

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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DEATH OF BRO. WALTER CROSTHWAITE

As we go to press we have heard with deep sorrow of the sudden death on May 13th of Bro. Walter Crosthwaite, aged eighty-seven. We hope to pay tribute to our beloved brother in the next issue of the 'S.S.' In the meantime we extend to his widow, Sis. M. Crosthwaite, our sincere sympathy and the assurance of our prayers.

OUR GREATEST NEED

IN the past few weeks in our meetings around the Lord's table, we have been reading Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. The great theme running through the epistle is that of Unity—oneness. The whole epistle can be summed up in the great declaration in chapter 4 : 3-6: "Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." In the same chapter the apostle states that the one God and Father, through the one Lord, gave gifts to His church of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, so that "we may all attain to the unity of the faith" (v.13). In 1 : 10 we are shown that God's plan is "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth"; in 2:14-15, that God "has made us both (Jew and Gentile) one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility . . . that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace"; and in 2:18, that "we both (Jew and Gentile) have access in one Spirit to the Father."

Christ's prayer for unity

Perhaps the scripture most often in the minds of Christians and members of religious denominations is the prayer of Jesus Christ in John 17, especially beseeching the Father "that they may all be one" (v.21). By "they" the F

meant "those who are to believe in me through their [the apostles'] word." Christ prays that this unity among Christians may be the same as that among his apostles. Of what kind is this unity among the apostles? No less than the same perfect and absolute oneness of the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. In other words, the same unity is to exist among Christ's followers as between God and Christ. There can be no higher calling or exhortation to be one. Christ prays that the oneness of his people shall be the oneness of God and Himself.

No enlargement upon this prayer is necessary, nor can its glorious meaning be shown in clearer light than in the Saviour's simple words. The standard of unity is the perfect one of that obtaining between the Father and the Son.

Not only is the standard of unity shown, but its purpose also: "so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." If Christians are not united the world will not believe in Christ, nor accept His salvation; nor will they believe in the God who speaks through Him. A united people of God is the surest means of turning men and women to Christ; a disunited people the chief cause of unbelief. History shows this: the divisions and disunity of those who all claim to be worshipping and serving the same God are the source of more unbelief, scepticism and apathy towards Christ and His teaching than any other cause. There is growing realisation of this in the many denominations. Those who call themselves Christians do not glory as much as they once did in their affiliation to this denomination or that, although there are still many who are proud to call themselves Anglicans, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists and so on; while to the Roman Catholic it is sufficient for him to glory in his being "a Catholic." That to him is the end of all controversy. But it is openly admitted, in ecclesiastical quarters and among the rank and file, that division is a sin: often we hear the phrase "the scandal of division."

The desire for unity

Hence, for many years there have been steady and concerted efforts to bring about unity among the "churches." This movement is the most significant event taking place in the religious world at the present time. It is given different names and shows various forms: the Ecumenical Movement, the World Council of Churches, the British Council of Churches, the "Catholicity of the Church." The movement is gathering momentum; there are even hopes that the Roman Catholic Church, which has frigidly stood aside from all such movements, may relax its "holier than thou" attitude and consent to take part in discussions with a view to church unity. The recent visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Pope has been hailed as an epoch-making event in religious history. Fraternisation is taking place between prelates, exchange of pulpits among preachers of different denominations, "inter-communion," united church gatherings and witness. But all such fellowship is a mere scratching of the surface, without reaching the deep divisions underlying the disunity. For no amount of veneering can hide the patent fact that these denominations are united in only one thing—that there is no intention to return to the New Testament as the authority and guidance for the church. Almost anything can be allowed as teaching and practice, and the church still be "Christian."

We would rejoice at this urge for unity if it were for the right purposes and built upon a firm foundation. We cannot help but think that underlying it is the desire to present an imposing front to the world, to be a mighty, impressive force. But we cannot rejoice for another reason: we are convinced that this movement for unity is a turning from the word of God, not to it. Its teachings are being compromised for the sake of an imposing façade. Denominations taking part in the Ecumenical Movement are assured that they will retain their autonomy and identity. If the word of God were followed there would be no such bodies, but the one Body, the church of the New Testament. If this unity movement were God's will there would be a readiness, even a desire, to cease to exist as denominations, even a rejoicing that they are no longer in existence. In the words of Charles Wesley's hymn, "Names and sects and parties fall; Thou, O Christ, art all in all." The movement does not go back far enough—to the Scriptures.

The question of "Christian Unity" is so important that it was debated in the House of Lords on May 10th. There was much general talk about Christian unity,

and many pious expressions uttered. Lord Mackintosh of Halifax, a Methodist, thought that the purpose of Christianity was perhaps served better by a variety of churches to deal with the different needs and temperaments of the people. How often has such a sentiment been expressed! But Lord Alexander of Hillsborough set the debate on solid ground when he said, "the principle is that everything one does with regard to doctrine and church organisation and preaching must be placed upon the word of God and that alone." What person claiming to love Christ and to be His follower can or dare differ from that statement? Any other basis for unity other than the New Testament is like building upon sinking and shifting sand. The New Testament alone, without denominational bias or human tradition, is the impregnable rock upon which the "united church" must stand. The Roman Catholic Church would never accept this standard as alone sufficient. Any unity with her must be on her terms; she will not deviate from her position as being "the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, out of which there is no salvation." She is her own standard. "Semper aedem," "always the same" remains her motto, in this respect at least. Consequently the move must be towards Rome, and so indeed it is. In the House of Lords debate it was pointed out by Lord Alexander that "there has been a steady drift to Rome by the Church of England during the last four or five decades." The same drift is noticeable in the Free Churches. Many examples could be given, but they are superfluous.

Unity among ourselves

But we must examine not only other religious communions in the light of God's word. We must be courageous and honest enough to examine ourselves. This needs humility. We cannot with truth say that in the churches of Christ, "pleading for a complete return to New Testament Christianity," we are living up to that noble plea. We claim to "speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent." But such statements can mean just as much, or as little, as we wish to make them. Neither statement is found in Scripture, so we cannot be judged or justified by them. The standard of unity among ourselves, as for others, is the word of God. We plead with others to leave their unscriptural and unauthorised ways and to come into God's way as He has laid it down in His written word. Are we ourselves ready to renounce anything we teach or do in the church of Christ which does not have the authority of His word? In the religious world the divisions and confusion have arisen over departure from the New Testament. There is no controversy over teaching and doing what is contained therein. Our own divisions and confusion arise from the same source.

For none of us can claim that there is no division among us. The "Restoration Movement" was to restore, not initiate, New Testament Christianity. Thomas Campbell, in his "Declaration and Address" of 1809 deplored the divisions in religion and stated that in the will of God the church is one. He stressed that this oneness is to be found only in adhering to the Scriptures, and that personal opinions must be let go if they prevent the word of God from operating.

The divisions we have in the churches of Christ arise through extra-scriptural matters, not from matters plainly taught in God's book. We have introduced into the church methods and practices which find no support in Scripture. For instance, our Conference Committee, business conferences, individual cups at the Lord's table. We did not find these in Scripture, but when they are challenged we go to the New Testament to try to justify them. And it cannot be done. The result is disagreement, which enlarges to division. And the controversy and dissension would not be if we were humble enough to let all go that is not scriptural and therefore necessary for the carrying out of the Lord's work.

Brethren, our greatest need is UNITY, that we may bear a clear and united witness and "that the world may believe." For this unity can we not retrace our steps and forego everything which is not necessary, and in introducing which we have given offence to brethren and are widening division? What a tragedy that the Lord's table, which should be an expression of the sweetest and deepest unity among us, is becoming, through our own conduct, the very demonstration of division. While time and opportunity are still ours let us refrain from participating in those practices which are destroying the testimony we all wish to give to the world.

In the next few weeks we shall be reading on Lord's Days the epistle to the Philippians. Let us individually take to heart Paul's exhortation in chapter 1, verse 27: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ . . . stand firm in one Spirit, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel."

EDITOR.

A TOUR OF PALESTINE. VI.

By G. Lodge

Samaria

ON the following day (Lord's Day, 24th April, 1960) we—Bro. Hardy and the writer—broke bread in the morning and then walked through the old city. In the afternoon, we left for Samaria (now called Sebastia), passing the end of a road to Emmaus. We also had sites pointed out to us as Bethel, Shiloh, Shechem and Sychar. We visited Jacob's well, 125 ft. vertical shaft, with a spring flowing through the bottom. We drank some of the water which was most refreshing. Good water in Jordan is not common.

As we stopped our 'bus in the village, we met a man carrying his all-wooden plough over his shoulder as he led his horse home. We often saw oxen ploughing, especially in Galilee. Half-way up the hill, behind the village, we came to Herod's palace, a summer residence, sometimes referred to as a temple. This, of course, was roofless, but for its age was remarkably well preserved. It had been built only 25 years before the birth of Jesus. Here it was that Salome danced for Herod and his nobles, as they drank themselves silly. One end of the hall has a semi-circular platform, with stone benches built in round the edges—almost certainly the V.I.P. end of the hall, and the scene of that night's drunken orgy. After viewing other Roman remains on this hill, we moved on to Nablus, where about 210 of the remaining Samaritans live. There are three tribes of them, and as they have continually inbred, the quality of the human specimens declines year by year. Of the group of thirty or so who appeared while we were there, two were dumb idiots. Another 110 Samaritans now live in Jaffa. The reason for our visit really was to see the Scroll of the Pentateuch which they possess. They claim it to be 3,000 years old. Those who should be able to judge say that 1,000 years is nearer its true age. It is protected by an ornamental brass cover.

Bethany and Jericho

The following day we went in taxis to Bethany, home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. We were shown a tomb—claimed to be that of Lazarus—quite without evidence except for the town name, of course. We continued on the road to Jericho, alighting at the Inn of the "Good Samaritan." This is the only building between Jerusalem and Jericho, and if its age is right (as seemed likely) then Jesus may well have had this place in mind when telling his story of the Good Samaritan. It is in the form of a rectangular enclosing wall, with buildings nowadays on the front or roadside only. It is at present used as a police station. Shortly after leaving this point, we passed a roadside sign indicating that we were beginning to go below sea level. The country here is absolutely barren and forbidding, so that robbers would indeed find this rocky, hilly, sandy area a fine territory for their business. To see greenery in Jericho was indeed a pleasant surprise.

Jericho is watered by Elijah's fountain, a spring which feeds the water channels running throughout the town. The ancient city of Jericho stands on a hill (largely a man-made hill, I fancy) standing behind the fountain. Excavations on this site have revealed two different walls, one of 5,000 B.C. and another of 2,000 B.C., and a stone-built watch tower which is probably the earliest remaining evidence of its many civilisations. The bases of the walls and of the tower (which has an entry door at the bottom) must be about on a level with the surrounding plain. This is why I suggested that the hill may be man-made—the results of repeated building and demolition on this site. The walls Joshua helped to demolish would be of mud or clay bricks and being felled, would soon be trampled under foot to become part of this ancient hillock. It was from this hillock we noticed an U.N.R.A. motor water-tanker filling up at Elijah's fountain with drinking water for the Arab refugees living in camps a few miles away—the only time we saw men at a well!

After the water has run through the town it is apparently allowed to run to waste into the sand. A little further down the road, outside the city, a retired American official had been given permission to run out a three-inch pipeline and was farming the desert quite well. What a pity that all those refugees were sitting in camps doing next to nothing, when they might be helping to make this desert "blossom as the rose." It has been done in past times and no doubt could be done again. We moved through Jericho now towards the Jordan, passing a great old tree, which the guide assured us was the sycamore Zaccheus climbed into. It was not a sycamore, but I believe that is a mistranslation, or mistaking of names at least. We arrived next at the point in the river Jordan commonly accepted as the place of baptism used by John the Baptist. It would be a feasible place to use, for it had a sloping beach and enough depth of water, even though the Israelis have removed half its old depth before it reaches this point, for their irrigation schemes.

From here we went to the Dead Sea, lunching at a beautiful modern hotel by the seashore, which proudly claims to be the "lowest spot on earth." Some of the party swam in the Dead Sea and found it very easy to float, as the sea water holds 25 per cent. of salts in solution, due to the sea having no outlet. The water felt almost greasy to the touch—definitely "thick" water.

(To be continued).

THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

THE popular cry in the religious world today is for the unity of all believers, and in general, this call has taken the form of unity regardless of differences. By the adoption of an attitude of "broadmindedness" and "toleration," men are drawing closer to each other in the name of Christ. This prevailing spirit seems to have transferred itself to the church of Christ of the present age. It is widely known that there are fragments of one kind or another which lay claim to the original faith, and therefore to the right to be known as churches of Christ, but these fragments are separated from each other, and are often torn apart internally by questions like the organ, one-man ministry, individual cups, church government, and the like. In the face of this complex situation, where seeming trivialities are dividing those who claim to be the true people of God, the idea has taken root that the solution to the problem lies in an attitude of toleration and good will in which such matters as these are to be ignored, and in which baptism should be accepted by all as a sufficient basis for unity. So long as one has been baptised for remission of sins, other considerations are of little or no account, and those concerned should unite and co-operate with each other regardless of any other consideration.

The question is whether this attitude (which is advocated on the plea of love) is right, or whether, in following the lead of other religious bodies, those who are striving for purity of worship would be committing the same disastrous error as "the blind who follow the blind."

God's Word and Unity

As with all other matters of this kind, we must determine the truth of this question by the guidance of the word of God, for this alone is the chart and compass of the church.

On the eve of his departure for Jerusalem, Paul called the elders of the Ephesian church to him at Miletus, and exhorted them to "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20 : 28-31).

Let us bear in mind that the apostle is speaking to baptised believers and elders of the church. These had the responsibility of guiding and feeding the flock.

In Jude's letter we read, "It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. "For there are certain men crept in unawares . . ." Whether there are any at the present time who can be accused of all that is mentioned in this

letter is beside the point. It is enough that such can be the case among those who claim the name of Christ. The words of the apostles make strange reading in these days when the most cautious criticism is regarded as "unchristian" and in "bad taste."

Let us take an individual case. The apostle John is known as the apostle of love, and his letters deal largely with this subject. That he loved his Lord and his brethren fervently and passionately cannot be denied, but he has some very pointed things to say about certain people just the same. In 3 John 9-10, we have his criticism of Diotrephes, who "loveth to have the pre-eminence among them. received us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." It is evident that this Diotrephes was a baptised believer, but he resisted the word of God, he undermined the authority of the apostles, and established himself as a lord over God's heritage. It is clear from his subsequent action in casting loyal brethren out of the church, that this man was utterly unscrupulous, dangerous, and treacherous. John's exhortation here is significant, "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. These are the words of one whose love for his brethren is commended by all.

Is baptism alone sufficient basis for Christian unity? Can we co-operate with all others who have been baptised regardless of any other consideration? The answer of the word of God in these scriptures and in many others, is a definite and a decisive NO! A careful consideration of the condition of the seven churches in Revelation is revealing in this respect.

The Principles of Unity

What then can we advocate as a basis for Christian unity?

The Restoration movement as we call it, pleads for a complete return to the original faith, but has become bogged down by side issues which have arisen in the course of time, and which have divided those who were once of the same mind, and have robbed the church of initiative and spirituality. These differences are not the result of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for otherwise he must be the author of confusion. They must therefore be human in origin. Somewhere, somehow, someone has left the straight and narrow path of God. If unity is to be achieved, we must all get back on the divinely appointed way.

The question arises, "Who has left the divine pattern, and where?" and this brings us to the point where we must pause to consider our differences. Where differences exist there must be error. This error must be eliminated if our worship is to be acceptable to God, for they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is utterly useless to find a basis for religious unity unless that basis is acceptable to God, for He is the one whom we seek to serve.

These differences must be resolved, and this must be done in the light of the word of God. Moreover, the principles which are applied for the solution of differences which divide parties in the Restoration movement must be equally applicable to the things which divide all parties which claim the name of Christ. These principles must be scrupulously fair, and honourable to all concerned.

The following should satisfy the requirements of the case:

- (1) Commandments: Strict observance.
- (2) Doctrines and Practices: To be clearly established as scriptural before introduction. Abolition of all not having this authority.
- (3) Expedients: (Measures which are absolutely necessary for carrying out a command where no scriptural method is given). Freedom, but no commandment, doctrine, or practice of divine authority to be violated where these are adopted.

The acceptance and application of these principles would dissolve the differences between all religious bodies. The emphasis is on the requirements of the word of God, for therein only can his will be determined. If we are to have unity, it must be for the purpose of doing the will of God. If any should find these principles unacceptable, it would be interesting to know why. We should be suspicious of any who seek to avoid them, because it is evident that they have something to hide. The righteous can safely dwell within the limits they impose, for they demand an honest and fair examination of every point of division, in the light of the word of God, and no true Christian can be opposed to such an investigation.

The call for unity among denominational bodies has come when the fires of the Reformation have been extinguished, and the tend of that call is a return to Rome with its idolatry and papal domination. The call for compromise, despite the clear instruction of the word of God, can only come to us when the fires of the Restoration movement are burning low. The time has come for us to examine this call carefully in the light of the word of God.

JOHN M. WOOD.

THE AUTHORITY FOR TRUE DOCTRINE

BY WHAT authority do you do these things?" (Mat. 21 : 23). The chief priests put this question to Jesus as he was teaching in the temple. Instead of giving them a direct answer, Jesus propounded a question to them. If they would answer it, he agreed to tell them by what authority he did those things. The question of Jesus to these elders and priests was concerning the baptism of John. Was it from heaven or from men? All doctrine today comes from these two sources of authority. If it is from heaven, it is true. If it is from man, it may be false.

Primary Authority

Authority may be divided into two classes—primary and delegated. The authority of heaven or of God is primary authority which is inherent by virtue of him being the very fountain-head of all authority. Delegated authority is authority vested in another by the one holding primary authority.

God the Father holds primary authority, yet he has seldom chosen to govern man by the exercise of his primary authority. He has chosen as a rule to exercise his authority through chosen vessels to whom he has delegated authority. This idea is set forth in these words: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things" (Heb. 1:1). God delegated authority to the prophets in ages past and in this dispensation delegated to his Son. Jesus said, "The words which ye hear are not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (Jno. 3:35). On the Mount of Transfiguration, the voice of God speaking from heaven gave the command to hear his Son, in whom he was well pleased. After the resurrection of Jesus, he declares all authority in heaven and earth is given unto him (Mat. 28:18). While Jesus was here on earth, he exercised his authority personally. He could cast out demons, cure diseases, calm the storm-tossed sea, or forgive sins.

Delegated Authority

Knowing his earthly ministry would only be for a limited time, Jesus made preparation for the authoritative execution of his will. This was done by delegating authority to the apostles. Matthew gives the delegating of this authority in these words: "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (18:18).

When authority was delegated to the Son, there was no danger of mistakes involved, for the Son was divine and infallible. However, the human element enters in when the Son makes his delegation to the apostles. To avoid mistakes and error, Jesus would not allow these men to go forth executing his will upon their own initiative but charged them to wait until they received power from on high. This power was the Holy Spirit. It came upon them on Pentecost (Acts 1:1-8). Jesus said, "the Spirit will teach you ALL things. He shall testify of me. He will show you things to come. He will guide you into ALL truth (Jno. 14:26, 15:26, and 16:13).

The apostles were under divine guidance of the Holy Spirit as they exercised the authority given them in executing the will of Christ. There is no evidence in the divine record that the apostles ever delegated this authority to anyone else. When the New Testament was completed, there was no more need for special inspiration. All things pertaining to life and godliness had been given (2 Pet. 1:3). It is the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25). For it to remain perfect, nothing can be added to it or nothing taken from it (Gal. 1:6, Rev. 22:18-19).

The words of the apostles stand as authority today. Their teaching is Jesus' teaching. Their authority is the authority of Jesus. "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Jno. 13:20).

The New Testament — Our Authority

The New Testament is our authority in doctrine today. Any doctrine or teaching not found in the New Testament must be rejected as false. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). If this principle was followed today, it would revolutionise the religious world. It would mean the end of catholicism, protestantism, and all other schisms and unity would prevail. It would mean everyone speaking the same thing, being of one mind, and being of the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10), and all walking by the same rule (Phil. 3:16).

From the many doctrines in the world today, it is evident that men have forgotten Christ has authority and that all teaching is to come from the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). To excuse the contradictory doctrines that prevail and to make all men feel that they are acceptable with God, the cry is heard everywhere, "We can't all see alike." This is tantamount to saying, "We can't all believe alike."

The true Christian walks by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). This faith is obtained from the word of God (Rom. 10:17). In the Lord's prayer (Jno. 17:20-21), Jesus prayed for all to be one who believed on him through the words of the apostles. We must conclude then if our faith has come from the word of God we will all believe alike.

His word cannot produce the confusion that exists today (1 Cor. 14:33). If we look to the word of God for his will toward us, we will find it. If we look to his word for an endorsement of our own will, we will be deceived. Will you accept the authority of the New Testament as the one for true doctrine?—*Selected.*

WORK TOGETHER

This is a Biblical idea: The Bible informs us that Christians are "working together with him" (2 Cor. 6:1). Look at the teaching of this verse. (1) We are workers; (2) we are workers together; and (3) we are workers together with Him.

Each of these facts is significant. God wants His children to be active. We are to "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). "Let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds" is another of the many admonitions that Christians are workers (see Titus 3:14).

But in addition to our being active, God wants us to be workers together. "Behold," writes the Psalmist, "how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Ps 133:1). What no one of us can do alone, all of us can do together. What abilities the one lacks in carrying on the work of the church, another can supply. What the latter person lacks, the former can supply. We are the various members of one body, and strength is in our union and danger is in our discord. We are "workers together."

Then we can fulfil the third significant portion of the text. We may become workers together with him. All of us together with all our united strength are much too weak to do the task to be done. But working together with God, we "can do all things through Christ which strengthens" us.

"SEEK YE FIRST . . ."

In order to achieve the real peace passing understanding, we must develop a proper perspective. Difficult though it may be to realise, God's kingdom and God's righteousness are to be given prerogative over everything else. Jesus said that all else would fall in its place when these two things are given first place (Matt. 6:33).

Sometimes our willing spirits have trouble with the willing flesh. Frequently, like Paul, we have to buffet our body to keep it under subjection. Why? Because all in us that is flesh argues vehemently that God's kingdom and God's righteousness are not the most important things. Our very reason seems to say that material things must come first. We cannot see how the more intangible, spiritual things deserve first place; nor can we realise that, when they are given first place, the secondary things will also be ours.

This is where we have a need for faith. Only by faith can we reach to the spiritual achievement to see how things must fall into the proper perspective and develop an awareness of the importance of spiritual matters. Remember, God's kingdom and God's righteousness demand first place in our lives. And remember also that the only promise we have of attaining all else comes after we have put God's business in its proper place. To reach this point, we must "walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR JUNE

4—Ezekiel 34:1-24.	Philippians 2:1-18.
11— " 37:1-14.	" 2:19-30.
18—Daniel 3:16-30.	" 3:1-16.
25— " 4:19-37.	" 3:17-47.

Philippians, the epistle of joy

What is joy? The dictionary tells us—gladness, exhilaration of spirits. So this title fits well the letter we are considering. Perhaps we should consider seriously what is not joy—"foolish talking, or jesting." These are forbidden to Christians (Eph. 5:4). We mention this because so many in these frivolous days think that Christians ought to be always laughing, and those who can make people laugh are given very big pay, and accorded much popular praise. This is wrong, as we well know, being acquainted with Nero's wickedness—"fiddling while Rome burned." We would not have appreciated Nehemiah had he joked over the ruins of God's holy city. His joy came when he was busy repairing the walls.

So the joy which filled Paul's great heart came from the satisfaction of looking back and viewing the faithfulness and love of the congregation at Philippi. The Philippian Christians rejoiced with him because of their share in his work for God. They all rejoiced in the eternal salvation towards which they were striving—a "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). They went about their earthly duties with heavenly aspirations, and that enabled them to face either prosperity or disaster with complete calm and trust. This would surely show on their faces, not always with a smile because they would sorrow with the sorrowful, and rejoice with the glad. When our minds are attuned to the heavenly realities and dwell upon things which are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, they are refined thereby, and vulgarity, and stupidity become distasteful—"as a man thinketh, so he is" (Prov. 23:7). So our joy should be a deep and abiding satisfaction in God and Christ. One of the most disturbing features of modern society is its concentration on what is called "happiness," but what is really only a subtle form of self-deception. It satisfies only for the moment and leaves the seeker with less strength to face the facts of life.

The title given to the letter is justified by Paul's special respect and affection for the assembly. His original entry into the town is described in Acts 16. It is interesting to note the main events recorded there. This successful evangelistic effort began at a women's prayer meeting on the river bank outside the city, where the moving spirit was a woman engaged, apparently successfully, in the business of selling purple cloth or dye. She had her own house and had already been a worshipper of the true God—whether a Jew, proselyte or Gentile we do not know. The next household of which we hear is that of the jailer of the prison. We may suppose these two households formed a part of the nucleus of the church—what a strange combination: the prosperous business lady and the man of a violent profession, dealing with the criminal section of the population! Paul and his companions, including Silas and Timothy, had doubtless been working some time in the city between the entry and their arrest and cruel and unjust treatment, leading to expulsion. So a congregation was gathered and became a force for righteousness—a colony of heaven in a colony of Rome (Acts 16:12). These all gathered at Lydia's house to bid farewell to their beloved teachers after the imprisonment (Acts 16:40).

They were far from forgetting them and twice sent them help while they were working and subject to persecution at Thessalonica (5:15 and 16).

Between that time and the writing of the letter about ten years must have passed, during which at least two visits were made by Paul at Philippi. They must have been very happy and profitable times, blessed by much teaching, increase in work and zeal and strong mutual love (Acts 20:1 and 6). Doubtless more messages and help were sent but a long gap occurred due to the gospel work undertaken by Paul taking him from place to place, in a wide and scattered area, and to his trouble, arrest and imprisonment—in Judæa and Cæsarea and the long and dangerous journey to Rome. The church at Philippi thus lost touch for a period until a messenger was found in the person of Epaphroditus to convey their gifts and messages of goodwill. He undertook this commission at the risk of his life—doubtless in journeying with a considerable sum of money over difficult country with "perils of robbers, and perils by sea." A

severe sickness overtook him after arrival at Rome. Evidently on arrival he got into close touch with Paul, so as to call for the recommendation (2:25) of being a brother, companion in labour and fellow-soldier. We comment that this Christian promptly sought out the prisoner-preacher and put heart and soul into the service of Christ. He endeared himself so much to Paul that it would have been a deep grief if his sickness had ended in death, and we picture Paul as unselfishly wanting to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi—much as he would have liked to continue the fellowship in Rome. How useful ought the people of God to be to one another, how anxious to serve one another, especially in the church, and how endearing should our fellowship be!

News must have reached Philippi of the serious illness of Epaphroditus and he was much beloved there also (the Lord sweeten and purify us all in the same way!). We must remember there was no news service, so that it would be a matter of waiting for his arrival with Paul's letter before they could be sure the Lord had spared him to be with them again. We picture a scene of great rejoicing when he did arrive with the joy-filled letter. Hearts would overflow with gratitude to God; and tears of joy and sympathy would be shed. Prayer would rise to the Father as on other occasions in the churches (Acts 4:25 and 12:5). Paul's release and sustenance would be the subject (Phil. 1:19 and 2:23-24).

Some saddening thoughts arise from this letter too, through the light it throws upon a New Testament church, and this we propose considering next month. But the joy of the apostle, and his encouragement to his readers to rejoice, permeate the letter, beginning with his joy in thinking of them (1:3 and 4); joy in the preaching of Christ (1:18); rejoicing for prayers (1:18-19); joy for self-sacrifice (2:17-18) and finally the practical outcome of the love of the Philipians (4:10). "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). This last may well have been the immediate reason for writing the letter—gratitude and love expressed—how good it is.

R. B. SCOTT.

church who has written to the column before, I am sad because I believe that this attitude is entirely wrong and surely if pursued is a basis for further ill-feeling and division. I also believe that each local assembly is responsible for its own government and practice, and that the judge of another congregation must only be the Lord Himself. Therefore I can have fellowship, support and co-operate with my brethren though not necessarily agreeing with their every practice and activity.

T. R. STREETON.

Dear Bro. Editor,

In the May issue of the S.S. a letter appeared written by Bro. Andrew Gardner. In it he states that the church in Tranent was represented at meetings held by the church in Hyvots Bank, Edinburgh. The fact that one or more of the Tranent members were present at meetings at Hyvots Bank does not imply that they in any wise represented the church in Tranent. On the contrary: the Tranent Church wish to make it known that they have never recognised or supported the church at Hyvots Bank.

The sentiments expressed by the Editor in the same issue of the S.S. are also the sentiments of the church in Tranent. We would be very happy to co-operate with the church at Hyvots Bank, but so long as they persist in the use of individual cups at the Lord's table such co-operation is not possible.

We deeply regret having to take this step, but we feel it necessary to make our position clear so as to allay any doubts that may have arisen in the minds of our brethren.

D. SCOTT, Secretary.

"THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD" TREASURER'S STATEMENT Year ended March 31st, 1961.

	Income	£	s.	d.
Bank Balance at 1-4-60 ..	292	8	10	
Cash Balance at 1-4-60 ..	103	17	2	
Subscriptions	285	9	1	
Gifts	47	19	9	
		£729	14	10
	Expenditure	£	s.	d.
Bro. W. Barker (Printing)	422	6	6	
Bound Volumes	16	13	6	
Postage & Stationery	53	3	5	
Balance at Bank	209	7	1	
Cash in Hand	28	4	4	
		£729	14	10

Treasurer's Remarks

A comparison with the 1960 statement (S.S., April 1960) show an increase in the cost of printing of £105. This is offset by the fact that this year includes two months from the previous year.

The amount of subscriptions is increased, due to several overdue contri-

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Bro. Editor,

I was a little unhappy after having read the comments which followed the publication of certain reports concerning the work in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The implication was that the S.S. is not prepared to fully identify itself with these churches because of certain practices which might be unscriptural.

As a member of an "Association"

butions having come to hand. Unfortunately gifts are down by a greater amount than this increase.

For the Future

Two facts must be faced. Printing costs are going up again due to the increased price of paper. The number of subscribers is going down. Very little can be done about costs—except meet them. We look to your generosity in this matter, brethren. The reasons for the latter position are various. The majority of the cancellations have followed our refusal to publish notices which were considered against the general good of the churches. Similarly, a few years ago, subscribers were lost when a free discussion of the Evangelistic Committee was published.

What can We do about it?

- (a) Each buy his own copy. Don't be content to wait till someone passes a copy on to you.
- (b) Tell others about the paper. One sister in Canada has introduced no fewer than six other readers.
- (c) Pay for your copies promptly without needing a reminder.
- (d) Read the whole of each issue when you have bought it. It will do you good, we hope.

Thank you

A closing word of very sincere thanks to those brethren and churches who so regularly send not only their full dues but that extra gift which keeps the paper solvent. It is not always possible to write "Thank you" letters when gifts are received, so, to one and all, thank you! and please may I say "Keep it up."

PAUL JONES.

then when we held the first meetings in our new meeting-place in Petticoat Lane. We were greatly encouraged by the presence of brethren from near and far, and we appreciated the teaching and preaching of Brethren Will Steele, Albert Winstanley, Geoffrey Lodge and Frank Worgan. About 150 gathered on Saturday afternoon, and even more were present at the evening meeting. We had well-attended meetings on the Lord's Day, with almost sixty present at the afternoon Bible School.

On Saturday afternoon, the secretary gave a report of the work, in which he stated that the church had received £1,050 in gifts from churches and individuals. The Ince church had contributed £725, and we had received £1,100 in loans from brethren. It was estimated that we should still need a little more cash to clear all the accounts that had still to come in for work done. Voluntary work done by the brethren must have saved the church at least £1,000.

Everything looks promising for the work in Ince. Bro. Frank Worgan, recently returned from Holland, is labouring with us. We are also encouraged by the addition to our numbers of several Christians who desire to help with the work in this area.

Pray for us, brethren, that as we faithfully sow and water the seed, God will give the increase.

The church rejoices in reporting the first addition through immersion since moving into the new meeting-place. On Lord's Day, April 16th, Susan Worgan, aged eleven, was immersed.

Peterhead.—On Lord's Day, April 16th, we were filled with joy at the restoration of a sister to the church. May she remain faithful.

J. T. BUCHAN.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Blackburn, Hamilton Street.—We have just had a rich time of fellowship during an eight days' mission conducted by Bro. A. Winstanley. Again we can say our brother gave of his best, and excelled in his exhortations and gospel messages. Though we cannot report any additions, some friends have become interested through our united efforts, so we are praying that we shall reap in due season.

We wish to thank all the brethren who came over to help us, especially from Cleveleys and Wigan districts. The attendances at all meetings were very good, considering it was a holiday period.

Christ was preached and exalted, the church strengthened, the people had the Gospel preached unto them. To God be the glory.

H.W.

Ince-in-Makerfield (Lancashire).—March 4th and 5th, 1961 are days to be remembered by the church here, for it was

OBITUARY

Tranent.—It is with great sorrow that we record the passing of our esteemed Sister Jane Jamieson, who fell asleep in Jesus after a short illness on April 31st at the age of seventy-two. The news of her passing came as a great shock to those who knew her and loved her.

Sister Jamieson was a member of the church for over fifty years. With her late husband and her son Tom, she entered into fellowship with the church in Tranent a few years ago, and her joy was to serve the Lord she loved. She will be greatly missed but we look forward to the day when we shall meet again in "the land that is fairer than day." We commend her son and his family to the grace of God, and pray that He may richly bless them in their hour of grief.

The services in the home and at the graveside were conducted by Bro. W. Steele.

D. SCOTT.

COMING EVENTS

Wigan: Scholes.—Special weekend meetings, Saturdays and Lord's Days, June 10th to 25th. Saturday, June 10th and Lord's Day, June 11th both at 7.30 p.m. Bro. R. B. Scott. Saturday, June 17th: Tea 5 p.m., Gospel 7 p.m. Bren. F. Day and T. McDonald. Lord's Day, June 18th, 7.30 p.m.: T. McDonald. Saturday, June 24th, 7.30 p.m. Lord's Day, June 25th: Bro. T. Nisbet.

We appeal for your support in prayer and presence.

AN INVITATION

Cleveleys.—May we remind brethren spending their holidays in Blackpool or the Fylde coast that we shall be pleased to welcome them to our meetings in the Co-operative Hall, Beach Road, Cleveleys.

The meeting for breaking of bread is at 10.30 a.m., and evening meetings will be held, when possible, at 6.30 p.m. If any visiting brother is prepared to serve the church please advise the secretary, Bro. Eric Winter, 77 Kelvin Road, Norbreck, Blackpool.

CHRIST HAS NO HANDS BUT OUR HANDS

Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today;
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men on His way;
He has no tongue but our tongue
To tell men how He died;
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side.

We are the only Bible
The careless world will read;
We are the sinner's gospel;
We are the scoffer's creed;
We are the Lord's last message,
Given in deed and word;
What if the type is crooked?
What if the print is blurred?
—Selected.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Frank Worgan, 8 Greenways, Standish, Wigan. Telephone Standish 2059.

BREVITIES

Recipe for a better tomorrow: Give the best you have today.

Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible, and achieves the impossible.

It's hard to remove the beam from our own eye if our hands are full of stones.

We defend our friends in the same proportion that we love them.

Dishonesty is a forsaking of permanent for temporary advantages.

Persecution is not wrong because it is cruel, but cruel because it is wrong.

Some people try to serve the devil in such a way as not to offend God.

To banish, imprison, plunder, starve, hang, and burn men for religion is not the gospel of Christ, but the policy of the devil. Christ never used force or violence but once, and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, not to drive them in.

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