

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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THE BIBLE; ITS INSPIRATION

INSPIRATION means "breathing in." In 2 Tim. 3:16 Paul writes, "All scripture [or 'every scripture'] is given by inspiration of God," which means that they are God-breathed. We breathe in order to utter words. As every scripture is given by the breath of God, this means that every scripture is composed of the words of God.

Inspiration is claimed by the Scriptures themselves

In the Old Testament such sayings as "Thus saith the Lord," "The word of the Lord came unto Moses, saying . . ." or "The Lord spake unto me" or similar statements occur about two thousand times. The verse already quoted from 2 Tim. 3:16 and the statement in 2 Peter 1:20-21, "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of the scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God," refer to the Old Testament scriptures as being God-breathed, inspired. The inspiration of the Old Testament is more called in question than is the inspiration of the New. To any Christian the two statements quoted should be sufficient to set God's authority, through the apostles Paul and Peter, upon those writings which are doubted by so many. To the devil's question, "Yea, hath God said?"—repeated by so many doubters of the word of God—the answer comes clearly and unmistakably that "every scripture is given by inspiration of God," and that "men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God."

But in 2 Peter 3:15-16 we are told that the New Testament too is God-breathed. Here Peter places Paul's writings (in the N.T.) on a level with "the other scriptures" (in the O.T.). He says, "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you in the wisdom given to him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters . . ." Thus, as the O.T. has been shown to be the word of God, so is the New.

The N.T. comes later than the Old and is therefore a fuller and clearer revelation. In Heb. 1:1-2 we read, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets [in the O.T.]; but in these last days [in the N.T.] he has spoken to us by a Son . . ." Then in ch. 2:1 the writer goes on to say, "Therefore [because of Him through whom God speaks in the N.T.] we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it." Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to the men of old [in the O.T.] . . . but I say to you . . ." (Matt. 5). In those words Jesus claimed that He was a fuller revelation, speaking with higher authority than those writers of the Old Testament. If the O.T. scriptures are inspired, this is true also of the New.

How far is the Bible inspired?

Some say that the Bible is inspired in its spiritual teaching, but that much of its account of history is not true, and that some parts are contradicted by discoveries of science. We are too eager to "defend" the Bible against such changes,

trying to explain it away. We should leave the proof to those who make the charges, by demanding that they bring evidence that any true results of scientific discovery, or any facts of history, contradict any statement in the Bible. Theories, such as the evolutionary hypothesis, may deny the Bible, but facts do not. These theories must first be demonstrated as proven, before they can be accepted as showing the inaccuracy of scripture. The statements of accurate science, before the principles of science were formulated, and the historical fulfilment of prophecy are proofs that the writers could not have written through human knowledge, but only through the inspiration of God.

Many of us will recall the late Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. Barnes. Some of his utterances were appalling in their treatment of the word of God, especially as coming from one claiming to be a Christian. Bishop Barnes rejected the whole of the miraculous element in scripture. Even the recorded miracles of Christ he did not accept, nor such happenings as the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ. Yet he embraced the teaching of Christ, such as in the Sermon on the Mount. But on what authority did he accept the one and reject the other? Both are recorded by the same writers, and the same evidence and authority are produced for both—the testimony of eye-witnesses and hearers of Christ. The judgement of the things recorded, then, depends not on the evidence but upon whether they be acceptable to "the modern mind." Men living 1900 years after the events are deemed sounder judges as to their truth or otherwise than those who heard and saw what they wrote down. Yet this is termed "scientific criticism" and "a faith according to reason." In justifying his views, Bishop Barnes wrote a book, "Should such a faith offend?" suggesting by that title that the faith of the Bible does offend. If it does offend, so much the worse for the "modern mind."

Others say that the thoughts but not the words of the Bible are inspired. But how can we know a person's thoughts apart from his words, and how can we know that we have got his thoughts right apart from his words? How can we have arithmetic without figures or music without notes? It is true that such a composer as the deaf Beethoven could not hear the music he had written. It is marvellous to realise that the tunes ran through his brain without his writing a note. But we could not know what those glorious harmonies were had Beethoven not put them into symbols to convey their musical value to his hearers. So God, to convey His will and thoughts to us, has guided men through His Holy Spirit to reveal His will in the symbols of words.

In 1 Cor. 2:11-13 Paul asks, "For what person know's a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God . . . And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit."

The scriptures claim that their words are inspired. We have a perfect example of the process of inspiration in Jeremiah 36:1-6 and 16-18. We read there that God told Jeremiah to write the words that God had spoken to him upon a roll (the book of those times). Jeremiah dictated these words to a writer, Baruch, who wrote them on the roll and read them to the people. When Baruch was asked how he had come by these words he told the king's men that Jeremiah had dictated the words to him and he had written them down. The process is thus clear: God spoke the words to Jeremiah, Jeremiah repeated them to Baruch, Baruch wrote them down and the consequent writing was the very words of God. In Numbers 23 to 25 a false prophet, Balaam, is told by his king, Balak, to curse the advancing Israelites. Instead, however, Balaam blesses them. When the king asks why, Balaam answers that God had put words in his mouth and he could utter only those words, even though not understanding their meaning. Moses, David, Jeremiah and almost all the other prophets claim to be speaking the words of God.

This is so also in the New Testament. Jesus spoke by inspiration, as Moses did, for He was "a prophet like unto Moses." The apostles (Acts 2:1, 4) and Paul (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thes. 2:13) all spoke the very words which the Holy Spirit gave to them.

From 1 Peter 1:10-11 we learn that often the writers did not themselves understand what they wrote. We can illustrate it like this: a student writes in his note-

book the words which his professor speaks in his lecture. When later the student reads those words he may not understand them, though he has written them, for they are the words of another. But to understand their meaning he must study them.

Is inspiration mechanical?

Some object that this makes the writers of the Bible mere machines. But does it? A pianist plays a piece of music composed by another, but one can sense the player's stamp and style in the playing. It is another man's composition but that does not make the playing a mechanical act. A Shakespearean actor repeats the very words of the dramatist: Is he therefore an automaton, a gramophone record? No, for the man himself and the power to sway his audience are put into his words, though they are the words of another. He is a means whereby the words of the dramatist are interpreted and made to live to those who hear.

Just so the Bible writers faithfully wrote and spoke the words of God, but their personalities are shown in their writings. Moses does not write like David, nor Peter like Paul or John. The Bible writers were men, but what they wrote was from God. God chose human agency, as in other ways, to make His message known to men."

EDITOR.

FOOD: THEN AND NOW

THE stimulating exposition on "a famine of hearing the words of the Lord," in the August *S.S.* brought vividly to mind the thoughts which this text gave me on a recent visit to the Castle Museum in York. In this museum one can peep into the past. The rooms are furnished as they would have been in past ages. One can enter the Jacobean hall and pass on to the Georgian, Elizabethan or Victorian rooms. In the precincts of the museum is a street with shops as they were built and stocked with goods over a century ago. The goods are priced at their century-old prices, but they are not for sale!

Thoughts of God

Amidst much to interest and admire, there was only one thing which impressed. On the wall of one room hung pieces of needlework (samplers). On every one were sewn God's thoughts, or the sewer's thoughts of God and His Son, and they were the work of schoolgirls. Herewith a few examples:

In 1817 Ann Hancock, aged 12, sewed:

"You shall through Christ the conquest gain,
And with your God for ever reign."

In the same century Eliza Townsend, aged 7, sewed a cross and underneath were the words of Jesus, with the words of the malefactors at each side.

In June, 1844, Ann Appleby sewed:

"Jesus permit Thy gracious name to stand
As the first effort of my youthful hand;
And while my fingers over this canvas move
Engage my tender heart to feel thy love;
With Thy dear children may I bear a part
And write Thy Name Thyself upon my heart."

The young then and now

While visualising those little needleworkers of over a century ago, working the Word of God into their hearts as well as into their canvas, my thoughts and compassion went out to our young people of the present day—the children, the teenagers, those whom even some Christians write off as juvenile delinquents. What older people seem to forget is that they have more or less created the world conditions in which the young find themselves. God's shortest command—"BE STILL"—has been neglected by all. If such stillness was necessary in David's day how much more is it necessary today, when it is difficult to hear the Word of God, because of the clamouring noise of tongues in the world. From Press, radio and television the voice of the world advises on how to attain and use every possible material need and luxury. The newsboy shouts "Paper," but in turn the newspaper shouts at us.

Our responsibility

The "famine of hearing the words of the Lord" has come upon us because of the superabundance of hearing the world's words, and often imposed on the young by older generations. Parents are commanded that the word of God be taught diligently to their children (Deut. 6), but by permission of many parents the word of the world booms inside ("when thou sittest in thine house"), and outside ("when thou walkest by the way"). The voice of God is drowned in the world's deafening shout of "idle words." Our children and young people are treated to a diet of idle words. I am appalled at the trivialities contained in children's school books and literature. Compare these with the wholesome food of our little friends of a hundred years ago, when every story had a moral and, even in the hobby of sewing, their thoughts were directed to a Heavenly Father and a Loving Saviour.

It seems that past generations looked upon God's Word as a necessity, while many today regard it as a luxury, an extra they can do without. As the voice of the world has more and more invaded our homes, young people have heard less and less of God's word there. Jesus said that "for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of judgment." Has there ever been a time when so many idle words are spoken and written as today? Not unkind words. Not angry words, but IDLE WORDS, which do not give God the glory.

The word delinquent means, among other things, "neglecting or failing in duty." The term may well be applied, not to juveniles but to parents, teachers, and Christians who have allowed a "famine of hearing the words of the Lord" because they have not been diligent enough in feeding the young with the Bread of Life. In a world where even mature Christians have to exercise self-discipline to "BE STILL" and "HEAR what the SPIRIT saith," let us not judge the young, but from a deep concern for their souls cry, "Lord Jesus, Bread of Life, make them hungry for Thy voice."
M. DARROCH.

ONE CHURCH

MANY religious people are exercised in their hearts and minds respecting the divisions existing in the professed Christian world. All, generally, admit that this condition ought not to be.

It is confessed to be contrary to the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ, the founder and builder of the church. Some, in their zeal and love for the things of God and His honour, are attempting to do something to eliminate some of the denominations by fusing two or three together into a larger denomination. With the same motive some are trying to build one world-wide Church embracing all the denominations throughout the world. These attempts at Church Union may appear to most people as praiseworthy and deserving of support.

After careful consideration of all that the promoters of these plans have proposed we, from the viewpoint of the Holy Scriptures, are sure that they are vain and useless to achieve their objective.

This to many pious people may sound bold speaking and perhaps be taken as offensive. We are speaking soberly and with gravity; without offence to any good men and women.

We observe here that the fact of these denominations desiring to unite with one another is a tacit admission that they are not built on the pattern given by Jesus Christ through His Apostles. The denominations are human institutions. Their creeds, confessions, articles and disciplines are man-made.

To form a union of the denominations according to the procedure of old time is to form another human institution with its man-made creed, etc. We submit that even if such a union could be formed, it would be a union in error. It would still be dishonouring to God and His Son Jesus Christ. All these proposals for Church Union are based upon compromise, one with another. There is no suggestion of inquiring what is the will of Him who said, "I will build my church."

The Lord Jesus Christ is the architect and builder of His church. His church is not to be confounded with a material building, made by man's hands and composed of stone or wood and embellished with artistry. In the word of God, His church is also called His body and His house. The character of God's church or house is spiritual.

We refer to some Scripture texts which are so plain that they need no comment: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127: 1). "He who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house" (Hebrews 3:3). "To whom coming [to Jesus] as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4-5).

The members of the body of Christ "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2, 20-22).

After a prayerful study of these words of God, it should be clear to any good and honest heart that any attempt by men to devise a basis of union other than upon the word of God will be abortive. Their efforts will have the same ending as the efforts of the men of Babel. The thoughts and ways of men are not the thoughts and ways of God.

In order to Christian Unity, the first thing for the denominations to do is to disavow and renounce their creeds, articles, confessions and disciplines and take the Bible alone for their guide and counsellor.

In Psalm 19 it is written:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

The Word of God is here described as perfect, sure, right, pure, clean and true. We could not desire anything better, nor can man devise anything so good. The wisdom of God shines forth from the holy page and is perfectly suited to man's need.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim., 3:16).

Consider well these things.

SAMUEL WILSON.

A QUESTION OF INTERPRETATION

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

PERHAPS twenty years ago, an order for the printing of some tracts came to me, and in the copy submitted there were certain words with which I did not agree. When sending proofs, I asked the brother who sent the order if he believed there was indeed a gift of the Holy Spirit at the baptism of a believer, saying that I did not believe there was. He replied that he did believe it, but would be pleased to read what I thought about it. Sorry to say, I did not respond and there it rested.

About that time, and some years before, I had been sounding suitable brethren, as convenience arose, as to what they thought about this same question. Also, putting it in a different way, I asked, "When you were immersed were you conscious of the receipt of the Holy Spirit?" To the first question the answer came readily enough, usually in the affirmative, but to the second, I never received an answer. The question was considered rather dubiously, as though the one questioned wondered what I was getting at. One old, knowledgeable brother, in answer to the first question, said, "Yes, how can the fruits of the Spirit be produced unless there is

first a gift of the Spirit?" I thought that answer beside the mark. There is a gift of the Spirit to every believer which is capable of producing its fruits, but it is not received at baptism. That was the reply I made to him.

Since then, from time to time, prompted by what I heard or read, I have picked up pen and paper several times to write what I believe about the passage from which this idea appears to come, but always left off before it was completed. Now, however, no one else having stepped in, there does seem to be a call to place before S.S. readers what I—and, I trust, others—believe to be the truth on this matter.

An order to print another tract recently received, carries these words: "God grants at baptism the Holy Spirit to strengthen and bless the Christian in the new life in Christ." Taking that to mean precisely what it says, I have to say, for myself, I do not believe it. It is not so I understand the action of God in baptism.

Another reason which bears upon me strongly to write as I do, is a statement made by a correspondent in the S.S. (Feb. 1960) which reads, in graphic language, "baptismal regeneration" is a "shameful innovation and brain-spun sophistry." Several brethren wrote denying that we, as a people, believed anything of the kind, but I venture to say that if the statement quoted from the tract is not baptismal regeneration it is something perilously like it.

The late Campbell Morgan had the same idea about baptismal regeneration as that correspondent. A long time ago, he held meetings at Heanor, attended mostly by Methodists. At one public meeting, members of Heanor Church attended. Questions being invited, one of our brethren asked about baptism and the new birth, but the speaker would have none of it. He quickly closed the questions with one put by himself to the large audience—greeted with a great guffaw of laughter. "Which of you," he asked, "at the time of your birth, knew that you were being born?" The implication being that as it is in the natural birth so is it in the spiritual. A man who aspired to be a "teacher in Israel"—an expositor of the Scriptures—himself a baptised believer, should have known better. Perhaps he did, but found himself awkwardly placed in a meeting of that kind, and took the easy way out.

While the analogy between natural birth and spiritual is very close, it does break down at one vital point. Spiritual conception, in its very nature is a conscious act. It is not possible to believe—to be convinced of a thing—without being aware of it. Conviction of belief is spiritual conception. So it is that a man does know when he is being born anew, for every part of the process is a conscious act. In the natural it is not so. Conception is brought about by the operation of natural forces and (possibly) is always unconscious. Thereafter, however, both natural and spiritual life develop from what they each feed upon. How does Scripture express this truth? "The seed is the word." Seed is for food as well as for sowing. "Desire the milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," is how Peter puts it. While Paul writes: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work."

Does one believe in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? It is there, in those words. The Old Testament psalmist declares: "The entrance of thy words giveth light." In the New Testament, the Lord himself says: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," Spirit, life, light. They are all there in the wide sweep of Paul's language. To teach that the Holy Spirit is received at baptism introduces an element of mysticism into that divine order of the new birth which so closely follows the natural gift of life, and it is not to be wondered at, for God is the author of both.

Thus we come to Peter's words at Pentecost, so often quoted just as they stand. It should be noted that, sometimes, passages which appear to be clearly stated, when seen in their context, are realised to have meanings quite different from what was first thought. It may be so here.

Peter began his address with an explanation of the earlier events which occurred on that day, mentioning Joel and his prophecy. This he claimed to have been fulfilled in the sight of the people gathered around him. Then he reminded them of events in Jerusalem concerning Christ, and goes on to explain to them the meaning of those events—convincing many of them of the guiltiness of their

conduct towards Christ, until, pierced in their hearts, they called, "What shall we do?" Peter tells them: "Repent and be immersed every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, in order to the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

In the light of events, of what they had seen and what Peter had told them of Joel's prophecy, what did those people think he meant when he said, "Ye shall receive the Holy Spirit?" With the Spirit's operations clearly manifested and seen before them, in the way the truth had been made known, what could they have understood Peter to mean, when he went on to say, "for the promise is unto you and your children?" I leave that there for everyone to answer for himself.

Now let us look at the parallel passage in Mark 16:15, which reads: "He [Jesus] said to them, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved . . . and these signs shall attend those who believe. In my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues . . . they shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall recover."

Notice how close the parallel is between the two. First the preaching, then the terms of salvation, then the promise of the Spirit. Mark's record is impossible of belief, as it stands. We know that those things which on the surface, were promised to all, have not attended all believers through the years that have passed. We have our explanation of that. Signs and wonders belonged to the age of miracles and have ceased. Then why do we accept Peter's promise as applying to the present age? Taking the two passages together do they not each teach precisely the same thing?

One last point. *How much* to the point is left to readers to answer for themselves. Closing his remarks, Peter said, "You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and your children." In the law, the penalty for wrong-doing could be passed on to the third and fourth generation, almost without limit. But this promise is to "you and your children." Taken literally, that means it ceased at the end of two generations, equivalent to the end of the age of miracles, which ceased with the deaths of the apostles. This would seem to mean that that gift of the Holy spirit which Peter had in mind ended many years ago.

W. BARKER.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR NOVEMBER

5—Zephaniah 1.	John 1:35-51.
12— " 3:8-20.	" 2:.
19—Haggai 2.	" 3:1-21.
26—Zechariah 1.	" 3:22-36.

The New Birth (John 1:12 and 13)

Without in any way belittling the other gospels, we recognise that of the apostle John to be quite unique. It has a grandeur and beauty all its own, and this is surely reasonable in view of the close and intimate relationship with the Saviour throughout His ministry—"the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 20:2), bearing in mind that He loved them all, and there is no respect of persons with Him. So the closest earthly intimacy, incomprehensible though it seems, was possible with "the Word" which was, "with God, and was

God." No other writer insists so emphatically that "the Word was made flesh" (1:14). Read John's first letter, where we have this thought also in the first few verses, and in the fourth chapter.

The superb first chapter of Genesis must have been in mind when John wrote his introduction. He also had in his mind that "Comforter" whom he received from the Father on the day of Pentecost, enabling him to write with infallible accuracy those words and deeds which make it possible to believe that Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). Thus we may share the close experience with John—fellowship—that our joy may be full like his (1 John 1-4). It is God who has made the revelation so that we have the right, authority or power to become His children by believing the testimony.

A Jew is a Jew by natural birth. He is a descendant of Abraham, and the Saviour was so, to the extent that His birth was natural—of the seed of

Abraham according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3). His coming was promised and expected, and His life proved His divine origin and authority, but His own people refused him. They had the first offer, but acceptance had to be a matter of heart and soul, not just intellectual assent. Their rejection was a heart rejection rather than an intellectual one. The religious leaders who should have been the first to accept His claims, were filled with jealous rage. They recognised Him to be their superior. He had greater power, obviously from God (John 3:32) and greater love—the common people heard him gladly—(Mark 12:37), and he exercised both with complete unselfishness. He exposed their faults and revealed their hypocrisy as much by the contrast of His life with theirs as by His words. So they could not be the real people of God any longer. A spiritual birth became necessary through the bringing in of a new covenant, a new agreement based upon faith and obedience. It is true that faith and obedience were necessary as a qualification for blessing under the old covenant, but the initial qualifications were natural birth and circumcision.

Now, the reception of the Son of God gives men and women the right to become God's children through their exercise of faith ("believe on His name" (1:12). This phrase is characteristic of John, occurring thirty-five times in the gospel; "belief" and "faith" represent always the same one word in the original, and the "name" indicates who and what He was. We become children by birth whether physically or spiritually, the one by fleshly seed, the other by spiritual seed, which is "the word of God which liveth and abideth" (1 Peter 1:23). It is clear that John is most emphatically denying any connection between physical and spiritual birth. We should not overlook that generation comes before birth: seeds germinate before the plant appears. The incorruptible seed must be sown in the heart before spiritual birth can take place. Some "churches" depend upon physical birth, rather than spiritual birth for their membership, and they cannot therefore be churches of Christ's establishment. Natural birth cannot qualify for it. The Saviour made this quite plain to Nicodemus, and we are right to draw particular attention to His teaching that birth into His family is by water and spirit (John

3:3-6). This is the positive but, as on other matters, John places the negative also very clearly before us—"Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man (1:13). Dr. Plummer (Anglican) writes): "Man cannot become a child of God in right of human parentage"—a bitter word to Jewish exclusiveness," and a rebuke to infant-sprinklers!

A brother used to say of those who took their confession of Christ very seriously, "They have the root of the matter in them," and we have heard the expression, perhaps incorrect, but plain, "They are born-again Christians." It is a very grave weakness in the church that such things have to be said, indicating that some are not really members of the body of Christ—professing without practising. Indeed we need the exhortation, "Let him that thinketh he standeth . . ." (1 Cor. 10:12), but it may indeed be that submission to the command to be baptised has been fulfilled before that spiritual birth has taken place. How essential it is that the act of obedience should follow, not precede, the heart-acceptance of the gospel. Whenever this is not so, the Saviour has been slighted or mocked, the convert deceived and the church weakened.

To believe on the name of the Son of God we must accept the testimony of His word. The gospel by John was written with this very purpose and hardly any honest man could read it without believing it. The incorruptible seed produces the new life—not a mere appearance of respectability, but a "new creature or creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). This will become increasingly obvious as we feed first on the pure milk of the word and then on its strong meat (Heb. 5:12 and 13; 1 Peter 2:2). The working of God's Spirit in our hearts will make for pure lives, eschewing worldly pleasures, growing in grace and the knowledge of the Saviour, and enabling Him to use us to implant the seed in other hearts.

R. B. SCOTT.

THE TRUE SOURCE

Pity the man who says he has only himself to thank for the good things he enjoys! He has his health—yes, because he has taken care of himself. He has his home—yes, because he saved his money and bought it. He has his bread—yes, because he alone earned it.

This man needs to learn that: Back of the loaf is the flour; and back of the flour is the mill; and back of the mill is the wheat; and back of the wheat is the shower and sun given by God!

—Bible Talk.

CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

(Romans 8:28-31).

I LABOURED to show that predestination was not that we as persons have been predestinated to heaven or hell. But now I see there is a glorious encouraging purpose of God concerning all who love Him, in that passage. Those who love God and believe in Him as He is revealed in Christ are to become Christ-like in this world and like Christ in eternity.

Think of the image of Christ in our souls as a photograph in its progress of development. First the exposure, next the negative, then the final development: the "exposure" is the heart receiving the Word, which results in faith, hope and love. The gospel which produces faith is a word-picture of "Jesus Christ and him crucified."

But there is no real semblance of Jesus until one has "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine" (Rom. 6:17-18). No soul can resemble Christ without obedience (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8). But at the time of conversion faith is weak, knowledge limited, and love has a long way to go before it is perfected. So, like the negative, the soul at that time has only a dim, imperfect outline of the image of Christ.

"The gospel is not primarily a law, a mere set of rules. It is the story of a Person. We obey the laws or commands because we love Him, trust, admire and adore Him, and want to be like Him, to "be conformed to the image of His Son." That is the goal to keep in mind. There is no real Christian character without.

A redeemed soul grows into the image of Christ by "patient continuance in well-doing" (2 Cor. 3:18). The more we by faith look unto Jesus, the more like Him we shall become.

—P. E. HINTON.

TOO BUSY TO LISTEN TO GOD?

Christians rejoice when they hear the words: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers (1 Pet. 3:12). But, contrariwise, can we say our ears are always open to the voice of the Lord? Here is a case in point: Some applicants were talking together while waiting to be interviewed for a job as a wireless operator. They were speaking so loudly that they did not hear the dots and dashes being signalled over a loud-speaker in the room.

But a man sitting quietly on one side suddenly arose to his feet and walked purposefully into the office marked "Private"; a few moments later he came out—appointed to the job.

"How did you get in there ahead of us?" complained the talkative applicant. "We were here first."

"You were not listening to the message coming over the loudspeaker," replied the new employee. "The code was saying, 'The man I need must always be on the alert. The first man who gets this message and comes directly into my private office will be placed on one of my ships as a wireless operator!'"

Are WE listening? Are our ears open to hear the message of God coming to us through the New Testament, or are we too busy talking about our own ideas?

SATAN GOES TO CHURCH

An old legend relates that a pious man met Satan one day coming out of the church building. "What are you doing here?" asked the man. "I thought you never set foot inside the building."

"Oh yes," answered Satan, "where there is praying and preaching against me, I must see to it that I do not lose too many souls."

"How do you do that?" inquired the man.

"Oh, I have my own methods which work very well," answered Satan. "For instance, I set the ladies' eyes wandering over their neighbours' hats and dresses; I persuade young boys to look at the cute little babies; I arrange for housewives to think about their Sunday dinner; I turn men's thoughts to business and the latest political news; and soon, the spirit of worship is gone.

"But most important of all," continued Satan, "I interpret every word of the sermon so that it concerns only his neighbour. Then, as soon as the worship is over, I change the conversation, and the gospel message is soon forgotten.

"Yes," Satan boasted, "I am pretty good at my job!"

MARKS OF IDENTIFICATION

Ordinarily, when one sets about to identify the church of our Lord Jesus Christ the name, organisation, worship, terms of admission, foundation, etc., are taken into consideration, and this is as it should be. No religious group that deviates from these identifying marks can be scripturally designated a Church of Christ. However, there are other more subtle marks of identification and it is these we want to consider.

1. **Growth.** The church of the first century grew, and it grew fast. The three thousand who made up the church the first day soon grew to 5,000 men (Acts 4:4). Then the number became a "great multitude" (Act 4:32); more were added, "multitudes, both of men and women" (Acts 5:14); and a little later, "the number of the disciples was multiplied" (Acts 6:1). As the gospel was preached and "the word of God increased, the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly" (Acts 6:7). Later, when persecution caused the disciples to leave Jerusalem, "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4), and this resulted in a still greater growth.

The only conclusion to be drawn from these passages is that self-propagation is a prominent mark of identification and, regardless of the name written across the front of the meeting-house, a group today that is not teaching the word of God to others and growing (God's word will not return void, Isa. 55:11), is not the same church described in the book of Acts.

2. **Membership inclusive of all.** Another identifying mark of the Lord's church is that her gospel message is for all people, in every walk of life, in every racial, economic and educational group. Only God could give a gospel that could span the whole social and economic field. Jesus said, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Peter's conclusion after preaching to a Gentile was that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). The Great Commission is to "Go . . . preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The only conclusion to be drawn from these passages is that a group of people who preach a message that appeals or applies to only one segment of humanity is not the church described in the New

Testament; her message is for all! The disciples were rich (Cornelius, Philemon, the eunuch), they were poor (Dorcas and her friends, the Macedonians, Onesimus), they were educated (Luke, Paul), and they were "ignorant and unlearned" (Peter, John). They were slave and free, Jew and Gentile, young and old. Therefore, any message that applies to only one of these groups is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, and any church that teaches a doctrine that does not apply to all of them is not the church of Christ.

3. **Study.** A third identifying mark of the church is study. The Christian of the first century was a disciple, a learner. He was one who studied to show himself approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15); he grew in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), and "he searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). Hence, a body of people today that does not study and grow spiritually is not the body of Christ.

Do our congregations bear these marks of identification? Are we growing in number as a result of teaching all people the way of salvation? Are we growing spiritually, in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as a result of our study?

If not, the admonition in Hebrews 5:12 comes ringing through the centuries to us, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God . . .!"

—Bible Talk.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

France, Orleans: I enjoyed preaching the gospel in Loughborough, Ince and Edinburgh in June. Since returning to Orleans, our work has kept us extremely busy and given us more encouragement. We have had two gospel missions (July and September) and we are preparing for our third for October 26th-29th with Bro. Donald Daugherty of Paris. forty-seven each night, which is encouraging in France. In September a young French Christian was restored to his first love after six years of unfaithfulness. He is a great help in the work.

Cleveleys: We are very pleased to report that Sylvia Nixon of Co. Cork, now stationed at the R.A.F. camp, Weeton, has confessed her faith in the Lord Jesus and was immersed at Hamilton Street, Blackburn, on September 17th. Sylvia was brought to a knowledge of the truth by her fiancé, Bro. John Roberts, of Kirkcaldy. We pray our young sister may grow in grace and knowledge. May the Lord bless her and keep her faithful. E.W.

Hindley.—Once again we have cause for rejoicing in the addition of another precious soul to the Lord. Keith Smith made the good confession and was baptized during the mission of Bill Richardson, at Albert Street, Newtown, Wigan. He is a young man of promising capabilities and we pray he may be a useful asset to the church of the Lord. May he be but the earnest of a greater harvest yet to be gathered in. T.K.

Kentish Town: The church records with gratitude a happy gathering, with warm support from other churches, on the occasion of the ninetieth anniversary on Saturday, October the 7th, of the opening of Hope Chapel for the work and worship of the church. Brother Tom Nisbet, now working with the new cause at Reading, spoke at both afternoon and evening sessions, and a company of between sixty and seventy sat down to tea between the meetings. In the afternoon Bro. Nisbet spoke on "Who is able to build Him a house?" (2 Chron. 2:6), encouraging the members of the church, which is His house; and in the evening on "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), salvation for all alike on God's terms.

Loughborough: On September 23rd and 24th the church held its 119th anniversary services. The gathering on Saturday was described as the best ever: over one hundred sat down to tea. The evening meeting was addressed by Brethren John Dodsley and A. E. Winstanley, and they served us well. The meeting-house was full, one of the outstanding features being the wonderful co-operation given by the Midland churches. We surely are working together for the extension of the Kingdom. Bro. Winstanley served the church on the Lord's Day and in the evening preached the gospel, a number of non-members being present.

We thank God for these seasons of refreshing, and trust that it may provoke and encourage us to greater sacrifices in His service. E. HILL.

Wethersfield, Essex: Our hearts are rejoicing over the "new birth" in our congregation. Miss Christine Wells, eighteen-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Wells, of Sible Hedingham, obeyed her Lord in baptism Friday night, October 6th. Brother Ralph Limb from Eastwood, Notts., returned to

baptise her, and the Lord added her to His church (Acts 2:47).

Wigan, Albert Street: From Tuesday, September 5th to 17th, the church had the services of Bro. Bill Richardson, evangelist, from Haarlem, Holland. Meetings were held on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Carnegie Library, Pemberton: we had a number of non-members present, so this venture proved worthwhile. The gospel was preached with power and conviction in our own meeting-place on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Lord's Days, all meetings being attended by some non-members, and seed was sown that may bear fruit in the days that be ahead. Bro. Richardson inspired and encouraged the saints by teaching, and also taught the Bible school, giving very helpful advice to the young people. At the final meeting, a hundred being present, the subject of baptism was dealt with. We had the joy of seeing a young man from the Hindley district baptised. We trust that God will bless him, and that he may grow in grace. We desire to thank all who supported us in th effort to win souls for the Master and to extend His kingdom. W. SMITH.

Woodstock, Capetown: Bro. T. W. Hartle writes: "On 24th September it was a happy and rejoicing occasion at Bridgetown, Athlone, to see the baptism of the eldest son in a family. October 5th will mark the third year of the commencement of the work at Bridgetown, with five members. Through much labour, personal work and co-operation we now have a membership of twenty-two, and a Bible school of thirty-six."

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**FROM THE CHURCH AT
LOUGHBOROUGH
A statement**

So that there shall be no misunderstanding in the brotherhood, we want to make it known that the church in Loughborough does not oppose or seek to prevent brethren serving the cause in Hoton. We rejoice in any effort to save souls and our dearest wish is that through the faithful preaching of the gospel the kingdom of Christ may be extended.

(Signed) PETER D. HILL.
BARRIE A. SHARPE.
EDMUND HILL.

COMING EVENTS

Birmingham, Summer Lane—96th. Anniversary Meetings, Saturday and Sunday, 4th and 5th November.

Saturday, Tea at 4 o'clock, Social 5.30 in Cowper Street Council School.
Speaker: Frank Worgan.

Blackburn.—The church at Hamilton Street, Blackburn extends a hearty invitation to brethren and friends during the forthcoming weekend meetings (God willing). Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 11th and 12th, 1961: Speaker, Bro. Tom McDonald (Dewsbury). Both meetings to commence at 7.30 p.m.

Brighton, Oxford Street: Special meeting, Saturday, November 11th. Tea 5 p.m.; meeting 6.30 p.m. Speaker: W. T. Hurcombe (Ince, Lancashire).

Dewsbury.—A cordial invitation is given to the anniversary meeting on November 25th. Tea at 4 p.m., meeting at 6 p.m. to be addressed by F. Worgan (Ince). Chairman, P. Partington (Ince).

SPRING CONFERENCE & RALLY, April 21st-23rd, 1962

Would any church desirous of having the Spring Conference please communicate with Bro. A. Hood, Conference Secretary?

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

A second notice. Notice of Bro. James Grant's new address—45 Kirkwood Avenue, Redding, Falkirk—appeared in April S.S. Bro. Grant, however, is still receiving mail from brethren at his former address. Please note the new address now.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL, 1962

Preliminary Notice

We are glad to announce that we have booked the George Hostel, Bangor, for the period July 28th to August 11th, 1962. If the Lord will, the Vacation Bible School will be held there as usual. The programme will be announced next year.

Prices. For children (i.e. under 14) the cost will be as formerly, £3 per week. For adults (14 years and over) the charge has been increased by 5/- to £5 15s. per week. The authorities have increased the charge because of an increase in staff wages.

Bookings: No bookings will be accepted without a deposit (£1 for adults, 10/- for children, both regardless of period). Already a number of bookings have been received. It is expected that next year there will be 120 beds available.

V.B.S. 1961

Sister Miriam Partington has prepared a balance-sheet, a copy of which will be sent to anyone who was at the school and applies for it. Kindly send a stamped addressed envelope.

The money remaining after all accounts are settled will be used to send gospel literature, Bibles, etc. to our brethren in Africa. A. E. WINSTANLEY.

A CORRECTION

In the previous issue of the S.S. (Vol. 28, No. 10), the date under the heading was printed as November. This should, of course, have been October.

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All matter for insertion must be sent before the 10th of the month (news items the 15th) to the Editor: C. MELLING, 133 Long Lane, Hindley, Wigan, Lancs.

Forthcoming events and personal notices: 3/- for three lines minimum; 8d. per line over three lines.

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

Secretary of Conference Committee: A. HOOD, 45 Park Road, Hindley, nr. Wigan.

NYASALAND Mission: Contributions to W. STEELE, 31 Niddrie Road, Portobello, Edinburgh, Mid Lothian.

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