

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 26. NO. 10

OCTOBER 1960

The Church of Scotland and Infant Sprinkling.

[The following letter from Bro. W. Brown and the newspaper articles and correspondence speak for themselves. They serve once again to show the absurdity and indefensibility of infant sprinkling and the impregnability of New Testament teaching and practice on this subject.—Ed.]

IEWS ON BAPTISM

Dear Editor,

I enclose a copy of correspondence which has appeared in the *Dunfermline Press*, consequent upon a leader in that paper on 11th June, 1960, arising out of a meeting of the Presbytery of Dunfermline as described in the same issue, report of which is also enclosed.

You will see that I was one of those who challenged the Editor's and Presbytery's views on baptism, and I thought it might be of interest to publish this correspondence or extracts in the *Scripture Standard*, if you deem that such would be profitable. The letter from "a member of the Church of Scotland" in the issue of the 2nd inst., is a surprising effort, as I think you will agree.

W. BROWN.

BAPTISMAL SERVICE RAISES PROBLEMS :

Special Committee of Presbytery Examine Difficulties and Report.

THE perturbing thought that not one of the Disciples would be entitled to baptism under the law of the Church of Scotland was expressed by the convener of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Baptism, the Rev. A. Q. Morton, Culross Abbey, when he submitted his committee's report to the Presbytery of Dunfermline and Kinross meeting in the Dunfermline Abbey Church Hall on Tuesday.

Defending the present baptismal service, the Rev. George McWilliam, Beath, declared that it would be a great pity to make any change in a service which had such tradition behind it.

No problem

A great many elders saw no problem at all about baptism, but there were real difficulties. What were suitable prepara-

tions for baptism? To many people baptism finished with the sprinkling of water and the taking of certain vows, but that could only be a monstrous travesty of the sacrament.

"Baptism is an intimate sacrament, but one thing we don't want to do," said Mr. Grieve, "is to encourage the opinion that it is only a sort of priestly

rite in which the congregation are spectators and not participants."

Two things essential

Mr. Handley contended that two things were essential in the order of service. The first was that it express truly what the Church believed and secondly that it express it clearly and simply in a way in which ordinary parents would understand. The present service did not express the true Reformed interpretation of the sacrament of Baptism. The order of service also did not lay sufficient stress upon the importance of training, and there was a complete absence of the element of thanksgiving for the gift of a new child.

Further, there was a lack of an element of dedication and an undertaking by the congregation to play their part in the great task of training the child.

Mr. Handley quoted in full the baptismal service of the Methodist Church and upheld it as an example of dignified, simple, and true theology. "It seems to me," he said, "that all the elements are there that are missing in our service."

Expressing a third point of view, Mr. Morton held that the doctrine of baptism meant beginning with what people felt. "We still get the great majority of babies to baptise," he said, "but we get them largely for this reason—it is a happy event and provides the chance of thanksgiving."

Mr. Morton added that he was rather perturbed that "not one of the disciples would be entitled to baptism under the law of the Church of Scotland."

The "Dunfermline Press" leading article on the above report reads as follows: (slightly abridged)

The meaning of Baptism

WHY should the form of service to be followed at a baptism take up so much of the time of the Presbytery of Dunfermline and Kinross this week? And why should the special committee appointed by the Presbytery to examine the matter find it so very difficult to draw up a form of service adequate to the importance of the sacrament and yet comprehensible to the average layman and laywoman? To a large majority of lay members of the Church of Scotland it may appear that the special committee

The Rev. Ivor Gibson, North Church, Kely, said that the concept of baptism was complex, but he felt that they should let the people of the congregation see that they had a responsibility in the act of baptism. He also thought that they should emphasise the place in it of the grace of God. He did not feel that the Methodist service emphasised that the sacrament was a divine thing.

Re-dedication

"I feel that stress should be laid on the re-dedication of the whole congregation at the sacrament of baptism," said another elder, Mr. T. C. Foggo, Cairns Church, Cowdenbeath. He felt that they had to encourage the congregation to extend their interest in the spiritual welfare of the child as part of a communal interest."

A third elder declared that many parents had their child baptised to give the baby a good send-off and to prevent the neighbours talking.

The Rev. R. Adam Smith, West Church, Kinross, said he had long proclaimed the necessity for young people joining the Church at 14 years of age when they would be in a better position to be instructed in the vows their parents took before the congregation. In that way, he thought, they would strengthen baptism.

He felt that perhaps they had choked the baptismal ceremony by the use of too many theological phrases.

The Rev. William Cunningham, Cairneyhill, warned that there was a considerable danger of superstition mingling in the ceremony. He added that superstition had been described as the religion of the irreligious and the science of the unscientific.

and the Presbytery itself are making rather "heavy weather" of a matter which in essence appears to be merely the sprinkling of water upon a baby's head and giving of a name to the child. But that attitude is precisely what the Rev. A. Q. Morton, convener of the special committee, is most worried about. How can a minister transmit to his people—how can he communicate to rank and file members of varying intellect and comprehension the vital doctrinal importance of the sacrament of baptism?

The trouble with so many so-called Christians to-day is that they seem content merely with a perfunctory, superficial practice of their faith and shy away in horror when asked to address themselves to the full implications of the doctrine and theology from which that faith springs and from which it draws its strength. Too often, doctrine and theology are subjects which laymen and laywomen dismiss as having "no relevance" for them.

The most common misconception among a large body of Church folk is that the primary reason for baptism is to give a baby a name, a Christian name. And yet they are told in quite simple terms before the baptism and actually during the baptismal service that the sacrament is in fact the receiving of the child into the fold of the Christian Church. We have no desire to go into the arguments for and against infant baptism. But those who even nominally accept it as the right thing to do should realise that, because the child at that stage in its life cannot obviously understand the import of the act, then the parents must take vows on the child's behalf. They must, however, also be told that those vows are as solemnly binding upon them as are those taken, say, in marriage.

The number of children who do not attend either a Sunday School or church would appear to reflect little or no effort on the part of many church-married parents to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"—one of the vows taken at a baptismal service.

Why should this be so? The answer may well lie in the inadequacy of the preparation of parents when bringing their children for baptism. The right of baptism is not something which should be conceded willy-nilly or taken for granted. Parents should be brought to a true realisation of the significance of the sacrament. And congregations should be brought to a realisation that a baptismal service is not merely an occasion for admiring a bonnie bairn. It is a joint act of a Christian family, meeting together, in faith, to participate in an act of grace specifically designed to meet a human need. We have sympathy with our ministerial friends in finding a form of words to make the vital link with and to light the vital spark of comprehension among their people in one of the most wonderful features of our Christian faith. But the words are there to be found. In faith, they will be found.

[This correspondence follows on the Report and the editorial comment]

READERS' VIEWS ON MEANING OF BAPTISM

The comments in *The Dunfermline Press* of 11th June on "The Meaning of Baptism," regarding the statements of the Committee of the Presbytery of Dunfermline and Kinross, can be readily understood. It is a great mercy that the Scriptures are not so indefinite and obscure as the discussions reported in *The Dunfermline Press*.

The Bible requires no theological expressions or terms as to the understanding of the mode and meaning of Baptism or to a Baptismal service, for such should be governed by it. The meaning of the word "Baptism," i.e., to dip, to plunge, to dye, could be the guide in the ordinance, and the subjects for Baptism, as seen for instance in the Acts, chapter 8, verse 12: "When they believed—they were baptized both men and women," a public declaration of their identification with the burial and resurrection of Christ. "The answer of a

good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21).

It is such a pity the Reformation did not reach this far in its deliverance from tradition and vain reasonings. Such discussions by the Presbytery would have been unnecessary.

Yes, sir, the comments on "The Meaning of Baptism" are fully justified.

"BELIEVER."

Your leader of the 11st inst. expresses the laudable desire that words may be found "to light the vital spark of comprehension" regarding "one of the most wonderful features of our Christian faith (viz., baptism). The words are there to be found. In faith, they will be found." It seems to me that in these last six words you have alighted on the only possible solution to the complexities and difficulties which seem to have afflicted the Church of Scotland Committee on Baptism.

The fact that "not one of the disciples

would be entitled to baptism under the law of the Church Scotland," as stated by the convener of that committee, is certainly a most perturbing statement to make. Does it not, therefore, logically follow that there must be something seriously wrong with baptism under the law of the Church of Scotland? If so, does it not then become an essential duty to alter or amend such a law, in order that it should conform to the conditions under which the disciples of our Lord himself would have been lawful candidates?

In other words, surely the conditions under which the early disciples submitted to such an ordinance and so became Christians should be adopted as a prototype for all other subsequent baptisms. Especially is this so, when we consider that according to the Scriptures there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4:5). If baptism is not in accordance with this prototype, then does it not follow that difficulties and complexities are bound to arise, the more so as we try to found or explain a system which is at variance with the original prototype?

What then was the prototype on which we are to base all subsequent types or examples? That would seem to be the more logical and vital question to which attention should first be directed, before any attempt is made to erect a form of service, conformable to the meaning and intent of the ordinance itself. It is at this point that I revert to the solution suggested above, viz., that "in faith words will be found" by which we may comprehend what is indeed "one of the most wonderful features of our Christian faith."

Indeed, true Christian faith, as revealed in the New Testament Scripture, untrammelled by the accretions which human traditions have attached thereto, does in fact give us the very words we seek, and what other words do we need or are of greater authority than those contained in the very words used or authorised by the Author of that faith Himself? "Faith (which is simply belief) cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So says the word of faith in Romans 10:16-17. This is said in relation to obedience to the Gospel which is predicative of the one baptism, as referred to in Romans 6:4; Acts 2:38; 8:37-39; Galatians 3:27, and by our Lord Himself in Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47.

All these passages clearly show what is required to become a Christian and an honest examination of them shows that an essential pre-requisite of belief that Jesus is the Son of God, followed by repentance or a change of mind which induces the believer to submit to the divine ordinance of immersion for the remission of sins and a teachable nature are all that are required to make such an one a disciple, in the true sense of the word. If this is acknowledged (and there seems no doubt about it, from a study of the original Greek in which the New Testament was written), then it is little wonder that difficulty is found in finding words to fit a system of sprinkling infants which involves neither belief, nor repentance, nor immersion, nor remission of sins, all of which are such essential and unquestionable features of the prototype.

If traditions are to be the norm by which these matters are to be judged, then let them be the traditions of the New Testament (2 Thess. 2:15) and not the traditions of men for which no authority exists in the Scriptures (Matt. 15:9). Bitter experience has shown too often that it is human traditions which give rise to confusion and complexity, not the Word of God which, if faithfully and honestly followed, is more than sufficient to provide "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path."

W. BROWN.

Baptism does not mean sprinkling, but complete immersion. It is a vital part of God's plan for the salvation of sinful man. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Under the law, sacrifices for sin were made year by year. Then Christ came with the law of love, so He was once for all offered to bear the sins of many (Heb. 9:22-28).

The sinner has to obey to share in this great work of redemption from sin: (1) Realise that all sins, however big, however small, separate the sinner from God in all His purity; (2) realise that Christ alone, the Spotless Lamb of God is worthy to be mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5); (3) acknowledge as a sinner, the need of His cleansing blood, and be baptised in the waters of baptism thereby freed from all past sins (Rom. 6:1-4).

In Universal History of the World,

edited by J. A. Hammerton (vol. 5, page 2,175), there is a picture of "A second-century baptism in running water." It reads underneath: "Apart from their artistic interest, the mural paintings in the catacombs are valuable for the light they throw on early Christian practice. This painting dating from the second half of the second century shows a baptism by immersion. All the early authorities contemplate the use of running or 'living' water in the rite of baptism."

What a wealth of meaning. Baptised in running water, sins washed away for ever. The River Jordan was the scene of many New Testament baptisms. Jesus was baptised in Jordan (Matt. 3). Not a few drops of water but a river.

"LOST IN WONDER."

If I understand some of your correspondents aright, they seem to be under a misapprehension, viz., that baptism is necessary to salvation. This has never been affirmed by the reformed churches and is against the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Westminster Confession. *Vide* the reply to the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:21); the words to the woman who anointed His feet (Luke 7:50), and to the thief on the Cross. In none of these cases did our Lord make baptism a condition of salvation.

Baptism is merely a sign or symbol of our engagement to be the Lord's and, although our Lord Himself did not administer the rite (John 5:2), yet He commanded His disciples so to do. The worry of the Church today as I see it, is not with form or administration but with the many parents who take on baptismal vows without the least intention of honouring them. J. SINCLAIR.

The "ordinance of baptism required to become a Christian"; "the divine ordinance of immersion for the remission of sins"; and "be baptized in the waters of baptism thereby freed from all past sins." I quote from letters by "W. Brown" and "Lost in Wonder" in *The Dunfermline Press* on 18th June. Such statements are clearly the result of failure in "rightly dividing the word of truth," a common failure with many of us.

Dispensation, according to the Scriptures, is a period of time in which God has dealt with men in relation to His revealed will for that time. In Eden's garden it was innocence. Immediately outside that, according to conscience. Then by human government, followed by

households. Then nationally by law. Since the death and resurrection of Christ, the dispensation of grace. The key to an understanding of the Bible is found in distinguishing these dispensations.

The present day of grace commenced in the first coming of Christ to put away sins, until His second coming apart from sin. In the Acts of the Apostles, the change is clearly seen in the change from law to grace, but we cannot put a finger on the change, saying it is just there. The dispensations overlap as it were. The same will take place in the future terrible judgments as seen in the Revelation, in the seals, the trumpets and the vials. The Acts must be viewed in that way. Up to chapter 10, no Gentiles as such are seen; it is Jews, Samaritans, proselytes. The first time the Gospel was proclaimed to a company of Gentiles was in chapter 10.

W. Brown rightly quotes: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." There were faiths many. The faith of chapter 2 is not the faith of chapter 10. There were baptisms many, from John the Baptist's to that seen in chapter 10 of the Acts. There is now the one baptism of Matthew 28:19, for all nations. Make disciples, baptise and teach them is the commission as given by the risen Lord. Roman Catholics and the majority of Protestants so-called, have changed the divine order in this, placing baptism before discipleship. Disciples are made through the preaching of the Gospel, not by baptism. Baptism marks a disciple as obedient, not makes one. In the present dispensation, those becoming Christian are "saved by grace," which is through faith.

To mix works, baptisms, prayers, the law or aught else with grace, it becomes a mixture, a thing God abhors, and it is impossible for one to obtain salvation through such, for "grace would be no longer grace." Salvation is not by water, but by that much-maligned and misunderstood word "blood". Not washing in blood. Such would defile, not cleanse. In the Old Testament sacrifices, typical of Christ, distinction is made between "blood". Shedding of blood, sprinkling of blood, the life of the flesh is in the blood, i.e., life and blood are equivalent terms, so that blood speaks of life. Shedding of blood of death, sprinkling of blood, life out of death. Christ entered Heaven "by his own blood" (Heb. 9:12), i.e. by His life, out of death- having obtained eternal redemption.

Pages could be written on this important subject, but we forbear. How beautifully simple are the Scriptures on the subject of salvation. The last verse of Romans 4: "Delivered for our offences, raised for our justification." The first verse of chapter 5: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." A peace we cannot make, but may receive through faith in Him, in a definite individual experience of a new spiritual birth.

"BELIEVER."

Blessed are they that do His commandments and teach them, such as W. Brown and "Member of Church of Scotland" do in their comments on the "how, who and why" of baptism. I do believe wholeheartedly that the God of Heaven will accept nothing less than complete conformity with the New Testament pattern.

I would like to ask a question, why should any Christian want to do anything else? To my mind there is neither reason nor rhyme for infant baptism. It has always been a puzzle to me that the clergy practise such a meaningless ceremony in the name of the Father, Christ and Holy Spirit. Infant baptism is the fundamental error of Christendom. It had no place in original Christianity. A man's religion is a matter for his own personal decision. To address baptism to an infant a few days old is to make of it a meaningless ceremony.

Now, take note who want guidance about this question. Believer's immersion symbolically sets forth the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour. They have the assurance of sins forgiven and a gift of the Holy Spirit. To any such they have become new creatures in Christ Jesus through faith, love and obedience.

What is wrong with the world today is that many put more faith in what the clergymen say and practise than in the writings in the Scriptures of truth. But let us thank God some are beginning to see the light. WILLIAM ADAMSON

It is difficult to see what "Believer" is trying to prove in his letter of the 20th inst., unless it is that baptism is unnecessary to salvation. If that is so, we may well ask why such prominence is given to baptism by our Lord and the Apostles. The words of the Author of salvation are. "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16) "Go and disciple all nations, baptising

them" (Matt. 28:19), thereby indicating how disciples were made. Luke's version says, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His (Jesus's) Name beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

In view of what happened at Jerusalem, as described in Acts chapter 2, especially verse 38, where Peter exhorts his hearers to "repent and be baptised" for the remission of their sins, it is obvious that our Lord's instructions were being put into effect, and verse 47 makes it also obvious that the commencement of the Church of our Lord took place on that day in Jerusalem, the Lord adding such baptised believers to His Church.

That this is clear is generally accepted and recognised by all Christians, no matter to what particular brand of faith they subscribe. The only unfortunate doubt that has arisen through the ages, and which has separated believers, is in the interpretation of the word "baptism" itself. This word I endeavored to prove meant "immersion," as recognised by all Greek scholars, and not "sprinkling" which is from another Greek word altogether and that such immersion applies only to adults capable of exercising belief in Jesus as the Son of God, as required by Him.

"Believer," however, is in a different category altogether. According to him, the Christian era commenced at Acts, chapter 10, with the conversion of the first Gentile (as if Gentiles only could be Christians). It is difficult to see the drift of such reasoning. The only logical conclusion from such a premise is that all the members of the church from Acts, 2, to Acts, 9, were not Christians. In view of the fact that these included Peter, the early disciples and apostles and Paul himself, who was baptised in Acts, 9, it would seem (according to "Believer's" line of reasoning) that Paul's statement that the church was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20) was wrong!

"Believer" also says "we cannot put a finger on the change (from law to grace) saying it is just there." This is a contradiction of the Scriptures which clearly show that this change took place when Jesus "nailed" the law to the Cross (Col. 2:14) of which the awesome symbol is described in Matthew 27:51, and surely it was fifty days after that, on the day of Pentecost when the Christian dispensation began, with the formation of the Lord's Church.

Moreover, to say, as "Believer" does, that "the divine ordinance of immersion for the remission of sins" is "a failure rightly to divide the word of Truth" is beyond comprehension, considering that this was ordained by our Lord Himself for the salvation of men and put into practice by Peter and the apostles (Acts 2:38). "Believer's" objections are therefore against the word of truth itself! He need not wonder therefore, if we view his attempts to expound that word with some degree of scepticism and as an attempt to wrest that word, to suit his own particular brand of belief.

He says "Baptism marks a disciple as obedient, not makes one." Are we to assume then that the acceptance of the truth of the Gospel which is not followed by immersion, i.e., by belief alone, makes a disciple? If so, then it logically follows that (according to "Believer") the Gospel makes "disobedient disciples"! Galatians 3:26-27 refutes this.

He says "salvation is not by water." 2 Peter 3:21 refutes this, as also Mark 16:16. He says the "blood" saves, not water. Does it not occur to him that both of these mediums operate in the salvation of men and women? Colossians 2 clearly shows how the Spirit, the Blood (Cross) and Baptism operate in the divine scheme of salvation. 1 John 5:8 also refers. He makes great play of Romans 4 and 5 but omits chapter 6 which clearly shows that all these Christians whom Paul was addressing had already been immersed as well as believing.

The confusion into which "Believer" has been led clearly shows once again that if we logically study the Word of God we need have no difficulty in knowing what to do, provided we follow its simple directions. W. BROWN.

How wonderful it would have been if, in this year, the 400th anniversary of the Reformation, the Church of Scotland could have celebrated this great event by preaching and practising the reformed rite of baptism, instead of the half reformed rite of baptism which she preaches and practises at the present time.

It is only in books such as The Book of Common Order that any justification can be found for infant baptism. The weight of the evidence of the Scriptures comes down very heavily in favour of baptism by immersion, after repentance.

Peter puts the position thus: "Repent and be baptised" (Acts 2:38). "Repent" covers the whole ground and includes saving faith when it is thus used alone. To change one's mind about sin, self and God, and to turn from reliance upon self, the law and dead works and to trust in Christ only constitutes repentance, and, of course, salvation.

Now, having repented, the next step is confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Be baptised," says Peter, and here you have "believers' baptism." Baptism when it precedes faith becomes "unbelievers' baptism," a rite unknown in Scripture. Faith in Christ is the condition of salvation; baptism is the confession of that faith and the expression of its meaning. This is the Scriptural order.

If the Church of Scotland paid more attention to the Scripture which she uses in The Book of Common Order in the order for the administration of the sacrament of baptism to infants, she would see, from the words of our Lord and Saviour, how she reverses the Scriptural order by practising this rite. The relevant words are found in Matthew 28:19, and J. B. Phillips, James Moffatt and the Revised Standard Version give us a better translation than the Authorised Version. J. B. Phillips put it thus: "You, then, are to go and make disciples of all nations, and baptise them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." First of all, make disciples, then, having made disciples, baptise them.

From Matthew 28:18-20, The Book of Common Order goes on to quote from Mark 10:13-16. Now, if sufficient can be found in these verses to authorise infant baptism, is there not also sufficient to be found to authorise infants to take part in the Lord's Supper? For surely, if infants can be brought to the Lord for His blessing in baptism, they can also be brought to the Lord for His blessing in the participation of the Lord's Supper. If, according to what The Book of Common Order says, "In holy baptism God brings them into the family and household of faith, and makes them members of Christ and citizens of the kingdom of heaven," then they have every right to participate in the Lord's Supper. But perhaps The Book of Common Order doesn't mean what it says and the difficulty lies in trying to make it say what it does mean. There should not be the difficulty that there appears to be in making the meaning of baptism clear.

Would it be unfair to suggest that those on the General Assembly's Committee of Baptism are led more by their brilliance and the use of that brilliance to justify infant baptism rather than to justify infant baptism by the evidence of Scripture? It was said of the convener of that committee on the Churchman's Page of *The Evening Citizen* of 11th June: "He is too fond of side-tracking practical issues into the realm of abstruse theology. He gave still another 'heavy' report of the Committee of Baptism which after several years has still not got down to 'brass tacks'."

It is to be hoped that this committee and Presbytery Committees will soon get down to "brass tacks," and when they do this, honestly and sincerely facing up to the evidence of the Scriptures, I think they will see that such evidence is in favour of baptism by immersion after repentance. If we are wrong in our present form of baptism, then let us be humble and gracious enough to admit it.

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND MEMBER.

I did not mean to encroach again on the space for letters on "The meaning of baptism," but to the ordinary reader of the Bible, much written in the letters, must be confusing.

W. Brown will insist that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins, Mark 16:16 being his favourite text for that, quoting "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." That verse, however, continues: "but he that believeth not shall be damned." It does not say "he that believeth not and is not baptised", for baptism is neither the means of salvation nor condemnation. Admitting this verse is difficult, anyone almost, could refer to at least twenty verses which state or infer that salvation is "by grace through faith," such as, for instance, Ephesians 2:5; "By grace are ye saved." Verse 8, "By grace are ye saved through faith, not of works," etc. The question is, do we read the one obscure verse in the light of the twenty, or the twenty in the light of the one? This needs no comment, the twenty being as clear as crystal.

In this present dispensation of grace, which commenced in Acts 2, on the descent of the Holy Spirit, the birthday of the Church in Jerusalem (not in Rome), we must not forget that the Acts of the Apostles is transitory, passing, and

must be viewed as that. Till chapter 10, those who comprised the then Church were Jews, Samaritans and proselytes. In chapter 10, God for the first time commenced to call out of the Gentiles a people for His Name, as James declared to the Council in chapter 15, vv. 13-14, when referring to Peter's preaching in chapter 10, and referring to Peter's report in chapter 15, vv. 7-11. We (Jews) shall be saved, even as they (Gentiles), a pattern to those, both Jews and Gentiles who afterwards should be saved.

The "one baptism" now has nothing whatever to do with the remission of sins, and does not make disciples. The ordinance comes not before, but after the salvation obtained through faith in Christ as Saviour. The thief upon a cross (Luke 23:34) obtained salvation and was not baptised. His only free thing was his tongue, and he called upon the Lord. In Acts 8:13, "Simon the Sorcerer" was baptised, but remained "in the land of iniquity."

Yes, this must certainly seem confusing, and will be to anyone not having experienced regeneration, a spiritual birth, but by grace through faith is now God's way for salvation. "It is of faith that it might be of grace" (Rom. 4:16). Chapter 11, v. 6, "if it be of works, then it is no more grace." Not great faith, but faith in a Great One! Not the character of faith, but of the One in whom the faith terminates. "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). In a word, a repentant faith is the only requirement, i.e., faith in Him. Grace, like judgment, must be absolute in itself. The unmerited favour of God, in the Person of His Son. We dare not mix it with baptism, works or ought else. To do so would be fatal to the obtaining of salvation.

This does not minimise the importance of baptism, a very important ordinance for the obedience of a believer. The order of Acts 2:41 obtains today. Receiving His word, i.e., being saved. Then, as a believer, baptised. Then added to a local church, and continuing. Someone has said that "an ounce of experience is worth a ton of argument." Take a single Scripture (if conscious of the need of salvation), such, as say—John 5:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Think it out. It is the voice of God (through John) and definite. To believe is an act of the will, also definite. Not just some mental idea of the mind.

Call, come, look, just mean the same, all definite acts, "and thou shalt be saved." Not by or through baptism.

"BELIEVER."

[One finds it impossible to understand why "Believer" ever wrote upon this controversy, except to show that baptism is immersion and that it is for believers. For he denies that it has any connection with salvation for us,

though he must accept the N.T. that to the Jews it was necessary for salvation (Acts 2:38 and 22:16). Thus God has one way of salvation for Jews and another for Gentiles! Yet in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gal. 3:28). This is a racial distinction indeed. Any exposition of a Scripture passage which contradicts any other Scripture is obviously false.]

What is perhaps the most significant feature of the above correspondence is that, apart from the letter from J. Sinclair, no attempt is made to prove or defend the practice of infant sprinkling. The editorial and the debate on the Church of Scotland Report simply take the practice for granted, without such an attempt. We cannot but think that this silence is because of the realisation that there can be no proof or defence, least of all from the N.T.

This is so in every case when infant sprinkling is called in question. It is based entirely on tradition and human innovation, and has not a scrap of divine authority. The arguments used to base the practice on Scripture would not convince a child. The trouble is that it is so automatically accepted that very few are sufficiently interested to question it. As in many other matters, sentiment outweighs fact and reason. "Christening" is so "nice"; it is little more than a social convention. It is simply "not done" to neglect or refuse to have a baby "christened." Although so widely accepted we question whether one-tenth of those subscribing to the practice have any doctrinal or religious ideas causing them to conform. Those who most strongly deplore this are clergymen themselves. They should tackle the problem at its roots and be ready to examine it in the light of God's word.—EDITOR S.S.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

OCTOBER

| | |
|---------------|------------------|
| 2—Job 1:6-22. | Matthew 25:1-13. |
| 9— " 2. | " 25:14-46. |
| 16— " 42. | " 26:1-16. |
| 23—Psalm 2. | " 26:17-35. |
| 30— " 22. | " 26:36-56. |

Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Our brief readings from these books complete the historical section of the Old Covenant writings, and bring us to about four hundred and thirty-two years before Christ. Malachi's prophecy may be a few years later, but otherwise the prophetic books run parallel with the history just as the letters in the New Covenant writings run parallel in some measure with the history in Acts, the one kind of literature throwing light upon the other.

The three sections of the Old Testament as mentioned by the Saviour (Luke 24:44-46) are—

- (1) The Law, comprising only the five books of Moses;
- (2) The Prophets, comprising the "former prophets" (Joshua to 2 Kings) and the "latter prophets"—the remaining books, except those included as "the Psalms";

- (3) The Psalms (Job to Song of Solomon).

The sad story of declension from the true religion and worship of Jehovah is completed in Kings and Chronicles—with the last few verses of 2 Chronicles as a footnote. Ezra and Nehemiah recount the return from captivity and subsequent events, and Esther the promotion and eminence of a Jewish woman and a Jewish man (Mordecai) in what must have been voluntary continued "exile". The division of the nation after Solomon's reign took place about 980 B.C. The northern kingdom (called Israel and having Samaria as its capital) was destroyed and the bulk of the people taken into captivity by Assyria about 720 B.C. Judah was similarly conquered by Nebuchadnezzar about one hundred and thirty years later. After seventy years (Jer. 25:12-14; 29:10; 33:10-14) Cyrus captured Babylon and released the Jews to return under Zerubbabel and Jeshua. They completed the Temple about 517 B.C. but conditions had gone from bad to worse until Ezra and Nehemiah headed a reformation.

The Jews remained under beneficent Persian rule for about two hundred years under administration of their high priests. Subsequently they came under Greeks and Egyptians, and finally in

63 B.C. under the Romans. In this situation we find them largely re-settled in their own land for the coming of the Messiah, and also spread abroad over the civilised world. They had suffered very severely at the hands of some of their foreign rulers but had also been favoured and privileged in remarkable degree. Pictures of such influence are found in Daniel, Esther and in the cases of Ezra and Nehemiah, but their prominence in Alexandria and other places of learning before the time of Christ was a means of forwarding the spread of the gospel. The Old Testament was translated into Greek in consequence. There can be no doubt that a higher moral and spiritual condition can bring a subject race into high office. "Righteousness exalteth a nation."

The gap between old and new testaments might make us underestimate the period of waiting for the Messiah from Malachi's days. Perhaps it helps to know that in the history of our own nation it would cover the time from about Henry VIII to the present—how many things and what development has taken place during that time!

Job

"The book of Job is an acknowledged masterpiece, both as an expression of religious experience and as a work of poetic genius. Its theme is the struggle of a deeply religious soul with the doubts aroused by undeserved suffering."—*Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

This is undoubtedly true. The poetry is not like ours, not being at all a question of rhyme. It is poetic thought connection rather than that, and "consists in such an arrangement of the words composing the sentence, or verse, that when complete it resolves itself into two or more symmetrical members . . . the first member, forming the rise of the verse, is succeeded by its counterpart which forms the fall" (Dr. Scrivener). We give this brief explanation as so much of the prophetic writings as well as the Psalms is in poetic form, hidden in some measure by the verse divisions in our standard versions, but still obvious in a careful reading. Fortunately this kind of writing is not spoilt by translation as a consideration of, say, one psalm will prove.

Job belonged to the patriarchal times when the head of the family acted as priest for it (1:5—and note "continually"). He was a particularly righteous

man, but of course not perfect—and recognised this, else why offer the sacrifices? God permitted him to suffer both loss and personal affliction in such a degree that he was driven in his despair to curse the day of his birth. His friends coming to console him could only think him guilty of some specially great sin, and by expressing their thoughts caused him extra pain. He remains certain that this is not the case, and desires to plead his cause with God to whom he looks in spite of all appearances to the contrary, to vindicate his (Job's) character. The problem is with us today, and the answer remains that we must continue to trust though we cannot trace. Ultimately God will be entirely vindicated as absolutely right, and to argue against that can only put us out of harmony with Him.

One of our own poets has written:—
 "Clouds and conflicts round us press;
 Would we have one sorrow less?
 Lo! the sharpness of the Cross,
 All the pain and all the loss,
 Death, and darkness, and the tomb,
 Only whisper, 'Till He come!'"

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Tranent.—With great joy we record further additions to the church. A young man, James Baird, who has been attending our meetings for some time, was baptised on Wednesday, July 13th. Bro. Baird and our young Sister Irene Coull were married on Saturday, September 17th, and we take this opportunity of wishing them every happiness.

John Sinclair, son of Bro. and Sis. James Sinclair, was baptised at the Bible School conducted by Bro. Albert Winstanley, on Sunday, July 31st.

We earnestly thank God for these further proofs of the power of His word, and pray that our young brethren may be found faithful, as they enter the new life full of promise, in grateful service to our Lord.
 D. SCOTT.

Vacation Bible School at Bangor.—This was held July 23rd to August 6th and served the purpose which was intended: it strengthened the Lord's people, and helped some others to decide for Christ as Lord. We were specially pleased to see so many young disciples anxious to fit themselves for consecrated usefulness

in the kingdom of God. We rejoiced to see three baptised into Christ.

It is not possible to speak in detail of the activities. The series of studies on the Holy Spirit, covering various aspects of His work, was very helpful and informative. The forums dealt with "Prayer", "Intoxicants", "Bible Study" and "Instrumental Music in Worship". The "Questions answered" sessions, as always, were varied and informative. The gospel preaching was shared by a number of brothers (twelve took part) and we are glad to see young brothers who are growing into useful servants of God, able to "handle aright" His Word.

Outstanding was the willingness of all brethren to serve. The sisters, as usual, helped greatly—especially in organising children's classes and activities. It is neither possible nor necessary to name individuals who served in any way. All served for love of God and His church, and to have His approval.

Special Note: The general wish of those present was that we should return to Bangor next year. We have therefore booked the only period available (August 5th-19th, 1961) for the next V.B.S. (the Lord permitting). Announcement will be made in due course giving details regarding bookings. Please do not send bookings or deposits until these are requested.

A. E. WINSTANLEY.

EDITOR'S NOTE

We regret that this month several items have had to be held over because of great pressure on printing space available. We trust our contributors will understand and will not be greatly inconvenienced.

OBITUARY

Newtongrange—The church has suffered the loss of one of its oldest members in the person of our Sister William Allan Senr. on August 26th. She became a member of the body of Christ more than fifty years ago, and remained faithful unto the end. She set an example for all of us who are left to mourn her passing. At all times Christ had the pre-eminence in her life.

She bore her cross of suffering for many years without complaint, and now she is at rest in the Lord. But we sorrow not as those who have no hope, because

we realise that we have no continuing city here, but look for one eternal in the heavens.

We commend her loved ones, her husband, Bro. Wm. Allan Senr. and two sons, Bro. George Allan and Bro. Wm. Allan Junr., to our heavenly Father, that they may receive that comfort and consolation that they need in their hour of loss.

Our sister was laid to rest on August 29th. Bro. Edward Jess officiated at the service in the house and at the graveside.

W. H. ALLAN.

Wigan, Albert Street.—It is with great sorrow that we record the passing of our Bro. Harry Unsworth on August 14th, at the age of fifty-one. He returned home after meeting with the church at Ulverston and died shortly after midnight. Our sympathies go out to his dear wife and family and we commend them to the care of our heavenly Father, who will supply their every need.

W. SMITH.

Wigan, Scholes.—On August 5th Bro. Joseph Calderbank, of the above church, died in hospital, after an illness of many months. He was immersed into Christ two and a half years ago and from that time worked in the Master's service in the way he was best fitted. He was always ready to help in the activities of the church, in open-air meetings, delivering tracts, and supporting the preaching of the gospel by his presence. Whenever able, he met with us around the Lord's table, by his simplicity and humility revealing his desire to be a good Christian.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to his widow, our sister in Christ, Sally Calderbank. May she ever seek the refuge and guidance of God our heavenly Father, until the hope of a joyful reunion has been fulfilled. Bro. Carlton Melling conducted the funeral service both at the meeting-house and at the graveside.

J. ASPINALL.

Brevities

Affliction.—When the wind of affliction blows upon the believer, God is in the wind. When the fire of affliction kindles upon him, God is in the fire, to sanctify, to support, to refine.

Honourable Warfare.—What a blessed thing it is to fight for the truth, for the honour of God, for everlasting life; to wear celestial armour; to fight with the Captain at our side, and be sure of victory.

COMING EVENTS

Wigan, Albert Street: Week-end Rally on Saturday and Sunday, October 1st and 2nd (D.V.). Saturday 3 p.m.: Devotional service. Speakers, Bro. G. Lodge (Dewsbury), Bro. Jack Nisbet (Huddington). 4.45: Tea in schoolroom. 7.30 p.m.: Gospel meeting. Speaker, Bro. Edward Jess (Dalmellington). Lord's Day: 10.30 a.m., Breaking of bread; exhortation, Bro. Jack Nisbet; 2.15 p.m., Bible school; 7.30 p.m., Gospel meeting; speaker, Bro. Edward Jess. We cordially invite all members and friends to these meetings.

Loughborough, Oxford Street. The church extends an invitation to all brethren to join in our anniversary rally on Saturday and Lord's Day, October 1st and 2nd. Saturday, tea 4.30; evening meeting six o'clock, to be addressed by Bren. J. Thomasson of Dewsbury and Paul Jones of Birmingham.

Newtongrange.—Annual social meeting, Saturday, October 8th. Tea 4.30 p.m. meeting 5.30. Speakers, Bren. Joe Nisbet (Tranent) and L. Morgan (Hindley). Bro. Morgan will serve the church on Lord's Day, October 9th. We invite all who may be in the district to be present with us on this occasion.

East Ardsley, Yorks.—Anniversary meetings, Saturday and Lord's Day, October 29th and 30th. Saturday: Tea 4.15, meeting 6 p.m. Chairman, Bro. W. S. Bradley (Doncaster). Speakers, Bren. F. C. Day (Birmingham) and R. McDonald (Dewsbury). Lord's Day: Bro. Day will serve the church. Come and join us in our celebrations.

Kentish Town Anniversary Rally.

Saturday, October 8th, 3 and 6 p.m. Tea 5 p.m. Visitors heartily welcome. Write, if staying to R. B. Scott, 96 Chetwynd Road, N.W.5.

Mission with Bro. Winstanley, October 8th to 30th—Support at meetings and persistent prayer are earnestly requested. Meetings, Lord's Days, 6.30 p.m., Wednesdays, 8 p.m. and Saturdays 7 p.m.

Newtongrange.—Annual Social Meeting, October 8th. Speaker, Bro. Leonard Morgan, who will also serve the church on Lord's Day, October 9th.

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

plead for the unity of all Christians by a complete return to the faith, practice and worship of the first Church.

"The Churches of Christ salute you."

This is the wording of a poster which has been printed for use of the churches and in houses. The poster is 18in. by 10in. and supplies can be obtained free of charge (please send postage) from: Bro. T. Stones, 34 Holmfield Avenue, Loughborough, Leicestershire.

MARRIAGE

In the meeting-house of the Church of Christ, Kentish Town, London, August 27th, 1960, Bro. Len Channing officiating: Bro. Harold Baines, of Morley, Yorks., to Sis. (Mrs.) Lavinia Chappin, of Aylesbury, Bucks. Present address: 56 Perry Street, Wendover, Bucks.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly. Prices: Home, one copy for one year, 8/-; two copies 15/6; three copies 22/- post free. Canada and U.S.A.: one copy, one dollar; Africa, Australia, New Zealand: One copy, 7/6; two 14/-; three 20/6. All orders and payments to the 'S.S.' Agent and Treasurer: PAUL JONES, 41 Pendragon Road, Birmingham 22B.

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

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

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

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

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

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd., Langley Mill, Nottm.