

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## BIBLE STUDY

"OF the making of many books there is no end . . ." That was written almost 3,000 years ago, but remains as true today as when written. Even more so, for last year over 26,000 new books were published in this country, without counting reprints or new editions. Among this total religious books formed a large part, and among these religious books new titles on the Bible and Bible study, commentaries and expositions were numerous.

We term some of these works "helps" to Bible study. They help us to better understanding of the meaning of scripture; they make study easier and cut out much of the preparation of messages we are to give to churches, in gospel meetings and Bible school teaching. Much of what is regarded as "drudgery" is thereby saved. But it is possible that we can depend too much upon these works, to the neglect of study of the Bible itself, the very word we are seeking to understand and make clear to others. These works may help to produce eloquent preaching and convincing teaching. But ultimately our lack of knowledge and understanding of the scriptures themselves will be revealed. There will come times when we shall be shown to be out of our depth, unable to handle aright the word of God when measured and tested by that word. This will inevitably arise, however learned we be in commentaries and expositions, if we do not know the Bible itself. So long as a cripple depends upon his crutches he will never be able to walk, to stand upon his feet as he should for a full life.

There is no substitute for the word of God itself. True, the lawyer must know how to handle commentaries and expositions of the country's laws, but he must know also the law *itself*. We remember attending to a law student in Wigan Reference Library, who told us that he didn't want any *commentary* upon a certain Act of Parliament, but the Act *itself*. He said that sometimes the commentators put their own meaning to what the Act says, and he wanted to study the words of the Act for himself. No doubt this obtains also in Bible exposition.

In these days we have developed quicker ways of learning. Instead of going through the slow processes of learning from the foundations we are aiming at producing rapid results by short cuts. Thus, in literature we have The Great Books of the World shortened so that we can get the gist of them without reading the whole works—"Reader's Digest" editions and so on. "Have the masterpieces of the world's greatest writers in your home, at your fingertips" we are exhorted. In painting we have methods of filling in colours according to numbers on the drawing. In reading our children are taught to read sentences at a time, without the painful piecing together letter by letter of each word—such as the Initial Teaching Alphabet. In music we have the

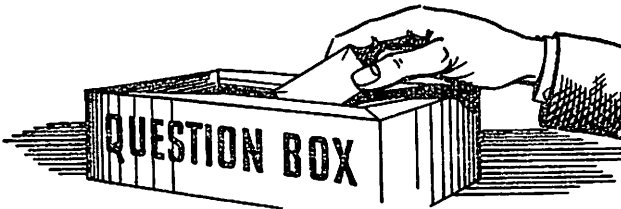
vastly more rapid ways of playing than the old, slow, humdrum process of mastering the scales. But in all these systems there comes the time when the fundamentals can no longer be bypassed, and we have to go back to the beginnings to lay the foundations and to realise the significance of those fundamentals. The same applies to scripture study. Nothing can replace God's word itself, helpful and labour-saving though men's words may be.

About three years ago Lord Soper expressed his wish that all Bible reading be abandoned for twelve months, that people might get away from the traditional, commonly accepted beliefs of Christianity. We think rather that it would be well for a time to abandon the crutches we have made of commentaries, etc., and turn to the words of scripture themselves. We should find that "God is His own interpreter and He will make it plain," in the sense that scripture compared with scripture is its own best expositor.

We shall not find it easy to do this. We shall find all kinds of difficulties arise. One will be "Which translation shall I use?" We would reply "Use as many as you can get hold of," comparing one with another. Then will come the question "But *how* to study?" Here again we answer that there are various ways of studying the Bible—for instance, by book, chapter, verse, even word; subject (whether a topic or a Bible character). God willing, we shall try to enlarge upon these various ways of studying scripture in articles following this.

Above all, without touching the questions of authorship, circumstances of writing, to whom written, etc., it is essential that we read and study the words of God themselves. Such study is urgent and vital.

EDITOR




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Conducted by  
James Gardiner

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**"Could you please explain James 5:14-15: "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up," in view of the claims by "Faith Healing" movements regarding this passage?"**

IN this chapter of James's epistle, he gives advice and instructions to those who were afflicted (suffering evil because they were Christ's disciples); those who were merry; those sick; and those erring from the truth.

Those afflicted were to pray for strength to cope with and forgive their tormentors; those who were merry or happy were to sing. There is a tendency amongst men, when in a "merry" state, to drink and sing bawdy songs: James says Christ's disciples should give expression to their joy by singing hymns to God's praise.

Next, James gives instructions concerning the sick and this is the subject matter of our question. James's injunction to the sick is that they should send, not for the best physician in the district, but for the elders of the local congregation. These elders were not physicians, of course, but were called in to heal the sick person miraculously. By the laying on of the apostles' hands power to work miracles, wonders and signs could be passed on to other disciples and these supernatural gifts were bestowed liberally. In the early years of the church's history God granted such gifts to His emissaries so that they might manifest proof of their heavenly mandate and also that they might *confirm the word of truth* (Mark 16:17-20; see also 1 Cor. chapters 12, 13

and 14, and Eph. 4:8-13). After God's word had been confirmed (and it only required one confirmation) the necessity for such miracles and signs ceased. Now we must believe, or reject, the written scriptures—walking by faith rather than by sight. The age of miracles has thus long since passed away, notwithstanding the strong claims to the contrary by various people, including faith healers.

Among the supernatural gifts bestowed was the amazing power to heal the bodily sick miraculously, and since the elders were amongst those who were recipients of such gifts, it is reasonable that they should be summoned in such cases. We notice that the elders (plural) were to be called (not a R.C. priest as the Roman Catholic Church interprets it to justify their rite of extreme unction). The elders with such gifts, therefore, were called to the sick bed, where they anointed the infirm person with oil. This anointing with oil served little purpose as a curative agent since the sick person was in any case healed miraculously. God could easily have cured the sick person without any prior anointing of oil, just as easily in fact as Jesus could have cured the blind man in John 9:6-7 without first applying clay to the blind man's eyes. The anointing with oil was probably intended as a sign to the sick person and to all onlookers that a miracle was about to be performed. This anointing of the sick with oil prior to their being healed was not something new but was practised by "the twelve" sent out under the "limited commission," prior altogether to the "great commission." The twelve also were given power to cast out devils, heal the sick and even raise the dead. Jesus' instructions to them (Matt. 10:8) were to "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give." Mark 6:13 says that "they [the twelve] anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." Thus the twelve also anointed the sick with oil prior to healing them supernaturally. The anointing was to be done in the name of the Lord.

The elders were also required to pray over the sick person, and "the prayer of faith (v.15) shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (a phrase confirming the fact that physical bodily sickness is what the sick man is being saved from); his sins, additionally, are forgiven. Notice it is the *prayer* and not the oil which saves the sick. "Prayer of faith" means not just a prayer made in full assurance of an answer, or based on strong belief, but has reference to the miraculous gift of faith mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:9. "Shall save the sick"—no embarrassing failures which would require to be explained away, such as one might see today, but healing carrying the guarantee of God.

These miraculous healings in New Testament times were *instantaneous*, *supernatural* and, what is most important, *permanent*. These three features raise them into a sphere infinitely above the most successful of the struggling endeavours of any faith healer no matter how good his intentions might be. This is surely by far the most telling point in appraising the claims of "faith healers" today. I do not know enough about "faith healing" to be too critical of it, and I certainly have no desire to malign men whose only wish is to heal the sick. I suppose there are men who can induce, by whatever power, a change for the better in the chronically sick, but this result must not be compared to, or confused with, James 5 or any of the other miraculous healings of the New Testament (church) age. An invalid may be induced to totter from his wheelchair on the stage of some packed theatre in an atmosphere charged with emotion, sweat, tears and expectancy but most often the invalid must return home, sadly, in the wheelchair.

After long and earnest efforts by the best "faith healers" many, and probably all, of those suffering from the deadly and malignant diseases (cancers, etc.) pass on to death regardless. This surely illustrates the *present absence* of the mighty healing powers of God's servants in the early days of the church.

The charge that one is limiting God's power may be made but God alone can limit His own power, and very often has, and does. God can still, and does, restore the sick and, if He so chooses, He can save even the sick nigh unto death, else it would be futile to pray for the recovery of the sick. What man today, however, has the right,

power or authority to call upon God to instantly manifest a cure in the sick by employing "a prayer of faith" as in James 5? We can express our wish to God that a sick person may recover but we cannot invoke the terms of James 5:13-15 and expect God to fall in line, albeit we think we have great faith.

It is as well to remember that this gift of healing the sick, to be implemented by these elders, was not the *only* special gift given. Jesus said (Mark 16:17, 18) "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." These signs and wonders were to confirm the word. If the gift of healing the sick is still extant, by the same token so should the others be. Where are those today, then, who can speak with new tongues?; where is the man today who can cast out devils? Where is the man of such faith that he is prepared to drink a fatal dose of arsenic to prove God is with him? or is prepared to share a bed with a king cobra? Where are all such? Why are we left with but those who are prepared to lay hands on the sick? The answer is that all such gifts belonged to the age of miracles and are vested in man no longer, and this includes them all—the miraculous healing of the sick as well. If we are sick nowadays we don't call for the elders: we send for the best physician or surgeon in town and place our trust in them, at the same time asking our heavenly Father to afford us a blessing. I do hope these comments may be of some little assistance to the questioner.

(Please continue to send your questions to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland)

### CAMEROONS EVANGELISATION FUND

Again a report in connection with the above work, and this time an appeal for financial assistance to the fund. I continue to have complete faith and confidence in the labours of Brother D. N. Elangwe and his co-labourers in the Cameroons. He is doing great work with the printing press and producing large quantities of gospel literature and tracts, which are, I may say, of sound scriptural content. Our brother has been trying to keep down running costs by printing bill-heads and odd jobs, but has found that this has been interfering with the supplying of the continual demands for the gospel literature. He has secured another smaller press which will produce the odd jobs, so that the larger press may produce the vital tracts and leaflets in an uninterrupted flow. But he is having difficulty in paying for this smaller machine, which is costing £185, of which I have sent £65. This virtually depletes the fund.

This is a fruitful endeavour and deserves our attention and help. In the Cameroons we have great opportunities: the people hearing the gospel for the first time are very interested and the churches around Kumba are growing. Bro. Elangwe

and others are not sparing themselves in trying to reach many in the villages with the gospel, preached in the open and by the printed page.

I am sure that if we do not reach them with the true gospel, the others (Globals, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, etc.) will reach them with their false doctrines. I appeal therefore again to all the brethren to remember this work in their prayers; and perhaps at the next business meeting of their congregations they will remember also this fund and its urgent need, and send a contribution, however small. Every penny will be well spent. I thank those who have contributed regularly in the past and know that they will be happy in the knowledge that souls are being won in the Cameroons indirectly but very definitely as a result of their interest and who have not yet participated in this work financial contributions. I hope that some, will join us in this worthy endeavour.

Please send what you can spare to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

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*The article, Churches of Christ, printed on the centre pages may be used as a pamphlet by readers who care to extract it.—Editor.*

# CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Statement by Sydney Black, of London

Extracted from THE REVIEW OF THE CHURCHES, March, 1893

“THE Churches of Christ” are Churches set for the unqualified restoration of Primitive Christianity, in all its pristine simplicity and purity. In order to do this, they discard and discountenance all human names, creeds and confessions of faith. They maintain that the Christian institution was absolutely perfected, as to its faith, polity ordinances and worship, from the first Pentecost after the ascension of our Divine Lord until the death of the Apostle John, and that it is capable of no subsequent development or improvement. They hold, however, that in relation to the “region of expediency” there is considerable latitude for diversity of *method* in applying Christianity to the special exigencies of the age and of the times in which we live. But there must be no violation of Christian principle. The principles of Christianity are inelastic. The methods of their application are by no means stereotyped.

The Churches are one with Chillingworth in affirming that “the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible contains the religion for Protestants.” Each church is a self-governing, self-supporting, and self-edifying body, and is independent of any conference, synod, council, or other legislative assembly.

The Churches of Christ are *Episcopalian*, because they have bishops. They are *Presbyterian*, because these bishops are elders. They are *Congregational*, because every member has a voice in Church government. They are *Baptist*, because they practise believers’ immersion. They are a *Society of Friends*, because they seek to do whatsoever their Divine Lord requires at their hands. They are *Methodist*, because they seek to do everything decently and according to method. They hold that each of these forms of Church government, and each of these phases of ecclesiastical life, is partial, and emphasises one special phase of government and life, whereas the New Testament Church combines them in one harmonious and comprehensive whole.

## The Way to Unity

In their contention for the organic union of all obedient believers in the Son of God, the Churches hold the absolute essentiality of adopting the names, both as individuals and churches, which are found in the New Testament Scriptures. They avoid any such distinctive names as Calvinists, Lutherans, or Baptists. As individuals they adopt such New Testament names as “Christians,” “Saints,” “Disciples,” or “Brethren”; while the congregations in their corporate capacity are known as “Churches of Christ,” “Churches of God” or “Churches of God in Christ.”

In relation to human creeds, they hold their utter inutility on the following grounds:—Firstly, if a creed contain more than is in the Bible, it contains *too much*. Secondly, if it contain less than is in the Bible, it contains *too little*. Thirdly, if it contain *the same*, then the inutility of the creed at once becomes apparent. And, fourthly, if intended to render the Bible more explicit as to what is to be believed in order to salvation, then they hold it impugns the wisdom and judgement of the Holy Spirit, who has vouchsafed to us a simple revelation of the Christian system in the New Testament.

The Churches of Christ hold further that the only confession of faith recognised in the New Testament Scriptures is the *rock* confession which Simon Peter made at Cæsarea Philippi, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” They maintain

this to be an all-sufficient and all-embracing confession of faith, and that this great foundation truth must be confessed with the mouth in order to obtain the remission of sins.

They also emphatically plead for the organic union of all followers of the Lord Jesus upon the well-known seven-fold basis enunciated by the Apostle to the Gentiles, in Ephesians iv. 3-6: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all." Many leaders of thought in the movement are decidedly of the opinion that the Evangelical Churches of Christendom are *practically* one upon six of these planks, and that in the event of the Scriptural settlement of the long baptismal controversy, the desired consummation of Christian Union would speedily be reached. This, however, can only be brought about by the annihilation of all littleness of spirit, and the exhibition of mutual forbearance and Divine brotherliness.

#### "According to the Scriptures"

In contending for this simple basis of union, they lay special emphasis upon speaking where the Scriptures speak, and being silent where the Scriptures are silent, in all matters relating to the faith, institutions, and polity of the Church of Christ. They plead that in things essential there must be *unity*; that in things doubtful there must be *liberty*; while in all things there must be *unselfish* love. They hold that in all essential matters, or matters directly involved in the basis of union named, the Scriptures give forth no uncertain sound; and that could a Round Table Conference of all Evangelical and other theological lights of the day be held, they would speedily, if unarmed with creeds and confessions of faith, arrive at the same conclusions on the essentials of the Christian faith. There was, indeed, a period in British history when a Church existed and flourished which owned allegiance neither to Rome nor to Constantinople. She partook of some of the God-honouring and Divinely-given elements of the Italian, Grecian, and Iberian Churches, and rejected much appertaining to the great Apostacy. The present movement rejects the Apostacy *in toto*, at the same time holding tenaciously by everything good, pure, and Scriptural in the religious life of eighteen centuries.

In their proclamation of the saving Evangel they feel morally compelled to lay *special* stress upon the conditions of salvation laid down by Jesus Christ in His parting behest, and invariably enunciated by His inspired Apostles. They hold that there are several co-operating causes at work in the salvation of mankind. On the Divine side there is the *moving* cause—the pure, disinterested love of God. There is also the *procuring* cause—the free gift of the Divine Son. On the human side there is the *qualifying* cause—faith evolving a determination to follow the Lamb everywhere. There is also the *receiving* cause—the Heaven-appointed ordinance of Christian immersion. They use this last word because they reject both sprinkling and pouring as part and parcel of the Great Apostacy, and unhesitatingly take this course on the authority of the scholarship of the ages. They hold that baptism administered to believing penitents is, in the words of John Wesley, "both a means and a seal of pardon," and upon this point they are pleased to propagate the teaching of that revered pioneer on Acts xxii. 16. Hence every member of this great movement is an immersed believer.

#### Organisation and Practice

The Churches of Christ discard completely what is rightly known as the "*one-man ministry*." They equally repudiate the idea of an "*all-man ministry*." They select elders as bishops to rule the Church, and deacons to wait upon their respective ministries: and send forth evangelists as *ex-officio* members, labouring for special seasons with the various congregations. The bishops are either professional men, commercial men, artisans, or independent men, who up to the present have invariably vouchsafed their services entirely unremunerated financially. Some of the evangelists are paid. They live to preach, and do not preach to live. The evangelists simply control and organise their own department of work, viz., evangelisation, and in no sense rule the Church. The Church, through the bishopric, governs her own affairs. Liberty to preach, teach,

expound, and exhort is extended to all members capable of edifying. Judgment as to capability is, of course, vested in the bishopric. The bishops are also, of necessity, the pastors who feed the flock of God. The work of Christian women is recognised and encouraged within the prescribed New Testament limits.

The Disciples tenaciously believe that the New Testament enforces the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, and that this constitutes the great focus-point of the Christian institution. They hold that the Lord's Supper is only open to those who have attended to the Scriptural conditions of pardon, and are walking before God consistently. The Churches absolutely refuse any financial assistance for evangelistic, or distinctly ecclesiastical purposes, from the general public. The Lord's Supper and the Christian fellowship are co-extensive with membership in the Kingdom of favour. They are the exclusive prerogative of the Ecclesia of Christ. The members of the Churches are willing and anxious, however, for the most part, to co-operate with all philanthropists and lovers of humanity in the various beneficent, social, and rescue movements of the day. Hence some of their leading speakers are constantly found on "Prohibition," "Social Purity," and other platforms, thus participating in the work of creating an atmosphere all around in which covetousness, impurity, selfishness, and every form of unbrotherliness simply cannot breathe. They hold it to be just as important for the Church of Christ to weed and prepare the soil as to sow the seed.

## THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

Apart from any theory of inspiration, or of how the Bible books came to their present form; or how much the text may have suffered in transmission at the hands of editors and copyists; apart from the question of how much is to be interpreted literally, and how much figuratively, or what is historical and what may be poetical: if we will assume that the Bible is just what it appears to be, and will study its books to know their contents, we will find there a unity of thought, indicating that one mind inspired the writing and compilation of the whole series of books; that it bears on its face the stamp of its author; that it is in a unique and distinctive sense the WORD OF GOD.

There is a view held in certain intellectual circles that the Bible is a sort of age-long story of man's effort to find God; a record of man's experiences reaching after God, gradually improving his idea of God by building on the experiences of preceding generations.

In those passages so abundant in the Bible in which it is said that God spoke, God, according to this view, did not really speak; but men put their ideas in language professing to be the language of God, while in reality it was only what

men imagined about God. The Bible is thus reduced to the level of other books, and is made to appear not a divine book, but a human book pretending to be divine.

We reject this view utterly, and with abhorrence. We believe the Bible to be, not man's account of his effort to find God, but rather an account of God's effort to reveal Himself to man; God's own record of His dealings with men, in His unfolding revelation of Himself to the human race; the revealed will of the Creator of man, given to man by the Creator Himself, for instruction and guidance in the ways of life.

The books of the Bible were composed by human authors, and it is not even known who some of them were, nor is it known just how God directed these authors to write. But it is asserted that God did direct them, and these books must be exactly what God wanted them to be. There is this difference between the Bible and all other books.

Authors may pray for God's help and guidance—and God does help and guide: there are many books in the world which God has unmistakably helped authors to write. But even so, even the most saintly of authors would hardly presume to claim for these books that God wrote them.

**BUT THAT IS CLAIMED FOR THE BIBLE.** God Himself superintended and directed and dictated the writing of the Bible books, with the human authors so completely under His control that the writing was the Writing of God.

The Bible is God's Word in a sense that no other book in the world is God's Word.

It may be that some Bible utterances are "ancient thought forms" for ideas that we would now express in a different way, for they were expressed in language of ancient times. But even so the Bible contains precisely the things that God wants mankind to know, in exactly the form in which He wants us to know them. And to the end of time the dear old book will remain the one and only answer to humanity's quest for God.

The Bible, composed by many authors, over a period of many centuries, yet one book, is in itself the outstanding miracle of the ages, bearing aloft its own evidence of its superhuman origin.

Everybody ought to love the Bible. Everybody ought to be a regular reader of the Bible. Everybody ought to strive to live by the Bible's teachings. The Bible ought to have central place in the life and working of every church and in every pulpit. The pulpit's one business is the simple expository, teaching of God's Word.

*Woodstock Bulletin (S. Africa)*

### PRAYER

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved."

(Psalm 55:22)

Just close your eyes and open your heart,

And feel your cares and sorrows depart;

Just yield yourself to the Father above,  
And let Him hold you in His gentle love;

For life on earth grows more involved  
With endless problems that cannot be solved.

God only asks us to do our best,  
Then He will take over and finish the rest.

So when you are tired, discouraged  
and through,  
There's always one door that's open  
to you:  
And that is the door to the house  
of prayer;  
You'll find God waiting to meet you  
there.

For the house of prayer is no farther  
away  
Than the quiet spot where you kneel  
and pray.  
The heart is a Temple when God is  
there,  
As we place ourselves in His loving  
care.

He hears every prayer and answers  
each one,  
When we pray in Christ's name,  
"Thy will be done."  
And the burdens that seemed so heavy  
to bear  
Are carried away on the wings of  
prayer.

(Contributed)

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### "SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY . . ."

Enjoy the present, whatever it be, and be not solicitous for the future, for if you take your foot from the present standing and thrust it forward toward tomorrow's event it is like refusing to quench your present thirst by fearing you shall want drink next day—if it be well today it is madness to make the present miserable by fearing it will be ill tomorrow—for it may be it shall not, and then to what purpose was this day's affliction? But if tomorrow you shall want—your sorrow shall come fast enough, though you do not hasten it.

*Jeremy Taylor*

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If we notice little pleasures,  
If we notice little pains;  
If we quite forgot our losses  
And remembered all our gains;

If we looked for people's virtues  
And their faults refused to see,  
What a comfortable, happy,  
Cheerful place this world would be.



# SCRIPTURE READINGS

MAY 1968

5—Isaiah 61	Matthew 11:2-19
12—Genesis 18:16-33	Matthew 11:20-30
19—Isaiah 1:10-20	Matthew 12:1-21
26—Ecclesiastes 12	Matthew 12:22-37

## JOHN THE BAPTIST (Matt. 11:2-14)

The story of this outstanding man is one of the saddest in the scriptures. There is no need for sorrow, however, in his ultimate reward. We have been saddened recently by the story of the sufferings of faithful Christians in communist - controlled countries. Here again we must not overlook the ultimate eternal reward—the incorruptible inheritance. Nevertheless the “afflictions of the righteous” (Psa. 34:18) touch us deeply, as indeed they should. There remains, too, the mystery of God’s permission. We humbly bow to the divine decrees without being able fully to understand them.

Here is surely the same difficulty in the mind of John the Baptist, though in a different sense. His understanding of what the Messiah would be and do made him doubtful as to whether the healer, preacher and teacher, of whom he heard in the prison through his disciples, really was the Messiah whom he had baptised. The testimony had come from heaven above, and he had then no possible doubt of identity; but how different to all Jewish conceptions were the humble works of Jesus of Nazareth. He had not even presented Himself to the rulers in Jerusalem to receive their service and worship, but was doing his work among the poor and comparatively illiterate people of Galilee, the fishermen and the peasants.

So his disciples come to Jesus for information or assurance. The kingdom of heaven of which John had preached had not come. It was still being preached as “at hand.” We learn from Luke (7:21) that while the disciples of John were with Him “He cured many of infirmities” and blindness and evil spirits, so that the disciples would go back to the prison as eyewitnesses of the divine power at work. Jesus practically quoted Isaiah in

His message of assurance (see 35:5 and 42:6), prophecies recognised as being messianic, and certainly known to John. His words indicate understanding of John’s difficulty, which was also a difficulty in the minds of His own disciples—witness their requesting places in the kingdom, quarrelling as to who was greatest, and not expecting His resurrection. The blessing is with those who continued to believe, accepting the message of love in word and action (the better rendering is in the R.V. “none occasion of stumbling in Me”). While Jesus was walking among them, He was their light. That light was lost, hidden from His faithful followers for three days; but then came the joyful revelation, and the stumbling block of apparent weakness and failure for ever removed. John did not share in the revelation, at least in his earthly body. His is the martyr’s crown.

## The Greatness of John

Let us look carefully at the comments of Jesus. Not one of the prophets of old was any greater than John. We may think this is hard to believe: and as an absolute fact its truth is in John’s being honoured by hearing, seeing and baptising the Son of God. There is no greater honour than this; yet in a sense we share that even more fully because the gospel of Christ brings the news of a final triumph over evil and an assurance of salvation never known before. Abraham, Moses and David were greatly used of God and viewed the promises afar, but John was the personal herald of the everlasting king. John was near indeed to the setting up of the kingdom but every Christian is a subject in it.

The multitudes flocked to John’s ministry in the wilderness. His preaching stirred up the whole nation by its denunciation of sin, its urgent message of repentance and preparation for the Messiah’s coming. Here was a man absolutely without fear. The king on his throne was rebuked for sin, the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy. The picture of a reed shaken by the wind is a stark contrast to the inflexible righteousness of John; the picture of people in fine clothes the exact opposite of the hairy man of the wilderness living on the wild honey and locusts and clothed with a girdle of

leather only. Many would regard him as a "religious maniac," as some earnest preachers of today are regarded. But they could not listen without getting the message, whether they liked it or not. It seems clear in fact that the religious leaders did not accept him (Luke 7:30). No doubt there were exceptions such as Joseph and Nicodemus in the case of Christ. So great had been John's influence that zealous folk (for this we think is meant by "violent") were earnestly anticipating the kingdom and behaving as though it had already come. We see this in the way the crowds flocked after Jesus, "trode one upon another" to be near Him, followed on foot around the lake, carried their sick to feel His healing hand, touched Him in the press, and, on at least one occasion, sought to take Him by force and make Him king (John 6:15). But as the end of His mission came near and He retired to Ephraim (John 11:54) the enthusiasm of the Galilean crowds in large measure ceased.

Finally Jesus interprets the prophecy of Malachi for us in its last few verses. John the Baptist is the prophet Elijah in character and work. He also had some other resemblance (2 Kings 1:8) not so important and yet so fitting. Is this the man needed today? The sense of sin and the coming of the Lord surely need emphasis when sin is regarded as mere sickness, and the promised return is almost a joke!

R. B. SCOTT

### PROGRESSIVE DECLINE

A young Christian manifested an interest in preaching and made a great show of earnestness and endeavour. But his acquaintances became concerned by the company he kept. First, he was seen *walking* with men who frequented public houses. Often his companions were worse for drink as he walked with them.

Next he was seen *standing* at the door of one of these places, his companions pressing him to go in.

Finally he went in, *sitting* with them and taking part with them in their pleasures. Indeed the psalmist knew what he meant when he wrote (Psalm 1:1) "Blessed is the man that walketh

not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." H. Baines

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**East Ardsley.** — We are pleased indeed to report the addition of one to our number — Denise Kibler, one of our senior scholars in the Sunday School, on April 12th. Now that she is entering workaday life she has made the decision to give her life to Jesus.

We pray now that she will be continually serving her Master.

**Morley (Zoar Street).**—On Wednesday, 27th March, 12 years old Robert Fish confessed Jesus as Lord and was baptised for the remission of sins. Robert has attended a number of our gospel meetings, and has seen a series of filmstrips which have been shown in his home.

Please remember our young brother in your prayers, and pray for us as we seek to encourage his growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We give God the glory for this another manifestation of the power of the gospel.

**Slamannan District.** — On Saturday, March 9th, a large number of brethren met again at Tranent for mutual benefit to discuss the subject, "How can we be united with all our brethren?"

The discussion was led by Bro. John Colgan, Tranent, and Bro. Hugh Davidson, Motherwell, and was presided over by Bro. Wm. Black, Dalmellington.

The addresses given led to an interesting discussion, and many points were made on this subject which we feel sure left everyone with much to think upon.

God willing, we hope next to meet at Slamannan on Saturday, May 11th, 1968, to discuss "Instrumental music in worship—why not?" led by Bro. Paul Jones, evangelist, and Bro. Mark Plain, Tranent, presided over by Bro. Peter Wilson, Slamannan.

We thank the brethren at Tranent for inviting us. Hugh Davidson

## OBITUARY

**Hindley.**—We are sorry to report the passing of Brother Joseph Leyland on March 1st, 1968, only ten weeks after his beloved wife.

He was living with his son and family in Wigan, and removed to Blackpool with them only the day before he passed away.

We shall miss our brother, for he was a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus.

We commend his loved ones to our heavenly Father, knowing He will provide solid joy and lasting comfort at this time.

T. Kemp

**Ilkeston.**—We are sorry to report the passing from this life of two members of the church here:—

Sis. Elsie May Gee at the age of 71 years. She came into the church late in life; for the last two years she had not been able to attend at the Lord's table on account of illness. Our sympathy goes out to her family and relatives. She died on February 16th, and was cremated on February 21st at Wilford Hill.

Also Bro. Joseph Hewitt Hardy, who passed away suddenly on February 28th, aged 64 years, and was laid to rest on March 4th. Our brother has been a faithful and consistent attender at the Lord's table, being present for the last time on January 28th. He was of a quiet disposition but well known, especially by the children, to whom he was a great favourite. He was generous in his giving to the Lord's cause. Never being married, he leaves behind him two sisters and a host of friends to mourn his loss. The writer officiated at the funeral service.

F. Gregory

**Leicester.**—We regret to announce the passing of Sister Annie Mary Bradshaw, who was called to higher service on Thursday, March 28th.

Sister Bradshaw came to Leicester many years ago from Selston, Notts., where she had many friends.

She fellowshipped with us for a few years, and was a faithful follower of her Lord and stood steadfastly by His word.

We commend to the grace of God her two sons.  
S. Harbottle

**Tranent.**—The church mourns the loss of another aged sister. Suddenly, on Sunday, 17th March, our dear Sister Baxter fell asleep in Jesus. She was 93 years of age.

Her death came as a shock to all of us, especially those who had visited her a few days before she died. Her faith in her Saviour was a source of inspiration to all who met her. She died with a firm hope of a joyful resurrection.

Our sympathy goes out to her family and all who mourn her passing, and we pray they will find comfort and consolation in our heavenly Father.  
Mark Plain

**Wigan: Scholos.** — Sis. E. A. Ashurst died on April 10th at the age of 86 years. She was formerly a member of the Church of England. Through tract distribution and visiting Sis Ashurst attended meetings conducted by Albert Winstanley in 1961 and was immersed at the age of 79. Since then she was regular in attendance at meetings until taken into hospital almost two years ago. She lived a life of fragrance reflected from the Saviour she loved and served. Her radiant joy had its effect on those whom she met, and her suffering was often concealed by her gentle and loving humour and wit. "She hath done what she could."

### THANKS

Bro. & Sis. Sam Whitton, 45 Latham Lane, Orrell, Wigan, express their deep thanks to all those who wrote or visited while Bro. Whitton was in hospital in Wigan and Manchester.

Bro. Whitton is now recovering well from his severe illness, and has been greatly helped by the love and prayers of the brethren.

### BIRTHS

To Christine and Kenneth Faulks, a son, Ian James, March 18th. Thanks to God for prayers answered.—2 Dorterry Crescent, Ilkeston, Derbyshire.

To Norma and Joseph Layland, April 16th, a daughter, Wendy Deborah.—10 Carr Lane, Worsley Mesnes, Wigan, Lancs.

## COMING EVENTS

**Wallacestone.**—Special gospel mission during April and May (DV).

Wallacestone Meeting Place: Sundays, 6 p.m.; Mondays, 7.30 p.m.

Laurieston Community Hall: Wednesdays, 7.30 p.m.

Limerigg Church Hall: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

Speakers: April, Bro. Paul Jones; May, Bro. David Dougall.

The meetings at Laurieston are in a new area, untouched by God's true gospel. The meetings at Limerigg are to be held in conjunction with the church at Slamanan, continuing the good work they began November-January.

We ask for your prayers and support during this effort and pray that we shall receive the Lord's blessing. To Him be the glory.

## UNITED MISSION EFFORT

The Morley, East Ardsley and Dewsbury churches will be conducting a united mission effort from the 17th to 23rd June, 1968 (D.V.).

Meetings will be held in the meeting room of the East Ardsley Church in Main Street.

Monday, 17th, to Thursday, 20th.—Meetings nightly at 7.30 p.m.

Saturday, 22nd.—Meeting at 6 p.m.

Sunday, 23rd.—Meeting at 7.30 p.m.

Speaker: Bro. John Justin (Evangelist working in Lisburn, N. Ireland).

Please support this effort by your prayers, and by your presence, if that is possible.

**Ince (Petticoat Lane).**—Bible School Workshop, June 15th, 2.0 p.m. until 4.45 p.m., followed by basket tea and 6.30 p.m. gospel meeting.

This is a discussion meeting of four seminar groups: the points of discussion will be objectives, syllabus and course content and materials and teaching methods.

All Bible school teachers and Christians are invited.

Further details will be sent to the church correspondent.

**Tunbridge Wells.**—Fourth Anniversary meeting, May 18th, at 6.30 p.m. Speaker: Victor Hunter. The meeting will be preceded by tea at 5 p.m.

Sunday, May 19th: 10 a.m., Bible School; 11 a.m., Lord's Supper; 6.30 p.m., gospel meeting. Preacher: Vic Hunter. Theme for weekend: "The faith and practice of the Church of Christ."

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

William Steele, 88 Mountcastle Drive South, Edinburgh 15. Tel. 031-669-1290.

## MARRIAGE

Reginald James Bullock to Maureen Richards, in the Church of Christ, Burns Street, Ilkeston, on Saturday, March 30th, 1968, R. Gregory officiating.

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