ.

Love must characterise God's children. (4:7-21).—This passage alone would justify us in calling John the "apostle of love," yet he is hardly more so than other writers, more especially Paul. These verses throw love into high relief. First we have the appeal based upon the fact that God is love. When we learn of loving deeds done for unselfish motives, we

acknowledge the beauty and power of love, and recognise it as the one thing which can bring real happiness and peace into life. How natural when God the Creator is Himself so full of love.

The story of the cross is here repeated. We can see God in that as we see His love manifested in it, and so we can feel God in us, so to speak, when we imitate Him in our own behaviour. The spirit we manifest is the Spirit who animates us. That same Spirit enabled the apostles to give their testimony, and has given us that testimony in the New Testament, the basis of our faith by which we confess Jesus as Saviour. Our love for God removes our fear of death—but this does not mean we do not regard Him with reverential awe. If we do not manifest love to our brethren (whom we can see), that will prove we do not love God. And what about loving our enemies—another commandment of Christ's? R. B. SCOTT.

LETTER FROM BRO. AND SIS. MURPHY, RHODESIA.

Dear Bro. Crosthwaite,

I received the enclosed from Bro. Joppey a few weeks ago. It is condensed and slightly altered to be more suited for publication in an English paper, but I will send the original under separate cover. I thought that you might like to use it, and it will certainly be a little unusual to have something from the pen of an African brother.

He is at present about three hundred miles from here, but we expect him up to help with the work during his school break. When these brothers do put themselves out to preach the word they put us to shame. We don't have half the handicaps which they take for granted and overcome them. They need all the help they can get in this work. The missionaries have laboured wonderfully well to give some of these boys a sounder knowledge of the Scriptures than many of the young men we meet at home. If there is one field in which I think more might have been done, it is in encouraging the Christians to establish Churches, by supplying Bibles and hymn books. What little money could have been supplied could never have touched the fringe of their poverty. From the news I hear from Nyasaland from time to time, the Bibles which have been sent out have done more good than many missionaries might have done. That is in the Gospel. Anyone who comes out now should come to the towns and not to the villages. The African population in Lusaka is now on the way to sixty thousand and was only twenty-five thousand when I came here. It is a won-

derful opportunity if only there were more labourers—and I mean labourers.

There is plenty of work at which a man might earn his living if anyone wanted to come, but they would really have to feel called to stay out here. We have come to love these people, who need the gospel so much and we feel so insignificant at the enormity of the task. But thanks be unto God, who gives the victory again and again. How wonderful too, is the fellowship of saints, that we can think of so many brethren at home, and know that their hearts and thoughts and prayers are so often with us.

We are by God's grace starting a new meeting in another centre where we shall also have a Bible school for the children, and a midweek meeting for Bible study. We shall, of course, meet to remember the Lord on the Lord's day morning. This for a time means dividing our numbers, but also adding unto them and starting another sphere of witness for the Saviour.

We pray, dear Brother, that you are sustained by the love of God and the consolations we have in Christ.

‘THINGS MOST SURELY BELIEVED AMONGST US’

In the study of the things most surely believed amongst us we first of all consider the establishment of the Church of Christ. The Church of Christ is largely unknown in this country (Africa). Many people do not know the teaching of the Church. Therefore they take the Church as one of the denominations. So may the reader note as we go on with our studying, the establishment of the Church of Christ.

Soon after the ascension of Jesus, and forty days after His resurrection from the dead, there were one hundred and twenty disciples left in Jerusalem (Acts 1-15); and many more throughout all Palestine (1 Cor. 15:6). The first Pentecost after the resurrection, the disciples were assembled at Jerusalem.

This surely was a day of days. The day had wonderful happenings, that appealed to eye and ear. Sounds as of a mighty wind, and flames like tongues, accompanied that great day. These accompaniments sat on each of the Apostles, and the effect was great. This effect was produced by the coming of the Holy Spirit, promised previously by Jesus to bring the Apostles power. To the wondering crowd, who gathered from everywhere, the Holy Spirit was the convincing power attesting to the truth of the Gospel preached.

Read Acts 2 carefully. This is a world changing chapter. You can see the

Jewish age ending. You can see Jesus succeeding Moses as a Leader. It was the birthday of God's universal Kingdom upon earth, the Church of Christ (Matt. 16-18). The place was Jerusalem (Micah 4-2; Luke 24-27; Acts 1 and 2).

The Apostle Peter had been selected by Jesus to open the doors to the Kingdom or the Church (Mat. 16:15-19), and he really did that. He proves to the people that Jesus is the Christ. He tells the people of His well-known works, His death unknowingly carried out by wicked people, His resurrection, His exaltation at God's right hand, foretold by the prophets and proven by the miracle of this very day.

Note the great results of this first ever Gospel sermon: the crowds heard the gospel facts; they were pricked in their hearts. No doubt they believed the gospel story. Realising their sinfulness, they asked the great question: 'What shall we do?' Peter gave them a plain answer: 'Repent every one of you, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.' They instantly obeyed—'Then they that gladly received his word were baptised.' Three thousand of them. 'And the Lord added them to the Church (Acts 2:41). They did not join the Church. They simply submitted to the terms of the great commission of the Gospel. (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:27). They were then, and not until then saved.

The conduct of the saved is plainly shown: "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, in the breaking of bread and in prayers."

We read then of a great day in a great city, a great power manifested, a great crowd of people, a great sermon preached, a great response and a great salvation, a great Church established, the Church of Christ. Those who were saved, believed, repented, and were baptised for the remission of sins. If you submit to the terms of the great commission as a true believer, then the Lord will add you to His Church.

L. S. JOPPEY.

* * * * *

(This is condensed from the writing of an African Brother in Northern Rhodesia. He is employed as a teacher, and like a good many African brothers, he devotes a great deal of his spare time to the spread of gospel truth. He has almost completed a correspondence course of Bible study, put out by brethren in Pretoria, South Africa. He has followed Paul's advice to another young man: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth."—F. MURPHY.)

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Bristol, Bedminster.—On May 30th and 31st, the Anniversary Services of the Church were held. On the Saturday, there was a happy gathering around the tea tables, followed by a service at which representatives of all the Churches in the district brought greetings. Each speaker gave a five minutes' talk, contributing to a very happy time spent together. Bro. R. McDonald was the visiting preacher and during the week-end gave three very solid and challenging addresses, emphasising the New Testament basis of our faith.

F. W. WILLS.

Hereford.—We have been pleased to welcome to the Lord's Table Bro. William Groom, of Kington, Herefordshire. Bro. Groom has long been acquainted with the Churches of Christ, and had already complied with our Lord's commandment regarding entry into His Body. His joining with us signifies his desire to be obedient to the Scriptures regarding fellowship. It is believed that the addition to our number of our Brother will strengthen us in our ability to worship, study and serve. We now have a membership of thirteen, of whom eleven are able to meet regularly. Meetings are now held in a converted timber garage adjoining the home of Sister Sprake, 72 Whitehorse Street.

R. COLES.

Hindley.—The 1953 Bible School and Mission are over, and we have many pleasant memories of the meetings and fellowship shared with those of like mind. It indeed was a real mountain-top experience, and a glorious foretaste of the feasts we shall share together if we remain faithful. Two other brethren have been requested to write their impressions of the Bible School, so the writer will make a report of the meetings. The School started on Saturday, May 24th, in the afternoon, with timely messages from Bren. R. A. Hill and D. Dougall. On Saturday evening, Bren. A. E. Winstanley and W. Steele gave us a taste of the good things to come.

The early morning prayer meetings were again a source of inspiration, ably led by Brethren W. Steele, H. Baines, R. Limb, A. Gardner and D. Dougall. The themes of the talks were: "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," each brother dealing with one aspect of the text.

The lectures this year dealt with the messages of the Gospels, and Brethren W. Crosthwaite, L. Channing, Frank Worgan, and Albert Winstanley, had been chosen to minister the word. Many

expressions of appreciation were given, and we feel sure much good was done.

The second period of the morning session was devoted to Forums: "The Apostles' Doctrine," "Fellowship," "Breaking of Bread," and "Prayers."

Brethren A. E. Winstanley, R. McDonald, G. Hudson, and G. Lodge, led the Forums, ably assisted by several other brethren. Many valuable lessons were given and much good done. The sessions were very instructive.

In the afternoon, the ever-popular "Questions Answered" period went all too quickly. Some brethren would like more time devoted to this session, but we prefer to leave our brethren, like Oliver Twist, "asking for more."

The second period of the afternoon consisted of a mixture of good things. On Monday, "Singing together" was led by Bro. A. L. Frith. This is proving very popular, and we feel it merits a place on any future Bible School programme.

On Tuesday, G. Lodge gave a talk and answered questions on the subject of "Visual Aids in Teaching." This proved very helpful to workers amongst the young and was appreciated.

On Wednesday, Bro. Carlton Melling dealt with the subject of "The Christian and Citizenship" in a wonderful way. He had a difficult subject, and we feel he did a very good work.

Thursday was in the nature of an experiment. At first we thought to have four discussion groups dealing with "The Christian and Amusements," but two of our brethren were not able to be with us on the Thursday, so we decided to have two groups, led by Bro. Carlton Melling and Bro. Len Channing. This session proved a success, the time factor running out all too quickly. Young and old enjoyed discussing the problems arising from the topic under discussion.

This year, Bro. Philip Partington was chosen to take charge of the open-air, and he did the task well. The names of the brethren who served us in the open-air were Brethren Alex Allan, G. Lodge, Dieter Alten, A. E. Winstanley, R. McDonald, A. Gardiner, Tom Nesbit, and L. Channing.

Before reporting on the Gospel meetings, I should like to refer to Lord's Day, May 24th, for we had a wonderful time of fellowship. We had a feast of good things, the time spent around the table, the hymns, prayers and the message given by Bro. Ralph Limb, were a source of inspiration to those gathered.

Our choice of speaker for the Primary and Junior school, with many adults present, proved to be a wise one. Bro. Alex Allan, of Blackburn, gave an object lesson which was enjoyed and appreciated. Bro. Harold Baines was chosen to speak to the Bible Class, and had some very good lessons for us.

Bro. Dieter Alten, from Germany, preached the Gospel for us from Lord's

Day, May 25th, to Thursday, May 28th, again on the Saturday and Lord's Day following, owing to the interest and success of the Mission.

A great amount of work had been put in before the Mission started, approximately 2,000 "Revivals," and 4,000 hand-bills being distributed. Many invitation cards were sent out, write-ups in the papers and personal work done.

Were we rewarded? Men and women attended who had never entered the building before. Brethren had to leave their seats for non-members attending. The approximate attendances at the Gospel meetings during the Bible School will give you some idea of the inspiring times, Lord's Day 125, Monday 135, Tuesday 159, Wednesday 183, Thursday 190. The following Saturday and Lord's Day, did not reach these figures but the meetings were worth while.

Four precious souls decided for Christ, two from Ince and two from Hindley; Brethren Duddle and Ashcroft, and Sisters Carter and Bell.

It was a pleasure to have Dieter with us—he endeared himself to all. We thank God for his services and pray God's blessing to rest upon his work. We thank all the brethren who by their sacrificial service helped to make the 1953 Bible School such a huge success. I realise I cannot pay an adequate tribute to all who so willingly gave of their time, talents, and money, to help the work here and we hope further afield.

LEONARD MORGAN.

OBITUARY

Nelson Southfield Street.—Sister Mrs. J. Willman, of this Church, entered into well-earned rest on June 2nd, at the age of eighty-four. She had been a member of the Churches of Christ for fifty years, forty-one of them being spent with the Church at Dalton-in-Furness, the last years at Nelson. Sister Willman was a quiet, consistent Christian, a good

woman, and a worthy and honourable member of the Church. During the time we had her in our membership, we had learned to esteem her very highly; she will be missed very much. We are only a small Church and when we lose one it leaves a big gap in our ranks. Our Sister was laid to rest in Dalton Cemetery after a service held in Dalton Church of Christ meeting room, Bro. W. Crosthwaite, of Ulverston, conducting the service. Our very deep sympathy is extended to the two daughters and son of our sister, and we commend them lovingly to God.

A. CARSON.

Kirkcaldy, Rose Street.—It is with deep regret that we record the sudden passing of our Sister Mrs. Henry Dewar, on Tuesday, 12th May. Our Sister had not enjoyed the best of health recently but there was no indication that she would so soon or so suddenly leave us. Our sincere sympathy goes out to Bro. Henry and Sister Annie Dewar, his daughter, and we pray that our Heavenly Father will bless and comfort them in this time of loss. May they be sustained by the knowledge that some day we shall be reunited with those whom we have loved and lost awhile.

Peterhead.—With the greatest sorrow we report the passing of our dear sister Barbara Wood Strachan, on May 16th. Our beloved sister was laid to rest on May 19th.

Bro. Reid conducted the services, assisted by Bro. Mair, of Portnockie. Members from Buckie, Cullen and Portnockie were present. Our deepest sympathy is extended to her daughter, Sister Barbara Strachan, whom we commend to the loving care of God. We know He will never leave nor forsake her in her hours of sorrow.

"A sudden change in a moment fell,
She had not time to say farewell,
Ere for the regions of delight
Where pleasures never cease,
She left this world of sin and strife
And entered into peace."

A. REID.

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