

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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**
** **“A SURE AND STEADFAST ANCHOR FOR**
** **THE SOUL”**
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** “THOU ART THE SAME AND THY YEARS HAVE NO END” (Psalm 102:25) **

** “THOU ART THE SAME AND THY YEARS WILL NEVER END” (Heb. 1:12) **

** “I THE LORD DO NOT CHANGE” (Malachi 3:6) **

** “JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER”
** (Hebrews 13:8) **

** “Yesterday, today, for ever Jesus is the same:
** All may change, but Jesus never – Glory to His Name” **

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** **‘THE PROGRAMME OF CHRISTIANITY’**
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IN what has been termed “The Year of Revolution,”—1848—two German Communists in England—Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels—published *The Communist Manifesto*. The book set out the principles of Communism and what must be done to bring about Communist Revolution. In the years since it was issued the *Manifesto* has had an epoch-making effect upon the world, politically, historically and even religiously. It still remains, theoretically if not in practice, what we might term “The Programme of Communism”.

In the later nineteenth century (1851-1897) there lived a famous minister in the Free Church of Scotland — Henry Drummond. He was a magnificent, spell-binding preacher, a lecturer who influenced thousands, especially young men, by his teaching, and a writer of many books. Some of these latter became world-wide in their fame and sold in thousands. Two of Drummond’s works — *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* and *The Ascent of Man* — had a vast influence upon philosophical and religious thinking of Drummond’s era. They are still read, although not nearly so widely, and their titles are still remembered.

Another famous book of Drummond's was entitled *The Greatest Thing in the World Love*. This book contains an essay, *The Programme of Christianity*. The title is based upon Isaiah 61:1-3: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord; that he might be glorified."

We will remember that this passage is the one that Jesus read in the synagogue in Nazareth, as recorded in Luke 4:15-19, and upon which Jesus went on to teach the congregation. In expounding Isaiah's prophecy Jesus demonstrated that He was Messiah: the works and mercies prophesied by Isaiah Jesus was already doing and would continue to do. Hence He was announcing His mission. Henry Drummond thus terms Isaiah's prophecy "The Programme of Christianity". As the Marx-Engel's book of 1848 was a *Manifesto* of Communism, so Isaiah's statement is the manifesto of the Messiah — the programme of Christianity.

"Social" Christianity

Drummond goes on to stress the SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY. He attempts to show that the things Isaiah says the Messiah will do all concern *this life, this world*, and that the Kingdom of God will thus come and be manifested.

Now there is no doubt that Christianity must be seen and realised in the attitude towards and concern of Christians to the suffering, the poverty, the needs, the injustice of the world: "man's inhumanity to man"; the selfishness and brutality which even governments display towards the needs of other peoples than their own; the wars, lust for power, the down-treading of those unable to help themselves, and the closing of our ears to the cries of the afflicted. Indeed James in his epistle (especially 5:1-6) shows the wickedness of oppression and that the works of Christians demonstrate the sincerity of their faith (2:5-26). If Christians, as churches or as individuals fail to respond, with the things we possess, to the needs of mankind our witness is destroyed, or at least hindered. Not only James's epistle, but the great prophets of the Old Testament denounce the hypocrisy of those who, although performing their duties to God, are unconcerned about their responsibilities to those in need.

We admit that we do pitifully little to alleviate these sufferings. Our church treasurers' books do not often enough contain items of expenditure on gifts and help to the distressed. There are certain reasons for our lack of awareness in this way: the needs of mankind are so great, but we feel frustrated as to how to minister to these needs—how to get the help to them. We have chiefly to rely upon organisations like Oxfam, Save the Children Fund., which detracts from the glory that should be God's in moving His people to carry out His will as shown to us so plainly in scripture. Then, too, this suffering is so far away from us; it doesn't touch us. We thank God for providing for our needs, and if we remember the needs of others it is so often only in our thoughts and prayers, which cost us nothing.

All this we must admit to be true. As regards our more immediate relations with our fellow men, well, we have the Welfare State, in which the needy are provided for from the cradle to the grave, and no one need go in want, but all have the right to be maintained. This relieves us, we think, of our urgency to give relief: the needy are the concern of the State. This has brought about the reaction that much of the teaching of scripture on our responsibilities to minister to others no longer applies to Christians, we say, because the State has taken over. Hence we are released from those responsibilities. So what can we do?

There is a further danger, perhaps more subtle. We can get so involved in social activities that the church comes to be merely of this world, part of the world's make-up a social organisation. In these days we see that this danger is more than a trend: it is a definite movement, to the neglect of the preaching of the gospel and of the holiness of the Christian. We come down to the level of the merely natural, and bear little mark of the supernatural and the spiritual. Although our Master taught that "My kingdom is not of this world" we treat it as being *merely* of this world.

The Kingdom of God

Henry Drummond in his *Programme of Christianity* was attempting to show that the Kingdom of God consists in ministering to mankind in the things of this life. There is no doubt that his essay has had profound effect upon the thought and action of so-called Christianity ever since. It is glibly repeated that the Victorian era was one of the prosperity of the few and the stark poverty of the many; and that Christians, especially those termed "Evangelicals" were so preoccupied with heavenly things that they neglected the earthly — that they were "so heavenly-minded that they were of no earthly use".

And yet: that period produced followers of Jesus Christ, both men and women, who had no peace of conscience unless and until they responded to the needs of their fellow men, spiritual and social. The later nineteenth century saw the rise of great missionary societies, sending out taking the gospel to faraway lands and people; great revivalist campaigns which aroused people to the "social" as well as the spiritual implications of the gospel; such movements as the Salvation Army, with its stress on the necessity of feeding and clothing the poor and the outcasts from society; the great societies for the care of the aged, the sick, the crippled, the children. However much we disagree with or question some of the practices and teachings of these bodies, the facts are clear — they contributed to lifting the level of life and to the truth that God cares for and suffers with the needy; and we today owe our vastly increased standard of living to the love and sympathy of those men and women of God.

"But the Kingdom of God does not mean food and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." The great mistake of Henry Drummond and of all proponents of "Social Christianity" is that they think that by serving the physical and temporal needs of men they are setting up the Kingdom of God. You cannot satisfy spiritual need with physical food, Jesus, who taught so much that His servants are to serve their fellows in this life's needs, taught also that "Man shall not live by bread alone."

I read Drummond's essay "The Programme of Christianity" some twelve years ago. After reading it I pencilled a note at the end: "All this, and yet not a word as to how a man becomes a member of the kingdom of God — 'Except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3-5).

EDITOR

NE-HUSHTAN — A PIECE OF BRASS

2nd Kings 18:4. Man will worship. We find from the earliest days the desire in man to worship. In the beginning Cain and Abel offered sacrifice to God. After the flood Noah's first act was to build an altar. Wherever Abram pitched his tent he built an altar, as also did Isaac and Jacob. This continued until God gave instruction to Moses to build the tabernacle. Moses carried out each detail as God commanded, adding nothing to it nor taking anything from it. Tabernacle worship continued until God's presence was enshrined in the Temple of Solomon.

Later in history we find men changing their ideas; but not so with God. When we come to the reign of Hezekiah, we find the people begin to worship the "trim-

mings" — not God. King Hezekiah was a true reformer: he was one who used the hammer whenever he came in contact with an idol or an altar, which interfered with true worship. With his hammer he would break it in pieces. He had this desire to please God. Scripture tells us "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord". He named the brazen serpent Ne-hushtan. He cleansed religion. There was no half measure with this man.

Look what Hezekiah did

1 *"He removed the 'high places'"* The sanctuaries of the Cannanites were mostly conspicuous places. Each high place came to be attached to some seat of idolatrous worship. A high place was equivalent to a sanctuary in the eyes of the people. Scripture associates divine worship with mountains. The woman at the well in Samaria said "Our fathers worshipped in these mountains, but ye say Jerusalem is the place to worship" (John 4:20).

Moses was called of God to go to Mount Sinai; God spoke to Elijah in Mount Horeb. Each tribe had its own high place and the Cannanitish shrine exercised an unholy influence upon the people of Israel. Amos and Hosea denounced the sinfulness of worship in high places, but Hezekiah was the first to break it down.

2 *Hezekiah "broke the images."* The people had broken God's law (Ex. 20:3-5; Lev. 26:1). All images are made of stone, wood, metal or other material. All images or idols demand sacrifices. Even Jacob's wife had her little idol. How many of us have our little images or idols?

Before the Fall, man was created in the image of God, unmarred, perfect. But sin changed his image.

3 *"He cut down the groves"*. Groves were long poles attached to the Cannanitish shrines. Micah (5:13) said "Thy craven images also will I cut off; thou shalt no more worship the work of their hands. I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee — so will I destroy thy cities." Deuteronomy 16:21,22 says "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up any image which the Lord thy God hateth."

4 *"He broke in pieces the brazen serpent"*. Hezekiah had great courage to do this. It had been made by Moses on God's instruction, and had been divinely used to save thousands of lives. (Num. 21:4-9). The people sinned by speaking against God and Moses. "Wherefore have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in this wilderness?" they cried. Because of their sin God sent fiery serpents which bit the people so that many died. God then commanded Moses to erect a fiery serpent on a pole. Everyone who had been bitten were to look upon this serpent in order to live. The history of the Israelites shows that, against the will of God, this serpent became a part of their worship. Jesus Christ explains that this was a symbol of Himself being lifted up. (John 3:14). He further said "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32).

The children of Israel burned incense. The burning of this incense was an act of worship. In Ex. 30:34 we are told of the material from which this incense was compounded; it was sweet smelling. Clouds of incense accompanied the high priest as he entered the holy of holies: this is a symbol of prayer. The incense formed part of the morning and evening prayer. Their sin lay in worshipping these things and not God Himself.

Many churches are dominated by high places or altars; too many are embellished by idols and images. They still have their groves and clouds of incense. These cannot save them, nor hide men's sins from God. Paul warns us about "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:11). Only the shed blood of Jesus can cleanse us from our sins. With the coming of the Lord Jesus, the types and shadows were fulfilled.

"The types and shadows of the world..."

The woman at the Well of Samaria said to Jesus "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say that Jerusalem is the place to worship". Jesus replied "...the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father..." They that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. Before we can worship Him, we must accept Him as our Saviour. Jesus said "I am the way, the Truth and the Light.

In Acts 2 Peter points out the way of salvation by which we can obtain Eternal Life and never let your religion be called - "a piece of brass", Ne-Hushtan - dead, but like Hezekiah, do the things that are right in the sight of the Lord.

T. BLACKMORE

ADULT BAPTISM MAY BE MAJOR TREND

From "New Zealand Herald," Monday, June 7th, 1971

By John Ross "Herald" Staff Reporter

FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS ARE LIKELY TO ARISE FROM A NEW EMPHASIS ON THE BAPTISM OF ADULTS IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.

"GETTING THE BABY DONE", SOME SOURCES SUGGEST, MIGHT BE A THING OF THE PAST IN 20 YEARS.

The new emphasis on the baptism of adults could lead, ultimately, to the virtual elimination of infant baptism in the Anglican Church. If this happens, the practice is likely to be closely re-examined by other major churches - Presbyterian, Catholic and Methodist. (The Baptist Church, the Churches of Christ, and the Brethren and Pentecostal Churches baptise "believers" - those who are old enough to understand what they are doing.)

Commission set up

In Auckland, Bishop E.A. Gowing is setting up a commission, convened by the Dean of Auckland, the Very Rev. J.O. Rymer, to look at the implications of the new service. Representatives of the Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodist, Congregational and Associated Churches of Christ Churches, are being invited to join the commission.

Dean Rymer said the commission would examine whether the new service "measures up to the best understanding of the will of Christ for His Church", and whether the service represents any departure from the mind of the Anglican Church as expressed in the Prayer Book and the 39 Articles.

One effect of the general acceptance of adult baptism could be a revitalisation of the Anglican Church. Churches which practise adult baptism are recognised by many as being more dynamic, with a higher level of individual commitment, than those which do not. In other words, an adult who makes a conscious decision to be baptised and becomes a Church member is more likely to be an enthusiastic member of his Church than one who has been baptised as an infant and is confirmed almost as a matter of course.

Clergy unhappy with stand

Anglican clergy have recently been becoming increasingly unhappy with the official stand of their Church on Baptism. In Britain, clergy are reported to have left the Church because of disagreement on this issue.

In New Zealand, allowance has been made in the past for the baptism of adults, but only a very small proportion of Anglicans have been baptised as adults. The newly introduced 1970 service of Christian initiation apparently reverses the previous position. It emphasises the baptism, confirmation and first Communion of adults, while still making provision for infant baptisms.

The Ven. D.S. Millar, Archdeacon of Dunedin, and chairman of the Commission on Prayer Book Revision, which began looking at the services of baptism and confirmation early in 1967, said there had been a growing practice of baptising and confirming adults in the Anglican Church, and a return to the pattern of Christian initiation followed by the early Church. The new service was experimental, he said; It would be reconsidered at next year's General Synod of the Anglican Church, and there would be a further revision after four to six years.

The introduction to the new service the commission is putting forward for the approval of the church, has in mind as its subject an adult person not previously baptised. "This person would be baptised with water, receive the laying on of the bishop's hands, and be admitted to Holy Communion, all at one continuous service. "It is, of course, assumed that a large number of people, though probably a smaller proportion than in the past, will be baptised in *infancy*." The introduction also states that "this service is not, in the intention of the commission, a revolutionary innovation". Archdeacon Millar, said the commission expected the service, as a unit, would probably only be used in a minority of cases at present, but it expected this to be extended in time.

Baptism of Infants would continue

The baptism of infants, however, would continue, and this section of the booklet could be taken by itself. Archdeacon Millar said the Church would not discourage infant baptism, and he added: "I would not like to say we are endeavouring to replace infant baptism with adult baptism."

Some Anglicans, however, suspect the move is much more significant than anybody is prepared to admit and that the new emphasis must be introduced gradually, to "avoid chaos", as one vicar put it. And if this is merely a liturgical change, it seems strange that serious consideration is likely to be given to the introduction of services of infant dedication which would presumably replace infant baptisms.

The warden of St. John's Theological College, the Rev. Canon R.S. Foster, said that in the very early days of the church infant baptism was for children of Christian parents. In those days, however, everyone was regarded as being a Christian. "I don't think the new service has any theological overtones or undertones," he said. "But I can see that it might well have practical effects in due course - say in 10 years - when adults are being baptised, and parents who are not Christians will not seek baptism for their children". The church's thinking about the value of infant baptism has not changed, he added.

Trend termed Logical

But it is in the process of changing, according to the Rev. H.G. Boniface, vicar of St. Margaret's Hillsborough, who said the Anglican Church was rethinking the whole question. However, it was not the way of the Church to make major, sudden alterations, so while there had been a shift toward adult and away from infant baptism, there had been no condemnation of the latter.

"One could perhaps, prophesy that 20 years from now, infant baptism will be the exception rather than the rule," he said, "In fact, it might well be a thing of the past. I personally feel that as the Church moves away from a belief in St. Augustine's teaching on original sin, the whole theological basis of infant baptism

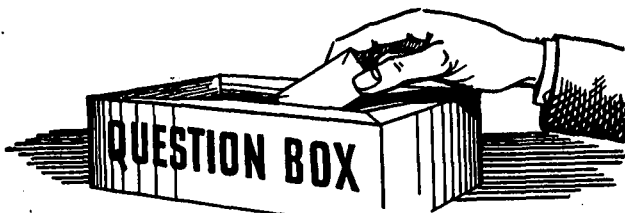
is being undermined, and it is logical for the church to move over to adult baptism as the norm."

Another Anglican who feels the Church might have gone farther than it is prepared to admit, is the Rev. C.L. Cullen, vicar of St. George's, Papatoetoe, who said that he, like Mr. Boniface, found it very difficult to accept the traditional teaching on infant baptism. "I don't believe we can accept a scriptural understanding of the meaning of Christian initiation and still maintain the traditional ideas about baptism," he said

The principal of the Baptist Theological College, the Rev. J.A. Clifford, said he was all in favour of the practice of Christian initiation being brought closer to the practice of the early Church.

Half way house to reform

But the Anglican service as it stood, retained confirmation, and could therefore be only a halfway house toward baptismal reform. Mr Clifford said he was particularly surprised confirmation had been retained for an adult who was baptised as an adult. "It's a pity the commission did not follow its own logic and take a long, hard look at the root source of baptismal confusion — infant baptism itself," he said. If adult baptism became established as the norm, however, it would be much less difficult to deal with the whole question of infant baptism. Mr Clifford said he expected that if adult baptism was generally accepted in the Anglican Church, complications would arise in the current Church union talks. (Sent by Bro. S.Wilson, Auckland, N.Z.)



Conducted by
James Gardiner

"Could you please comment on two verses in Proverbs chapter 26 which appear to be entirely contradictory. Verse 4 says, "Answer not a fool according to his folly..."; verse 5 says, "Answer a fool according to his folly..." Are not these very contradictory statements?"

At first reading (and perhaps even at a second reading!) these verses certainly seem completely contradictory. However if we quote the verses in full they look a little less contradictory, and indeed we might even begin to think that we can see the explanation of the apparent contradiction.

Quoted in full verse 4 says, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him."

Verse 5 in full says, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes".

Various sorts of fools

The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about foolishness and wisdom, and in this chapter has a few pithy comments to make on the matter of fools and foolishness. None of us would like to be regarded as fools, and likewise it would be only with great reluctance that we would regard anyone else as "a fool". It is a designation that we should hesitate to apply to anyone, for do not we all occasionally behave in some foolish way or make foolish statements? There are however, apparently, certain individuals whom God regards as fools — who behave and talk in what is generally accepted as a foolish manner. It may be due to a lack of intelligence (and thus not be entirely their fault) or it may be due to culpable disregard for common-

sense and decency. A fool is not necessarily a knave — he may be just lacking in good sense, His eye may not be evil — just blind. Fools are often stupid to the degree, says Solomon, that they fail to learn by experience (a hard enough school). Most of us can think of instances in the past where *we* have lamentably failed to learn by our experiences: but Solomon is probably referring to some who *never* seem to profit from some past *faux pas* or indiscretion.

In the first verse of the chapter Solomon says that it is very unwise to try to bestow honour upon a foolish person. It would be as untimely and incongruous as snow in summer and rain at harvest time. In verse 3 he says the situation of fools is so hopeless that the only language likely to be understood by them is of physical violence — “a whip for a horse, and a rod for a fool’s back”. He further says in verses 7 and 9 that it would be a complete waste of time to expect any intelligent communication from fools, for a parable in their mouth is as a thorn piercing a drunken man’s hand. He who sends an important message by the hand of a fool is as a man who cuts his own leg off and displays the stump (v.6 New English Version). As a dog returns to its vomit so a fool returns to his folly and repeats his act of stupidity. (v.11)

It is while Solomon, the writer of the book of Proverbs, is speaking in this vein that he says, “Answer not a fool according to his folly...” and conversely “Answer a fool according to his folly...”

How fools should be dealt with

Proverbs often present two sides of the same truth in what is an apparently contradictory form and here, in the two verses under discussion, I believe that Solomon is merely saying that *in certain circumstances* a fool should be ignored and *in certain circumstances* he should most certainly be answered. Elsewhere in the scriptures Solomon says that there is a time to keep silence and a time to speak (Eccl. 3:7) and obviously his observation applies when one is confronted by foolishness. I think the phrase in each verse beginning with “lest” is a good guide to us in understanding the apparent contradiction in the verses, and in telling us in what circumstances we ought to keep silence and in what circumstances we ought to speak.

In verse four, therefore, Solomon says that we should “Answer *not* a fool according to his folly, *lest we also be like unto him*”. Thus in circumstances where we would be descending to the level of the foolish person in our answers, or in the way we answered, we should avoid answering at all. If we couldn’t answer without becoming as foolish as the foolish person we ought not to answer. Jesus was asked many foolish questions, but He *never* gave equally foolish answers. He put them by or gave an unexpected turn to the question and silenced the adversary. He was never inveigled into vain and puerile discussions and arguments. In other words, it seems that Solomon is saying, “Don’t answer a fool according to his folly by degrading yourself *to the level of a fool* and answering him in equally foolish language or manner.

On other occasions, however, it seems that foolishness deserves a swift and cutting rebuke and thus in v.5 Solomon says, “Answer a fool according to his folly, *lest he be wise in his own conceit*.” I suppose that sometimes dealing with foolishness is like dealing with small infants or children that sometimes we should ignore what they say and do, and sometimes we should sharply rebuke them. “Lest he be wise in his own conceit...” conjures up the idea that if the foolish man goes unanswered he may get the impression that he is right and that silence is to be construed as meaning that he can’t be answered. In such circumstances, says Solomon, give a telling and sharp reply that will “cut him down to size” (as Jesus did on many occasions).

This then is briefly how I understand these two verses and how I reconcile the apparently contradictory injunctions from Solomon. These verses were not written to "fools" of course, but rather for the guidance of those *who had to live with fools*. These proverbs would patently be wasted in the mouths of fools, and were therefore more for the advice of those who have to deal with fools. If we are to try to live wisely then there is an implied responsibility of trying to deal wisely with the crassly foolish. Paul says he spoke foolishly to the Corinthian Christians knowing that they who are truly wise are best able to "suffer fools gladly." (2 Cor. 11:19)

The phrase "according to his folly" means "*as his folly deserves*" and so in dealing with the foolish we are to be guided by the circumstances in each case and to speak or be silent "just as his folly deserves".

These verses are well illustrated by the foolish answer Moses gave to the rebellious Israelites (Numbers 20:10) and the wise rebuke from Job to his wife in Job 2:10.

It is perhaps worthy of note that after all that Solomon has to say about fools, he ends by making the observation that there is more hope for a fool than for the man who is wise in his own conceit. Worth thinking about?

WE invite more questions, urgently to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland. That passage of Scripture that puzzles or troubles you, those situations in life as a Christian, matters of church practices etc. — send along a question upon them. Other readers as well as yourself may be helped and enlightened by the answers.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JANUARY 1972

2—Psalm 107:23-43	Acts 28:1-15
9—Isaiah 6	Acts 28:16-31
16—Deut. 7:1-11	Eph. 1:1-14
23—Prov. 3:11-26	Eph. 1:15 to 2:10
30—2 Chron. 6:1-11	Eph. 2:11-22

"THEY CHANGED THEIR MINDS"

The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia* made up of two words — "change" and "mind". Physically we are born with a tendency to sin. David wrote "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). He surely did not mean that either generation or conception are sinful. God made man and woman and said "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28). But David understood that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), and knew only too well that he himself had sinned. Not only was he conscious of sin as we all are, but he had been guilty of both adultery and murder (Bathsheba and Uriah). Besides these sins he was not permitted to carry

out his commendable decision to build a HOUSE for GOD because he had shed blood and waged war (1 Chron. 22:8) — things not pleasing to God though sometimes done at His command. So soon as we become conscious of right and wrong, we recognise ourselves to be sinners for we cannot escape the disposition to sin. As we become conscious of law, we become conscious of sin. Accordingly one condition for forgiveness is repentance — change of mind. This is universally agreed: no one can dispute the need because it is obvious that unless we recognise we are wrong, there is no reason for us to change. We can refuse to repent, in which case we condemn ourselves and cannot expect forgiveness. The conclusion of the "barbarians" that Paul, a prisoner due for judgement, was bitten by the viper because of his sins, arose from their sense of justice. Their change of mind followed naturally on his miraculous escape. Whether guilty or not he must be more than human!

What we are particularly interested in is the working of their minds. They were uneducated and therefore superstitious—minds change in much the same way whatever their development. They

knew of course, by the composition of the crew of the vessel, that some were prisoners. The rescue operations were undertaken out of pity and goodwill. The "no little kindness" included no doubt some shelter and a fire, for the making of which Paul willingly laboured. That would be noticed by the natives, and it was a surprise and shock to them when they saw the viper inflict what they thought was the sentence of death. So superstition took over. They assumed that justice was at work—the gods were displeased with him. However, the evidence of escape from the punishment convinced them with equal force that supernatural power was at work—and how right they were! Paul subsequently preached Christ, and certainly gave further convincing evidence of divine approval in carrying out the work of healing throughout the island. The word of truth and the power of God turned the disastrous shipwreck into salvation for many. One rescued passenger so kindly treated became a messenger of love, and many changed their minds—repented, accepted and obeyed the gospel, and in their hearts enthroned Jesus.

"We thanked God and took courage"

The brethren in Rome who had so long ago received a letter of encouragement and instruction from Paul, must have heard something of his imprisonment and his appeal to Caesar. During his stay of seven days at Puteoli by permission of the centurion, the brethren must have had news of his arrival in Italy. The Appii Forum was some 40 miles from Rome but the distance was nothing to the loving disciples. With eager steps they covered that distance to greet the apostle. A special flood of gratitude filled Paul's soul when he met them. It seems that other Christians also came to the "Three Taverns"—not so far—and so he received a double welcome. He had won the respect and consideration of the centurion and the guard, so no hindrance to this fellowship occurred. We wonder whether the centurion became a Christian in view of his contact with Paul and his undoubted esteem for him. Rome was a great city, perhaps bewildering with its thronging

populace and magnificent buildings; but even here were those who loved and served Christ. We can only dimly realise the strain imposed upon Paul by the dreadful experiences on the sea, his previous tedious imprisonment in Caesarea, his continued loss of freedom to preach Christ, (his consuming passion), and his anticipated trial before a godless and unscrupulous emperor. Being subject to normal human reactions, his feeling of hardship and frustration had lessened the thankfulness of his heart, but the sight of the brethren renewed his praise as he recapitulated what had happened on the way, the hairbreadth escape from the sea, the kindness of the barbarians and the centurion, and the work done in Malta.

But the sight of the brethren also renewed his courage. For many long weeks he had been separated from all whom he knew except, Luke and Aristarchus. Here now he met some whose faith in Jesus was known all over the world. In the midst of a heathen and wicked city they were believing and practising the new life in Christ. What a thrill of anticipation of further action and close fellowship they opened up! They would open their hearts to him, would visit him, pray with him, be his messengers, and he would impart to them the spiritual gifts he longed to share. (Rom. 1:8-16; Phil. 1:12-14).

We all need to cultivate gratitude and courage, and meeting the brethren is a most helpful stimulus. R. B. SCOTT

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Mayfield, Midlothian: God has again blessed our witness in the faithful preaching of the word. We thank God for the wonderful power of the gospel.

With great joy we report two additions to the church on December 6th: Billy Clark, a young brother; and Robert Binnie aged 20. We pray God's richest blessing on them both. A. P. SHARP

COMING EVENTS

Tranent: Annual social meeting in the Town Hall, Church Street, Tranent, on 5th February at 4 p.m. Speakers Bros. Alf Marsden (Albert Street, Wigan) and Ian Davidson (Motherwell).

A warm welcome to All.

THE BIBLE SCHOOL

[Some three months ago a request was made that the S.S. contain a children's or Bible school feature, at least occasionally. Accordingly Bro. Tom King, of the church in Kirkby-in-Ashfield has agreed to be responsible for this new feature. Bro. King is himself a schoolmaster, and is willing to devote his experience and abilities to teaching the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ to the young.

Bro. King invites the co-operation of readers with their written contributions of articles, stories, reminiscences and whatever else will reach young people and influence them to choose the things that are pure and holy and right.

Bro. King's address is 2 Marshall Ave., Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts.

EDITOR

IT is intended to have a regular feature in the S.S. for the benefit of the Lord's Day School. The aim will be to encourage interest in this vital work by seeking the help of experienced and faithful brethren within the church. In this manner the pooling of knowledge through the S.S. should, God willing, prove a means by which tried and successful material could be employed throughout the church. This will be a means of extending the work by enabling more to assist.

There are several categories of brethren. There are those who attended the Lord's Day School as pupils. Some of these are able to reminisce and thereby pass on verbally helpful teaching and even hints on method. Some are capable of and willing to place it upon paper. We hope they will. There are those who are skilled in teaching methods but who are babes in the knowledge of the Word. Again many of these are capable and ought, therefore, to be willing to commit to paper the attributes of their training for the benefit of the church. In turn they will receive knowledge of church affairs both past and present. One would hope that the most fruitful source would be that group of faithful brethren who have never left Sunday School. They attended as

pupils and stayed on to teach or support those who did. It is to this group that the church owes much and from whom it demands even more. Early retirement is not a feature of the Lord's work.

Aim of the Bible School

Retraining and developing our thinking as new methods are uncovered is a feature of education. Complacency, or even arrogance, have no place in spiritual education. As the age gap between taught and learner widens, greater effort is necessary to keep abreast of modern trends in the imparting of knowledge. Today our school-children are taught in vastly different ways from how we received our schooling. Many of us were taught in a situation of "Sit down and shut up". Now the closed classroom door, guardian of the little box, is becoming obsolete as more "open plan" schools are built. Our task is to meet the challenge of the age, and it is our considered opinion that we can best do this by mutual help and co-operation.

The aim of the Lord's Day School has not changed in any way. The task may appear harder as society as a whole turns away from God. Further more, children today are more sophisticated than ever before. They know of world affairs in a manner no generation has known previously. Children no longer accept as they did. They are taught to question and discover for themselves. For this we, as advocates of the truth, should rejoice. For truth is the essence of evangelisation, which is still the task of the church. It is to achieve this aim that our Sunday schools must help. Their task is to sow seeds that will bear fruit later. If one child can be made in later life to say "Ah!, That's what they meant", our teaching will have been vindicated.

The dilemma for Sunday School is in clarifying a profound message whilst realising the limitations of our pupils and teachers. The hope is that by mutual co-operation teaching methods and contents may be interchanged to the benefit of all concerned.

FROM THE TREASURER

AS we enter 1972 I am glad to say, that we look forward to holding the cost of the **SCRIPTURE STANDARD** at last year's price. This is largely due to the help given by the Printer in absorbing increases by new methods of printing etc, and to continued gifts from Brethren and churches. We stress again our greatest needs, — **MORE SUBSCRIBERS AND PROMPT PAYMENT**. One church still owes for part of 1970's issues, and several still owe for all of 1971. Both types of subscriber should consider prompt payment as a Christian obligation. It is an unworthy position for a Christian to be in debt!

The publishing price is 6 np; postage on one copy is 2½ np. Thus 12 monthly issues by post cost £1.02 we have set the price at £1.00, with a reduction of 12½np on each additional copy — thus two copies per month £1.88; three copies £2.75 less a further bonus of 15 np making three copies £2.60.

If you subscribe through an agent in a church, who takes four or more copies, the rate is £0.90 per year. But please see that you **PAY YOUR AGENT PROMPTLY**. It is wrong to let him stand out of money for you.

The above prices apply throughout the Sterling area, Canada and U.S.A.: \$3.00 per year. Again if you send dollar bills we can afford to supply two copies for \$5.00 or three copies for \$7.00. But please notice that, as U.S.A. and Canadian cheques cost about 25% to redeem, we must impose the flat rate if payment is made by cheque.

We hope to have our Balance Sheet ready for the February issue. Please ensure that all outstanding accounts for 1971 and before are received before 1st January 1972.

PAUL JONES

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NOTICES. (Coming Events, Births, Engagements, Marriages, Thanks), 3 lines (minimum) 20p; each additional line 5p. Repeats (if notified when sending original notice) half price.

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