

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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Family Devotions.

(The fourth and last of the morning talks given at the Vacation Bible School
at Tunbridge Wells in August, 1959)

THE subject is an important one, and, alas, the practice very neglected. In a recent survey in America, statistics showed that in so-called religious homes only ten per cent of families practised any kind of religious devotions, or worship.

History has proved, time and time again, that a nation's prosperity and progress stands or falls on the spiritual condition of its families. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

Scotland many years ago built itself a reputation of being a God-fearing people, sending missionaries to many lands. In those years, family devotion was a common practice. Robert Burns, the poet, gives an insight into the religious background of the families in his day. His poem, "The Cottar's Saturday Night" tells of the family gathered round the fire at the end of the day to worship God, the father taking the lead:

"Then kneeling down to Heaven's eternal King,
The saint, the husband and the father, prays:
Hope springs exalting on triumphant wing,
That thus they shall meet in future days:

"From scenes like these Old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad;
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings;
An honest man's the noblest work of God."

There is without doubt a

Need for more Family Devotion.

Amongst our own families today how many of us gather our children around us for praise and worship? It may appear shameful, but it is common knowledge that in many of the homes of our brethren the Bible is never opened, prayer is not known to be practised openly, and grace is never said before meals. Must our worship and praise begin and end only in the chapel where we meet? Is all our spiritual life and devotion only to be found inside a meeting-house? Is it any wonder that we hear and read of broken marriages and homes when there is no acknowledging of God in the family life?

A well-known saying contains a great truth: "The family that prays together stays together." Imagine how difficult it is for husband and wife to pray together at the close of the day if one or the other has a quarrel against the loved one. Quarrels will be forgiven and peace made in order that "their prayers be not hindered."

Family devotions are perhaps as old as Adam himself. The patriarchs saw the need in their day. Isaac blesses his son (Gen. 27:26-27); Jacob commands his household to put away idols (Gen. 35:2); David gives godly advice to his son Solomon. (1 Kings 2:1-4).

There is no reason or excuse why husband and wife cannot close the day together in prayer, the husband in the role of the priest, bearing up to God the cares and needs of the family. Johnny's illness, Joan's schooling, little Peter's bad temper, all the domestic cares and problems: God loves to hear them all. An old man once told the story of how, on his wedding night, his wife handed him her Bible, and said: "We will have the reading." He had never prayed aloud in his life, but when the reading was ended and they both knelt down together he found himself praying for their new life together. That was a good beginning, and the Greek proverb says, "The beginning is half of the whole."

If there are children in the family every effort should be exercised to encourage them to take an active part in this service. For example, they should be encouraged to say grace at meals, to read the daily readings of Scripture. The effect on children living and growing up in this atmosphere will be far-reaching. The impression will be a lasting one. F. B. Meyer said that he owed a lot of his spiritual life to the devotional life of his mother and her daily reading of God's word.

One of the difficulties in the way of daily reading of the scriptures is the lack of readings with notes which help one to study the Bible systematically. I am sure others have felt this need amongst our brotherhood. However, a daily reading of a chapter in going through a whole book is better than not reading at all.

To many the suggestions may seem good but not practicable, and many have

Hindrances to Family Devotion

Some of these are real and set many problems: The husband and wife both working and going out and coming in at different hours; the children going off early to bed; the lack of privacy: families living with their "laws and in-laws." However, if there is an earnest desire to do God's will in this matter, something can and will be done. The Lord's day is one day at least when all could get together for some form of praise and worship. God is sure to bless even this, and the results will be seen in that many an evil and temptation will be held at bay, the family will be fortified in trial, when daily strength is prayed for and sought for from our heavenly Father; an earnestness of the family life in heaven will be felt in the earthly family life below; neighbours will observe and seek help in such homes in their times of extremity and distress.

Christ will be the Unseen Guest in the home where he is revered and worshipped.

H. ALLAN.

What is your Goal.

THE above heading poses a very simple question, yet how few could give it a real answer.

We would all admit that in everyday life, most people, as individuals and in association with others, are aiming at something; it may be to excel in sport, or to make a good living in business, trade, or a profession; and there are those also, who make pleasure their chief object: dancing, picture-going, or seeking the satisfaction of physical desires. Some also, to some extent, make the attendance at religious services their aim, not, perhaps, because they have any great desire, in themselves, to attend, but because mother or father, or both, wish to see them thus engaged. If asked what is their chief aim in life, it is not likely that any of such people would honestly say that they attend church as an act of worship of their heavenly Father. It is of these people—as of all mankind—that the statement has been made, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and that other saying, God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent." No goal in life is worthwhile that does not take these words into account.

No better example can be found of one who had a goal set before him than Jesus, the man of Nazareth. It is recorded of Him that "when his appointed time was come, he set his face stedfastly towards Jerusalem." There lay His goal: Calvary—death on a cross.

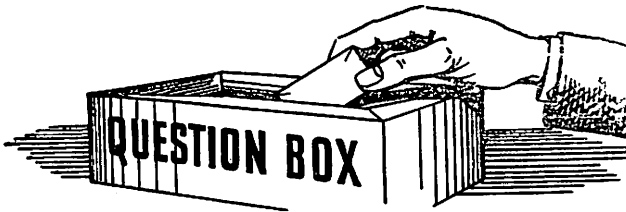
Stephen, the first Christian martyr, died, being stoned. Why was he willing to die? Because of the goal he had in mind.

Paul once wrote, "for me to live is Christ." What a pure-minded ideal to set before oneself? It meant more than just believing, praying, singing, giving. It meant for him—and for us—the self-denial of all things that separate from that one ideal. Paul also wrote "one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth [aiming for] those things which are before, I press toward the mark—the prize [the goal] of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul indeed was a man of high endeavour. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me. The life that I now live in the flesh. I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." This determination, zeal, purpose, was so fixed and rooted in Paul, that he could say, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come, nor things present, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." Paul's goal was Christ.

We, as Christians, had our spiritual beginnings, and Paul exhorts us, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" We were buried by baptism into death, that we might rise to walk in newness of life. This is the aim set before us: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, not things of the earth; and when this life comes to its ending, we can say, with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness . . . and not for me only, but for them also that love his appearing."

T. W. HARTLE.



CONDUCTED BY
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Q. Have we any evidence to show that Luke was the writer of both the gospel bearing his name, and the Acts of the Apostles?

A. The fact that Luke wrote both the gospel bearing his name, and the Acts of the Apostles has never been doubted except by a few German rationalists, and those who adopted their theories. Even a sceptic like Renan was convinced of it. There are two lines of evidence, one internal, the other external.

Internal. That the writer of Acts was a companion of Paul and therefore gained much of his material as an eyewitness, is evident from his use of the personal pronouns "we" and "us." By this we know that Luke first met Paul at Troas, for in Acts chapter 16, after using the pronoun "they" in verse 8, he

commences in verse 10 to use the pronouns "we" and "us." This variation occurs at intervals throughout the rest of the book as Luke leaves or rejoins Paul's company. Finally, he is found with Paul during the latter's first imprisonment at Rome (Acts 28:16). From the letters to the Colossians and Philemon, both written at that time, we find that Luke was one of Paul's most constant companions during his imprisonment (Col. 4:10-14; Phile. 23-24).

Further, although not giving his name, the author of Acts is clearly distinguished from the other most constant companions of Paul. This is seen in Acts 20:4-6, where the companions of Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem are said to have been Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus. But they are

mentioned as having gone on before Paul to Troas, and there having waited for "us," meaning the writer and Paul. The writer was, then, someone else other than those mentioned, and the only other person it could have been was Luke, who went on with Paul to Jerusalem and, as we have seen, to Rome.

That the same writer who wrote the Acts of the Apostles also wrote the gospel of Luke is apparent from the introduction to both books. It can be seen that one book is a sequel to the other, and written to the same person—Theophilus (compare Luke 1:1-4 and 24:49 with Acts 1:1-4). This is also confirmed by the style. Both books not only show that they were written by a person of learning, but by the same person. Plumptre has pointed out in his introduction to the Acts of the Apostles (*Ellicott's Commentary*), that no fewer than fifty words are used in both books which are not found anywhere else in the New Testament. Hobart, in his *Medical Language of Luke*, goes further (although some scholars consider that he has overstated the case), and shows that over four hundred Greek medical terms are used in their correct and technical sense by the writer of both books. This is highly significant when it is borne in mind that Luke was a physician (Col. 4:14).

Credner, the German scholar, admirably sums up the position in saying, "The Acts of the Apostles describes itself as the continuation of the third gospel; and the common object of both writings (Luke 1:3); the common peculiarities in regard to language and style; the common building up of doctrine on Pauline principles and foundation; the common striving after exactness . . . prove irrefragably that the author of the third gospel, the physician Luke, must on no account be separated from the author of the Acts of the Apostles" (quoted from Credner's Introduction, by F. C. Cook in his introduction to the Acts of the Apostles, *Speaker's Commentary*).

External. The external evidence shows just as conclusively that Luke is the author of both books. In fact, there never seems to have been any doubt in the early church on this point. The Muratorian Canon (not later than 170 A.D.) says, "In the third place is the book of the Gospel according to Luke." Again, "The acts of all the apostles are written in one book, Luke relates the

events of which he was an eye-witness to Theophilus." Irenæus (130-202 A.D.), in his work, *Against Heresies*, says, "Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel preached by him." In addition he makes many quotations from Acts, and repeatedly speaks of it as the work of Luke. His testimony is especially valuable, for he was a pupil of Polycarp, who not only lived in the days of the apostles but is said to have been a pupil of the apostle John. Tertullian (160-220), says, "Luke's form of the gospel men usually ascribe to Paul." Origen (195-254) is quoted by Eusebius as saying, "And the third, according to Luke, the gospel commended by Paul, which was written for the converts from the Gentiles" Eusebius (260-339) says, "Luke . . . by profession a physician, being for the most part connected with Paul, and familiarly acquainted with the rest of the apostles, has left us two inspired books."

Another remarkable testimony is that of Marcion the Heretic, against whom Irenæus wrote, for although he rejected the writings of all the apostles except those of Paul, he never doubted the writings of Luke.

There is then abundant evidence, both internally and externally, that Luke wrote both the gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

Q. Was Luke a disciple of Jesus?

A. We take it that the questioner is asking whether Luke was a follower of Jesus during the Lord's lifetime. Various traditions claim that he was. One claims that he was one of the seventy the Lord sent out. Another seeks to prove that he was a Gentile, on the ground that he and Epaphras are mentioned separately and after those "who are of the circumcision," in Colossians 4:11-14 (although this is supposition) and, once having concluded this, makes him one of the Greeks or Gentiles who came to see Jesus, as recorded in John 12:20.

Not only are these traditions without substance, but they are completely contradicted by the words of Luke himself in the introduction to his gospel. The R.S.V. gives the clearest rendering: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed

good to me, having followed all things me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed." Luke therefore was not writing as an eyewitness, but carefully distinguishes himself from those who had been eyewitnesses of the things he was now recording.

The first mention of Luke by name is not until Cor. 4:14. The only other times he is mentioned are Phile. 24 and that which many associate with Paul's second imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:11). The first indication we have of his being associated with the church is, as we have seen in answer to the previous question, Acts 16:10. Any attempt to trace Luke's life back further than this point is fruitless speculation.

Q. Was Philip the Evangelist in the Acts of the Apostles the same person as Philip the Apostle?

A. No. This is made quite clear from Acts 6. The twelve apostles found that they were in danger of neglecting prayer and the ministry of the Word of God in having to attend to the mundane affairs of the church (Acts 6:2). They therefore bade the church look out seven men to whom such work could be delegated. One of the seven chosen was Philip the evangelist (Acts 6:5; 21:8). The seven were then set before the twelve apostles, of whom Philip the apostle would be one (Acts 6:5). Philip the evangelist therefore met Philip the apostle, and they therefore could not be one and the same person.

Further proof can be seen from Acts 8. After Philip had baptised the Samaritans it was necessary for Peter and John to come down from Jerusalem in order to impart to them the Holy Spirit, since only the apostles had such power (Acts 8:14-17). If Philip had been an apostle, the visit of Peter and John would have been unnecessary.

WORLD REFUGEE YEAR FUND

I would like to report on the response to my letter in the December issue of the S.S. in which I suggested that brethren may care to combine in sending a gift to help refugees. I have received so far a total of £76 15s., fifteen contributions

came from individuals and four came from churches.

It has been a real pleasure to receive the letters and gifts from brethren in support of this most deserving cause. One brother welcomed the appeal because it was addressed to "the wider sympathies" of the brethren. Surely this brother is right in suggesting that there is a real danger of our concern being restricted within too narrow limits.

There is time for others to add their gifts to those I have already received. The address is 43 Rose Glen, Kingsbury, London, N.W.9. I intend closing the appeal on February 29th.

ERIC McDONALD.

CORRESPONDENCE

BRO. DAVID DOUGALL

Our readers will be glad to have this latest news of our brother's progress. Dear Bro. Melling,

In response to the many enquiries from the brethren, I hope the following report can be inserted in the S.S. for February:

Bro. David Dougall expresses his sincere thanks to the brethren from all parts of the country for their nice letters, "Get Well" cards and other tokens of Christian love received since his accident. He is not able to write yet, and Sister Dougall has tried to cope with the correspondence, but the task is too great for her, so we hope the brethren will accept this acknowledgment of their letters meantime.

Bro. Dougall evidently received a much harder knock than some of us realised at the time, and for a long time he was in a very grave condition. We are pleased to report that he is now home but the doctors say that recovery will take a long time. He cannot yet open his right eye voluntarily, although he can lift the lid with his finger, and the eye seems to be all right. When he tries to concentrate his thoughts on anything, even that soon tires him out.

At a recent examination at the Infirmary the doctors see a big improvement and Bro. Dougall reports back in six weeks' time for a further examination and possibly treatment.

Our brother appreciates very highly the prayers of the brethren on his behalf. We thank God our Heavenly Father for His mercies and continue with our prayers.

TOM NISBET.

Baptism and the New Birth.

Dear Bro. Melling,

Having read your article about "Johannes Warns," I agreed with all you said. Your criticism and remarks were justly and truly stated.

Fred Webster would do well to make a study of a good English grammar to learn the difference between a literal and a figurative expression. When Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and the spirit," it was a literal statement and its message was clear and plain; but when Jesus said, "I am the door," that was a figure of speech, which Jesus used all through the context to explain the difference between the true and the false, but the literal meaning was evidently clear.

Bro. Webster's statement that "baptism follows the new birth" is neither scriptural nor in keeping with apostolic practice. It is also a contradiction of Christ's commission, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." That injunction gives us a solid foundation for the construction of His church.

Living stones can be built upon it, but to separate belief from baptism cuts out the positive word "shall," and that leaves us doubtful as to what was meant. No argument against that passage will ever make sense. One often hears it said that it does not say that if you believe and are not baptised you will not be saved." That is putting in a couple of negatives and negatives are no foundation for building upon. Jesus stated a fact which had a divine foundation and we will be foolish to tamper with or ignore it.

Jesus said of Peter's confession "Upon this rock I will build my church." Anyone making that same confession is a proper candidate for the acceptance of Christ's commission—and being immersed into the triune names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Confession by itself is not conversion, but as Paul states, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." That was written to baptised believers for the encouragement of their faith. Note the word "unto."

The foregoing answers the question: "What is the means by which the defiled sinner is brought into contact with the great sin offering of Calvary?"

Then Bro. Webster tells us, "not by water, but by the water of the word of the truth of the gospel." Where is that passage found in scripture?

Here is Paul's answer to such a request, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to every one that believeth. To the Jew first and also to the Greek." The word "believeth" comprehends more than a mere assent of the mind; it is a belief which demands that every condition connected with salvation for the conversion of a sinner must be complied with, and they are scripturally named belief, repentance, confession and immersion, all summed up in one word—obedience.

So far as baptismal regeneration goes, it can only be applied to the baby sprinklers, who tell us that "the innocent little one is made a member of the visible and the invisible church."

It is a clumsy argument to put up for those trying to dodge the truth and claim salvation while being disobedient.

WILLIAM FERGUSON.

Dear Brother Editor,

Our brother Fred Webster seems to be what is commonly known as barking up the wrong tree.

As one who has nearly completed sixty years with the Church of Christ, may I be permitted to state one or two things for his future guidance:

(1) We do not believe in, or teach, Baptismal Regeneration.

(2) We do not believe that the New Testament teaches either infant baptism or adult baptism, but believers' baptism.

(3) We do believe we are saved by faith, but not by faith alone.

(4) We do believe we are saved by repentance (Act 2:38), but not by repentance alone.

(5) We do believe we are saved by confession (Rom. 10:9, 10), but not by confession alone.

(6) We do believe we are saved by baptisms, but not by baptism alone.

(7) We do believe that when we have complied with the above we can claim the promise of salvation, and not before.

(8) We do not believe the great commission to read, "He that believeth and is saved, may be baptised."

(9) We do believe that it reads, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," and we must keep to God's order (as Fred says).

(10) We do believe that this salvation is the forgiveness of past sins, and is not a ticket to heaven.

(11) We do not believe that the Apostle Paul committed an act of disobedience when he baptised some of his converts at Corinth, which he must have done if we are to believe the construction some people put upon 1 Cor. 1:17. The merits or demerits of believers' baptism is not under discussion, but the physical act of baptising, and Paul is glad he had not baptised many of them himself, lest any should say he had baptised them in his own name. I have often heard this passage quoted by unbaptised persons, but never before by a baptised believer.

(12) We do believe that the new Covenant (Will) containing the full and final revelation of God's will to man, came into operation at the death of the testator, and that the apostles were appointed the trustees of that will, to teach us those things that Jesus had taught them.

I hope these statements will be helpful to our brother and that he will not be troubled by any more phantoms.

EDMUND HILL.

Dear Editor,

It is with a sense of constraint, induced by the reading of Bro. Webster's two letters in *S.S.*, that this is written. That our brother writes with all the courage of conviction must be admitted, nevertheless he leaves us unconvinced that he has truth on his side in his main contention.

The figurative use of natural objects by Jesus Christ, on a certain occasion, he takes as *proof* that when the Lord speaks of water at another time he must be using figurative speech, which is plain nonsense.

There was a marriage feast at Cana, at which Jesus was present, his disciples with him. They who provided the feast had no wine for their guests, and Jesus, hearing of it, said to those who served, "Fill the water pots with water," and they filled them up to the brim. Were those water pots and the water poured into them figurative? A sort of game of pretending, as played even today by young children? Bro. Webster will know the right answer to that, I do not doubt. If the water in John 2 was real, how and why does it become figurative in John 3? Is it not obvious that the reason the water in John 3 *has* to be figurative is because it would otherwise conflict with Bro. Webster's views, which he wishes us to accept.

In writing thus, does he not place himself under the implied condemnation of those who, in his own words (in his second letter) "study the Bible to prove their own theology?" I think so.

Nothing shows more clearly the weakness of Brother Webster's position than the interpretation he places upon words used by Jesus. In his second letter he writes; I cannot—I dare not—reverse God's word." Praiseworthy, indeed! But his sense of responsibility to God's word does not prevent his altering a saying of the Lord in such a manner as to make it unintelligible. "Born of water and the spirit," is turned into "the water of the word of the truth of the gospel," which is to tamper recklessly with God's word.

When Nicodemus stumbled at what Jesus said to him, and was rebuked in consequence, the immediate answer given to his question, "How can these things be?" was not, as Bro. Webster implies, a reference to Moses lifting the serpent in the wilderness. No! It was "If I have told you of earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"

Jesus had been speaking of being born again, and the need of a new birth is a thing of the earth. Doubtless, it was so in the days of Christ, and should have been recognised by one who was a teacher in Israel. It certainly is so, and felt to be so, today. There are many good-intentioned people, the world over, who affirm this, and one does not need to be a Christian to see it. The dead hand of the past lies heavy on this generation (as it did on the Jews in that day of the Lord)—holding the whole world in thrall. Jesus said, I am a door. The office of a door is to open and shut. He came to shut the door to the then past, and to open the way to a new era.

Then also, the things which Jesus named, water and birth, are themselves of the earth—natural things; and water is as natural, real and tangible as birth.

Bro. Webster, in his two letters, has written a great deal about baptismal regeneration. Is there any one on this earth who truly believes any such doctrine? It would almost appear as though it is a term invented by those who believe and affirm that man is saved by faith alone, so as to give them a point of attack against all those who teach

that baptism is a part of the new birth; a sort of man of straw created for them to tilt at. It certainly is quite beside the mark for him to accuse Churches of Christ of having such a belief, warning them indeed—with unconscious irony—to flee from it.

Bro. Webster comes down strongly on Scriptures that suit his plea, and is somewhat elusive on any passage that discounts it. He declares: "Baptism is a burial," having Paul for his authority, and shuts his mind to its representing anything else. But just as a door opens and shuts, so a figure of speech may be understood in two or more ways. That is how Paul uses it. The old is buried—but out of death comes new life—which if true, would be baptismal regeneration indeed. There cannot be new life out of death—and if after burial one is to walk "in newness of life," a new birth becomes a necessity. The one figure points two ways.

When Jesus said, "Ye must be born again, Nicodemus answered, 'How can a man be born . . . when he is old?'" The answer came: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee. Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." We see, by those words that the old—the man of the earth—and the newly born—born of water and the Spirit—form one inseparably-connected new creation in Christ Jesus.

There is the closest possible analogy between natural and spiritual birth. In nature, procreation has two elements, begetting and conception, from which birth follows. These three are involved in all natural birth. In the spiritual—and scripture plainly shows it—it is exactly the same. There is the begetting (by the Spirit through the word) conception by the hearer (the receiving of a concept)—the acceptance by the mind of an idea presented to it. In Christianity the concept is, in John's words, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing ye might have life through his name." Following conception (believing) comes birth, which is by baptism. That is the Divine order of the new birth, which makes a man a child of God.

In nature, there is always life before birth, and in the spiritual it is imperative that there should be life before baptism (birth). "See, here is water," said the eunuch, "what doth hinder me

to be baptised?" "If thou believeth with all thine heart, thou mayest." Philip had preached the word, the first action in the order of the new birth, the next is seen in what the eunuch asks, and in Philip's answer. The eunuch believed, confessed, and was baptised. The new birth was thus brought to its spiritual conclusion. This same order is expressly laid down in the great commission, inescapably so. "Go preach, he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." To teach anything else is to make null and void what is Divinely commanded.

We are now in a position to examine two key passages which Bro. Webster quotes with much assurance. The first 1 Pet. 1:23, "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible . . . by the word of God."

The two words "born again" have a sense of finality for him. In the Greek, they are written as one word—the only occasion in the N.T. that they are so rendered (*vide* Young's Concordance). The word is *anagennao*, and its literal meaning is given as "to beget anew," so that what Peter wrote was not "born again," but "begotten anew" by the word of God, which brings Peter's words within the order of the new birth, and incidentally robs Bro. Webster of his basic position.

The second quotation is equally or even more disastrous for him. John 1:12: "But as many as received him [which is faith] to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Those referred to had faith, but were not yet children of God, but were given power to become such. No honest man, with that passage before him, will contend that faith alone is sufficient to save.

Bro. Webster, in vigorous language—unless I misapprehend or misapply his words—characterises the teaching of the Churches of Christ on this matter outlined above (as I understand that teaching), as "shameful innovation and brain-spun sophistry." Readers of his two letters will be able to judge for themselves where the "brain-spun sophistry" lies. W. BARKER.

OUR FATHER, Grant us new enthusiasm for Thy work: for the upraising of the outcast, for the feeding of the hungry, the healing of the sick, deliverance of those who languish in sore captivity to their baser self.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY

7—Genesis 50:1-3, 14-26.	Matt. 7:15-29.
14—Exodus 3:1-15.	„ 8: 1-17.
21— „ 40:1-16, 34-38.	„ 8:18-34.
28—Leviticus 8:1-9, 30-36.	„ 9: 1-17.

The Exodus

The title of this book, meaning a “going out,” was given, we understand, by the translators of the Septuagint, and is very fitting. When the Saviour was transfigured in glory with Moses and Elijah, the greatest of the prophets who preceded him, the subject of their conversation was the exodus which Jesus was to accomplish at Jerusalem. The exodus we are considering is absolutely unique in the world’s history, and forms perhaps the most wonderful of God’s dealings with the race He chose, to fulfil His purpose of offering salvation from sin to all mankind. Our readings touch upon two points only in the story. First the call of the leader by miraculous intervention and personal call, and then the setting up of the sanctuary in which His presence was to appear throughout the forty years of wilderness wanderings.

We observe some striking points in these two events. It would appear that Moses had thought to deliver the Jews from their bondage before. Obviously his mother must have imbued him at least with a knowledge of his birth, parentage and religious heritage. She had this opportunity only, perhaps, in his very early years and finally his position as a prince in Egypt would appear to offer the means of using position, power and cultural abilities to carry out his purpose. But he started wrongly, was compelled to flee and dwelt forty years in the wilderness through which, in part at least, he was to lead his people under direct supervision of Jehovah. We have no information as to his thoughts during that time, but we know he was married to the daughter of a priest, and took charge of the flock. We are quite sure that all this was to serve the purposes of God in training His servant for the tremendous responsibility and work to which he was subsequently called.

Moses shrank from the task and yet accepted it, seeking divine instruction, and being promised the needed help and given also human help through his brother Aaron. It was well that Moses had changed in attitude since “it came into his heart to visit his brethren” (Acts 7:23), when he acted upon impulse. He was then “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.” We do not read of his eminence and power in Egypt, but we know that nation was little short of a civilised empire—a world power. But forty years keeping the flock of his father-in-law in the wilds of the Sinaitic peninsula had brought a change—certainly a humbling experience for a prince of Egypt, banished for disloyalty. This period was made necessary by the consequences of Moses’s murder of the Egyptian taskmaster (4:19), and also doubtless the need for this almost startling change in character: “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). This was not weakness, as the whole life of the man testifies. God abundantly vindicated him many, many times. He had come to realise his own weakness, and his utter dependence on God.

The story of the exodus is told in detail in the early chapters, and is followed by the giving of the law at Mount Sinai —“the ten commandments,” spoken by the very voice of God Himself. How soon the people forgot that awe-inspiring sight and sound, and went back in heart and act to idol-worship! This indicates the stupendous marvel of the making of an undisciplined mob of slaves, discouraged and disheartened by hard bondage over many years, into a nation of warriors to be led forty years afterwards by Joshua against seven nations bigger than themselves. It is true the miraculous workings of God Himself can alone account for this. This second book of Moses covers a period of one year only, as we learn from our second reading, that time having been occupied in the making of the Tabernacle and all its furniture. That work was fundamental in the national life as true religion and true worship were the justification for the existence of Israel as a separate nation. It was as essential as a central unifying influence as is the New Testament to the church. The ark containing the “tables of the covenant,

the pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded" (Heb. 9:3) stood in the Holy of Holies, above which God's very presence was seen in the "Cloud of the Lord by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeyings" (40:38).

Once this work was completed the people were set in order in their camp surrounding the tabernacle on all sides until the cloud removed and led them to another camping ground. Thus the presence of Jehovah in their midst was at all times impressed on every person. We might imagine that every morning when some set out to collect the manna, they lifted the tent opening and looked towards the centre to see that He was with them still. Two main thoughts would predominate. They must give obedience to His law to be sure of His continued presence and while He is with them they are safe. Their experience of deliverance from Egypt assured them that no enemy could harm them, while the judgments executed in their midst assured them of His holiness.

All the material provisions of the old covenant have their spiritual counterparts in the new. Pray that we may all read these "holy scriptures" (2 Tim. 3:15) with discernment, and recognise their usefulness fully.

R. B. SCOTT.

Lesson Outlines

for the Lord's Day School

SERIES 1. LESSON 11.

Conversion: Cornelius with his kinsmen and intimate friends.

Lesson Verses. Acts 10:1 to 11:18 and Acts 15:5-11. Acts 10:30-48, in whole or in part, could be read in class.

Memory Verses. Acts 10:34, 35.

Objective. First Gentile converts. "So to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that they should live" (Acts 11:18).

Time. About A.D. 38.

Place. Cæsarea, modern Kaisariyeh, a village of Israel, the principal seaport of Palestine. About 35 m. N. of Joppa "by the seaside" and about 70 m. by road from Jerusalem. It was the seat of the Roman procurator of Judea.

Persons. (a) The apostle Peter. The Lord Jesus Christ had promised to give Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." " whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Peter had "opened the kingdom" to his fellow Israelites a few years earlier, on the first Pentecost after the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then about three thousand were immersed (Acts 2:41). In addition, for this most important occasion Peter was prepared by the vision instructing him to visit uncircumcised men, making no distinction between them and those who, like himself, had been circumcised in accordance with the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:1-4; Lev. 12:3; Acts 7:8; Rom. 4:11). Under the new covenant lack of circumcision would be no barrier to the dispensation of the mercy of God.

(b) Cornelius with his kinsmen and near friends. A Roman centurion. He and his (although Gentiles) were devout worshippers of God (Acts 10:2).

(c) They of the circumcision, the six Jewish brethren who had accompanied Peter from Joppa to Cæsarea.

Message. (i) Our heavenly Father is no respecter of persons. He makes no distinctions, shows no partiality. "In every nation anyone who reveres God and does what is right, is accepted by him." (ii) Peace has been proclaimed by God through Jesus Christ. (iii) God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and with power. Jesus was hanged on a gibbet, was raised from the dead by God on the "third day", and appeared to witnesses previously selected by God, the apostles who ate and drank with Jesus after his resurrection from the dead. (iv) God has appointed Jesus to be the Judge of the living and of the dead. (v) Through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ everyone who believes in Him, puts his trust in Him, will receive forgiveness of sins for His sake.

Results. While Peter was still speaking, the holy Spirit fell on all who heard the Word; on the Gentiles also the gift of the holy Spirit was poured. The Gentiles spoke with tongues and magnified God.

Peter said: "Dare anyone refuse the water for the immersion of these people, who have received the holy Spirit just as we did?" (i.e., the apostles at the beginning, Acts 11:15). Then Peter ordered that they be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ.

On his return to Jerusalem, believers of "the circumcision" joined issue with Peter. "You have visited uncircumcised men and eaten with them." But after Peter's explanation they said, "So to the Gentiles also, God has granted repentance that they should live."

Emphasis. "God chose," said Peter, "that of you all I should be the one by whom the Gentiles were to hear the word of the gospel and believe it. In cleansing their hearts by faith, God made not the slightest difference between us and them." The priceless blessing of the forgiveness of sins, the granting of repentance that they should live, was richly bestowed upon Cornelius, his kinsmen and intimate friends because they believed God and were obedient to His word.

Let all of us, today, Jews and Gentiles, give our minds and hearts to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. HOOD.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Blackburn.—We are pleased to record another addition to our assembly in the person of Elizabeth Ann Caughey, who has been constantly attending our Lord's Day school and gospel meetings for a number of years. She was immersed on December 13th, 1959. Rejoice and pray with us, brethren, that she may run faithfully to the end, and receive the crown of Life.

H.W.

Loughborough.—It was a joy to all of us, after the preaching of the Gospel by our Bro. Paul Jones, to see the wife of our Bro. Tom Stones come forward and express her desire to follow her Lord. Her husband was baptised during Bro. A. Winstanley's recent visit. May the Lord bless and keep her faithful to the end.

EDMUND HILL.

Slamannan District.—The New Year social gathering was held in the Slamannan church meeting house, on January 1st, 1960, under the presidency of Bro. Wm. Black, Dalmellington. There was a good attendance and our thanks are due to the Slamannan brethren for the work entailed in catering for such a large gathering, and for the very efficient service which was given.

Bro. Black, wishing one and all a happy and prosperous new year, reminded us

how highly privileged we were to be in the family of God and exhorted all to go forward into the new year with renewed strength, and "fear not."

Bro. Joe Nisbet, our first speaker, gave us a fine address on "Sanctification," showing clearly the sanctifying process of the word of God and the purity of life it brings if understood and obeyed.

Bro. A. Winstanley, our other speaker, spoke on the theme, "Love Begets Love," exhorting all to follow the words of our Saviour: "Love one another as I have loved you," and through love win others to our Saviour, for love is Christ's way to this end.

We were favoured with choir pieces from the Motherwell choir and solos by members of the Blackridge, Dalmellington, Motherwell and Slamannan churches, which were much appreciated.

We look forward to a happy and prosperous year in the work of the Lord.

Paris, France.—We have just completed a most successful Youth Meeting for the French-speaking young people of Belgium and France. There were 23 young men and women from nine different congregations present. Of this number six are developing into fine preachers of the Word. We extended to these six young men an invitation to preach each evening prior to our evangelistic service. I did the preaching each night. We were overjoyed to see Pol Billard arise and come forward to make the good confession the last evening of the meeting. His father is one of the charter members of the church in Reims. His conversion brings to nine the number of the faithful there.

For those who might be visiting the Continent during the summer months we mention that churches now exist in Paris, Orleans, Marsailles, Nice, Lille, Ecailon, Nancy, Chaumont and Reims. Write us for meeting times should you plan to be in any of these cities on the Lord's Day. Donald Daugherty, 3 rue Léon Bourgeois, Sèvres (S. et O.) France.

Woodstock, Capetown.—On December 13th, 1959, we witnessed an elderly lady, a widow, united with Christ in baptism. Then on December 13th, our young people's anniversary was convened, in which anthems, hymns, recitations, and gospel messages were rendered to an audience of about 180. We would like to thank all concerned for the co-operative spirit in publishing our reports during 1959, and we know in your prayers as well, for us here in South Africa. We pray it might be our happy experience also in 1960, God willing. Greetings in the Saviour's name from us all as a church and family, to you all over there. Please still pray for my "Car Fund," which stands now at £74 and that 1960 might bring this needed transport. 1st Corinth. 15:58. Hebrews 12 verses 1-3.

T. W. HARTLE.

COMING EVENTS

Blackburn.—The assembly here wishes it to be made widely known in the Brotherhood that they propose to hold a Mission, partly in the Y.M.C.A. on Lord's Days, March 6th and 13th, at 8 p.m. so that the principles of the Church of Christ might be made more widely known; also in their own meeting-place, Hamilton Street, on the same Lord's Days, at 6 p.m. and on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, at 7.30 with Bro. Albert Winstanley as Evangelist. Welcome tea, at 5 o'clock, Saturday, March 5th. Thanking all in the Brotherhood for good support in the past and in anticipation of your valued help in March 1960.

Morley.—Anniversary Services, Saturday, February 27th, 1960: Tea, 4 p.m.; meeting, 6 p.m. Chairman, Bro. H. Baines (Morley); speakers, Brethren John Dodsley (Kirkby-in-Ashfield) and Len Channing (Aylesbury) who will address the meetings on the Lord's Day. A hearty welcome to all.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Derek and Margaret Daniell, 38 Hopwood Gardens, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

James Grant, 17 Maranatha Crescent, Reddingmuirhead, By Falkirk, Stirlingshire.

Mark Plain, 33 Lammermoor Terrace, Tranent, East Lothian.

GOLDEN WEDDING

The Church in Buckie rejoice with Bro. and Sis. J. Bage on the occasion of their golden wedding. We trust that they may still see many happy days together, and enjoy that sweet fellowship amongst their brethren in the church of their Lord.

JOHN GEDDES.

SPRING CONFERENCE 1960

The Tranent church, East Lothian, with the support of the church at Hadcington, invites the brotherhood to meet in conference on Saturday and Monday, April 16th and 18th. All meetings will be open to the public, except the business meeting 2 p.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday.

Those intending to be present at the conference should write Bro. Mark Plain, 33 Lammermoor Terrace, Tranent, East Lothian, as soon as possible. Please state number in party, sex, and expected length of stay.

Saturday: 10 a.m., prayer and praise; 12 noon, lunch; 2 p.m., business session; 3 p.m., three 15 minute addresses on faith and work based on (i) "This is the work of God" (John 6:28, 29); (ii) "Work out your own salvation" (Phil. 2:12, 13); and (iii) "Working in you that which is well-pleasing" (Heb. 13:21, followed by questions addressed to the three speakers; 4.30 p.m., tea; 6 p.m., Gospel meeting.

Monday: 10 a.m., prayer and praise; 12 noon, lunch; 2.30 p.m., three 15-minute addresses based on (i) "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5: 13); (ii) "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14-16; and (iii) "You are my disciples, if—" (John 13:35), followed by questions addressed to the three speakers; 4.30 p.m., tea; 6 p.m., Gospel meeting.

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and forced to do your best will breed in you temperance and self-control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues which the idle never know.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

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

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