

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE BIBLE AND THE MODERN WORLD

II: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS (2)

AT the end of our previous article on this topic we put a series of questions as to whether a Christian must always obey rulers and laws. In this contribution we shall try to set out New Testament teaching and principles which give guidance upon these questions. For we believe that the New Testament answers them.

In general the answers are found in two passages of scripture: the apostles Peter and John answered the Jewish rulers "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard"; following the same incident the whole of the apostles are brought before the Sanhedrin, and told them "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29). These statements set out the general and permanent principles which must guide Christians in any circumstances in which their allegiance to Christ may be compromised by earthly authorities. What God has revealed in His word must never take second place to the laws of men.

This guidance is emphasised by what Paul writes in 1 Cor. 9:20-21. There the apostle gives his own experiences when he writes, "To the Jews I became as a Jew...; to those under the law I became as one under the law - though not being myself under the law - To those outside the law I became as one outside the law - not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ..." Here we are not concerned to go into what Paul means when he says (v.22) "I have become all things to all men". The words we wish to stress as being vital to our subject are, "NOT BEING WITHOUT LAW TOWARD GOD BUT UNDER THE LAW OF CHRIST". There Paul shows that he is under a higher law than the statutory law of the land: he is under the law of Christ. As Peter and John and the other apostles stated that where man's law and God's law conflict, God's law must be obeyed by His people, so Paul states that where such conflict exists Christ's law must be followed.

Examples of Conflict

These passages mean that whatever prevents Christians doing God's service in

carrying out His revealed will must be refused. This places before Christians continual choice in the everyday relationships with their fellow-men and the authorities, "the powers that be". To make the right choice — for God's side — will inevitably bring inconvenience and even hardship, loss and suffering to the Christian. For instance, by being genuine and honest when it would be so easy to get some dishonest gain, as so many others do, by acting shadily and violating his own conscience, the Christian will be termed foolish and treated with scorn. Or by refusing to work on Lord's Days where it will prevent his serving God as a Christian, he will incur considerable financial loss when he may very much need the money he could thus gain. We know of a case during the Second World War, when everyone was exhorted to "Goto it", where a Christian refused to work on Sundays. He was looked upon as not doing his part in the "war effort"; no respect was paid to his reasons of conscience. He was summoned to state his reasons to his employing authority, and succeeded in demonstrating that it was not *he* who was breaking the law, but his *employers* who were trying to compel him to work on Sundays. He had traced a statute dating back some 300 years which stated that everyone who worked on the "sabbath day" and did not "attend church" was liable to a fine of one shilling! We do not know to this day whether that statute has ever been repealed! This same brother was prepared to work Saturday nights well into Sunday mornings, miss his sleep to be present in meetings of the church and the Bible school, and to go to work again late Sunday night, without sleep, so long as he could do the Lord's service.

Effects Upon Others

This determination to do God's will rather than men's, where these conflict, does not display itself in open defiance to rulers and law. It is a whole way of life, a putting of first things first, a seeking first of the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is not *negative* opposition to law, but a *positive* doing of God's service. And, in spite of the seeming foolishness attributed to the Christian who acts thus; in spite of the scorn with which he may be treated; in spite of his being "sent to Coventry", a very different effect is left upon the world. Those around know that one who acts thus is utterly trustworthy as a workman and all his relationships; they secretly admire his courage and wish they had the courage to act similarly. They know that his word is dependable, and in their estimation he would sink lower if he acted otherwise. He has made his stand and would be regarded as something of a "turncoat" if he retreated from the position he has taken.

These are not pious platitudes. Scripture examples show them to be real. Compare the stand against idolatry of the three companions of Daniel (Dan. 3:17-18): "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known...that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up." "Our God is able and he will deliver us...BUT IF NOT...We will not serve you or the golden image..." Look again at the conduct of Peter and John before the Jewish Court. In Acts 4:13 we read that "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered, and they recognized that they had been with Jesus." The outcome to the apostles (Acts 5:41) was that "they left the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name." Acts 6:15 tells us the impression created upon that same Court by Stephen, to whose death those men gave their consent. Those murderers, "gazing at him, saw that his face was like the face of an angel."

The apostle Peter was, humanly speaking, a born agitator and fighter for the right. He did not hesitate to demonstrate or use physical violence when he thought the situation warranted it: he it was who lashed about him with his sword to save

his Master from being arrested in Gethsemane. But he was transformed by his Master's teaching and example. Under the power of the gospel he wrote such exhortations as these: "For what credit is it if, when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval" (1 Peter 2:20); "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right? But even if you do suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong" (1 Peter 3:13-17); "Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings...If you are reproached in the name of Christ you are blessed. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God" (1 Peter 4:12-16).

(Next month: The Christian and War)

EDITOR.

VOTING IN BUSINESS MEETINGS

FROM time to time I have heard and read that voting and majority rule in business meetings are wrong; that voting is sectarian and therefore unscriptural. I, for one, would like to present the "other side of the coin" on this matter. I believe that, to a great extent, such feelings about conducting business meetings arise by confusing the issues. They begin by stating that business meetings are solely to decide matters of lawful expedients, and then argue against voting, etc. upon the basis that it might lead to danger of initiating unscriptural practices. We need to keep the issues straight in order to avoid confusion and misteaching on this subject.

What The Issue IS NOT

There are areas where we are not at liberty to follow our opinions and in certain matters we have no right of choice in deciding whether or not a thing is to be done. The church is a kingdom, not a democracy. Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18); He is the head of the church and has all preeminence (Col. 1:18). He is the Lawgiver (Heb. 5:9) and the New Testament is our authority today. Hence, in this article the issue is not, Can we "vote" on matters of faith? Does majority vote constitute the rightness in such matters? Can we decide upon matters of doctrine, the organization and work of the church and other related matters that are laid down in the New Testament? We have no right to choose how often we will observe the Lord's Supper because scriptures determine this for us. We have no right to choose what emblems will be used. We have no right to vote whether or not we will use an instrument in worship because that has been settled for us in the Bible. Sometimes in the past an instrument was introduced into worship by the use of *majority vote*. The sin here was the exercise of majority votes in *matters of faith*, hence majority vote here simply resulted in the transgression of scriptural authority because they voted upon something they had no right to vote on in the first place. Even if they *unanimously* agreed to have the instrument in worship, it still would be wrong. Hence, it was not the vote *itself* that was wrong, but *what* they voted on in the first place, the use of an instrument in worship.

What IS The Issue?

This involves the very practice of engaging in a business meeting. There are certain areas in the framework of the church where we have the right, and the need,

to decide what to do. There are certain matters of *expedients*, which are methods or means of carrying out the work. In these things decisions must be made for a more efficient, successful, and continuing function of the church. For example: teaching is a function of the church (Eph. 4:11-16). It is what God "gave" the church. Now, *who* is to teach, how to divide the classes, what materials to use, are not outlined in the Bible. In other words, God gave the church the work to be done but did not spell out the details of the means or expedients by which this is done, or the arrangements of the teaching program. As long as there are qualified teachers, a scriptural organization, and the word of God is taught, then these other arrangements are left to the decision of the church. There are, therefore, many things that must be planned and arranged that are not matters of faith, but rather, matters of expediency—to expedite or aid in a more efficient manner the work of the church. Hence we have business meetings to decide on such matters.

We have no specific command to conduct business meetings. Nothing is outlined as to the procedures to follow in conducting them—so long as things are done "decently and in order." Yet we necessarily infer that some manner of deciding the business of the church must be arranged. Again, neither the business meeting nor the procedures of conducting meetings are outlined in the Bible. Hence, this must be arranged by the brethren and conducted in a way that harmony and the well-being of the church may be preserved. Since all this is in the realm of human judgment, then also the *means* of arriving at a conclusion satisfactory to the church must be of human arrangement. Not all are going to agree upon everything, hence we always believe that in the spirit of brotherly love the few should go along with what serves the best aims of the majority.

Those who say voting is wrong, or that majority rule is not right, must produce a passage of scripture that outlines the procedures by which any action is reached in a business meeting. They must produce the *specified manner* by which decisions are reached to prove majority rule is wrong. If the manner of conducting a business meeting is not specifically outlined in the Bible, and therefore is left to human judgment, then voting or majority rule cannot be against a specified rule that does not exist! Those who insist such is a violation of scriptures must therefore produce a passage of scripture that specifically tells us exactly what procedures are followed in a business meeting to prove voting, majority rule, wrong. For one unable to find a specific command as to the procedures of a business meeting, and then argue voting or majority rule is wrong, is legislating in the area of human judgment.

The argument is made that majority rule can lead the church into something unscriptural. But this is confusing the issue. We well know we cannot vote on matters of faith! But that can work just the other way too. What if a *few* want to lead the church into something wrong? The majority cannot stop them! I am certain we are well aware that in some places there is a clique made up of two or three who dominate the church. They somehow have the ability to rule without any serious challenge. They are unopposed for several reasons. There are those who are so indifferent and show such little concern about the affairs of the church that it matters not to them what is happening. Then there are those who are so timid that they fear to disagree with the ruling element in the church because it's "upsetting" to them. There are also those who think that "peace" is maintained in the church by allowing certain parties to have their way. All of this is unhealthy and adds up to — *minority rule!*

As far as majority rule leading the church astray is concerned, I firmly believe that in many places the opposite is true. A few press their desires and influence the majority and thus do whatever they desire because some feel majority rule is wrong. A few ambitious zealots can so manipulate matters as to gain their desires over the congregation.

Too often a matter is brought forth and brethren are asked to decide on it. One brother will say, "Whatever the rest want is alright with me." This sets up a chain reaction because the next man hesitates to speak out on the matter. As a result, the whole thing is in doubt, and although everyone will go along with "what the rest want," nobody knows what anybody wants! So they are *unanimous* in deciding *nothing* for fear that someone might dissent from the rest. Thus many business meetings serve no purpose at all. I firmly believe that if brethren would decide to act on what serves the desires of the majority, much confusion, grumbling and dissatisfaction could be avoided and the church could make the progress it should.

It seems strange that in all other organisational affairs people agree to majority vote. Yet a reasonable method of action such as this is rejected by our brethren in business meetings because of some strange notion that majority vote is wrong! I believe this rejection is because of a basic problem among brethren. In the business world they can act as gentlemen and work in accord with majority rule, but in the church brethren many times act as spoiled children who raise a tantrum if their whims or desires are not carried out. If they would act as gentlemen in the church as they do in their businesses, this problem of majority rule would not exist. Did not Paul say, "Quit you like men" (1 Cor. 16:13)? Become as grown men, act maturely!

I have been in places where a chronic objector would be against any good sound plan, all because it is his nature to be suspicious and against everything. Sad to say, many buckle under to such and their excuse is, "We don't believe in majority rule."

Consider it this way: some brethren argue that, unless *all* agree upon something, it should not be done. For example: the brethren agree to have a "song practice" once a month, say on Wednesday night. One brother objects, another agrees with him. The decision of the two ruled over the desires of the rest. *And by their argument that majority rule is wrong, they defend their practice of minority rule!* They got their way. Now, brethren, if majority rule is *wrong*, is minority rule *right*? If a project can be killed because one or two object to it, then this establishes the law of minority rule. If majority rule is "unscriptural", then is minority rule scriptural?

Some argue that unless the rule is unanimous, this would give the young and inexperienced the free road to push through anything that might be wrong. But this works the other way too. I have seen many old men bring in unscriptural things and kill the initiative of the church. So the argument against the one is an argument against the other.

Some brethren are opposed to voting in business meetings. "Vote" simply means an expression of approval or disapproval of a certain proposition or person under consideration. Many times names are submitted in churches in considering the eldership. Usually time is given to raise valid objections to the names submitted. Now, if this is not some form, one way or another, of *voting*, then just *what* is it? If voting is wrong, then this practice must cease for this is exactly what it is—*voting*. (Read your dictionary definition of the word.) Any time a decision is made about anything, any time any one is appointed for a certain task—this is voting. I do not know why brethren object to calling by name *the very thing they practice*. Even a nod of the head, yes or no, on any given motion is a vote.

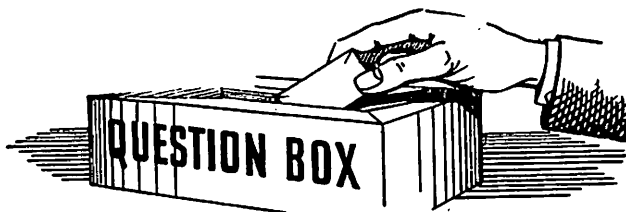
Any time a matter is proposed in a business meeting, one of two things must happen. The church must *accept* or *reject* it. Hence the very thing of bringing up a matter to decide upon puts in motion the action of voting. A motion is made, seconded. Now it must be decided if it will be accepted or rejected determining how many are for or against it? *This is a vote!* There are various ways by which a vote is made

to determine the matter. One way is to ask, "All in favour say yes; all opposed say no." Or there can be a show of hands, or the process can be dragged out by asking each one individually his choice, which is only a long way of doing the very same thing that can be accomplished by a show of hands, a "yes" or a "no". In this brethren practise the very thing they do not want to call it—voting. Even those against "voting" do it whether they realize it or not. Now, since it must be determined how many are in favour of a proposed motion, and the only way of deciding on the motion is to ask how many are for or against it, then I ask someone to show a *better* way of deciding on a motion other than all expressing their approval or disapproval—if voting is wrong—because expressing approval or disapproval of a motion is voting.

Some say majority rule is wrong because we are to be "of the same mind" and that there should be "no divisions among you". *They do not apply scriptures correctly; they do not "rightly divide the word of truth"*. A parallel passage to 1 Cor. 10 is Phil. 1:27: "that ye stand fast in one spirit, with *one mind* striving together for the faith of the gospel." If we were voting on matters of faith in our business meetings, that would be wrong. But if it comes to the matter of expedients, or things left to human judgement in carrying out certain functions, that is not a matter of faith and we have the right to differ on methods, etc. I never read in my Bible that I have to agree with every opinion, but I do read in my Bible that I must yield my personal opinion for the good of the whole body, if the rest want a thing done a certain way.

I do not read in the Bible where one or two can rule the church with their opinions, where the entire church must yield to the whims and desires of brethren who set themselves against the rest. I do read in my Bible where I must yield my desires to the desires of the church in order to preserve harmony and peace in the congregation.

Since the *procedures* of arriving at some conclusion on a given motion is not outlined in the Bible, then they rest in the area of human liberty and no one can legislate in this area where God has not defined these matters. LEO ROGOL.



Conducted by
James Gardiner

"What should the Christians attitude be to capital punishment, and does the statement in Genesis 9:6 apply today?"

GENESIS 9:6 says "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

First of all let us notice the context of this very important stipulation of God. Because of its wickedness the world had been destroyed by the flood, and only eight souls had survived. The earth was now completely devoid of human or animal life except that which the ark contained. On releasing Noah and his family from the ark God makes a gracious covenant with mankind—the *Magna Carta* of God's providence. Both the world and the church had been reduced to one small family. God blessed them (v.1) *ie.* promised to take care of them, and that the world, while it remains, would be theirs. They were to multiply and replenish the earth (a big task) Every

living thing would be meat for them (v.3) and they were sanctioned to eat flesh, but not blood. To facilitate this benefit God implanted a fear of man into all the animals, fowl and fish (if God were to remove this fear, man, of course, would be the hunted and not the hunter). Thus man received the power he has over the beasts of the field. Man was to look after himself and his fellow man — and also take care of the animals (v.10). The seal of the covenant and of God's good intentions was the rainbow in the sky. In this basic covenant, with its sweeping terms, God was the benefactor, and little was asked from man by way of reciprocation. This covenant, it is important to note, was applicable to Noah *and all his seed after him*. Thus this covenant applies to us today. God also laid the basis for absolute respect for human life when (in v.5,6) He said "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." Perhaps in the evil state of humanity prior to the flood life had been regarded cheaply and murder was rife. It certainly does not appear that murder was publicly avenged prior to the flood. In short, then, under the covenant with Noah God promises to bless man and gives him express authority to eat flesh, but forbids him to eat blood. God also expresses His abhorrence of murder and murderers, and instructs that wilful murderers must surely be put to death. Generations have come and gone since then, and indeed the economy of Israel has come and gone, but it is still true today that Man's duty is to replenish the earth, to be free to eat flesh, to abstain entirely from eating blood and under no circumstances to murder his fellow man. The fear of man is still present in animals, fowl and fish, and the rainbow still constitutes the sign that God will never again destroy the world by water. We are the seed or offspring of Noah and so that covenant applies with equal strength today.

The question before us is, of course, as to whether the instruction of God to Noah that murderers must surely be put to death applies today with equal strength. To my mind the answer obviously depends upon whether we can find in the word of God evidence that God has ever changed His mind on the matter. Did Christ or His apostles teach the abrogation of capital punishment? I must confess that I am unaware of any such evidence. Perhaps some kind brother may be able to correct me on this matter, and I will welcome any views on the subject.

The Jews certainly carried out the injunction given to Noah concerning murderers, and (to quote only one instance) we read in Deut. 19:11 the following: "But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him unto the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of the innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee." Thus in the case of premeditated murder we have the commandment that the murderer must be arrested by the elders (not a mob lynching) and delivered to the magistrates (the avenger of blood) to be executed. No eye was to pity the murderer. It is said that, today, more tears are shed for the murderer than the murdered. The Jews, then, certainly carried out capital punishment for murder (and indeed for many crimes other than murder) and we will find no evidence of the death penalty having been abrogated.

Did Jesus, or His apostles, say anything which approached a direct, or even an indirect cancellation of the instruction given to Noah? I have as yet failed to notice it. I think Jesus recognised two worlds: the small few who would find eternal life, and the large world outside on the broad road to destruction. It is the desire of Jesus that all the world would become His disciples and members of His church; but until that time comes there must exist the church, small in number, in the midst

of a large uncaring world. The world at large is not subject to the laws of Christ, but the church must be subject (Rom. 13:1-9) to the laws of the properly constituted authorities. Within the church the problem of a death penalty does not arise. The church of Christ (unlike Israel) has no courts of law where penalties for crimes are dispensed. *The church* does not make laws or administer justice, for she is subject only to the law of Christ and love. The church however is, like every other citizen in the outside world, subject to the laws made by the respective nations throughout the world. Such magistrates are God's servants, bent upon good government and the keeping of law and order. If we can envisage, then, a Christian being guilty of murder he would not be subject to a penalty meted out by the church, but rather by a worldly judge. Jesus recognised this and certainly did not disapprove of it. Paul also said that we would *suffer* as evildoers if guilty of evil. First Peter 2:14,15 expressly states that we must submit to every ordinance of man, and that kings and governors are doing God's will when *they punish evildoers*. The apostle Peter agrees precisely with Paul. Paul is very strong in Rom. 13:4 (and is speaking to Christians, we remember) and says, "But if thou do that which is evil, *be afraid*; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." We are to "*be afraid*". The magistrate does *not bear the sword* in vain. In a sense the mention of the sword could be taken figuratively, but the authorities (Roman) Paul was referring to certainly used the sword literally. The sword is not used by the "revenger" except in the case of capital punishment. To my mind Paul was regarding the ultimate in punishment as being the death sentence. Paul would not use *a sword*, being a disciple of Christ, but he recognised the right of national magistrates to use it in the punishment of crime. This seems a far cry from the apostles abrogating of the death penalty. In any case, it is not the function of Christians to fix punishments to suit crimes, or even to participate in the carrying out of them. Their function is to *obey* the rules and laws of the magistrates and society (the world at large). Recognising this Paul, when he stood trial before Festus, said, "If I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die..." (Acts 25:11). Paul clearly recognised that in the eyes of the ruling legal tribunals, there were crimes worthy of death. We are, according to Rom 13 and 1 Peter 2. to be subject to such laws and to such magistrates, for this is the will of God. On this basis then, I suggest that "the Christian's attitude to capital punishment" can only be an academic one, for the *magistrates and judges* of the nation's courts *make their own penal code*. Christians may have an opinion on that code, but are not responsible for it:—they have only a responsibility to obey it. We are in the world but not of the world (not in any smug self-righteous sense) and as such we must allow non-Christians to make laws as seem fit to them (they are God's ministers in this limited sense). If the magistrates employ a capital sentence for murderers it seems to me that they could justify it from Gen. 9:6, and indeed it may well be that they have a *duty*, according to Gen. 9:6, to employ the capital sentence.

From Gen. 9:6 we have the inference that official magistrates be appointed to secure the execution of murderers. God certainly was not going to kill all murderers supernaturally, although all such will ultimately face God; nor was it God's intention that the *next of kin* of the murdered should seek out the murderer and avenge the crime (for this would merely have made the avenger a murderer in turn). Officially appointed officers of law are obviously intended: and so with Noah we have the beginning of law being entrusted to society.

Some say there are no such things as *little* sins and *small* sins. But I reckon that God regards murder as the greatest of sins, and stipulated that murderers must die (at the hands of the official avenger of blood, Deut 19:11). Murder is the most daring and heinous act of rebellion against God; it assaults God's visible image on

earth and destroys the life which God gave. We must remember *why* murder was to be punishable by death — “for in the image of God made he man”. Surely this basic reason for capital punishment is not one that time can alter?

Objections to capital punishment usually are that it is barbaric; uncivilised; “unchristian”; irrevocable (disallowing repentance and conversion) and often unjust (through the rare event of miscarriage of justice). But surely all of those objections (except the unchristian one) must have been equally true in Noah’s day. Did God give Noah an instruction which was barbaric and uncivilised? We must take care that we do not accuse God in this way.

In brief then, I do not see evidence that Gen. 9:6 has been amended or annulled. The Christians attitude to capital punishment can be but academic, since Christians do not make laws for the world at large to obey, but rather the reverse. Both Jews and Gentiles had death sentences for murder, and other lesser crimes, and the British ‘life sentence’ in prison was unheard of. It may well be that if judges today followed the Bible system of punishments for crime there would be less anarchy and violence in the world.

(Questions please to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

AUGUST 1972

6—2 Kings 2:1-18	1 Cor. 15:35-58
13—Joshua 1	1 Cor. 16
20—Joshua 24:14-25	Phil. 1:1-14
27—Job 14	Phil. 1:15-30

“CORINTHIANS” AND “PHILIPPIANS”

WE are concluding our readings in the first Corinthian letter and passing direct to that to Philippi, without study of the second to Corinth. The second letter was written within two years of the first, but Philippians must have been written at least six years later. We set out the history picture in the S.S. for March this year.

Enshrined in the first Corinthian letter are the appeal for unity, the instructions for observance of the Lord’s Supper, the panegyric on love and the argument for the resurrection. We regard these as the high lights. Similarly there are two passages of special power in the Philippian letter:— the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus and the “Whatsoever things” exhortation. (2:5-11; 4:8 & 9)

Looking back to Acts we think over

the beginnings of these two churches. Philippi was the first town in Europe in which the gospel was preached, and the first convert was Lydia, the business woman. We do not know how many of the other women gathered at the place of prayer by the riverside were involved in the further work of the church, but it is safe to assume that numbers of people were interested. It was the hospitality of Lydia which gave the background and the opportunity to Paul and Silas; but their Jewish nationality prejudiced Gentiles against them, and it appears they resorted to the “place of prayer” for preaching and study until the demoniac girl gave them unwelcome publicity—and yet it must have provided opportunity for winning souls. Commercial interests being at stake, violence was resorted to and, overinfluenced by the mob, the judges punished the preachers without trial. The outstanding boldness and faithfulness of the prisoners in the dungeon with the intervention of an earthquake resulted in conversion of the jailer and a great change in the attitude of the authorities.

We thus have a picture of a church born in strange circumstances and with a varied membership, but holding Paul in high regard. Before he reached his next stop they sent once and again to his need, and their concern continued without intermission. It must have been months

afterwards when they sent help to him in Corinth. The initial efforts in Thessalonica had considerable results; Berea too provided a fruitful field, but Paul was chased from both places and after a short stay in Athens, reached Corinth, where God "had much people". And so the other church with which we are concerned began amid some persecution, but also with much fruitful work and some protection from the authorities. It is plain that the church here grew and prospered. It was faced with problems for which it asked Paul's advice. The letter provides a story about the church. Some teachers had belittled Paul's work and authority so that he had to defend himself (9:1-3). However, it is obvious they held him in great respect, for they had sought his advice on many questions. One point of special and somewhat strange interest is his refusal to take any help (we assume financial) from Corinth, while accepting it without question from Philippi. He had a fear that there were those in Corinth who would have liked to find occasion for a complaint that his preaching was for material gain, and he cut off all occasion by always insisting on self-support: his own labours and the freewill offerings of other persons and churches.

Paul's Love for the Churches

Paul's gratitude for the church at Corinth was for their possession of spiritual gifts and the blessings brought by acceptance of the gospel: the changed and enriched lives, and the ability to expand the work. In the case of Philippi his gratitude seems to have been rather for the outgoing love and action of the community. The first chapter of the letter overflows with gratitude and affection: "Making my supplication with joy for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel" and "I have you in my heart" he writes. J.B. Phillips writes "he is obviously very fond of the little church at Philippi". I question the word "little", but that is a matter of proportion. It is significant that in this church there were bishops (overseers) and deacons (ministers). This measure of organisation indicates an ordered community with some members ap-

pointed to undertake responsibilities of a specific kind; such can hardly be arranged in a small church.

How different were the circumstances under which these two letters were written! It seems certain Corinthians was written while Paul was busy in Ephesus pursuing his work in that whole district: "all they which dwell in Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10 see also v. 20). I suppose most of the trials mentioned in his second letter to Corinth (11:24) had already been endured, but he was a free man in active service. The Philippian letter came from Rome in confinement, perhaps in his own hired dwelling (Acts 28:30) but limited strictly, probably chained. Yet it pulsates with joy. He had learned the secret (4:12).

R.B. SCOTT

WHAT ABOUT THE PRAYER MEETING?

THE churches are in desperate straits. Little interest is shown by those inside or those outside. We have tried many things to arouse interest, but without improvement. Our methods and activities have been examined and revised, but we still do not reach those we desire to. We may well ask God and each other "Where are we failing?"

What about prayer? Have we tried that? Or are we relying upon our own abilities and wisdom? At the 1929 Conference of the Co-operation of Churches of Christ the President read a message sent by Sis. Mary Bannister, missionary in Africa. She said something like this: "I hope much time will be devoted to prayer at this Conference. Remember, we can accomplish more in speaking to God for ten minutes than by talking to each other for ten days."

We have largely let prayer be crowded out. If anything can be omitted from our gatherings it is prayer. Which meeting have we most allowed to die out? The prayer meeting. How many churches hold prayer meetings as such? In any meeting prayer is engaged in very little. Even the "prayers of the church" are largely without motive and life. We need reminding of the words of the hymn: "Thou art coming to a King. Great petitions with thee bring"

Prayer is one of our many "mutual ministries": something we can take part in much more than teaching or preaching. There is no reason why, when the prayers are offered, three or four brethren should not briefly engage. There are many things to pray for and to give God thanks for.

Among other things, "restoration of New Testament Christianity" means restoring prayer to the place it had in the N.T. church. In Acts 2:42 it is included with the apostles' teaching, fellowship and breaking of bread. It is amazing that a church claiming to be "the N.T. church" should be so slack upon vital N.T. teaching and practice — elders, evangelism and prayer.

In the N.T. we find that the Christians not only prayed, but that *they gathered, came together, in a meeting, to pray.* Read Acts 1:12-14; 2:42; 12:12; 13:1-3. WHAT ABOUT THE PRAYER MEETING?

C. MELLING

THANKS

BROTHER and Sister Jimmy Sinclair, of Tranent, wish to thank all the brethren who sent them cards, flowers and letters during their recent stay in hospital after their car accident. Bro. Sinclair has returned to work and Sis. Sinclair is making satisfactory progress at home.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Sinde, Zambia, Africa.: March 25
Dear Friends and Co-workers,

Already 1971, with more joys than sorrows, has slipped away, nearly three months of this wonderful new year of 1972. Let us not waste our valuable time regretting the failure, or glorying in the success, of the past. Instead, let us plan glorious plans for the remainder of 1972 greater plans for our life of service to our blessed LORD, joy with our family and loved ones, and an eternity of glory with our mighty CREATOR and SAVIOUR. Let us plan well, living for Jesus without anxiety or false pride. Remember, "the

clock of life is wound but once." In Paul's letter to the brethren at Colosse, we read, "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the LORD, and not unto men; knowing that from the LORD ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the LORD CHRIST" (Colossians 3:23-24) What a glorious promise to know and use in our daily living as we work for GOD!

Many are the blessings God has sent to us this year: just to name a few! (1) the many souls being reached with the gospel and Bible classes each LORD'S day; (2) Johnny and BaStephen have gone to the markets and passed out tracts, spoken to interested souls, set up a Bible study, taught them the way of the LORD more perfectly, and one soul was born in to the family of GOD last Sunday evening; (3) Wednesday afternoons we go to the villages; (4) Sunday afternoon at the Prison, Johnny and BaStephen have services; (5) a Christian magazine for the women is printed in Tonga at Kabanga Mission on the printing press they recently obtained (also many tracts, etc. are being printed) thus reaching into many places we could never go. Please pray the necessary funds for this great work will be supplied — and if you want to send a gift with your prayer, do so to: Ken Elder, Kabanga Mission, Box 19, Kalomo, Zambia, Africa. Remember "The brethren will do more when they are taught more"—a blessing the printing press is giving to the Christians in so many areas; (6) the seven precious souls born into CHRIST and three restored; (7) for the Sinde School of Preaching which is to begin soon, Lord willing; (8) our daily blessings of *you* dear faithful friends, whose inspiring letters, gifts and prayers help in spreading the Gospel which brings "light" into the lives of those living in darkness, without hope; (9) and for the assurance that GOD *can* and *will* answer prayer.

Until next time, may the peace and grace of GOD be upon you as you joyfully serve HIM each day. Keep praying we will always be used fully in HIS service, that HIS name may be glorified.

In Christian love,

ELAINE BRITTELL

TO ALL WHO ARE INTERESTED IN THE "SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

A MEETING TO DISCUSS ALL ASPECTS OF THE

"SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

will be held (God willing) on SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30th 1972
commencing 2.30p.m. in the meeting-house at

JACKSON'S SQUARE, SHOLES, WIGAN.

CHAIRMAN: R.B. SCOTT (Kentish Town)

Buffet Tea will be provided and it is hoped to arrange an EVENING MEETING
commencing 6 o'clock for those able to stay.

It will be appreciated if Church Secretaries will please give an estimate of the
number of persons hoping to attend from their congregation to:-

C. MELLING, 133, LONG LANE, HINDLEY, VIA WIGAN, LANCS.

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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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