

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 48. No.10

OCTOBER 1980

HUMBLE PIE

Another Olympics has come and gone — each one now looking more and more like being the very last one. It becomes increasingly difficult to believe the official Olympic axiom that it is not winning that matters but the honour of simply taking part. One only needs to see the efforts and expense expended in winning, to say nothing of occasional cheating to realise that it is the winning that matters. At the last Olympics a Russian fencer was sent home for blatant cheating and this time there have been dark rumblings about 'bent' Russian stewards and the use of an 'elastic' tape-measure on Russian long-jumpers and hammer throwers — perhaps 'sour grapes;' perhaps not. Our good friends in America are accused of 'bringing politics into sport' because they rightly decided to boycott the Olympics, the critics conveniently forgetting that the Russians are interested in sport only because of political objectives.

The Russians spend vast sums on athletics to secure success so that that same success might be used as political propaganda, and that the world might see what a good thing communism is. Hitler tried to do the same in the Olympics at Berlin in 1936 to show how good his political strategy was in producing a physical elite and history tells us how he stomped from the stadium in anger when he saw the coloured American Jesse Owens beat the best that Germany could provide. Perhaps the only countries who compete in terms of the true Olympic ideal are the small nations who send one or, perhaps, two participants and have no hope of winning anything. I suppose at the first Olympics it was simply a matter of a few men running a race to see who could win, but unfortunately there are, nowadays, much deeper ramifications than that. Pleasant though it is to watch the various competitions of an Olympic programme there can be little doubt that there emerges a nationalistic partisanship which, in my view, does more harm than good and divides the nations of the world rather than, as is alleged, drawing men closer together in brotherhood. Apart from this, there is the question of the *glorification of man* which undoubtedly is inherent in the whole exercise. Some would say that surely there can be no harm in the exaltation of physical fitness, and this is true, but physical fitness can be commended without the element of fierce competition which exists at the Olympics. Men and women, as national champions, are glorified in the event of their success at the Olympics, and indeed sometimes almost deified by their countrymen upon their

return home. Should *we* ever get carried away with the occasion Paul keeps our feet on the ground when he says, "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (II Cor. 10:17).

But someone will say, "Surely Paul was not speaking here of glorying in the physical prowess and fitness of anyone?" Paul certainly was not specifically speaking here of those who glory in physical strength or fleetness of foot but was in fact encompassing self-glorification *in any direction*, whether in physical, mental or moral attainments. He probably had in mind, although he does not expressly quote it, the admonition of Jeremiah (9:23,24) which runs, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

To a greater or lesser degree all men think they have something wherein they can boast or glory — indeed some live for the very glory that power provides — names like General Amin spring to mind. If we have nothing wherein we ourselves may glory we can sometimes bask in the reflected glory of the achievements of those close to us, even of our parents or our children — indeed many spend happy hours talking about the achievements of a son or a daughter. It is not unknown for a woman to glory in her beauty (and in some countries a lot of money is spent trying to retain that beauty) and it is not unknown for a man to glory in his strength and occasionally to flex his muscles to any interested onlookers. Many glory in the fact that they are men of property and substance and derive great pleasure from showing friends around their large estates and policies, parks and mansion houses. Some glory in their ancestry and pedigree and enjoy being referred to by those who recognise the fact and address them with due deference — there must be very few of the titled gentry who don't enjoy their title. There are those who may glory in feats of courage or endurance and willingly face impossible odds — indeed a young man from this locality is currently rowing across the Atlantic in a thirteen-foot boat and while we may question the wisdom of such an action, very few must doubt the raw courage. Then again some glory in academic distinction and love to be consulted as being 'an authority' on some particular subject or other.

It is only fair to say, and doubtless quite obvious, that these are generalisations only. It is also obvious that there is not necessarily anything wrong with power, or beauty, or strength, or estates, or titles, or distinguished ancestry, or courage, or academic achievements. The only thing wrong with them is if we truly glory in them or glory in those who possess such things.

GOD is the giver of all power, and beauty, and physical strength, and goods, and titles, and ancestry, and courage and mental accomplishments and to GOD should be given any and all glory. Most of the time when the world applauds those who possess special powers, gifts, abilities the world rarely relates these things to GOD. Even Israel of old were inclined to forget the author of these things and so Jeremiah had to admonish them as already quoted, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the physically strong man glory in his bodily strength, neither let the prosperous man glory in his prosperity."

To the 'self-made' man it must come as a very humiliating thought that man has little actually to do with his own possession of wisdom, strength or prosperity, but that it is God who is the silent but complete benefactor. God is indeed the giver of every good and perfect gift and this gives God an over-riding right to say HOW these gifts and blessings ought to be used. In other parts of the scriptures God does, in fact, give instructions on how men *ought to use* God-given wisdom, strength or prosperity

but here, in this statement of Jeremiah's, God is not talking about *the use* of the gifts but about *an acknowledgement* of the source of such gifts. God wants the recipients of His gifts to acknowledge that God is the giver, and publicly place the credit where the credit belongs. If, says Jeremiah, a man is disposed to glory, let him glory rather in the fact THAT HE KNOWS GOD and that HE HAS AN UNDERSTANDING WITH GOD, and that he recognises that it is God who, in this world, exercises Loving kindness, Judgement and Righteousness and that these are the things that God delights in. At very best, man's wisdom, strength and riches are superficial and puny and so the only objects worthy of any glory lodge with God.

Truly, Jeremiah, in these few words puts into eternal perspective any big ideas man may get into his head from time to time.

And so, in keeping with these sentiments, Paul pursues the same theme when he suggests to some of the 'upstarts' in the Corinthian church, who opposed him, that self-praise was no honour "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

Clearly there were those even in the church who indulged in vain-glory. Indeed, Paul, in his first epistle to these same Corinthians had to say, "Therefore let no man glory in men" and Paul himself (as he explains later) was given a 'thorn in the flesh' so that God's strength might be evidenced in Paul's physical weakness, and so Paul, if he glorified at all, gloried in his own infirmity that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Similarly, Paul exhorted the disciples at Galatia with these words, "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another and envying one another.," and in the closing verses of the same epistle uttered that wonderful personal avowal which surely provides a very fitting statement with which to close these remarks, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Jeremiah had recommended that men glory in God's exercise of Loving kindness, Judgement and Righteousness — Paul here adds a new dimension to our glorying when he says that we should all glory in the Cross of Christ. The 'Cross of Christ', so awful and so wonderful to contemplate and yet not so far removed from Jeremiah's recommendation for surely the 'Cross of Christ' was, in terms of world history, the focal point and trusting place of all of God's Loving kindness, Judgement and Righteousness.

In the Cross of Christ I glory
Towering o'er the wrecks of time
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime

THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

Revelation: chapter 2 and 3

AS ONE who has always been interested in these letters and benefitted because of being so, I write this to encourage my brethren to give attention to reading and studying them if they have not already done so.

Although I would like to deal with each one of these letters I confine my remarks to the first one — the letter to the church at Ephesus — with the hope that I may whet the appetite of others to give attention to them all.

Note first of all the exhortation given — "He that hath an ear let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches."

Do we need any other encouragement to give these letters our closest attention?

What is written therein I suggest is important to us all.

At the time this letter was written the church at Ephesus was probably large and flourishing.

Her works? A mixture of good and bad, and as with all things, known to God, especially her labour, toil, trouble in faithful service in the cause of Christ and in opposing evil.

The opposition made against the truth was faithfully and patiently borne by this church. She did not tolerate those who opposed the truth.

The claims of false apostles were examined and such were found to be liars.

This church, despite all this, did not abandon the principles of the truth, but persevered with patience on account of her Master.

She never wearied, never reached the point of giving up and for this was highly commended by Christ her Saviour.

Sadly, however, one thing was not approved, the loss of first love; not exactly the loss of love which seemed in some way to remain, but the loss of zeal of first love.

"Recall," the members of the church are exhorted, "the former position; the joy then experienced," and return to and do the first works; repent (waken up) otherwise light will be removed and the church would cease to exist (it long has, like many others).

Finally, this letter clearly states that the church at Ephesus despised and hated sin and to her was given the promise to one who overcomes, the reward of victory, *eternal life*.

Whether the church at Ephesus paid attention to and did repent of the thing not approved, we know not.

We do know that Paul in his letter wrote to encourage unity therein. Certainly, when Paul wrote his epistle, the church appeared to be active, sound in doctrine but deficient in love, so needful in any church. What we learn from a study of this letter to the church at Ephesus is that the reward of faithfulness must never be forgotten.

Everyone of us must endeavour to be worthy of our calling, to obtain the promised reward, life eternal.

The question is, how do we compare with the church at Ephesus to whom the Spirit wrote?

We view ourselves as an assembly of Christians although what we are, individually the church is compositely.

How do we work together as a church no matter where we are? Do we oppose evil openly? Do we tolerate opposers of the truth? Do we tolerate false doctrines?

Do we have the same trouble as this early church had, or are we united?

Do we have strife in our midst? Despite exhortations and much teaching do we have members falling away?

What of our first love, have we lost our early zeal? Are we dead or alive spiritually?

Is our witness in danger of extinction?

We must take to heart the experience of the early church, do all in our power to ensure a faithful church in the district in which we meet.

There are obvious reasons for doing so, it will be for *our* good, for the good of *those we hope will follow* in our footsteps, and above all else to ensure that the name of God and of our Saviour will continue to be *upheld and glorified*.

Our prayer is that it may long be so. It is the responsibility of all of us.

I never fail to read these letters to the churches without re-calling the word of our late Bro. John Sneddon:

"What kind of church would our church be

If every member was a member like me?"

Certainly words for thought.

GLEANINGS

“Let her glean even among the sheaves.” Ruth 2:15

Thy word is a lamp

“The Bible is by those who receive it as the Word of God generally accepted as a divinely appointed rule of faith and practice. Some, however, differ as to the parts of the book which should govern us today, and as to their exclusiveness as a rule of discipline. Because the Old Testament was the God — given law of the Old-Dispensation, and is still binding upon the faith of Christians, many have concluded that it is still binding as our rule of conduct, but the New Testament makes it clear that this is not so (Galatians 3: 23-25; Hebrews I: 1-2).

“We encourage the study of the whole Bible as the Word of God. That it came from Him makes it our duty to believe it, even though nothing were said of such a duty in the book itself. But that part called the New Testament is the Christian’s law book. The Christian is under law to Christ, not to Moses, and equally under the law to the apostles of Christ (Luke 10:16; John 20:20-23).

“The confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, is the foundation truth on which the Church of Christ is built (Matthew 17:16-18), but the Christian’s faith includes all Scripture teaching — the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible is his creed. To him it is an all-sufficient creed, because it comes from God. The light from God makes it authoritative, and makes it a fitting Guide for man, so the Christian can say with David:- “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” He has proved it a wise counsellor and a safe guide. In this world the pathway is oftentimes dark and somewhat dangerous; without the light from the word of the Living God the Christian’s feet would often slip.

If used personally, practically, perseveringly, the word of God will always, like a flaming torch, reveal the way and show what lies before.

“Having no fixed lamps in Eastern towns, in olden times each person carried a lantern with him that he might not fall into the open sewer or stumble over the heaps of refuse which defiled the road. This is a true picture of our paths through this dark world. We cannot know the way or how to walk safely in it if the light from the Word of God is not turned upon it. The head needs illumination, but even more the feet need direction, else head and feet may fall into the ditch. Happy is the man who personally appropriates God’s word, and practically uses it as his counsellor and comfort. It shall be a lamp by night, a light by day, and a delight at all times.

“The man who walks in darkness is sure sooner or later to stumble, while he who walks by the light of day or lamp of night stumbleth not, but keeps his uprightness. Ignorance upon practical subjects is painful, breeding indecision and suspense; how much so in those things that affect the Soul. The word of God by imparting heavenly knowledge leads to decision, and after obedience there is light within the Soul, as well as within the Book, and the course is light unto the end.”

A hurricane lamp

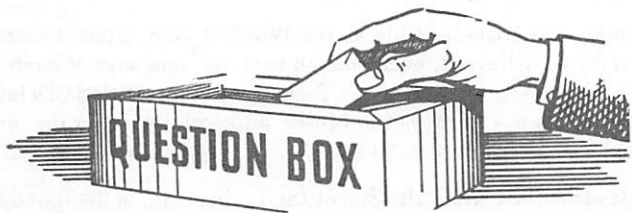
“There is a kind of lamp so made that, in the wildest of storms, the wind can never blow out; it is called a hurricane lamp. The Word of God will never blow out. Both in itself and in its use it is proved such a lamp. It will stand the storm of opposition to itself. How Satan and satanic men in all ages have tried to blow it out, but it shines today brighter than ever! It will stand you in equally unflinching stead when storms

beat against you. It will light you in the midst of temptation, and persecution and every stress that can come."

An invalid's lamp

"When we have to lie awake all the night in pain we do not want to be left in the dark; nor do we want any glaring, nerve-trying, wearying light. We want a cheerful, mellow, soothing light. Such a light is the Bible to those who are weak and weary and ill of mind or body. Many of its sweetest messages are specially suited to such. Beautiful, blessed invalid's lamp — the Word of God! Those who visit the sick know that nothing so cheers them as this cheerful, mellow night lamp of the Word of God." Bethesda 1907

Selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"If, as you said last month, there is no such office in the Church as the Evangelist, who in your opinion would appoint elders and deacons in congregations?"

Since my answer to the question on evangelists in the last issue of the S.S., two or three brethren have asked me essentially the same question as that printed above. As the question seems genuine enough, the only thing we can do is to discuss it as objectively as we can, always referring ourselves to the teaching of God's word, and avoiding as far as possible our personal opinions on the matter.

The Scriptural Guidance

In the first instance we ought to explore what is meant by "to appoint". We can find one example in ACTS 1: 23, "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. "Instead of the phrase "they appointed" (A.V.), the R.S.V. has "they put forward." Other versions say "they proposed two." The disciples then prayed to God so that there might be some indication as to who should be chosen, and then they cast lots. The casting of lots evidently involved inscribing names on small tablets of wood or stone, and then casting them from some receptacle, or from some garment; he whose lot first came out was the one chosen. In this case, these were simply singled out, in order that it might be made known which of them the Lord had chosen.

Further on in Acts of the Apostles, we have reference to the appointment of the so-called seven deacons (ACTS 6). In this case, the apostles prayed over them, and then laid their hands upon them. I have used the phrase "so-called" deacons, because it seems to me that two of those chosen, Stephen and Philip, did more than just wait at tables. Could it be that the laying on of the apostles hands involved more than just "setting forth" these men?

When Paul called the elders from Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, he exhorted them, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (ACTS 20: 28). The phrase "hath made" literally means "appointed by" the Holy Spirit. If we take this to mean a miraculous

appointment, then the elders at Ephesus at that time must have been in a different category than elders today; this in itself, if it were so, would raise all kinds of problems in exegesis. If, on the other hand, these men had been sought out because of their manifest love and devotion to the truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit, then this would be consistent with those sought out today because of *their* love for and devotion to the truth taught by the Holy Spirit through the word. In ACTS 14: 23 we read, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." So it seems that apostolic missionaries, when they revisited various churches, "had appointed" (R.S.V.) elders in every church. There is no statement regarding the laying on of hands in these appointments. These appointments, as were those recorded in Acts 6, were appointments to a specific position in the church.

The scripture which has reference to the work of Titus in Crete is rather interesting. He was to complete that which had been left unfinished, i.e., to appoint elders in every town, and the A.V. adds, "as I had appointed thee." Now this does not mean that Titus himself had been appointed to any specific office to do this work, he was left in Crete still working under apostolic jurisdiction. A better rendering of "as I had appointed thee" would seem to be "as I directed thee," and it seems reasonably clear that Paul was referring to previous personal details given to Titus on a previous occasion. A study of the Titus passage would seem to indicate that the instruction to Titus to appoint did not preclude the churches (in every town) from choosing their elders; I feel this to be a very important point to remember.

In summarising this section, it would appear to me that except in the case of the Acts 6 passage, which seems to me to have been a special situation anyway, that those overseers appointed under apostolic jurisdiction would have been appointed because of their christian qualities and would be with the approbation of the different assemblies of saints from among whom they had been sought. If the apostles had to outline the specific qualifications to be looked for, then these qualifications would have been given by them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and would be, by extension, necessary for appointment in similar situations thereafter.

After the First Century

There can be little doubt that the christians of the first century expected the imminent return of the Lord. The apostolic letters written subsequently to various christian communities were written to deal with problems which began to emerge in the extended time situation while the Church was waiting for the return of the Lord. However much New Testament christians may despise the idea of organisation, it became clear that some sort of organisation was needed in order to control some of the gross excesses that were creeping into local communities of christians. It seems perfectly reasonable to me that the Holy Spirit would need to give the apostles detailed instructions for the government of the Church, and that the apostles in turn would need to teach those instructions to the saints through various agencies so that the Church could sustain the apostolic teaching until such time that the Lord returned. Unfortunately, we know only too well the sectarian strife which beset the Church, and the almost irreparable damage which has been caused because of the desire of some christians to assume the pre-eminence over their fellow-christians. This is why it is so important for us today to follow the scriptural pattern, and nothing more than that. Therefore, for the subject under discussion, it would seem best to conclude in the following way.

1. Specific and detailed instructions have been given by the Holy Spirit for the government of the Church in its several localities. Whatever the mechanics of the

"setting forth" of the proposed leaders may be, it should be realised that they are only secondary to the main task of choosing the right men. It should be emphasised that the method whereby the Church is to be led is a God-given method, and that we should be sure that by prayer and meditation we arrange things to His Glory. It is much easier to make a leader than it is to un-make him.

2. The scriptural pattern, and reason, seems to suggest that when a community of saints has been taught the word then those saints should seek out *from among themselves* suitable men to lead them. They will do this with the utmost prayer, and care, and diligence to the word, but let there never be any doubt that if any of the leaders so chosen should in their lives defect from the high principles involved, then the saints who sought them out for election, appealing to the same word for justification, should be courageous enough to remove them from office.

3. In the case of a newly-formed community, the preacher may take it upon himself to suggest the men who in his opinion should be leaders. I will content myself by saying that we have the basic human fallibility of having preference for certain people and consequently we must always avoid this tendency. So far as the Church is concerned in this matter, it would seem that it is safer for a larger number to select than it is for one person. The maxim would seem to be, teach the word truthfully and objectively, and when the brethren know the word they will know who meet the qualifications.

4. The method of "setting forth" these men will vary with the situation. If it is a new elder or deacon to be appointed where there is an existing Oversight then the system will take care of itself.

I would not envisage any particular difficulty in such a situation. In the case of an unorganised community, it may be that the elders from a nearby community could assist in the induction into office of those chosen. A special meeting could be called which would emphasise the importance and dignity of the occasion. Prayer could be offered, and those selected might signify their willingness to serve by responding with a brief statement. The congregation might be asked to show their willingness to be led by standing, thereby indicating their desire to place themselves under the jurisdiction of those chosen. There are a number of ways in which such a dignified occasion could be conducted without contravening the word. On the whole I do not favour the laying on of hands because of the unfortunate implications attached to the ceremony by other religious groups.

In conclusion, let our teaching from the word be such that will ensure that the most suitable men are chosen for the offices concerned, and then let us induct them with all the dignity due to the importance of a God-given office.

All questions please to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.

HAPPINESS

Happiness is a difficult thing to define. The pleasant smile, the cheerful song, the hilarious fun all indicate the presence of happiness. But is it real?

The smile may hide a secret sorrow, the song may be there to drown misery that fills the heart. The fun may be no more than a counterfeit of genuine joy.

It has been said that the majority of the fun-giving clowns of circus life, are indeed sad men at heart.

However, all the attributes of happiness are a good thing in themselves. After all, who would counterfeit such a thing, if it be of no value. The scriptures tell us that we should not seek happiness where it cannot be found; i.e. the world.

Ask a rich man, if it is in material riches; the politician if it be in politics; the

student, if it be in learning; the worldly man, if it be in his wisdom. If all be honest, they will reply that there is nothing completely satisfying in these things. You will remember that the wise king Solomon wrote, of man in his unregenerate state, that: "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it, the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing, Eccl. 1:8.

It must be noted God did not create man to be unhappy. Adam and Eve were made without sin, in God's image. Perfectly happy in intimate fellowship, that is, until they fell into the trap set for them by Satan, who, it seems envied them the condition of innocence, from which he had fallen.

Misery, unhappiness stems from sin. Sin creates misery, unhappiness in all its associations. But praise the Lord, God, as we know, has made a way back to himself through Christ Jesus.

Without close fellowship with God, real happiness cannot be found. The great Augustine said that man is restless, and can find no rest until he finds God. How true this statement is. Jesus made the way back to God for sinners, in living for them; dying for them; and rising again from the dead for them. Jesus made the statement regarding the way, "I am the way the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the father but by me." (Jhn 14:6). Jesus is the secret of happiness.

The depth of happiness we experience is related to the closeness of walk we have in Christ Jesus. The closer we are, the happier we shall be. It then depends on the individuals experience in Christ. It is Gods wish that all should be happy. How happy are you? Are we missing out, if so, a closer walk with Jesus is the answer.

Perhaps we have only enough religion to make us miserable.

Andrew P. Sharp, Newtongrange.

“ELOHIM THE ONE TRUE GOD”

In modern times names are mere identification tags, in Bible times they were much more than that. They described the character, and sometimes in a prophetic sense, the mission and work of a person. Names were so meaningful, that often new ones were given to adult people as a sign of new found blessings or responsibilities from God. The classic example of which is recorded in Gen. 17:1-7. Where Abram, as he was then called, was by reason of a covenant promise made by God, given the new title "Abraham", (which means 'father of a multitude'.) The Commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel at the time of the conquest of Canaan was Joshua. But he also had had a change of name, from Hoshea, which means salvation, to Joshua, which means 'Jehovah is our salvation,' (Num. 13:8); (Deut. 32:44), a much needed reminder for a conquering people! The name 'Moses', "to draw forth" was given by Pharaoh's daughter, "Because I drew him out of the water," she said, (in Ex. 2:10). All of this proves the point, that names in the Bible times were not just meaningless labels, but rich expositions of the lives and characters they designated. This also applies to the names given to God in the scriptures. Such as Elohim, El, El-Shaddai, Adonai, Jehovah, and many others. Each one presents us with a distinct view of the manifold perfections of the Almighty. In this article we are going to examine the name Elohim.

Elohim the almighty God

Robert B. Girdlestone in his book "Synonyms of the Old Testament" says that Elohim is used 2555 times in the Old Testament. The very first verse of Genesis speaks of Elohim. "In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth". So Elohim is the all-powerful creator. Actually it is one of a family of words

in which, "All the words convey the idea of 'might and power'", (I.S.B.E. Vol. 2 page 1265). Words like El, the most simple and elementary form of the name God, or its plural Elim. Eloah, the singular of the name Elohim, which is almost exclusively used in the poetical books, Job, Psalms, etc. Elah the Aramaic form is used in the books of Daniel and Ezra, and only once in Jeremiah. By association the name Elohim embraces might and power. But it goes beyond that. You will have noticed that Elohim is a plural word. It seems that the singular form was not adequate to express the fulness of God's power and authority. So the Hebrew writers used the plural "majestic" form, immediately directing our attention beyond the confines of the singular to the All-Mightiness and All-Powerfulness in the plural Elohim. The God who made the world and all things in it. Whenever the plural Elohim is used of the true God, it is always used with singular verbs and adjectives to denote a singular idea. As the name Elohim has a variety of applications in the scriptures, it applies to God more as a generic term. It is not a personal name like Jehovah.

Elohim the one true God

Had the ancient nations remained monotheistic in belief, then the Most High would have been recognised as the One True Elohim. "For even though they knew God, they did not honour Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (Rom. 1:21-23). A disintegration of the knowledge of God led to a corresponding misapplication of all His glories to idol gods. When Jonah and the sailors were marooned on their storm-tossed ship, it is revealed, "That the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god" or Elohim (Jonah 1:5). In these dark idolatrous days the Almighty Elohim was more than a tribal deity. In Ekron, god was Baalzebub, (2 Kings 1:2); Dagon was the Elohim of the Philistines, (Judges 16:23); Chemosh was the god of Moab, and Milcom the Elohim of Ammon. Even Jehovah was considered no more and no less a tribal god. The attitude of the foreign settlers of Samaria illustrate this, "They feared Jehovah and served their own Elohim according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile" (2 Kings 17:33). The nations might salve their conscience believing they worshipped Elohim. But the Lord corrects their foolish speculations as He spells out the true, and proper use of the title Elohim. "The Lord our God is one Elohim" (Deut. 6:4). "I am the first and the last there is no Elohim besides Me" (Isa. 44:6; 45:14, 21).

Elohim the judge with power over life and death

With that in mind we might be very surprised to learn that the scriptures apply the term Elohim to certain humans! Jesus himself draws our attention to it. "Has it not been written in your law, 'I say you are God's'" (Jn. 10:34). This is a quote from Psalms 89, where the Judges are described as Elohim. The same application is made in Ex. 22:8-9, also. Joseph gives us the key to a correct understanding of these verses. In Gen. 50:19 "But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?'" The Lord said to Moses, (Ex. 7:1) "See I make you as God to Pharaoh". Putting all these ideas together we can say that those who dispensed God's law with the power of life and death as God's representatives, were the Elohim among men. This also is true where the word of God applies Elohim to Angels. As in Heb. 1:6 (Ps. 97:7), and Heb. 2:7 (Ps. 8:5-6). Angels fit the definition as dispensers of God's law,

(Heb. 2:2), with the power of life and death, (Num. 22:33). What is true of God's representatives is true of God. So not only does the name Elohim embrace power and might thus displaying God as the Almighty creator of heaven and earth, but in conjunction He is the moral Governor of the world, possessing the power of life and death.

Elohim the one triune God

Because the derivation of the name Elohim is lost in obscurity the full implication of the word can only be gained through an understanding of its contextual use. It is not accidental then that Elohim has such a wide spectrum of applications. Neither is it chance that leaves the word fluid enough to find its own level, a level hinted at in the plural use of the term. Universally prepared for in the misuse of the name, and prophetically outlined in the secondary use of the title, (see Jn. 10:31-39), Elohim is a triune being; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. "Then God said 'let us make man in OUR image", (Gen. 1:26). "Then the Lord said: "Behold, the man has become like one of US" (Gen. 3:22). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was WITH God and the Word WAS GOD." (Jn. 1:1).

The One True Elohim, is a Triune Being, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Judge of the living and the dead, Saviour of mankind.

STEVE KEARNEY, 253 Woodlawn Park, Firhouse, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

November

- 2 Deut. 18, 9-22 I John 4, 1-12
 9 Deut. 15, 1-11 I John 4, 13 to 5, 5
 16 Jer. 7, 16-31 I John 5, 6-21
 23 Prov. 23, 1-15 II John
 30 Gen. 18, 1-15 III John

Apostasy Approaching

With sorrow John sees the fatal influence of false prophets entering into the church and going out from it to form rival bodies of believers. In his second and third letters he has specifically to warn against acceptance of them, and has to deal with a leader who defies apostolic authority. As far as we can tell the other apostles had passed away or had suffered martyrdom, but many

upon whom apostolic hands had been laid remained active in spreading the gospel and maintaining the truth among the scattered churches by travelling among them. Meantime the Scriptures were being built up by copying and re-copying apostolic writings, some of the earliest of which would be Paul's letters to the Thessalonian Christians, and many written records of the work and teachings of Jesus to be collected and collated by Matthew, Mark and Luke as we have them in our present New Testament. John in his old age would be able to look back and view the most wonderful spread of the truth, and his great anxiety in writing the letters was to combat errors being taught and spread which contradicted the once-and-for-all delivered message of God's love. One of the subtle perversions of the gospel was certainly that Jesus was not really a human being but a spirit which temporarily held sway over a body but left it before submitting to the indignity of arrest and crucifixion. "It was not

possible for a Holy Spirit to be confined to the flesh!" The complete reality of the Son of Man is John's theme, and the test to be applied to would-be prophets is whether or not they confessed this truth. This doctrinal certainty is closely connected with the behaviour of followers of the Saviour for the greatest exhibition of divine love was the humiliation of One Who bore the divine likeness and authority but submitted to the savage hatred of men in order that He might be the propitiation for sinful humanity to divine justice. He could only do this if He were truly both human and divine. The exhibition of this supreme love is the example and teaching by which the Christian must live.

If the offence of the cross could be removed "intellectuals" could base a philosophy on worldly wisdom and will-worship to satisfy man's reasoning, (and minimise his sin), but not GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. We find in many times and places men claiming miraculous power but nothing really approaching the miracles of the New Testament has ever been authoritatively proved or accepted. It always appears to be distant in time or place from possibility of real proof. We do not say that wonderful cures or other wonders never take place, and Christians experience happenings which are unexplainable by normal means though apparently providential. The exercise of faithful prayer is required of us in any case, and we have no doubt that God hears us. We would humbly too add the proviso "according to His will" (5, 14). Anti-Christ's were already at work, and the darkness into which the continent of Europe fell slowly but surely submerged the truth to be hidden in foreign language from the common people. This period was foreseen and by some is thought to be indicated in Rev. 13, 5 when Papal power replaced the Roman Empire, and dominated Europe until the Reformation gradually brought the WORD of GOD into the open again.

This is being played down at the present time as indicated by the popularity of the Pope.

Scriptural Relevance

There is mystery in relation to the collection of books we know as THE NEW TESTAMENT. That the writings were made and assumed their present form as a collection forming one united book there is no question, and doubts about their acceptance we can regard as settled. Argument on this matter may be left to those interested, and there are many honest doubters. We are assuming that John the Apostle wrote all three letters attributed to him, and find ourselves wondering at the wisdom which inspired such a variety of writers and reasons for their work in the Canon of Scripture. Paul wrote one letter to an individual and Luke wrote for Theophilus, but John wrote his second to a family which was in the habit of entertaining travelling preachers. The head of this family is a woman and apparently she is a widow with some children who are believers practising truth in love. She is in the same danger from false prophets as all believers, but as a likely giver of hospitality she must be careful not to give encouragement to them. I believe that among churches of Christ pleading for the return to primitive faith and practice it has been a feature to give hospitality in a way which has encouraged many and led to an extension of the Saviour's holy influence as did "the elect lady".

That it should be so is good, and we should never grudge such help and fellowship to one another. This grace is a source of joy and it is a privilege. His third letter is written to an individual member of a church in which one man is power conscious and seeks to dictate to the membership. This might not be very bad if love and love for truth is the motive, but this man even opposes the apostle and thus brings himself under severe condemnation. The usurpation of

power in any church is forbidden and the plurality of elders is a safeguard. We need to be reminded that humble service is the only qualification for prominence in the church and no one member can exalt himself against another if there is to be successful operation of a body whether a physical or a spiritual one. There is ample evidence that prophets authorised by the Holy Spirit were at work after the apostles passed on, and their function was probably very largely responsible for the formation of the New Testament. We cannot but note that wonders and signs could be wrought by those who pushed for false doctrine, and the test of their genuineness was not a question of what they could do but what they confessed. The truth then as now is the standard by which error must be unmasked. "If they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8, 20): "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4, 11). Portions if not the whole of the gospels were available to those who could read and write and the rapid spread of the churches would ensure a wonderful accession of intelligence in those days as it did in the days of the Reformation, named accordingly "The Renaissance" (re-birth). Those who came out of heathen darkness into the light of truth were stimulated by the divine intervention into mental and spiritual activity unknown before. When we consider how long it would take one of us to copy all the words of the Bible and realise that every word in the New Testament was so written before John wrote these three letters, we may have some conception of the magnitude of the task, and the divine energy working through the "new creatures" born of the incorruptible seed, which is the WORD OF GOD. We do not know that Gaius, Diotrophes and Demetrius were members of the same church. If so we hope the apostle's projected visit was the means of uniting them in love of one another, of the Lord and of the truth.

R. B. Scott.

IT CAN'T BE DONE

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13). This is Paul's admonition to Timothy after having told him of the Spirit's prediction that some would depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Vine says that the expressions "hold fast" and "form" mean "steadfast adherence to" and "an outline or sketch" (Vol. II, p. 253, 125). Thus, the admonition to "hold fast the form of sound words" is one commanding the giving of steadfast adherence to the outline or sketch of sound words that he had been taught.

Ten ladies cannot take the same pattern and steadfastly adhere to its outline or sketch and make dresses that differ. If one makes a dress with a square collar and another one with a round one, or one a dress with a zipper at the front and another one with buttons, it's evident that someone has not steadfastly adhered to the sketch or outline given in the pattern.

Ten builders cannot take the same blue prints and build houses that differ in shape or arrangement. If one builds a house having three bedrooms and another one having two, or if one places the kitchen on the south side of the house and another places it on the north side of the house, someone has not steadfastly adhered to the sketch or outline given in the blueprint.

Neither can ten preachers take the same Bible and preach different doctrines and make members of different religious organisations. When preachers teach doctrines that differ and cause persons to become members of different religious bodies, someone is not steadfastly adhering to the sketch or outline of sound words that inspiration has given.

The ladies cannot do it by steadfastly adhering to the pattern, the builders

cannot do it by steadfastly adhering to the blueprints, and preachers cannot do it by obeying Paul's admonition to Timothy.

Lewell Blasingame in *Truth Magazine*

QUESTION BOX

Brother T. H. Blackmore, 7 Mayfield Avenue, Worle, Weston-super-Mare, writes commending brother Alf's answer to the recent question on 'The Evangelist' and raises the question as to why elders and deacons cannot 'feed the flock' and allow the evangelist to break new ground, rather than serve a church well able, in manpower, to look after itself. He suggests that full use is perhaps not made of the manpower in many churches because of the presence of 'the evangelist'. Retired bretheren could be asked to do more, and more use on the platform could be made of 'visiting bretheren'. Many churches are suffering through lack of elders and deacons, of course, but there are many congregations with sufficient manpower to preach in the locality and allow the evangelist to pursue true evangelism and 'break new ground'. (*These good sentiments have a familiar ring and would have been highly commended by brother Crosthwaite and bretheren of like calibre. Ed.*)

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Manchester: On Sunday 10th August, it was our joy to hear Rahim Ullah express his faith in Jesus Christ and intimate his desire to be baptised after a gospel talk given by brother Chris Webster of Wigan. Once again we have reason to thank the brethren of Longshoot Scholes, Wigan, for putting their baptistry at our disposal and for providing refreshments. Brother Rahim was baptised on Tuesday evening, the 12th August, 1980.

We first met Rahim about seven years ago and he was then a fervent Muslim. We have had the thrill of seeing him gradually come under the influence of the Saviour. His decision to be baptised was no easy matter. He knew that his decision would distress his mother and family, and arouse antagonism in his former friends. We must pray for his well-being, perseverance and continued growth, and that his wife and children will also come to the Messiah. Most of all we praise God for victory over Satan in another soul brought into the Kingdom of Heaven. We have been greatly encouraged by the assistance of and spiritual fellowship with twelve young American students. Over 10,000 Muslim orientated tracts were distributed in immigrant areas of Liverpool, Oldham, Manchester and Stretford, in the process of which three English, one Pakistan person, and three Pakistan families were contacted.

We thank God for these blessings and request you to pray for us as we endeavour to life Jesus before their eyes. These young American brothers and sisters come here at their own expense and spend their holidays in the Lord's service. Most of them work, sometimes up to twenty hours per week, to support themselves whilst at college. Out of their own pockets they gave a total of £130 to purchase tracts and help in the work at Stretford. It has been wonderful to work with them and to witness their joy in the Lord.

Allan Ashurst.

Peterhead, Scotland: A new era of the work here began in June, when brother Michael Gaunt began his labours with us. Michael and Maureen and their family had been in Corby for the past nine years where they had enjoyed their work among the saints in that place. The brethren here were both helpful and encouraging as Michael and Maureen settled into their new home.

We rejoiced on Lord's Day, July 12th

when father and son Jockie and John Ritchie re-affirmed their faith in the service of the Master, and Stanley, Grace and Celia Cruden, recently arrived from Corby placed their membership with the saints in Merchant Street. Since then Angela Cruden has been welcomed into fellowship.

Alex John Wedderburn who will now be in his second year at the British Bible School, has worked with us during his summer break, and his involvement with the brethren has been encouraging. With his usual zeal and organisational flair, Alex John with several other adults, accompanied 29 children from Peterhead to a camp in Edinburgh which proved a great success. His marriage on August 16th to Shiela Gardiner was a suitable climax to his service, and we pray God's richest blessing on their new life together.

David Hepburn spent a part of his summer break with us, and we pray that all that has been undertaken during the summer months will meet with the Master's approval. We were delighted to have brother Tom Nisbet (Senr.) with us for two weeks. It was, for him, a holiday but all of us enjoyed his lessons and fellowship in our homes — it was a source of blessing. We would ask you to note our new times of meetings beginning in September. If you are in the N.E. we would be delighted to have you visit with us. Brethren we solicit your prayers as we continue to edify the saints and preach the gospel. You are often in our thoughts and prayers. Michael Gaunt.

Slamannan District, Scotland: On 6th September, 1980, the Mutual Benefit Meeting took place at Dalmellington church in Ayrshire when the subject was "Darwin's Theory — Fact or Fiction". Brother Tom McGinn and brother Mark Plain (Senr.) were the two speakers and brother Leslie Purcell was in the chair. As can be imagined the subject created great interest, although with the time at our disposal we could only scratch at the surface. The speakers in-

troduced some interesting thoughts, facts and suggestions and an hour's lively discussion followed. We were reminded that this was a serious matter and our schoolchildren were being reared on a regular diet of evolutionistic propaganda. Brother Ian Davidson, from Motherwell, assembled on display a great many books and publications related to the subject so that those interested could, if they wished, endeavour to purchase the same.

Lord willing, the next Mutual Benefit Meeting will be at Wallacestone on 6th December, 1980, when the subject will be "What The O.T. and N.T. say about the Devil" and the Speakers will be Harry McGinn and Leslie Purcell — William Black will be in the chair.

P.S. During the course of the above meeting, Bro. Ian Davidson suggested that perhaps more members of the church would join the EVOLUTION PROTEST MOVEMENT, if they knew where to apply. — The address is: A. Radcliffe-Smith, B.Sc., 13 Argyle Avenue, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW3 2LE. H. Davidson:

OBITUARY

Buckie, Scotland: It is with sorrow that we record the passing of our dear sister Roma Flett, on Monday 25th August, 1980.

Roma had gone into hospital on Friday, and died the following Monday afternoon. In her time of infirmity she was an inspiration to us all. Now freed from physical ailments she is 'At Home With The Lord'.

To Charlie, her brother, and her family we give our deepest sympathy and lovingly commend them to that "Comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Taking part in the service at the Meeting Hall were brother John Geddes and brother Alex Harper, and at the graveside brother William Pirie.

John Gedde

COMING EVENTS

The church at Newtongrange intend, God willing, to hold their *Annual Social Meeting* on Saturday, 25th October, 1980 at 4 p.m.

Speakers: Bro. Harry McGinn, from Dalmellington; Bro. Jack Nisbet, from Ulverston.

Come and join us.

A. Sharp, Sec.

MARRIAGE

On Friday, 15th August, 1980, in the Meeting Place of the church at Cluny Terrace, Buckie, by Bro. William Mair, the marriage took place of Dr. James Sinclair, (youngest son of brother and sister James Sinclair, Tranent), and sister Maimie Strachan, (only daughter of brother and sister William Strachan, Buckie).

James is a grandson of the late brother and sister Alfred Geddes, Buckie, and Maimie is a granddaughter of the late brother George Reid and sister Mary J. Reid, Buckie.

J. Geddes.

TIMES OF MEETING

From September, 1980 the church at Merchant Street, Peterhead, will hold

the following meetings:

Sunday: 10 a.m. Bible School (all ages); 11 a.m. Breaking of Bread; 6 p.m. Gospel Meeting.

Wednesday: 7 p.m. Bible Study.

Saturday: 7 p.m. Prayer Meeting & Bible Study.

"FORGIVING, EVEN AS FORGIVEN"

(Eph. 5 : 32)

A shamefaced employee was summoned to the office of the senior partner to hear his doom. The least he could expect was dismissal. He might be sent to prison for years.

The old man asked if he were guilty. The clerk stammered that he had no defence, and must throw himself upon the mercy of his employer. "I shall not send you to prison" said the old man. "If I take you back, can I trust you?" When the surprised and broken clerk was about to leave the senior partner said, "You are the second man who has fallen and been pardoned in this business. I was the first. What you have done, I did. The mercy you have received, I received. God help us all."

Christian Endeavour World

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH	£3.00
CANADA & U.S.A.	\$6.00
AIR MAIL please add £1.00 or \$2.00 to above surface mail rates				

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Tel. No. Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd., Langley Mill, Nottm. Tel. 07737 (Langley Mill) 2266