

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

VOL. 32. No. 9.

SEPTEMBER, 1965

Our Four-Fold Relationship and Responsibility

THERE is a sense in which all possible human relationships are comprehended in the statement of Peter in 1 Peter 2:17 where the apostle says, "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. "Honour the king." This verse is a good example of how God's word gives principles to govern the whole of our lives. Let us examine the parts of Peter's statement.

The exhortation to "honour all men" indicates our social relationship and responsibility. We should honour all men, because they are men. We read in Gen. 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Man is the only creature of whom it is said that he was created in the image of God. Man therefore is infinitely superior to all of the lower animal creation. There is in man a spark of the infinite. He has a moral sensibility, the power of reason, the power of intelligent choice. There is something about him that will spend eternity somewhere.

There is a sense in which all men are brothers. Paul said on Mars' Hill that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). It is even chemically true that human blood is the same all over the world, regardless of race or colour, and that human blood and animal blood differ. The fatherhood of God presupposes the brotherhood of men. Neither the theory of race superiority promulgated by Hitler, nor racial prejudice, nor anything else should obscure the truth that we should honour all men.

The principle of honouring all men will lead us to use every opportunity to do good unto all men, regardless of who are or where they are (Gal. 6:10). Our interest in the welfare of our fellow men should be world-wide in its scope. When Christ gave the marching orders to inaugurate the gospel programme, which we have the privilege of having a part in continuing, he said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Here is the spirit of the gospel.

The command to "love the brotherhood" indicates our fraternal relationships and responsibility. We have a special obligation to those who are fellow members of the family of God. We are to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, "especially unto them which are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). We should "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10).

As far as our relationship one to another is concerned, brotherly love is the most important need of the church. Peter puts it like this: "And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). The spirit of lowliness, meekness, forbearance, and longsuffering in love will enable the church to be a united, happy band (Eph. 4:1-3).

Peter's instruction to "fear God" points up our religious relationship and duty. It has to do with those things that stand directly between one's soul and God. After having tried all that the world had to offer in the realm of riches, honour, and pleasures, Solomon said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

Christ called love to God "the first and great commandment" (Matt. 22:38). So if we are short in our love for God, we are missing the most important thing of all. If we truly love God, we will obey him, for "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1 Jno. 5:3). Christ summed this matter up when he said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). God will not be pleased with anything less than first place in our lives.

Our political or civil relationship and duty are indicated in the word, "Honour the king." Wherever Christians live, they should be loyal, law-abiding citizens. See Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13. Christian citizens of any nation should be the best citizens of that nation. We should be very conscientious in obeying the laws of the land, always remembering that God is the higher authority. If there is ever a conflict between the laws of the land and the laws of God, we must obey God (Acts 5:29).

Christ indicated that the Christian has a civil, as well as a religious, obligation when he said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). Here the principle of the separation of church and state is set forth. A Christian is a citizen of two kingdoms and is to be loyal to both. As Christians we should "pray for kings, and for all who are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim 2:1-3).

G. B. SHELBURNE, Jr.

'Do Good to all Men'

"AS we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

In the verses preceding the one above, the Apostle Paul, in his own hand, had written somewhat concerning sowing and reaping (see verses 7 and 8). He continues this thought in verse 10, as he says, "As we have... opportunity, let us do good unto all men." While the time of sowing is here let us sow the good seed; and let our love be manifested to all, even as was the love of Christ. There is a personal interest in sowing the good seed in others, for the sower will take part in the harvest.

So abundant are the opportunities to "do good unto all men" that time and space would fail us to enumerate them. Jesus indicated several capacities for benevolence when he said, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matt. 25:35, 36). As we think of these many opportunities, let us remember that benevolence must not be limited to the physical realm of life. We may do good unto someone by helping him physically, and by doing so open the door of opportunity to help them spiritually. Make the application of the statement of Jesus to both sides of the dual nature of man.

"I was an hungered." Millions of people in this world go to bed hungry every night, and awaken every morning with the same hopeless despair: no food to nourish and sustain their starving bodies. And do not think that you must go abroad to find people in this condition; there are some living close to you. And are there not teeming millions of people whose very beings are crying out for the food of the gospel of Jesus Christ; people who are spiritually starving? The only way you can do them good is to give them the bread of life; teach them Jesus.

"I was thirsty." Very often you have an opportunity to "give a cup of cold water" to someone who is thirsty. Make the best of that opportunity; never refuse anyone. Jesus had such a circumstantial meeting with a Samaritan woman who was after water. He told her of water which, if she would drink it, would quench her thirst forever! He was speaking of living water, or the water of life. "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"I was a stranger." Whenever and wherever you meet a stranger you encounter the opportunity to do good; to take him in. You may open your home and your heart to someone in need, even though you have not known him previously, remembering all the while that you are only opening the door to the greater opportunity of making him acquainted with Jesus. Those who are out of Christ are strangers to the hope of salvation and the promise of eternal life. You may teach them that they can be "made nigh through the blood of Christ."

"I was naked." Yes, there are those around us who are desperately in need of the clothing which we hang in the ends of our closets and never wear any more. Can we watch them go by, braving the cold wind without even a light jacket, as we sit by the warm fire wrapped in our complacency, and still think that we are like Christ? And what about the spiritually naked? Can we permit them to go on

through life cold and friendless, when all they need is for someone to tell them of the warmth of the knowledge of the love of Christ, and think that we are "doing good to all?"

"I was sick." You are quick to help your friends or neighbours in times of sickness, because you realise you are needed. Sin is a dreaded malady, a terrible disease. Many of your friends and neighbours are suffering constantly with this sickness. Can you pass their houses daily, knowing full well just what remedy should be applied, and yet fail to tell them of it? Don't you realise that you are needed? Can you not see that unless you show them the way to the Great Physician, they may die in their sins?

"I was in prison." People who are in jail need help, and they are unable to help themselves. They are dependent on others for many things which they need. We have in them an opportunity to do good, but we often neglect it. At the same time there are those who are imprisoned by Satan, in bondage to sin. Satan has entangled them in false doctrines until they are helpless to free themselves. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We claim to know the truth and we should be aware of the fact that it is the only key to freedom for those who are in Satan's clutches. Shall we take the truth to them? They are not free to come after it.

It is easy to see that we cannot "do good to all men" and maintain that old idea of "live and let live." If someone is starving, naked, sick, or in prison you cannot do him good by leaving him alone! The rule of life for every Christian is not "live and let live" but "live and help live!"

Which do you wish to hear in that final day of judgment: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom..." or, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire . . . ?"

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men."

Training for Service—1

THERE is great need among us for teachers of the church and preachers of the gospel. But this need will not be filled unless and until we set ourselves to train and prepare brethren to do these services. Such training should ideally be given in the local congregations. But we realise that many things prevent this being done as it should. We need not consider these obstacles now. In view of the urgency of the need we want to get straight into a series which will have as its aim some elementary grounding in the Scriptures which we are to spread abroad.

The publishing of these notes on training for service will perhaps reach a wider circle of students than would be otherwise possible. What can be given in a local training class, or in a district, can be even wider disseminated through the "S.S." Then again, to print the lessons is to have them in more permanent form than simply to teach them by word of mouth, even although notes be taken. Another advantage of this method is that the pages of the "S.S." on which the lessons appear can be cut out and preserved.

This series will outline the study for each month, and on this study questions will be based. These questions can be answered or not, as the student thinks fit. If you care to attempt them and send your answers to the editor of the "S.S." this will be greatly appreciated, and in marking the answers every attempt will be made to guide and encourage brethren or friends sending them.

May we ask that this course be taken seriously? We would be grateful if elders or other leaders in the churches draw the attention of interested ones in their congregations to the series. And we shall value your prayers that God will use the lessons for the blessing of His church and the growth of His kingdom.

I. FORMS OF TEACHING & PREACHING

It cannot be too firmly stressed that all our teaching and preaching must be centred in the Bible. We quote from the Scripture Gift Mission's Annual Report 1964—"Mightily Grew the Word": "Three times is this 'growth of the word' remarked in the Acts of the Apostles, each time as the power within the development of the church. In Acts 6:7...12:24...19:20." The Report goes on to stress "the recognition by the apostles and the church of the priority of prayer and the ministry of the word over all else, and their obedience to this truth."

From the Bible we must teach and preach, if these activities are to bear any lasting and worthwhile results. All the various forms of teaching and preaching

mentioned below must have what is contained in the Bible as their contents and message. We mention four different methods and purposes of giving out the word of God:—

1. EXPOSITORY

This may seem a forbidding word, but if we take it to pieces it contains its meaning. It means expose-itory: exposing, explaining, declaring the meaning of. Exposition of the scriptures is the taking of a book, chapter, verse or even word of the Bible and showing their meaning, either from the Bible languages, Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek, or from English usage. Much of the teaching by this method is termed "doctrinal"—teaching and doctrine have often the same meaning. In a sense expository teaching or preaching is sometimes, necessarily, more scholarly than some of the other forms to be mentioned.

2. SUBJECT

This is the centring of the message on some subject: the subject may be either a person, as Abraham, Peter, etc., or an abstract doctrine, for example faith, humility, etc. The subject method may, of course, include doctrinal approach: for instance the subject of repentance in the scriptures would bring out, or expound, the doctrine or teaching on that topic.

3. EXHORTATORY

The meaning of this word can be understood by analysing it. It is the method of teaching by exhorting, exhortation; it means teaching or preaching which urges or encourages (exhorts) Christians or non-Christians towards God, Jesus Christ and spiritual and eternal things. The method is best and most often used in teaching the church, the "apostles' doctrine," especially when we break the bread at the Lord's table. Sometimes, indeed, the teaching is then termed the "exhortation."

4. EVANGELISTIC

The word comes from "evangel"—the gospel, the good news (of salvation). Hence such messages are given in gospel meetings or evangelistic campaigns. Evangelistic preaching is the preaching of salvation through Jesus Christ. Such preaching aims for decisions of the unsaved to acknowledge and obey Jesus as Saviour. Soul-saving is the aim of evangelistic preaching.

QUESTIONS

(These questions arise from the introductory notes you have just read, and can be answered by careful reading of those notes. If you would like to submit them for marking and comments we shall welcome your sending them to the editor of the "S.S." They will be returned to you as quickly as possible.

1. All effective teaching or preaching must be based on the Bible. Why?
2. Study Peter's address in Acts 2. From it show how his message was:
 - (1) expository; (2) subject; (3) exhortatory; (4) evangelistic.
3. From the two Epistles to Timothy outline Paul's instructions for making a fit teacher of the church and preacher of the gospel.

Next Month's Study: What Bible should I use?

God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty (1 Cor. 1, 27). MAN is much mistaken when he makes his calculations without any consideration of God. The fatal mistake of self-confident godless men is that they indulge self-congratulation on their own evident superiority. They boast of their strength and perhaps of their successes. But they do not take account of their end. They forget that "the battle is not to the strong." (Eccles. 9:11). — Neil McLachlan.

The Lord sitteth upon the flood. (Psalm 29, 10).

WHAT a wonderful thing it is to remind ourselves, in this troubled world, that there is a throne that is high and lifted up, and that there is seated upon it our covenant-keeping sovereign God, the Almighty One.—John Pritchard.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SEPTEMBER, 1965

- 5—Daniel 6:1-15 Luke 10:38 to 11:13
 12—Daniel 6:16-28 Luke 11:14-36
 19—2 Chron. 24:15-25 Luke 11:37-54
 26—Ecclesiastes 7:1-20 Luke 12:1-21

EMPHASIS ON FEAR

THE dictionary informs us that fear is "a painful emotion excited by the apprehension of impending danger; alarm; dread," and there can hardly be a person alive who does not know what fear is, having felt it. In a general sense we are ashamed of fear, and some boast that they are not afraid of anyone or anything. We think too of some as having no fear, and therefore regard them as brave. There is something wrong about this, for bravery is defiance of fear. What greater bravery can be imagined than that of the Saviour Who, knowing what He was to endure of physical, mental and spiritual torment, faced it unflinchingly—"He set His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). The "painful emotion" is unavoidable but it was faced and overcome for love of man and obedience to God.

But we are considering a few verses in Luke 12, where Jesus taught His disciples (and us of course) to fear and not to fear. We observe an instruction to "beware" in verse 1, and this surely is to be afraid or to fear. We should have a "painful emotion" because of impending danger, spiritual danger, real, disastrous, with issues of life and death, when we remember the sin of the Pharisees, which called forth the severest indictment the Saviour uttered (read Matthew 23).

Here is something we need to fear. An attack may be expected by every professing Christian, and it is so subtle as to be unrecognised. Jesus, speaking to the people, told them to do what the Pharisees said. They preached well. To follow their teachings was pleasing to God. They were earnest students of the Word, and it is the Word of God. Many of them were indeed good men, godly men, men of prayer, but somehow their practice, while outwardly correct, had become an empty formality. How fatally easy it is to keep the outward observances but by neglect of personal dedication to develop the double life, in which so many of the Pharisees alas, excelled. They preached but did not practise. That is one thing Jesus then

wished and wishes His followers to avoid, particularly was He speaking to the apostles who were to be the leaders of His people as the Pharisees were leaders of the Jews. We may view with thankful admiration that noble band of consecrated men who did indeed follow Jesus, denying self and taking up the cross unhesitatingly. They heeded the warning, and it was left to a later time to change the simple ordinances into empty ceremonies, and water-down the practice of a holy life into a modified worldliness—and much worse.

The uselessness of hypocrisy, and the need to "speak out" are shown in verses 2 and 3. What the disciples will have to say to be honest will bring on "a painful emotion" by reason of the effect of their word on others, and this fear is to be resisted finally and firmly. Hypocrisy ends in exposure to the wrath of God which is indeed final, and that wrath is not escaped by dying. The disciples will have to face death at the hands of their fellows, but the confession of the Christ bringing on that fear will end in acknowledgement before God's hosts in heaven. Their testimony will be that of the Holy Spirit of God, and those who resist will be condemned—be unforgiven. These disciples are to witness the apparent defeat of holiness and goodness on the cross, but they will be given power from above as it becomes needful. How they must have exulted in this when they did face the authorities with the news of the gospel!

So fear is the common lot of humanity. Some fears are to be resisted, some are to be heeded. There is fear which is abject and can keep up in misery all our days, witness the superstitious fears of the heathen; and fears of material loss which often dominate the lives of men and women now. There is also the well-founded fear of war among the nations. This latter fear might well be salutary in its effects on those who have ambition and covet material advantage. For the Christian, however, there are the exceeding great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4), for the Saviour came "to deliver them who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15), and Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:1). But we ought to have that altogether wholesome fear of displeasing Him, for "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2,3).

Finally, "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear" (3 John 4:18), and that love must make us like Him (verse 17). How like Him are we?
 R. B. SCOTT.

CORRESPONDENCE

"THREE COVENANTS"

Dear Brother Melling,—After reading the article, "Three Covenants," in the August issue, I feel that some comment ought to be made, since it appears plain that Brother Wilson has made several serious errors of judgment on important points.

First: The proposition upon which our brother has based his article is false. He takes Isaiah 24:5 and informs us that this is a prophecy which "concerns the near end of the gospel age," and declares that Isaiah was "not writing to the people of his own day and generation, nor for the dispensation under which he lived." However, a proper study of that section of the book should show any student how mistaken Brother Wilson is.

Whilst no-one would wish to deny the fact that there are passages in the book of Isaiah which are of a plainly Messianic nature, to ignore the historical significance of a passage and tear it out of its setting, in the way that our brother treats verse 5 of chapter 24, is to abuse the scriptures. In fact, this is the erroneous kind of exegesis which has produced so many false doctrines. I wonder if Brother Wilson knows that pre-millennialists treat this very chapter in the same way that he does, and believe that verse 23 in particular "concerns the near end of the gospel age," as he puts it?

Second: When writing of the covenants, Brother Wilson appears to imply that there is a difference in significance between the words "everlasting," "perpetual" and "for ever." He says that "the word everlasting is not used in the text," referring, presumably, to Exodus 31:15. But if he would examine the passages to which he refers he would find that all three terms are renderings of the same Hebrew word "olam." This being the case, it is difficult to see the point of this part of the article.

Third: Towards the end of the article, our brother declares that "to substitute individual cups in place of a common cup is to change the ordinance of the everlasting covenant." This, of course, is the thing that our brother was bent on proving from the moment he put pen to paper, but, unfortunately this remains merely an assertion which assumes the

very thing that still needs to be proved. Over several years now, thoughtful and sincere brethren who stand on both sides of the issue, have spoken and written about this vexed subject. We do not believe that articles such as Brother Wilson's, with its over-simplification of the problem, is going to contribute anything towards its solution.

The trouble with such statements is that they almost invariably carry the one who makes them much farther than he wants to go. I wonder if Brother Wilson is prepared to accept the consequences of his line of reasoning? Noting the fact that the Lord, at the institution of the Supper used what Bro. Wilson calls "a common cup," the conclusion is drawn that, "to substitute individual cups in place of a common cup is to change the ordinance of the everlasting covenant."

But we also know that the Lord used unleavened bread when the Supper was instituted. Does Bro. Wilson believe that the congregations which use a piece of ordinary bread in place of unleavened bread are also guilty of changing the ordinance of the everlasting covenant? So with the cup. The Lord used the fruit of the vine. But in travelling among the congregations I have known brethren use a variety of other fluids, from black-currant cordial downwards. Are these congregations to be accused of "changing the ordinance of the everlasting covenant"?

And then there is the question of the container; does our brother believe that the congregations which use *two* containers instead of his "common cup" (a term as unscriptural as "container") are guilty of "changing the ordinance of the everlasting covenant"? When he answers these questions perhaps he will also state where he thinks these congregations stand in relation to the Lord. Have they "broken the everlasting covenant"?

I take it for granted that every child of God desires the truth, and, by all means, let us seek to establish the truth. But it is possible to allow zeal to outstrip judgment when we try to prove our own position. Let us take care that we always seek to handle the word of God reverently and consistently.

And if I may sound a final note of warning: we may disagree with a brother's position and even question his handling of the scriptures, but never let us question his sincerity. Once that is done, we shall never be able to settle anything.

FRANK WORGAN.

God's people need stirring up

WHILEVER we are content to lie down, allowing the plain word of life and truth to be trodden under the feet of man's tradition, we fail! Instead of arousing to duty, as did Nehemiah, when he set the law before the people, after the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem, reforming the house of God, doing away with the abuses that had gained a foothold in that city, we are doing contrary-wise. Nehemiah wept and fasted because of the people's disregard of the covenant that God had made with them. They purified themselves, as also did the priests and Levites, making their approach to God acceptable.

Is it not time we did the same? Even more so, being under a better covenant? Not one sealed with the blood of animals, but with the blood of the perfect, sinless Lamb of God. Job 17:18 reads: "The innocent shall stir himself up against the hypocrite." Can we claim innocence if we fail to act against all hypocrisy and error? In the next verse Job assures us, "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." How better could we be exhorted to hold fast to the faith once for all delivered to the saints?

The same word is sure and fast. As we turn the pages of time there is no change in the Word. The only change is in the era. In 1 Peter 1:13, Peter exhorts, "Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." If we read on to the end of the chapter, we grip cause and effect in startling fashion. We need continual stirring up, though we need to watch that we do not tolerate any such stirring as the chief priests used when they stirred up the people to demand the release of a murderer and the crucifixion of Jesus. But rather the stirring up of which Paul reminds Timothy (2 Tim. 1:6) to "stir up the gift of God" he had received through Paul's hands. Also as Peter thought it needful, as long as he remained on earth, to keep stirring them up (2 Peter 1:5) reminding them of the things needful to attain a Godlike life, without which, he declares, they will become barren. With them, they become fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Again he continues the same impassioned appeal (2 Peter 3:1). So imperative is this need: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you: in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of our Lord and Saviour." Here we notice

that, in spite of acknowledging their purity of mind, stirring up was essential in order that they may remember. It is most timely that we heed the words of the apostle. For by the stirring up of purity in our minds, we reject and eliminate all that is opposed to Him who is pure.

One cannot escape the intention of our Lord when He wishes us to remember: "This do in remembrance of me." We would do well to use this act of remembrance as a positive stirring up of our pure minds. In the original tongue the word *anazapureo-ana* "up or again," *zoos* "alive," *pur* "fire," is used metaphorically of a fire capable of dying out if neglected.

Therefore we need to stir up, not allowing the fire of zeal and devotion to die down until our once fervent service becomes ineffective and fruitless. Let us never weary of stirring up those gifts [talents] entrusted to us, irrespective of their degree.

J. A. GREGORY.

Parables of Jesus

3: THE LOST SON

Reading; Luke 15:11-32. Text: "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

FOR the first time in our studies, the human element comes into these parables. From the comparative simplicity of the coin and the sheep we now come to th emore complex problems of human affairs. Here the lasting quality of the Lord's teaching manifests itself, for what father of grown-up sons will not agree that what happened in this household of long ago has happened in a greater or lesser degree in most households? What is the basic ingredient in this story? A young man desiring to assert himself and live his own life in his own way, something all young people have done, or had the desire to do, at some time in their lives, albeit often a misguided way of life; and, also like the young man of this story, they have learned it the hard way.

Let us take a closer look at this family. It will be noted there is no mention of a mother, or sisters in the narrative; only servants, suggesting the father was a man of means, as also gathered from the desire of the son to have the "portion of goods that falleth to me." Evidently this was considerable, for he went into a distant country and had by worldly standards a "high old time."

We can also justifiably assume the father was a widower, which could account for the younger son's behaviour. If so, he was lacking a mother's care, and possibly in its stead enjoyed a loving father's over-indulgence. Be

that as it may, the young man decided to leave home and go out into the world and enjoy himself unhindered by family ties and restrictions. Like many young men of today, he desired to "sow his wild oats," and doing so found out to his cost that time-honoured truth, taught elsewhere in scripture, that "as a man sows so shall he reap."

The story divides itself into six sections:—

1 The departure (v. 13); 2 The resultant misery (v. 14); 3 The repentance (v. 17); 4 The return (v. 20); 5 The rejoicing (v. 24) and 6 The critic (v. 30).

Note here what human experience is found in typical Scripture brevity. In verses 13-19 in simple yet telling phrases the record reveals human folly and learning in ways that lesser minds would have written about in whole volumes, with far less effect.

This young man's experiences at the hands of the world is one that is all too common, yet successive generations of youth constantly ignore the lesson, preferring time and again to learn by finding out from bitter experience. How true: "Laugh and the world laughs with you, Weep, and you weep alone."

Note verse 14: "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want." Yes, for the first time in his young irresponsible life, he knew what it was to be hungry; so desperate became his position that he did what was for a Jew, a most degrading job—he fed swine. To a Jew the pig was a most unclean animal, and no self-respecting Jew would even think of touching one, let alone feeling it.

It is here that we get the first glimpse of the real character of the lad: "He fain would have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat and no man gave unto him." Yet he was apparently so honest that he would not help himself by stealing some of the food, as a less scrupulous man might have done. Then we note he did another wise and sensible thing—he meditated. Many of us could profitably do likewise when some foolish action on our part has landed us into trouble.

And then comes what is the crux of the whole problem: in v. 17 we read, "he came to himself." We have heard this interpreted as meaning "when he came to his senses," but on studying this out we prefer the scriptural definition: coming to himself, his real self, he knew he had been foolish; he knew his trouble was of his own doing; he had no-one to blame but himself. Again he showed that he was a person of character. A weaker person would have been inclined to blame anybody and everybody. But he knew his misery and degradation were

his own fault, and owned up to it; and the conceited, self-willed big-head became, what he ought to have been at the first, a sensible young man, who knew when he was well off.

He decided to go home again, meditating on the lot of his father's servants compared to himself, his father's son. May we suggest his light of thought as he meditated—"I ought to go home"; "I can go home: what is there to stop me"; "I will go home, "I ought; I can; I will."

Now let us notice the nature of his repentance (verses 18 and 19): "I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants." He realised it was not only his father he had sinned against, but against heaven, and that means the ruler of heaven. What a difference it would make to us if we only realised that when we sin, even against our fellow man, it is against heaven too that we are sinning, and is felt up there as it is felt down here.

The young man, true to his word, returns home, and what do we find? "Whilst he was yet a great way off his father saw him." What anxiety, fear and worry had gone through the father's mind. One thing does stand out—his love. Day after day, week after week, month after month for all we know, he had watched and waited, hoping in his heart that his son would return. It is possible that he knew his son better than the son knew himself, and his love, his faithfulness and trust in his son were well rewarded, for at long last he saw him "while he was yet a great way off," and running to meet him he welcomed him home. Note how the son faithfully starts to deliver his speech of repentance; how often he had recited those words to himself as he journeyed home! But he got only about half-way through; his request to be made as one of his father's hired servants was never reached for his father interrupted him, ordered the best robe to be put on him, signifying acceptance; and the ring on his finger. Then came the customary feasting and rejoicing. It is here that a blight comes on the proceedings, and here we see the real character of the son who stayed at home, He who had neither caused his father any worry refused to go in to meet his brother, possibly seeing in his return a rival for the rest of his father's fortune. But he need not have worried, for his father soon came out to him, and assured him, "All that I have is thine." But note first the elder brother's scorn (verse 30): "As soon as this *thy* son is come . . ." and the father's gentle reminder of verse 32: "for this *thy* brother was dead and is alive again; was lost and is found."

What are the lessons we can learn from this story? May we suggest four: (1) Not to despise the fallen one. It is said of Charles Hadden Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher, that he was one day passing a well-known prison when a noted criminal was being taken inside to serve a long term of well-deserved imprisonment. A friend who was with Spurgeon made a disparaging remark about the prisoner, to be immediately answered by the preacher, "There, but for the Grace of God, go I." How do we know but that we also, but for God's grace, might be the fallen one?

(2) Not to be ashamed of saying, "I have sinned": admittedly it is the hardest thing to say, but what a difference, both to ourselves and to the one we have injured, when we do say it.

(3) Not to be hasty in condemning our brother. We are told in the 10th verse of this chapter that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." How can we then, if the holy angels of God rejoice over a sinner turning from his ways, sit in judgment upon others when we are sinners ourselves?

(4) The very grave danger of self-righteousness. If there is anything that God despises it is hypocrisy and self-righteousness, the "holier than thou" attitude. "He loveth much to whom much is forgiven." HAROLD BAINES.

A Call to the Churches

I have often been asked, and have even thought to myself, "Where are the churches of Christ going?" During my youth I saw the church of Christ as the greatest thing on earth, and even now I believe that this still is the case. Of course events have taken place which we must learn to acknowledge in a changing world, because the church is in the world, and the world is in the church. In my youth poverty was rampant, unemployment and low wages were the accepted things. The church played its part in that world, as it should do. The elders were active where there was poverty and gave liberally out of church funds and their own pockets. Also the forms of amusements were limited: we played simple games and took long walks. Today we have more organised games, wireless, TV, the motor-car. The affluent society has come to stay.

These changes have caused many to forget their Creator. The church has been the main sufferer, and yet it was through the influence of the church that

many of these changes came. The church as depicted in the New Testament has always been the means of lifting up the fallen and feeding the hungry. It is quite evident that in prosperity man forgets his God, "the giver of every good and perfect gift."

Amidst all these changes have come greater opportunities for education: our young people are going into colleges instead of into coal mines and factories, and are seeking wiser and better ways of presenting the Christian gospel, in place of the more simple ways of the past. And yet it is the same gospel, requiring the same conversion, as Christ and his apostles taught. The teaching of Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever; in changing times we have an unchanging gospel. The same results can be had as 2,000 years ago. Yet we pose the question, where are we going? Are we going to preach the gospel, and teach the same things, practise the same truths? It may be that the Church must seek wider fields to practise benevolence. Failing this, we must ask ourselves, has the church completed its mission? Only these past few days, we had a report of the work being done by OXFAM, and they are only touching the fringe of the needs of the world. Are we as Christians to accept that if we come to the Lord's table and preach the gospel that this is the extent of our work, while at the same time acting like the Priest and Levite—just doing our obligations while leaving the wounded to die?

You will appreciate, brethren, that this isn't coming from an angry young man, but from one who is dissatisfied with present-day trends. All the principles of New Testament Christianity are good: we must do them, but we must do more to help others. The gospels are full of good ideals and practical examples, the Epistles show how they were done. C. H. Spurgeon said that it was no use preaching the gospel to the cold and hungry; feed them first and tell them that Christ said, "Do this." Christ wants preachers but he also wants workers.

A great problem today is that of old age, such a lot can be done for old people. Could we not organise a form of entertainment, and open our meeting-houses during the week; arrange a visitation programme, especially where there is sickness? Perhaps the sisters

could spend an evening with some lonely person, I feel sure that this is one way to attract people to our meetings. As I see it, apart from an occasional mission, we are preaching to the same people Sunday after Sunday, and are only scratching the surface of what Jesus wished us to do.

During the past 40 years Christians have divided themselves into camps of discontent over such questions as war, modernism, cup or cups, one-man ministry or, the modern form, located evangelist. If we analyse these controversies we would agree that they should never have arisen. They have arisen because men and brethren have contended with the scriptures and have placed their thoughts before God's teaching. I feel quite sure that this was done with good intentions, but what are the results? We are divided. Yet we are not down and out, if we have God and time on our side. Will God's word return unto Him void? Will his church fail? Will man be allowed to fix the destiny of his soul? I believe not. I believe that we must repent of our waywardness, our pride, our self-pity, our obsessions, and return to God and his teaching. Each one of us knows where he has failed. We cannot play at church, we cannot have a do-it-yourself church. We must pray and work for unity, brother must stop antagonising brother. We must place ourselves, our buildings, our money in God's service, and he will show us his ways. The masses of people are starving for the gospel, sincere people are striving for union. Here we have a unique opportunity. May our hearts burn within us until our hands and feet also burn with the message of God's love. Jesus said "Go," and go we must, not for individual or national exaltation, but for Christ, for his Kingdom, and with Christ we will win the world.

J. E. BREAKELL.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Birmingham: Summer Lane.—It is always a joy to report the addition of souls to the family of God, won by the gospel and eager to be of service for our Lord and Saviour. We are the more happy at this time, for we are praising God for a young married couple, Brother and Sister Gwyn Williams, sister and brotether-in-law of one of our young sisters, who were brought into contact with the church because of the attention they were receiving from the "Jehovah's Witnesses." They were immersed on 15th April. May they be used as lights in the kingdom of God's dear Son.

P.J.

Hindley.—A very successful gospel mission was held from June 5th to 12th. Bro. A. E. Winstanley proclaimed the good news and we are pleased to report the addition of Bro. David Longmire, and Sister Ince, to the church here, and Sister Blears to the church at Ince. Over the period, between 50 and 60 friends were present at the meetings, and as many as 17 on one night. We credit much of this to the personal work put in. Particularly on the holiday Monday. Quite a number of valuable contacts were made and a few children were encouraged to come to the bible school.

We are grateful to the members of the district churches who encouraged us by their support. May the seed sown be watered and fed to an abundant harvest.

Tom Kemp.

South Liverpool (Blenheim Road).—We are happy to report the results of one of the finest gospel campaigns this part of the city has experienced of recent years. The campaign, held in the remodelled Holyoake Hall, was sponsored by the church in Broadway, Lubbock, Texas, whose preacher, Bro. William S. Banowsky, expounded the truth every night (but Friday) to an average of 185 people. Toward the end of the period (July 18th to 28th) attendances exceeded 200 and on the last night the count was 240.

Brother Banowsky brought with him 53 workers from various parts of the U.S.A. and Canada, who were joined by a sister from Paris and fifteen brethren from different parts of Britain and the seven existing members of the church. Thousands of homes were visited following the distribution of over 20,000 folders in the area. Two hundred Corporation buses carried interior posters of the campaign and "Liverpool Daily Post" (circulation 90,000) twice displayed a large colour advertisement.

It is a joy to report that 16 believers (eight of them on the last night) were baptised into Christ, and that since the campaign one other, pondering her position before God, followed the Lord on 5th August. We are convinced that so many good contacts have been made that a still-greater harvest may yet be gathered in.

Bro. Banowsky delivered some thoughtful and penetrating sermons which not only revealed the gospel as

the power of God unto salvation but were also a great stimulus to his own brethren. Many firm friendships were also made among campaign workers who had not previously met one another.

Another feature of the campaign was the ready provision of baptistry facilities by Disciples at Thirlmere Road chapel on the north side of the city, where the bath was held in readiness every night to a late hour.

We express our appreciation to all brethren whose concern for the lost made this holiday work a labour of love. Particularly we acknowledge Bro. W. E. Young's organisation of the visiting party and the loan of his valuable cine projector by Bro. Don Hardy (Morley) for the showing of "Pact and Faith" films each evening.

R. A. Hill.

Tunbridge Wells (corner of Cambrian Road.—Prom July 17th to July 29th, Bro. Bill Bowman, from Patchoque, New York, was the special preacher during our gospel campaign. Bro. Bowman and his wife, travelled at their own expense to work with us, doing personal work in the neighbourhood. We thank them for their sacrifice, and commend the work they did in reaching many new contacts. Also our thanks go to the brethren in this country who laboured with them, and our prayer is that their labours will bear fruit in the coming days.

The church here rejoiced in the fact that two were immersed into Christ, one Jacqueline Palmer from the Bible School and the other Mrs. Rose Rusbridge, who has attended the meetings intermittently for many years. In addition some fine contacts have been made, who are continuing to attend, and are also receiving a Bible correspondence course and film strip lessons. Brethren pray for the work here.

Derek L. Daniell.

On Sunday, 8th August, the church witnessed the immersion into Christ of Richard Hodson, a young man who was contacted by the campaign, details being placed through his letter box. Acting on the offer of a free correspondence course, he called at my home within an hour to get the first lesson, on Tuesday, 13th July. Because of a previously-arranged holiday he attended only twice during the campaign, but practically completed the course. To the joy of all assembled, he requested immersion after attending our morning meeting as an interested observer. We commend our brother to God with the prayers that he will be a valiant worker for the Lord in this town.

"We shall reap if we faint not."

Derek L. Daniell.

OBITUARY

Blackburn: Hamilton Street—We regret to record the passing of Sister Alice Grime, on August 2nd, in her 84th year. Practically all her life she had followed her Lord, and whenever her health permitted would assemble with her brethren to remember Him whom she loved and served so well. We shall miss her, but with hope look forward to the glad reunion with the saints "when we shall weep and sigh no more." The services in the Chapel at Hamilton Street and at the cemetery were conducted by the writer. J.P.

Tranent, and Hamilton (Canada).—It is with deep sorrow that we record the passing of our Bro. James Sneddon, of the church in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Bro. Sneddon was a member of the church in Tranent before emigrating to Canada with his wife and family. During his time of fellowship with us he was a keen worker in the church, both in preaching, and teaching. He had a cheery disposition, and was well liked by all who knew him.

We had the privilege of having him and his good wife with us just two years ago, when he spent a month's vacation with us, preaching and exhorting and trying with all the means at his disposal to extend our Lord's Kingdom. Little did we know then that we would never see his face again. But we "sorrow not as those without hope," for we know, if we live as he lived, that we shall meet again in "that land that is fairer than day."

We commend our sister, and her son, Jim, to the grace of God, and pray that He may richly bless them in their hour of grief.

D. Scott.

[The following appreciation of Bro. Sneddon has been submitted by a brother from Canada and is here printed by request.]

He took an active part in various activities of the church at Sandford Avenue. He was treasurer, superintendent of the Sunday School (which he had to give up on account of his health), and song leader. He also took part in the preaching of the gospel. He was not an impassive worker, but a very active one, and he will be missed for a long time by the congregation at Sandford Avenue, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Jack Yagor.

COMING EVENTS

Dewsbury. Church anniversary on Saturday, 18th September. Tea at 4 p.m., meeting at 6 p.m. Speaker, Bro. Joe Nisbet (Tranent).

East Ardsley, Wakefield.—Eight days' mission conducted by A. E. Winstanley (Loughborough), Saturday, October 23rd to Sunday, October 31st.

Saturday, October 23rd, 6 p.m.; Sunday, 24th; Monday 25th; Tuesday 26th; Wednesday 27th; Thursday 23rd to 28th all at 7.30 p.m.

Friday 29th, Children's meeting, 6 p.m.; Saturday 30th, Church anniversary, Tea 4.15, Meeting 6 p.m. Chairman Harold Baines (Aylesbury).

Sunday, October 31st, 7.30 p.m.

We appeal for help and support from any who can attend these meetings.

Tunbridge Wells (Corner of Cambrian Road).—"Know your Bible Campaign." Saturday, October 2nd to Sunday, October 10th. Speaker: Andrew Gardiner.

If you still have a few days holiday left, why not make it a rewarding time by coming to assist with personal work? Accommodation or details: please write to Derek L. Daniell, 38 Hopwood Gardens, Tunbridge Wells, Telephone 23864.

FREE OFFER

A GESTETNER DUPLICATOR

A sister in the church is willing to give her Gestetner Duplicator No. 120 (Rotary), recently over-hauled and in perfect condition, to anyone in the church who can use it, especially for the Lord's work. Enquiries immediately, please, to either Bro. Paul Jones or Bro. C. Melling (addresses at foot of this page).

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All correspondence, including articles, news items, coming events, etc., to be sent, before the 10th of the month to the Editor, C. MELLING, 133 Long Lane, Hindley, Lanes. Payments to PAUL JONES, address as above.

NOTICES. Scale of charges: 3/- for first 3 lines or less; 8d. each subsequent line. Repeats (if notified when sending copy) half original charge. Payments to PAUL JONES, address as above.

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[For the above extract we are indebted to the new distributing agent for the "S.S." announced in the June issue: Bro. Ronald Maiden, 41 Comberton Park Road, Kidderminster, Worcs.—Ed.]

WANTED

Bristol Tune Book, Staff Notation-Copies wanted.—Write with price to R. B. Scott, 20 Midhurst Avenue, London N.10.