

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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ARE WE REALLY NECESSARY?

MOST groups and associations have the tendency—and often the smaller the body the greater the tendency—to hold an exaggerated view of their importance, and of the necessity of their existence. Churches and denominations equally with secular bodies show this tendency. We all regard ourselves as more or less indispensable, and question if the world can get along without us, or even if God can accomplish His will without us. We like to regard ourselves as of more importance than we really are, and to think that we are contributing a vital portion to the whole body of truth, religious or otherwise.

The co-operation becomes a denomination

Some forty-five years ago a movement began among Churches of Christ in the then Co-operation for getting themselves more widely known and recognised among religious denominations. This movement, led by a few determined brethren, spread rapidly. After a few years we boasted that we had become known, recognised and accepted, especially among the Free Churches. Eagerly, and without consulting the individual churches, the annual conference went ahead: Churches of Christ became members of such bodies as the Free Church Federal Council, the British Council of Churches and now are joined with the World Council of Churches and are identified wholeheartedly (so far as regards those leading the Churches of Christ in the Association) in the ecumenical movement.

It was insisted that the "distinctive witness" of Churches of Christ would be presented more clearly by mixing among and, to some extent, uniting with such bodies. No vital principles would be compromised; within these religious associations we should still bear our witness to New Testament Christianity. As was foreseen and warned against, these rosy prospects did not materialise and promises were not fulfilled. Before long it was seen that Churches of Christ were being more influenced by the religious bodies they mixed with than those bodies were being influenced by us. The witness in those circles to New Testament Christianity was feeble. Soon we were copying the practices and methods of those with whom we were identified; and not only the practices but the teaching.

Pushed through the theological college (then at Overdale, Birmingham) and through the pages of the "Christian Advocate" and other literature, modernistic theology was insinuated through the churches. Scripture was watered down; even the New Testament was departed from, and today it is true to say that the New Testament plays little part as the authority for the Churches of Christ. The distinctive witness" has been abandoned; the churches have taken over the views, the outlook, the language and the ways of denominationalism. As was obvious from the beginning of this wider movement, Churches of Christ in the Association have become simply a denomination among denominations; swallowed up in the ecumenical movement. They play a negligible part in influencing any decisions.

Even the desire is lacking to contribute anything "distinctive" to the counsels of the affiliating bodies. We have assimilated far more than has been contributed: all sorts of traditions have been introduced into the churches without reference to their scripturalness. Far more concern is shown to please religious friends than to be faithful to the plain teaching of the word of God—the very reason for our existence is to bear witness to that. Ceasing that witness we cease to have any reason for existing. We are unnecessary; we can be managed without, and nobody will be the worse for our dying out.

"These things are for our learning"

Seeing that the movement for restoration of New Testament Christianity was being betrayed and thrown overboard for the sake of popularity and the appearance of united strength, some brethren and a few churches would not be identified with these things. At first it was a few brethren who raised their voices against what was being done in the name of the churches and without their consent, or even at times their knowledge. The protests grew in strength, until whole churches were withdrawing from the Co-operation, refusing to have any part in the unscriptural, worldly and denominational mixture of many creeds. Soon after the second world war withdrawals of churches were averaging about five a year. The consequence was that the number of those counted in churches in the Co-operation declined from about 16,000 to fewer than 10,000 within those few years.

But those withdrawing formed more than a protest movement. They bore and bear much more than negative testimony to "the things most surely believed amongst us." What we plead for is the reason for the existence of this periodical: "A complete return to Christianity as it was in the beginning." That means that positively we present and insist upon those things in the New Testament which are patently fundamental if the church is to be the church of Christ; and that negatively we reject those things which cannot find their justification in the New Testament. We are aware that this statement raises many questions as to what are fundamentals, what is binding upon Christians, to what extent can we allow those things which are agreed upon as "expedient" and how far are we allowed liberty as churches and as individual Christians. But, as the word of God completely furnishes us in every good work, and makes the man of God complete in doctrine and service, we find within those limitations ample outlet and guidance for all ages in accomplishing the will of God in the world. It is safe to be as broad as the New Testament—and as narrow,

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind."

Let us learn from the examples of our own history. The ancient people of God, Israel, were constantly warned that when they came into the land which God had given them they were not to look with longing upon the nations around them, with their elaborate worship, their highly organised systems and their great numbers. In spite of these warnings the Israelites did largely go the way of other nations, forgetting that God had His purposes to work out through them towards the world. So did the church of Christ in the early centuries: she sold her purity and independence for the tinsel of the world and shared in its wealth. So did the noble Restoration Movement of the early nineteenth century, both in America and in this country, in letting go the purity of her appeal for the faith of the first church for the "mess of pottage" held out to her in the praises and plaudits of men.

Are we really necessary? Have we any vital message for the world? Have we anything to contribute that will point out the "more excellent way" to our fellow-men who are bewildered by the many contradictory voices of religion, and are equally bewildered by the attempts being made for a "worldwide" Church; by the so-called reconciling of these many voices in attempting to show that, after all, we are "all one in Christ Jesus"? It doesn't make sense. But the clear and simple plea of Christ in the New Testament does make sense. And, so long as that is our plea, we are really necessary.

PAUL'S PREDICTIONS 1

(2 Thessalonians 2:15)

MY remarks are based on Paul's words of exhortation and encouragement, "Therefore brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught whether by word, or by our epistle."

It may be said that it is a human tendency to jump to extremes, and this was no less true of the early Christians than it is of anyone else. There were some at that time who said there is no resurrection of the dead, that Christ had not risen from the dead; and we can only conclude, that they therefore did not expect him to return. It is equally evident from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, that some of them had gone to the opposite extreme, and held that the Lord's return was imminent. They expected him to come in the very near future. Paul beseeches them not to be soon shaken in mind, nor be troubled, neither by spirit nor by letter as from the apostles, that the day of Christ was at hand; but he warns the saints by prophetic utterance that there must first come a falling away from the faith—a great apostasy—and a revealing of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, before the Lord returns. And he exhorts them to stand fast and hold the traditions which they had been taught.

We note immediately that Judas Iscariot is spoken of as the Son of Perdition in John 17, when Jesus, pouring forth his supplication for his saints in anticipation of the sufferings of Calvary says, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but there are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father: keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the Son of Perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled." Judas Iscariot, the Son of Perdition was so called because he was a professed disciple of the Lord, who sold his master for thirty pieces of silver.

The Falling Away

Judas is not the Son of Perdition referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2, for he had long since gone and hanged himself; but, in giving this title to this figure which was yet to come, Paul indicates that this one would also be a professed disciple of the Lord. This man would not be a heathen idolator, nor would he be an apostate Jew, but he would be one within the church, and would oppose the right judgments of God among his people.

In the ancient kingdom of Israel, God had dwelt between the cherubims overshadowing the mercy seat in the holiest place in the tabernacle and the temple; but Paul speaks of the New Covenant saying, "God is not confined to temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24) and again (2 Corinthians 6:16) "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

The Man of Sin, "who opposes and exalts himself against God, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself that he is God," refers to one who is numbered with the saints, and who would rise to govern and to dictate to the church as only God has the right to do. Paul's warning is against a great apostasy, when men within the church would set themselves up with a human head, forsaking the faith once delivered, usurping the place of Christ, and reigning as princes and lords within the church, which is His body.

When Paul was on that final journey to Jerusalem where he was to make his appeal to Cæsar, he tarried for a short time at Miletus, and called for the elders of the Ephesian church. And when they were come, he addressed them in passionate speech saying, "Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made YOU overseers. For I knew this, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them."

Many today are not much concerned about strict adherence to the faith and the traditions once delivered; but the apostles were concerned. Paul says, "I ceased not to warn everyone of you night and day with tears, for the space of three years."

Again in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul speaks of something "which withholdeth," or holds back, "the mystery of iniquity which already works"—which mystery means a something covered, or not yet revealed; but which was there, working under cover, where it could not readily be seen. The apostasy was there, in Paul's time, waiting, and biding its time. The day would come when the Man of Sin would be revealed, when his works and his intentions would be made known, but which was then being held back. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who hinders will hinder, until he be taken out of the way,"—and THEN shall that wicked one be revealed." That the Man of Sin would soon be revealed is evident from the fact that the apostasy was already working in the church in Paul's day, and hence we look into the history of the church immediately following the apostolic age for the appearance of the Man of Sin, and we have no difficulty in recognising him in the rise of the Roman Catholic Church with its supreme bishop the Pope, who sits on the throne of the Roman Church, showing himself to be the supreme authority in the church, and who receives and accepts the acclaim and honour which is due alone to God.

The Apostate Roman Church was hindered in its development by the civic government of the Roman Empire. With the decline and fall of that empire, this hindrance was removed; a perverted form of the Christian faith became the state religion, and the apostasy flourished. Paul writes to Timothy with regard to this apostasy (1 Timothy 4:1-4): "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (2 Timothy 4:3-4): "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own desires shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables."

The full development of this apostasy is seen in the Roman Church, with its human head, its arrogant claims, its pretensions to miracles, its creed, auricular confession, purgatory, indulgencies, effigies, crucifixes, holy water and pouring and sprinkling, and its claim to apostolic succession.

The result of Roman Catholic supremacy is recorded in history as the Dark or Medieval Ages of superstition and ignorance. The Bible was taken out of the hands of the common people. The masses were universally uneducated, the people's faith in the word of God was undermined. They were taught not to seek to read the Bible, nor to attempt to interpret the Bible, but to hear the priest.

The Reformation

This state of affairs existed through the blood and toil and sweat of many centuries, to the time of the Reformation. Over four hundred years ago, Martin Luther attempted to dethrone the Man of Sin; coinciding with this, a new influence came into the world in the great Renaissance, or revival of learning, and following hard upon this the invention of printing brought to men knowledge and enlightenment which had long been denied them. Men were largely freed from the shackles of Catholicism, socially, politically, and morally. A commentator states, "The Reformation has proved to be one of the most splendid eras in the history of the world." We owe our national privileges and civil liberties to the reformers. Protestant nations can well compare with those under Catholic domination.

Luther restored the bible to the people in 1534, and defended its claims against the arrogant pretensions and tyranny of Rome; but after his death men converted his tenets to a new state religion, and much good was undone by rival protestant factions and political interests. But the flag of liberty had been unfurled, and the movement towards truth and purity of worship slowly gained momentum. Time after time, however, as each new sect was formed, it became bogged down by creeds and dogmas, and it was repeatedly necessary to break away in order to make further progress in the search for truth. All sorts of extremes of doctrine and practice came into being, and the structure of the church was altered a thousand times.

Tired of new and old creeds and parties in religion, and of the numerous attempts to reform the Reformation; convinced by the Scriptures, and by observa-

tion and experience that the unity of the disciples of Christ is essential to the conversion of the world, and that the correction and improvement of creeds or sects can never become the basis of union, communion, or co-operation, a few individuals at the beginning of the last century began to study ways and means of restoring primitive Christianity. These few individuals include that great Bible scholar and preacher, Alexander Campbell. A careful, conscientious and prayerful study of the reasons for the then existing state of the sects was begun. It was found that all Protestant sects of the time affirmed that the Bible was their religion—yet division flourished. It was also found that while many emphatically denounced human creeds and made a plea for the Bible alone, they were still persistently adhering to things which were not to be found in the word of God.

Campbell writes, "Their sentiments, language, style, and general views of the gospel were as human as auricular confession, extreme unction, and purgatorial purification. The Bible alone is the Bible only in word and deed, in profession and practice. This alone can reform the world, and save the church."

With this profound conviction in their hearts, the few pressed on in search of greater light and purity of worship. Campbell wrote, "We found it an arduous task, and one of 20 years' labour, to correct our diction and to purify our speech according to the Bible alone; and even yet, we have not wholly repudiated the language of Ashdod. We only profess to work and to walk by the rules which will inevitably issue in a pure speech, and in right conceptions of that pure, and holy, and celestial thing called Christianity — in faith, in sentiment, and in practice."

The Restoration Movement

The task which these few set themselves in the early 19th century was a project for uniting the sects (or rather, the Christians in all sects) upon a clear and scriptural bond of union — upon having a "thus saith the Lord," either in express terms, or in approved precedent, for every article of faith and item of religious practice. The Declaration and Address of the Washington Association made this statement in 1809. It was tendered to parties confessing the Westminster Creed, and also to Protestants of every name, making faith in Christ, and obedience to Him the only test of Christian character, and the only bond of church union, communion, and co-operation. Campbell says, "It was approved by all, but was adopted and practised by none, except the few, or that part of the few who made the future."

What these few men had decided in this great project was that they would endeavour to determine exactly what the Scriptures teach about the church, its doctrines, sentiments, and practices; and that they would leave no stone unturned until they had established, or re-established, the truth of primitive Christianity. They were determined that personal opinions, and preconceived notions would not be allowed to hinder them, but that point by point, in a systematic survey of the whole field of religion, they would sift the wheat from the chaff, and restore that which God had appointed at the beginning. It was a project in which they were determined to sacrifice everything to truth. Campbell says, "None of us were aware of the havoc that this principle, if faithfully applied, would make of our views and practices on various favourite points." The principle which was inscribed upon our banners when we withdrew from the ranks of the sects was, "Faith in Jesus as the true Messiah, obedience to Him as our Lawgiver and King the only test of Christian character, and the only bond of Christian union, communion, and co-operation, irrespective of all creeds, opinions, commandments, and traditions of men."

It was from this beginning, that the Restoration movement, and the church of Christ as we know it in our time, came. Insofar as these principles have been adhered to, the church has prospered. Insofar as these principles have been abandoned, the church has suffered severe reverses.

From the beginning of the 19th century to the turn of the present century, steady progress and growth was made. Isolated groups seeking the will of God in independence joined forces, often a matter of two or three at a time. A Co-operation of Churches of Christ came into being, organised at the outset for the specific purpose of combining "for evangelistic purposes," but becoming bogged down, as the sects had so often been before, as it developed into a highly organised system of committees for numerous other purposes. The first Great War had a devastating effect on the church. Strong alien influence was felt, and in Britain, a theological college came into existence for the training of evangelists.

In the process of time, one-man ministry brought higher criticism of the word of God — a form of intellectual snobbery based on the vanity of man and worldly wisdom. Agnosticism grew, and the vital search for truth was abandoned, for a located ministry is no bulwark against apostasy. The Co-operation, now called

the Association, sought affiliation with the Free Church Federal Council, and is associated with the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Movement, and has therefore become in effect a sect among sects. It became necessary for loyal churches and brethren to withdraw from the Co-operation in order to preserve what remained of the purity of the worship of God under the leadership of men such as our beloved Bro. Crosthwaite and others, some of whom are with us to the present time. The Co-operation had gone back to the beggarly elements from which the church separated with such great sacrifice at the beginning.

"Christian Unity"

Lest some should think I criticise too severely, let me quote from the columns of the "Scottish Daily Mail," reporting on the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, with special reference to talks on unity between the sects, in Edinburgh on that date, May 31st, 1966:

The Very Reverend Dr. Neville Davidson, convenor of the Inter-Church Relations Committee, said the Assembly had already defined its own objective — one united Church in Scotland, in full communion with the Church in England and in other countries.

He spoke of progress in talks with other Churches and proposed multilateral conversations with the Episcopal Church, the Congregational Union of Scotland, the Methodist Church in Scotland, the United Free Church of Scotland, and the Church of Christ.

"The Rev. Dr. J. W. C. Dougall, not to be confused with Bro. David Dougall, Convenor of the Kirk's Special Committee on this subject, made it clear that the main stumbling block was the question of bishops. Some progress had been made. Many Anglicans would be willing to agree that the Ministry is not to be tied to apostolic succession as a doctrinal or dogmatic principle.

"Seconding him, the Rev. P. P. Brodie of Allea, said that they were proposing bilateral conversations between the Church of Scotland, and the Scottish Episcopal Church 'to explore they way forward towards a united Church in our land.'

"They should also face the question of Intercommunion and Full Communion as steps to reunion.

"The Rev. T. W. Jarvie, of Dundee, said that the Church of Scotland had acted faithfully and presented the gospel to the Scottish people. They acknowledged that the same was true of the Scottish Episcopal Church. The Kirk would claim that the members of the Scottish Episcopal Church were Christians in the fullest sense of the word, and that their Church was properly constituted, and their ministry valid. 'We want the Episcopal Church to do the same to us'."

Well, these are some of the quotations. If the Co-operation Church agrees with these sentiments, I do not know what there is to prevent them from sinking their differences with these bodies, and uniting with them in every respect, and I see no reason why they should maintain a separate existence. But if they do not agree with these sentiments, I cannot see why they take part in such discussions, for it is evident that it is assumed by the acts taking part in these talks, that the Co-operation churches have accepted without protest the sort of thing which is being said in these discussions. They have been classified as a sect among sects, and have accepted that classification!

(To be continued)

J. M. WOOD.

That I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus.

(Acts 20, 24.)

—The loyal Christian who puts his love to Christ before all earthly love possesses a joy and peace unknown to those who desert their Lord in the hour of danger. Happy is the man who is loyal to the very end and can say with triumph as death draws near: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

“THINGS THAT MUST NEED BE”

IN the affairs of men in this world there must needs be laws and appointments for the regulating of their duties and privileges in their relations of one to another. Things that “must needs be” are continually about us. We must eat and drink, work and sleep, etc. All these things are necessary because of our being and constitution. God knows who has made us all, and knows us altogether, and has endowed us with wonderful faculties, has given us appointments and laws which must needs be observed in order to fellowship with Himself.

In order to a constant awareness of God, and an appreciation of His holiness and great power and of our mortality, weakness and sin, the Scripture tells us that “we must needs die, become as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person; yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him” (2 Sam. 14:14). The last clause in this verse of Scripture gives great comfort and consolation to those who have their faith and hope in God.

It is an inexorable law that “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment,” but God in His great mercy and love for us has also said, “He hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9).

At the beginning of human history, we read, our first parents disobeyed God's commandment and, according to His warning, their sin brought death into the world; “and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” All men are partakers of Adam's frailty.

Immediately after the transgression of Adam and Eve, God's word gives the first intimation of His means which He devised in order to save the human race from the result of sin. God's promise was: “I will put enmity between thee (the tempter), and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel.” This word foretold the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary for the sins of the whole world.

The Old Testament abounds with prophecies relative to the coming into the world of One who would be a Saviour. Jesus of Nazareth was the One whom the Old Testament prophets predicted should come and that He should live and suffer and die, even as the four Gospel writers have told us; also that Jesus must rise from the dead and ascend into heaven and sit on the right hand of God. Jesus in His teachings told His disciples “that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Scriptures concerning Him.” On the morning of Jesus' resurrection, the two angels at the empty tomb said to the women there: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen; remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:5-7).

It was necessary that Jesus should die for the sins of the people. No man can save himself, no man can save his brother or friend, or neighbour. Nothing a man can give can redeem himself or brother; even riches, silver or gold; indeed, if he could give the whole world it would not avail.

We all need a Saviour, and God, knowing our need, did send Him. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This Saviour is Jesus Christ of Nazareth. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus said of Himself, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” God willeth not the death of any. “He will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth, for there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:4-5). On the Divine side, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, have planned and fulfilled all the things which must needs be for the salvation of man. There remain yet on man's side the things which he must need do, in order “to obtain the salvation brought nigh by your Lord Jesus Christ.” Some false teachers say, “there is nothing to do.” The Apostles of Jesus Christ never gave such an answer to anxious enquirers. The Lord Jesus when He appeared to Saul of Tarsus (also called Paul), who asked, “Lord what wilt Thou have me to do? . . . said unto him, Arise, and go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6). On the day of Pentecost, when the multitude, hearing Peter tell how they had, with wicked hands, crucified the Messiah, cried out, “What shall we do?” They were told what to do . . . to save themselves. We read in the Scriptures, “He (Jesus) became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him” (Heb. 5:9).

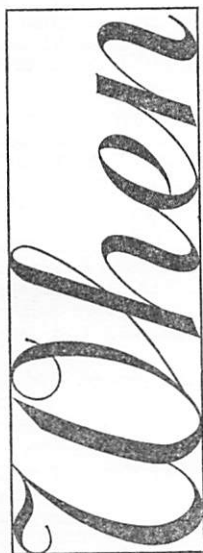
God said of Jesus on the holy mount, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him" (Matt 17:5). These words show us that we must hear and obey Jesus Christ if we would have eternal salvation. Eternal salvation is the inestimable blessing; in it are the unsearchable riches of Christ. This salvation was brought nigh to us at infinite cost, for it cost God His dear Son. If we neglect this "so great salvation," the consequences to ourselves will be terrible, "for God will take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us then hear and obey those things which must needs be for our salvation. Jesus said, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." Peter confessed, "Lord, to whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." The eunuch made this same confession to Philip, thus shewing that he believed with all his heart. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). The Pentecostians were told on enquiry to, "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

We must needs believe, repent, confess and be baptised in order to remission of sins; to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; to be saved. Thereafter we must continue faithful till death or the Lord comes from heaven to take His own to be forever with Him. Jesus says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

S.W.

HOW TO USE THE BIBLE



WHEN in sorrow, read John 14.
 men fail you, read Psalm 27.
 you have sinned, read Psalm 51.
 you worry, read Matthew 6:19-34.
 about to go to church, read Psalm 84.
 you are in danger, read Psalm 91.
 you have the blues, read Psalm 34.
 God seems far away, read Psalm 139.
 you are discouraged, read Isaiah 40.
 you want to be fruitful, read John 15.
 doubts come upon you, try John 7:17.
 you are lonely or fearful, read Psalm 23.
 you forget your blessings, read Psalm 103.
 you would see a Christian, read Matthew 5.
 you would have an idea of religion, read James 1:19-27.
 your faith needs stirring, read Hebrews 11.
 you feel down and out, read Romans 8:31-39.
 you want courage for your task, read Joshua 3:8.
 the world seems bigger than God, read Psalm 90.
 you want rest and peace, read Matthew 11:25-30.
 you want Christian assurance, read Romans 8:1-30.
 looking for Paul's secret of happiness, read Colossians 3:12-17.
 you leave home for labour or travel, read Psalm 121.
 you grow bitter or critical, read 1 Corinthians 13.
 your prayers grow narrow or selfish, read Psalm 67.

Strong in faith, giving glory to God.

(Rom. 4, 21.)

—God is looking, not for the man of ability but for the man of faith; the man who refuses to doubt; the man who believes that God is sufficient. He is looking for the man who believes not only that God can, but is fully persuaded that God will.

Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine.

(1 Tim. 4, 16.)

—There must be no slackness in our attitude towards the above all toward our own sin. I have no place for the teaching of those who think that because they have been justified through Christ they can release their vigilance. We can believe in eternal presumption.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

NOVEMBER 1966

6—Ezekiel 1:1-21	Revelation 1
13—Ezekiel 1:22-28	Revelation 2:1-17
20—Ezekiel 2:1 to 3,3	Revelation 2:18-29
27—Ezekiel 3:4-15	Revelation 3:1-13

VISIONS AND SYMBOLS

WE recognise without question that the book we are reading from is quite different from all the other New Testament writings. While they recount visions and symbols from time to time, such as Peter's "sheet let down by the four corners" (Acts 10:11), there is nothing like the "living creatures" of Ezekiel, or the "beasts" of Daniel, until we come to this last "revelation" made to John. Obviously there is a divine purpose in this and we should not turn away, merely puzzled, from it. Certainly there are very important lessons to be learned from the introductory portion apart from the general lesson that all the troubles and wickedness of the world will be brought to an end triumphantly. James Russell Lowell has written "Right for ever on the scaffold." It is not altogether true anyway, but we know "God is not mocked (never successfully defied or mocked)." Victory is always with the righteous though he may not see it in this life. "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Those interested in the peculiarities of this unique portion of "the sacred writings" (2 Tim. 3:15) should read the introduction by J. B. Phillips to his quite recent translation. I am not referring to the notes about authorship, date, etc., but his comments as a translator.

We will look first at an initial peculiarity. This is the only portion of the New Testament which states its own importance and the blessing which reading it brings. We know of course that "all scripture" is important and brings blessing. It is also indispensable to those who want to serve God. However, here we have the statement "Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear" it read (R.S.V.). The picture is of those Christians who are unable to read—and there were in those early days very many in that position—listening. This ties up beautifully (and threateningly) with the concluding curse (22: 18 & 19) and again applies as truly to all scripture. We are immediately reminded of the Lord's own parable of the man who builds on the rock, or on the sand, for we must "keep what is written therein" to receive the

blessing. The interpretation of the visions and symbols may be difficult but the lessons of the seven letters alone will keep all of us busy—if we are rightly exercised thereby. Encouragement and warning always go hand in hand and are equally necessary, as universal human experience teaches.

We note relationship between Father and Son as shown also in John 17:8 & 9. God gives His Son for His servant John—who can it be but the beloved apostle?—this revealing of the future for guidance of all His servants, and through an angel. To the multitude of martyrs who bore almost indescribable sufferings for their faith not long after this message was recorded, how necessary it was! We are inclined in these times of comparative ease to forget our heavenly destiny but to them it was so near and clear. While we have comfort on earth how easy it is to grow complacent. We have perhaps yet to learn more clearly that "friendship with the world is enmity against God"—and does that explain the weakness and spiritual poverty so prevalent as to make us despair, for instance of unity and a pure church free from division?

Denial of our own ideas and plans, a contempt for money and worldly friendship or favour, and a realisation of coming out from among them and being separate, are surely required of us before genuine success is possible. The general feeling that we must win the world by offering things it craves for is undoubtedly wrong, and the stern denunciations of the book and its vivid description of judgments upon sinners are much more likely to bring down the pride of men into humble submission. May the Lord richly bless the reading aloud among the churches of His revelation that we may be aligned more closely to His will and purpose, and so escape being spewed out of His mouth. The Lord will return. Every eye will see Him. The world will not be pleased. Bitter sorrow and unrelieved remorse will be its portion, but His own people will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is characteristic of the authorised ambassadors of the King of kings that they humbly identify themselves with those to whom they have brought the joy of salvation and the final and supreme gift of eternal life. Hence "I, John, your brother" thus introduces himself, chosen by the Saviour and honoured by the wondrous baptism in the Holy Spirit, empowered to remember infallibly the divine messages. He shares with the suffering saints that privilege, while he shares also the throne "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). John did not forget that thrilling lesson in the upper room which he records so

beautifully (John 13). Our willingness to keep "the ordinances" (1 Cor. 11:2) and maintain the "holy conversation" (2 Peter 3:11) will decide our usefulness to our Saviour's church.

R. B. SCOTT

WHAT JESUS THOUGHT OF HIS CHURCH

HE "loved the church and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). He "nourisheth and cherisheth it." He loves and cares for it with loving and tender care, as the husband cares for his wife. To Him it is to be "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

The Lord's thinking and attitude towards the church should be our thinking and attitude. WE MAKE UP THE CHURCH, each brother and sister. Let us never at any time be a "spot" or "wrinkle" or "blemish."

Is Christ's attitude yours and mine?

—Woodstock (Cape Town)- Bulletin.

WHEN GOD CALLED

Elijah was busy plowing;
Gideon was busy threshing wheat;
David was busy caring for the sheep;
Matthew was busy collecting taxes;
Amos was busy following the flock;
Peter and Andrew were busy fishing;
Saul was busy persecuting the church;
Moses was busy with his flocks in Horeb;
Nehemiah was busy carrying the King's cup;
James and John were busy preparing to fish;
King Saul was busy searching for lost beasts.

LET US ALL GET BUSY! MAYBE THE LORD CAN USE US!

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Bro. Melling.—I should like to quote the following in support of Bro. Kendrick's argument that God (the Father) offered up the Son on the cross.

(a) Rom. 8:32: "He that SPARED NOT His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" i.e. if God was prepared to SACRIFICE Him for us, he is

prepared to give us abundantly more besides. An "offering" is a sacrifice.

(b) Romans 8:3: "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (margin: 'and as a SACRIFICE FOR SIN'), condemned sin in the flesh."

(c) Hebrews 9:25: "Nor yet that he should offer himself often . . . but now in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And . . . so Christ was once OFFERED to bear the sins of many." This chapter deals with the sacrifices of the Old Covenant as types of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and emphasises that ". . . without the shedding of blood there is no remission . . . so Christ was offered. . . ." But did MAN offer up Christ FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS or did God the Father offer him up for that purpose? And where else was the blood of Christ shed for remission, if it was not on the cross?

Forasmuch then, as Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, it is evident that God foreknew, and intended, and DID offer up his Son on Calvary for the sins of the world.

Peter presented BOTH sides of the question to those Jews on the day of Pentecost, and they recognised and accepted the truth of his words in true repentance. Man stands condemned in the crucifixion (both then and now) in that his motives are corrupt; but God is justified in the same act, because His motives are unimpeachable. "For God so LOVED . . . that He gave . . ."

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, etc. (September "S.S."). The promise of God with regard to his people of the New Covenant is that he would dwell in them, and walk in them (2 Cor. 6:16). I have long believed, and still believe, that the indwelling of God the Father and God the Son, is in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's discourse in John 14 shows that he has gone to prepare a place for his own. Peter teaches that he is personally in heaven today (Acts 2:34), and that he is at the right hand of God in heaven. So the Father and the Son are both in heaven IN PERSON. But when he left this earth, Jesus said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter (in his absence) that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth . . . for he dwelleth with you, and SHALL BE IN YOU. . . . These things have I spoken unto you, being YET PRESENT with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father WILL SEND in my name . . ." Every word of this discourse speaks of the Lord's departure and personal absence from his disciples, while he is to be present with the Father in person in heaven.

Paul stresses that, "... your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19) and the Holy Spirit is here IN PERSON). But he avers also that "Ye are the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16 etc. and God the Father and the Son are not here in person) I therefore conclude that the Father and the Son indwell the Christian IN THE PERSON of the Holy Spirit. If not, then Bro. G. N. Woods has still to explain how God indwells the Christian in the same manner that the Holy Spirit does.

JOHN M. WOOD

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Buckie.—During September, Bro. David Dougall laboured with the church. We have all been encouraged by our brother's exhortations and proclaiming of the gospel. Our meetings were well attended. Bro. David worked hard in visitation. We are confident that the faithful sowing of the seed will bring ultimate harvest. We pray that God will richly bless our brother in his labours.

Instead of the brethren, coming from Peterhead for our last meeting, we travelled there to have fellowship with them and to hear Bro. Tom Nisbet preach the gospel.

We take this opportunity of thanking the brethren who visited us during the summer. It does our hearts good to see brethren from so far south coming and having fellowship with us.

Continue to pray for the church in the north.

John Geddes

Loughborough.—Owing to the sudden death of his father-in-law in the U.S.A., Brother V. Hunter was unable to be with us for our mission, September 17th-25th. We commend Sister Hunter and all who mourn to the blessing of God.

At very short notice Brother A. E. Winstanley and Bro. C. P. Slate (Wembley) took over the preaching. Bro. Winstanley spoke on the 17th and 18th and Bro. Slate on the 20th, 22nd, 24th and 25th. We were encouraged by the support of brethren from other churches in the midlands, and also by the presence of a good number of friends. We thank God for the faithful preaching of his word, and pray it may bring results in spiritual growth among God's people here, and in the salvation of others.

On Saturday, September 24th we held the anniversary meeting, and were greatly encouraged by the presence of many brethren from places as far apart as Brighton and Kirkcaldy. Alan Ashurst gave an exhortation on "Go

home and tell thy friends what great things the Lord hath done for thee." Philip Slate spoke on "Living among the tombs." Both addresses were much appreciated. The meetinghouse was full to capacity.

Brethren, pray for us.

Tom Stones

Morley.—The church was helped and encouraged by brethren and friends on the occasion of the Autumn rally held October 1st and 2nd. The speaker was Bro. Andrew Gardiner, and chairman Bro. Harold Baines.

On Saturday about 80 brethren sat down to tea, followed in the evening by an address by Bro. Gardiner (to about 120 brethren and friends) using as his text 1 Pet. 2:9.

On the Lord's Day Bro. Gardiner once again served us at the Breaking of Bread service, taking as his subject "Authority."

At the gospel service on Lord's Day evening our brother spoke mightily asking the question. Who cares for my soul?

We greatly appreciate the help and encouragement of Bro. Baines and Bro. Gardiner and pray that the Lord will bless the seed sown in due course.

M. Grant

Newtongrange.—The church held its annual social meeting on Saturday, October 8th, Bro. James Morris, presiding, gave a warm welcome to the many churches represented and to the many friends who came in to spend the evening with us.

In all there would be 170 present and our speaking brethren, Alf Marsden (Wigan) and E. Jess (Dalmellington) gave messages which left us in no doubt as to our position and what we ought to do as regards our work for the Lord and our witness for Christ as a church.

Bro. Marsden also served the church on Lord's Day, October 9th, when we were really inspired by the addresses he delivered. We do thank him for his labours among us.

The choir pieces by the churches were much appreciated, as were also the solos and part-singing pieces. Bro. W. Wardrop (Motherwell), expressed the company's thanks for a night of scriptural blessings and mountain-top experiences.

W. H. Allan

Tranent.—The church here has had cause for rejoicing again in witnessing the power of the gospel. Foster Bell (son of Sister Ella Bell) confessed Jesus as his Saviour and was immersed on Lord's Day, October 2nd.

Our prayer is that he will remain faithful and, with God's help, be the means of proclaiming to others the word of truth.

COMING EVENTS

Dear Editor and Brethren,—May I first of all thank those of you who have contributed, and still are contributing, towards the forthcoming campaign in Hucknall, the result of which will, we pray, establish a new meeting of the Lord's people. The campaign is being held from November 12th-20th and conducted by Bro. Philip Slate, in the Hucknall Co-operative Hall, Market Place, Hucknall, Notts.

Meetings are as follows: —

Saturday, November 12th—Gospel Meeting 7.30.

Sunday, November 13th—Breaking of Bread 10.45 a.m.; Gospel Meeting 6.0 p.m.

Monday, November 14th — Gospel Meeting 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 15th. Film and Discussion 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 16th. Gospel Meeting 7.30 p.m.

Thursday, November 17th—Gospel Meeting 7.30 p.m.

Friday, November 18th — Gospel Meeting 7.30 p.m.

Saturday, November 19th—Film and Discussion 7.30 p.m.

Sunday, November 20th—As the 13th.

Your support and prayers are most important. Geoffrey Sheldon, 66 Beardall, Hucknall, Notts.

—♦—

BIRTH

To Bro. and Sis. David Barlow, on October 5th, a daughter, Caroline.

TOO LATE!

"Too late!" The word rings down the sky,
And sounds like thunder from on high;
Then dies away a whispering sigh—
"Too late! Too late!"

The Day God's Son to earth comes down,
These words will ring the world around,
The saddest words in language found—
"Too late! Too late!"

The Heavens will blaze with glory bright,
Men gaze with awe upon the sight,
And realise God's Word is right;
They are—Too late.

My friend, that day is very near,
Will you be filled with great good cheer,
Or will your heart be filled with fear—
Because—Too late?

This is the time for you to choose,
What you would gain—what you would
lose
While you have time, Oh! stop and
muse—
In time?—Too late?

This is the issue you must face:
Be lost, or saved through saving grace;
Now it the day to join the race—
Or be—too late.

E. M. Blundell, Hereford, July 1957.

"If ye keep my commandments ye shall
abide in my love."
(John 15, 10)

TO abide means two things—"faith" and
"obedience." And so, having trusted in
God I pray: "This day I want to abide
in Thee, that the fruit of the Spirit may
be brought forth in my life." I trust
Thee for everything that I need and, by
Thy grace, I will obey Thee in all that
thou dost prompt me to do. That is
abiding! John L. Bird.

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