

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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A CUP OF COLD WATER

THERE is more than one way of making use of cold water. 'A cup of cold water' seems to carry the connotation of refreshing the weary traveller on the hard road of life. Many of us do not administer cold water in that way: we are inclined rather to throw it by the bucketful upon the more enthusiastic of our number. Many a young brother or sister, full of great ideas for the furtherance of the Lord's work has come away disconsolately from the Business Meeting, cooled somewhat by the liberal applications of cold water at the hands of some of our older members. There is nothing new under the sun and to be fair to us older members it is true to say that many of the 'brainwaves' advanced by the younger disciples have been tried before and perhaps been found to be unsuitable. However it must be true to say that what we say to others either builds them up or knocks them down. We either edify (to build) or we discourage; we either quench or we quicken. Compared with the size of the whole population of this island there are very few of us (church members) and we should be careful not to dishearten one-another. What we require as individuals, and as churches, is encouragement. We should try to uplift and rebuild one-another. We should try to lift up and not cast down. I'm not advocating the fawning and patronising approach we see in some religious papers but at the same time it is a good thing to commend a brother occasionally for a job well done, or for a praiseworthy action. When we discourage a brother we receive a pat on the back from Satan. Let's go easy then with the pails of cold water.

A 'cup of cold water' is however quite another matter and there is no restriction on acts of kindness. An act of kindness is never lost. Jesus, in Matt. 10:42, when sending out the twelve said, amongst many other things, "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall nowise lose his reward" These twelve, and later the seventy, were to confer the highest favour on mankind without reward - the kingdom of heaven and the gift of eternal life. The water of Life was to be given freely, and God presumed that the world would at least occasionally offer hospitality to the bearers of the gospel of peace. Jesus warned the twelve that they were going into a cold and unfriendly world and that they would be treated by many in no better a fashion than He had. As the world treated the Master so it would treat the servants. But those who trust in Him shall not want - those who try to do His will shall not be forsaken. Those who provide but a cup of cold water to the servants of Christ shall not lose their reward. We see then, the duty, of treating

kindly those who bear the message of salvation. Jesus expected that in every city (and village) they would find some who would welcome them. The gospel was sent to benefit the world and it is but right that we should help those on their way who would publish the good news. The poor probably had nothing better to offer than a cup of water but a great deal was represented in the very offer itself. Inasmuch as they did it unto one of these little ones they did it unto Jesus Himself.

There is a pleasant story of a man who lived on the borders of an African desert who carried daily a pitcher of cold water to the dusty and stony thoroughfare and left it to be used by any thirsty traveller who might happen to pass that way. He was not paid to do it by anyone, and probably would have flatly refused the thought of any kind of monetary reward. His was just a thoughtful and kindly act. It was just a little thing but prompted, surely, by a big heart. Nowadays in the hard-bitten world in which we live where very few do anything for nothing, it is a delight to encounter those who go out of their way to do a service for another. The African gentleman who provided the pitcher of water, each day, had probably never heard of the words recorded in Matt. 10:42, but yet he had captured quite naturally the spirit of that portion of scripture and was guided by a motive pure. Not only in African deserts, however, may such deeds be done. Our world is a spiritual Sahara, a vast and arid desert full of pilgrims that are wayworn, weary and sad to whose fainting lips may be pressed, by loving hands, the refreshing cup of cold water. Obviously 'a cup of cold water' today consists of small acts of charity and can take very many forms. Each such act of kindness has a special beauty all of its own, and each carries the benediction of Christ upon the kindly deed, however humble. We may lack the material resources and means to match the philanthropy of some of the world's millionaire benefactor's but we have the Lord's assurance that no act of compassion or generosity goes unnoticed or unrecorded in the archives of heaven, no matter how small it may seem to be.

A 'cup of cold water' may be but a smile; a word of comfort; a warm handshake or even just a sympathetic nod — to someone weary with the conflict of life. It may be a telephone call at a timely moment; it may be a visit to a lonely sick bed. It may be a bunch of flowers, or a loaf of bread. It may be the helping hand in the kitchen of a tired mother; or the minding of her children. It may be a card or letter; it could be as little as a lift in a car. No matter how apparently small, these generousities of day-to-day life do not go unnoticed and it has been said that Jesus takes them as flowers of remembrance and presses them between the pages of the Book of Life, to keep for ever. When He comes in His glory He will remember all those 'cups of cold water' — "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye hath done it unto me". Thus, let no one say, however lowly his status and his means, that there is nothing in the daily routine of life to inspire him to nobler living when the teaching of Christ in Matt. 10:42 invests the humblest deed of kindness with a divine beauty and glory. Let us endeavour not to let opportunities pass of helping fellow mortals along the hard road of life.

"This world's not all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given —
He that hath soothed a widow's woe,
Or wiped an orphan's tear, doth know
There's something here of heaven.

I believe that it is a scientific fact that, since the creation of the world, not one single particle of matter has been lost. Matter changes its form but can not be produced or destroyed. When some property catches fire and goes up in smoke it has changed its identity but is still in the world. Water vapour from the lakes and steaming jungles rises into the skies but returns again in the form of the dewdrop or raindrop. SO it is with every good deed and generous act; every self-denial and personal sacrifice. They may go unnoticed by the world at large or be unknown to anyone else but they can never be lost. The scribes of heaven record them in the Books of Life.

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" Eph. 4:32.

EDITOR

IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

How great is God our Father,
How wonderful, His care;
Providing all things needful
For all men everywhere.

Tender, tender mercies,
See His blessings fall,
Coming down from Heaven
From a God who loveth all.

PERFECT MERCY — AND MERCY Psalm 23:6

“Surely goodness.....oh,and don't forgetAnd mercy”.

I wonder whether we may share a walk together this month, to the “pastures of tender grass”, and then on to the “waters of quietness”, so that we can talk over this wonderful theme of “and mercy”.

It may be that some of our readers may remember that we dealt with David's sin with Bathsheba at length in an article in the Scripture Standard, under the theme of Great Doctrines of Scripture, on the mercy of God. and gave particular attention to Psalm 51. Refresh your memory with this glorious Psalm, I have no doubt that it will be a rich blessing to your soul.

We shall of course deal with David's need for mercy, bringing to your mind another great Psalm, but just now let us consider why we need the tender mercy of God, in our lives.

The word of God reminds us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one” Romans 3:10.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23.

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” Isaiah 64:6.

“For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us, and as for our iniquities, we know them” Isaiah 59:12.

“Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth...I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but how mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” Job 40:4 and 42:5,6.

When Ezra discovered the sin of his people he said:— “I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee” Ezra 9:5,6;

What shall we say of that slave of Christ?

“PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God” Romans 1:1.

“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” 1 Corinthians 15:9.

“Unto me, who am less then the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” Ephesians 3:8.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” 1 Timothy 1:15.

“But I am carnal, sold under sin” Romans 7:14.

“What I hate, that do I.” Romans 7:15

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” Romans 7:18.

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Romans 7:23.24.

My brother, my sister, we have a need to get down on our knees and thank our loving heavenly Father, for the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans. If such a saint of God, as the Apostle Paul, could lay bare his soul, before the brethren at Rome, how much more should we feel our unworthiness, and realize the exceeding sinfulness of our own sin before a righteous God. I have no quarrel with the language of this bond-servant of the Lord Jesus, for I too, can say of a truth:— “But I am carnal, sold under sin”, “What I hate, that I do”, “O wretched man that I am”.

The prophet Isaiah said:— “Our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: and as for our iniquities, we know them”.

OUR TRANSGRESSIONS.....OUR SINS.....OUR INIQUITIES..... WE KNOW THEM!

Unless we are cleansed with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus, and are clothed with His righteousness, none dare stand before God. Thank God there is a way out, come with me to “the place called Calvary”, and see God’s beloved, and begotten Son, pay the price for your sin and mine. Seek His forgiveness, accept His authority, obey His commands, and enter the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to Cruden mercy is “That essential perfection in God whereby He pities and relieves the miseries of His creatures”. Someone has said something to the effect that “mercy is compassion shown by one to another who is in his power and has no claim to kindness”. We can be encouraged by the thought that the cry of the publican in the temple was heard “God be merciful to me a sinner” Luke 18:13.

“Surely goodness.....oh,and don’t forget.....And mercy”.

May I gather a few fragments from the psalm which can bring you great comfort, Psalm 32: verses 1, 2, and 5 “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid, I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin”. The glorious message of the Psalm, proclaims the blessedness of forgiveness, David had sinned against God, and he was burdened with the consciousness of that sin, read verses three and four and note his misery. “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer”. No hiding of the sharp flint, no covering up of the true facts, he knew why he felt as he did, and had the good sense to do something about it. His sin had brought untold suffering, and no doubt yearned to be relieved of the burden, so he did the sensible thing. “I said, I will confess..” “Surely goodness.....oh,and don’t forget.....And mercy”.

“TRANSGRESSION”

“SIN”

“INIQUITY”

Writing on these three words J. H. Jowett said:— He calls it his “transgression”. The word is significant of a “Breaking loose”. The figure is almost that of a horse that has broken the traces, and is bolting. The cords have been snapped. The yoke has been thrown aside. The man conceives himself as in revolt. He is a rebel, a deserter. He has broken the bands; he has discarded all discipline, and has roamed in ways of unconsidered licence. He also calls it his “sin”. He has deflected from the prescribed line of life. He has chosen his own end. He has missed the mark. His life “has not arrived”. It is characterised by failure. He also calls it his “Iniquity”. His life is marred by crookedness and deformity. Guilt has sunk into his faculties, and all of them have been twisted in a certain perversity. Such is the man’s vivid consciousness of his own estate. He is a rebel of perverse inclinations, and wrenched by self-will into spiritual deformity”. “Surely goodness.....oh,and don’t forget.....And mercy”.

C. H. Spurgeon said:— “Never go hungry while the daily bread of grace is on the table of mercy”. SO the writer of our very own Psalm, went to the table of mercy, to the one who is “full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth Psalm 86:15.

Note the three words again:—

- “I acknowledged my sin unto thee”.
- “Mine iniquity have I not hid”.
- “I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord”.

He told God all about it, no covering up of any of the sordid details, and because of his penitence, and confession, God wonderfully dealt with his “transgressions”, “sin”, “iniquity”.

To quote C. H. Spurgeon again:— “The darkest cloud shall scatter itself in showers of mercy”. “For thou, Lord art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee” Psalm 86:5.

Note now the three fold answer of the Lord!

“BLESSED is he whose transgression is forgiven”.

“Whose sin is covered”.

“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity”.

Is it any wonder, that David tasting the blessedness of sin forgiven, should end the Psalm with a song of a ransomed soul:— “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart” Psalm 32:11.

My mind goes back to the day, when I was buried with my Lord in the waters of baptism, and having my sins washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and having the joy of sins forgiven, and I know that many of our readers can join with me in saying:—

O Happy day, that fixed my choice

Happy day! happy day!

On Thee, my Saviour and my God;

When Jesus washed my sins away!

Well may my thankful heart rejoice,

He taught me how to watch and pray,

And tell its raptures all abroad.

And live rejoicing every day.

This month's exercise:— Learn by heart the three verses Psalm 32:1,2, and 5.

May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion. LEONARD MORGAN.

THE TIE THAT BINDS

“THE Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another” Genesis 31:49.

“There's a blessed tie that binds us,
It comes from Heaven above,
Joining all our hearts together,
It is the Saviour's love.”

What a wonderful tie it is that binds us together in Jesus, There is nothing on earth to compare with it. It surpasses all human ties, joining together every known race of man. Paul sums it up like this, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, Bond nor free, male or female — ye are all one in Christ Jesus”.

Love unites — hate divides. Jesus came to gather together in one all the kindreds of the earth to dwell together. In Him, we sit together in high places; we are joined together by the cords of His love; we live together as the redeemed of the Lord. Such a bond as this bridges the gulf of time, for Jesus said, “The children of God shall sit down together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God”. All believers are joined together in the Saviour's love. It surmounts all racial prejudices and enmity and it is greater than any blood relationship. Individuals families, races, and nations, give way before it. All are one in Christ Jesus.

“There are blessings without number,
There is fellowship to share;
And our burdens will be lightened
When we for each other care”.

This blessed tie teaches us concern, not merely for ourselves, but for others. As in the body, when one member suffers, all the other members know about it and share in it; so in Christ's body, the church, all grieve when one suffers — all rejoice when one is glad.

A burden shared is a burden halved. Cares become less heavy when others sympathise and bring relief. Just as Jesus carried our sorrows and bore our burdens, so we are to bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. Care thus shown for others excites to more perfect love for each other. More, Jesus is alive in us, and He who laid down his life for us encourages us to lay down our lives for the brethren,

“There is nothing that can part us
If to Christ we true but be,
And His grace and love and mercy
Will flow through you and me”.

Paul assures us that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God, in Christ Jesus. That is nothing of an outward nature. Yet we must beware of our own selves, for whilst no man can pluck us out of our Father's hand of our own choice we can stray away and be lost. So many things are in the world to lure us away, If we remain steadfast, we shall be unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. If we falter and swerve from following after Him we shall be eternally lost.

David said, "My soul is continually in my hand", Not locked away, where no one can get at it, but here in my hand. So long as a tight hold is kept upon it, safe – but allow that grasp to weaken, and it can slip away. So we pray the Lord to watch over us when we are absent the one from the other. When we are true to Jesus, we are true to each other, and as a united band we can show forth the excellency of Him who has called us out of darkness into His most marvellous light.

May our prayer be:—

"May the Lord watch over you,
The Lord watch over me,
When we're absent from each other,
That we may faithful be.
And I will pray for you,
So won't you pray for me.
When we're absent from each other
The LOrd watch over you and me."

TOM KEMP

ABRAHAM AND MELCHISEDEK

(My King of Righteousness and King of Peace)

WE cannot consider Melchisedek without referring to Abraham, the wonderful example of obedient faith – the Father of the Faithful, for wherever God sent Him, he was prepared to go, not only so, but wherever he arrived in his pilgrimage he built an altar to the Most High God – Jehovah, an offering (prayer) and burnt offering, shedding of blood (spiritual devotioin). But even in those early years we read of conflict. In Genesis 13:8 we read of conflict between Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen, for Abraham said to Lot "Let there be no strife I plead with thee, between my herdsmen and thine, for we be brethren, (and in verse 9) "Is not the whole land before thee; separate thyself I plead thee from me; If thou will take the left hand, I will go to the right, and if thou go to the right then I will go to the left". Lot was the natural man, pleasing only self, as we read in verse 10. "And Lot lifted up his eyes and behold all the plain of Jordan was well-watered everywhere; (His was transient sight), even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as thou comest unto Zoar. Lot chose, then, and they separated. This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 13 tells us the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. The narrative continues (verse 14) "And the Lord said to Abraham, after they separated, "Lift up now, thine eyes and look from the place where thou art – northward, southward, eastward and westward to Thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. I will make them as the dust of the earth. Then Abraham moved his tent and dwelt in the plain of Mamre in Hebron (House of God), and there built an altar.

Then we come to the Battle of the Kings (four against five). All the goods of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were taken, Lot was captured, too, and his goods taken.

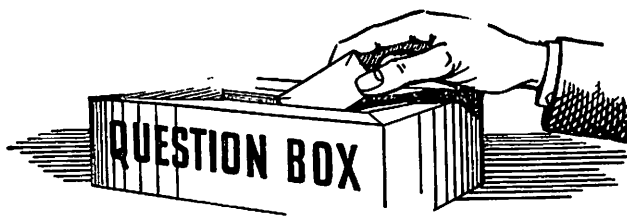
When Abraham heard that his brother in the Lord was there. Abraham took his own selected army and rescued Lot and here is recorded the very important meeting. There met Abraham as he returned from battle an amazing person called Melchisedek, He blesses Abraham and provides

bread and wine for his army (Gen. 14:18). Melchisedek, we are told, was the priest of the Most High God, and Abraham gave him one tenth of the spoil, and he blesses Abraham.

Gen. 14:19 "And he blessed Abraham and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies". Here was a priesthood revealed – above Aaron's, for we read in Psalm 110:4 "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek".

This is an allegory of the Lord Jesus Christ – we read Hebrews 6:20, and in Hebrews 5:6-10, we read these words "As he saith in another place Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek. Jesus, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared, though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect he became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him called of God an High Priest, after the order of Melchisedek. Hebrews 6:20 refers again to this "Whither the forerunner is for us entered – even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek". The purpose of Jesus Christ (Melchisedek) – see Hebrews 7:11, "If therefore, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the Law) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedek and not called after the order of Aaron, for it is evident (and very important) that our Lord sprang out of Judah (was He not the Lion of the Tribe of Judah?) Of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood (v.15) and it is yet far more evident for that after the similitude of Melchisedek, there ariseth another priest – who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment (note the contrast here) but after the power of an endless life – for he testifieth, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek". Hebrews 7:1, describes this Melchisedek, King of Salem. Priest of the Most High God, who met Abram returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him – to whom also Abram gave a tenth part of everything. He is first by interpretation King of Righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of Peace, –without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the SON OF GOD – who also abideth a priest continually.

W. WARDROP, Motherwell.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"WOULD you please comment on the question, 'Who is my brother in Christ?' Would you please deal with it under the headings of Repentance, Baptism, The Church, Practices and Fellowship?"

THIS is not an easy question to answer. We are living almost two thousand years since the gospel first began to be preached, and during that time we know that the message of Christ has been perverted in many ways, but I feel sure that if we refer ourselves to the early days of christianity, and argue our case from first principles, then we shall undoubtedly learn something useful. All I ask is that the questioner, and anyone who reads what I have to say, will keep an open mind and an unbiased view. Let us begin, then as the questioner suggests.

Repentance

It is undeniably true that before we can be brethren in Christ then we must have travelled the way of repentance. The greek word in the N.T. is METANOIA and literally means 'after-thought, change of mind', and the word is always used of repentance from sin or evil. Therefore we are

thinking primarily of a person who looks back over his sinful life, is sorry for the state in which he finds himself, and decides to change his mind and turn to God. Consequently, we can understand why the first call of both John the Baptist and Peter was to repentance. My brother in Christ will be one who has repented of his sinful state and turned in obedience to God for forgiveness and cleansing, otherwise he would not be my brother in Christ. In this sense, repentance cannot be a continuing process.

However, Luke records how repentance should be viewed within the brotherhood, "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" Luke 17:3,4. Trespass here has the meaning of a false step, a blunder, a deviation from righteousness.

Obviously, if I can forgive my brother his trespasses then we are not speaking about that kind of sin and evil which only God can forgive. If I have been wrong, then of course I can have a repentant attitude, and I ought to have, and my brother ought to forgive me. Let us never forget that everyone of us can be found in a fault and we may all have occasion to repent. We spend too much time looking outward and not enough inward. It seems to me that the word of God is used like a bludgeon to beat our brethren with rather than the healing balm which it can be. Yes, my brother in Christ will know repentance and he will practice it.

Baptism

My brother in Christ will certainly be one who has been baptised, that is immersed in water for the remission of sins. If he hadn't, then he would not be my brother in Christ, because it is when we are obedient to God's call that we become 'in Christ'. Paul says, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death" Rom. 6:3.

In some way that I don't understand, my brethren and I are related to and united with deity; Jesus prayed to his Father, "That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one is us" John 17:21.

Some argue that it is logical to think that if Mormons, Jehovahs Witnesses, and others have been immersed in water for the remission of sins then they are my brothers in Christ, but erring brethren. I do not deny that such may have ostensibly been immersed in water, but how can they be my brothers in Christ when they are openly trying to subvert the very Christ in whom they are supposed to be? No, I personally will not have it, nor will I ever in my wildest imaginations equate my brothers in Christ who may have erred in some respect with those who openly subvert Christ and his teaching. I am not aware of any of my brethren in Churches of Christ who are openly denying the Lord who saved them because they prefer to promote a system of their own.

The Church

My brother in Christ would be a member of the Church of Christ. I know of no other church to which he could belong because Jesus said "I will build my church". Baptism brings us into the body of Christ; the body of Christ is the Church, so there is a complete integration of baptism and the church.

I wrote in the October /75 issue of the "S.S." "There is only one Church mentioned in the N.T. and that is the Church that Jesus initiated and which came into being in the 1st century A.D. This means that there must be a big question mark against the many denominations which have sprung from that church which started at Pentecost". I believed that then and I believe it now.

I am convinced that my brother in Christ would want to be associated with the church that bears the name of the one who loved it and gave Himself for it. I think that if we stated positively where our brethren should be found we would not be so actively engaged in speculating where they might be found.

Practice

My brother in Christ would certainly be very careful of the practices in which he engaged himself. This is not to say, of course, the practices of my brethren would be absolutely identical

In every respect. I may believe that some of the practices in which some of my brethren engage themselves may be right or wrong as the case may be, but because I believe them to be right or wrong doesn't necessarily make them right or wrong; things are right or wrong whether or not I believe them to be so.

For my sins I found myself a protagonist in the last war. The army strategists taught me that it was unwise to take up a position from which I could not retreat if the ground on which I was standing became untenable. Now don't misunderstand me here; I am not saying that I would not stand and stand firmly if the occasion demanded it, but what I am saying is that it is easy to take up a posture and announce beliefs which I hold to be irreversible and denounce everyone who does not believe exactly as I do. Now theoretically I and every brother in Christ has the right to do this if we so desire. What do we then arrive at? Do we form churches or communities of one because we can't agree with each other?

Yes, my brother in Christ will be careful of what he practices, but he will have sufficient intelligence to know that because a thing is done differently it does not necessarily mean that it is done wrongly, or that it is evil in intent.

I am well aware that some of my brethren practice things which perhaps I personally would not, but I am not prepared to denounce them as charlatans because of that, And if their declared intention is to promote the gospel of Christ then I will co-operate with all to achieve that laudable objective.

In the final analysis, let God be the judge of what is right or wrong. He is much more capable than we are.

Conclusion

I think Fellowship is too important a subject to deal with quietly and lightly, and if the questioner will permit then I will return to this in the next issue.

(All questions please to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

MAY 1976

2—Genesis 2:1-17	Romans 6
9—Deut. 5:22-23	Romans 7
16—Deut. 6:1-15	Romans 8:1-17
23—Psalm 44:1 & 9-26	Romans 8:18-39
30—Genesis 21:1-13	Romans 9:1-18

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

THE beauty of light is only fully appreciated against a background of darkness. The loveliness of grace is enhanced, and perhaps only realised at all against a background of sin. So it may be argued that sin is necessary to make the practice of grace possible. However we rebel at once against the idea that we must sin more to make grace more wonderful. So does Paul of course, and points to baptism as a death, burial and resurrection, making the habitual practice of sin impossible through a change in state as great as passing out of death into a new life.

We have always pleaded for the proper position of this very simple act of obedience, and for its correct practice. What possible significance can putting a few drops of water on an innocent and helpless infant have? What relationship can the act have unless there is a decision and a true appreciation of a life-changing step? We have the thought that even the word "immersion" is not clear enough a translation. The old English word "dip" is better, but what a revolution in expression it would be to change from "baptism" to "dipping"! That most wonderful of translations, the A.V., failed to translate but merely transliterated the word, thus hiding the truth, or shall we say pandering to the "Establishment" — the perverted practice of many generations. How like to other perversions this is. There is a strong argument for talking of Bible things in Bible words. An incorrect word can result in much confusion and error. Is a case in point calling the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table or the Breaking of bread, "the Communion" or "Holy Communion"? Simple acts of worship have been made into elaborate ceremonies. In seeking to keep sacred — a very important thing — the simple acts,

man has made them into "drama" to please the senses, instead of obedient adoration in the heart, to please God. It is questionable whether we can ever exaggerate the importance of the change signified by baptism. Paul in these readings allows his mind to range, over a variety of subjects to urge upon christians their obligations to GRACE.

Crucifixion is the most terrible of deaths. When we pass through the water, we indicate our consciousness of the greatness of the sufferings of Christ, and to that extent share them. We are thus separated by the death of the old life without Christ into the new life with Christ. We leave finally our former condition, and are born into a new life in which holiness dominates. Death is the penalty required by God's law, and having in baptism suffered that, we are justified. The punishment has freed us from the penalty, but by grace Jesus took our punishment upon Himself. He bore our sins in his own body upon the tree (1 Peter 2:24). Now we live in Christ, and He lives in us.

The Significance of the Law of God

We have begun the new life, but we are in our mortal bodies still. Sin remains with us and around us. Temptations come. We have life in Christ but we must still suffer death. The new life which is born in us has to be sustained by life-giving food just as a new-born depends first upon its mother, and then upon normal food. We are instantly in need of spiritual food. Sin can no longer dominate us, but we find ourselves failing to be wholly good as our Saviour was, and teaches us to be. We have come to know the law of God and have sought forgiveness for all the past, and received it in the act of baptism, but we continue to recognise imperfection. We did fail in the past, yes, and were for a time perhaps unconscious of it and free of conviction, but now we are much more conscious of the sinfulness of sin. The more anxious we are to fulfill our Saviour's will, the more we feel our need of His spirit and presence. Love and reverence lead us in the new life. Abject fear was removed when we put our trust in Christ and obeyed Him in the water. We cannot trust our own power but we trust His word. His promise of forgiveness satisfied us - and it still does as we humbly and with contrite heart make our confession.

Our consciousness of right and wrong is now more sensitive than ever but we no longer need to be taught NOT to do this and that, because

we are servants of God and we do His will because we love Him, doing from the heart those things which Jesus and His apostles are teaching us. The word and example of Jesus are our daily and continual guide. "We serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter" (7:6). It is no longer a question of obeying certain rules, but of bringing the offerings of humble hearts with the longing to think, speak and act according to the law and example of the Lord Jesus.

Life and Peace (8:6)

Life without peace cannot be happy. True happiness is only possible for those who have come into line with the will of God. Peace, real peace, comes into our lives when we are "in Christ Jesus" (8:1). We come into Christ through faith, repentance and obedience. The initial obedience is in baptism which signifies our "rising to walk in newness of Life" (6:4), but of course it must be continuous, and we have seen that it is never perfect on account of the weakness of the flesh. We have pictured for us the two principles of life, one of which we renounced at our baptism, and the other which thereafter must be our choice. We must 'walk after the spirit', and have always in mind the spiritual realities. If we are tied to material things, it means that we do not have the Spirit of Christ, and cease to belong to Him. Material blessings can occupy our minds to the exclusion of spiritual things which extend into the eternal future. Through all the changing scenes of life we may have the assurance of God's favour because nothing can separate from His love. The passage referring in particular to this final assurance of peace is one of the most wonderful passages in scripture (8:31-39). When we consider the life and work of Paul we can perhaps appreciate the beauty and force of his words, and feel almost ashamed of the comparatively comfortable lives we live in these days of material obsession. The Lord save us from preoccupation with anything but Himself and His service. R.B. SCOTT.

HE WILLS

He wills that everywhere, all who are His
Should seek His face.

For all, for Kings, all in high place.

To supplicate and intercede

And give God thanks that we may lead

Tranquil and quiet lives.

(Sent in by sister LUCY ARMSTRONG).

WHAT IS FREEDOM?

Many a boy has discovered that real freedom is never gained by breaking legitimate laws.

'Obedience to Law is Liberty' is the appropriate inscription over the massive entrance of a great courthouse in Cleveland, and it is wonderfully true. There is no real liberty in any other course. Just so doing what you please, and following that impulse, is not true freedom. Obeying a sudden impulse to follow the primrose path usually starts or strengthens

some bad habit which forges shackles on our characters and destroys by just so much our freedom. A lawless person is never free. He is a victim of his own unaccountable impulses and soon a slave to his bad habits.

Selected.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Mayfield, Easthouses, Midlothian: Report of the building fund situation. Just over a year ago we began a venture to the end that we would build our own meeting place. We have now purchased a piece of land for £1750 and our current fund now stands at £800. We still have a long way to go but we feel sure that the Lord will bless us abundantly towards this end, just as he has blessed us in the past. We wish to thank all the churches and individuals who have helped us thus far. Thank you and may God bless you all.

MAURICE FERGUSON.

Slamannan: The churches in the Slamannan district of Scotland held their regular 'Mutual Benefit' meeting on 6th March last. The meeting on this occasion was held at Haddington and the Chairman was brother Wm. Black from Dalmellington. Speakers were Edward Jess, Tranent, and L. McLuckie from Haddington. The subject was 'Christian Forgiveness' and after the speakers introduced the subject a fairly lively discussion followed. The subject for discussion at the next meeting will be "Does God care about what people wear?" on 15th May.

OBITUARY

Blackburn, Hamilton Street: It is with deep sorrow we record the sudden passing of our dear sister Esther Lever on Sunday March 7th.

Esther was with us at the Lord's table and that same morning having laid the Lord's table here for the last time.

She was a member of Hamilton St. for over fifty years constantly serving her Lord and Master. She will be greatly missed. The Lord has called her from a life of trustful, loving and faithful service in deep humility. She was a shining example and we look forward to the day when we too shall meet our Lord.

She was laid to rest Thursday March 11th Bro. Roy Renshaw officiating. We command her sister and family to our loving Heavenly Father.

SARAH BAILEY

Eastwood, Seymour Road: It is with a deep sense of loss that we report the passing of our dearly beloved Brother Charles Limb.

Bro. Charles gave his heart to the Lord at the early age of eleven years and was aged eighty when called to higher service for His Master. Over the years he has been a source of strength and encouragement to his brethren by the faithful way he strove to walk in the Paths of Truth and Righteousness.

May the sorrow of the sight of an empty seat be turned to a renewed determination to carry on the work to extend "The Church" in this corner of God's Vineyard.

Bro. Tom Nisbet from the church which meets at Haddington conducted the service on the 9th March at Seymour Rd. Bro Tom and Bro Charles had been friends over the years and in his remarks he showed us that although hearts are saddened by the passing of earthly ties, it was also a time of rejoicing for one who has fought the Good Fight, kept the faith, and has gained his goal.

How truly we can echo the Theme of Bro. Tom's message, "The Best" is yet to come. Sister Limb and family wish to thank brethren for the love shown to them by the many letters and flowers received. Words cannot express the comfort and encouragement gained.

J. M. MALCOLM.

COMING EVENTS

New Wellington Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn:
 God willing, we intend holding on Saturday,
 24th April, a gospel meeting at which Bro.
 J. Diggle (Ilkeston) will be the speaker.
 All Welcome. Meeting begins at 7.30 p.m.
 Refreshments served (especially to those who
 come a distance). T. TYSON

BOUND VOLUMES

Bound volumes of the "S.S." are now available
 for the years 1973-75; at £3 post paid; supply
 limited; orders dealt with in strict rotation.
 All mail to Brother Paul Jones.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO YOU

There's a sweet old story translated for man,
 But writ in the long, long ago—
 The Gospel according to Mark, Luke, and John
 Of Christ and his mission below.

Men read and admire the Gospel of Christ.
 With its love so unfailing and true;
 But what do they say, and what do they think,
 Of the gospel "according to you?"

'Tis a wonderful story, that gospel of love,
 As it shines in the Christ life divine;
 And, oh, that its truths might be told again,
 In the story of your life and mine!

Unselfishness mirrors in every scene;
 Love blossoms on every sod:
 And back from its vision the heart comes to tell
 The wonderful goodness of God.

You are writing each day a letter to men;
 Take care that the writing is true;
 'Tis the only gospel that some men will read—
 That gospel according to you

Selected

WHAT THEN?

When all the plants of our cities
 Have turned out their last finished work,
 When the merchants have sold their last cargoes
 And dismissed their last tired clerk,
 When the banks have raked in their last dollar
 And paid out their last dividend,
 When the Judge of the earth says,
 Closed for the night,
 And calls for a balance; WHAT THEN?

When the actors have played their last drama,
 And the mimic has poked his last fun,
 When the film has flashed its last picture
 And the bill-board displayed its last run,
 When the crowds seeking pleasure have van-
 ished

And gone out in the darkness again,
 When the trumpet of ages has sounded
 And we stand up before Him; WHAT THEN?

When the choir has sung its last anthem,
 And the preacher has said his last prayer,
 When the people have heard their last sermon
 And the message died out on the air,
 When the Bible lies closed on the lectern,
 And the pews are all empty of men,
 When each one is faced with his record,
 And the great book is opened; WHAT THEN?

When the last bugle call sinks to silence,
 And the long marching column stands still,
 When the Captain has barked his last order,
 And they've captured the last fort and hill,
 When the flag has been struck from the mast
 head

And the killed and the wounded checked in,
 Then the world which rejected the Saviour
 Will be asked for a reason; WHAT THEN?
 from 'The Flame'

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