

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 39. No. 12

DECEMBER, 1972

THE BIBLE AND THE MODERN WORLD

IV: THE COLOUR PROBLEM (2)

AT THE close of Part 1 of our study of the Colour Problem (November S.S.) it was stated that we had not in that contribution pointed out the teaching of scripture upon the subject. This we now turn to in this second part, remembering that the title of this series of articles is "The BIBLE and the Modern World".

Throughout the Bible people are treated as *persons, individuals*, not as groups, nations, multitudes. We shall try to demonstrate that the God of the Bible is He to whom every separate man or woman is precious, and that His Son Jesus Christ lived, died and was raised from death for each separate sinner — "He loved *me* and gave himself for *me*" (Gal. 2:20). In God's sight there is no distinction of *any kind*: "There is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22-23; compare Rom. 10:12). The Christian's attitude to this colour question should, as in all matters, be the attitude of God. People of other races should be treated as *people, persons*, whatever their characteristics, whatever the colour of their skin. The rights and privileges enjoyed by one should be enjoyed by all, without any feelings of condescension towards them, as though *we* are bestowing upon *them* favours out of our benevolence and to which they are not due.

In the "Declaration of Independence" of the United States one of the first great truths enunciated is that "all men are treated equal, and they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and Happiness". In spite of the cynic's statement that "Some men are more equal than others", this is a noble sentiment. True, it has often been violated in practice, but the truth remains that men are equal in the sight of their Creator. This is a *biblical* truth.

In the Old Testament

The Hebrews, Israel, the Jews, are shown to be the kingdom of God in ancient days, the Old Covenant people of God. They were His "if you will keep my covenant,

my own possession among all peoples... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:5) and similar promises are often repeated in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Yet these people of God were not to exalt themselves above other peoples, for their calling and privileges were entirely by the grace, the favour, of God, undeserved by themselves. Moreover Peter explains these promises as being fulfilled in their fullest sense by the people of God in the New Covenant, the church, the saints, Christians. And in the great prophecies of Isaiah the prophet tells of the day that is coming when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established... and all nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come... for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (2:2-3) and "the nations... that have not heard my fame or seen my glory shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the Lord" (66:18-20).

Isaiah is sometimes spoken of as the "Gospel Prophet". Nowhere in the Old Testament is the gospel of the New Covenant so clearly foreshadowed as in Isaiah's prophecies; nowhere the life, death and resurrection, the great gospel truths, so vividly portrayed, seven hundred years before their accomplishment. He demonstrates that the Jews were chosen to be God's people in order to testify of Jehovah's greater purpose to save the nations of the world through the giving of God's Son. In addition, in the O.T. are numerous references to the time when, with the coming of Jesus Christ and His gospel, all nations and peoples and tongues worship, glorify and serve the living God, when all should be included in God's love.

We have a very striking statement made by Paul in Gal. 3:8 that "God preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" — that in making His promises to the "father of the Hebrews" concerning the people who should be his descendants, God gave the patriarch the "good news of salvation" Following God's promise that He would give the land where Abraham was living to his posterity after him, God added a second promise, which constitutes what Paul designates as "the gospel": that in Abraham's seed (Jesus the Messiah, Gal. 3:16) all nations would be blessed. This promise of the Saviour is repeated many times in the O.T., for instance in Gen. 12:3 and 18:18. Such passages in the New Testament as Acts 3:25; Rom. 10:11-13; Gal. 3:8, 14,16 and Col. 3:10 all refer back to this O.T. promise as having been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the gospel.

In the New Testament

In the very first command to His apostles to go and preach his gospel Jesus tells them to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation." Immediately before His ascension the resurrected Christ told them that they should be His witnesses, beginning in Jerusalem, spreading into Judea, farther afield into Samaria and finally into all the world. There was to be no distinction of race, colour, nationality or tongue. Preaching at Athens Paul tells the philosophers that God "had made from one every nation of men to live on the face of all the earth... that they should seek God in the hope that they might feel after him and find him" (Acts 17:26).

Ephesians 2:11-16 strikingly illustrates how distinctions of colour or any other kind have been made void, broken down by the gospel. In verses 13 and 14 Paul writes: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility." "Us both" who were "made one" are Jew and Gentile. The Bible, Old Testament and New, demonstrates clearly how great was the hatred that existed between Jews and Gentiles in those times. It was

mutual: the one would have no dealings with the other; each despised the other. Business relations to some extent, for the necessary carrying on of trade and commerce, were entered into. But apart from those relationships there was no contact, especially socially and religiously. But Paul shows that not only wider relationships have been entered into, but that, through the gospel "both have become one"! It is an astounding statement. If Jew and Gentile can become one, any other union, unity and oneness are possible among any other nations.

But the statement is even more wonderful. In verse 14 Paul speaks of "the middle wall of partition" "the dividing wall of hostility" (RSV). Here he refers to the wall in the temple in Jerusalem, beyond which no one was allowed to pass unless he were a Jew. This was a low wall or balustrade: a Gentile could go in the temple precincts as far as that, but no farther. In the year 1871, during excavations on the site of the temple in Jerusalem, a pillar was unearthed which had been erected upon this "dividing wall". It was inscribed with a Greek inscription in these words: **NOMAN OF ANOTHER NATION TO ENTER WITHIN THE FENCE AND ENCLOSURE ROUND THE TEMPLE, AND WHOEVER IS CAUGHT WILL HAVE HIMSELF TO BLAME THAT HIS DEATH ENSUES.**

The temple was destroyed in the year 70 A.D. Not one stone was left upon another. Paul wrote his epistle to the Ephesians about the year 60, ten years before that "middle wall" was broken down. Yet he affirms that it had already been broken down by the gospel — love and liberty for all, of whatever nation or colour, so that he could write to the Galatians (3:27-28) "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek...slave nor free...male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Man's true place in God's sight

The great missionary Robert Moffat tells in his book *Missionary Labours and Scenes in South Africa* (1842) of being asked to preach to the family and household of a Boer (Dutch) farmer. The farmer had many slaves, and Moffat asked that they too be invited to hear the gospel. The farmer refused, explaining that his slaves were no better than dogs. Moffat went on with the service, and during it he read from the gospels the account of the Syrophenician woman begging Jesus to heal her daughter, who was demon-possessed. "And he said to her 'Let the children first be fed: it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs.' But she answered him 'Yes, Lord; but even the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table.'" The farmer stopped Moffat and called in some of his slaves to hear the gospel.

The issue of colour bar, or any other bar to a man's becoming what God intends him to be through the gospel, is settled once for all in the word of God. Peter had to break down many prejudices, do many things which were unpleasant, even revolting to him as a Jew, when he preached the word of the Lord to Cornelius, the Roman officer, the Gentile. In showing how God had opened his eyes, and in explaining why he was doing something which would have outraged his whole nature had he not been a Christian, he says: "God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him... You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with... any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any one common or unclean. 'When Peter is called to account for his breaking down of tradition, convention and custom, he explains to the Christians in Jerusalem: that, seeing that God had demonstrated that those who had been "dogs" and outside of God's love, according to the Jews, were accepted by God and made His people, "Who was I that I could withstand God?" And if God right through His word has shown that "all are precious in His sight" who are we to deny His God-given liberties and blessings to any?

John Oxenham, the Manchester novelist and poet, perfectly sums up the equality and oneness of all men in the sight of God, in his great hymn:

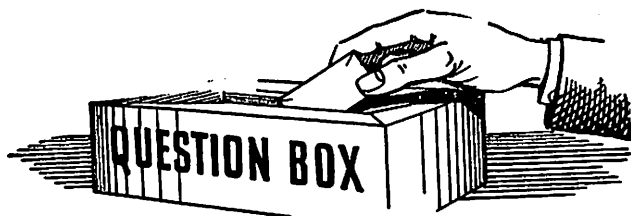
In Christ there is no East or West,
 In Him no South or North,
 But one great fellowship of love
 Throughout the whole wide earth.
 In Him shall true hearts everywhere
 Their high communion find:
 His service is the golden cord
 Close-binding all mankind.

Join hands, then, brothers of the faith,
 Whate'er your race may be!
 Who serves my Father as a son
 Is surely kin to me.
 In Christ now meet both East and West,
 In Him meet South and North:
 All Christly souls are one in Him
 Throughout the whole wide earth.

(John Oxenham, 1852-1941)

NEXT MONTH: HOME AND FAMILY

EDITOR



Conducted by
 James Gardiner

“In Mark 4:12 Jesus gives the reason why He spoke in parables. Could you please comment on this verse.”

THE questioner is referring to the time when the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables, and the answer is contained in verses 11 and 12: “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them”.

To most of us, at first reading the Lord’s answer is very perplexing, for it seems that He is saying that He spoke in parables so that some would find the kingdom of God and that most would not. Most of us think that Jesus spoke in parables in order to make the message simple to understand, and so it comes as a surprise to us to hear it suggested that parables were used to wrap the message in mystery: some would be able to decode it, and some would not. On the face of it this would seem to be the position in Mark 4:11-12. But is this really so?

This incident is dealt with not only by Mark but also by Matthew and Luke (Matt. 13 and Luke 8) and I suggest a study of all three accounts. Indeed, I suggest that Matthew 13 provides a more comprehensive account of this conversation between Jesus and His disciples on the parables.

Teaching by parables

With a few exceptions, especially in John’s gospel, the word “parable” is

simply the English word in Greek letters, and it comes from a verb which means "to throw or place side by side for purposes of comparison". It is used by the sacred writers both in a wider and a narrower sense: in the wider sense to mean an adage, a proverb, a dark saying, or sometimes to describe a lesson which is confirmed by a simile drawn from nature. In the narrower sense it is the name given to a connected narrative, whether of events in human life, or in the process of nature itself, by which some great spiritual truth is illustrated or enforced. The little girl in Sunday School wasn't very far wrong when she said a parable is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning". Parables, of course, are to be found in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Jesus is not the only one in the Bible to speak in parables, but of course He used many and, as parables, His are incapable of being surpassed.

What were the advantages of speaking in parables? First of all they were invaluable in attracting attention — in Jesus' case He constantly had to address multitudes. Jesus spoke beautiful parables and people flocked to hear them. Nothing can be more difficult than inventing a suitable parable. Let anyone try it and he will see how difficult it is! We take Christ's parables for granted, for we have read them so often. Yet at the same time they are ever new and we constantly discover new beauties in them. The Lord's choice of the simple plot and the things of everyday life in His parables, was probably why "the common people heard Him gladly". The sower going forth to sow; the fisherman casting his net into the lake; the woman kneading her dough, or sweeping her house for the lost coin; the shepherd going after his lost sheep; the father and his long-lost son; the marriage procession; the hiring of labourers in the market place — all daily events or circumstances of life to which the people, rich or poor, could respond, and to whom these subjects had a ready appeal.

Parables also made a deeper impression on the mind and memory than any simple, bald statement of fact. "Who is my neighbour?" was a question which could have been answered by a few words yet Jesus spoke the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' which, I am sure, would never be forgotten by the questioner. The parable of the 'Good Samaritan' still has the same powerful effect. No one today asks, "Who is my neighbour?"

Reception by the Hearer

Yet other reasons why Jesus spoke in parables was to forestall violence against Him and to prevent his hearers from being too soon repelled by too sudden a revelation, either of His purpose or of His message. By and large the audiences to whom Jesus spoke were hostile to His message and intentions. His hearers were largely prejudiced against the truth and this "new" conception of the kingdom of God, and so Jesus spoke in parables to disarm their antagonism. This is not to say that Jesus was sheltering behind confusion caused by himself by making the message so vague by parabolic utterance that his hearers did not know that He was reproving them. Indeed, Jesus did not hesitate to call His enemies "Blind leaders of the blind", "vipers", "hypocrites", "whited sepulchres" and so on. Now however by His parabolic form of teaching He was placing a time-fuse alongside truth. By a process of *delayed action* truth now *filtered* through to the minds of the hearers of the parables, depending upon how perceptive and spiritually minded they might be. They were less likely to reject the message without properly hearing it; and less likely to do violence to the bearer of the news that they were hypocrites, if they were not told it in one word, but became gradually convinced of it by reflection upon a story they had been told. No one could take exception to the beautiful story, but men with bad consciences would soon perceive that Christ spoke the parable against them.

Nathan did the same thing to David (2 Sam. 12:1-7) in accusing him of great iniquity. Had the prophet gone in to the Psalmist and directly and immediately denounced him and pronounced sentence upon him, it is questionable if David would have listened to him, and it is almost certain that Nathan would have provoked David to anger rather than have led him to repentance. But Nathan, by telling the touching parable of the ewe lamb, awoke the better nature of king David, and when, after David had given his judgement in a burst of honest indignation, Nathan turned and quietly said, "Thou art the man" the effect was tremendous. Any anger or resentment David might have shown was completely defused and all he could humbly say was, "I have sinned" — words which struck the theme of the 51st Psalm and which began a lasting penitence of pure sincerity. Unhappily penitence was not produced in everyone who heard our Lord's parables and (in Matt. 22:33-36) in the parable of the wicked husbandmen, the chief priests and Pharisees at the end (but not till then) perceived that He had spoken of them. They sought to lay their hands on Him, but were prevented by fear of the multitude. However, He obtained his objective, for He had so held up the mirror before them that they recognised themselves and were *self-condemned*.

"Take heed how you hear"

This brings us to the reason Jesus gives of why He was at this time employing parables. It was *to test the character* of his hearers. A new value had been set on truth by making men take pains to find it. We lightly value what we lightly get. In parables Jesus does not so much teach us as to get us to *apply* the lesson, and thus teach ourselves. The parabolic form of teaching attracts only the thoughtful and spiritually discerning — those who have ears prepared to hear and eyes disposed to see: "There are none so blind as those who will not see." The parables thus both *attracted* and *sifted* the crowds.

To the eager childlike heart the parable was a challenge and an opportunity. To him that hath (such a mind) would be given. To the self-satisfied, proud and indifferent the parable was stupid and passed unheeded.

We notice from all three gospel records of this incident that Jesus, after relating the parable of the sower, said, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear". It was an *open invitation to all* to reflect upon the parable and learn. It was not a question of only the disciples being able (by some process of predestination) to understand and the rest unable. *All* were able to understand if they wanted to. The parables are easy for us to understand because we know the solution, but it would be difficult for the original hearers. Indeed *the twelve* rarely understood the parables. In Mark 4:13 Jesus chided the disciples for not being able to comprehend the parable of the sower and said, in effect, "If you cannot understand this one how will you understand the others?"

Having given the invitation to *all* to hear His parables Jesus points out that He spoke in parables so that the message would be more clear to those keen to learn and more veiled and mysterious to those who had closed their ears and eyes to the truth. *Mark's* account leaves us with the impression that *God is concealing* the truth from "those without" and thus preventing them from being "converted". This is a false impression for, in Matthew's gospel, we are told that the people have closed their ears and their eyes, lest God should heal them (v. 15). Their condition was similar to that of the people in Isaiah's day (Matt. 13:14). "Their heart had waxed gross (fat) their ears were dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see and hear and be converted." *God* was willing, but they were not. Many people today are in a similar condition — they don't want to know. Jesus says that *by thus speaking in parables*, those keen to learn receive wonderful lessons, and those not keen to learn receive nothing at all. The parable was

designed to have such an effect, To the eager the truth is revealed; to the indifferent the truth is concealed — all done by the parabolic form of teaching.

The desire to learn

It was the habit, after Jesus had related a parable, for those keen to learn its meaning to remain behind after the throng had dispersed (like the extra-keen student after a college lecture) to question Jesus. These were *not just the twelve* (see Mark 4:10). *To all such* Jesus imparted the great spiritual lessons concealed in the parables. Those who did not enquire went home in ignorance (although further opportunities to ask were no doubt given). Those who *never* enquired died in ignorance. Thus mention is made of the principle (of God's) that to him who has shall be given, and from him who has not is taken away even that which he has.

In the closing verses of the discourse (Matt. 13:17) Jesus points out how privileged the twelve and the others were in hearing these things: not so much because they were privileged people but because they lived in the privileged age of the New Testament. May we feel equally acutely the privilege conferred upon us, in being able to share with them those things which prophets, kings and righteous men of bygone ages have desired to see and were not able.

(Questions please to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

DECEMBER 1972

3-1 Samuel 21	Mark 2:23 to 3:12
10-Isaiah 55	Mark 3:13-35
17-Jeremiah 5:20-30	Mark 4:1-25
24-Jonah 1	Mark 4:26-41
31-1 Samuel 16:10-23	Mark 5:1-20

"BESIDE HIMSELF"

WE do not know how long the "friends" of Jesus had this opinion about Him. It seems clear that we must include among them His mother and his brethren. They must have been deeply concerned for his welfare, and thought they could help by taking him away from the crowds, for a time at least. They were sure that he would wear himself out with the constant strain of attending to the sick and preaching and teaching the people. We know that his brothers did not believe in him, and had the temerity to criticise his methods, and make suggestions for his benefit (John 7:6). How glad we are to read in Acts 1:14 that their unbelief was subsequently overcome. They did not have closed minds.

The extent of His fame is indicated in 3:7 & 8. From Idumaea in the south to Tyre and Sidon in the north, people flocked to see Him, to hear Him and to benefit by His miraculous powers. Our month's readings continue the record of His almost overwhelming activity. Twice we read He used a boat to save Him from being thronged (3:9 and 4:1) and this would be an ideal platform to get maximum hearing. He had to move out to a "desert" place to pray in the very early morning (1:35), and to the fact that "All men seek for Thee" (1:37) He replied "Let us go elsewhere". The testimony of those He healed made it that "He could no more openly enter into the city" (1:45). Nevertheless "He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee" (1:39).

Familiar as we are with the gospel narrative, it is hard for us to realise the tremendous public reaction produced by His personality and works. The work of John the Baptist had stirred the people's messianic hopes, and some of them, in particular those He called and chose to follow Him, were ready to accept Him as their leader. The impact of His teaching, preaching and healing brought the common people out in their thousands to listen and to acclaim Him a messenger of God,

if not the Christ Himself. Their attitude is described, "they were all amazed, and glorified God" (2:12). In fact we could truly say they loved Him, they respected him, and wanted Him to stay with them. His appearance anywhere brought the crowds around Him.

We know that the heart of Jesus overflowed with love, especially perhaps for those in difficult circumstances, and His course of action was deliberate. He came to seek and to save the lost: this brought Him inevitably into conflict with those who were selfish and did not care for others. There were those among the religious leaders who were genuine — witness Simeon, Anna, Zachariah and Elizabeth, but the majority of the Scribes and Pharisees, outwardly so devout, were "formalists". They observed the ritual,

but did not practise spiritual obligations it laid upon them. The law of Moses demanded kindness, even to strangers. The sacrifices, the tithing, the washings were to go side by side with doing good. The very sad thing was that "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (7:6). Thus the absolute honesty of purpose manifested fully in the life and work of Jesus only excited their enmity and opposition. They actually entered the synagogue to worship, but their object was to find fault with Jesus. No wonder that He that knew no sin "looked round about on them with anger" (3:5). He was "beside himself" in no wrong sense — "the zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17). His motives were utterly pure: oh, that ours could be.

Being quite unable to deny or minimize His power over the demons they dared to attempt to discredit Jesus and deceive the people with the suggestion that He was using satanic power to relieve the victims of Satan so wonderfully. Both the demons themselves and the obvious blessings resulting to sufferers made the suggestion ridiculous, and this brought the most terrible statement of Jesus — a sin which cannot have forgiveness (3:29).

These enemies should have been struck with shame when Jesus rebuked them in the synagogue for their hardness of heart over healing on the sabbath, but instead it drove them to combine with their political enemies in plots to murder Him. History unfortunately records too many cases of the same kind. Jesus warned His disciples that "whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). The friends of Jesus no doubt knew that He was endangering His life by continuing His wonderful works — and He was. Even Pilate knew "that for envy they had delivered Him up". BUT THIS COULD NOT DEFLECT HIM FROM HIS PURPOSE.

R.B. SCOTT

NOVEMBER "S.S."

WE sincerely regret the delay in circulating November issue of "S.S.". This was due to a misunderstanding between the editor (whose fault it was) and the printer. Our warmest thanks go to Mr. K. Barker, the printer for his and his staff's help and co-operation in this matter, and to all our agents who responded so promptly.

EDITOR.

A NEW TRACT

WE have just received a copy of a tract entitled "What the artist left out". On the front page is a coloured reproduction of Holman Hunt's famous painting "The Light of the World", which depicts Jesus knocking on a door overgrown with weeds, "What the artist left out" was the latch, so that the door could be opened only from within.

The tract has 4 pages, is beautifully produced and well written with its appealing message.

It is prepared by the church in Haddington, East Lothian, and is warmly recommended for distribution. It is priced at £7 per 1,000 copies, and quantities are obtainable from: Jack Nisbet, 1 CAPONFLAT CRESCENT, HADDINGTON, EAST LOTHIAN.

"GREAT DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE"

HEBREWS 6:1-3 (R.V.): "Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ and press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement. And this will we do, if God permit."

The writer to the Hebrews does not suggest that "the first principles are to be forgotten, or altered, or are diminished in importance, but rather that, having learned these things, there is something more for the child of God to learn, master and understand." Thus he says, "Press on unto perfection."

We shall endeavour to follow this exhortation during 1973, and seek under the above heading, to publish a series of monthly articles by different writers.

Subjects envisaged are:—

1. The Omnipotence, Omnipresence and Omniscience of God
2. The Providence of God
3. The Grace of God
4. The Mercy of God
5. The Humility of God
6. The Forgiveness of God
7. Redemption
8. Salvation
9. Justification
10. Sanctification
11. The Judgement of God
12. Eternity

"And this will we do, if God permit!"
PAUL JONES

READING CARDS FOR 1973

THE list of suggested Scripture readings has again been compiled by Bro. R.B. Scott. These will be ready for distribution shortly. Church secretaries and others desiring them please order from S.S. Distributing Agent: CHARLES GRANT, 45 KIRKWOOD AVENUE, REDDING, FALKIRK, EAST STIRLINGSHIRE: Price 1p each card, postage extra.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

WE are often impressed by hearing over the radio or reading in books statements about the New Testament church which are absolutely true and depict the purity and simplicity of the church in the beginning. These truths are uttered by speakers from many denominations, but they confirm the plea that churches of Christ have been advancing for some 150 years — the plea for N.T. Christianity. Indeed some of the things said by these writers or speakers are quite as forceful as we would make them.

During the week October 2nd to 6th Dr. Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, was giving the series of talks in Thought for Today, and dealing with the subject The Church of Christ. In his series he stated these three great truths of the N.T. church:—

- (1) That converts to Jesus Christ were "plunged beneath the water";
- (2) That "the church was the people";
- (3) That "all Christians were called saints".

All these are among the simple truths of the N.T. church. We are grateful that they are still brought before us. But how infinitely better it would be if the religious bodies from which these writers or speakers come would themselves return to the simplicity of the teaching and practices of that original church.

O God, grant that we may work and pray for that day, and that it may yet come!

EDUCATION

IF education goes wrong what is likely to go right? If the battle of civilisation is lost in the schoolroom, who will win it back afterwards? If the whole community is set wrong in its thinking at school, what chance has the preacher of setting it right from the pulpit? To begin by starting the community on the wrong road in the plastic period and then, when it grows up, to send out the parson and the policeman to bring it back — what a fool's paradise could compare to that?

L.P. Jacks

CUSTOM & COMMAND

WITH some religionists custom and tradition have more weight than the plain word of God. Assail baptism, something positively commanded, and they will applaud. Assail their unscriptural teaching and practices and they become greatly offended-

R.L. Whiteside

TO AGENTS AND SUBSCRIBERS

OUR warmest thanks are extended for your help and support during 1972. You have ensured that the S.S. has come through another testing and harassing year. We ask for this continued help through 1973, God willing.

This you can give by:

- (1) Paying your subscriptions early, before the end of this year, if possible: such subscriptions will be used for paying NEXT YEAR'S BILLS;
- (2) Agents being diligent in collecting subscriptions and in trying to obtain **additional readers**; and by prompt distribution of the paper to your subscribers.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Haddington, East Lothian: We are very pleased to report that Linda Brunton was baptised into Christ on 11th October 1972 in the meeting-place of the church in Tranent. Linda is a sixth year pupil in the local secondary school, and we are glad that she has decided to "remember, now, her Creator in the days of her youth". It is our prayer that, by studious application to the word of God and steadfastness in her newfound faith, she may long be spared "to serve God acceptably, with reverence and Godly fear". We are grateful to the brethren in Tranent for the use of their meeting-place.

J. NISBET

Kentish Town: By the kindness of the Slamannan District and the church at Slamannan in particular, the church here

enjoyed and profited by the services of Brother Paul Jones from 7th to 25th Oct., with additional meetings and better attendances. Several who need to make decision heard his plain messages and we hope may still be brought to know the Lord.

Slamannan District: A social gathering was held in the Slamannan Church's meeting-place on Saturday 28th October, to mark the retiral of Bro. David Dougall, Evangelist in the Slamannan District Churches from 1st January 1952 until the end of July 1972.

At this social gathering a cheque was presented to Bro. & Sis. Dougall as a token of respect, and in appreciation of the service they had rendered to the Churches during these twenty years.

Well over a hundred attended and words of appreciation were expressed by a delegate from each church in the District, also by Bro. Paul Jones, our present Evangelist. Bro. Dougall made a suitable reply on behalf of himself and Sis. Dougall.

Part of the evening was spent listening to the singing of various solos, a duet, quartettes and choir pieces.

Tea was served, provided by the Slamannan Sisters, helped by Sisters from the other churches, and was much enjoyed. We thank all for their help, and the Slamannan church for housing this occasion.

We again take this opportunity to wish both Bro. & Sis. Dougall a Happy Retirement. Should Bro. David continue to preach, we would also wish him every success in his continued preaching of God's word, to the saving of others.

May God continue to richly bless them both in the days that may lie ahead.

HUGH DAVIDSON, District Secretary

(We take this opportunity of expressing our own best wishes, and we feel sure those of all readers of the S.S. to Bro. Dougall in his retirement. Many of us have experienced and enjoyed his faithful service in teaching the Word and preaching

the gospel among us. We have enjoyed, too, his warm and happy fellowship and friendship.

With our good wishes we include David's wife. The lot of the wife of a travelling evangelist is often one of some hardship and discomfort and sacrifice. By. Sis. Dougall these discomforts have been gladly undertaken for the sake of Christ, of the churches and of her husband. "Servants of Christ, well done!" Only in eternity will the full results be shown of "your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in the Lord!"

EDITOR)

Woodstock (Cape Town): During a series of meetings from 6th to 10th September, conducted by Bro. T.W. Hartle, three—two men and a woman— were baptized. Thanks for support are extended to the local congregations of BONTEHEUWEL, BOKMAKIRRIE and STEENBERG.

OBITUARY

Bedminster, Bristol: It is with sorrow that we record another loss to the church—our Sis. Allan.

It was late in life that she learned the way of the Lord more perfectly, being baptized only six years ago at the age of seventy-seven, and remaining faithful to the end. It was her great joy to meet with her brethren, this being made possible by the kindness of brethren, who fetched her. Bro. J. Casey conducted the funeral service. L.D.

Ilkeston, Gladstone School: The church here has sorrow in reporting the loss of a dear sister — Ellen Booth who passed away on October 15th at Derby City Hospital, aged 67 years and was interred in the Park cemetery, Bro. A. E. Winstanley (Loughborough) officiating.

Sister Booth had been ill for many years, but whenever possible she attended every meeting, and the Lords table. She

was known affectionately to all as "auntie Nellie and her presence will be greatly missed at this congregation in Ilkeston. We commend her family to the Lord, and pray that these few words will give comfort and hope: "Blessed are they which die in the Lord, for they find rest from their labours," and "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

A. GREGORY

Tranent: With feelings of deepest sorrow we report that the church has been called upon to part with an aged and honoured member, Sister Porteous. She passed peacefully to her rest on October 28th, 1972 at the residence of her daughter, Jenny Haswell, who, herself, is a sister in Christ and does not enjoy the best of health.

Sister Porteous was 85 and had been a faithful member for over 50 years. Our late sister was always present at the Lord's table until health began to fail her a few years ago. She was visited regularly on Sunday evenings after the gospel meetings, and then she would join in singing praises to God and the word was read and expounded to her. She was not afraid to meet her Lord.

Her passing was sudden; only the previous Sunday evening she was singing with us, and one of the hymns was:—

Only in Thee, O Saviour mine,
Dwelleth my soul in peace divine.

We commend her daughter to our loving heavenly Father, and trust that he may give her strength to bear the parting, through His word:

The best relief that mourners have,
It makes our sorrows blest;
Tells of our hope beyond the grave,
And our eternal rest.

COMING EVENTS

Slamannan District: The Annual New Year Social gathering of the churches will be held (D.V.) in the Slamannan Church Meeting Place on Monday 1st January 1973 at 12 noon.

HUGH DAVIDSON District Secretary.

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ARTICLES AND OTHER LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS are welcomed by the Editor.

NEWS ITEMS, REPORTS OF CHURCH ACTIVITIES and notices of COMING EVENTS are invited. The Editor is solely responsible for decisions as to the inclusion or exclusion of any such contributions forwarded for publication, whether by churches or individuals.

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