

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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The Ground of Christian Unity

IN AUGUST, 1954, the second Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held at Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A. It was attended by hundred of representatives from many of the religious denominations all over the world, including the Association of Churches of Christ in this country and the Disciples in America.

At the first Assembly in 1948 at Amsterdam the watchword, 'We intend to stay together,' was adopted. There was no intention to create a World Super-Church. Differences in belief, doctrine, organisation, tradition and practices were not to be allowed to prevent the united voice of these Churches from speaking as one, and their united witness from making its influence felt.

The Report of the World Council

The *Evanston Report*, published this year, forms a most interesting document to those who, like ourselves, are concerned for the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. It can be said at once that the W.C. of C. stands for unity. But here is the vital omission. Unity is not an end in itself. The adage, 'Unity is strength,' is not necessarily true. Unity can be weakness, when it is a unity of mixed faiths and practices. There will inevitably be divisions, when the basic ground of unity is not wholeheartedly accepted. Unity must be *upon the Scriptures*. Some accept the Bible *and* . . . ; some take the Bible *but* . . . We must accept the Bible without 'and' or 'but.'

Strangely enough the reading of the *Report* has been a stimulating experience, confirming the position of those who try to follow 'Jesus only' and adopt as creed the Bible alone. To prove this statement ample quotation could be made, but space forbids.

The Question: How is Christian Unity to be achieved?

The *Report* simply underlines the truth that the only way to be one in Christ is on the ground of the New Testament. Systems of belief and Confessions of Faith have been drawn up by the religious communions represented on the W.C. of C.; elaborate ecclesiastical hierarchies; highly-organised systems of church government; liturgies: all these have had the effect of, and indeed have made necessary, the creating of a clergy unknown to the New Testament. The 'laity' (another artificial creation) cannot hope to comprehend in these meticulous systems what their own churches stand for. Is there any wonder at the appalling ignorance of the members of the denominations of what is the faith that marks their particular church as a separate body? And any wonder that they cannot discern the difference

between their own church and others and that they are ready to unite on any ground or on no ground at all? Only the highly-trained 'clergy' are in a position to confer on such matters. Hence, it is understandable that the great majority of utterances made at the Evanston Assembly were by Archbishops, Bishops, Patriarchs and Reverends. Even the representative of the Association of Churches of Christ is listed in the *Report* as 'Rev.' W. G. Baker.

The Answer: 'Speak as the Oracles of God'

To whom, then, are we to look for unity of the church? To those whose ecclesiastical position and doctrines will not bear examination in the light of the New Testament, which they eagerly claim as their authority? Or to that New Testament itself, in its simplicity, its plainness, its order, and its consistency? Compare the church of the New Testament with the part-pagan, part-Jewish, part-Christian churches around us. Compare the leaders of the New Testament church with the politico-religious, worldly and apologetic hierarchies in the churches to-day. And compare the authority with which the church of the New Testament preached its message with the abject picture we have to-day of a church to which almost complete indifference is shown, which at the best is tolerated as a harmless institution.

Are we to look for this unity to the wisdom of men or to the wisdom of God? Even the W.C. of C. can only answer that the way to unity is through the word of God. Time after time the *Report* insists that divisions have come through leaving the simplicity of the doctrine of Christ, and that we must return to that doctrine in the Scriptures. But acting upon such noble resolutions is another matter. There seems no great desire to have done with teaching, practice and tradition that find no support in the New Testament.

The uncompromising declaration of the delegates of the Eastern Orthodox Church was regarded rather as upsetting the harmony and tolerance which characterised the Assembly. This declaration stated:

'From the Orthodox viewpoint, reunion of Christendom . . . can be achieved solely on the total dogmatic Faith of the early, undivided Church without . . . subtraction or alteration. We cannot accept . . . distinction between essential and non-essential doctrines.

'Thus when we are considering . . . Church unity we cannot envisage it in any other way than as the complete restoration of the total Faith and the total episcopal structure of the Church . . .

'The "perfect unity" of Christians must not be interpreted exclusively as a realisation at the Second Coming of Christ . . . but as a present reality . . . to receive its consummation in the Last Day.'

We can say 'Amen' to that, even though from a body which cannot bear the examination of its own declaration. It is amazing that a world-wide assembly of divines should come to exactly the same realisation as we in the Church of Christ have long pleaded for. Did not the Saviour say, 'Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes'?

The Witness of Churches of Christ

Always deviation from the word of God leads to confusion and ends in futility and powerlessness. Why then should we move from this sure ground, this 'impregnable rock of Holy Scripture,' for the sinking sand of denominationalism and organised religion? We plead for men to come not our way but the Lord's. We make no claim that *we* are right and all others wrong; but emphatically we believe the Scriptures to be infallibly right, and insofar as we are guided by them *we* are right.

An article in the *American Christian Review*, December, 1948, had these words:—

'WE STAND ON THE BOOK and must get its teaching before the public. We have the truth and must preach it. We stand on the only position all the world acknowledges to be safe and invulnerable. All denominations admit we are saved and safe. Not a thing we preach is called in question or is in debate. All controversy is over what others have eliminated or substituted. Our position is right and cannot be wrong, all the religious world being judge. We preach the Book in the very words of the Book . . . We are endeavouring simply to persuade all to lay aside "precepts and commandments of men" and come to the Book. In no other way can any man claim the promise of salvation, here or hereafter.'

Humbly yet confidently we strive to adhere to the truth of God. We pray we may not be accused of arrogance or of the awful sin of spiritual pride. For He who searcheth the hearts knows that we are concerned to maintain to-day the pure flame of New Testament Christianity, realising that only so will the unity of the church and the fulfilment of the prayer of the Saviour 'that they may all be one' be accomplished. EDITOR.

Approaching the Word of God

III.

CONTINUING our investigation of approaches to avoid we pass from the casual and dishonest to the dogmatic.

The Dogmatic Approach

This may be summed up as an approach which tries to use the Bible to prove an already assumed doctrine. The Bible is not a source-book from which to prove doctrines; it is doctrine. We must go to God's book, not in search of our own theories, intent on finding them somehow or other, but we must go to it for what it has for us to learn.

There is something of the dogmatic in most of the other wrong approaches mentioned in this series. Every aspect of the Dishonest Approach begins with this sort of prejudice and we shall notice it again in due course, particularly in the Priestly Approach. It is worth while here to give dogmatism a section to itself if only to refute the charge so often made against the advocates of New Testament Christianity that they are "dogmatic." This charge must be false so long as we hold to Biblical doctrine and reject both the unscriptural and the extra-scriptural. On the other hand, it would be true only if we countenance doctrines and practices having no scriptural precedent and then twist the scriptures to justify them. This is exactly what 'liberalism' does and it is dogmatism pure and simple.

Novel though this thought may appear to be, it is true that 'liberalism' is as dogmatic as any sectarian creed, and perhaps more so. While advertising their own liberality, and being very willing for us to join them in their broad views of inspiration or of obedience to Christ, 'liberalists' are extremely unwilling for us to differ from them, even charging us with schism for which they are directly responsible.

Notice that in the strict meaning of the word, 'dogmatic' cannot apply to the sincere lover of truth who approaches the Bible with no preconceived doctrine to prove. On the contrary, modernism, for example, approaches the Bible with the determination to find as many discrepancies as possible,

and to prove that not all the Bible is the Word of God. That is dogmatic : it first assumes a doctrine to be true and then it finds proof texts to support the doctrine, ignoring proof to the contrary. It is not difficult to find a particular dogma in the scriptures. It may not be there in fact, but we can always find thoughts which tend in its direction and so we assume that it is true. (This can be done even with secular books if we misuse them in the same way.) The argument for women preachers is another example of dogmatism *in spite of the positive direction of the apostle* (1 Tim. 2 : 12 and 1 Cor. 14 : 34).

This method of handling the scriptures was begun in the Dark Ages by the mother of sectarianism, the Roman Church, in order to settle controversy, and it has been continued ever since by all her daughters, including the pseudo-restoration of the 20th century. We prefer to hold to what has been wrongly called 'the dogma of indefectibility,' meaning the doctrine of the complete reliability and truth of the Bible, for 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God . . . that the man of God may be perfect . . .' (2 Tim. 3 : 16, 17).

R. A. H.

(To be continued)

Notes on my Life

By WALTER CROSTHWAITE

MY NEXT FIELD of labour was Liversedge. The work there proved so promising that we spent six months with the church in that town. The meeting house, a large one, was often crowded with hearers. Each Tuesday night during this period an open-air meeting was held at the neighbouring town, Heckmondwike. Great crowds gathered, and there was much questioning and discussion. It is splendid training for a young preacher to have to defend his statements before a crowd in the open air. To 'be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you' requires much reading, study and preparation.

Facing Opposition

Our chief opponents were Methodists and sceptics. The Methodists were sore because when we went to Liversedge their chapel was closed for repairs and decoration, many of their members attended our meetings, and hearing the Lord's plan of salvation obeyed Him and became members of the Church of Christ. At an open-air meeting a Methodist preacher, after we had quoted Wesley's statements on baptism, and references in his Journal as to his immersing certain persons, said : 'If there is anything in John Wesley's Journal about him immersing anyone, you put it in.' He also challenged me to a discussion, which I accepted.

The next Tuesday I took Wesley's books with me, but the preacher was not there. The following week he turned up and said, 'Mr. Wesley in his Journal says, "I baptised seven adults, two by immersion." Now I want you to tell this crowd what Mr. Wesley did with the other five.' I replied, 'He does not say, and I cannot tell ; but he says in another place that he baptised a person "according to the custom of the first Church, and the rule of the Church of England, by immersion"; so whatever he did with the other five was not according to the custom of the first Church.' The preacher was

angry and declared that he would not debate with me at any price. The effect was not lost on the crowd. (Quotations from *Wesley's Journal*, February 21st, 1736 ; March 21st, 1759.)

Of our work at Liversedge, the church secretary reported: 'We are having some very stirring times here. Much excitement prevails from our outdoor meetings. Bro. Crosthwaite's plain putting of New Testament truth, combined with his earnest delivery, our activity, and the yielding of many to the claims of the Gospel, no doubt being the causes which have led to the rousing up of sectarian prejudice and atheistic opposition. All things, however, seem rather to increase the attendance at our meetings than otherwise. In fact, the last two Wednesday evenings, when we have had immersions, the place has been crowded to excess, many having to stand, and others could not gain admittance.' The curate of the Parish Church helped us much by a sermon which was reported in the local paper. He attacked the things we were setting forth. This was followed by a newspaper correspondence which created much interest.

I spent periods with all the Yorkshire churches, but mainly with those at Birstall, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Leeds (Gledhow Road and Wortley) and Wakefield. I have not kept a record of the numbers added to these churches during my labours with them, but it was a great joy to see many accepting Jesus as their Saviour and Lord and becoming useful in His service. Some of these are pillars of churches in distant lands.

Debating with Mormons

It was at Heckmondwike in 1904 that I had my first encounter with the Mormons (Latter-Day Saints). At the close of one of our open-air meetings one of their elders stepped into the ring and said he was in entire agreement with all we advocated. To let the public see where we each stood, I announced that next week an address on Mormonism would be given; and any of its representatives would be given opportunity to reply. This led to a challenge to debate with one of their elders, which was accepted. A committee was appointed to make the arrangements. A few days later we received a letter from their district president stating that the elder who gave the challenge had no authority to arrange debates without consulting him. We replied, pointing out that the elder claimed to be as much inspired and led by the Holy Spirit as the Apostles of Christ; and it was strange that anyone should prevent an inspired man from honouring his word. After much parleying, a debate was arranged to be held at Liversedge on September 29th, 1904, the proposition to be, 'Is the Book of Mormon from God?' Mr. Mellors (a really able man) took the affirmative and I the negative. The chairman was an independent man, who, I think, claimed to be agnostic.

I was suffering with an attack of influenza, and was strongly advised not to go; but I determined to be present if I was alive. I was far from satisfied with my part in the debate. However, in his last speech, Mr. Mellors said he could answer all that had been advanced against the Book of Mormon if he could have the hall for a night to himself. The chairman said: 'If you can say more on the subject, I am confident your opponent can, and the honourable course is to arrange another night's discussion.' But Mr. Mellors would have no more. The Mormons hired another hall and spent three hours in defence of their claims. Many of us were present, but they refused to allow questions or discussion. At the close, a number of Mormon elders gathered round me, and pronounced a curse on me for my opposition to their claims. I thanked them, and said I felt much better for their curse than I would for their blessing.

(To be continued)

Memoir of Alexander Brown

(We are indebted to Bro: Levi Clark, of the Ulverston Church, for sending the article which follows.)

(Reprinted from *The Young Christian*, 1893)

A SENSE of personal loss was felt by many in the brotherhood when it was known that Alexander Brown had passed away. One of those 'who seemed to be pillars,' his removal has made a breach that will be very hard to fill up. As a teacher of Christianity he exercised a powerful influence on the minds of those brought into contact with him, and a feeling of deep obligation for help received and stimulus gained will rise in many hearts at the mention of his name. A life spent as was his, a character somewhat rugged, perhaps, but solid and massive, composed more of the sterling virtues than the mere outward graces, invites more than a few passing remarks. They carry with them many lessons, and in hope that some of those may have their due influence, this short sketch is attempted. For thirty years before the public, moving from place to place during that time, much detail is omitted, as unknown by the writer of this sketch. But the broad outline is known and here given, in the conviction that the interest in the subject will excuse the limitations of the knowledge and style of presentation.

Alexander Brown was born in 1841, in the little Lanarkshire village of Longridge, of God-fearing Presbyterian parents. His father was overman in a coal pit, and finding it hard to support his family on his scanty wages, he told his employer one day that he really must advance his pay. To this his master demurred, but said he, 'I'll tell ye what I'll do, I'll give wee Sandie a trapdoor to keep.' Wee Sandie, then but in his tenth year, was duly introduced to the stern realities of life, and sent down the pit to look after the trapdoor. The work was not very arduous, but the little chap felt the hours long and weary sitting at his post. In due time he was promoted to be a pony driver, and ultimately a hewer. When nineteen years of age, and then doing a man's work, a great religious 'revival' swept over the district. His sister Helen was brought under its influence in Cambusnithan, and carried the fire to Fauldhouse, where the Browns were then resident. She made a convert of Alexander, who united with the Evangelical Union body. With characteristic thoroughness he gave himself to the study of the scriptures, and from them learned that it was his duty to be immersed, which rite was performed by Francis Johnstone, of Edinburgh. Through his influence a number more followed his example, and a small church was formed in the year 1860. Anxious to improve his scanty education, he, along with a number of young men, formed a class, taught in the evenings by the parish dominie, a 'Sticket minister.'

Greek was one of the subjects studied, and in order to get time to master its difficulties, he used to rise in the winter mornings at four o'clock. His worthy mother, who encouraged him in his studies, undertook to waken him at that hour, with the result that often the whole household was roused, for Alexander was powerful at sleeping as at other things. In the dominie's class were other young miners, who, by their indomitable courage and perseverance, have raised themselves to good positions in life, attending the university in the winter and working in the pits all summer to earn money for the winter studies. The dominie, fond of argument, loved to set his Presbyterian and Baptist pupils at each other, and the former generally went home crestfallen under the sledgehammer arguments of Alexander.

In 1861 he left home for Edinburgh, having been invited by the late Thomas Hughes Milner to join him that he might be helped in his education. Whilst in Edinburgh he gave promise of becoming a good speaker. From this time up to 1864, when he went to Glasgow to labour with the church in

Brown Street, he moved a good deal about the country, and frequently between spells of evangelistic work he returned home and worked in the coal pits. For, though from boyhood he had an earnest desire to lead men to the Lord, he had a strong aversion to being supported in the work, and would have avoided, if possible, being a 'professional' evangelist, if we may be pardoned for using that word. From Glasgow, where he laboured some time, and where Jeannie McClintock, now in Montreal, and daughter of our esteemed brother W. McLintock, was his first convert, he went to Huddersfield in 1866, labouring with the church for about two years. One of the elders now there testifies to the great good accomplished during his stay, especially in consolidating the church and fitting the younger brethren for public work.

In 1867 he was married to Margaret Morrison, daughter of the miller of Craigston, and a most devoted and worthy wife she ever proved herself to be. Some time afterwards he removed to Leeds, and whilst partly supported by the church at Wortley, but chiefly maintaining himself by secular employment, he laboured vigorously in the gospel. A course of lectures delivered to large audiences in a public hall was so highly appreciated that numerous and urgent requests were made for their publication. A church was formed, on which he bestowed much labour and lavished much affection. And just here we may quote from a letter received from a brother associated with the church from its formation. 'In connection with the early history of the church in Leeds I was privileged to co-operate with him, and the most intimate fellowship existed between us. It is needless to say that I learned to love him very dearly, as that would be the testimony of all who had been in close contact with him. He was not usually demonstrative, but tried rather to be stoical; but I have seen him shed bitter tears over the troubles of others, and have read letters to suffering ones when he could not be present in person to comfort them, so full of sympathy and tenderness that any casual acquaintance could not have believed possible. He was a brother you could go to with any difficulty and be sure of real sympathy, coupled with advice full of wisdom and thoroughly impartial. He was as faithful with reproof where he considered it necessary, but given in a manner that made you feel that your good was his desire. His readiness to sacrifice his own comfort and pleasure without murmur was very marked; at all times, at any inconvenience, he was ready to attend to duty. In his church work patience and consideration for others were carried to great lengths, and I have been amazed to see him quietly submit to have his plans that had been carefully thought over laid aside, and more crude ones adopted, rather than unduly to press his own on the church. In short, he embodied Christ in his life as fully as I believe it possible for a man to do, and his loss to the brotherhood is one that will be deeply felt.'

From Leeds he removed to Liverpool in 1873, and for the next ten years laboured in the Gospel in connection with the General Evangelistic Committee, or with individual churches. We have already noted his dislike to receive support whilst engaged in evangelistic work, a feeling that made it difficult for him to work harmoniously with some of the committees at times. Whilst labouring with the churches at this time, although employed as an evangelist and preaching the Gospel, his work really lay in teaching the church he was in, and fitting its members for usefulness inside and outside the church. He was exceedingly careful *not* to do all the public work of any church he might be associated with, but to train and fit others to do it. His policy was not to make himself indispensable to the church, so that when he left it would drop back into the same or worse condition than that in which he found it, but rather so to teach and train those inside that his services might be dispensed with, without much loss to the church.

Somewhere about 1880 or 1881 Alexander Brown went to Glasgow, and attended classes at the University, intending to take the degree of M.A.

But his health failed and he had to abandon the idea, which was to him a great disappointment. During 1881 he delivered his discourses on 'Conversion to God,' which have since appeared in book form, and which are of great value to preachers desiring to proceed on scriptural lines in the matter of conversion. That year the Glasgow fog punished him severely, and many a lecture was delivered under great weakness, he being scarcely able to speak when he entered the hall. Yet he never failed to keep his engagement, so entirely reliable was he.

In 1883 he entered into connection with the Training Committee, and, with short breaks when the funds gave out, maintained the connection up till his death. Young men anxious and showing likely capacity for evangelistic work were invited to join him, when he gave them instruction likely to fit them both for preaching and teaching in the church. Many availed themselves of the opportunity, and were under his direct tuition for various periods, from a few months to two years. He also formed classes in the various districts where he laboured, in which either portion of scripture or subject was carefully and systematically studied, and a knowledge was thus given, not only of the portion under review, but, what was of more value, of the methods to be followed in order to promote a profitable investigation of the Word of God. His methods in this work have been severely criticised in some quarters as being too much on student lines. The criticism is unfair, as no one realised more than he that practice and actual participation in evangelistic work are needed to develop a speaker. But he felt strongly that something must precede this, and that those who aspire to instruct their fellows in divine truth must first gain a thorough knowledge of God's Word. Hence the supreme importance he attached to scripture study and the pains he took to help his students in how best to proceed. The misfortune was that results were often looked for far too soon. He felt that here it was best to hasten slowly, and the very limited time students were under his training afforded little or no opportunity for the development he desired. Yet there are many brethren who are now useful teachers in the churches, and a number of our evangelists who gladly own their indebtedness to him for the aid received from his training. We quote the words of Bro. J. Grinstead, taken from the *Bristol Messenger* in a report of the annual meeting at Wigan in 1891. 'The training work has been chiefly under the care of my valued friend, Alexander Brown. I was a Christian before I knew him, but it was a grand day for me when the God of Providence brought me into contact with Alexander Brown. He it was who trained me, who gave me an insight into the proper way of dealing with the Scriptures. Since then I have been the means of saving and helping a good many, but as I look back and think of the patient, untiring, generous help I received from Alexander Brown, I am inclined to attribute to him under God a very large measure of the success of my labours.'

The classes formed were in various parts of the country—Glasgow, Slamannan and Edinburgh district, Newcastle, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Hastings, Carlisle, Furness, etc. During this time his health began to give way under the enormous strain of work which he undertook. For in addition to the classes he had a large correspondence class open to any all over the country, and the amount of detailed work which such a class involved, together with the written tasks undertaken by his classes orally taught, and all of which he corrected himself with the greatest care and consideration for the feelings of his pupils, was sufficient to break down the health of a far stronger man than he. Much travelling was a necessity, and only those who saw him could realise at what sacrifice of comfort and health he prosecuted his work. Though often prostrate with weakness, he continued his work until the summer of 1891, when he was obliged to succumb, very reluctantly, and only when he found that he could no longer

fight his physical weakness. It grieved him exceedingly, for work was the very breath of his life, and from the time when he gave himself to the Lord, all through the thirty years of his Christian life, he seemed to grudge every hour that was not spent either in increasing his own store of knowledge or in promoting the Christian progress of others. He realised that the night cometh when no man can work. The day darkened and the shadows fell whilst he was looking forward to many years of useful service.

His trouble was an affection of the brain, the result of a diseased condition of the blood and low vitality. It clouded his intellect and affected his memory, though, until near the end, he recognised and could converse with friends. Mrs. Brown, for whom our hearts go out in deepest sympathy, was with him only a few hours before he died. On the afternoon of Wednesday, 13th September, 1893, at three o'clock, his sufferings ceased, and he departed 'to be with Christ, which is far better.' On the Saturday following, loving hands laid the tired, worn-out body aside, to wait the resurrection morn, when it shall be raised an incorruptible body, with powers exalted and enlarged, to enter on nobler and wider forms of service of the Lord, whom having not seen, he loved so well; but who, then seen, shall fill the soul with divine rapture, and transform it into His own glorious likeness.

Our brother was a man of single purpose. To advance the cause of the Redeemer, to lead men and women to enrol themselves under the leadership of Jesus, to own Him as Lord, was what he lived for. The welfare of the churches which are advocating a restoration of the Christianity of the New Testament lay very near his heart, and in their service he spent his life. Taking him all in all, few served them better. His was work that will remain. He cared nothing for show or for popularity, but was deeply concerned for the stability and faithfulness of the churches. And to increase this he took special pains to instruct and equip for their work those who were likely to take leading places in the congregations. Than this there is no more important work.

He recognised his special talents did not lie in preaching the Gospel. Not so much for want of sympathy, but from not allowing it to have free expression in his public speech, his Gospel addresses were less successful than those of a far meaner intellectual order. But he was a born teacher. He had the power of unfolding his subject in a lucid, orderly and impressive manner. Not an orator in the popular sense of the word, no coiner of high-sounding phrases; with few words of introduction he went direct for his subject, and never failed to convey lessons of truth to audiences whom he never wearied.

His consideration for others and readiness to sacrifice his own comfort to help them was a marked feature of his character. Naturally reticent, he disliked to talk of himself, and hated fuss, but those who knew him best knew how entirely unselfish he was. In the churches where he was best known, and where he laboured most, he was most highly esteemed for Christian character as well as for public gifts.

Order, method and thoroughness characterised all he put his hand to. He despised slipshod superficial work. He spared no pains himself, and was severe in his condemnation of those who stepped into positions of responsibility and neglected their duty. Half-hearted people who were constantly wavering between serving God and the world had scant consideration from him, and his failing lay in an undue censoriousness of anything or anybody not genuine and thorough.

We hesitate to relate one incident, but that at this day many need the lesson of his example. When in business near Huddersfield he was not successful, and incurred liabilities he could not discharge when closing business. But the obligation he still felt to meet them, and it took years of

the most careful self-denial carried to its extreme limit, and in which his wife nobly and willingly joined, before he could say as he did to a friend holding up a sovereign, 'That covers the last penny I owe in the world.'

He had an intense reverence and love for God's word. He believed and taught that all that God has revealed to us should have our closest attention and most loyal adherence. Its study afforded him most sincere pleasure. To him it was a mine of wealth in which he never wearied to dig, and in which he was continually finding fresh gems. Holy Scripture was not to him, however, simply a storehouse of knowledge. Most devoutly he believed in its transforming power on the heart and life, that it not only makes wise the simple, but that its entrance giveth light; that it 'is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among the sanctified.' And he himself was a living and powerful illustration of this truth which he held.

W. CROCKATT.

Call to Remember the Former Days

IT MAY SEEM presumptuous for one who has taken only a small part in the endeavour to restore the Restoration Movement in Great Britain and Ireland to write even a brief outline of its history.

For the writer this really began on a Lord's Day in October, 1915, when seven brothers and sisters in the Lord, from two nearby assemblies, met for the first time, using the homely phrase of a good brother, 'to keep house for the Lord.' From that small beginning at least 110 persons have been associated with that assembly through the years. That first meeting, to remember Jesus Christ as our Saviour at His table, remains indelibly in one's memory as a joyful and inspiring occasion.

Already signs of digression had appeared in the most glorious spiritual movement since the days of the apostles. It was our deep desire and heart purpose, with divine help, to establish a community on simple lines, according to New Testament teaching and practice; and by God's grace to keep ourselves free from the errors to which others had succumbed. Since that day many departures from the faith have appeared around us amongst brethren whom we esteemed and loved. Whatever our own weaknesses and failures may have been, that assembly and many others of like mind and purpose have definitely disassociated themselves from the digressive element.

There is no room or desire for boasting. The movement has had its weaknesses and failures. It would be right to say we are far from what we would wish and pray to be, and we need divine forgiveness. However, there is no need to despair, although we deeply regret that a few have deserted the movement, and maybe some others are not over-enthusiastic for its future welfare and progress. We feel indeed that the blessing of God has been upon us, to the glory of His Holy Name. What really matters is what the movement stands for—a return to just principles and adherence to the right way of the Lord in His own House.

Certain well-known and esteemed brethren come to mind who have not only given their support but have toiled incessantly that the movement should have the success which it deserves: W. Chapman, W. H. Clark, W. M. Kempster, J. Scoullor, T. E. Entwistle (these having passed to their reward) and W. Crosthwaite, happily still with us and at his advanced age still loyally giving of his best; many others also by voice and pen giving their support and help. It now falls to the younger generation to keep the banner of truth raised and to keep the standard flying, in defence of a pure and unadulterated Christianity. The sword of the Spirit must not be sheathed!

It must be a matter of encouragement to those who are nearing the end of their earthly journey to know that so many of their younger brethren are most loyally and devotedly giving their lives to this grand and noble cause. May our Heavenly Father bless them and give them good success. May they ever remember that 'Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever,' and that His truth ever remains the same. 'Facts are still facts! They do not alter, when the questioning and doubtful minds of men refuse to accept them! Truth likewise is always truth.'

Who would have thought, during the progress of that original meeting of brethren in Leeds in 1924, when Co-operation leaders and brethren out to defend Bible truth, met in discussion, that so many in subsequent years would rally to the fray, resisting the encroachment of error and defending the truth of God's Word? Overdale College had already begun its subtle work of opposing the scriptures of truth, and of laying the foundation of scepticism among its students.

One writer in a trenchant article expressed himself thus: 'We need not be surprised at unbelief in the *world* to-day. We ought to be ashamed at the unbelief of the *Church*. And that feeling of shame turns to one of heartache as we realise that our movement (Churches of Christ) is infected with the same spirit of infidelity. We need hardly be surprised that so often it must be said concerning churches, "Ichabod: the glory is departed"! However, the voices and pens of brethren named were busy defending 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' thus laying the basis for much subsequent success in His glorious cause. The writings of Brethren Clark, Chapman, Entwistle and Crosthwaite should stimulate and energise young brethren to continue this battle for truth and righteousness.

J. HOLMES.

(To be continued)

The Four Pillars of Wisdom

THERE are four grand arguments for the Bible as the Holy Word of God. The first, the miracles it records; the second, the prophecies it contains; the third, the goodness of the doctrine; and the fourth, the moral character of the writers.

The miracles flow from divine power; the prophecies from divine understanding; the excellencies of the doctrine from divine goodness; and the moral character of the writers from Him who was without sin.

Thus Christianity is built upon four immovable pillars: the power of God; the understanding of God; the goodness of God; and the purity of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour.

R. NAYLOR.

Fault Finding

PRAY don't find fault with the man
Who limps or stumbles along the road,
Unless you have worn the shoes he wears
Or struggled beneath his load.

There may be tacks in his shoes that hurt
Though hidden away from view,
And the burden he bears, placed on you
now,
Might cause you to stumble too.

Don't sneer at the man who is down to-
day,
Unless you have felt the blow
That caused his fall, or felt the shame
That only the fallen know.

You may be strong, but still the blows
that were his, if dealt to you
In the self-same way at the self-same
time

Might cause you to stagger too.

Don't be too harsh with the man who sins
Or pelt him with words or stones,
Unless you are sure, yea doubly sure,
That you have no sins of your own.

For you know, perhaps, if Satan's voice
Should whisper as softly to you
As it did to him, when he went astray,
'Twould cause you to falter too.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nov. 6—Joel 2:18-32.	Acts 2: 1-21.
.. 13—Exodus 32:15-29.	.. 2:22-47.
.. 20—Isa. 34:16-35:10.	.. 3: 1-24.
.. 27—Psalm 118.	.. 3:25-4:22.

The descent of the Spirit (2:1-13).—God's timing never fails. Just when devout Jews from all parts of the inhabited earth came together, the manifestation of God's approval of His chosen ambassadors was consummated. They were together awaiting the fulfilment of the promise of John Baptist, and the still plainer and later promises of the Saviour Himself. The eager, patient and faithful spirit was in their hearts, which surely and always brings a blessing. Now 'the greater works' (John 14:12) of which Jesus spoke are to begin—and they are still continuing. The noise was heard all over the town, and the apostles must have moved from their upper room to a public place, perhaps the court of the Temple, for such crowds to gather around them. The wind and the tongue-like flames were the physical symbols of the divine work, and it would seem that only the former was publicly known. The foreign languages in which the apostles spoke were either distributed among them or miraculously their thoughts were conveyed to the ears of the hearers in their native tongues. Little wonder they were astonished, and some sought a far-fetched and obviously false explanation. We comment that God chose to reveal the gospel this first time in such a way that none could misunderstand. How difficult it is even to learn with much time and patience to speak another language so as to be understood by natives. The gift of 'languages' safeguarded and was of immeasurable help to the first preachers of the gospel—to make the message clear and plain.

Peter's speech (2:14-36).—Peter first brushes aside the stupid suggestion of drunkenness, then explains the fulfilment of prophecy, just manifested in their sight and hearing. I believe with some expositors that the whole prophecy was fulfilled at this time (Matt. 27:45 and 51-54; 28:2). Further manifestations probably took place also before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and undoubtedly the miraculous gifts continued until after that date. The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth at whose crucifixion many of his hearers were present, is proved by reference to the Scriptures with which most of them would also be familiar. The coming of the Messiah was the hope of every devout Jew. The most marvellous signs they

had witnessed produced conviction when thus explained by those whose approval by God was so obvious.

Immediate results of the speech (2:37-42).—The truth brought home in this way to the minds and hearts of the people filled them with apprehension, and in agony of soul they sought guidance of the apostles—to receive the answer which should be given to-day to the same enquiry. It seems so abundantly clear that faith or belief of the message brought the longing for forgiveness; the change of life (repentance) must follow, and be manifested in obedience in immersion. Some have quibbled about the baptism of such a number, but the pools in Jerusalem and the physical capacity of twelve men should silence such. Those who persist in saying or believing that baptism is not 'for' or 'unto' remission of sins, and therefore necessary for salvation in this present dispensation, deny this passage, and thus contradict the Holy Spirit. As to the Church, we have four essential things here: (1) The teaching of the apostles; (2) the fellowship, contribution, collection, or 'the common life of the Church'; (3) the breaking of the bread; (4) the prayers. I lean to the view that (2) means 'The contribution,' as the other points are in any case 'fellowship,' and the definite articles do indicate some specific action by the Church.

The new society (2:43-47).—We may assume safely that the conditions mentioned in this paragraph continued for some weeks, perhaps before the events recorded in our next chapter. Deep reverence and wonder at God's goodness filled the Christians' hearts, and unselfishness overflowed in giving, so that those who were in need were provided for. Obviously the apostles took charge of the common fund and distributed it (6:1). The reference to the Breaking of Bread may have been to common meals in each others' homes or to a frequent partaking of the Lord's Supper, subsequently ordained by apostolic authority for weekly observance. We must remember the exceptional conditions of this time. Jews from all over the world stayed in Jerusalem to be with this new society, finally to be scattered over the world to spread its joys and new behaviour. It was natural that God should daily add to their numbers through the influence of the truth upon their lives.

The healing of the cripple (3:1-11).—Signs and wonders were continually wrought but this is selected by Luke on account of its results. The cripple was well known, having a place in the minds of the worshippers, and so his cure had a startling effect. Only those who have had experience of wonderful recovery can realise the cripple's own feelings. It

was a natural thing for the apostles to do. They were following in their Master's footsteps.

Peter's second recorded speech (3:12-26).

—Note the first effort of the speaker—to turn the people's attention away from himself. There is decided emphasis on the wickedness of the Jews. They committed the crime against God even against Pilate's will. Their rulers were equally with them in this, and Peter's very direct accusation in spite of his reference to their ignorance as an excuse, certainly brought the wrath of the influential men to a head—perhaps in their eyes ignorance would be a worse crime than murder. The way of salvation and the promise of future happiness is put before the hearers as clearly prophesied. We realise that here is the result of the teaching of Christ, who opened their minds that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-47) with the necessary guidance of the Holy Spirit. The seasons of refreshing had already come, but much more remains in store. We observe Peter's recognition that the whole world was to be blessed and the Jews were only the first recipients of blessing.

The first arrest (5:1-4).—It is probable that Peter and John knew they had already incurred the wrath and jealousy of the Sadducees, and they would remember the teaching of Christ and His example of popularity, followed by rejection and crucifixion. Doubtless they prayed and sought courage from God, and were able to rejoice in both the conversion of so many, and that persecution was coming as they had been warned. The special objection of the Sadducees was, of course, the proof of the resurrection.

The apostles before the Council (4:5-22).

—It seems a strange thing to ask by what power the cure had been wrought. Signs and wonders by the apostles' hands, and the presence in Jerusalem of 5,000 people living new lives, were surely sufficient to show that this was not magic. They could not have realised the force of the work. Nothing could have been plainer than Peter's answer, and the cure was absolutely undeniable. What explanation could be given? That it was something to do with their dark deed of not long ago, must have dawned on their minds. The miracle of the speech and behaviour of these men was as great as the cure. The rulers were anxious to stop the work but again feared the people. They had to be satisfied to threaten. Peter and John laid down a rule in the form of a question, which should guide us when rulers ask Christians to do what they know is against God's will.

R. B. SCOTT.

CORRESPONDENCE

Sharing as I do Bro. Partington's views on war I hesitate to appear to oppose his suggestion that British churches should not be advertised in *Contact*, but it is very important that the existence of genuine Churches of Christ should be given publicity—even to brethren in armed forces.

I am sure that our brother is not suggesting that young Christian men whose military service takes them to strange countries should be deprived of fellowship in those churches where obedience to Christ is placed before the military demands of the State.

We can best solve this problem by suggesting that the sub-heading of *Contact* be changed so as to make it a periodical for all Christians overseas and not merely soldiers in particular.

But why cannot British churches be advertised more regularly in British periodicals?

R. A. HILL.

[We have received other expressions of opinion on this matter, both agreeing and disagreeing with Bro. Partington's original letter. As both sides of the question have been represented we think it best not to include further correspondence. We feel that the remedy is in the hands of the churches. It would be best for churches concerned to express their objection to inclusion in *Contact* direct to the editor of that paper.—EDITOR.]

Circular Letters from Lusaka

P.O. Box 600,
Lusaka,
Northern Rhodesia.

Dear Brethren,

We are writing in the first place to thank you for your gifts that have done so much to help the work of the Lord here. As some of you will know we have been using the meeting room for the past few weeks. We had to put up the building without going into debt, and without very generous help we could not have done this. The amount we have received in gifts is £465 1s. 9d. Individual gifts have been acknowledged. There is so much to be done at home and we are exceedingly grateful to all who have helped. When we decided to do this, we had not thought that such help would be given. Indeed, perhaps if we had given much thought we would never have begun.

One of the brothers this morning was exhorting the Christians to go from house to house. He was speaking of the eunuch who when asked if he understood the Scriptures said: 'How can I except

some man show me? Do you ever have feelings of remorse that there was someone who did not understand, and you never told them the wondrous story of the Lamb of God? Philip went to Gaza. Some would not think to go to the next street to tell the good news. But the same Lord who said to us 'Come' also says 'Go.'

So often we are not prepared to make the sacrifice of effort or of time. Some of the Christians here are out 12 hours a day at work, most of them having five or six miles to travel to the place of work. To do this they have had to change their way of life, which was perhaps a carefree life before coming to town. It is surprising how they now find time to visit their friends with the gospel. We have tried to teach them this habit for the past four years and we hope it will remain a part of their daily life. We felt too that it followed the pattern of the Scriptures to go in twos (or more). Surely this is what we should do at home. It is not a question of choice of methods—it is a question of obedience to a divine command—or disobedience, whichever we choose. It is only as we venture out in these ways, trusting God, that we find real joy in our believing. For God is ever faithful.

When we read the *Standard* the first thing we look for is news of progress in the Lord's work. May God demonstrate amongst us again that the Gospel is His power unto salvation.

In thanking the brethren for their fellowship, I think I should mention the pleasure we have had in acknowledging gifts from U.S.A., from South Africa, and from Northern Rhodesia, the last being from missionaries and from the African converts. Truly an evidence that somebody obeyed the command, 'Go ye into all the world.'

WE are writing in this way to our many friends, as this seems the best way to write to so many at one time.

It is a little more than a year since we arrived back in Lusaka. By God's grace we have been able to continue in the efforts to spread a knowledge of the Scriptures and to build up a work in this area. A great help towards this has been the building of a meeting room in the Chilenje suburb. We are now worshipping there and the position is such that we are enabled to make contact with large numbers of people.

We had sufficient seating for about 90 people, but we shall have to increase this as soon as possible. Sometimes we look upon a building as an essential to establishing a permanent work. In this we deceive ourselves. Any permanency of Christian work is that assured in heaven for us. It is surely this that we must strive for, that the work we do may have Divine approval. We believe that we are working for this end if we build upon the sure foundation. 'Other founda-

tion can no man lay.' We must all seek to build the superstructure which will stand the testing.

Some of the Christians have had to move to other places. Some return to their villages. Others move in and join us, and at times there are those who are added to the Lord's Church. The building is now paid for with the exception of a maintenance payment at the end of six months. There will be a little more furniture yet to provide. So far we have made our own furniture, if that is what we may call it. You should try working on rough wood, making it smooth, staining and varnishing, hitting your thumb a few times, and then you will think that there never was furniture like this.

We thank all those who have kept this work in mind both in prayer and in material support. Christians have been most generous, and we are writing now to thank those who have helped in this way.

Many Bibles have been distributed, some free, and others at a slightly cheaper rate, to those we knew could afford to pay. If there are any who have a used English Bible, which you could pass on we should be grateful for this. We have an English Bible class which proved a greater attraction than I had expected. We also wish to form a small library of books which will help in Bible study. I should say not of a doctrinal nature, for we wish to teach the Christians first of all to accept and know what God's word says, so that they may learn to discern the good from the bad. So often we find division, largely because we try to measure the Scripture by what has been said or written, or by views commonly held, and even called 'fundamental.' The correct thing is to prove all things by the Word which liveth and abideth forever.

May God give you every blessing, and stir up in us all the desire to walk more closely with Him, and to work with a greater zeal.

FRANK & NANCY MURPHY.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Loughborough.—The 113th Church Anniversary Services were held on September 24th and 25th. Various Churches in the district were represented at the tea and service on Saturday, and on this occasion we were privileged to have as our speakers Bro. Fred Day (Birmingham) and Bro. Ralph Limb (Eastwood) who gave excellent addresses from the true and living Word. On Sunday, Bro. Day was the speaker, with messages of encouragement and great joy. All felt it had been a week-end of spiritual blessing and strength.

A. SIMMONS.

Morley (Zoar Street).—Having regard to John 3:16, why do you teach baptism as a fundamental? 'In Luke 2:52, one reads that Jesus grew in wisdom and favour with God. How could this be if, as you claim, Jesus was omniscient?' Simple questions no doubt, yet Brethren L. Channing and R. Limb, with the capable direction of Bro. G. Lodge, used them to good advantage in New Testament propagation. These and many other questions were put to these three brethren at 'Your Questions Answered' session at the Autumn Rally, held on October 1st and 2nd. The Saturday tea and meeting was exceptionally well supported by loyal brethren from near and far, and the Meeting Place was crowded. Bro. Ed. Pickersgill was chairman and Bro. F. Hardy gave the welcome. Bros. Channing and Limb gave excellent teaching. We are very grateful to them, and to the visiting brethren. The meetings on the Lord's Day were well attended, and our speaking brethren's words will be long remembered. We have no decisions to announce, yet some of the younger generation are really interested. In the words of the Bristol brethren's commendatory letter, we 'Labour on, our joy to do the Master's will.' A feature on the Lord's Day was the giving of the entire collection to the Buckie building fund appeal.

FRED SUGDEN.

Slamannan District.—The half-yearly conference of Sunday school teachers in the Slamannan District was held in the Meeting Place of the Church at Slamannan on Saturday, 24th September. About 60 members were present. The chairman was Bro. Jim Morris (Newtongrange) who in his opening remarks urged us to greater service for the Lord. He illustrated from the Scriptures the types God used in His service and showed that no matter our capability we could be used to God's glory. Matthew chapter 28, was read by Bro. Jack Nisbet (Tranent). The subject, 'How to keep the teen-agers,' was then introduced by Bro. David Dougall. He outlined the problem and then offered suggestions. The most important of these were: (a) greater interest by the Church in Bible school work; (b) use of the most capable teachers; (c) a training class for teachers; (d) reformation of the school; (e) activities on week-nights to enlighten and interest the children. A very profitable time was spent in question and discussion.

JANETTE PLAIN.

Slamannan.—It is with the greatest pleasure and deep gratitude to our Heavenly Father that we are able to report four additions to the Church here, all of them from the Lord's Day School: Barbara Harley, grand-daughter of the late Bro. James Harley; Ian Sneddon, son of Bro. and Sister Colin Sneddon; Peter and Colin Sneddon, both sons of

Bro. and Sister Walter Sneddon, junior. May God bless these dear lambs of His fold and keep them until the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be all honour and glory both now and ever.

MARY NEILSON.

Ulverston.—We have had a long and hard struggle here, and have long prayed for a turn of the tide. We are glad to report that on September 22nd three young women, Margaret, Evelyn and Judith Cox were immersed into the saving Name of the Lord Jesus and were welcomed to our fellowship on Lord's Day, the 25th. This has cheered us all and given us courage to go forward in the strength of the Lord. We have had the offer of a more suitable place to meet in, a building originally built for and run as a Free Church. There are two fairly large rooms and other smaller ones. It is offered to us on rental. We have our present meeting place only for Lord's Days; this other place we shall have entirely to ourselves. If present negotiations are satisfactorily concluded we hope, D.V., to commence meeting in our new home at the beginning of November. As we shall have to buy some of the forms, furnishings, etc. belonging to the last tenants we shall be glad of any help that can be given us. We are short of able brethren to help us to carry on the work, and keep on praying and hoping that some will come to reside in the town. For any retiring from business, etc. no more delightful district can be found. 'Brethren, pray for us.' All communications to W. Crosthwaite, Ford Villa, Hart Street, Ulverston, Lancashire.

Wigan, Albart Street.—On September 10th we again entered into special mission services for two weeks. On this occasion we had the pleasure of a visit from Holland of Bro. Bill Richardson and family, also Bro. Henk Quint, who came with them. Gospel meetings were held every night except Tuesdays and Fridays, and on Lord's Days, Bro. Richardson preached the Gospel for the Church at Ince, so our brother's time was well spent. Meetings were well attended, a number of non-members being present, and Bro. Richardson also had talks with several in their homes. Once again the Gospel was preached with power and conviction, yet in simplicity. All who heard were inspired and many became very interested. Again we had great joy in seeing four more decide to follow Jesus, Miss Partington and Miss Hill, both daughters of brethren well known. These were received into fellowship at Ince the following Lord's Day. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor from Southport, who had been with the party to Holland in July, came to make the good confession and were baptised the same hour. They decided to meet with the brethren at Albart Street. To God we give all the praise and glory, and trust that these young

people may be kept faithful through life.

Our Bro. Henk Quint soon made himself at home with us although he could speak only one or two words in English. His prayers at our morning prayer meetings helped us to realise 'Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.' At the final meeting he spoke a message of love to all and pleaded for those present to follow Jesus. This was interpreted to us by Bro. Richardson. Again we extend our grateful thanks to them all, and to members from all Churches in the district; also Morley and Blackburn for their interest and support. And now we go forward into October. Each Lord's Day evening at 7.30, Bro. Philip Partington is to be the preacher. May God bless all our labours. W. SMITH.

NEXT YEAR'S READINGS

Broo. Scott has undertaken the compilation of the suggested Bible readings for 1956 and will continue to write the Notes, God willing. We are grateful to him for so readily consenting, in spite of his having so much other work to do. Orders for reading cards should be addressed as before to Bro. Philip Partington, 78 Chapel Green Road, Hindley, near Wigan, Lancashire.—Editor.

'THE KENTISH TOWN MESSENGER.'

This is a four-page leaflet issued by the Kentish Town Church, which it is hoped will continue to be issued at intervals. The object is to give simple, helpful articles and news of the work of the Church.

It contains notes on Bible passages, a 'Question Box,' jottings of Church and Sunday School interest, news of the Lord's work in other lands, and items of news of the local Church.

The leaflet is tastefully produced in typescript. The project could well be copied by other Churches, if capable brethren can be found to undertake its compilation.

COMING EVENTS

Birmingham, Summer Lane (corner Geach Street).—Ninetieth Anniversary meetings. Saturday, November 5th. Tea at 4 p.m.; social meeting at 5.30 p.m.

Because of the limited accommodation of our own temporary buildings the Saturday tea and meeting will be held in the Ormond Street Mission Hall (by kind permission of the trustees). This is only about three minutes' walk from our chapel, where cars and coaches should be left.

On Lord's Day, 6th November, the services will be in our own chapel. Morning worship at 10.30. Evening preaching service at 6.30.

Kirkcaldy, Rose Street.—Rally, Saturday, November 5th, 2.30 p.m., to open a two months' mission by Bro. A. Gardiner. Proposed speakers for the Rally: Bro. W. Steele and Bro. S. Hunter. An invitation is given to all. Accommodation for long-distance brethren wishing to stay overnight, write Secretary, J. Inglis, 77 Salisbury Street, Kirkcaldy, Fife.

East Kirkby, Beulah Road.—Invitation to Anniversary Meetings, Saturday, 26th November and Lord's Day, 27th November. Speaker: Fred C. Day (Summer Lane, Birmingham). Saturday: Tea at 4.15 p.m. (approx.); Meeting at 6 p.m. A warm welcome assured to all.

Wigan, Scholes.—Special Mission, Saturday, November 19th, to Lord's Day, December 4th. Meetings each Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, at 7.30 p.m. Also Gospel meetings on Lord's Days, 7.30 p.m.

Saturday, November 26th: Tea, 4.30 p.m., followed at 6.30 by meeting to give thanks for seventy-three years as a Church of Christ.

Speaker at all meetings, Bro. Jack Nadeau, American missionary in Munich (Germany).

We invite the support of brethren from near and far. Accommodation can be provided for those desiring it. Please write: H. Davenport, 4 Warnford Street, Wigan, Lancs.

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

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