

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE WRATH OF GOD

IN last month's editorial we tried to stress the fact that God gave to us Jesus Christ His Son to accept or reject as Saviour and Lord. In this article we shall try to show the vital consequences of our choice, throughout eternity.

God's Vengeance

In Isaiah 61:1-2 the prophet utters what Henry Drummond has termed "The Programme of Christianity." Whether this be what the prophet intended we cannot say. But the meaning of the great statement is made clear by Jesus Himself and we can have no doubt, therefore, as to the exposition. Luke 4:16-21 tells how Jesus read this passage from the roll of the scriptures in the synagogue of His home town of Nazareth. It is most interesting to compare what Jesus read, as written in Luke 4, with the prophecy as recorded in Isaiah 61. You will notice that the words "and the day of vengeance of our God" are contained in Isaiah's prophecy, but are omitted in the reading of Jesus: Jesus ends with the words "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Immediately following that sentence Luke tells us that "He closed the book and gave it back to the attendant." The words "the acceptable year of the Lord" marked the end of the prophecy which was relevant, which applied to, those hearers at Nazareth in Christ's day.

Jesus then began to show the meaning of this scripture, and got at once to the heart of the matter in His opening words: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All that Isaiah had prophesied in that passage Jesus had read came to pass in Christ's ministry among the people. If Jesus had read Isaiah's continuing words about "the day of vengeance of our God" He would not with truth have been able to say "Today this scripture has been fulfilled." Surely that is the reason for His omission of the words. Surely Jesus did not end the passage where He did accidentally, or because He had come to the end of the selected reading for that sabbath day. Surely there was intent in the omission.

That the passage was Messianic, prophesying of the coming Messiah, was taught by all the Jewish rabbis and accepted by all the people. The people of Nazareth that day understood perfectly well, therefore, that when He said "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" Jesus of Nazareth was saying He was the Messiah. The works He had done and was doing, the teaching He had given and was giving, fulfilled the mission prophesied by Isaiah and stamped Him as Messiah. Messiah's coming was to minister as Isaiah had foretold. But Jesus omitted that portion which spoke of the Messiah declaring "the day of vengeance of our God" because He had not yet come to bring in that day, and therefore that scripture was not yet fulfilled in their ears.

But so surely as Isaiah uttered the words, so surely shall they come to pass. So surely as the former portion of Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled, so surely will this latter portion. The part of the prophecy remaining to be fulfilled is the visitation of God's vengeance, His wrath upon those who, in spite of all God has done and still does through His Son Jesus Christ, still reject or ignore "God's offer of mercy." Do you remember how Jesus pointed out the lack of understanding of the two disciples from Emmaus when He said, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!?" All they have spoken. Not a little

here and a little there; not what pleases us and conforms with "the modern mind"; but all. And all this prophecy in Isaiah 61 will be fulfilled. "The day of vengeance" is still to come.

Other scriptures point out that God takes vengeance upon sin. Romans 12: 19 says, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay' says the Lord" (quoting Lev. 19: 18; Deut. 32: 35). In 2 Thess. 1:10 Paul prophesies the time when "the Lord is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God" (that is, those who do not acknowledge Him) "and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day . . ."

We do not like the idea of God "taking vengeance, exercising judgement, administering justice or revealing wrath. Especially do we like to think of what is termed "the God of the New Testament" or "the God of Jesus Christ" being altogether different from the God of the Jews, "the God of the Old Testament." Modern theology draws a distinction (wholly imaginary) between the sublime teaching of love given by Jesus and the "systematic theology" and the salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ taught so much by Paul. Yet nowhere are the love and faithfulness and tenderness of God set out more plainly than in the Old Testament; and nowhere are the justice and wrath of God portrayed more terribly than in the New. Far from Jesus revealing a God who is all-loving and forgiving, and Paul a God who demands fullest retribution for sin, Jesus Himself uttered the most fearful condemnation, in parables and other teaching, upon those who should reject Him, the sent One of God. It has been said that, "if Jesus had wished to teach the reality of eternal punishment, it is difficult to see how He could have done so in plainer words than He used."

We Cannot Judge God's Standard by Man's

Men have their own standards of right and wrong, justice and injustice, mercy and punishment, righteousness and sin. To us vengeance implies taking revenge, paying back, implying peevishness and spitefulness. But this is not what is meant by the vengeance and wrath of God. His wrath is according to His character, in perfect keeping with His righteousness, a manifestation of His holiness. Romans 1: 18 shows that His wrath is moral perfection: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth." In that wonderful account of the glory of God revealed to Moses in Mount Sinai, God is spoken of as "forgiving iniquity, but who will by no means clear the guilty" (Num. 34: 6-7). Habakkuk the prophet pleads with God on the ground of His absolute holiness in the words, "Thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on wrong" (Hab. 1: 13).

Thus we see that God's wrath is part of His holiness. God is perfect or He is not God. All His work is perfect, or He is not God. Nothing can be permitted finally to mar that perfection. Nothing can abide before Him which is not perfect. His justice and judgements are perfect (Rom. 9: 19-24; Gen. 18: 25).

And His judgements are individual. People are not judged by classes or creeds or societies, but as persons. God's judgement is of each separate one, his thoughts, motives, words and actions (Rom. 14: 12; 2 Cor. 5: 10; Gal. 6: 5; Rev. 20: 11-14; 22: 12) His wrath shall break forth finally against apostasy (Heb. 10: 26-31); disobedience (John 3: 26); all wickedness (Rom. 1: 18). None of us can stand without guilt before God in our own goodness. Our good works, the things that we pride ourselves upon saying and doing, that we like to be praised for, are in His sight "as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64: 6).

"Through Our Lord Jesus Christ"

We must take seriously the certainty of the wrath of God. The scriptures impress the awful fact upon us in the clearest words. "Our God is a consuming fire"; "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Such words were spoken, not only to those in the Old Testament who broke the laws of God, but to those in the New, in the Christian age, the age of the gospel. They are written to Christians, in the letter to the Hebrews. It is because God's wrath is so fearful that such fearful things as the agonies, the shame, and the crucifixion of the Son of God are alone sufficient to demonstrate to all that salvation is no light matter and that the coming, the mission and the death and resurrection of Christ the sinless One meant the enduring of such dreadful suffering to save from such a dreadful doom. God has not been to all His pains to work out His plan of salvation for it to be treated as though it were never given, or to be rejected, without awful consequences. The depths of Christ's suffering shows us the depths of what we are saved from, and the heights of glories of salvation to which we are called.

Paul sums up the whole matter in what he writes in Rom. 5: 9-10: "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if, while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." These great blessings—justification, reconciliation and the living of the new life in Christ Jesus,—are portrayed by Paul in what he writes immediately following this fifth chapter (Romans 6: 3-5): "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united to him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."

EDITOR

‘INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT’ A REVIEW

A REGULAR writer in a contemporary religious journal, under the heading, "Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," has revealed his views thereon, as follows:—

"Some recent writings on the subject of the Holy Spirit have raised the question: Does the Spirit dwell in us in exactly the same way the Father and Son dwell in us? I believe the Father and Son dwell in us representatively in the person of the Holy Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally."

The Bible abounds with affirmations establishing, beyond reasonable controversy the fact of the habitation of deity in the hearts of the faithful followers of the Lord. The Father (2 Cor. 6: 16), the Son (Col. 1: 27), and the Holy Spirit are all expressly declared to be in us. Thus, the issue is not, Does the Spirit dwell in us today? It is, rather, How does the Spirit dwell in us today? The writer whom we quote above says: "I believe the Father and the Son dwell in us representatively in the person of the Holy Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally." Do the Scriptures assert that the Father and the Son dwell in us "representatively in the person of the Holy Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally"? No. On what ground does the writer attempt to establish this? Because Paul said that we are "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." (Eph. 2: 22.) This passage is not germane to the matter at hand. Here, the apostle is discussing the church—contemplated as a building—as the habitation of God, not individual Christians. Our writer, recognising and admitting this fact, attempts to reason from one to the other, on the ground that God dwells in the church, only as he dwells in each individual Christian. (a) This is lame logic, and involves fallacious reasoning. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit all sustain relationships with the body of believers, not characteristic of individuals. Our Lord said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18: 20). Is he in the midst of one disciple in the same way? (b) Moreover, our writer's logic denies to Christ a "personal" relationship with his church, making it a representative one only. Said he, "I believe the Father and the Son dwell in us representatively in the person of the Holy Spirit . . ." Why does he "believe" this? Paul said we are "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit!" This is by him admitted to refer to the church. Therefore, neither God, nor Christ, dwells in the church personally today! Of course, our good brother does not believe this absurdity, but to it his logic irresistibly leads.

Said he,

"There are those among us who affirm that the Holy Spirit dwells in us 'through the word.' Of course, they do not have any passages which teach this in so many words."

Had our brother, in the foregoing quotation, substituted the word "say" for the word "teach" we would have no serious objection to his statement. The Scriptures do not, of course, have to "say" a thing in so many words in order to teach it. It was his intention to controvert the affirmation of "those among us" who "affirm" that the Holy Spirit dwells in us "through the word." Hence, our brother believes that the Holy Spirit dwells in us apart from or independent of the word! So do all denominational preachers throughout the land. The only essential difference between them is that our brother herein quoted contends for a direct operation of the Spirit immediately following conversion; whereas denominational theologians contend for it immediately preceding! We believe that the view we are refuting is a dangerous one; and, that it is an easy step from the concept of a

personal, literal, indwelling of the Spirit in the heart— independent of and apart from the word of truth— to fanciful leadings, alleged divine impulses and intimations now believed by some among us to proceed from the Spirit which is by them believed to dwell in the heart actually, literally, personally—apart from the word.

How Does the Spirit Dwell in the Heart?

Our writer under review is in error in asserting that "Of course they do not have any passages which teach this (the Spirit dwells in the hearts of Christians today through the word, G.N.W.), in so many words." We wish to direct attention to a remarkable passage found in Eph. 3: 16, 17, where Paul, in a prayer for the Ephesians, said, "that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." We thus learn that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, but that such is conditioned on our being strengthened with power through his Spirit. The strengthening process is through the Spirit; the resultant blessing is Christ in our hearts through faith. "Through faith," is explanatory of "through his Spirit." But, how does faith come? By hearing the word of truth. (Rom. 10: 17.) Thus, by hearing the word of truth, we are strengthened with power "through his Spirit" (who gave the word) and Christ dwells in our hearts through faith! There is indeed no other way by which either God, Christ or the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

But, our writer asks,

"Is there proof that receiving the word is not receiving the Spirit? Yes! People who received the word were baptised (Acts 2: 41), but they received the Spirit after they were baptised."

The implication is that those of us who believe that the Spirit, in conviction and consecration operates only by means of the word of truth, think that receiving the word is receiving the Spirit. It would from this be a short step to the charge that we believe the Spirit and the word are the same! We confess to neither. There is, of course, a sense in which a sinner is led by the Spirit in following the steps which lead to salvation; but under contemplation in these studies is the extent to which those who are his children are under the influence of the Spirit, and the means used to affect this influence. All of us will concede that if we have obeyed the gospel, Christ is, in some measure, in us; yet, the extent of this is susceptible of wide variation. "My little children," Paul painfully wrote to the Galatians, when they were acting unworthily, "of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. 4: 19). But, how would Christ "be formed" in them? By a return, on their part, to the truth which the apostle had preached to them. Christ dwells in the heart, "through faith" (Eph. 3: 17); faith comes by means of the gospel (Rom. 10: 17); thus the means by which the Galatians would experience the forming of Christ in them would be their submission to the truth. God dwells in us through his Spirit, because it is by the agency of the Spirit that the heart is prepared for a habitation of God. This is far from meaning that the way in which God dwells in us differs from the manner in which the Spirit dwells. Deity, whether the Father, the Son or the Spirit, inhabits the heart "through faith"—the ground on which our faith in deity rests. (Heb. 11: 6). This faith, in turn, rests on the inspired record, which the Holy Spirit, through those who penned his message to the world, made available. It was Paul who said, "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." (Cor. 12: 3). But, were it not for the Bible, we would never have known that Jesus is Lord: "But these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20: 31). Thus, the way the Holy Spirit enables us to say that "Jesus is Lord" is by means of the truth which he supplied. We conclude, therefore, that the Holy Spirit influences, motivates, and lives in the hearts of those who follow his teaching; that such is also characteristic of the Father and the Son; and, that deity dwells in the hearts of the people today in no other fashion.

G. N. WOODS

STRENGTH

IN closing his exhortations to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul wrote, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (6: 10.) Strength is a relative thing. The strong child is weak compared to the strong boy; the boy is weak beside the man, and the physically strong man, who is without God, is weak beside the man who places his trust in God. It is said that Paul himself was weak physically. Spiritually he was a giant. The apostle gives the secret of this all-important inner strength in these words: "Put on the armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (6: 11.)

L. D. HARLESS

THE ONE SPIRIT

"There is . . . one Spirit" — Eph. 4:4.

THIS is just what we should expect from what we know of the human body, used here metaphorically.

Every sound body is indwelt by a spirit, which is the animating principle of life, without which the body would be dead, a corpse, seeing nothing, knowing nothing. Such we might have supposed to be the case with the body of Christ, that it too would be possessed by one spirit as the life-sustaining force, without which it would be a dead organism, or at best, a worldly union.

When Jesus was here among men, there were those that were possessed by evil spirits, who, dethroning the human spirit, took control of the body, always causing some grievous bodily or mental malady. Among those whom Jesus healed were "those which were possessed with demons." Something like that had taken place in the Jewish nation of Christ's day; for that weird-like parable of the unclean spirit, that, after wandering through dry places seeking rest and finding none, returned to the house from whence it had been driven, and finding it clean but empty, goeth and taketh seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, who enter in and dwell there, making the last state of the man worse than the first—this parable He spoke of them for He added, "Even so shall it be unto this wicked generation."

And has not something like this befallen the church of later days? Does not the existence of many bodies, with different names and different polity, bear witness to many spirits rather than one, and opposed to the one? At the first, however, there was one body and one Spirit.

The One Spirit, the Spirit of God

I think there can be no doubt that the Spirit referred to here as the one Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, or of God. In the first place, it would be difficult to imagine any other spirit having such a vital bearing on the oneness of Christians as is urged here but the Divine Spirit of the Divine Head. Then, previously, those here addressed are spoken of as "a habitation of God through the Spirit," and in the preceding context it is said that they, as one body, had access unto God in one Spirit; so that here one Spirit dwells in the one body. Afterwards they are admonished (4:30) "not to grieve the holy Spirit of God, in Whom they were sealed unto the day of redemption." Being sealed, and indwelt by the Spirit of God, whom they could grieve, it is only reasonable to conclude that the "one Spirit" is that Holy Spirit of God.

Again, the church is spoken of elsewhere under the figure of a temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 3:16 and 17); and in Rom. 8:9-11 the Spirit of spoken of as dwelling in individual members of the body of Christ, so that "if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

From such close parallels as these it seems clear that the "one Spirit" connected here with the one body, is that same Holy Spirit called also the Spirit of the living God, the Spirit of Life, the Spirit of Truth, of Grace, and Glory; that eternal Spirit who in the beginning moved on the face of the waters and brought the universe into form; that moved holy men of God to speak the prophecy of old time; that was given to the Apostles of Christ to guide them into all truth, and show them things to come, and complete the revelation of God. The one Spirit is the self-same Spirit who has ever worked with God, in creation, providence and grace. This Spirit fills the temple of God, Christ's body, the church, with His presence, and we may be sure that in His presence is light and life.

Let us now proceed, with all reverence, to ascertain

The Work of the Spirit

under the Christian Dispensation, which Paul has called "the ministration of the Spirit." To treat this point at all fully, we must notice the Spirit's work for the Apostles of Christ, the world and the members of the one body.

1. **The Apostles**—Among the Spirit-gifted persons given by the exalted Head to His church, the Apostles are named first, and set first. "He gave some to be Apostles; and some prophets," etc. (Eph. 4:11). "And God has set some in the church, first Apostles," etc. (1. Cor. 12:28).

These stand head and shoulders above their fellows, nearest to the Divine Head, His ambassadors to the world, master-builders in His temple, lawgivers in His kingdom. For this high position and responsible work He called them to be His companions, that they might hear His words and see His wondrous works; and finally endowed them with the Spirit, as He endowed none else.

What the Spirit was to do for them may be gathered from these great promises, given by the Lord on that night in which He was betrayed. (Read John 14: 16-18, 26; 15; 26 and 27; 16: 13 and 14, and Luke 24: 49).

According to these precious promises of Jesus to His own, the Spirit would act as a Comforter—one who assists another, a helper. As such He would cheer, counsel and defend them as Jesus had done; for He was to be another Comforter for all their days, not only with them, but in them. Then He was to be their Teacher and Monitor; so reminding them of all that Jesus had taught, showing its meaning and revealing new truth which they could not bear before. In this way the Spirit would be a Guide into all truth, show them things to come and enable them to bear witness to Christ, in which the Spirit also would enable them to confirm their words by signs and wonders and mighty deeds. In truth, the heaven-sent Messenger was to be to them what it had been to Jesus; to quote the words of a prophet, "The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11: 2).

The fulfilment of these promises began to be realised on that ever-memorable day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-44), when the Apostles were immersed in the Holy Spirit, according to the word of their Lord on His ascension day, "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." Then they received power from on high and went forth preaching the word, making known the conditions of salvation, and the laws of the kingdom of God for all time, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will" (Heb. 2: 4). Thus were the Apostles qualified to carry out their great commission, with all authority and without mistake. Those inspired men, though dead, yet speak, in the pages of the New Testament writings—the perfect will of God. Their words are the words of the Spirit and should be accepted and obeyed as the only rule of faith and life. Let us remember that we know nothing of Christ but through them, and that of them it is said. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." "He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth Me." "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me."—Jesus. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle."—Paul.

2. The World.—That the world would be benefited by the sending of the Spirit by Jesus when He should go to the Father is clear from His words in John 16: 8 to 11: "And He, when He is come, will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement."

This portion tells plainly what the Spirit would do for the world, and the context how that would be done—through the Apostles' word; for the Spirit was to come to them, and be in them, and speak through them. So it was on that grand first occasion when Peter "preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven." The large multitude of Jews who first asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" were pricked in their hearts by the words which fell from Peter's lips, being convicted of the sin of disbelief in Jesus, the righteousness of His character and claims, and judgement against all who were opposed to Him, as had been attested by His resurrection and coronation, set forth in Peter's address (Acts 2); and it is the same everywhere in apostolic preaching.

This is enough to show the falsity of the popular doctrine that the Spirit of God must enter the sinner's heart before he can believe the Gospel. If that were so, then the Spirit would be to blame for every soul unsaved. Such a thought is repugnant, and we cannot harbour it for a moment; for we know that the responsibility rests entirely upon ourselves. But Jesus settled this matter once and for all, for He said expressly, when speaking of sending the Comforter (John 14: 17), "Whom, (i.e., the Spirit of Truth) the world *CANNOT* receive." Therefore, let no one say that he can and must receive the Spirit in order to be converted. But does not the Spirit work in the conversion of the world? Most certainly, and no one is converted to Christ apart from the Spirit. But the Spirit does not work by entering the uncleansed heart of the sinner, but, by His gracious influence upon the heart from without by providential dealing and the word of the truth of the Gospel, "the power of God for salvation." Let a few of the inspired writers tell how sinners are begotten of God, born of, and renewed by, the Spirit:—

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."—James. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."—Peter. "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."—Paul. The Gospel is the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, the Divine power in conversion; so that while the sinner cannot receive the Spirit, he can receive the word of the Spirit, and all who do are born of the Spirit, and become a new creation, the sons of God. Then, because they are sons, not to make them sons, mark you, but "because they are sons, God sends forth the spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv., 6).

On the other hand, to reject the Gospel is to resist the Holy Spirit, as many did in the days of the Prophets and Apostles; for Stephen said to the Jewish Sanhedrin, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye."

Their fathers resisted the Spirit in the Prophets (Nehemiah ix., 26-30), and they were doing the same thing by rejecting the testimony of the Apostles, the Spirit-filled Ambassadors of Christ.

3. The Members of the Body.—The work of the Spirit for these is two-fold, provisional and permanent, or temporary and abiding. The supernatural gifts, such as those named in 1. Cor. 12: 8-10, possessed by many in the first churches, were given by the Spirit, according to His will, for the establishment of the kingdom and the completion of the faith once for all delivered; but, when this was accomplished, those great and needful gifts ceased to be given. This is implied in Eph. iv., 13. The Spirit-gifted persons—Apostles, Prophets, etc.—were given "till we all attain unto the unity—oneness—of the faith." Then we have this plain statement about those gifts:—"Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away" (1 Cor. xiii., 8-10).

Now, as grand as those Divine workings were, these abiding and continuous operations of the Spirit among and for God's children are more excellent still; and so many and various are these that all we can do now is to name them as briefly as possible. He strengthens them with all might in the inward man (Ephes. 3: 16); sheds the love of God forth in their hearts (Rom. 5: 5), making them to abound in hope (Rom. 15: 13); He helps their infirmities, makes intercession for them, leads them, bears witness to their being the children of God, and still there is more to follow; for He shall quicken their mortal bodies, and fashion them like Christ's glorious body (Rom. 8: 11, 14, 16, 26).

The complete revelation of the will of God, the conversion of sinners, the sanctification and glorification of saints are all due to the working of the one Spirit. To reject the Word of God is to resist the Spirit of God. To neglect it, or live contrary to its teaching is to grieve the Holy Spirit, and to mar that magnetic oneness seen at first, when there was one body and one Spirit—may we not say, one body *because* one Spirit, whose fruit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.

A return to the teaching of the Spirit in the Apostles' word throughout Christendom would cast out the unclean spirit of sectarianism, whose name is legion, and the church, restored, would be found at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in her right mind—one body and one Spirit.—J. OLIVER.

THINGS MOST SURELY BELIEVED AMONGST US

4: One God, One Bible, One Church.

One God

THE Bible says, with disconcerting frankness, "There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all," and in many other places leaves the reader in no doubt as to who God is, what he is, and our relationship to him. Man has had many conceptions as to a supreme being, and has been at great pains to give an account of the origin of things according to his finite mind. Herbert Spencer, the noted 19th century atheist, described the heavens and the earth as a "Time-Space continuum, with five known categories, Time, Force, Action, Space, Matter." What he didn't say was that Gen. 1:1 said the same thing. In the beginning (Time) God (Force) created (Action) the heavens (Space) and the earth (Matter). Incidentally, the five principles of physics. What he also forgot to state was that this "Time-Space Continuum" by its very nature revealed a mind bigger than his own, that designed this in infinite detail and in perfect order; and it continues to work.

The ancients too had some queer ideas as to God. Many had a special God for special occasions: there was a God of War, a God of Rain, a God of the Seas, even some mountains were regarded as Gods to be appeased by some awful sacrifices. The Athenians of the Apostle Paul's time had altars to every conceivable god they could think of, and, in case they had left one out had an altar erected "To the Unknown God," providing the apostle with a heaven-sent opportunity to tell them who that unknown God was.

The Churches of Christ affirm with certainty their belief in one God. He is supreme, has given us one Bible, and established one Church.

Many people are apt to think when viewing the universe that a God of such vast knowledge and power could not possibly be interested in mere mortals like we are, yet they forget that God, great as he is, has good cause to be interested in us because he made us, and what is more, made us in his image. The Old Testament has various names to describe God—Jehovah, Lord of Hosts, etc., but it was left to the New Testament to reveal to us the name by which we can know him best, the one our Lord taught us to say when we pray, "Our Father" (Matt. 6:9), that earthly, family relationship we all can understand. The writer has been a Christian for nigh on 50 years, and has not ceased to marvel that the Lord of heaven and earth should be so humble as to wish to be known simply as "Our Father." This then is the one God in whom we firmly believe, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23).

One Bible

Whatever one may say or not say about religion, man is a worshipping creature: he has a natural inborn instinct to worship something or someone. Hence it is interesting to note that according to statistics there are some 400 known religions in the world of some sort or another.

The religion of Jesus Christ as revealed in the bible is unique amongst religions in that it is the only one to base its faith on the resurrection of its founder.

God is a God of order, and the bible reveals itself also as a book of order. It is a profound book—being a book of God it could not be anything else—but it has a message you don't find anywhere else, a message of hope to a sin-stricken world. No-one today can say with truth that all is well with the world, and the bible tells us what is wrong—"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

It has been said that Nature and the Bible are the Divine offspring of God, and so it is. As nature in all its beauty speaks of a creative God, so the Bible speaks of an all-loving, understanding God. Both were designed for the benefit of man, and, as the one reveals God's handiwork in a material sense, so the other reveals his handiwork in a religious sense.

In life man employs three faculties; in things material, the Senses: sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. In religion, Faith, which finds expression in various acts of worship. In personal conduct, morals; where there is a lack of morals there also is a lack of some religious thought and conduct.

The Bible is a book that gives guidance in all these matters: it tells us the source of things material, its faith is of a nature that gives understanding to life's problems, because the Christ of which it speaks has, "trod this way before," He was, "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin."

What the sun is to the material heavens and its attendant planets, the bible is to the world of men, Doubt, scepticism and rationalism may cloud the sky, but the bible outshines them all. Sceptics may come, sceptics may go, but the Bible goes on for ever.

Men have often asked the meaning of life: Why are we here? Where did we come from? What is the ultimate destiny of man? The Bible has the complete answers. He came from God, he came to serve God, and to go back to Him. It tells of the difficulties in between, of sin and wickedness, of the fate of those who practice these things and ignore the God who calls to them; it tells man what he was—God's image; it tells him what he is—a sinner; it tells him what he can be, a saint, and that means a sinner saved by grace.

The Bible, like all other books, has to be read to be understood. Like any other profound book it presents difficulties; but read, it can be understood. On the other hand the bible is not like any other book in the whole world: its author is God, who in turn employed over 40 different writers, from different walks of life, from humble fishermen to Royalty, and over a period of time extending some two thousand years, and yet through it all maintaining a complete harmony to make the most astounding predictions, and with the passing of centuries, records their fulfilment; the most remarkable being the birth, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this in most intimate detail: the place, line and family from which he would be born, the manner of his birth, of a virgin, and in regard to his death, again in most intimate detail. Yes, the Bible is a remarkable book, has a remarkable story to tell and a remarkable message for the world today.

This then is the "One Bible," of the "One God" whom we believe in and worship and seek to present to the world around us.

"We've a Story to tell to the nations
That shall turn their hearts to the right,
A story of truth and sweetness,
A story of peace and light.

"We've a Message to give to the nations—
That the Lord who reigneth above
Hath sent us his Son to save us,
And show us that God is Love.

"We've a Saviour to show to the nations
Who the path of sorrow has trod,
That all of the world's great people
Might come to the truth of God."

H. BAINES.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SEPTEMBER 1966

4—Deut. 4:5-14	1 John 2:18-25
11—Deut. 6:4-15	1 John 2:7-17
12—Deut. 8:1-10	1 John 3:1-10
25—Deut. 11:13-25	1 John 3:11-24

PURPOSE IN LETTER-WRITING

THE apostle John, who was so closely intimate with Jesus that he calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7 & 20), tells us that he wrote his gospel to convince men of the truth about Christ, and so to give them the opportunity of eternal life. That is his history of the life of Jesus. We are reading his letters during October and November. They are complementary to what must surely have been his earlier work, and bear signs of an aged man's thoughts.

Twenty-one of the New Testament "books" are letters, not originally written for us, and perhaps Luke's two books were intended for private rather than general use, being addressed to "most excellent Theophilus." It has pleased God to give us His final revelation in this way, and the fact in no way reduces its inspiration and importance. In it we have "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (1 Peter 1:3) and "the man of God may be completely equipped" (2 Tim. 3:16) by giving heed to their teaching. The Old Testament stands in its place in the same way, and all who cast doubt upon this "Word of God" do so at their peril, and are in line with that "old serpent" who said "Hath God said?" Many have laboured with excellent motives to confirm the genuineness of the writings from external evidence—which is abundant—but those to whom we owe the greatest debt have laboured over the centuries to give us in our own language their meaning.

John states his manifold purpose in writing this first letter.

It begins with a declaration of the truth that Jesus was indeed God manifest in the flesh. Philosophies teaching the evil character of everything material, and the supremacy of intellect over faith and conduct were endangering the church, and this letter strikes at their falsity. The very positive assurance of the true humanity of the Saviour puts all his readers into the same privileged position as John and the other apostles—that is, in fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Christ-like joy which this brings to John can only be complete when he has shared the fact and therefore the new life, the eternal life, with others. Significantly there is an alternative reading "your" instead of "our" in verse 4. That truth is two-fold and the New English Bible translates "joy of us all," which combines the two.

But the purpose of the letter does not stay with either the revelation or the joy. It is also the very important wish and instruction "that you may not sin." The spread of the life of Christ in the world suffers the most serious setback when His people let Him down by sinning. We have of course to reckon that we do sin, and we should not grow discouraged and disheartened when it is made clear that Christians are not to sin—"he who commits sin is of the devil." This must mean habitual or deliberate sin—sin that we love and want.

The danger and wickedness of sin cannot be over-emphasised, and certainly words are not "minced" in this letter. God is light and sin is darkness (1:5 . . .). Knowledge of God makes us walk in light, meaning complete honesty and truthfulness. Obedience to the commandments of God involves us in the practice of love in our relationships. We are brought up short by the contrast with hatred, illustrated by the sin of Cain. Righteousness and love must go hand in hand, as sin and hatred go hand in hand. We are warned that the world does not respect believers by reason of its ignorance of God, and may be

expected to hate the children of light (3:1 & 13). The light of the Saviour illustrates both righteousness and love, and as these abide in our hearts we have assurance that we are indeed God's children (3:24). The practical outcome will be seen in our behaviour (3:17).

Motives for addressing certain groups of brethren are set out in a double form, probably for emphasis, in chapter 2, verses 12-14. We observe that the first set of three reasons are prefaced with "I write," the second with "I have written," almost as though John refers to a previous writing. There is very little difference in the words. We should suppose the distinctions to be the thought first for the community in general (perhaps thinking of the younger members), second for those with ripe experience and deeper knowledge, and last for those who are at work with the enthusiasm of youth. All alike are warned against worldly attractions and ambitions, the attachment to which has ruined so many promising Christian lives.

In common with the other writers of the New Testament we have here very clearly set forth the other-worldliness of the Christian life and the down-to-earth practical outcome of it. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." R. B. SCOTT.

A SOLITARY WAY

Prov. 14:10; 1 Cor. 2:11

There is a mystery in human hearts,
And though we be encircled by a host
Of those who love us well and are
beloved.

To every one of us from time to time
There comes a sense of utter loneliness.
Our dearest friend is stranger to our joy.
And cannot realise our bitterness:
There is not one who really understands,
Not one to enter into all I feel.
Such is the cry of each of us in turn:
We wander in "A Solitary Way";

No matter what or where our lot may be,
Each heart mysterious even to itself,
Must live its inner life in solitude.

Job. 7:17; Matt. 10:37

And would you know the reason why this
is?

It is because the Lord desires our love;
In every heart He wishes to be first.
He, therefore, keeps the secret key
Himself

To open all its chambers and to bless
With perfect sympathy and holy peace
Each solitary soul which comes to Him.
So when we feel this loneliness, it is
The voice of Jesus saying. "Come to me";
And, every time we are not understood.
It is a call to us to come again,

For Christ alone can satisfy the soul,
And those who work with Him from
day to day
Can never have "A Solitary Way."
Isa. 47:16, 22; Ps. 34

And when beneath some heavy cross you
faint,
And say, "I cannot bear this load alone,"
You say the truth. Christ made it
purposely
So heavy that you must return to Him.
The bitter grief which no one
understands;
Conveys a secret message from the King,
Entreating you to come to Him again;
The Man of Sorrows understands it well;
In all points tempted He can feel with
you.
You cannot come too often or too near:
The Son of God is infinite on grace,
His presence satisfies the longing soul,
And those who walk with Him from day
to day
Can never have "A Solitary Way."

JUST USE ME

Just use me—I am the Bible.
I am God's wonderful library.
I am always—and above all—The Truth.
To the weary pilgrim, I am a good strong
staff.
To the one who sits in gloom, I am a
glorious light
Generations follow generations—yet it
lives.
Nations rise and fall—yet it lives.
Kings, dictators, presidents come and
go—yet it lives.
Torn, condemned, burned—yet it lives
Doubted, suspected, criticised—yet it
lives.
Damned by atheists—yet it lives.
Exaggerated by fanatics—yet it lives.
Misconstrued and mis-stated—yet it lives.
Ranted and raved about—yet it lives.
Its inspiration denied—yet it lives.
Yet it lives as—a lamp to our feet,
a light to our paths,
a standard for childhood.
a guide for youth
a comfort for the aged,
food for the hungry,
water for the thirsty,
rest for the weary,
light for the heathen,
salvation for the sinner,
grace for the Christian.
To know it is to love it;
To love it is to accept it;
To accept it means life eternal.
—WILLARD L. JOHNSON.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Aylesbury. On Wednesday, July 6th, we had the joy of witnessing Miss Ethel Giles and Miss Edith Giles, put on the Lord in baptism. These two ladies have been attending our services and studying with us for some time, and we have learnt to appreciate their sincerity and their resolve to follow the Lord's will. We pray that they may be richly blessed as they grow in grace and knowledge in the Lord.

L. H. Channing.

Blackburn (New Wellington Street).—The church has been greatly encouraged in her work for the Master. The power of the gospel was evidenced on July 20th as Jacqueline Giles and Ernest Cunningham upon the confession of their faith, were immersed into the ever-blessed Name. Again on July 26th three more precious souls were added to the church—Barbara Giles, Leonard Cunningham and John Sutton being numbered amongst those whose past sins have been forgiven. We pray for their steadfastness in "the faith once and for all delivered to the saints." To God we give the glory.

R.R.

Ilkeston.—We are pleased to report another addition to the church here. Maureen Richards, who has been attending the gospel meetings for some time was immersed on July 10th. We pray that our young sister may be kept faithful and that more may follow her example.

F. Gregory.

Loughborough (Oxford Street).—We thank God for the success which attended our Vacation Bible School and Campaign for Christ, July 30th to August 7th.

The V.B.S. for boys and girls was something of an experiment (the first time it has been tried by a church of Christ in England) but results were thrilling. We had classes for all age groups (from three-year-olds to adults) five mornings, from 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon. On the first morning attendance was 80—this included 54 children. This grew until on the Friday morning we had a total of 102 (79 children and 23 adults). At the parents' night on the Friday, over 120 children and adults attended.

In the gospel meetings of the Campaign, Bro. James R. Petty (Villanova,

U.S.A.) made our hearts glad as he lifted up Christ as Lord of all life. On the last two evenings of the campaign we witnessed the baptism of four people: Stephanie Stones (whose parents are well-known members of this congregation); Elizabeth and Jane Winstanley (every member of the Winstanley family here is now also a member of God's family) and Miss Mary Pears, a very dear friend of members here, who has attended services for some months. We praise and bless the Lord for these lives yielded to His keeping. God bless them!

We were assisted in this effort by a team of 21 workers. The majority of these came with Bro. Petty from U.S.A., but others came from Switzerland, France, Germany and England. They came entirely at their own expense, giving up their holidays to share in this campaign. In addition to teaching in the V.B.S. they also worked in door to door work, open air preaching, and visiting. We want to place on record our appreciation for such consecrated service to Christ the Lord.

We commend Bro. Petty for the fact that all his preaching was designed to exalt Jesus the Saviour, and we know that in addition to those who came to Jesus there are others whose hearts have been touched by the appeal of God's love in Christ. An average of 12 non-members attended each gospel meeting. We look for further reaping in coming days, and give all praise to our Father.

A. E. Winstanley.

OBITUARY

Ilkeston.—Another of our members has passed from this life to the higher life. Bro. John Burrows died in Heanor hospital on July 1st at the age of 74 years, after only a short illness.

Our departed brother had gone through many trials recently, losing his wife and a married daughter in the space of fifteen months. His faith was such that he could look forward to meeting his loved ones again.

Our sympathy goes out to his sons and daughters who are left to mourn his loss. We commend them to the care of our Heavenly Father.

The funeral service was conducted by the writer.

F. Gregory.

COMING EVENTS

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Albert Street, Newtown, Wigan

We cordially invite all members of Churches of Christ to the

AUTUMN RALLY

Saturday, September 10th, 1966

These meetings are designed to elicit fraternal relations which will give mountain-top experiences and glorious fellowship, to make progress in the work of the Master.

3 p.m. JOHN DODSLEY (Kirkby-in-Ashfield): "What it means to be a Christian." Discussion.

4 p.m. ERIC WINTER (Cleveleys): "The Purpose of the Church." Discussion.

5 p.m. TEA.

6.30 p.m. PUBLIC MEETING, with hymn-singing arranged by Jack Parker.

Preacher: JOHN M. WOOD
(Dunfermline)

We give a warm welcome and will endeavour to provide hospitality for those desiring to stay the weekend. Please write: Walter Smith, 262 Scot Lane, Newtown, Wigan, Lancs.

Dewsbury.—Anniversary Meetings, Saturday and Sunday, September 17th and 18th. Speaker, Bro. C. P. Slate (Wembley). Details later.

Loughborough.—Gospel Mission, September 17th-25th. Preacher, Bro. V. Hunter (Wembley). Meetings: Saturdays 17th and 24th, 6.30 p.m. Sundays 18th and 25th, 6.15 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday, 20th and 22nd, 7.30 p.m.

Please note: Anniversary service Saturday, September 24th. There will be two

speakers: Bro. Hunter and Bro. A. Ashurst (Scholes, Wigan, Lancs). Tea from 4.30 p.m.

Hospitality: Any desiring to stay during this period should contact A. E. Winstanley, 59 Frederick Street, Loughborough, Leics. (Loughborough 3978).

Kentish Town: Anniversary meetings on Saturday, October 1st. Afternoon 3 o'clock. Tea 5 o'clock. Evening meeting 6.30—Brother Dougall working with us from 1st to 11th. A warm welcome for visitors.

Morley: Annual Autumn Rally, October 1st and 2nd, 1966. Speaker Bro. A. Gardiner (Edinburgh). President Bro. H. Baines (Aylesbury).

Saturday, October 1st:—

Tea 4.15 p.m.

Meeting 6.15 p.m.

Sunday, October 2nd:—

Breaking of bread 2.30 p.m.

Gospel service 6.0 p.m.

Please help us by your prayers and presence. M. Gaunt.

Newtongrange.—The church intend holding (D.V.) their annual social meeting on October 8th, 1966.

Speakers on this occasion will be Bro. Alfred Marsden (Wigan) and Bro. Edward Jess (Dalmellington).

Tea will be served in the hall at 4 p.m. and will be held in the meeting-place at 5 p.m.

We invite all our brethren who may be in our area on this date, to be with us, so that we may all work together to the honour and glory of our Lord and to the extension of His kingdom.

W. H. Allan.

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