

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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The Practice of Prayer

' . . . WE believed that the prayer of the heart intensified by self-sacrifice was the great changer of the world : that it did more than economics, politics, or pacts.' The quotation is from a new novel by Monica Baldwin, *The Called and the Chosen*. Every Christian surely believes those words, in short that 'prayer changes things.' A review of the book sceptically observes, 'Readers to whom that sentence is meaningless—to whom prayer is either infantile self-deception, or, at the best, a rather primitive psychological technique for soothing oneself in times of stress—will find the atmosphere of Miss Baldwin's novel repellent.' The suggestion is that prayer has merely a psychological effect, makes one *feel* different, almost as an intoxicated car-driver feels he is driving well when he is really without full control and is a danger to other users of the road. This idea treats prayer as delusion or auto-suggestion, persuading ourselves that things are other than they really are. But the results of prayer as experienced in the lives of the men of God in the Bible, in the experiences of followers of Christ through succeeding ages, and above all in the life of Jesus Himself, are too real and wonderful to allow of any such attitude.

But another attitude to prayer is very common. It is that which regards prayer as something to fall back upon in time of need, something handy to have in the background, but which need be used only in desperate situations, as certain tablets or medicines. One writer has likened this to our knowing that in emergency we can always dial 999 for the police or the fire brigade. With such a conception prayer is necessary only when one is at death's door. We know of a case where a clergyman was criticised for offering a prayer at the bedside of a sick man. The man was upset to think that he was so ill that he needed praying for. Which raises another point : prayer is often looked upon as being the business of 'ministers' and 'priests' only, as part of their professional duties. If anyone is dangerously ill the 'minister' is sent for, as though he alone has the right to approach God, or as though God looks upon his children not through the blood of Christ but through a 'dog-collar' or clerical vestments.

What happens in Prayer

What have we the right to expect in answer to prayer? Can we look for the dramatic or miraculous; can we expect God to 'intervene' in spectacular manner? Can we ask him to act to get us out of difficulties into which we have got ourselves through following our own designs and will?

Can we try to persuade God that what we want is really to do His will when we know all the time that it is *our* will and comfort we desire? No: if we expect in such ways we are doomed to disappointment; we shall give up praying because of what we term 'unanswered' prayer, when the answer which God gave was not according to our hopes. We must remember that God sometimes says 'No,' as any wise loving parent will. The God Who is constantly working answers His people's prayers in the seemingly insignificant things of life, the everyday things to which we are so often blind, yet which are of the stuff that make our lives. Several weeks ago on the radio programme, 'Silver Lining' the story was told of a lady who complained that, though she prayed much, her prayers never seemed to be answered. 'Are you sure,' asked a friend, 'that you aren't trying to use God instead of asking God to use you?' And is not that the meaning of the will of God being done, for which we should pray? That God uses us in everything to do His will? Is not that the highest meaning of prayer—that God so moulds us that He is better able to accomplish His will? That we are used in the hands of God to answer our own prayers? That God through us works out His purposes, which are always for the good and blessing of His children? So 'prayer changes things' by enabling God to do through us what we cannot do without His strength and guidance.

And here let us not forget that the surest guidance we have is in the written word of God: to know the Bible is to be guided in the ways of God. All sorts of circumstances arise in daily life which can be decided only through our having made the word of God our daily spiritual food, and turning it into prayer.

The Power of Prayer

And what a mighty power lies in prayer that the church is failing to use. We rightly insist that the early Christians 'continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread . . .' Let us also emulate them in 'the prayers.' The prayers are put on equal level with the other items of worship in which the church in her pure new joy served God and built herself up in the faith. Who is to say how much the advance and triumphs of the church in those days owed to its faithfulness in prayer? The first chapter of Acts tells us that the 120 who first formed the church 'continued steadfastly in prayer.' They met in a spirit of expectancy. William Carey, the missionary, used to say, 'Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God.' We may be so halting and faithless in what we attempt for God because we are so hesitant in seeking His face and blessing in prayer.

'Thy presence we have coldly sought,
And feebly longed Thy face to see.'

Brethren, it may well be that God is waiting for our readiness to receive to 'open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.' (Mal. 3:10); that the longed-for revival of pure Christianity is hindered because we are not praying and living for it. We may be *working* for it, but revival depends not only upon what we do. It depends rather upon God's working through us. That is a significant passage in Acts 14:27. Paul and Barnabas have just returned to Antioch in Syria from their first great missionary journey. They gather the church together to tell of their experiences. What a thrilling meeting that must have been! But in it there is no glorifying of the two missionaries. They recounted, not what they had done for God, but what God had done through or with them. Paul later wrote, 'I live: and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' (Gal. 2:20). When he was speaking of his labours in the gospel he said, 'I laboured . . . yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me'

(1 Cor. 15 : 10). He inspired his fellow-Christians with the words 'It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Phil. 2 : 13).

'We will give ourselves to prayer.'

Napoleon said that an army marches on its stomach. It is equally true to say that the church must advance on her knees. Let us resolve that individually we will each day

'Take time to be holy; speak oft with our Lord.
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.'

And as churches may we devote more time in our meetings to prayer, and hold separate prayer meetings for the progress of the gospel of the Son of God. For more will be accomplished by seeking God's wisdom and strength than by all our feverish activity without His aid.

'Lord of light whose name outshineth
All the stars and suns of space,
Deign to make us Thy co-workers
In the Kingdom of Thy grace;
Use us to fulfil Thy purpose
In this gift of Christ Thy Son:
Father, as in highest heaven,
So on earth Thy will be done.'

'We will give ourselves to prayer.'

EDITOR.

'Weightier Matters'

IT is evident that our Lord intended His followers to be able to discern the things which are most important in God's sight. One of the differences between the true Christian faith and false religions is that in the latter is often seen a formula which is learnt and recited in parrot fashion, as in Mohammedism; or, as in Roman Catholicism, the responsibility of belief is in the hands of the priests, and the devotee accepts without analysing the teaching.

The Mosaic law was indeed of God, even to its minutest detail, but all parts, great and small, were but symbols of the persons and work of the Christ who was to come. Hosea saw further than many of his day and said, 'For I desired mercy and not sacrifice.' In the Gospel according to Matthew these words are quoted twice, and each time they are preceded by scenes of great spiritual import. On the first occasion on which Jesus used them they followed the Pharisees' criticism of His eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. The second time is recorded in the twelfth chapter. What could be more tender than the last six verses of chapter eleven? He prayed, 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' The words of invitation to the weary and heavy laden follow. In the beginning of the next chapter, He supports the method adopted by the disciples of staying their hunger on the Sabbath, and upholds David's action in his day. Matthew's Gospel was written especially for Jewish converts, and the reference to their great ancestor was intended to carry weight to the readers. How our Lord regarded David's prophetic insight into His own Divine nature is recorded in chapter 22. This is followed by a scathing attack on the Pharisees' interpretation of the law, and includes the words of our title: 'The weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith,

The injunction to the Pharisee who disapproved of taking a meal with unwashed hands, recorded in Luke's Gospel, is somewhat differently worded. He was told that judgment and the love of God are acceptable.

How wondrously, in all the splendour of his teaching, does Paul, the former Pharisee, set forth these truths in his Epistles. In passage after passage are these words used : judgment, mercy, faith and love. Even when the actual phrases are not fully used in many of his profound reasonings, the theme brought forth is the working of these principles in conversion, in holy living, and in the hope of the life to come. Take as an example : ' I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and 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.'

Jesus said, ' The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' With our human tendency to routine, let us beware lest, like those of old, we use methods which approach those of a formula. By what simple means God's doctrines are often brought before the notice of those He is calling ! Some years ago a man, led astray by the allurements of this world, heard the summons to leave a life linked with drunkenness and gambling. It came partly through seeing the change wrought in his wife's life. A memory of her childhood's Sunday School days had been stirred in her by the hearing of carol-singing, and was the first step in leading her to union with the Lord and His Church. Evidently with the hope of gaining some knowledge of Christian teaching, he read a little tale entitled 'Christie's Old Organ.' Running through the theme of the tale are references to a hymn. The first verse says :

' There is a city bright,
Closed are its gates to sin ;
Naught that defileth, naught that defileth
Can ever enter in.'

Here is judgment ! Then follow more verses :

' Saviour, I come to Thee !
O, Lamb of God, I pray,
Cleanse me and save me, cleanse me and save me,
Wash all my sins away.

Lord, make me, from this hour,
Thy loving child to be ;
Kept by Thy power, kept by Thy power,
From all that grieveth Thee.'

Here are mercy and faith ! Other steps led on and he became a quiet, but useful member of the Church at Scholes, Wigan. He had earlier desired to be host of a public house, and a testing of his faith came when, shortly after his conversion, he was offered one with a large sum of money to help in its establishment. He refused, renouncing also all connected with his past habits, even that of smoking. Well may we rejoice that the last verse of the hymn has become his experience also :

' Till in the snowy dress
Of Thy redeemed I stand,
Faultless and stainless, faultless and stainless,
Safe in that happy land.'

And here is the consummation of the love of God !

MARY F. BOOTH,

New Theories on Origin of Life

UNDER the above heading the *Sunday Times* of August 18th prints the article which follows :

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? That is the essence of the international conference on the origin of life taking place this week in Moscow. It has been arranged by the International Union of Biochemistry and will include speakers from many countries. Some exciting revelations from the Russians are awaited.

A multitude of hypotheses have been put forward about the way life started on earth. Until recently, many people thought the germs of life were carried to earth by meteors or meteoric dust from other worlds.

Careful experiments showed that meteors were sterile and could not have carried life. But the idea that primitive organisms could have been blown through space in dust form by the pressure exerted by sunlight has had many adherents.

It was shown to be theoretically possible and dust quite likely reaches us from other planets in this way. But it would be a very long journey for the life 'germs,' some thousands of years, during which they would have to withstand temperatures below that at which air liquefies, and they would be subject to intense ultra-violet rays.

It now seems certain that no living matter could survive such conditions. Most of those attending the conference will, therefore, accept the fact that life started here on earth.

A young American, Stanley Miller, showed a few years ago that, if the Northern Lights—or Aurora Borealis—had existed in those days, then quite large quantities of atoms from these gases would link together to form amino acids—the complicated substances essential to life.

Early this year, it was found that Beta rays given off by radio-active substances in the earth could have produced the same effect. Only a week or two ago a similar claim was made for gamma rays—another form of radiation.

Two new possibilities are thereby opened. The earth we know was more radio-active millions of years ago. That radio-activity could have been the start of life, or the cosmic rays which bombard us continually from outer space might have been responsible.

Truly did G. K. Chesterton say that 'When men cease to believe in God they will believe anything.' Christians who believe the plain yet sublime account of the 'origin of life' described in the first chapter of Genesis are regarded as uneducated, old-fashioned, gullible and semi-idiot. We wonder who are the gullible ones, when such solemn nonsense as the above is offered as accounting for the appearance of life. Of reason alone, the hymn rightly says:

'Her weak directions leave the mind
Bewildered in a dubious road.'

We wonder too who it really is who refuse to accept the evidence presented of how life came into being. If such theories as the above are evidence we prefer to reject them and to adhere to the quiet authority of the Scripture account of life's beginning, which accords with evidence, sense and reason.

Another illustration of the truth that 'the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men.' Never was theory accepted on less evidence than the evolution theory. Yet in our schools it is taught as fact. Much of its popularity is because to refuse to believe it is to put one's self 'beyond the pale' in intellectual circles.

Another reason is that to reject the theory means the acceptance of the only alternative—that life was created 'in the beginning' by God. This we wholeheartedly acknowledge.

We pass on, without comment, for it is sufficient comment on the above, the following from the *Manchester Guardian* of September 6th:

'Modern man may point with pride to his achievements in engineering and electronics—to television, electronic computers, supersonic planes, and the like. But he cannot begin to conceive how he could make a single blade of grass.' Thus the seed of almost Biblical doubt which Professor J. Doyle planted in the minds of the Botany Section [of the British Association for the Advancement of Science] in his presidential address, "Aspects and problems of conifer embryology."

'A consideration of some of the intricacies of the mechanism by which grains of conifer pollen germinate led him to ask whether botanists should glibly assume that principles of evolution were sufficient to explain how the various major plant groups had achieved almost independent existence.

'It seems to me just intellectual presumption to claim to offer a sort of blanket explanation of the global nature of all animate nature over a thousand million years of geological time. We have before us as a cautionary example how the phlogiston theory dominated chemistry for more than a century. I sometimes fear that an over-preoccupation with selection may prevent us from keeping open minds and may bog us down in a phlogiston-like mass.'

'Members will no doubt notice, he said, that it is nearly a century since Darwin and Huxley between them rammed the evolutionary theory down the collective throat of the Association and in particular down that of Bishop Wilberforce.'

The Organisation and Government of the Church of Christ--V.

Evangelists: Their Subsistence.

WITH the Church taking such an important part in sending out evangelists, does it not follow that the Church would be responsible for supporting those sent out? It is impossible to think otherwise, especially in view of Paul's injunction to the Church at Corinth (1 Cor. 9:14). The fact that Paul refused subsistence is not an argument that evangelists are to follow his example. His was a peculiar case—the only one of its kind in fact. It was imperative that not the slightest hint of commercialism, in his preaching of the gospel, should hinder the vital mission on which he was engaged, namely, the opening up of the road to heaven to the Gentiles. Upon no future evangelist would such an onerous task fall. But observe how, both in the sphere of work of an evangelist and the matter of his subsistence, it is always the church that is in control. This is understandable, if the principle already referred to is to be maintained, namely, that the glory is to be to Him, 'in the church,' throughout all ages.

The whole question is resolved by Paul in his letter to Timothy where, with reference to those whose work lies in preaching and teaching, he says 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox whilst it is treading out the corn' (1 Tim. 5:18) and 'The labourer who does the work should be the first to receive a share of the fruits of the earth' (2 Tim. 2:6).

The Modern Set-Up

In the light of these New Testament arrangements for church organisation, as revealed in the word of God, we are now (and only now) able to consider how these arrangements compare with the modern set-up of evangelistic committees and, in the case of the Association of Churches of Christ, a Bible college for the training, placing and payment of evangelists. Frankly, they do not compare at all, except for the end for which they are designed; but surely it is a false premise that the end justifies the means.

After all it was 'He that ascended who gave some apostles, and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers.' He gives us His Holy Spirit and makes us members of His Body, the Church. Who is the man who dares to set up a different arrangement from the Divine order? Who is so bold to say that God's Word is insufficient for the purpose for which it was designed, namely, the government of His Church and the extension of His Kingdom on earth? Who so presumptuous as to set aside the Scriptures which saith, 'Every word of God is pure . . . add thou not unto His words lest He reprove thee and thou be found a liar.' (Prov. 30 : 5-6). Has it not been proved over and over again that departure from the Divine plan has always ended and always will end in disaster, and that every such departure, no matter how well meaning in its ultimate intention, germinates within itself a parasitic growth of error which ultimately and inevitably chokes the very life out of that on which it grows?

Evangelistic Committee

Right away, let it be said that there is no objection to committees as such. Before we can say for or against we require to know how they are managed. God, not man, has laid down the rules, and therefore we have to examine this expression which is of modern origin, to see if it conforms to the scriptural definition.

A 'committee,' as its derivation implies, is simply a body of people put together for a certain purpose. Now the only purpose we are concerned with in the church is the building up of the members of the church and the enrolment of new members, *i.e.* the extension of the Kingdom of God on earth. The only 'committee' or body of people authorised to do these things is the church members themselves, with the assistance of a sub-committee of evangelists, pastors and teachers: in other words, the evangelists, office bearers and members of the church. Let each church do that in its own district, and then we will have the God-given solution to the church's organisational problems.

Let us then drop the use of the word 'committee' and similar terms and talk only of the churches, evangelists, elders, deacons, brethren. In other words, let us call 'Bible things by Bible names,' and we shall not fall into error, as we have been doing. For one thing, the dropping of such unscriptural names and the use only of Bible names will enable us more easily to relate our actions to the word of God, which, after all, is the standard by which we as a church are to live. Judged by this standard, the Committee system, as we know it at present, is unscriptural. There can be no other logical conclusion, if the New Testament standard is applied to it.

The New Testament Pattern of Evangelism

We have seen that the New Testament evangelist for any geographical district is ordained and supported by the 'chief' church in that district—*cf.* Philip in Cæsarea, Titus in Crete, Timothy in Ephesus. One of the main purposes for appointing an evangelist to any district was that the weaker churches in that district should receive the benefit of the evangelistic

services, in the way of building up and extending churches in that district. Paul and Silas set out from Antioch and confirmed the churches in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15 : 41).

It would, therefore, appear that a radical reformation in our ideas and practices is called for if a restoration to the primitive order is to be accomplished. Can that be done? I believe it can if we set about it in a 'spirit of meekness.' By doing so we shall be acting up to what has been the main object of our movement, namely, 'Back to the Bible.'

Further, if anything is to be done, it ought to be done by all the churches, since all, without exception, are involved. Nay, necessity is laid upon us all if we are to follow these apostolic precedents (Phil. 3 : 17 and 4 : 9), and if, as we believe, these Scriptures are the inspired word of the Head of the Church Himself.

W. BROWN.

(To be continued).

“Willing”

I once heard a blind man refuse the gift of sight! A surgeon had promised to remove his cataracts, and without a fee. He wouldn't have it!

Our Lord Jesus, on one occasion asked a helpless invalid if he was "willing" for a cure?

It was at the Pool of Bethesda. Round that saline spring had gathered "a vast crowd of impotent folk, blind, maimed, withered—*waiting*," so John tells us in the 5th chapter of his Gospel.

For what were they waiting? For one of those periodic bubblings, when the healing efficacy of the spring would be most effective. The sick folk thought that it was an "angel" that stirred the water, and that the first comer who stepped in then would be healed of anything that troubled him.

All eyes were fixed on the water. So they failed to see the Lord. All but one hopeless case, with no friends to help carry him. He had been "waiting" for thirty-eight years! His suffering eye lighted on the Lord. No one else paid any attention to the Saviour. Jesus asked him, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

"Whole" is a good old English word, meaning complete health. If your body and mind are fairly well, but your soul is sick, you are not "whole"—only half a man.

That blind man I spoke of, feared to face the stress of life with eyesight restored. Too much would be expected of him, with new responsibilities. He preferred to exist in the dark rather than live in the light.

Do you hesitate to come to Christ? You could be made new—your horizon enlarged; a clear conscience, and a partnership with God.

So far, you are in the dark; helpless against sin, and with no certain knowledge as to what is to become of you eventually.

Like those impotent *waiting* folk, you, too, are on the *watch*—waiting for the good fairy round the corner, ready to bring you luck, and the satisfactions in life that you continually crave for. There was no angel at the Pool, and there is no fairy waiting for you!

Jesus could have saved every one of that sick multitude: but they lost that opportunity. Their attention was absorbed elsewhere—with only one exception!

Will you repeat that folly in *your* own life?

"If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." In fact, he is "WHOLE." You can be if you are "willing." Are you?

The choice we all must make

God created man a free agent—able to know the difference between right and wrong, and capable of making a choice between the two. Upon this principle is based man's accountability. Without the power and the privilege of choosing between good and evil, man could not be responsible for his actions. But since man is a free agent, God holds him responsible for the choice that he makes, either to serve God or serve Satan. God rewards man when he chooses to obey, and punishes him when he chooses to disobey.

This principle has held true in all of God's dealings with man. We see an illustration of it in the case of the first sin. Man was given a law and left absolutely free to choose between obedience and disobedience. We see the principle of man's free agency illustrated in Moses' admonition to Israel to choose between life and death (Deut. 30:19), and that of Joshua to choose whom they would serve (Josh. 24:15).

This principle is operative to-day in regard to accepting or rejecting the great salvation offered through Christ. Man is called on to choose between the broad way which leads to destruction and the narrow way which leads to life (Matt. 7:13-14). The invitation goes forth "Whosoever will, let him come" (Rev. 22:17). As in ages past, so to-day: God does not coerce or force men to serve him, but man is free to accept or to reject the will of God. The will of man is consulted in the matter. Let us look at some of the salient facts in regard to this choice:

1. The choice between sin and righteousness is inevitable; it must be made. Our Lord has said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathered not with me scattered abroad" (Matt. 12:30). And again, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). In writing to the church of the Laodiceans the Lord said through John: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16). So we see that there is no middle ground. A choice is inescapable—it must be made!

Even if one is not an avowed servant of the devil—if he does not aggressively pursue an evil course—he makes the choice simply by not doing what is right. "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17). It is not enough simply to know to do right or simply to intend to do it. One must make a definite decision to follow the right, and must be unyielding in his determination not only to shun that which is evil, but to go forward in that which is right, in order to please the Lord.

2. This choice must be made now. We are admonished to live "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Tit. 2:12), and the apostle warns: "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Away with the idea of another chance after death. We must prepare to meet God now or never.

3. Upon this choice our eternal destiny depends. The apostle tells us in 2 Cor. 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

In Matt. 25:31-46, we have from the lips of the Son of God a graphic description of the great and final judgment. Here we are told that, when the Lord comes, all nations shall be gathered before him, and he shall separate them as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. The sheep will be placed on the right hand, and the goats on the left hand. To those on the right hand the king will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To those on his left hand, he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The reason assigned for this welcome to the righteous will be that in various conditions of life they have ministered to those in need; the reason for the denunciation of the wicked will be that they have not done so. The whole is summed up in these words: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (Vs. 46).

4. The way to make the right choice is made plain in the word of God. The alien sinner is commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to repent of his sins, to confess Christ, and to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2-8). The child of God is required to continue faithfully and steadfastly in the Lord's work unto death (Acts 2:42, Rev. 14:13). The commands of the gospel are clear and unmistakable, and every honest soul can know and obey them. Why not do so now?

True Service

The world may sound no trumpet, ring no bells;
 The Book of Life the shining record tells.
 Thy love shall chant its own beatitudes,
 After its own life working. A child's kiss
 Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad;
 A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich;
 A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong;
 Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
 Of service which thou renderest.

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

'I thank my God for you'

IN the *Scripture Standard* for December, 1955, a short extract appeared under the above heading, setting forth Paul's love for the brethren and his gratitude to God for their devotion and service. Musing upon this recently, I tried to visualise the Apostle in his Roman prison-house, thinking of the many whom he had been instrumental in winning for his Lord and Saviour. Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, Thessalonica, Galatia, and other scenes of his manifold labours, would pass across his mental vision, and his heart would be cheered and warmed as he 'remembered the brethren.'

This led me to think of some who, like myself, are isolated and, because of infirmity, are no longer able to meet in fellowship. We may, however, like Paul, have before us in contemplation many whom we have met and loved in the Lord, and with whom through past years we have worshipped and served.

Surely such remembrances should help us day by day, in our loneliness, to be grateful to our Heavenly Father for the love and fellowship of the many with whom we have shared the blessings of the Kingdom. Many whom we have thus loved have 'fallen asleep in Jesus,' but 'Their works follow them,' and we may be strengthened and encouraged, as we remember their faithfulness and zeal in their service for the Master.

Then, throughout the land of our birth and across the seas, many whose names we remember with love for their work's sake, who are pleading for the truth as it is in Jesus, and urging their brethren to remain loyal to New Testament Christianity, come to mind, and we are cheered and blest by reports of their devotion. The Lord bless them with strength and courage for their great task. Some whom we have not met in the flesh, amongst them young brethren, who by report are advancing in knowledge and usefulness come to mind, and of these latter, we would sincerely say 'God bless the lads.' May you be used mightily for the saving of souls, and the strengthening of your brethren. We pray for all who are giving their lives in the cause of the Master; and as we have you in mind we 'thank God and take courage' for the help we receive, as we read of you, month by month, in the *Scripture Standard*, and in letters received from some who think of us, and who desire to assure us of their remembrance of us.

I am persuaded that others will share my feeling, thus expressed:

'How sweet, how heavenly is the sight,
When those that love the Lord,
In one another's peace delight,
And so fulfil the word.'

J. HOLMES.

[We commend the article printed above as being the heartfelt expressions of a brother who, in these days, rarely experiences that precious blessing we take so easily for granted, 'the fellowship of kindred minds.' He is far removed from his brethren, has suffered much for His Master's sake, and to-day is feeble in body and aged in years. Yet to be in his presence is a benediction: the joy of the Lord shines in his face and speech. We have been able to visit him on rare occasions, but those have been times of uplifting fellowship and have brought more blessing to the visitor than has been given to Bro. Holmes. Pray for him, brethren, and write to him at 10 Murham Avenue, Goole, Yorks. Encourage him by the realisation of the noble company of which we are privileged to be members.—EDITOR.]

From a Christian's Diary

By Berean

This Ecumenical Business. The Union Committee of the 'Association of Churches of Christ' reported to this year's Annual Conference that 'the proposal to include a list of the officers of the Baptist Union in the *Year Book*, with a reciprocal inclusion of Churches of Christ officials in the *Baptist Union Handbook* is not to be implemented, the B.U. Council having decided not to proceed with the scheme. The Union Committee expresses the hope that, in spite of this, local congregations will not be deterred from developing contacts with Baptist churches in their area' (quoted from a paragraph headed 'Ecumenical

Business,' *Christian Advocate*, August 16th. 1957).

Just how much further can this ecumenical idea (that all who profess the name Christian are part of Christ's body regardless of doctrinal differences and unscriptural practices) lead those who once claimed to be Christians only? The printed interchange of 'officials' was too much even for Baptists. Then how can 'local churches develop contacts,' indeed, what contacts are envisaged?

Can sectarian churches be brought back to the Bible by any sort of fraternisation? As well try to make a drunkard a teetotaler by drinking with

him. Once a brotherhood has a sectarian handbook and is centrally organised like any other denomination, how can it possibly claim to speak only for the body of Christ? Could the church of the living God stoop to requesting official recognition in one of the very sects which are condemned by apostolic doctrine (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:10-16 and Eph. 4:1-6)?

* * *

Other Traditions. The annual report of the same Union Committee of British Disciples 'stresses the need that members of Churches of Christ should become acquainted with Christians of other traditions.' If this means the personal contact of Bible Christians with sectarians in order to lead them to complete surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ it is most necessary. There is also the need to become acquainted with sectarian heresies in order to be able to combat them with the truth. All must be on the basis of no compromise with error (1 Thess. 5:21-22).

The phrase 'Christians of other traditions,' however, seems to indicate that there are sub-sections to Christianity, or that the church of Christ has its subdivisions of tradition. New Testament teaching does not allow for that possibility. Paul exhorted Thessalonian Christians (2 Thess. 2:15) to 'stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle' and he warned the churches (in Christ) of Galatia of the curse upon those who 'preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached' (Gal. 1:8). We have been warned!

* * *

Liberal Digression. The foregoing paragraphs lead to the answer to a question which is often asked, especially in areas where there appear to be two 'Churches of Christ' on competitive terms. What is the difference between Associated Churches of Christ and those churches which are striving independently to reproduce New Testament faith and practice in the twentieth century? Is there any other difference than that of organisation? There is indeed. Associated Churches of Christ no longer acknowledge the necessity of obedience to the gospel—except, perhaps, to those

who are aware of the need. Loyal churches of Christ, on the other hand, insist that Christians are made in exactly the same way to-day as they were in the days of the apostles, by faith combined with obedience (of which repentance and baptism are only the initial manifestations) and therefore no-one can claim the name Christian who has not been united with Christ in the original, genuine manner.

This basic difference of attitude, not merely to the obedience of faith and to baptism as an initiation into Christ but also the difference of attitude to the whole Word of God has been summed up in the two contrasting words, 'liberal' and 'conservative.' It is a difference which becomes more pronounced with the years.

* * *

Misunderstandings. As a result of my reference in August to the Hindley Bible School and the thrill of learning more of the 'all things' of Matthew 28:20, a correspondent has taken me to task for 'criticism of the past generation and the poverty of their instruction.' He particularly mentions 'John McCartney, who was a teacher of a very high standard' and I wonder if any other readers may have gained a similar wrong impression from my August jottings. Perhaps there was some ambiguity of expression, for which I am sorry.

What I meant to contrast was not high quality of instruction but the depth of scriptural truth uncovered at Hindley in comparison with the sectarian sentimentalism that has passed for 'teaching and edification' in digressive churches in recent years. I was not thinking of printed lessons or correspondence courses so much as of sermons and public discourses and the weekly attempts to teach the 'rank and file' of the movement. My criticism was intended to cover only the last 35 to 40 years, as I hoped was plain from my words.

In my experience the soundest teaching came mainly from those whom I called the ostracised few, the 'old-pathers' (some of whom we rejoice to have with us still) who had been students of such men as David King, Alexander Brown, Lancelot Oliver and Bartley Ellis, to name only a few of the leaders of restoration at the end of the nineteenth century. I was certainly not

criticising any of them. Many of us to-day owe most of our knowledge of the Word either to their preaching and teaching or to their writing and books. We have not learned anything of confidence in the truth of Scripture from the liberal theology of the last forty years.

Whether we date the turn of the tide from the reception of 'Christians Association' churches with their sinful innovations, or the first musical instrument in 1908, or merely think of these as symptoms of more fundamental disease, it must have been approximately the time of World War I that the end came to the original testimony of the movement for a 'thus saith the Lord' on all corporate problems of organisation, doctrine and worship. The idea of tolerating agnostic criticism with the 'new theology' and allowing unscriptural offices and practices was then in the ascendant.

BROTHER CHANNING

The latest news we have is that our Brother was operated upon on Friday, September 6th. The operation left him very weak and tired, but Bro. Channing is regaining strength slowly. We are unable yet to say whether complete recovery is assured, but of course we pray and hope for this. Let us continue faithful in prayer to this end. Meanwhile our Bro. and Sis. Channing will be cheered by any remembrance in letter any readers may like to send them, to 9 Ripon Street, Aylesbury, Bucks.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

OCTOBER 1957

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|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Oct. 6—1 Kings 17:8-24. | John 4:43-54. |
| „ 13—Neh. 13:4-22. | „ 5: 1-29. |
| „ 20—Deut. 18:9-22. | „ 5:30-47. |
| „ 27—1 Kings 16:29 to 17:7. | „ 6: 1-21. |

THIRTY AND EIGHT YEARS IN HIS INFIRMITY (John 5:5)

The purpose of the Gospel by John is clearly stated to be 'that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God,' and that, as the outcome of that belief,

'ye may have life in His name.' This incident is one of those in the story of His ministry which John has selected for this purpose. All that has been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus may be said to have the same object, but the individuals who wrote had their own purposes also—which in no way detracts from their inspiration, or their authority. We may benefit the more by bearing the objects in mind when studying a selected individual case like this one.

Only those who have had infirmity of this severe kind to bear, and who know it has been at least partially their own fault, can enter fully into the impotent man's condition of helplessness and hopelessness. While we can therefore see from his attitude and action that he needed another kind of awakening besides the purely physical one, we do not do so with the "holier than thou" feeling. That does not befit any Christian in any circumstances anyway.

Verse 4 in the narrative seems to be an interpolation but serves to explain somewhat. The man had apparently lost hope of cure, and was obsessed rather with the thought that someone else was getting before him, and it may be 'no-one wants to help me.' Some do not get help because their attitude is repelling. But it was this very man that Jesus helped, and His question implies a doubt—did the man really want to be cured, or had he grown 'lazy,' willing to lie helpless rather than to make further effort? His answer was a complaint, and the sequel shows that the power of Jesus to heal did not depend upon the faith of the individual.

Did the healed man know that 'telling on Jesus' would bring him into danger? We cannot tell, but a word of warning was necessary, and it was given quite sternly. Divine blessings are always in large measure conditional. Good health is not to be kept while we continue to break the laws which control it—and they are God's laws. Here it seems clear that sin was at the root of the trouble, and that must be left if the wonderful restoration was to be maintained. We are glad he was found in the Temple—we trust giving thanks. At least he had rendered obedience in the first case, and gave the one reason for 'breaking the Sabbath' that was sufficient—the Son of Man being Lord also of the Sabbath.

BELIEF IN MOSES (John 5:46)

The Jews boasted of their faith in Moses. '... we are disciples of Moses. We know that God hath spoken unto Moses . . .' (9:28 and 29). We have been asked, when speaking of New Testament Christianity, whether we reject the Old Testament—and without saying so directly, many professing Christians do so. Moses has been the target for the arrows of unbelief for many years, and often one hears harsh words concerning the laws set forth in his writings, the acts of God recorded there, and the supposed low standards of conduct allowed. When the critics have reached the standard of purity and holiness required thereby, it will be time to discredit that noble prophet of God.

Those who do find fault with Moses ultimately come to finding fault with the Saviour Himself, and certainly they cannot place reliance upon the New Testament, and the words of the Christ. To deny Moses the position of honour given him in the whole Bible is to deny Christ Himself. This thought is expressed so plainly in the verses before us that there is no excuse for doubting. It makes doubting a case of refusal to acknowledge the authenticity of the 'sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation,' and to remove our trust in them to our judgment or that of other men.

How right the Jews were in placing their trust in Moses, and how fatally wrong in rejecting the One of whom he spoke and wrote. There are two points at which they made their mistake: (1) They had not the love of God in themselves (verse 42); (2) They received glory one of another (verse 44). If we are to be acceptable to God we must then both love Him, and seek His glory.

R. B. SCOTT.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Buckie.—On Sunday, August 15th the church rejoiced to receive into the fellowship Sis. Jean Watt. She had been already baptised for the remission of her sins. Some have sown, others have watered, and God has given the increase. The church has been strengthened spiritually. We would like to thank Brethren

Gardiner, Worgan, Leyland, Parker, Jess, Nisbet, Steele and others for services given us during the summer months.

JOHN GEDDES.

Newtongrange.—On Lord's Day, September 1st, Harold Finlay, only son of Bro. and Sis. Finlay, became one with Christ by being immersed into His name. Only recently left school, we pray with his parents that his schooling in this subject will have no endng.

Newtongrange, Annual Social.—We extend a hearty invitation to all the brethren to join us in marking the anniversary of the Church of Christ in Newtongrange. We will meet, if the Lord tarry, on October 12th at 4.30 p.m.

We are hoping to have Brethren Wm. Hendren (Belfast) and James Gardiner (Haddington) to address us.

Andrew Gardiner has been preaching the Gospel here during September, and his stirring and heart-searching messages have indeed been effective. To-night Mrs. Ewington, daughter of Sister Moar, confessed the name of Jesus as her Saviour, and put him on in baptism. A. J. BROWN.

Northern Rhodesia, Fort Jameson.—Bro. Clayton Nyanjagha writes on September 5th: 'I have started translating another gospel tract, titled "The Church that Jesus Built" into a wide spoken language within the Federation Territories as to help many non-English speaking people. The S.S. has increased more knowledge of Bible understanding . . . Also the church receives the "Truth in Love" magazine monthly and is very rich with the Spiritual growth.

'From the last letter I had written you to this moment 19 souls added to the church, and received a letter from one of our brethren in Nyasaland, Chapita Banda, an African evangelist that recently he has baptized 13 souls. The church still works in combination.

'Ephesians 4:1-16.'

Ulverston.—With great joy we report the decision of a young disciple, Henry Cox, who was immersed into the Lord Jesus on August 21st, and welcomed to the fellowship of the Church on August 25th.

He is one of a fourth generation to be members of the Church of Christ, and three of his sisters are members of the church here. His great-grandfather, grand mother, and mother were of the

Rockliffe family, well-known and esteemed in the churches. We pray that the Lord will bless and keep our young brother faithful to the end, and that he will prove a useful servant of the Lord Jesus. This decision has greatly cheered and encouraged us all. W. CROTHWAITE.

Wallacestone.—It is with joy we report an addition to the church. A young woman, Elizabeth Myles, daughter of Bro. and Sis. John Myles, put on her Lord in baptism on Sunday, August 25th after Bro. Alex Brown had preached the gospel. We thank God for this decision.

JAMES GRANT.

Woodstock, Capetown.—We witnessed on July 28th a man baptised, due to the labours of the assembly at Lansdowne, Cape Province. Bro. C. Steyn gave a message on 'Newness of Life.' Bro. Steyn arrived recently to work in Capetown and to assist the churches already established. He has started work near his home in Pinelands, a growing European centre, and is offering a free Bible correspondence course through the local newspaper, together with New Testament sermons which are arousing much interest. He is assisting me at the School of Industry at Ottery, and so much has the interest grown there that twenty-one of the six hundred boys have asked to take up the correspondence course. We trust it will lead to the saving of their souls.

On August 16th and 17th Bro. Steyn conducted a gospel campaign, with average attendance of forty each evening. In view of this eagerness to hear New Testament teaching it is intended, God willing, to hold a campaign in the Peninsula among the churches here.

Due to the visit of Bro. Steyn to a young man's home I was awakened early in the morning to see this young man baptised at 2.30 that same morning. Then on September 1st a young lady was baptised at Simonstown and at Woodstock a young man was baptised the same day. An elderly man and his wife, with whom I have been in contact for many months, have decided to be baptised on September 8th, God willing. So, while 'one has watered, and another planted, God gave the increase.' To Him be the glory at all times.

Pray for us, as we pray for you over there, that we might experience a rich harvest of souls to the glory of God (1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 12:1-3). T. W. HARTLE.

GREAT YARMOUTH FISHING SEASON, 1957

The arrangements for the mission at Great Yarmouth are now almost completed. If the Lord tarries we shall begin to break bread and preach the Gospel in the Labour Rooms, King Street, Yarmouth, on October 5th.

The Annual Rally will be held on October 26th, in the Park Baptist Tabernacle Hall, at 7 p.m. In past years this has been a feast of good things, and we believe this year will be no exception. Some brethren from England and Scotland have already promised to be with us; but in order that you too might have this spiritual uplift with its happy memories, we invite you.

Accommodation at 17/6 and 18/- per day, board residence, is available. If you intend being with us at the Rally, or during our stay at Yarmouth, write me at my home address: Seaview Cottage, Wallacestone, Brighton, Falkirk, Stirlingshire, or on and after October 1st, at c/o Harpley, 33 Harley Road, Newtown, Great Yarmouth. DAVID DOUGALL.

COMING EVENTS

Kentish Town—God permitting, we shall be holding our usual anniversary meetings on Saturday, October 5th. Bro. F. C. Day has kindly consented to serve us on the occasion, and on the Lord's Day following. Visitors from all parts will be warmly welcomed. Afternoon 3, tea 5, evening 6.30.

East Ardsley.—Anniversary celebrations, Saturday and Sunday, October 26th and 27th. Saturday: Tea 4 p.m. Evening meeting 6; speakers, Bren. J. Garnett (Doncaster) and A. E. Winstanley (Tunbridge Wells); chairman, Bro. A. Robottom (Wortley).

We extend to all a very warm invitation to join us in our celebrations.

Morley, Yorkshire.—Saturday, October 5th, Autumn Rally. Speakers: Brethren L. H. Channing and T. Nisbet. Tea 4 p.m., Rally 6.15 p.m.

Beulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield. Anniversary, D.V., Saturday, November 23rd. Tea 4.15. Social meeting 6 p.m. Speakers: Bren. L. Morgan and S. Jepson,

COMING TO CANADA?

When in the TORONTO district, the brethren of the Maplewood Avenue congregation extend a hearty welcome to all who desire to worship. The meeting house is situated at 10 Maplewood Avenue, near the corner of Vaughan Road, Toronto, Ontario.

Services for the week are as follows:—
Lord's Day—

- 10 a.m.: Bible School for all ages.
11 a.m.: Worship & Breaking of Bread.
7 p.m.: Preaching of the Gospel.

Wednesday—

- 8 p.m.: Prayer and Bible Study.

Maplewood Avenue Church of Christ.
Secretary: John D. MacKay, 7 Locust Street, Toronto 9, Ontario, Canada.

When in VANCOUVER worship with the church of Christ at 604 East 12th Street, Lord's Day: Bible Classes for all ages, 10 a.m.; Breaking of Bread, 11 a.m.; Gospel, 7.30 p.m. Thursday: Prayer and Bible Study for all ages, 7.30 p.m.

AN INVITATION TO CLEVELEYS

Last year 129 visiting brethren met with us to break bread and we were greatly encouraged by their presence and help. We renew our invitation to all who visit this area to have fellowship with us in the Co-operative Hall, Beach Road. We meet at 10.30 a.m. for breaking of bread and at 6.30 p.m. to preach the gospel.

PUBLICATIONS

'Truth in Love' (monthly). Albert Winstanley, 43a Church Road, Tunbridge Wells.

'Talks on the Tabernacle,' by Walter Crosthwaite. Prices from Paul Jones, 41 Pendragon Road, Birmingham, 22b.

'The Young Christian' (monthly). 'The Churches of Christ Salute You.' Prices of both from Thos. Nisbet, 8 Haldane Avenue, Haddington, East Lothian.

'The Gospel Banner' (monthly). From Lawnbrook Avenue Church of Christ, Belfast). Hugh Tidsley, 34 Sarajew Crescent, Cavehill Road, Belfast.

BOOKS WANTED

Do any brethren have copies of the books listed below which they would be willing to sell? They are wanted by brothers for serious Bible study.

God's Prophetic Word, by Foy E. Wallace Junr.

On the Rock, by Dugan.

Hector Among the Doctors, by Daniel Sommer.

Volume 5 of *Zerr's Commentary*.

Each book is out of print, hence this advertisement. Prices, etc., to: A. E. Winstanley, 43a Church Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

BIRTH

On August 23rd to John and Betty Dodsley, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, a son, David John.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly. Prices: Home, one copy for one year, 8/-; two copies 14/-; three copies 20/-, post free. U.S.A., one dollar per copy. Canada, Africa, Australia, New Zealand: One copy 7/-; two 13/-; three 19/6. All orders and payments to the 'S.S.' Agent and Treasurer: PAUL JONES, 41 Pendragon Road, Birmingham 22B.

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

NYASALAND MISSION. Contributions to W. STEELE, Atholl Dene, Longniddry, East Lothian.

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