

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 22. No. 11

NOVEMBER, 1956

The Knowledge of God

BROTHER JOHN SCOLLER used to say that the right understanding of the word 'knowledge' in the Scriptures is a key to unlock many seeming mysteries in the sacred writings. In nothing is this truer than in man's attitude towards God.

Bible Knowledge

We rightly deplore the fact that appalling ignorance of the contents of the Bible exists among most people. We confess that even Christians do not know as much as they should of what the Bible teaches and how to handle it. Sometimes this lack of knowledge is demonstrated by tests, or 'quizzes,' given to University and College students. Very often such 'quizzes' are used to test children in our Sunday Schools. When our children emerge satisfactorily from such tests, when they can state how many books in the Old Testament, can name five apostles of the Lord, or can recite a few verses from John 14 we are proud. The growth of such methods is no doubt largely due to the popularity of radio programmes like 'Twenty Questions' and 'Any Questions?'

We believe that knowledge displayed in such ways can be overrated. It is possible to know the numbers of books, chapters, verses, words and even letters (all these have been counted) in the Bible without their having any effect whatever upon life. In other words, we may know all *about* the Bible but not *know the Bible*. We may know just who wrote which book, and yet not know its Divine Author.

A Book and its Author

Have you ever had the experience of meeting the author of a book you have read? After reading the book you may have wanted to know its writer. When such a wish has been fulfilled, with how much greater relish and appreciation do we return to the book. We tell others of the book and that we have seen and spoken with its writer.

Some years ago a noted author of books for children visited the High School where she had been educated, and autographed copies of her books for the children. For many weeks afterwards there was a tremendous demand for this author's books in bookshops and public libraries. Why? Because the readers had seen and knew something of the writer. Now her books had new interest and new meaning. They became alive with the author's personality, and gave greater delight. Their readers not only knew *about* her; they *knew her*.

The lesson applies itself : the Bible is the Book of God ; He is its author, its originator. His is the mind behind its sublime teaching. It is His word, His revelation.

Yet, as we have seen, we may know much *about* the Bible—its history, geography, personalities, customs, but still not know its Author. We may know much *about* God—His dealings with mankind in history, His majesty and power, yet not know God Himself.

Knowing Man

Over the ancient Greek temple at Delphi were inscribed the words 'Learn to know thyself,' meaning, as we sometimes say, 'Man, know thyself.' Alexander Pope wrote in his poem, *Essay on Man* :

'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan ;
The proper study of mankind is man.'

Yet how can man know himself ? He may know all *about* himself, be able to name and number every bone, muscle, sinew, nerve in his body, may understand his exact physical make-up, and be able to describe how all his parts function. But does he then know *himself* as he really is ? Is there no other part of man than the physical ? Is he simply the highest animal ?

Of only one was it said that 'he knew all men . . . knew what was in man.' If man cannot know himself, even less can he know God, except insofar as God has revealed Himself. 'Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ?' (Job 11 : 7).

This revelation God has made in clear unmistakeable fashion in Jesus Christ, His Son. He said of the Father, 'Ye have not known him, but I know him,' and 'the world knew thee not, but I knew thee.' He reproached an apostle with the words, 'Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip ? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'

Knowing God

And where do we find this highest and final revelation of God, His 'last word to man' ? The question answers itself. God has revealed Himself in various ways in nature and in history. But nowhere do we see His love and redemption so clearly as in the Scriptures, which alone bear witness of Christ (John 5 : 39). God gives 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God' where ? In nature ? In history ? No, but 'in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 4 : 6).

We can know God, then, in the Christ of the written word. Just as we know a person not through knowing or reading about him, but through meeting and talking and having fellowship with him, so we know God through meeting Him in worship and at His table, talking to Him in prayer, and walking with Him in fellowship, through our Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, the one mediator.

How true is it of all of us that

'We have not known Thee as we ought,
Nor learned Thy wisdom, grace and power.'

And how our aspiration should be

'Lord, give us light Thy truth to see,
And make us wise in knowing Thee.'

We remember reading of an occasion when a world-famous actor thrilled his audience by his reciting of the 23rd Psalm. With all his histrionic powers and the skilled use of voice and gesture he held his hearers spellbound while he repeated the glorious words of the Shepherd Psalm. Rapturous applause greeted the performance. Then an old man made his way to the platform and simply spoke again the familiar words ; yet with such understanding of their meaning that his sincerity could be felt by all

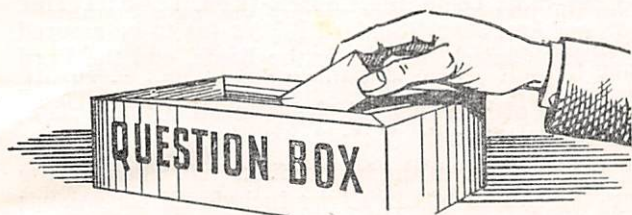
who heard. No applause greeted the old man, but in the silence the actor again stood up and said, 'My friends, I know the 23rd Psalm, but this man knows its author.'

Oh that we all may yearn, with Paul, to 'know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death.' This yearning can be translated into reality, for 'this is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou didst send.'

But at best, in this life our knowledge of God must be limited by what we are. It is truly said that to know a person thoroughly we must be with him in his home. Even so, to know God fully, to realise all His glory and power, His love, mercy and holiness, we must be with Him in His home.

We do not fully know God, but God fully knows us. But as God fully knows us now, so in eternity, untrammelled by the limitations of the flesh we shall know Him. 'Then shall I know fully, even as also I was fully known.' (1 Cor. 12:12).

EDITOR.



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Q. Is the Church of Christ the only church recognised by the Lord? Can one be saved in any denomination?

A. 1. *The One Church.* It should be abundantly clear to any student of scripture that the Lord has only one church. The testimony of the Lord is emphatic on the point. Matt. 16:18 'Upon this rock I will build my church' (not churches); John 10:16: '... and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.' Jesus prayed, 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' (John 17:21). The oneness of the people of God is to be as close as that between the Father and the Son. The Lord further demonstrated (John 15) the same truth by the figure of a vine. Here He represents Himself as the vine, the apostles as the branches, and all Christians as the fruit. All are one, from and in the one vine.

Paul's words are equally emphatic. Eph. 4:4: 'There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.' That the 'one body' is the church is seen from Eph. 1:22-23 and Col. 1:18. Again, Paul shows the same truth under the figure of a temple (1 Cor. 3:16) and a house (1 Tim. 3:15). Again notice, he does not speak of many temples, and many houses, but one temple, and one house.

2. *Denominationalism and the One Church.* Many denominations recognise this truth, but claim that the sects are various parts of the one church. But this is not true. When the Lord used the figure of a vine, with its branches and fruit (John 15); or Paul used the figure of a body and its constituent parts (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-20) or a temple and its building (Eph. 2:20-22), they spoke of individual Christians, and not of sects and parties. Paul clearly shows this in 1 Cor. 12:25. Again, the word 'churches,' is only used in the New Testament of individual congregations within the 'one body' and not of different sects (see Rom. 16:16; Rev. 1:4).

Denominationalism can have no place in the Body of Christ, for it (a) Destroys the union of the 'one body' (1 Cor. 1:10-12; 12:25); (b) Is of human origin, and therefore will be eventually destroyed by the Lord (Matt. 15:13); (c) Dishonours the name of Christ (1 Cor. 1:12-13); (d) Is condemned as a sin (Gal. 5:19-20, see R.V. marg.). Note that 'factions,' and 'parties,' are put on a par with such sins as fornication and idolatry; (e) Carries within itself the seeds of its own decay (Luke 11:17); (f) Is to be rejected by all true Christians, in that they are warned to reject all those that cause division (Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10; 2 John 9-11).

3. *Denominationalism and Salvation.* The above in itself shows that denominationalism and salvation cannot be found together, for sectarianism is a sin which excludes from the kingdom of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21, R.V.). The same truth can be seen from the opposite aspect, for no-one can be saved outside the Church of Christ. (a) There is no salvation except in Christ (Acts 4:12). To be in Christ, is to be in His Body, the Church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1, 18); (b) to be cleansed by the blood of Christ, we must come into the institution for which He shed His blood (Acts 20:28); (c) to be reconciled to God, we must be in His Church (Eph. 2:16); (d) to be in the family of God, we must be in His Church (Eph. 1:4-5; 1 Tim. 3:15; 'house', 'household', see American Standard R.V.); (e) to be assured of eternity, we must be in His Church, for she is the Bride, and the Lord is the Bridegroom (Eph. 5:25-27); (f) all spiritual blessings are in Christ. The Church is '... the fulness of him that filleth all in all' (Eph. 1:23); (g) The Lord alone adds to His Church (Acts 2:42).

May it be added, lest there be any misunderstanding, that when we use the term, 'the church', or 'the church of Christ' we include all Christians; that is, all those, *but only those*, who have obeyed, and are adhering faithfully to the Lord's word, wherever they are, whether known to us or not.

Q. Is it right for a Christian woman to continue to live with her husband who will not allow her to attend the Church assembly? Would she be justified in leaving her husband, that she might obey her Lord?

A. As far as this writer is aware, the Scriptures make no provision for a believer to leave the unbelieving marriage partner, but only the reverse: provision in case the unbeliever leaves the believer (see 1 Cor. 7:10-17). But they do teach, that in the case of one becoming a Christian after marriage, everything should be done to preserve the marriage with the unbelieving partner (1 Cor. 7:10-11). Paul reminds the Christian (a) '... but God hath called us to peace' (verse 15): it is the Christian's duty, as far as possible, to be at peace with all, and especially with the one to whom he or she is married; (b) 'For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?' (verse 16). Christian forbearance may not only lead to the saving of the marriage, but make that marriage true in the Lord, in the saving of the soul of the unbelieving companion (1 Pet.3:1-2); (c) 'But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk'. (verse 17). Where one partner has become a Christian, he or she should not seek to change one's lot in consequence, but rather change the unbelieving companion to whom one is married. However, in spite of this the first loyalty of the Christian must be to Christ. In the case of the wife, this must come even above the headship of her husband (Acts 5:29). Furthermore, in the judgment day only our own deeds will be taken into account, and not whether or not disobedience has been induced by others.

This writer's advice to the questioner therefore is: that only after everything else has been genuinely tried and failed should she take action

that may lead to the breaking up of the marriage; not by leaving her husband, but by opposing him on the matter of assembling with the saints, and absolutely refusing to disobey her Lord. Since no husband in this western world has such absolute power as to prevent a wife exercising her just rights, he would be faced with either having to reconcile himself to the situation, or leaving his wife. If the latter should occur, then the wife '... is not under bondage in such case' (verse 15), that is, not free to marry again (verse 11), but no longer under the headship of her husband.

Since the questioner is not known to the writer, may a note of general warning be added. It is tragic when a wife, having become a Christian, finds herself in this position. It is far worse when a Christian invites such a possibility by marrying an unbeliever. Let us have the courage to teach that marriage of a Christian with an unbeliever is not merely undesirable, but sinful (see 1 Cor. 7:14, 39; 2 Cor. 6:14).

Q. If anyone withdraws membership from the Church and is never reinstated (a backslider), does he have any chance in the hereafter?

A. The word 'withdraws' in the question is incorrect. The New Testament never speaks of a backslider withdrawing, but of falling away. If a Christian falls away through following false teaching, he is 'severed from Christ' and 'fallen away from grace' (Gal. 5:4, R.V.). He is therefore cut off from the source of spiritual life (1 John 5:11-12; 2 John 9). If he falls away through hardness of heart (akin to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit) and rejects the only means that God has of saving him, then he crucifies the Son of God afresh (Heb. 6:4-6). If he 'sins wilfully' through failure to hold fast to the faith and to continue in love and good works, or if he forsakes the assembly, then if he continues in this state, '... there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins' (Heb. 10:23-31). If he goes back into the world, then it would have been better if he had never known the way of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:20-21). There is always a way of forgiveness for the direst sinner, even the Christian who has fallen away, if he is repentant (1 John 1:9). But for the unrepentant backslider not only is there no hope in the hereafter, but he faces a worse fate than that of the unbeliever (Heb. 10:27-31; 2 Pet. 2:20-21).

The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life

The fourth lecture on the theme of the Holy Spirit
given at Hindley Bible School, 1956 by Leonard Channing

THE New Testament says much in regard to the Holy Spirit, especially in connection with the Christian life. Yet, strangely enough, we, as New Testament Christians, say comparatively little about the subject. This is not as it should be, for the work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely fundamental to the Christian life. We propose to consider the subject under three headings: (1) The promise of the Spirit; (2) The indwelling of the Spirit; (3) The work of the Spirit.

(1) The promise of the Spirit

The New Testament speaks of several different gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it is well at the beginning to make clear the distinctions between them. Firstly, we read of the gift of the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Only the Lord could possibly have this, 'for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Secondly, there was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was also a gift (see Acts 11:17), not a general promise. It was given on but two occasions, both as signs: at Pentecost, to show that the king-

dom of Christ had commenced; and to Cornelius, to show that the kingdom had come to the Gentiles. Thirdly, we read of what may be called 'the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.' These gifts also were not given to everyone, even in Apostolic days. Paul, for instance, desired to visit Rome, one of the reasons being, ' . . . that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.' Further, the gifts by their very nature could only be temporary, for they could only be imparted by the laying on of the Apostles' hands (see Acts 8:14-17). Their purpose was simply to confirm the Word, and when this was accomplished they passed away. (See Mark 16:17-20; Acts 2:16-20; 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Heb. 2:3-4).

But what of the ordinary Christian in New Testament times upon whom the hands of the Apostles had not been laid? And what of Christians to-day? Undoubtedly, there is a fourth promise of the Spirit, which, unlike the others, is general and abiding. The Lord promised this gift of the Spirit in John 7:37-38: 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' John under inspiration explains the statement: '(But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)' (v. 39).

Note, this promise is without limitation, for it is addressed to all who believe on the Lord. Peter, in fulfilment of this statement, makes the same promise on the day of Pentecost in even more definite terms (Acts 2:38-39). Peter repeats the same promise in Acts 3:19: ' . . . when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.' (See also Acts 5:22). Paul also speaks of the same promise in Titus 3:5-6, and many other scriptures refer to the same subject.

This gift is to all Christians, even to those in New Testament days who subsequently received special gifts of the Spirit. This is made clear in Acts 6. The Apostles directed the church at Jerusalem to select seven men to serve tables. One of the qualifications of the men chosen was that they were to be 'full of the Holy Spirit,' men who had received to a great degree the promise to all Christians, and who were living Spirit-filled lives. The Apostles then laid their hands on them, and two of them afterwards worked miracles. It is thus evident that they were given, in addition, the special miraculous powers of the Spirit.

But what is this gift of the Spirit promised to all Christians? Some extraordinary answers are given to this question. But the New Testament makes it perfectly plain, that it is nothing less than the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself. There are many scriptures that state this. We quote only two: Rom. 5:5: 'And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us'; Rom. 8:9-11: 'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.'

Let us at this point emphasise that the Holy Spirit is a *person*, Deity, the Third Person of the Godhead. We deplore the speaking of the Holy Spirit as 'it,' as occurs in so much literature on the subject. It is as dishonouring to speak of the Spirit in this way as it would be to speak of Christ! And it is as a *person* that the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of a Christian. We have heard so much of the Holy Spirit working through the Word (rightly so, in the proper sense), that some are in danger of having

a mechanical and impersonal view of the Spirit's indwelling. We can talk of the power of the Holy Spirit, His influence, His working through the Word; and all this is true. But never confuse the Holy Spirit Himself with His instrument or agent.

(2) Indwelling of the Spirit

There are two ways in which the Spirit of God could come into our hearts: either by enveloping us, suddenly, mysteriously, directly from heaven; or by making His entry through an instrument, vehicle, or agent. The former idea is widely held in the evangelical world. Many will pray for and do all sorts of things in order to experience the supposedly sudden indwelling of the Spirit. But the second position alone has the support of scripture.

As to what this instrument or agent is the scriptures are equally clear. Jesus said in John 6:63 'It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.' Again (John 16:13) the Lord said to His disciples, 'Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.' Later He prays for them, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.' Again, 1 Pet. 1:22-23 says, 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.' The agent or instrument by which the Spirit dwells in the heart is therefore the Word of God.

This is in line with the Lord's original promise (John 7:38). Belief in Christ, through acceptance of His Word, means the indwelling of the Spirit in the heart. This is exactly in accord with what happened at Pentecost. The Word was preached, was believed, was obeyed, and the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled. This is in line with what Paul says in Gal. 4:6, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' It is not to make us sons, but because we are sons of God, that the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart.

This may be illustrated another way. Paul says in 1 Cor. 6:19 'What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you.' Now would God have dwelt in the Temple of old, manifesting Himself in the cloud of glory, unless the right conditions had been present, His people obedient to His will, His priests consecrated, His temple cleansed? God actually withdrew His presence because these conditions did not prevail. Yet, how many of us are offering to the Spirit of God human temples in which there is little consecration, lives disobedient to His will, and hearts filled with the defilements of the flesh. The Spirit through His Word has laid down the conditions of His indwelling. Comply with these conditions in the first place, and the promise of His presence will be fulfilled. Continue to comply with His Word, and He will continue to dwell in the heart.

This is the very test that the Word of God gives us, that we might know whether we have the indwelling of the Spirit. The test is not emotional, mystical, miraculous, or spectacular. Rom. 8:16 says, 'The Spirit itself [himself, R.V.] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' Here are two witnesses. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit witnessing through the Word. On the other, my spirit witnessing through my life. When these two come together, when my spirit tells me that I have come into line, and am living in accordance with the Holy Spirit's Word, then I know that I am a child of God.

(To be continued)

Baptism is a Test of Faith

[The article that follows is the concluding portion of one of a series, 'That they all may be one,' being written for the *Mission Messenger* by W. Carl Ketcherside. In the earlier portion of the article, Bro. Ketcherside has set out, under nine headings, the necessary qualities of the act of faith through which God bestows remission of sins upon those who obey Him. Now he proceeds to show how baptism fulfils all these conditions.]

Identifying the Test

WHAT test does God propose to determine if our faith is of the quality which deserves a bestowal of His great blessings of forgiveness of transgressions, the indwelling of His Spirit, and the hope of eternal life? The simplest and easiest way to answer this is to determine what the inspired apostles required of those who believed, in order that the remission of sins might be freely granted. No better occasion could be afforded for our information than the first proclamation of the glad tidings. This proclamation in fact must take place after the acts which constitute the proclamation. Since those acts involve the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we must come this side of His resurrection. That brings us to the first Pentecost succeeding that event, and the public proclamation of the apostle Peter.

After insisting upon the conviction or faith of his hearers in the Messiahship of the Nazarene, he heard them ask, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' This was a plain question. It deserved an unmistakable reply. The reply was given. 'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins' (Acts 2:38). Notice that they were to be baptised in the name, that is, by the authority, of Jesus Christ. Here was a real test of faith in that authority.

Remember that there are certain things which cannot be denied. Men may, in order to justify certain creeds and opinions, quibble about meanings and applications of these things, but the facts are unalterable. The people asked what to do. They were told to repent and be baptised. They were told to do this by the authority of Jesus Christ. They were instructed to do it by an ambassador of the absent King. That ambassador was under the direct impulse of the Holy Spirit. Regardless of what may be entailed in baptism as here commanded, and irrespective of its antecedents, consequences, or relationships to the plan of God, sinners were told by divine authority to be baptised, and this extended to Jews, their posterity, Gentiles—that is, all who were subjects of the call of the glad tidings. This is the test of faith as proposed by divine authority. All the scholarship of the world agrees that the word baptism in its original import meant 'immersion, submersion, burial, overwhelming,' and this is substantiated by the universal practice of the primitive Church closest to the time when the command was given. That this was immersion in water is evidenced by Peter himself in Acts 10:47.

But our interest lies in whether baptism in water of a proper subject fulfils the requirements of a test of faith, looking to the reception of blessings of such magnitude as are held forth by the glad tidings. . . .

Examining the Test

1. Immersion in water is a single, simple open act, to which one can submit without being possessed of great philosophic acumen. There is nothing in the word 'immersion' which indicates more than a burial in some element. Not even the idea of coming forth from the element is found in

the word. Of course, since one is to enter a new relationship, and live a new life, the rising from the element is a necessary part of obedience, but this we learn from other terms and examples of its fulfilment. When one is buried with Christ in water, and that because of his faith in the Son of God, he has submitted to the test of heaven.

2. Baptism can be misunderstood only by those who want to do something other than what God has authorised, and by the very act of beclouding the term, show that they lack the first essential—faith. The same rules of interpretation applied to any human document written in the same age, to the same people who were instructed to be baptised will establish beyond any shadow of doubt just what baptism involves.

3. Immersion in water is not a secret, personal, private or internal act to produce purging, but is an open act which may be witnessed by many, and must always be witnessed by at least one other, the one who performs it, thus constituting an initiation ceremony into the community of the saints.

4. The material element employed is universally obtainable. . . . This one item alone goes far towards establishing immersion in water as a test reflecting divine mercy, and when considered in conjunction with the other attributes of such a test will conclusively demonstrate it.

5. The rôle of the one being immersed in water is passive. The one who immerses another acts in the rôle merely of burying one who is dead. One could not more scripturally immerse himself than he could physically bury himself after his decease. All divine communication relative to the action of baptism is given to the one performing the act, and never to the one submitting to it. What other arrangement could the Divine Intelligence have commanded which so aptly fits this requirement?

6. Only humble souls can be recipients of God's blessing. Any test therefore which would admit those worthy, by the same token must bar entrance to those who are not. Rebellion and pride are the twin evils of the human heart. Faith must dethrone the first, and humility the second. Nothing can be so destructive as baptism to either of these. One must submit to authority, simply because it is authority. No reasoning process can figure any relationship between what he is required to do and what he seeks to obtain. Rebellion is crushed in baptism. . . .

7. The immersion of the body or any part thereof in water has been recognised as a means of cleansing, and is universally practised for this purpose. So true is this, that special instruction had to be given, that in the performance of the act as a test of faith, it was not for the 'putting away of the filth of the flesh.'

8. Baptism is a re-enactment by the individual of the facts of the glad tidings, which constitute the power of God unto salvation. 'Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection' (Rom. 6:3-5).

9. It is here that baptism proves its worthiness as a real test of faith. Remission of sins takes place in heaven. It is an act of God and not of man. But baptism is performed on earth by man and for man. No-one can see any connection between one man immersing another in water and

the remitting of the sins of that person in heaven. There is but one reason why any accountable being would submit to baptism in water, and that is because of faith in the authority of God.

Baptism and Remission

Is baptism for the remission of sins? There is nothing in water which has any power to remit sins. There is nothing in the act of submerging in water which can remit sins. Forgiveness is an act of the divine mind operating in behalf of man and conditioned upon the faith of man. It is an act of undeserved kindness bestowed upon the basis of belief in a person—the Son of God. Baptism is a test of one's faith in Christ. By submitting to this test, man places himself in a position where the grace of God becomes operative in his behalf. God has not eliminated the will of man in the scheme of redemption. He only tests the willingness of man to bow to His authority. Can a man receive remission of sins if he refuses to be baptised? Certainly not! Noah would not have been saved if he had refused to build the ark; Abel would not have been approved of God if he had not offered a blood sacrifice; the walls of Jericho would not have fallen if Israel had refused to march around them; Naaman would not have been cleansed of leprosy if he had refused to dip in the Jordan. When God proposes a test of faith as a condition to reception of certain blessings, it is an act of unbelief and rebellion to ask Him to grant those blessings while refusing to submit to the test.

When a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and is immersed in view of that faith, his sins are remitted and he is adopted into the family of God as an heir. 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.' These are the words of our Lord. But some man adds, 'That is, if he understands that baptism is for the remission of sins.' But God does not say that! That is a human rider attached to the divine revelation. It is an unwritten creed. When there is a believing penitent and the proper action, it is beyond the power of any man to affect the design, whether the subject fully comprehends the design or not. The design of baptism has to do with God's part. When man does what God demands, God will do what He has promised.

Ordinance of Induction

In any ordinance of induction or translation, a proper subject complying with the ordinance, is inducted into that state to which the ordinance is intended to induct, whether he understands the design or not. A slave who is ignorant of the design of the papers intended to secure his freedom, will be just as free when he makes his mark in lieu of a signature, as one who fully understands the whole legal procedure. The sacred scriptures nowhere teach that the design of baptism is contingent for its fulfilment upon a knowledge of that design by the subject of baptism. Such a requirement cannot be a matter of faith. It is arbitrary, dogmatic, and a mere creedal opinion. Men confuse the design of baptism, and the knowledge of that design, until they make remission of sins dependent not upon obedience to the act that God authorises, but upon the degree of human knowledge of the purpose of God.

Every individual upon this earth who believes in his heart that Jesus is the Son of God, and who is immersed in water in conformity to and motivated by that faith, is God's child and my brother. I invite all such to forsake Babylon and to unite with us in an effort to restore the Church of God in its purity. Rejecting all human creeds and opinions as bases of fellowship, let us stand upon His Word.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

READINGS FOR NOVEMBER, 1956.

Nov. 4—	Psalms 46.	1 Thess. 1
„ 11—	Proverbs 10 : 1-12.	
		1 Thess. 2 : 1-12.
„ 18—	Jeremiah 11 : 1-14.	
		1 Thess. 2 : 13 to 3 : 13.
„ 25—	Exodus 20 : 1-21.	
		1 Thess 4 : 1-12.

PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CHRISTIANS AT THESSALONICA

It is obvious from the contents of this letter that it is the first we have of Paul's. The circumstances of its writing are quite clear, from a brief study of Acts 17 and 18 and the contents of the letter itself. It must have been written only a short time after the visit (2 : 17), and while Paul, Timothy and Silas were together at Corinth (Acts 18 : 5). Timothy had joined Paul at Athens, but he sent him as a messenger to Thessalonica, being anxious for the young church's stand under severe trials. The result of that visit is manifest in the tone of the letter. The apostle's heart overflowed with gratitude and joy to know that his converts were standing fast.

We trace briefly the story: Philippi was the first important town in Europe in which the gospel was preached, and the work was begun very thoroughly in quite a short period, probably only a few weeks. The preachers left there in no condition for more work, but probably continued their work as they passed through towns and villages on the great Roman road which passed across Macedonia as the main highway from Rome to the east. Thessalonica would be the first big town, and here the synagogue gave opportunity to reach Paul's own countrymen, whose training and knowledge of the Scriptures would be rightly expected to open the way for the gospel message. The past experience was here repeated; 'reasoning' and 'opening and alleging' from those same scriptures to the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, led to a division among the Jews. The suffering of the Christ and death by crucifixion proved a stumbling block to many, but Gentiles interested in the true God through contact with Jews were more ready to accept the truth, and did so in large numbers—'a great multitude'—the better educated well-to-do women also.

This preponderance of Gentile Christians probably accounts for the absence of references to the Old Testament in

the letter, and this nucleus of thoughtful people including of course those Jews 'who consorted with Paul and Silas,' surely accounts for the early development and astonishing progress of the church.

Apparently only three weeks passed before the unbelieving Jews began the campaign of slander and instigation of the mob, but during that time and until they left, the preachers had indoctrinated the new-born Christians quite thoroughly. The powers conferred by the Holy Spirit doubtless had much to do with this, and we can safely presume that members of the church received miraculous powers through the laying on of the Apostle's hands (1 : 5). But the great example of love, patience and self-sacrifice set by the Apostle and his companions, won their hearts and stabilised their faith. This taught them most plainly the importance of the message, and its great urgency. Men do not bear suffering willingly without some reason, and the very fact of their passing through such trials at Philippi, and doubtless bearing the marks of their ill treatment, would gain the attention of reasonable folk.

The first three chapters of the letter are largely expressions of personal feelings and actions. We cannot but think that some had accused the apostle, in his absence, of running away from persecution, and of staying away for the same reason, and probably also of being mercenary (2 : 5—'cloak of covetousness'). Thus we read a defence of behaviour (2 : 1-12), and plan for a visit (2 : 17; 3 : 10 and 11). It is clear that it was more the compulsion of the brethren that caused Paul's hasty departure from both Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17 : 10 and 14), than desire on his part. The Saviour's instruction to preachers is clear—'if they persecute you in one city, flee to the next' (Matt. 10 : 23).

In its joyful and triumphant tone the letter resembles that to the Philippians, written several years later, and the reason is the same. The churches of Macedonia were particularly forward in supporting the apostle and in giving for the poorer brethren (2 Cor. 8 : 1-5). They had developed these Christian habits and virtues in advance of others.

The letter abounds with commendations. We can take as persons and as churches the various points of these and endeavour to deserve such ourselves. We would like to be celebrated for 'work of faith, labour of love, patience of hope' (1 : 3), to become examples to all the believers in a wide district—or in the nation.

News travels faster now than it did then, but which church of Christ in this country is famous for its zeal in the

Lord's service? (1:7 and 8). None of us has turned from idolatry of the old heathen type, but have we even turned from idols such as respectability and worldly standing, or from sectarian ideas to those taught by God Himself in His word? Or do we exercise ourselves, like the apostle himself, to be affectionately desirous of all our brethren, willing to impart as it were our own souls to one another? Christians of to-day, alas, too often forget to live "holily and righteously and unblameably." We all need the exhortation to "walk worthily of God, who calleth you into His own kingdom and glory." It should indeed be our longing to see all the churches united, vigorous and keeping to the 'old paths' without compromise. One cause of thankfulness is specially important to-day—the acceptance of the message of God through the apostles as the truth 'which also worketh in you that believe.'

We observe that Timothy's mission from Athens was to 'comfort' Christians enduring severe persecution. This means rather encouragement to bear the trial. It is not to say it will soon be over, but to draw attention to what had already been preached and taught, namely the second coming of the Saviour, as that for which they must prepare by continuing to live pure and holy lives (2:19; 3:13). Service to God must be accompanied by patience in expectation of the return of the Saviour. It is very evident that the preaching of New Testament Christianity must include warning of the wrath to come. Probably in rich, populous and wicked cities like Thessalonica and Corinth this aspect of the gospel would have a prominent part.

Chapters four and five include instruction and warnings. The main points are: 1, the necessity to avoid fornication, hardly reckoned as a sin among the heathen, and forming part of their worship; 2, the duty of brotherly love; 3, teaching about the second coming; 4, diligence in business; 5, respect for the bishops.

The prominence of the second coming is certainly striking. It occurs in each of the three earlier chapters, and occupies about 13 verses of the rest. These constitute a more explicit revelation of this great event than is given anywhere else in the New Testament. We meet the same facts in 1 Cor. 15:51 and 52. Here the apostle's teaching seems to have arisen from Timothy's report, or possibly the question put to him as to what would happen to those now dying among the Christians at Thessalonica. The expectation of an almost immediate return raised the thought that those who died in the meantime would lose the great reward and thrilling experience of meeting the Lord upon His return.

Paul assures them that this will not be so, but that those who are alive would not have any advantage. Having stated this Paul also recalls his teaching that 'the day of the Lord' will be unknown until it comes. Christ Himself laid the emphasis on the uncertainty, and surely this is just what we need to realise. Whether we are to live a hundred years or a day the position is just the same—we must be ready 'for in an hour that ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.'

It was good indeed that the early Christians were filled with expectation of an early return of Christ. This made them more earnest and stimulated them to greater effort to purify themselves and win others. This thought is expressed in the last chapter in verses 23 and 24 in a beautiful parting wish.

A remarkable summary of instructions is embodied in verses 13 to 21 of the same chapter. These are reminiscent of Romans 12:7-21, where there is the same concentration. A lifetime of effort will not exhaust obedience to the commands.

We suggest that this short letter be read through several times at a sitting before more concentrated study is given to detail. Such reading if thoughtfully done cannot fail to help us to get a grip of Christian duty. To attune our minds to the apostolic sources of joy might well have astonishing results, for real love, real joy and real peace are the exclusive possessions of the Christian.

R. B. SCOTT.

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The Church of Christ Hymn Book

The Hymn Book is now on the press and the first proofs have been received. The printers, William Byles and Sons, of Bradford, are making every effort to deliver for distribution by the end of the year, but cannot guarantee this.

In the meantime it is important that orders from churches and individuals be sent in as soon as possible to BRO. FRED HARDY, 'WINDYRIDGE,' BAGHILL GREEN, WEST ARDSLEY, NR. LEEDS. If possible please send cash with order, as funds are urgently needed to defray cost of printing. It would be deeply appreciated, too, if churches which have undertaken to make donations towards the cost of the book would send their contributions now.

PRICES: ordinary edition, bound black or navy blue cloth, 435 hymns, 6/- per copy, including packing and postage. We are sorry to be unable yet to state the

price of the india paper, leather-bound, gold-lettered edition, as samples have not yet been approved. Efforts are also being made to produce a strong leather-bound edition for platform use, but it has been found impossible to issue an inter-leaved edition for use of precentors. The cost would be prohibitive.

Please act at once, brethren and friends, to help to pay the cost of 5,000 copies which have been ordered.

From the Treasurer

A number of you have written wishing me well in my work for the *Scripture Standard*, and I would like to thank you all for your good wishes.

The time has come for me to look to you for an expression of those good wishes in deeds. I think we should look upon the matter of our subscriptions as a Christian duty, for the Bible commands, 'Owe no man anything.' I realise that many of you have already sent your subscriptions for 1957, and to you I say thank you, for you have helped me most of all.

Between now and the end of the year I hope to send every one on my list an account of payments. By the time you read this you may have received yours. When you do, brethren, will you consider it your bond and duty to return the account together with your subscription? It is necessary when subscribing to a worldly paper to send the subscription with the order, and to renew it yearly. Why is it that some expect to receive a Christian paper and pay for it sometimes one, two, or even three years afterwards? These things ought not so to be. See to it, brethren, please.

If you find some small odd amounts on your account it is because you commenced to subscribe part way through the year; I would like to get all accounts to end in December. Church accounts will be to the end of 1956 and afterwards at half-yearly intervals, unless quarterly or yearly accounts are requested.

To all who go a second mile and send a gift as well, let me say that the *Standard* is most grateful. Without your help we would cease to publish in a very few months. The net cost, without postage, is approximately 9½d. per copy.

Again thanking you, one and all.

PAUL JONES.

CORRESPONDENCE

[We have received a few more letters bearing on the subject of Evangelism. In view of the fact that during the past four months this matter has had so much space in the 'S.S.' its pros and cons been advanced, and that three conferences this year have dealt with it, we think it wisest to close the correspondence. We wish no discourtesy to any contributors, and trust they will understand and appreciate the reasons for this decision.—EDITOR].

LETTER FROM NEW ZEALAND

Dear Brethren in Christ,

With my wife and two daughters we arrived at the end of July in New Zealand to reside permanently. Everything has gone well to plan, and we are delighted with all that we have seen and heard. We were given a great welcome by the brethren in the small church at Richmond, and have found it good to meet each Lord's Day with these people, among whom are brethren who for some years have worshipped in their own homes, H. Gill and D. Hammond, with their faithful wives.

Bro. and Sister E. Paul Mathews began work with this group at the beginning of this year, and before we arrived, four had been added to the Church, and two young people since. Bro. Mathews comes from the States, and it has been good to discover that we are able to work together. He is a good preacher and a fair teacher, and we need each other as we work in the vineyard of the Master.

We have moved into the city of Nelson, for my work is there, and the college for Marion and Pauline. Also we believe that here a good strong church can soon be started. To this end Bro. Mathews has an office here, and this week we are starting meetings in one of the large rooms that will hold about 40 persons; seats, etc., we have had to make. We trust that this room will be worth all the time that has been put into it. It is in the centre of the city, in a main road.

We have held to date six meetings on Lord's Days in the evening, in a large hall that we were able to hire, and by so doing have found some who were interested in the Gospel, and we are hoping that they will continue to meet with us.

As we have a large house with large rooms, many young people are coming to visit us, and we are able to have in our home a good attendance at the Bible Study on Thursday evenings; also one night a week is set aside for singing practice. This work we are sure will soon

show some sound results for the Master. I have never seen people so ready for the truth as the people here. It is a good field and if the work is put into it, the harvest is sure.

An advert, is placed in the city paper every week, and as everyone reads the paper, adverts, as well, the news that the Gospel is being preached is getting around.

There is a group here known as the 'Associated Churches of Christ,' but is far from the Scriptures on vital truth. We have had talks with some of its members; they are with the sects in the Ecumenical Movement, and hold ecumenical baptismal services, and of late have baptised a Methodist into the Methodist Church. They are not going to make it pleasant for us, and are concerned about our meetings, but we intend to expose their errors, as with all the sects around, as we preach the word of truth. Instrumental music is used by them.

Nelson is the key to a far-reaching effort. W. J. COLE.

Address: c/o Mr. D. Hammond, Ranui, Appleby, Richmond, Nelson, New Zealand.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Bristol, Bedminster.—It was with much joy we heard the good confession and witnessed the immersion of Annette Griffin on September 9th, also that of Judith Stevens, on September 16th. These two young Sisters have had this under consideration for some time, and they are very happy now they have made the decision. We trust that in service for their new Lord and Master their happiness will continue and increase. F. W. W.

Cape Town

We are glad to sound out good news to the glory of God. During my nine months' full-time effort, we were glad to witness four women confess the Lord Jesus and united with Him in baptism. They were personal contacts I had made, and were baptised on 9th September.

I have been privileged to speak to backsliding members who have expressed their desire to return to 'the fold.' On 16th September, due to the labours of the Lansdowne assembly we witnessed two women and a man also confess the Lord Jesus in baptism.

Then on the 11th and 22nd September and on 6th October I convened special meetings to give my personal testimony, with others also speaking, and assisted by our young people. The aver-

age attendance at these special meetings was 79. This effort has brought eagerness, zeal and determination to do greater things for God.

This is really an encouraging spirit being manifested; and by the grace of God we are determined that this effort by the churches in the Peninsula shall continue. If we drift into a state of laxity Satan will rejoice, but steadfast in faith we shall unitedly resist him.

On September 30th owing to the efforts of the new work started at Simonstown, a woman was baptised. We in Cape Town are indeed rejoicing, that in one month eight souls were added to the Church.

I am visiting and encouraging the various assemblies in the Peninsula, such as Grassy Park, Lansdowne, Simonstown and Wynberg. At Stellenbosch, a country village about 36 miles from our assembly, where most of the people are members of the Dutch Reformed Church I have come in contact with a family who seem very interested in the simple gospel, so please pray that it might lead to the salvation of that and other families. T. W. HARTLE.

Hindley.—The Church has just concluded a successful effort with Bro. A. E. Winstanley as the preacher. We commenced a nine-night mission on Saturday, September 15th, and the response was so encouraging we continued a further five nights.

Attendances exceeded our expectations. Brethren from near and far journeyed to be with us.

Four thousand copies of *Truth in Love*, invitation cards and window posters were used to notify the public of the meetings and many responded. Four were added to the church as a result of the effort—Irene Bold, Graham Gorton, Brian Hurst, and Ernest Rudd.

Bro. Winstanley spared no effort. His messages were clear, simple and distinct.

We appreciate the prayers and good wishes of brethren and thank God for fulfilled promises and answered prayers. We press on to greater efforts for His praise and glory. TOM KEMP.

Morley.—**Conference and Rally.** When the Morley brethren, after much thought, decided to invite the conference to share the Autumn Rally meetings on October 6th, they immediately implemented that decision with energetic and prayerful preparation. The response to their invitation and the dignified approach to the momentous issue involved gave them cause for sincere thankfulness.

The number attending proved their decision to use the commodious Baptist

Tabernacle to be the right one. Brethren A. E. Winstanley and R. B. Scott provided deep spiritual teaching, and made the Rally an inspiring occasion. Bro. R. MacDonald, a long-trusted servant of the Morley church, fulfilled the duty of chairman.

After yet another eventful and inspiring week-end, we thank all those loyal brethren who encouraged us along the way. We give thanks also to our Heavenly Parent.

FRED SUGDEN.

The Morley Conference

Under the chairmanship of Bro. A. Hood the conference took place in the afternoon of Saturday, October 6th. Bro. F. Hardy welcomed the brethren in the name of the Morley church, and stressed that the purpose of inviting the conference was the desire to spread the gospel.

The chairman read from the S.S. the Proposition and the Amendment appearing in the September and October numbers, and he outlined the scope of the conference. There was very little discussion, except on matters of procedure. The feeling seemed to be that the subject of the Committee and Evangelism had been so fully dealt with recently that there was nothing to be gained by further statements.

Voting on the Proposition and the Amendment (the Amendment taken first) resulted in 43 for the continuance of the Committee and 18 for its disbandment. The six members of the former Committee were re-elected: Bren. F. Hardy (Morley), A. Hood (Hindley), G. Hudson (Cleveleys), C. Limb (Eastwood), R. McDonald (Dewsbury) and H. Wilson (Blackburn); together with four additional members: Bren. H. Baines (Morley), L. Daniell (Bedminster), A. L. Frith (Cleveleys) and W. Smith (Newtown, Wigan).

Discussion followed on the work to be carried out by the Committee, with a view to the efficient evangelising of the country.

Leven, Fife.—We rejoice to report that Sister Manson, formerly of the 'Plymouth Brethren,' who has attended our gospel meetings, expressed her desire to become one of us. She was received into the church on Lord's Day, October 7th. We pray that she may be but the first of many who will be added to the church as

we labour in this new corner of the Lord's vineyard. May the Lord bless and keep her.

J. W. DAVIDSON.

Slamannan District.—On September 29th, a meeting of Bible School teachers was held at Slamannan, under the chairmanship of Bro. Jack Nisbet (Haddington). Approximately fifty members were present. After tea the chairman warmly welcomed all present and introduced Bro. Clyde Findlay, from Texas, U.S.A. Following a reading from Matthew, 13th Chapter, our brother gave a very instructive talk on 'A Sower,' the teacher; covering what a teacher should be; should know; and can do; emphasising that teaching is not telling or talking, but is 'causing to learn.' He showed that teaching includes preparation, presentation, and application.

In conclusion Bro. Findlay said, 'If the Scribes in the temple had known that Jesus, the boy in their midst, was the Christ, how carefully they would have asked and answered.' Therefore let teachers fear, recognising that in our midst is Christ, attending how we teach. The usual discussion period followed.

B. DAVIDSON.

Tranent.—The Church rejoices again in seeing fruit for its labour. We are glad to report the addition to the Church of Roger Kerr, son of Bro. and Sis. Joe Kerr. He put on the Lord Jesus in baptism on Lord's Day, September 30th. May the Lord richly bless our young brother

D. SCOTT.

Wigan, Albert Street.—September 4th to September 14th we had the pleasure of a visit from Belgium of Bro. S. Timmerman. The meetings each night were well attended, friends being present at nearly all of them. Our brother spoke on the precious promises of God, and his untiring labours made a deep impression. We look forward to the time when the seed faithfully sown will bring forth fruit and yield a harvest of souls.

We are glad to report the restoration of two brethren and trust they will remain faithful to their Lord. We thank all members of district churches for loyal support, and we pray for God's blessing on the efforts for the extension of God's Kingdom. For all these inspiring and uplifting times to God be the glory.

W. SMITH.

NEXT CONFERENCE

Will churches please note that the next conference is due on Saturday, April 20th, 1957? Also, will any church desirous of entertaining the conference please let me know so that arrangements can be put in hand without delay?—A. Hood, 45 Park Road, Hindley, Wigan, Lancs.

COMING EVENTS

Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Beulah Road.—We warmly invite the brethren to share in our 32nd anniversary of the beginning of the church, Saturday, November 24th. Tea 4.15 p.m., Social Meeting 6.0 p.m., to be addressed by Bro. F. C. Day of Summer Lane, Birmingham, who will also serve the church on Lord's Day, November 25th.

The Secretary would appreciate notification of numbers intending to come.

T. WOODHOUSE.

Wigan, Scholes.—Mission, Saturday, November 17th to Lord's Day, December 2nd. Preacher: Bro. Gary Adams, American missionary in Holland. Gospel meetings: Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Lord's Days, at 7.30 p.m. Saturday, November 24th, 74th Anniversary of Church. Tea 4.30 p.m. Gospel meeting 6.0 p.m. approx.

We extend a sincere invitation to all brethren to help us to make this mission a success, and to meet and hear Bro. Adams. Visiting parties should write to Richard Ratcliffe, 254 Bolton Road, Aspull, Nr. Wigan.

BIRTH

To Roseline and Eric Winter, 77 Kelvin Road, Norbreck, Blackpool, a daughter, Claire, on September 30th. We thank God for His grace and brethren for their prayers.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

The church formerly meeting at Cross-roads, Leven, Fife, now worships in Community Centre Hall, Macduff, East Wemyss, Fife, midway between Kirkcaldy and Leven.

Also please note change of Secretary's address (Bro. J. W. Davidson) from 4 to 10 Sandy Brae, Kennoway, Fife.

WHAT THEN?

WHEN all the great plants of our cities
Have turned out their last finished
work;
When merchants have sold their last
silk,
And dismissed the last tired clerk;
When banks have raked in their last
dollar,
And paid out the last dividend;
When the Judge of the earth says:
'Close for the night,'
And asks for a balance—What then?
When the choir has sung its last an-
them,
And the preacher has made his last
prayer;
When the people have heard their last
sermon,
And the sound has died out on the
air;
When the Bible lies closed on the altar,
And the pews are all empty of men,
And the Great Book is opened—What
then?
When the bugle's call sinks into silence,
And the long marching columns stand
still;
When the captain repeats his last orders,
And they've captured the last fort and
last hill,
And the flag has been hauled from the
masthead,
And the wounded afield are checked
in,
And a world that rejected its Saviour
Is asked for a reason—WHAT THEN?
—J. WHITFIELD GREEN.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly. Prices: Home, one copy 7/6; two copies 13/6; three copies 19/6, post free. U.S.A., one dollar per copy. Canada, Africa, Australia, New Zealand: One copy 7/-; two 13/-; three 19/6. All orders and payments to the Treasurer: PAUL JONES, 122 Heathfield Road, Birmingham 19.

All matter for insertion must be sent before the 10th of the month (news items the 15th) to the Editor: C. MELLING, 76 Tickhill Street, Denaby Main, nr. Doncaster.

EVANGELIST FUND: Contributions to R. McDONALD, Lumley House, 4 Clarke Street, Westboro, Dewsbury, Yorks.

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

NYASALAND MISSION. Contributions to W. STEELE, Atholl Dene, Longniddry, East Lothian.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is printed for the publishers by
Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd., Langley Mill, Nottm.