

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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THREE ITEMS FROM A TRACT

According to this morning's newspapers, another batch of illegal immigrants have been arrested. The police, acting on a "tip-off", stopped a large truck on the motorway yesterday and found fourteen illegal immigrants hiding in a secret compartment in the vehicle. This is happening all the time, of course, and some countries, like USA and Canada have a much bigger problem with illicit immigration than does Britain. It is difficult, sometimes, not to feel a certain sympathy for those who, by some accident of fate, have been born on the wrong side of a border, or who are being victimised, for whatever reason, and are trying to flee to a better environment. Most of us here in the UK have no idea whatsoever as to how wretched and dangerous life can be in other parts of the world. The "Boat People", for instance, in their overloaded, leaky, insanitary and unseaworthy death-traps would rather drown at sea than return to the shores they left behind. However, chaos would reign if there were no immigration controls, and therefore entry into another country must be within legal constraints and in accordance with the law. Truly there are thousands who seek a better country.

Paul (in Heb. 11) describes great worthies of the O.T. and says that they too sought a better country - viz. "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly, wherefore God is not shamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city." Those who would seek this heavenly country must do so *lawfully*. The principle of legality obtains just as much in entering the Kingdom of Heaven as it does in entering lowly Britain. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Jesus was, of course, declaring Himself to be the door into the Kingdom, and added "I am the door, by Me if any man entereth in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:1,9). There will always be those who wish to enter on their own terms, or "climb up some other way" (and some would even try to take the Kingdom by force: Matt. 11:12), but entry must be in the God-given manner, through Christ and His Holy Word.

ALL AUTHORITY

There are, of course, those who might not like the mention of words like "law" and "legality" in connection with entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven, and would quote Jesus' words, "For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

This is, of course, quite true but any kingdom has a king and any king has power to make laws to govern his subjects, and there is a law outlined in the N.T. which is certainly not of Moses. James, who has a fair bit to say about law says, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy" and that lawgiver, obviously, is Christ.

But it is not merely a question of law; it is a question of authority. John says that **"God hath given Him (Christ) authority to execute judgement also, because He is the Son of Man."** (John 5:27). Jesus has, in fact, been given ALL authority and said, just prior to His ascension to God's right hand, **"All power (authority: RV) is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world."**

Clearly Jesus had been given total authority (in heaven as well as in earth) and, based upon that authority, Jesus commissioned His apostles to go into ALL the world (to Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles) and preach the gospel to EVERY NATION, baptising them and thereafter teaching them to observe ALL THINGS "whatsoever I have commanded you." Thus God has entrusted all authority to Jesus and any failure in us to acquiesce to that authority would be a rejection of God's lawmaker. As James says, there is One Lawmaker, who able to save and to destroy. Some of that authority was, of course, delegated to the apostles when they were given their great commission and Jesus could say of the apostles, **"He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me."** (Luke 10:16). Who would dare to challenge the authority of Christ, we wonder?

THREE ITEMS FROM A TRACT

Who would dare to challenge the authority of Christ, we ask? And the plain answer is that it is done every day, and most often by those claiming to be Christians. Just this week I received a 6-page tract entitled *"Baptism In Water"* by a Robert McCracken, and although lack of space restricts the opportunity to comment on it, one or two points deserve notice. For instance, the tract (1) creates a difference between *the terms of entry* into the Lord's Body as between Jews and Gentiles: i.e. the Jews (the circumcision) required to repent and be baptised, but (2) the Gentiles receive remission of sins "as the immediate result of faith" and (3) baptism "has no efficacy towards eternal salvation."

Wherein do these three items of Mr. McCracken's doctrine challenge Christ's authority? (I have written to the tract-writer, by the way, and await a response).

(1)

First of all, the tract, in drawing a distinction between Jew and Gentile *in terms of entry* into the Lord's body, flouts the authority of Jesus. It was our Lord's **emphatic and stated intention** that His same gospel should be preached in all nations and to every creature. Certainly at the beginning of Christ's ministry the gospel of the kingdom was taken exclusively to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel", but after they rejected the opportunity to repent and set their house in order, and crucified their Messias, God withdrew any special consideration of His chosen race and extended His gospel to the Gentiles. As Paul says, **"the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek"**. However, after the Lord's resurrection, and just prior to His ascension, He commissioned His apostle thus, **"Go ye into ALL the world and preach the gospel to EVERY CREATURE"** (Mark 16:15) and **"Teach ALL THE NATIONS"** (Matt. 28:19). Indeed, on receiving the commission the apostles **"Went forth and preached EVERYWHERE"** (Mark 16:20). Thus whether the commission was fully understood at that time by Peter or not, the gospel was certainly to be the same for all ("all the nations: every creature") and so were *the terms of entry* into the Lord's body. In short, Jesus commanded His apostles to preach one, and the same, gospel to everyone (Jew and Gentile) and to offer them entry into the K. of H. on *exactly similar terms*: i.e. their faith in Christ; their repentance and their immersion for the remission of their sins. To teach otherwise is clearly a subversion of Christ's intentions, wittingly or unwittingly, and a challenge to His authority.

(2)

That "*Gentiles receive remission of sins as an immediate result of faith*" is again a statement which contradicts God's word. Obviously one must have **faith** in Christ to receive remission of sins (Acts 10:48) and remission of sins comes to us only by virtue of **the shed blood of Christ** (Matt. 26:28 & Heb. 9:22) but God's word is also quite emphatic that **baptism** must come prior to remission of sins being granted (Acts 2:38). The apostle Peter, inspired of the Holy Spirit, preaching the gospel at Pentecost, instructed earnest enquirers to "**Repent and be BAPTISED every one of you in the name of (or by the authority of) Jesus Christ FOR the remission of sins.**" And so Peter says that repentance and baptism must **precede** remission of sins. Mr. McCracken says that "remission of sins comes as the immediate result of faith." Thus the latter contradicts the former and challenges the word of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism being necessary *prior* to remission of sins is surely not a concept difficult for us to grasp. The converts of John the Baptist did not seem to have any difficulty with the principle. John the Baptist preached "**The baptism of repentance for the remission of sins**" (Mark 1:4). His converts came in their thousands, on the understanding that if they repented their sins, and were baptised confessing their sins, they would receive remission of their sins. Would John's converts have received remission of sins if they had refused his baptism? If so, what was the point of John baptising thousands in the Jordan? Was Christ's baptism inferior to John's, and as per the tract, not for the remission of sins? Of course not. Jesus baptised even more converts than John (John 4:1) and that is saying something. Was He wasting His time and energy, and the time of the thousands of converts? No; Jesus was baptising for the remission of sins.

Even in the case of Paul's own conversion, we find that, even after having lengthy conversation with Jesus, in person, on the road to Damascus, Paul's obvious faith and special relationship with Jesus did not give him remission of sins. Indeed, he still had his sins upon him even after three days of prayer and fasting. It was not until God sent Ananias to him that he got rid of his sins (remission of sins), for Ananias said, "**What are you waiting for, get up and be baptised and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**" (Acts 22:16). And so Paul's sins were *washed away* (not prayed away) *in baptism*.

(3)

The tract's third assertion that "*Baptism has no efficacy towards eternal salvation*" is another clear assault upon the sovereignty of Jesus. Jesus, in giving the great commission to the apostles (already mentioned) said, "**He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned**" (Mark 16:15). Undeniably, there are in the Bible, some difficult passages, but I suggest that this is not one of them. Indeed one could read that statement to an infant class at school and they would all understand that "salvation" will follow upon "belief and baptism" and that condemnation follows upon disbelief. And surely Jesus knew what He was saying. Do we imagine that Jesus got the sequence of His words mixed up? And so from this passage alone, we understand Jesus to say that faith followed by baptism will bring about salvation. None of the apostles appear to have tried to correct Jesus and point out that He had got it wrong. However, had Mr. McCracken been in Christ's presence on that occasion, he could have said, "Not so, Lord, don't you know that baptism has no efficacy towards eternal salvation." What would Jesus have said to Mr. McCracken, we wonder? Peter obviously understood the sequence of our Lord's words for, a short time later, at Pentecost, when he preached the gospel, and was asked by enquiring penitents, what they must do, he said, "**Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ FOR the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**" This

was not an opportunity confined to "the circumcision" for Peter went on to say, **"For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call"** (Acts 2:38,39).

A FORM OF REASONING?

Consider the "logic" of the following:-

(1) Yes, baptism is mentioned about 80 times in the N.T. and was administered by John and Jesus but "baptism has no efficacy towards eternal salvation."

(2) Yes, the last command of Jesus was **"Go, teach and baptise"** all the nations, but nevertheless baptism has nothing to do with our salvation.

(3) Yes, the first command given to enquiring sinners was **"Repent and be baptised"** (Acts 2:38) but that does not mean that baptism plays any part in salvation.

(4) Yes, no less than 3,000 souls obeyed Peter on Pentecost and were baptised, but that seemed unnecessary for baptism has nothing to do with salvation.

(5) Yes, every case of conversion in the Acts involved faith, repentance and baptism, but that does not mean that baptism has any efficacy towards eternal salvation, does it?

(6) Yes, John's and Christ's baptism was for **"the remission of sins"** but remission of sins has nothing to do with eternal salvation.

(7) Yes, Rom. 6 says that we rise in baptism from the watery grave to **"Walk in newness of life"** but "newness of life" has nothing to do with our eternal salvation.

(8) Yes, we must be **"born again"** (born of water and the Spirit) and we must participate in the **"washing of regeneration"** (Titus 3:5) but baptism plays no part in this.

(9) Yes, the Jews **"rejected the counsel of God against themselves"** by refusing to be baptised, (Luke 7:29,30) but surely baptism is not as important as all that.

(10) Yes, Baptism was sent down to earth by God **from heaven** (Matt. 21:25) but that does not mean to say that baptism has anything to do with eternal salvation.

(11) Yes, Jesus walked 70 miles to be baptised and *insisted* on being baptised "For" He said, **"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"** (Matt. 3:13) but "fulfilling all righteousness" has nothing to do with salvation.

(12) Yes, Baptism is for **"putting on Christ"** (Gal. 3:27) but putting on Christ has nothing to do with our salvation, has it?

(13) Yes, Paul was told to arise and to be baptised **"to wash away his sins"** but "washing our sins away" has nothing to do with salvation, has it?

(14) Yes, Jesus said, **"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"** but did He get the sequence of His words correctly, for we know that baptism is not necessary to a person's salvation.

(15) Yes, Peter said that **"baptism doth also now save us"** but surely Peter could not mean that, for we know ourselves that baptism does not save us?

When we reflect upon all the facts concerning baptism in the 15 items above (and there are many more) it must surely strike us strangely bizarre that any serious student of God's word (and indeed a tract-writer) should just dismiss these facts as of little consequence and of no relevance to one's soul's salvation.

Justification for this attitude is usually based upon texts like Acts 16:30,31 - as follows.

FAITH THE FIRST STEP

Acts 16:30,31 records Paul's reply to the jailer's question, **"Sirs, what must I do to be saved."** Paul answered, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** Many refuse to be moved away from this one verse, and they say, "See, it never mentions baptism." Yes, it never mentions baptism but it never mentions repentance either, does it? Belief, in fact, is just the first step but more must follow.

After all, the demons firmly believe in Jesus but it won't save them: and they tremble (James 2:19). And John tells us that **"among the Chief Rulers many believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue"** (John 12:42). Here were eminent and intelligent Jews who genuinely believed in Jesus Christ, but thought it wise to keep quiet about it: thus they would not confess Him. And so here, straightaway, we see that more than faith is required: a confession of Christ is required as well. Thus we cannot isolate and cling to one verse as far as salvation is concerned: we must enlarge our knowledge and take on board every other verse which deals with the subject.

Incidentally, in the conversion of the jailer (mentioned above) Paul was dealing with a Roman (a heathen man) who probably had never heard of Christ, and so the jailer had to take the first step: belief. Accordingly, the record goes on to describe how Paul preached **"the word of the Lord"** to the jailer and his household, and how that Paul baptised them all straightaway thereafter; (the **"very same hour of the night"**). And so it seems that Paul (unlike Mr. McCracken) regarded baptism as vitally important in the **"efficacy of eternal salvation"** and something *so important* that it could not be put off until the morning.

ENTRY IN THE AUTHORISED MANNER

Yes, of course, we are saved by **faith** (Acts 16:31). But we are not saved by faith alone (James 2:24). Why are we not saved by faith only? Simply because we are saved by many other things as well. For instance, we are saved by **grace** (Eph.2:8); we are saved, as we have seen, by **confessing Christ** (Rom.10:10); and by **the gospel** (Acts 11:14); and by **the Holy Scriptures** (2 Tim. 3:16); and we are saved by **calling on His name** (Rom. 10:13); and by **hope** (Rom. 8:24); and by **Christ's life and death** (Rom 5:10); and by **our obedience** (Acts 2:40); and by **Christ's name** (Acts 4:12); and by **our good deeds** (James 2:24); and by **baptism** (1Peter 3:21); and by **our endurance to the end** (Matt. 10:22). There are other elements involved in our salvation, of course, but those few listed above should be enough to illustrate to any reasonable person that we are saved by a whole combination of factors, all equal in importance and all plainly revealed in God's word. Baptism is included as much as any of the others and although it is not more important than others, neither is it any less important than the others. As stated previously, any tract-writer who teaches that **"baptism has no efficacy towards eternal salvation"** is subverting the truth of scripture and challenging the authority of Christ and His apostles, by teaching something they never taught or sanctioned. Such misinformation will deceive the unwary and be ever likely to lead some away from the truth. We have not been left in ignorance and there is a **prescribed way** of entering the Kingdom. We must not add to God's word nor must we subtract from it, even if any such measure would increase convert numbers. We must enter the Kingdom by the door, for there will be those, said Jesus, who will try to climb up some other way. Jesus anticipates that at the Great Assize not a few **"illegal immigrants"** for heaven will turn up and claim entry saying, **"Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name cast out demons, and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity"** (Matt. 7:22). It's a sobering thought.

EDITOR.

THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD

In explaining the role of Jew and Gentile in God's plan for man's redemption, Paul uses an illustration of the olive tree. Natural branches (fleshly Israel) were broken off so that wild olive branches (the Gentiles) could be grafted in among the remaining

natural branches. In this picturesque fashion Paul exhorts the Gentile believers of the Roman church, "**Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity; but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in his kindness; otherwise you will be cut off**" (Romans 11:22).

Today we need to behold the *goodness* and *severity* of God. We delight in experiencing the goodness of God. From the riches of his loving kindness we derive enjoyment and pleasure. Perhaps this is true because "goodness in God as in man means something admirable, attractive, and praiseworthy" (Packer). We like a good man. We enjoy talking about him and his deeds of kindness. Consequently, we like a good God. We find satisfaction in speaking to others concerning His acts of love. Yet, to say "God is good" means much more than saying "God is kind and gracious in all His dealings with man." When the biblical writers call God *good*, they are referring to His *moral perfection*. A survey of *chrestotes* (the Greek word in Romans 11:22 translated "goodness" in the KJV and "kindness" in the NASV) in Romans will illustrate this.

But God, being just, demands this moral perfection of mankind. God due to his righteous nature, does not and cannot tolerate sin. Man is in a hopeless, lost condition. Thus it became necessary for God to send His son Jesus - the God-man - to satisfy His just requirement of perfection and at the same time make it possible for man to be brought once again into a friendly relationship with God. God is both just and justifier of the one having faith in Jesus (Romans 3:26).

PROMOTES REPENTANCE

Therefore, the fact of God's goodness, his moral perfection, has very important implications upon man's salvation. God's goodness supplies the *reason* for God acting through Christ in man's behalf.

1. God is good, morally perfect, and demands this perfection in his creatures.
2. Man is not good, morally imperfect, and cannot by himself satisfy God's demand.
3. So through Christ God provides *the* solution.

Another passage containing *chrestotes* is Romans 2:4. Here Paul asks, "**do you think lightly of the riches of his kindness (Gk. *chrestotetos*) and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?**" Paul is not speaking primarily of God's acts of kindness or goodness which he showers upon all men (although such would be involved). Paul basically is declaring through a rhetorical question that the person who criticizes the defects in others should gaze upon his own weakness in light of God's matchless perfection. Not until man views God's perfect goodness will he come to acknowledge his own efforts for guidance and security as useless and vain. When man thinks seriously and soberly about the riches of God's moral perfection, then man will repent (Gk., *metanoeo*, "change the mind") and give up the futile effort of attaining happiness through his own devices and will then turn to God for salvation. So not only does the fact of God's goodness supply the reason for God acting through Christ in man's behalf, the goodness of God also supplies the *incentive* for man's accepting God's gift of grace.

1. God is good, morally perfect, the embodiment of true happiness.
2. Man is not good, morally imperfect, and cannot by himself find true happiness.
3. Thus, man needs to repent, turn from his selfish pursuit of happiness unto God's glorious gift of true joy and peace found in Jesus Christ.

GOD'S GOODNESS IN THE O.T.

The Old Testament likewise declares the goodness of God. In Exodus 33:18 Moses asked God to reveal his glory. The Lord replied, "**I myself will make *all my goodness pass before you.***" When the Lord descended to Moses in order to display the fullness of his goodness, he passed by in front of Moses and proclaimed, "**The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness**

and truth; who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished" (Exodus 34.6-7). God here makes known the totality of His matchlessness - His tenderness, His mercy, His patience, His kindness, His faithfulness, His righteousness, and His forgiveness.

Within the sphere of God's moral perfection (His goodness in the absolute sense) is God's generosity of kindness (His goodness in the specialized sense). God's generosity of kindness is His free, unrestrained, unreserved, beneficial action on man's behalf in spite of man's unworthiness. In all His dealings with mankind (whether it be his love, mercy, justice, forgiveness, etc.), God is abundant, overflowing, and never-ending. "The Lord is good to all" says the psalmist.

GOD'S UNIVERSAL GOODNESS

Indeed the storehouses of heaven constantly flood mankind with gifts of love and kindness. "Every meal, every pleasure, every possession, every bit of sunshine, every night's sleep, every moment of health and safety, and everything else that sustains and enriches life is a divine gift" (Packer). And these gifts are bestowed upon saint and sinner alike, for the Lord "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45).

Amazingly, the wicked fail to honour the Lord for his goodness. Now God does not appreciate unthankfulness, and being righteous in all His ways God withholds the full measure of His goodness from the wicked. So even though the Lord is good to both righteous and unrighteous in *some* ways, the Lord is good to the righteous in *all* ways. The Lord reserves the full measure of His goodness for His people - those who honour and respect His goodness. And why not? We ourselves do not enjoy giving gifts to someone who despises our generosity. So while we may say that to the sinner the Lord is good, we must say that to the saint the Lord is *very* good.

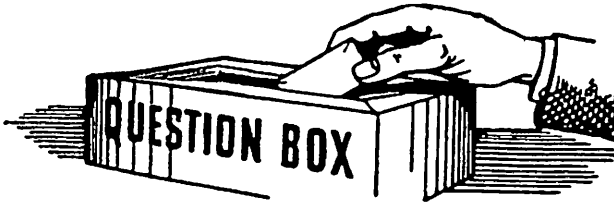
Yet, in treating God's goodness we must use caution. Too many entertain the idea that God is like grandparents spoiling their first grandchild. After junior has hurled a baseball through mother's china cabinet glass, grandma restrains mother, saying, "Don't spank him, he didn't mean any harm!" This is the idea of a *Santa Claus god* - a big, nice giant floating around in the sky, giving gifts and pleasure to all and never administering any discipline or punishment. This is *not* the biblical view of God. Paul speaks not only of God's goodness, but also of God's severity.

GOD'S SEVERITY

In our opening scripture, *severity* (Gk., *apotomian*) literally means "a cutting off." In context, it indicates God's severity in the cutting off or rejection of fleshly Israel in order to bring salvation to the Gentiles. From this sharp excision of God is a lesson for the Gentiles - a lesson of reverence and awe. In the wake of every manifestation of God's goodness lies severe judgement if that goodness is mocked. Sooner or later those who decline God's goodness, exemplified in manifold external blessings and in His provisions for man's salvation through Jesus Christ, will be "cut off." Yet, God is not quick to execute His severity. The Lord "is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Sinner, "regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation" (2 Peter 3:15). Consider His goodness toward you and turn in faith and love to Him before the impending danger of His severity falls upon you. Fallen brother or sister, appreciate the overwhelming goodness of God in your behalf. Count your many blessings. Look to Jesus who died for you. Likewise appreciate God's longsuffering. Think of how he tolerates your rebellious nature and your unworthiness. Love Him for His love and repent, or else you will suffer the misfortune of His severe discipline. Remember, if God has placed thorns in your bed it is only to keep you from falling further into spiritual complacency. This discipline of

love is meant to keep us from experiencing the full measure of His severity. In this light, even His severity is part of His goodness. Behold then, the goodness and the severity of God!

D. FLETCHER.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

This month, the question, which has been, asked concerns the Synagogue.

The questioner, a sister who has clearly given a great deal of thought to the subject, observes that whilst the Old Testament scriptures contain a divine command authorising the setting up of the Tabernacle system, there is no command to set up the Synagogue and she asks:

“Do Bible scholars consider that the Jewish synagogues had divine authority, or were they a man-made expedient to meet a particular need? If the latter, bearing in mind that it was the custom of Jesus to attend the synagogue (Luk. 4:16), was He endorsing, by His presence, a man-made expedient?”

NOT FOUND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In order to offer an appropriate answer to the question it is necessary to consider how and why the synagogue came into existence, and the first thing that has to be noted is that there is no mention of it in the Old Testament and nothing which suggests that God commanded its institution.

The only verse in the Old Testament in which the English word 'synagogue' occurs is Psalm 74:8, in the 'Authorised Version' (1611), where it is the rendering of the Hebrew word '*moed*', and simply means 'meeting-place' or 'assembly'. Later versions invariably and correctly translate it that way, because it is absolutely certain that its use in the psalm does not relate to the 'synagogue' which appeared in later times. After all, the word 'synagogue' is transliteration of Greek word '*sunagoge*'.

However, it should not surprise us, when we consider how important the synagogue system became to Judaism, that later Jewish historians such as Josephus and Philo claimed to trace the synagogue's origin back to the time of Moses. But there is no evidence whatsoever to support this idea and scholars outside of Judaism give it no credence.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SYNAGOGUE

The questioner uses the phrase, '*an expedient to meet a particular need*', and I suspect that she has in mind the period in Jewish history, over 500 years before the birth of Christ, when the Kingdom of Judah was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, because it was the Babylonian Captivity which gave rise to the synagogue.

The policy frequently adopted by empires such as those of Assyria and Babylon, in their treatment of the nations whom they defeated, was one of 'assimilation'. It was a policy designed to destroy the national identity of the captives by dispensing them throughout the empire. The Jews in Babylon, however, effectively countered this move by establishing assemblies, which later developed into the institution known as the Synagogue. Since they could no longer meet the requirements of the Mosaic law, which decreed that priestly worship should be carried out in the Temple in Jerusalem - (a temple which, in any case, had been destroyed) - it became necessary to devise some

other means of keeping both their race and religion pure and alive whilst they were in captivity. For that purpose these assemblies were established.

ITS PURPOSE

This means that we may accurately describe the synagogue '*a man-made expedient*' for that is exactly what it was. But it served several significant purposes.

Firstly, the synagogue maintained the Jewish national consciousness and became the social centre for the life of the captives, so that even in captivity they never forgot that they were Jews.

Secondly, it promoted a renewed interest in, and respect for, the scriptures and became the place where the collective study of the word of God was conducted.

Thirdly, because it was no longer possible to observe the feasts, fast and sacrifices prescribed by the Law, there being neither priesthood nor temple, the synagogue also became a place for communal prayer.

So effectively did this 'expedient' work, that when the people returned to their homeland they took it with them and developed it, so that with the passing of time, the synagogue was accepted as a uniquely Jewish 'institution', and the synagogue services became more formal and ritualistic.

As for the buildings in which the services were held, these varied in grandeur and style according to the congregation's size and affluence. *Externally*, the buildings were not usually impressive, because in the Middle Ages the height of synagogues was restricted by law; a manifestation of the anti-Semitism which was fairly common in those days. But, whatever physical differences there may have been between the buildings themselves, they were contained certain items of furniture which came to be common to all of them and which can be identified to this day.

Since the Middle Ages, *the sacred scrolls* containing the Law have been housed in the '*Ark*', a kind of cupboard or chest, which is always located on the wall, which faces Jerusalem.

In front of this 'Ark', there is the '*Perpetual Light*', symbolising the constant Presence of God, and which is said to remind the congregation of the fire on the altar which, in the days of the Tabernacle and the Temple, was never allowed to go out.

There is, also, the '*Bimah*', a raised platform on which stands a reading desk from which prayers are led, the scriptures read, and announcements are made. This used to be situated at one end of the synagogue, but in these days is usually placed in the centre of the building.

Incidentally, one may be forgiven for supposing that those who attend the synagogue have no problem in allowing their left hand to know what their right hand does! According to one rabbi, the *Bimah* is also the place where, '*acts of benevolence are made, in the form of donations, which those who are called up to the Reading of the Law are wont to make!*'

THE MODERN SYNAGOGUE

If anything, therefore, over the centuries the Synagogue has become even more important in Jewish life. Modern Jewish leaders teach that it is surpassed in importance only by the home, and, like the home, it serves as '*a training ground in Holiness*'.

Regardless of what changes it has undergone since the days of the Babylonian Captivity, the purposes it serves are still essentially the same. It remains:

1. A place for the study of the Scriptures.
2. A place of Worship.
3. A Centre of Social Life.

These three functions have come to be described as:

1. *Torah*: the study of the Law of God.

I think that it is a fact not generally understood by Christians, amongst whom

private study of the Word is encouraged, that Judaism actually *discourages* private or individual study. It prefers *communal* study and regards knowledge gained in the *synagogue*, where different views and opinions are expressed, as the proper method of arriving at a true understanding of the scriptures.

2. *Abodah*, or Worship.

Here, again, Judaism stresses the *communal* nature of worship, and displays what can only be described as a 'negative attitude' towards private worship, or, what is called 'worship in isolation'.

3. *Gemiluth Chasadim*

This *is* the term which describes the practice of benevolence and good deeds, and for this aspect of Jewish life also, the synagogue is considered to be the ideal place. The Jews describe this as '*social service*', because the synagogue has become the place where their leaders meet together to make decisions affecting the life of their community and where benevolence is dispensed.

So, we see that an 'expedient' which was devised in a time of national distress, eventually became an important institution in Judaism.

AN 'EXPEDIENT'

Let us now think about that word '*expedient*'. We must remember that although the word does not occur in the scripture, we should not confuse it with such words as '*unscriptural*' or '*anti-scriptural*'. 'Expedient' simply means '*beneficial, advantageous or useful*', and, for this reason, there is nothing wrong with the proper use of 'an expedient'.

If anything is adopted which is *not* in harmony with the scriptures it cannot be said to be 'beneficial' or 'advantageous', and therefore it cannot properly be called an expedient.

JESUS AND THE SYNAGOGUE

As for the Lord Himself '*endorsing by presence (in the Synagogue) a man-made expedient*' - (and there is no doubt that he did so *regularly*, Luke 4:16) - nothing that was done in the Synagogue could be condemned as a violation of the Law of God. Since the Law commanded worship, benevolence and obedience to God's Word, it could be argued that the Synagogue encouraged and assisted the Jews to understand and obey the Law. For this reason the Lord Jesus would have no objection to it.

OUR OWN 'EXPEDIENTS'

Come to think about it, there are many things, which *we* have adopted and use in the life of the Church today which are, in fact, 'expedients'.

The *Time* at which the local congregation decides to meet for worship on the Lord's Day, is determined on the basis of 'expediency' that is, on the basis of appropriateness and convenience.

The *Activities* which congregations arrange for themselves, in order to promote growth and encourage fellowship, are also 'expedients'. Where do we find the passage of scriptures which *explicitly* command the setting up of '*Lord's Day Bible Classes, Men's Training Classes, Ladies' Meetings* and similar activities? Where, indeed, are we commanded to publish and use a *hymnbook*?

All of these are useful arrangements - 'expedients' - designed to help us to do what we are *commanded* to do; namely study the Word, in order to be able to teach and preach, and sing God's praises. No doubt we could do all of these things without the use of these 'expedients'. For instance, we could *sing* without the use of hymnbooks, though I doubt we could do so as conveniently.

Yes! The Synagogue was a 'man-made expedient', used - and, by inference, approved - by the Lord, and I suggest that we should do well to adopt His wisdom and follow His example when proposals are put forward which are designed to help us to

work and worship more effectively.

A method is neither *right* nor *wrong* merely because it is *new*. The question, which we should always ask, is, *Is what is suggested in harmony with the Word of God, or does it violate, or conflict with, what the scriptures reveal to be His will?*

The answer to this question will settle whether a thing is truly '*expedient*' or not.

(Questions to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houstoun, Renfrewshire, Scotland, PA6 7NZ)

THE LORD'S SUPPER (3) - THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE

We saw in the last article how the Catholic Church sought to justify its teaching of transubstantiation back before the Council of Nicea in 325. The first effort to bring this doctrine together seems to have been by Paschasius in 870. The teaching became entrenched so that by 1120 the Waldenses were being slaughtered and persecuted for believing that the bread and wine were just symbols as inviting others to prove from the scriptures that they were in error. By 1215 the Council of Lateran had formally adopted the doctrine into the Catholic faith. John Wycliffe retained the Waldenses teaching, formally renouncing the Catholic view in 1337 after 5 papal bulls had been issued to put him in prison for his erroneous doctrines. By 1539 the English Statute of the 6 articles stated in the first article "That in the sacrament of the Altar, after consecration, there remains no substance of bread and wine; but under these forms the natural body and blood of Christ are present". It was further enacted "that if any did speak, preach, or write against the first article, they were to be judged heretics, and burnt without any abjuration, and to forfeit their real personal estates to the king." If any taught against the other articles of religion they were to die as felons. Within 20 years many had been burnt at the stake including Latimer and Ridley. The reason for burning and not another form of death was because they believed the elements of the Lord's Supper were just emblems. Today the Catholic Church belief remains unchanged having reaffirmed it at the second Vatican Council of 1962/5. "If anyone shall say that in the Mass there is not offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead, or what is offered is nothing else than Christ let him be an anathema". On the Internet 'Father' Feene continues the message in 1998 "Unless you eat Me you shall not have life in you" Life is life eternal and means nothing less than salvation".

VATICAN COUNCIL VERSUS SCRIPTURE

Shortly after the creation of the Church on Pentecost those that had received the word and had been baptised (*Acts 2:41*) "**were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' doctrine and to fellowship and in breaking of bread.**" Jesus had made it clear (*Matthew 15:9*) that worship is vain if the doctrines of men are taught; and almost the last thing he instructed his disciples to do was to Teach - Baptise - "**Teach them to observe all things.**" (*Matthew 28:19/20*).

In the letter to the Colossians Paul says "**We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.**" (1:28) the word 'proclaim' is the same as Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 11:26 of the Lord's Supper and therefore links teaching with the feast, as also does Colossians 3:16. The Apostle John emphasises the importance of doctrine and makes it absolutely clear "**Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.**" (2 *John 1.9*). When we come together then at the breaking of bread it is important that not only are our actions to be in harmony with Christ's teaching but so

also that our beliefs. The issue of what we believe about the Lord's Supper strikes at the real core of Christianity. The second Vatican Council absolutely belies the teaching of Romans and Hebrews: - *Romans 6:9/10* - "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead *dieth no more*; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, *he died unto sin once*: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." *Hebrews 7:27* - "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did *once*, when he offered up himself." *Hebrews 9:12* - "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in *once* into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." *Hebrews 9:26* - "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now *once* in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." *Hebrews 10:10* - "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*."

O.T. PROHIBITION

As the Apostle Peter said of Jesus on Pentecost "And God raised Him up again, *putting an end to the agony of death*, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (*Act 2:24*). As "there no longer remains a *sacrifice* for sins" (*Hebrews 10:26*), the Mass cannot then be a 'propitiatory sacrifice' and as such must be a "*Gentile sacrifice*" as in *1 Co. 10:20* "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." To also suggest that in taking of the cup one is actually drinking blood, when the drinking of blood was an abomination in the Old Testament reinforces the application of *Corinthians 10:20* to their practice - *Leviticus 7:26* "Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings."

And *Leviticus 6:30* "no sin offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall be eaten: it shall be burnt in the fire. . ." *Leviticus 17* does not allow a Jew or alien to eat blood and those that do are to be "*cut off from his people*." The Apostle James at the Council of Jerusalem in *Acts 15* advised the Gentiles, "that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."

PAUL'S EXAMPLE

In the face of Catholic teaching, some like the Quakers have rejected any symbolism and do not keep the Lord's Supper or practise baptism because they maintain that God must only be worshipped in spirit. Should we then keep this institution with so many different ideas around on what it represents? Turning back to the Apostle Paul for an answer we find in *1 Cor. 11:1* "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ . . ." The word 'followers' is from the Greek word to mimic, to imitate. Of the things we are asked then to imitate is set out in *1 Corinthians 11:23/25* "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me . . . For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." The apparent simple statement "For as often as you eat this bread" can be understood by asking "What are we to eat?" - bread; that should close the matter. To those who accept this as an answer we need to ask is it important enough to upset the unity of the Church by not challenging the Catholic interpretation of transubstantiation? What should our attitude be to those that have different ideas to ourselves on the nature of Christianity. Can we share the Mass? Should we accept or deny fellowship to those who have a different doctrine to

ourselves? Some guidelines are given, the Apostle Paul required the Corinthians not to associate with immoral 'Christian' people (1 Cor. 5:9) and to remove the wicked so-called brother from amongst them (1 Cor. 5:13) and "with such a one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). In his letter to the Ephesians in chapter 5 verse 11 he extends the ban to fellowship with unbelievers (but not association) - "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." 2 Co. 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

JOHN AT PATMOS

The trend today is for ecumenicism; blurring any difference for the sake of the unity for which Jesus prayed, but for what did he pray? "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me." John 17:21/23. The unity then that Jesus prayed for can only be obtained if we have Jesus 'in us'. Our only way to pursue this unity is to pursue the objective to get closer to the teaching and practice of the Apostles' doctrine. The Apostle John in his vision on the isle of Patmos records that *Ephesus* was praised because she "hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans", (2:6) *Pergamos* was condemned "because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication and they hast also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (2:14/15). *Thyatira* was also condemned for they "sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." (2:20). It is clear from these examples that we need to hate error and not to suffer false teaching if we are to escape condemnation. The next article (DV) will explore the details of the emblems employed to focus our minds on "remembering that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead" (2 Timothy 2:8).

BRIAN BOLAND.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sept. 6	Psalm 119:17-32	2 Timothy 2
Sept. 13	Psalm 119:33-48	2 Timothy 3
Sept. 20	Psalm 116	2 Timothy 4
Sept. 27	Jeremiah 17:1-10	Titus 1

SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL

The Christian religion has always had its opponents. Some of them have resorted to violence in an attempt to destroy it. It should be noted that there were ten major persecutions by the pagan Romans to wipe Christianity from the Empire. But many Jews were also hostile to the Way. Jesus, of course,

foresaw all this. He said: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

Paul and Timothy were numbered with the persecuted. They suffered much for the cause of Christ. They saw themselves as soldiers in the greatest conflict the world has seen - the conflict between good and evil, between God and Satan, between the kingdom of light and the

kingdom of darkness. They were involved in a cause worth living for and a cause worth dying for. They gave their all. Jesus was their example. He inspired them to endure hardships, suffer persecution, and overcome imprisonment. Paul wrote: "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us . . ." (2:11-12). They knew that suffering was for a while and that splendour was after a while. Paul once wrote: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

CONTINUING IN THE GOSPEL

In chapter three we are given by Paul the marks of the last days. Really, they are qualities of godlessness. They paint a terrible picture. Let us consider some of them.

There are those who are "covetous". The Greek word is *philarguros* and means, literally, money-loving. The world is full of such people. I have met a number of them during my thirty-year banking career. "Boasters" is from *alazon* and originally referred to a wandering quack. It grew to mean an impostor or a braggart. We have all encountered the clever know-alls who have not an ounce of humility in them. Perhaps we work with them or they live next door to us. They give a real test to our Christian character. "Unholy" is *anosios* and is a terrible thing. It speaks of one who is without piety and who has absolutely no reverence for God. "Without natural affection" is *astorgos*. *Storge* is the word for family love. Adam Clarke has written: "Without that affection which parents bear to their young and which the young bear to their parents. An affection which is common to every class of animals; consequently, men without it are worse than brutes". "Incontinent" is *akrates* and speaks of

those who are ungovernable in their desires and who are slaves to uncleanness. "Heady" is *propetes* and refers to those who are headstrong. "It describes the man who is swept on by passion and impulse to such an extent that he is totally unable to think sensibly" (Barclay). "Highminded" is the Greek word *tetuphomenos* and describes those who are inflated with conceit. When someone is like that, there is no room for goodness.

Timothy was surrounded by such people, as we are today. Paul encouraged him to "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:14-15, N.I.V.). The Scriptures inspired Timothy because they themselves were inspired by God. They are perfect for their purpose and their purpose is to make us perfect or complete, lacking in nothing (3:17).

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

Paul gave Timothy every encouragement despite the fact that he felt his end was near (4:6-8). Paul was a man of hope. He looked forward to being with the Lord forever in heaven and receiving that "crown of righteousness" (4:8). But the Lord's work had to continue on earth and he looked to men such as Timothy to proclaim fearlessly and tirelessly the good news of Jesus and His love for sinful mankind. "Preach the word . . ." (4:2) and ". . . do the work of an evangelist . . ." (4:5) are clear instructions to his son in the faith. The gospel was everything to Paul. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). He lived for the gospel and he died for the gospel. What an example for all Christians in all times!

EPISTLE TO TITUS

AUTHOR: the apostle Paul.

RECIPIENT: Titus. He was a Greek and probably one of Paul's converts (1:4). He probably came from Antioch. He is mentioned in the following passages (outwith the epistle of Titus itself): Galatians 2:1,3; 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,17,23; 12:18; 2 Timothy 4:10. His efforts in Corinth for Paul are worthy of careful study. His labours in Crete are also legendary. He is still a well-known figure there. Strangely, there is no mention of Titus in the book of Acts.

DATE: around 65 A.D.

THEME: "Titus had been left on the island of Crete to organize the churches there (1:5). The letter therefore has much in common with 1 Timothy, but with greater emphasis on church organisation and administration" (The Hodder Bible Handbook).

CRETE: a mountainous island in the Mediterranean. It is 160 miles long and 6 to 35 miles broad. It has an interesting and long history. The Romans conquered it and it was home to many Jews at one time. "The Cretans were famous bowmen; but their moral reputation was bad, their unchastity and untruthfulness were proverbial" (The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible).

QUALIFICATION OF AN ELDER

Paul addressed the qualifications to two evangelists: Timothy and Titus (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The eldership is an important subject. I wish to highlight a number of the qualifications.

". . . having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly" (1:6). The N.I.V. translation is: **". . . a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient"**. We have to be careful here. I believe that these words have reference to faithfulness to the earthly father. A father cannot be held responsible for his children being believers in Christ. Yes, he can be an example and

guide them to the right road, but the decision for Christ ultimately lies with the child when he or she comes of age. Timothy's words are clear on this qualification: **"One that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?)"** (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

"Not given to wine" (1:7) means **"not addicted to wine"**. I do not think it necessarily follows that an elder must be a complete abstainer from alcohol. Personally, I think complete abstinence is the best and safest course. **"No striker"** (1:7) means "not one who tends to settle arguments with his fists". I have known people like that. An elder has to be a peaceable man. **"Not given to filthy lucre"** (1:7) means "not one who earns money by base methods". David King wrote: "But there is an allusion to useful and honourable trades or callings". **". . . Sober, just, holy, temperate . . ."** (1:8) means "one who wisely controls his instincts; gives respect to men and reverence to God; shows piety or reverences the fundamental decencies of life; has achieved complete self-mastery in his life".

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. In which book do we read the song of Moses?
2. What kind of pillar led the Israelites at night?
3. Who murdered Abner, the commander of Saul's army?
4. How many men did Saul use to hunt down David in the desert of En Gedi?
5. Who put out a fleece to verify God's will?

6. Who was Shaashgaz?
7. Who said to Paul *"Have you appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shall you go"*.
8. Which apostle had a vision of animals in a sheet?
9. Who asked Pontius Pilate for Jesus' body?
10. Where did John write the Revelation?

OBITUARY

Slamannan: The church here regrets to record the passing of sister Dorothy Hay on Saturday, 13th June 1998, aged 81 years. For over the past 2 years Dorothy was unable to meet with the brethren because of the frailty of the flesh. Thanks is given to Carrondale Nursing Home for their kind care and devotion to Dorothy, and our thoughts and sympathies, at this time, go out to the immediate family and friends who are mourning her passing. We commend them to the grace of God and to the comfort of the scriptures.

Services in the Meeting-House and the Crematorium were conducted by brother Peter Wilson.

GRACE SNEDDON (Sec.)

THANKS

The family of Dorothy Hay sincerely thank all those who sent letters, cards and telephone messages during their recent bereavement. All of these things were greatly appreciated.

GRACE SNEDDON (Sec.)

THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORIOUS AID

*When I am tired, the Bible is my bed;
 When in the dark, the Bible is my light;
 When I am hungry, it is vital bread;
 When sorely pressed, 'tis armour for the fight;
 When I am sick, 'tis healing medicine;
 When lonely, in it, thronging friends are mine.*

1. Deuteronomy (chapter 32).
2. Fire (Exodus 13:22).
3. Joab (2 Samuel 3:27).
4. 3000 (1 Samuel 24:1,2).
5. Gideon (Judges 6:36-40).
6. The eunuch in charge of Xerxes' concubines (Esther 2:14).
7. Festus (Acts 25:12).
8. Peter (Acts 10:9-16).
9. Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57).
10. Patmos (Revelation 1:9).

ANSWERS

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