

The Scripture Standard

'What Saith the Scripture.' (Rom, iv. 3.)

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The Sin against the Holy Spirit.

'Wherefore I say unto you: All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.' (Matt: xii. 31-32).

SIN is a terrible thing. I think Bro. M'Garvey, of consecrated memory, once remarked that he would appreciate above all the gift to convey to men an adequate conception of what sin is. I have an idea that we do not think how exceedingly evil sin is or we should wish to be made free from it. God cannot look upon sin. In His great heart of tenderness, while He loves man, He hates sin. To live in sin with the possibility of being forgiven is a terrible thing. The one thing we all need is 'redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins.' We know sin to be taken out of the way, but unless we have *our* sins taken out of the way, we shall never see God's face. People live day after day, week after week, year after year in sin, *i.e.*, while they know that God is displeased with it. They should realize that He holds the brittle thread of their existence. But to commit a sin that has no forgiveness, either in this world or in that which is to come, who can measure the helplessness and hopelessness of that? Jesus spoke of such a sin, and to-night we shall try

to learn what is that sin. I shall put before you two questions to be answered: What was that sin against the Holy Spirit, of which the Saviour spoke? Can we commit that sin now? We want to know, and it is important that we should know. Much confusion exists in the public mind over these questions and many are deeply troubled about them, because they fear they may have committed this sin, and are consequently, hopelessly lost.

Some years ago a young man gave his heart to the Lord. He confessed the Saviour and put Him on in accordance with His appointment and for a time he ran well. He was a nice boy. Finally he moved away from the Church and from Church associations into a part of the country where there were not many Church privileges, and got swept off his feet. Like many others he let go his hold upon Christ and in a large measure his faith in the Gospel. After living like that for some time, he was brought to himself, began to realize his position and how unfaithful he had been. During a protracted meeting with much excitement and preaching about the sin against the Holy Spirit, he reached the conclusion that he had committed it. He could not sleep, and the thought of it almost drove him crazy. He wrote to me, and unbosomed his very soul. He told me he feared he would lose his mind.

The thought that we have committed a sin that 'hath no forgiveness' is enough to set anyone crazy. I want,

therefore, to clear up and remove the mysticism that has been thrown around this subject. In almost every modern revival meeting the preacher talks on the unpardonable sin. He does that after the emotional feelings are wrought up near the close of the meetings, and leaves the impression that unless they are moved they will sin the sin that hath no forgiveness. Many times it has the effect of moving the people, because they are scared. But people who are scared into becoming Christians do not amount to much, unless you keep them scared all the time. The man who comes to Christ in that way is not the best kind. You cannot trust him. We should come because the love of God constrains us, not because we are afraid.

So the popular teaching of the sin against the Holy Spirit is that, if we refuse to yield when that Spirit moves in direct impact with our spirit, then that unpardonable sin is committed.

I have been in a meeting in which the preacher said his hearers had committed this sin, and yet at the close he asked them to come and get saved. That is not logical at all.

Let us then examine this lesson. Jesus had performed a miracle. I understand the sin against the Holy Spirit to be a specific sin, a particular sin, a sin that belongs to the age of miracles and which was committed in the presence of miracles. Jesus had cast a demon out of a man who was blind and dumb. The blind man saw; the dumb spoke. The Pharisees were there, and they followed the Saviour about to find something to charge against him. They made that their business. They knew that Jesus had cast a demon out of the man. They were Jews and knew that no man could perform a miracle unless the power of God was with him. They were forced to admit the fact, but they said 'He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.' This sin was speaking against the Holy Spirit. It was a sin of the tongue rather than a sin of the thoughts. If these men had said and

expressed with their tongue what they believed in their hearts they would not have committed this sin. These men said with the tongue what they knew in their hearts was wrong. In speaking as they did they went against their own senses and denied their own eyes and ears, and gave the honour to the Devil rather than to the Man of Nazareth. That being so, no man can now commit that sin, and you need not worry yourself about the matter. It is a sin that cannot be committed now. The circumstances are altered; the conditions changed. No miracles are performed before us now. But you say, what about the infidels and sceptics who deny the miracle-working power of Jesus? That is altogether a different matter. Many sceptical men are thoroughly sincere and honest, having reached their conclusions through wrong-thinking and give expression to their own erroneous thoughts. Here, men witnessed Jesus cast out a demon, and saw the blind man see and speak. They knew this, and when they committed this sin they sealed their fate for ever. I ask if there is any other sin, once committed, one is lost for ever. You say, 'No!' So this sin is in a class by itself. It is altogether a different thing to go into sin and reach the point of infidelity.

I remember, some years ago, I was trying to set forth the truth on this subject and a good brother at the close of the meeting rose up and said, 'My young brother, you are not teaching the truth, and next Lord's day I am going to point out your mistake.' I said 'Very well, if I am wrong. I want to know .it.' When the time came, he got up and said, 'I think the sin against the Holy Spirit is wilful refusal to believe and accept the Spirit's testimony.' When he was through, I said, 'Brother, you are very generous and large hearted in your support of me. Now I can name eight or ten people living in this district. They know the Holy Spirit's testimony and their duty towards it. They understand it and for years have been wilfully rejecting it, and yet you

pay me to preach to those who have no chance in this world, neither in that which is to come.'

This was a sin once committed would seal their fate for ever. We can commit sin unto death, but we should never confound it with that in Matt. xii. In Heb. vi. 4 we read, 'For as touching those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.' That is a bad sin that will prove as fatal as the one under notice; but that is another sin. You will not doubt that those who had partaken of the Holy Spirit were the Lord's people. That must have been grievous sin which would make it impossible to renew them to repentance! So long as this dispensation lasts, our Father in Heaven is anxious to forgive; but you can destroy the ability to repent. So can I, and we can go into sin with our eyes wide open and continue in it till we destroy the capacity to repent. God never forgives without repentance. A man may go very grievously into sin; but so long as the disposition of sorrow for sin is in the heart, he has not reached that point. In Heb. x. 26, we read, 'If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins.' That is wilful sin with our eyes wide open.

Then we read 1 John v. 16-17: 'If any man see his brother sinning a sin riot unto death, he shall ask and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death, not concerning this do I say that he should make request.' This was written to Christians. There is a sin unto death and no more sacrifice or forgiveness for it. John says, I do not instruct you to pray for that. There is a sin not unto death.

We ask the Apostle John what he means, and the answer is: the falling into sin, an unintentional step in the way of wrong. If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive. We are poor erring creatures at best. We need a Father who is kind, merciful and ready to forgive; and need an advocate with the Father. The world can sin against the Holy Spirit, just as they can sin against God and Christ, but we should not confound this sin with that mentioned in Matt. xii.

Let us suppose a firm manufactures agricultural implements. They send out an agent who goes to the farmers, shows them the necessity for this new implement, and uses all the arguments in its favour as best he can. The farmers agree that it is just what they need, but say they can do without it. They send out a second agent. He uses all the arguments of the first, and some others of his own. The farmers say, 'We know it's all true what you say, but we do not want it.' The farmers are standing in the way of greater light. The firm sends out a third man, who uses all the arguments of the others and some more of his own. The farmers reject him also, and in doing so reject all three. • The great God sought to save the world through prophets, who were moved by the Divine Spirit, and the world rejected them. Then God sent His own peerless Son, whom the world also rejected. The Divine Father then sent the third agent, the Holy Spirit. He uses all the arguments used by those who preceded Him, with His own additional teaching, and to reject the Holy Spirit's testimony is to reject all. Sinners can resist and sin against the Holy Spirit, and it is a serious thing to be hardened to the preaching of the Gospel. The preacher repeats the words of the Holy Spirit, but the man gets a hardening process, his conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and good people who have been urged to accept the Gospel, and have refused, stand as a warning to those

who have now the opportunity of hearing the Gospel.

I remember a dear, old brother, now passed to the unseen world, who told me of Moses E. Lard holding a successful meeting. In that meeting, a man attended—an intelligent man, who was interested and moved as the preacher set forth the teaching of the Holy Spirit. One night, when the invitation was given, this young man was seen to partly rise to his feet to go forward, but sank back again in his seat. The next night, he stayed away, and the next night, he realized that he had to do his duty—or stop away. The meeting closed without that man. In after years, he was never again brought to the point of surrendering himself to Christ. When his end came, ministers in the town came to see him. He waved them away from the door. 'Don't come and pray for me,' he said. 'I know the Gospel. I knew it years ago, and didn't obey it. I am dying, and I am lost.' He trifled with the Holy Spirit's testimony. He resisted what the Spirit said about Jesus, until he became Gospel hardened.

My experience of men who have trifled with the Gospel and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and allowed the years to pass, is that the disposition to decide for Christ seldom ever comes.

It is a mistake to think that, just before we die, if we send for a preacher and just express a desire to be saved, it will be all right. We wish to be saved just because we are afraid, not because we love God. We have one instance in the sacred record of a man who desired to be saved after he died, but his desire did not help him. I believe a man can sin away the day of grace. 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' I want to read another statement, from Prov. i. 24, 'Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your

calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind.' What do these words mean? They mean that you should not trifle with the wooing and pleading of the Spirit of God. I tell you it is a mistake to think that we can make the preparation of a lifetime in the dehrim of death.

You remember that masterly address by Stephen, before the Sarihedrin. After going over the Old Testament history, of which every Jew was proud—the Rulers did not understand why he did so, till finally he rang the truth on them: 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit? Nehemiah ix. 30: 'Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by Thy Spirit in Thy prophets, yet would they not give ear.' That is the way God testified by His Spirit, through the prophets to His ancient people, and when they rejected the prophets' teaching, they rejected the Spirit of God.

Christians can grieve the Spirit of God by not living a life such as the Holy Spirit's testimony requires. We can even quench the Holy Spirit by being unfaithful and disobedient. Let us believe what the Holy Spirit says about Jesus. The Holy Spirit was to take of the things of Jesus and show them to the Apostles that they might preach how He lived, died, and was raised triumphant from the grave. We ought to believe all the Spirit says about Jesus, and do all the Holy Spirit bids us do—believe, repent, confess, be baptised into Him, and having done this, we should show forth the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance. If we do, we shall be helped by the Holy Spirit as he dwells in the believer—that Spirit of adoption and sonship—and come off more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Bible Readings.

OLD TESTAMENT.

Isa 1 1-20 . ISAAH prophesied many years before the exile in Babylon, and in this instance, puts forth a tremendous indictment against the people—rebellious children, corrupt in their dealings, yet continuing to offer sacrifices. They exhibited 'Religion's every grace, except the heart.' They had overlooked the fatherless and the widows, while the oppressed had not been helped. So bad had their conduct been that the prophet designates them as Sodom and Gomorrah. Ritualism, as ever, left the heart untouched and conduct unaffected. Yet, God would deign to reason with them, and on confession and repentance of their sins, will restore and bless. For those who persist in rebellion, a fearful retribution awaits—amply fulfilled in their experiences in Babylon.

Psalm Divine compassion and mankind's need of care and protection are here portrayed with a skill and beauty which has never been excelled. Little wonder that this wonderful psalm has made so strong an appeal to the heart of mankind everywhere. In the 'Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep,' this psalm finds ample illustration. None else can lead in such green pastures, by still water, in the paths of righteousness, or in the valley of the shadow, or give such abundant assurance of a dwelling in the House of the Lord forever—seeing He has gone to prepare a place for those sheep who hear His voice and follow Him.

Psa The writer of this psalm had no provincial tribal ideas about God. The Earth is the Lord's withall its wonders,

it was conceived and created by His power. The inhabitants of earth do not all ascend to the hill of the Lord, but only those of clean hands and pure hearts. Who is the King of Glory? 'Him whom they crucified,' as the apostle declares in I Cor. ii. 8. Despised and rejected of men, the angel choirs herald His return. Earth may have rejected but Heaven welcomes Him whom God hath highly exalted, and given a name that is above all.

Isa xlix Here is foretold the coming of the Prince of Peace, in whom alone is there hope of deliverance for Israel. this servant of God (through whom God

will be glorified) is in marked contrast to fleshly Israel. His mission is to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the remnant of Israel, yet to be a light to the Gentiles, and for salvation to the ends of the earth. (See Acts xiii. 47.) Despised of men and abhorred of the nation; yet kings and princes shall arise and worship him. The outcome is to bring blessing to Israel, whose children God will save.

NEW TESTAMENT.

Luke xv Parable should more appropriately termed, 'The parable of the elder brother.' It was spoken because the Scribes and Pharisees murmured at the Saviour on account of his receiving tax-gatherers and sinners, and eating with them. So far as the return of the erring son is concerned, a lovely picture is drawn. The attitude of hostility to the younger brother is exactly that of the Scribes and Pharisees to those who came to Jesus. This spirit is not yet dead. Many good folks—models of rectitude—look askance at those who come back in rags from the far country.

Mark x The death of Jesus was pre-determined and foretold. The Saviour knew it, and set his face to go to Jerusalem. What a contrast is here depicted—the Saviour walking alone to undergo crucifixion, with his companions trailing behind in fear. For the third time He tells them of the fate that must befall Him, but gives assurance that He will rise again. It is a marvel that His enemies should have gripped this (Matt, xxvii. 63.) while His intimate associates failed to understand. (Luke xxiv. 11.)

Only an appalling density could have impelled James and John, after such a declaration, to approach the Saviour with a request for prominence. That the ten were moved with indignation is little to their credit, for they wanted the positions for themselves, and felt that they had been forestalled. (See ch. ix. 33.) The Diotrephan spirit has blighted many a fair cause.

Matt 21 Luke is the only writer who records that prior to His entry into Jerusalem, the Saviour wept over the doomed city. In this apparently triumphant passage, the Saviour comes in accord with the prophecy (Zech. ix. 9.) 'lowly and riding on an ass.' The appeal

of the crowds shouting 'Hosanna,' infuriated the Pharisees. (Luke xix. 39.) The word means 'Save now, we pray,' it is the burden of Psalm cxviii. 25, usually sung at the Feast of Tabernacles. That such a petition should have been addressed to this hated Nazarene, was in their estimation, little short of blasphemy. Yet had they but known, He alone could have saved. Jesus had early in His career cleansed the temple. Here at the end, it was again a place of huckstering, rather than of worship.

Matt With what astonishing simplicity 28 is here recorded the most momentous occurrence in history. So unprepared were the disciples for this astounding event—though it had been foretold by the Saviour and confirmed by the angels at the tomb—that it left the Apostles gasping with fear and incredulity. Even in Galilee, where the Lord appointed to meet the disciples, some still doubted. Matthew does not mention the Ascension, which occurred, not at Galilee, but at the Mount of Olives.

The last charge to that generally despised and somewhat fearful band of disciples seemed unlikely to accomplish its purpose, but, endued with power, what pulling-down of strongholds was the result, and shall yet result to the honour and praise of our dear Redeemer.

O THOU Fount of every blessing !
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for Ecngs of loudest praise.
Teach me ever to adore Thee;
May I still Thy goc'r.ess prove;
While the hope of endless glory
Fills my heart with joy and love.

The Lord's Table.

NOTHING is more clearly taught in the New Testament than that conversion to Christ is effected by faith, repentance, and baptism. And we must not, as a Church of Christ, sanction anything short of that When we are prepared to tamper with the Living Oracles, and to sanction the tampering of others with the divine order by admitting to the Lord's Table those who have not followed the example of Christ and

the early Christians in baptism, we may then give up our distinctive plea; for having thus swerved from the ancient landmarks, we shall be ready for other innovations, and with awful momentum shall we slide down the declivity of modern usages, until we become an addition to the sects which, without us, are far too numerous.

JAMES LEAVESLEY

Open Collections.

QUERY: *At recent missions held by Churches of Christ, thank-offerings were asked for to which all, members and non-members, were asked to contribute. Is this in harmony with New Testament teaching and example?*

ANSWER. It should be well known by now that most of the American and Colonial preachers who visit Britain believe in open communion and open offerings. One of them, Dr. Rothenburger, says, 'The British practice of close communion and close offering is wholly foreign to the American Church.' So it is little wonder that open membership is common in the U.S.A., for if persons are permitted to partake of the privileges of the Church without coming in through the Divinely-appointed door, it is easy to include their names on the Church roll without their compliance with what all admit to be the Scriptural requirements.

All New Testament teaching relating to giving money is addressed to immersed believers. Human societies do not allow non-members to partake of their privileges and benefits, why then should the Divine Society be expected to do so? The Church of the New Testament, which we exist to restore and reproduce, was a self-supporting co-partnership Society. The word 'fellowship,' meaning joint-participation in giving and receiving, is sufficient to prove that. That same word is rendered 'contribution' in Romans xv. 26.

It was those who received the message and were immersed who

continued steadfastly in the fellowship. (Acts ii. 41-42). To supply the needs of poor brethren, possessors of houses and lands sold them, and distribution of the proceeds was made according to needs. (Acts iv. 34-35)-

The Churches supported preachers of the Gospel. Paul says, 'I robbed other Churches, taking wages of them to do you service.' (2 Cor. xi. 8). To the Philippians he wrote, 'No Church communicated [had fellowship] with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.' (Phil. iv. 15). The early preachers 'went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles,' and to help such is to be a fellow-helper to the truth.

Gospel blessings are offered to the sinner 'freely, without money and without price.' (Isa. lv. i, Rev. xxii. 17.) The practice of open collections, like open communion, blinds people to their real need, which is not to participate in the privileges of the Church, but to obey the Gospel, and thus come into the Church where all blessings and privileges can be enjoyed. Taking money from those who have not obeyed the Truth often puts a golden padlock on the mouth of preachers, causing them to be silent concerning sins and errors, against which they ought to 'cry out and shout.' Those who pay the piper claim the right to call the tune.

The Church (using the word broadly) has been dragged into the mud and made the target for infidel attacks and sneers of outsiders, by the adoption of many unscriptural ways of raising money to carry on the Lord's work.

Bro. Sydney Black said, 'It is a disgrace for the Church to go begging to the world. The Church of Christ, of all institutions in the world, ought to pay her own expenses.'

The Model Trust Deed, which was endorsed by the 1936 Annual Conference, has this clause in it: 'It is the duty of members of the Church to contribute of their substance . . . for the support and spread of the cause of Christ, that no contributions

for the furtherance of strictly Church purposes shall be knowingly received from the unimmersed.'

This New Testament position concerning money has given strength to the plea for a return to the faith and practice of the first Church. Departure in this and other matters in order to court favours from, and to stand well with, other religious bodies has much to do with present lack of progress. The practice of open offerings is contrary to New Testament teaching and example, and also to the terms of the Model Trust Deed, by which much Church property is secured. Departure in what some regard as small matters has prepared the way for departure in larger things. It is the opening of the flood-gates through which the surging sea of apostasy will sweep away that magnificent structure which our fathers, guided by the Scriptures, built up at such great cost.

EDITOR.

From the Treasurer.

SOMEWHAT late, I wish most heartily to thank readers, and especially our agents for loyal co-operation during 1936. The messages of goodwill received, gifts so kindly sent, and the steady increase in circulation, were a source of encouragement to all who share the work and responsibility of this magazine. Now may I say:

1. Gifts towards this work will be appreciated as opportunity offers. This magazine is not run for profit, each issue is sent out at a loss. Our readers have met our needs, and will do so still, we believe. All work is done gratis.

2. I shall be glad to hear from those who have not yet remitted for 1936, so that my books can be more or less cleared. I must say, with regret, that a few have not paid for 1935. These should realise that the printer has to be paid whether they pay or not.

3. Copies are sent in some instances to those who have not ordered them. These readers are asked to note that these copies are paid for by other readers, who request me to send them. Therefore, these who

receive such copies are under no obligation to pay. I am, of course, always glad for such to become subscribers.

4. A sample copy will be sent anywhere *free of charge*, upon my receiving name and address on a postcard. *Will those abroad kindly note not to send me foreign stamps for such copies.* They are no use to me, and this is not necessary.

5. *Payments from Overseas.* Will such readers please send me money orders, - or where possible *British postal orders.* *N.B. Readers in Africa are asked to send British orders only or money orders.*

6. May I once again appeal to all readers to make every effort to secure new readers. We depend upon you. There are many in these islands who would take the paper if they knew of it. We cannot, in many instances, get past the Church secretary and the officers to the rank and file who would take this magazine. **A. L. FRITH.**

Next Conference,

The next Conference will be held (D.V.) at Albert Street chapel, Wigan, on Saturday, March 27th.

Chairman, Bro. John Scouller.

2.0. Prayer Meeting. All who possibly can, please attend.

2.30. Conference and Discussion upon the Work of God. A report will (D.V.) be presented by the brethren appointed at the last Conference, upon Evangelisation, with suggestions for co-ordinating the forces everywhere of those who desire to stand for New Testament Christianity.

5.0. Tea. Charge, One Shilling.

6.0. Great Evening Meeting. Chairman, Bro. Leonard Morgan, of Hindley. Speakers, Bren. W. Crosthwaite and J. Scouller.

Items by Hamilton Street Singing Class.

Bro. Crosthwaite hopes to serve Albert Street Church the following Lord's Day.

HOSPITALITY. It must be pointed out that accommodation for those desiring to stay overnight is strictly limited, and as far as possible. Brethren are asked to make their own arrangements. No doubt, many will proceed to the coast for the week end. Many of our Wigan brethren, while willing, are not in the position to offer hospitality,

owing to the depressed industrial conditions obtaining in the district.

Those in Wigan District **WILLING TO OFFER HOSPITALITY** are asked to write Bro. Walter Smith, .262 Scot Lane, Marsh Green, Wigan. Please state what accommodation can be offered.

General enquiries may be made to me at 10 Poulton Street, Fleetwood.

Brethren are asked to make every effort to attend this conference, and to pray earnestly that God will bless our effort, that we may be guided by the wisdom which is from above, and that all may be done to His glory. **A. L. FRITH.**

Important Notice.

Will those who, God willing, intend to be present at Wigan, on Saturday, March 27th, please send me a postcard at least ten days before the time. This is essential, so that provision can be made for tea.

Those responsible for providing the 'eats' are always in some difficulty as to how many to provide for.

This request was made previous to the Blackpool Conference, yet **not twenty-five per cent of those who came responded to the request**, and at noon, on the day of the Conference, we had no idea how many to cater for. Will readers please treat this matter seriously, and do better this time. A card to me please, at 10 Poulton Street, Fleetwood. Thank you. **A. L. FRITH.**



Nyasaland.

THE Annual Meeting, attended by all the elders and deacons of the African Churches of Christ, was held at Namiwawa, on December 15th, 1936. An important financial problem called for serious consideration. Bro. Ronald said it had been the custom of the brethren to make a collection for the gospel work. This continued until 1931, when our friends and brethren were excommunicated by those who with papal-like aspirations, resolved to consign their betters to outer darkness.

After the trouble, the brethren set about brickmaking for the new school. This was opened last March and then the collection was restored to its place. In the words of Bro. Ronald: 'The fifteenth of the month was, the appointed day upon which the

collection was to be sent by the hands of faithful men to the treasurers at Namiwawa. Two had been appointed treasurers. I, Ronald, will give a form of receipt- in the presence of the treasurers, and the money will be deposited in the Standard Bank. On Dec. 15th, the collections were handed to the Treasurers, and at the close of the day, £2 14s. 10d. had been deposited.

Apparently, good as this was, the brethren were not satisfied, and determined to make efforts to increase the amounts in order to support and extend their Gospel work.

During the past year, one hundred and

sixteen have been won for Christ and added to the Church.

Bro. John Malembo, who was at Dowa at one time, has written gratefully acknowledging the spectacles supplied by a local firm at our expense. He says he can now see as well as ever.

If any Church, or number of Churches, or brethren would care to support a preacher in Nyasaland I shall be glad to hear of this desire. Any such preacher could be 'adopted,' and could be directly responsible to the 'adopter,' to whom communications could be sent* w. **M. KEMPSTER.**

The More Excellent Way.

PAUL'S message is addressed to Christians, who, living amid the luxuriousness and sensuousness of Corinth, are endeavouring to hold the faith concerning Christ Jesus, the Lord.

He has written much of such a character, that one writer has said that 'if there was another letter, like I Cor., it would upset the balance of the New Testament.' In this closing sentence of chapter twelve, he desires to set forth the 'more excellent way.'

What is the more excellent way? Have we found it? Do we walk along it and bask in the sweet sunshine that pervades it. Do we feel the freshness of its heavenly air and hear the music of its gentle breeze? Or, do we choose some lower way, and by this lower choice, miss the higher glory?

The Church at Corinth was favoured with spiritual gifts in a marked degree. They had prophets, those who could speak with tongues, and various other special manifestations of the Spirit. Surely they were blessed indeed!

But were they? These very things caused jealousies, strife, and cliques. There were divisions, a constant clashing of wills and such a state of disorder, that the most sacred observance, the Breaking of the Loaf, was abused, and their coming together

was akin to sacrilege. Hence, whilst Paul urges them to desire the best gifts, he leads them on to the more excellent way.

These last few years, I have had far more to do with troubles between brethren in the Lord than I have desired, and have been asked to use my influence to bring about better understandings, or to advise as to how best to act. Such tasks are not easy. It means sleepless nights and days of anxiety, and we often wonder if we shall ever learn the lessons of Christian grace and forbearance. For I am sure of this, that troubles in Church relationships could be avoided if we all determined to learn this lesson. We have claimed that the New Testament will settle all our problems. Do we believe it? Or do we only accept it in theory, and fail to practise its teaching?

We are living in difficult times, amid unrest, uncertainty, and confusion, and these outside forces affect our own lives. After all, a Church is made up of units, and what affects the individual, must have its effect upon the Church. Let us work it out in this way. If things unsettle me, and cause my soul to become like a morass of doubt, effect will be seen in my influence on the Church.

If in the mad rush after pleasure, I give my leisure hours to worldly amusements, a lack of spiritual desire will be exhibited in the Church. Deeper still, if I am harbouring unkind thoughts towards another, or allow things long past to rankle in the heart, these will produce a crop of trouble in which others will be involved.

There is a more excellent way! It is the way of love.

We are more or less conversant with the teaching of i Cor. xiii. The word used is the Greek word, *agape*, denoting the highest form of love. Can we grasp its reality and significance? It often happens, that two ways open out before us, each right, but one infinitely higher than the other: and the way we choose is a revelation of our own character. Surely it is this higher way we need to traverse.

When Isaac came to dwell where Abraham had previously sojourned, one of his first acts was to open out the wells his father had dug. When Isaac's herdmen had completed their task, the herdmen of Gerar strove with them for the well. It will be agreed that by the law of inheritance and right of labour, the wells belonged to Isaac. What did he do about it? He just left them the well and went further on. A second well was opened and the men of Gerar strove for this also. Surely, Isaac will not be so foolish this time! Surely he will defend his rights! No! He quietly goes his way and leaves them this well also. Another well is opened out, and for this they strove not. And Isaac called the name of it 'Rehoboth', for now he said 'the Lord hath made room for us'. (Gen. xxvi. 17-25) Foolish? Perhaps! But we feel it is the 'more excellent way'.

When Moses had the leadership of Israel, one of the most cruel wrongs done to him was when Miriam and Aaron spoke with intent to the people against him. For this Miriam was stricken with that dreadful disease.

leprosy. The punishment was just, and many would say, 'Serve her right!' Moses who had been deeply wronged went straight before the Lord, and prayed, 'Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee!'

In further illustration consider the opposition of Saul to David. As a result of Saul's jealousy and hatred, David is hounded from pillar to post and his life demanded by the King. But the day came when the tables were turned and Saul's life was in the hands of David. Asleep in a cave, Saul lay at his mercy, and David's counsellors said: 'Your enemy is in your hands, kill him, or else say the word and we will kill him. Rid yourself of your enemy once and for all! Was it not justifiable? Oh human grounds could any have blamed David had he acted thus? What is he going to do about it? Listen! 'How can I stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed?'

In those Old Testament days, with lesser light, centuries before the Son was manifested, we have noble examples of men who, with all their failings,—nevertheless learned to walk the more excellent way.

We have a higher example. Need the reference be made? You know it well. I wonder sometimes if we know it too well in a way, and yet do not know it really at all.

Well might the Sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in:
When God's dear Son was crucified
For man, the creature's sin.

What an object! The thorn-crowned brow, His face marred by trickling streams of blood, His hands and feet pierced by cruel nails. And from His lips there comes the cry, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!' Need more be said?

This life of ours will be a bigger, richer, finer thing, if we will learn to walk in this more excellent way. Thus faith and hope and love last on, these three, but the greatest of all is love! **ALLEN MURRAY.**

Correspondence.

Dear Bro.—I have read and enjoyed articles in your paper. A report from this far-off field may be appreciated. The work was begun here some twenty-two years ago. There are now thirty places where brethren meet on the first day of the week to break bread. This does not include the digressives, who have only a few congregations in this part. The population is sparse on the prairie, and so we have no large congregations. Since beginning to labour here in 1927, I have baptised 127, mostly in Saskatchewan, but I have laboured in Northern States, where the truth is less known. The nations represented among those baptised are: Canada, United States, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Syria, England, Ireland, and Scotland. Jesus said: 'Teach all nations,' and we can do it in our own country here. I would be glad to correspond with any of the brethren.—J. C. BAILEY, Radvilles, Sask, Canada.

News,

Birmingham (Summer Lane).—Bro. R. K. Francis is serving us and is in the midst of a three-months' evangelistic effort. We have just completed a fortnight's special mission, and are encouraged to report four decisions for our Lord and Master. A young man who has been attending our meetings, Eric Ansell, was immersed on Lord's Day evening, Feb. 14th, along with Roy Mitton, son of our Brother and Sister Mitton. After that service, two others made the good confession and are to be baptised during the coming week. We thank God for owning and blessing the work done, and pray that those who have thus taken their stand may be kept faithful, and that many more may be similarly captivated by the love of God as revealed in Christ Jesus.

F. C. DAY.

Belfast (Berlin Street).—Lord's Day, Feb. 7th, was a memorable day in the history of the Church which for over thirty years met in Old Lodge Road. We met for the first time in the building the Church is purchasing. The attendance at the Lord's Table was much larger than for a long time past, some who had gone out from us were agsin meeting with us. Bren. Frith (Fleetwood), and Hassell (Leicester), were with

us and addressed the gathering. It was a time of great rejoicing; and all felt it was good to be there. We had a great meeting in the evening. Bro. G. Hassell presided and gave a brief address to the children present, then Bro. Crosthwaite (to whom we owe so much) preached the old Gospel.

On Monday evening, another well attended meeting was addressed by Bren. Hassell and Frith.

We thank all who contributed towards the work here; and, above all, we thank God for all His blessings. We ask your prayers for us, and go forward confident that our 'labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

G. HEHDREN.

Heanor.—The Anniversary of the opening of the meeting-house was held on Feb. 13th and 14th, a fortnight earlier than usual, when there was a good attendance.

On Saturday, there was a representative tea-party, at which old acquaintances were renewed and new ones made. The social gathering which followed was presided over by Bro. Wm. Barker. Bren. W. H. Cook (Bulwell) and G. Weston (Canada) gave very helpful and inspiring discourses. A programme of songs, etc., by parties from Eastwood and Ilkeston was much appreciated.

On Lord's Day, there was a good attendance for worship, when Bro. Cook gave some timely exhortations on Peace and War, plainly showing the Christian attitude thereto, and referring to some of the menaces to the peace of the world at the present time. At the evening meeting, Bro. Cook spoke in no uncertain manner on Paul's visit to Athens, and his dealings with the various philosophies and superstitions of the city, pointing out that, even in our day, men are guided by superstition rather than by faith in a living God, who 'now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.'

w. HAWLEY.

Belfast.—We purposed in our hearts to visit the brethren in Belfast to see how they fared. My companion in travel was that stalwart in the faith, Bro. George Hassell, of Leicester. Leaving Fleetwood, in the evening of Saturday, February 6th, we found a ship at Heysham and, weighing anchor soon after midnight, we steered almost with a straight course to Belfast.

Dawn was breaking as we made secure to the quayside, there to see the Editor waiting to greet us, and a little later we joined Sister Crosthwaite, who was ready to attend to our physical needs. At this early hour,

the fellowship of kindred spirits was like to that above. We rejoiced to know that the Church was meeting, for the first time that morning, in the new meeting place. Some forty-two souls were gathered together at the hour of worship, the best meeting, in every way, for years. Inspiring hymns, fervent prayers, and a real spirit of devotion was manifest. As we broke the bread, and the symbol of that sacred blood was poured out, we were indeed conscious of the presence of our Lord. At the time of exhortation, there was an alertness and eagerness not often found, and the closing hymn resounded from hearts full of joy and gratitude.

After a well attended school and adult Bible class in the afternoon, a number of brethren went out to sing and speak the Gospel in the neighbourhood, and to invite the people to the evening meeting. This was a splendid gathering, the number of young people and children being most marked. Brb. Hassell presiding, spoke to the children, and then Bro. Crosthwaite followed with a powerful address. There was throughout a clear cut presentation of the Gospel, given with all the old fire and vigour.

The brethren were delighted to see us, and the warmest welcome was extended. The meeting-house is situated in a district where the possibilities are tremendous. It is substantially built, and when it comes entirely into the hands of the Church at the end of June, it will be prepared for the formal opening the following month. In a recent issue of this paper, Bro. Crosthwaite, on behalf of the Church, appealed for help towards the purchase. May I urge readers who can, and have not done, to send on at once. Your gift will be a glorious investment, and the brethren will be greatly cheered. On all hands we heard the work of Bro. Crosthwaite and his wife spoken of in the highest terms.

On the Monday evening, another meeting was held, and was very well attended. Bro. Crosthwaite presided, and 'we' spoke a farewell message, urging the brethren to continue the good work. Afterwards, we were brought on our way to the ship by a number of brethren. Reluctantly, we said farewell, after what had been to each and all an inspiring week-end. We sailed away, and soon the lights of Belfast were left behind, those of Fleetwood not coming into view until eight-fifteen the next morning.

We thanked God for journeying mercies, having covered some three hundred and thirty miles in the most glorious of all causes.

A. L. FRITH.

Obituary.

Bristol.—On Feb. 12th, 1937, at Broad Street, Staple Hill, Bristol (the home of her daughter, Sister F. Woolley) there passed away Sister J. A. Woolley, in the ninety-first year of her age, a fully-ripe fruit, faithful to the testimony of her Lord Jesus Christ. She came under the influence of the Gospel in 1892, and became one of the loyal supporters of the New Testament Churches of Christ to the very last of her days. Although often in much pain, unable to leave her bed, she bore the evidence of true Christian motherhood in all her ways. Prayerfully, she waited till her Lord called her home. Her body was interred at Burslem Cemetery, on Feb. 16th, 1937. For ever and ever with Jesus at home. **J.R.E.**

Humberstone, **Leicester.**—With sincere sorrow, we record the passing of Sister Sarah Taylor, who, sixty years ago, at the age of fifteen, gave her heart and life to her Saviour and Lord, and joined the Church at Crafton Street. She was one of the company who formed the Church at Humberstone in 1909. Always regular in her attendance at the Lord's Table, and ready to serve the Lord and His Church, she will be much missed. Of a bright and cheerful disposition, she helped and encouraged many.

'She hath done what she could,' and her memory to-day,
Rises high o'er the flood that sweeps ages away,
It gleams o'er the waters of Jordan for all
Who have done what they could when the Master shall call.

Blackridge.—We deeply regret to record the passing of Brother and Sister Coulter. Bro. Thomas Coulter died very suddenly on January 24th, aged 73 years. His wife, Sister Coulter, passed away seven days later, on Feb. 1st, aged 71 years. They became members of the Churches of Christ in the Slamannan District about forty years ago. The Church at Blackridge will miss their presence at the Lord's Table very much. They were faithful to the Lord in opposing anything that is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament Scriptures.

J. ROBERTSON.