

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 44. No. 1

JANUARY, 1976

CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS

AMONGST the letters I receive from readers of the 'S.S.' I occasionally get complaints regarding the publishing of material of 'a controversial nature'. I realise, of course, that what may be controversial to one brother may not, in fact, seem very controversial to another and so I can understand the feelings of all concerned. I therefore welcome all such letters and all criticism no matter from what quarter it may come. It is refreshing to discover brethren who feel so strongly on any particular matter that they put pen to paper and express their convictions. Surely we need many more such brethren. Criticism is good for us all and we should give it due and weighty consideration. If we happen to be the critics we should try and express our criticism reasonably and in a kind spirit. If we are critical of a general principle or practice we should try and avoid the denigration of individuals and the introduction of personalities. If we must eventually disagree then we should attempt to disagree in an agreeable manner.

Many brethren must have discovered that it is difficult to try and be a disciple of Christ without becoming involved in controversy. No conversation with our fellow-men lasts long without it eventually coming around to religious matters and a consequential controversy. Many a good gospel discourse has taken place in the factory, workshop, down the mine, in the office, over the fence and countless other places, on voyages, bus journeys and train rides. Our Lord Himself was continually engaged in disputations on matters of 'a controversial nature'. In fact, as we well know, His teaching was so controversial and so upset certain people that He was violently put to death. We should not stir up religious controversy but, then again, we should certainly not sidestep it for the sake of the status quo. It is possible to get through life very conveniently by the simple, but effective, device of *agreeing with everyone* but such a strategy is not very good for our self-respect. Eventually the time comes when we count the issue so important that we take a stand upon it — and in thus taking a stand we take sides as well. This happens in all walks of life and we have to make up our minds on all kinds of issues secular as well as religious. We make up our minds on such important issues as the Common Market, Capital Punishment, Abortion, Open Prisons, Race Relations, Euthanasia, Equality of the sexes, Comprehensive Schools, and so on. In the same way we are called upon to evaluate the grand and great issues raised in the scriptures and, in the light and extent of our knowledge at any given time, make up our minds upon them. It is conceivable that as we get older and wiser we may

change our minds on some of these great issues and that is doubtless as it should be. Surely the aim involved in a study of the scriptures, and bible-studies, is that we should grow in grace and in a knowledge of the truth.

It must be difficult for any religious magazine dedicated to the advocacy of '*a complete return to Christianity as it was in the beginning*' to steer completely clear of articles of 'a controversial nature' and also very doubtful if it should try to do so. Properly conducted, a discussion of a controversial nature can help us all to see the rationality, or otherwise, of *all points of view* on a subject: for surely no one man has a monopoly of truth. Many of us enjoy reading the transcripts of some of the epic Public Debates on some of the great religious controversies of our time and while the behaviour of some of the participants is on occasion to be deplored, yet the format of such discussion is ideally suited to the demonstration of the strengths and weaknesses of each point of view. 'Controversy' need not be a nasty word and if controversy can highlight a truth it should be welcomed. It has been said that when the popular evangelist Dr. Billy Graham was asked why he did not preach in his sermons the necessity of baptism, albeit he himself had been immersed, he said that he was never prepared to discuss subjects of *a controversial nature*. Surely no one wants to subscribe to a *religious magazine* which is not prepared to discuss subjects of a controversial nature but if there are any readers who feel that way please make it known to the editor. Let's face it, if a religious magazine is to steer clear of subjects of a controversial nature it will mean that there will be very little left to write about. Almost all matters raised in the Word of God have at one time or another been controversial matters and many of them still are and always will be. Each century has had to wrestle with biblical interpretation over which controversy raged and we live in a fools' paradise if we think for a moment that we can go through life unscathed by them. Personally I see little to be gained by 'acting the ostrich' and pretending that no areas of dissension exists—what we have got to do is try and cope with it when it arises. Almost any Bible theme one cares to mention has at one time, or still is, a matter over which men have differing opinions and, of course, this is more so in the religious world at large. Baptism is perhaps the classic example and even today the world is divided upon the act, the design and the proper subjects for baptism and schools of thought exist on subjects as varied as Trine Immersion and Baptism for the Dead. Even when the apostles were around to sort things out there was confusion about baptism for the dead. Also in New Testament times there were controversies over such things as the eating of meats and the keeping of days, the observance of the sabbath and the rite of circumcision, fastings and washings. The entire epistle to the Galatians is almost completely taken up by way of dealing with those who wanted the Law (of Moses) retained. Think of the controversy in the world surrounding the Lord's table, especially regarding the matter of how often it should be observed, who should not partake, who should officiate and how and what should be partaken. We ourselves are no strangers to controversy on such a subject. 'The covering of the head' is a fruitful field for varied views to say nothing of the 'Millennium' and just consider how many brethren have displeased one-another over the question of who was the twelfth disciple. The catalogue is almost endless and time would fail us to enumerate them—Divorce and Remarriage: Predestination: Music in the Worship: Elders — Qualifications and Appointments: God's Authorisation for Missionary Societies, Christian Colleges, Resident Evangelists: Radio Stations: Orphanages: Sunday Schools and so on, and so on. It would therefore seem to be difficult for any religious paper to publish articles which did not ruffle someone somewhere. What is written must of necessity please some and displease others. Provided that what is written is true and reasonably expressed then that is about as far as one can reasonably go in an attempt to please everyone. Paul displeased countless hundreds with the things he had to say. His attitude was, "Do I please men or God"? The New Testament advocates that we contend earnestly for the truth and that, I suppose, should be the priority.

Division in the church is sinful and Jesus prayed, as we know, that all His disciples might be one. Controversy however need not be synonymous with division. Jesus and His apostles many times engaged themselves in controversy with their fellow-men *because they loved them* and wanted them to embrace the truth of God.

In these few remarks the last impression I want to convey is that anyone can be complacent about controversy, justify it or excuse it. It exists as a fact nevertheless and we must try to cope with it and conduct ourselves, if involved in it, with courtesy, patience and a decorum that befits those who consider themselves disciples of the Lord. Readers will realise that avoiding controversial issues in a religious paper is very difficult. EDITOR

IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

Mercies new and never failing
 Brightly shine through all the past
 Watchful care and loving kindness
 Always near from first to last,
 Tender love, divine protection,
 Ever with us day and night;
 Blessings more than we can number
 Strew the path with golden light.

Perfect Joy — “My Cup Runneth Over” Psalm 23:5

May I remind you that this wonderful Psalm, belongs to the Believer, the child of God who has fully committed his or her life to the Lord Jesus. Those who have accepted His authority, and are sincerely seeking to follow the One they love dearly. Therefore if I have been accepted by Him, I can truthfully say, “IT IS MY PSALM” so when I say “My shepherd” “My soul” “My head” “My cup” I am not thinking of David, but rather my own personal relationship. I trust you will not think this message too personal, please keep in mind that it is “My Cup” and that cup runneth over.

“My cup runneth over”

For a loving Heavenly Father, who looking down and seeing my sinfulness, my transgressions, my iniquity, and knowing I had not the ability to put matters right, decided to do something about it, so He sent His only begotten Son, to pay the price for my sins. For the wonderful privilege through Christ of coming to the mercy seat, knowing that the line is open, to make my request known to Him, although I also am aware of the fact that He has promised His children: “And it shall come to pass. that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear”. Isaiah 65:24.

“My cup runneth over”

For the priceless gift of a Saviour, who was willing to leave the everlasting glories of Heaven, to come down, suffer, bleed and die, for one who had “Gone Astray” Isaiah 53:6. “Found Wanting” Daniel 5:27. “Not Worthy” Luke 7:6. “Sold under Sin” Romans 7:14. One who could say with the Apostle Paul “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And praise God I can also say with him, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” Verses 24 & 25;

“I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto Me and rest;
 Lay down, thou weary one, lay down Thy head upon my breast.”
 I came to Jesus as I was — Weary, and worn, and sad;
 I found in Him a resting-place, And He has made me glad.”

“My cup runneth over”

For the precious gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38 the one who was to “Reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” John 16:8. The one who was to guide His apostles into all truth, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” John 16:13. “He shall glorify me” John 16:14. It is vital that I

listen to his words and seek also to glorify" "the Lord Jesus, and I can do this by manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law" Galatians 5:22,23.

"My cup runneth over"

For God's most marvellous word, this vast reservoir, bringing to me all those wonderful promises, given to and for those who are His children. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ". Galatians 3:26,27. Listen to the words of our Heavenly Father: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" Hebrews 13:5. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" Psalm 34:7. "the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" Deuteronomy 33:27. "Casting all your care upon him' for he careth for you" 1 Peter 5:7.

"My cup runneth over"

For the wonderful privilege that is mine in living in a country where I along with other brethren, can meet together to worship our loving Heavenly Father in the beauty of holiness For the peace and quiet of the Lord's Day, a day set aside for His glory. For the Invaluable moments spent in quiet meditation when meeting around the table of our Lord Jesus, sharing with others some of "the unsearchable riches of Christ" The Apostle Paul said: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you. That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

"My cup runneth over"

For the golden hours spent with those of like faith, brethren beloved in the Lord, having shared with them mountain top experiences and happy fellowship. For the many mighty men of God, it has been my joy to have met, and sat at their feet, listening to the wonderful truths gleaned after very many years in the service of the Lord. Men who have been a great influence in my life. For the loving service rendered to me by those who seek to elevate the Lord Jesus, in their daily lives, and for the countless numbers of God's children who are striving to glorify the Lord.

"My cup runneth over"

For the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies:
Father, unto Thee we raise
This our sacrifice of praise.

"My cup runneth over"

For Sunsets & Sunrises. Sunshine & Shadows. Wet & Dry. Clouds & Rainbows. Mountains & Valleys. Trees & Flowers. Seeds & Harvests. Home & Family. Work & Play. Health & Strength. Food & Raiment. Life & Love. Peace & Joy. Friends & Friendship. Tears & Laughter. Goodness & Mercy. Memories sad & Memories glad. Unnumbered Comforts. Blessings I've forgotten.

"My cup runneth over"

For the valuable lesson of the two sparrows:— One which opened its mouth, and the other (I presume the parent) which put something in. Methinks:— Who told the young 'un to open its mouth? and who told the old 'un to put something in? "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" Matthew 10:29-31.

"My cup runneth over"

For the great pleasure of hearing my grandchildren singing grace; a little taste of Heaven:—

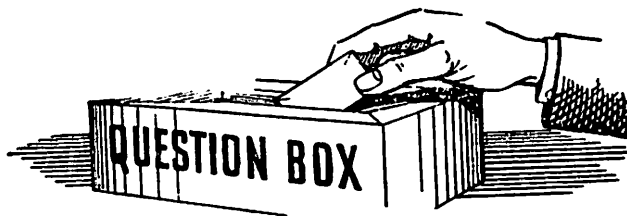
"Thank you for the world so sweet,
Thank you for the food we eat,
Thank you for the birds that sing,
Thank you God for everything."

"My cup runneth over"

The writer to the Hebrews in Chapter 11 gives a catalogue of God's mighty men, who died in faith, not having received the promises. By faith..by faith...By faith... Whether or not the writer realised he could not do justice to everyone; he writes in verse 32 "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of...of...of...of...of..."

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.
Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ,
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
That tastes those gifts with joy".

This month's exercise:— May I invite you once again to "Come aside and rest awhile, "take a walk with "the good shepherd", to the "green pastures", to the "pastures of tender grass". Take some note paper, and a pen of course, and write down, make a list, of those things you need to thank God for. If, after quiet meditation you feel like a change, you can stretch your legs by asking Him to lead you to the "still waters", "the waters of quietness". There you can complete your list, and if you care to share it with me. I should be delighted to receive it, send to:— Leonard Morgan, "Briarcroft", 396 Atherton Road, Hindley Green, Wigan.
May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion. LEONARD MORGAN



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"If we in the Church of Christ say that we have the right message, why is it that more progress isn't being made in the saving of souls?"

THIS is a question that must trouble the minds of many christians. We look around and see many struggling and ageing assemblies: churches which were numerically strong not too many years ago but now whose lights are burning dimly. We know of small, isolated communities whose chief concern seems to be to keep the doors open from week to week and who have neither the resources nor the numerical strength to mount and sustain efforts to promote the gospel. These things breed apathy and despair, and in the minds eye we can visualise old Satan flexing his muscles in order to mop up the remaining faithful.

Yes, the questioner has posed a vital question, one which demands an urgent answer. We can be assured that the power of God in and through the gospel is as dynamic as it ever has been. That being so, the failure must be on our part, and I personally believe that we have failed in the following areas.

Love

I bring this forward first because it is the pivot around which christianity revolves. I am convinced of the all-consuming love of God in the provisions which he has made for our salvation; I am not so convinced that the same sort of love is reciprocated by those who profess to be his children. How can we say that we love God if we are not prepared to keep his commandments? How can we emulate the sacrifice of Christ when we are unwilling to sacrifice even a little of our time for the promotion of his work? "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (1 John 2:6).

Furthermore, what about love to the brotherhood. Congregations have been split because of bitterness and envy. This has usually gone under the guise of contending for the truth against heresy, but no matter how we may seek to wrap things up the fact remains crystal clear that there has been and still is a singular lack of love in the brotherhood. Brethren, these things should not be, "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11). It is not too late to bury our differences although the day is far spent. It is a terrible, terrible thing that brethren have no fellowship with fellow-christians, and I am sure that God will hold us accountable if we persist in this attitude. When shall we learn the simple lesson that we don't necessarily have to agree on everything in order to co-operate in God's work?

Leadership

God in His wisdom has given each local community of christians autonomy to order its own affairs. Different styles of government have been set up but very seldom has leadership been seen as a function of community government. The line between ruling and leading has not been drawn sufficiently clearly. The attendant power and authority in ruling has appealed unto men: leadership has been less appealing because this calls for qualities in personal development which many so-called leaders have either been reluctant to give, or have not had the capacity to give.

What qualities make for a good leader? I believe he must have personal integrity, intelligence and complete objectivity. He must also be skilled in problem-solving techniques, interviewing techniques, and decision-making. He must be involved in achieving realistic objectives which have been worked out by himself and the community, and to this end he must have a complete grasp of human relations practice. He must so activate and motivate the community that if necessary they could operate efficiently without him. He must so guide the community that the personal objectives would automatically be the corporate objectives. He must make the community a fully-integrated, efficient arm for the Lord.

There is a school of thought which holds that leaders are born not made. The sooner this fallacy is nailed the better will we be able to turn our church governments into efficient leaderships. Then, perhaps, the church in its several communities will know where it is going.

Planning

If this had taken place in communities in previous years then we would not have reached the state in which we now find ourselves. It is only when a community knows where it is going that adequate plans can be made to realise the objective. Because of inefficient leadership we have initiated inadequate plans.

By planning I don't mean just for the mission next year. That is important, of course, but planning must go deeper than that. We must be looking a few years hence. We must know every single member of the community, their strength and weaknesses, their potentialities, their capacity for development in line with the long-term objectives of the community. We must know something of the plans of the wider social community in which we as a christian community operate. The long-term plans must be fully understood by every member so that adequate financial arrangements, for instance, can be made to realise the plans. We must be looking to develop leaders perhaps twenty years before they actually are needed, and there must also be an awareness among the incumbent leadership that as they advance in years the capacity to lead efficiently might be impaired, and that they must plan to lay down the mantle graciously when

such time comes so that it might fall on those who have been prepared to take it. In such a way will the continuity of efficient leadership be maintained.

Training

It seems to be a popular belief that training, like road accidents, should always happen to the other fellow. In Churches of Christ mutual ministry has come to mean mutual mouth with scant regard, many times, as to whether the particular brother has any aptitude to preach and teach. Those with the necessary aptitude should be trained. Those without should be directed into an avenue where they can fulfil themselves and the Lord's work in a way in which the brother who has the aptitude to teach could not. The phrases used to describe such arrangements are 'horses for courses' and 'square pegs in square holes'.

Take community singing. Why should the brothers who lead the singing not consider it necessary to learn the rudiments of music. They could be trained to do this in a few simple lessons. Or is it because they think that second best will do for God? I'm sure they don't think that at all, so why can we not initiate some training for them.

Or leaders, for instance. Do all leaders think they have reached the pinnacle of achievement and therefore nothing further need be done. If what I am saying is true then many are not half way up the mountain, so why can't we initiate training for leaders. And so we could go on, but I think I have said enough for you to realise that in a well-ordered community we should all be looking for ways to improve ourselves so that we could 'guard the deposit' that little bit better.

Conclusion

Well, dear questioner, we have lost ground, but don't despair entirely because I can detect a re-awakening to the urgent problems confronting us. Some are convinced if the things I put forward; others still need convincing. But I feel sure that if we can unite our efforts then there is nothing that the Church in the British Isles cannot achieve. May God grant that we shall act before it is too late.

All Questions Please to Brother Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield Wigan.

IF THINE EYE OFFEND THEE

JESUS said, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee": And again, "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body be cast into hell" (Matt. 5:29).

Those words are as bold and stark as any to be found in the New Testament and quite shocking to most people. The very thought of losing an eye or a hand is enough to send most of us looking for something other than a literal interpretation of Jesus' words.

Perhaps we turn away from a concrete interpretation too quickly for Jesus' words are literally true. It is better to lose one member than have the whole body perish. Human beings regularly face such choices and they regularly choose in favour of surrendering a member in order to gain a longer life for the body. Who, in his right mind, would not allow a hand, an eye, a leg or any other member to be severed if it meant the difference between life and death, to say nothing of the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

The literal truth of Jesus' statement notwithstanding, I do believe that the real meaning of these inspired words is spiritual. One reason I believe this is that literally plucking out one's eye would not help the problem Jesus was talking about. If one's eye were seeing things that caused him to sin, plucking out his eye would not really help. If the heart remained unchanged he would simply view the evil scenes with his other eye. For that matter even removing both eyes would not keep a willing heart from wicked imaginations. It could still be aroused by sensations from the other four senses.

If one is doing sinful acts with his right hand, cutting off that hand would not stop the deeds as long as the will to do them remained intact. There are few things which even right-handed persons cannot learn to do with their left hand. In fact, one could be a physical invalid and still be an active sinner if his heart remained unconverted. "An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations" is one of the things the Lord hates (Prov. 6:18).

I believe Jesus is teaching the sacrifices a disciple should be willing to make in order to purify both his heart (represented by the eye) and his behaviour (represented by the hand). The verses also indicate that a Christian life consists of a pure mind and good behaviour. Neither by itself is sufficient. Throughout the history of the church men have argued about the relative importance of purifying one's heart as opposed to purifying his life. Jesus insists both are essential.

In those days the Pharisees had decided they did not have to worry about the heart as long as one's behaviour was all right. Jesus quoted them as saying, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery:" But, he continued, "I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart". One could paraphrase Jesus' words like this: You have been told not to tolerate sinful deeds, but I worry as much about an impure heart as I do an impure life. Their own lives were a good example of what Jesus meant. He said "Ye are like whited sepulchres which outwardly appear beautiful but inwardly are full of dead men's bones". You appear righteous to men, Jesus said, but your hearts are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Not long ago a famous entertainer is asked, during a public appearance, about his religion. The question was no doubt prompted because the man was well known for making jokes about churches. He said he did not bother about any form of worship, and he did not worry about the irreligious things he does and says, because he believes God looks at the heart and he knows he loves God. Of course, his statement is not very different from the doctrine taught by some churches which says that it does not matter what kind of religion one practices as long as the heart is right.

The wisdom of Jesus' instructions are contained in the fact that it is impossible to keep either thoughts or behaviour pure unless they are both controlled together. An heart that persists in desiring evil things will eventually corrupt one's behaviour. And, one who finds himself behaving in a way that even he condemns will not continue in that state of mental conflict for long. He will resolve it by changing his behaviour to agree with his beliefs, or changing his beliefs to agree with his behaviour. Psychologists have elaborated this fact of human nature into a theory, called the principle of cognitive dissonance. Of course, the Lord knew how humans behave long before Dr. Festinger gave the principle a fancy name.

Are there current examples which will illustrate the truth Jesus was teaching? I once talked with an alcoholic who in his younger days had scoffed at the idea that alcohol was harmful. After years of drinking he had changed his mind. At that time he said he felt guilty about drinking and wished he could stop. If the man was sincere in what he said his heart was in the right place (his eye was pure) and he needed only to cut off his hand, i.e. stop the practice of lifting the bottle to his lips. Fortunately this man did so a few years later.

A salesman argued that he could not keep his job if he did not lie to customers. (Let me go on record as saying I do not think this is true, certainly not at least for any job worth keeping) He knew lying was wrong. In this case he should quit that job and that would be equivalent to cutting off his hand in Jesus' parable.

Perhaps you have known, as I have, people who attended a church which practiced things they did not believe simply because that was the most convenient church to attend. Again, they should cut off their hand from the practice, because if they do not, they will be apt to find themselves believing the practice ere long.

What kind of present-day situations would require plucking out one's eye? Here is an old story that still has a familiar ring. When David first walked on the roof top of his villa and saw Bathsheba bathing in her garden, it aroused evil desires in his heart. (II Sam. 11:2) If at that point he had plucked out his eye (removed himself from the scene) he would not have become the world's most famous adulterer.

If a young person (or an elder one) is associating with a group in which he is tempted to do wrong, even if he has not committed the deed, plucking out his eye would mean removing himself from the group which is the source of temptation. For the man who works on a job where he is tempted to do wrong, plucking out his eye would mean quitting that job and getting another where those temptations do not exist. I might add that the eye in Jesus' parable is symbolic of any means which can be used to convey information to the brain and thus could become a means of arousing impure impulses in the heart. Obviously, temptations which are created by sounds, or any other means, would require measures identical to those described for the eye.

We can summarize Jesus' discourse by saying it clearly condemned the doctrine of the Pharisees by laying on every individual the responsibility of monitoring his own heart, and in Peter's words, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ". In addition we are taught that one is not relieved of the responsibility for sinful deeds, even if they were first conceived in some source outside the person himself.

Contributed to the 'S.S.' by JAMES D. ORTEN, Brentwood, Tenn. U.S.A.

THE TRUTH, for others to see

Birmingham is the second City in Britain and of grand and glorious proportions as any visitor will soon discover. For the past 150 years it has been blessed by the Lord in that His saints have been constant in their witness and worship. Such old stalwarts as David King and Lancelot Oliver were pioneers of the Restoration Movement in the City. The total number of assemblies at one time was eight; of which the Church in Moseley Road was the first formed and a few years later christians commenced to meet in the old asylum in Aston. In 1865 these brethren purchased a building — erected for the Baptist Organization — at the corner of Geach Street and Summer Lane. This building had a seating capacity of 250.

The church in Summer Lane along with others at Moseley, Sparkhill, Bournville, Anderton Street and Erdington and some in the near vicinity of Birmingham, formed the 'Birmingham District' of the original 'Co-operation of Churches of Christ' in Great Britain. Among the whole of the six churches in Birmingham the total membership would be about 600. No one individual assembly ever allowed itself to reach such an unwieldy size. The practice has always been to hive off and set up other centres of witness. The number of 'Elders' has never been recorded as if it were of some great fete or moment, but at Summer Lane, until the late 'Sixties there were always three and at one period five. The membership was always a little over 100 and the writer can remember when the figure reached 113.

Far more important than the numerical size of the congregation and the numerical strength of the oversight: Summer Lane was always a spiritually strong church. Never more so than when the greatly respected John Allen Hudson visited Birmingham and served the church in 1937. Several were added to the church during his ministration of the Word. Most of the spiritual strength of this church in the first half of the twentieth century was due to the careful study and diligent teaching of Brother Fred C. Day. He was secretary to the church for over fifty years; his knowledge and wisdom are still unsurpassed. He kept the church faithful to the old paths wherein is the good way, when the 'Co-operation' drifted into Modernism. It was in 1946 that Summer Lane withdrew support from the 'Birmingham District'. She was the only congregation in Birmingham to stand firm against this digression and she played a good part in later years in assisting other assemblies outside the City who also seceded.

The original building was destroyed by enemy action in November 1941, but the Lord had mercy on the congregation and not one life was lost, either through the terrible bombing which the city endured or from among the young men of the church who were conscripted into the Forces. A temporary structure was erected on the old site toward the end of the war-years and this served the churches purposes until the government provided compensation money for the present building in 1962.

Brother Fred Day saw the centenary celebrations in 1965 but he passed to his rest in March 1966. In June the following year the writer entered into full-time work with the churches in Scotland. Since then the church at Summer Lane has sunk into apostasy and adopted many unscriptural practices such as had been so strenuously avoided when the 'Co-operation' drifted away. Innovations have arisen such as Preacher Training Colleges, Individual Cups at the Lord's Table and the 'Minister' system. "How are the mighty fallen?" **PAUL JONES**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY 1976

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1—Isaiah 34 | Revelation 19 |
| 8—Daniel 12 | Revelation 20 |
| 15—Isaiah 65:13-25 | Revelation 21:1-21 |
| 22—Genesis 2:4-25 | Revelation 21:22 to 22:5 |
| 29—Isaiah 66:1-14 | Revelation 22:6-21 |

THE COMING VICTORIES

Our readings this month conclude the amazing visions of the war with Satan. We begin with the heavenly rejoicing over the destruction of the "great whore". The long ages over which the seer has roamed have spanned the intervening times beyond the present time. While the process of disintegration of the system of false christianity is before our eyes, consummation is in the future. Christendom, the handmaid of materialistic civilization, presents a religion backed by governments with sophisticated weapons, designed to destroy human life — a complete contradiction of the teaching and example of Jesus. This caricature of the church of Christ must surely be the Babylon of the prophecy. The first head-on battle is pictured for us between the Lord leading his armies riding upon a white horse, and His weapon is the Word of God. He judges and makes war, opposed by the beast, the kings of the earth and the false prophet. They are defeated with tremendous carnage, a picture of complete defeat. The spiritual leaders are cast into the lake of fire. So ends the existence of beast and false prophet but the power behind them must still be dealt with. His influence is withdrawn for a period while apparently in heaven the souls of the faithful followers and martyrs of Jesus reign with Him. Earth's inhabitants meanwhile have protection from Satan's deceptions. but are ready when he is let out for a time to follow him in a tremendous campaign covering

the whole earth to attack and destroy God's people. Fire from heaven destroys them, and the devil joins his instruments in the lake of fire. The wars are spiritual realities, necessarily clothed in physical figures.

The Millennium

This word means simply a thousand years. It has been the source of endless controversy. What we must recognise is that the period may not be literally just what it says, but we believe that the time of restriction on Satan's power is either past, present, or still future. While we have no authority for building a picture of a perfect human society during the period, we also have no authority for denying it. We are sometimes reminded that this is the only passage in the Bible where such a period is mentioned. We cannot however dismiss the subject for that reason — or any other. We know Satan's power is limited. This is shown clearly in God's dealings with Satan in the case of Job, and we know he cannot tempt us more than we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). The idea of saints - christians of course — reigning and judging occurs elsewhere in scripture (Rom. 5:17; 1 Cor.6:2&3; Rev. 5:10). The very plain statement of scripture do not allow for two literal resurrections though we are in a sense resurrected when we rise from the water in baptism, a spiritual as well as a physical rising.

The Judgement

"It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgement" (Heb. 9:27). Were it not for the tender voice of Jesus promising forgiveness, and the measureless sacrifice He made for us, this vision would fill us with terror — and so it should for we are deeply conscious that when our record is displayed we would have nothing to recommend us to the Judge. So tremendous was the sight that heaven and earth fled away, when the human race came before the bar. But the Book of Life will be there, and every true christian's name will be in it. The disciples of Jesus came to Him

rejoicing in the power they had been able to wield but He said "Rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Have we sufficiently sought this honour or recognised the priceless privilege? Some have the hardihood to say "When you are dead you are done for", thinking to escape judgement but we note the universal nature of the resurrection "small and great", "death and Hades", and the dread punishment indicating immeasurable loss.

The Holy City

"We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). Here is Peter's vision, and John presents his vision of a most glorious city. This is the Bride of Christ adorned with wondrous grace, and the great glory of it is that God is in the midst. that He has wiped away all tears, removed all grief, and troubles. We suppose that John had a picture in his mind of the Jerusalem he knew in his youth. The temple was its great attraction "for glory and for beauty", and the city he sees in his vision bears a relation to the old one (destroyed by the time he wrote "Revelation"); The measurements remind of Ezekiel's vision of a new sanctuary in a physical Jerusalem with river of life flowing out of the Temple. In view of the New Covenant it would seem that Ezekiel's vision remains unfulfilled due to the continued disobedience of Israel according to the flesh. The new Jerusalem is a spiritual entity representing the fulfilment of God's promises far beyond the Old Covenant, for the sacrifices of the New are offered by those redeemed by the supreme and final sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. The measuring of the new city conveys the idea of completeness, sufficiency. We note the honour given to the twelve tribes of Israel at the entrance, and the greater honour to the twelve apostles forming the foundation stones (Eph. 2:20). The absolute purity and holiness of the citizens is emphasised (21:8&27; 22:15), surely to warn us who have started in the narrow way, not to depart from it ever. The transcendent beauty of the materials of construction alone forbid the entrance of anything unclean (21:11 & 18-21), and we are reminded of the hymn — "Eternal light, eternal light, how pure the soul must be..." (21:23; 22:5). A river if kept clean, beautifies a town. The picture here is completed by the river of water of life sustaining the trees of life. For the suffering saints, what

a refreshment for the soul! Throughout this book the LAMB through Whose blood alone is the glory made possible stands supremely great, completely identified with God Almighty.

Final Warnings

Humbled before "Revelation" we conclude with reminder of the very solemn statements concerning the book itself — which can perhaps equally be applied to the whole Bible. The angel said "These words are true and to be trusted" (22:6). He also said "Do not seal up the words" (22:10). Jesus says "Behold, I come quickly" (22:7-12 & 20). Let us say "He that is athirst. let him come. he that will. let him take the water of life freely".

R. B. SCOTT

A gem cannot be polished without friction
nor a man perfected without adversity.

HOPE THOU IN GOD

Psalms 42:11

Tune : Yorkshire

Hope thou in God! Creator of the world,
Against whose foes his banner is unfurled;
His word of truth, thy keen-edged sword shall
be.

And standing in his might — thy victory
Hold fast the faith thou hast in Him confessed
And be assured that he will do the rest.

Hope thou in God! The captain of the host,
He will be there when thou dost need him most
His promises are faithful, and so sure,
Abide in him and thou shalt be secure.
Hope thou in God! The mighty sovereign Lord
Keep faith with Him, and he will prove His
word.

Hope thou in God! The great eternal friend.
His power will keep thee safely to the end.
Skies may be dark and trials come thy way,
Still trust in Him and he will be thy stay
Hope thou in God! Fully in him confide,
And He will be thy rest at eventide.

Hope thou in God! This world will pass away,
But for thy soul there is a brighter day,
Where faith will pass, into the blessed sight.
Of the dear Lord who is our heart's delight.
Love, Peace and Joy then shall our portion be
Our hope fulfilled, when we shall dwell with
thee.

21.1.75

TOM KEMP

"IN APPRECIATION"

May I on behalf of my mother and myself, express through the pages of the Standard our sincere appreciation to our brethren throughout the country, who remembered us in our time of sorrow, at the passing away of Bro. Jim Pritt.

We thank-you for your remembrances of us in prayers, letters, cards & floral tributes.

During his long illness Dad was ever grateful for the visits of his brethren and the prayers offered on his behalf and could utter, himself, during his last days to his Heavenly Father, 'Thy will be done'. God bless you all Brethren.

Sister Norma Layland on Behalf of
Sister Doris Pritt.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR

HOME COUNTRIES & COMMONWEALTH	1 Copy	2 Copies	3 Copies
(through Agent)	£0.90		
(posted direct)	£1.00	£1.88	£2.60
CANADA & U.S.A.	\$3.00	\$5.00	\$7.00
(payment in dollar bills)	1, 2 or 3 years pro rata in advance		

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER: PAUL JONES 3 St. Laurence Crescent, Slamannan, Falkirk, FR1 3HY, Tel. Slamannan (032 485) 200 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

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

CONFERENCE SECRETARY: TOM WOODHOUSE, "Jesmond," 8 Shoulder-of-Mutton Hill, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts. NG17 7DX.

Hymn Book Agent and Treasurer: FRED HARDY, 73a Bridge Street, Morley, Leeds, Yorkshire. Tel. Morley 3255.

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd., Langley Mill, Nottm. Tel. 07737 (Langley Mill) 2266