

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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“Our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we
await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

— (Philippians 3:20, Rev.Stand.Vers.)

SECURITY IN THE MIDST OF INSECURITY

AS 1968 DAWNS with its hopes and fears—chiefly fears to most people—the words quoted above are to the people of God certainty and assurance in these troubled and anxious times. They impress upon us not only the **hope** but the **fact** that to God's children nothing they need fear can come to harm them, for their citizenship and treasure are beyond the reach of human circumstances to affect.

Far from being outmoded the Bible is always abreast of modern times and needs. He at whose inspiration its words were written could see the end from the beginning. God is not caught by surprise by the changing circumstances of life: He is never at a loss how to deal with them and bring His people through “more than conquerors.” From time to time men have tampered with the Bible and its teaching, but God's word remains unchanged: it is only the ideas of men which have proved unable to stand the test of time and events and have faded into nothingness. Thus, because “the word of the Lord abides forever” (Isa. 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25) it remains applicable to all “the changing scenes of life.”

Where do we find ourselves at the opening of this year 1968? In a world where events seem to have got beyond the wit and ability of men to manage. The worldly, Godless system men have made seems like a vast Frankenstein monster that has got out of control of its maker. In many of the highest civilised countries of the world the politicians, the experts and the specialists seem to be floundering helplessly to get things under control and to guide and determine what we are doing and where we are going. Those best qualified to judge are filled with foreboding, gloom, apprehension and fear of the course things are taking. The system of the world rejects God, has no place for Him in its counsels. More and more men are forging for themselves a chain which is ever more relentlessly binding them in a grip from which they cannot release themselves.

Almost everything in our modern civilisation centres around money—Mammon. The words of Jesus Christ are as true today as when they were uttered—“You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). Men cannot serve both. But they have gone further in rejecting God and serving mammon wholly. For our whole system of civilisation is built around money, finance, profits, “balance of payments.” How strikingly is this portrayed in our own country: politicians and financiers cannot impress upon us too strongly that the whole trouble is one of getting our financial situation straightened out, and once that is done we will begin to see the new Utopia, the golden age, come into being—that age of plenty, of higher living standards than we have ever known, of prosperity passing the dreams of men. As though to get our finances straight is to solve everything.

At heart the difficulties confronting this nation are moral and spiritual. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Ps. 127:1). For our serious financial position employers are blaming employees, owners blaming trade unions, and employees and unions blaming employers; Government is blaming everybody but itself, and everybody is blaming the Government. But the simple, undeniable fact is that we are all to blame: we are all in this. We are all selfish, not caring what happens to others so long as I'm all right. We are all guilty of holding a wrong sense of values, of what is worthwhile and what matters in life. We all put too much confidence in men and too little in God. Our standards are wrong: we hear much about the standard of living but very little about standards of life, of conduct. We insist upon our rights and privileges, but are little concerned as to our responsibilities.

We are seeking to build a lasting, secure civilisation with tools and materials which are unfitted for the task. We are trying to appease a hunger and thirst of the soul by earthly food. Long ago the teacher from Galilee spoke words which the world little heeds: in the Parable of the "Rich Fool" (Luke 12:20) Jesus told of a man who made the mistake of thinking that he could ensure himself for ever with the passing things of life. God called him a fool: a fool because all his thought was for "I, I, I": he was making things secure for his **body**, but was assuring his **soul** that all was well—"I will say to my soul . . ."

Where should the Christian be in all this? Like Paul, we should learn "to be content" (Phil. 4:11): not so much to complain or long for the things we haven't got, but to thank God for the things we have. That is a remarkable statement in Proverbs 30:8—"Give me neither poverty nor riches." To be in such a state is to be thankful, tranquil, content. On the one hand we are relieved from that constant, gnawing, grinding poverty where a man does not know how he is going to get his next meal; and on the other hand he is relieved from what Christ termed the "deceitfulness of riches" (Matt. 13:22). Many are made anxious and fearful by their very riches. How many there are who, when wars and bombings and financial crises, the rise and fall of money markets come are continually in fear as to what is happening to their wealth and property. How eloquent was the summing up of a rich brother in the church by another Christian, when he wrote in an obituary "He had the misfortune to get rich"!

Surely, then, as Christians our hopes are not based upon figures from Stock Exchanges, Budgets, money markets, investment, bank rate, but upon something more stable and tried. We are in the world but not of it, for "Our commonwealth is in heaven." Jesus taught us that "where your treasure is there will your heart be also." If our treasure is on earth, in this world and life, then we shall be anxious and fearful because therein is our trust and hope. But if our hope is anchored in heaven, beyond the reach of the changing circumstances of life in the world, the rise and fall of the monetary system, the ebb and flow of events do not touch us.

Not only at the outset of a new year does the teaching of the Bible contain immediately applicable lessons and inspiration and courage for us, but throughout our whole life as Christians. Because we are "citizens of heaven" we are to live towards God and our fellowmen that glorious life depicted in Colossians 3:1-3: "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

EDITOR

SECURITY

HOW large a part in our lives this ambition plays! To be secure: security of occupation, security for those contemplating marriage, and, not least, security in old age.

But how about after we have run our course in this life? Have the Scriptures anything to say upon this matter? Let us turn to them to see what, and if anything has been done to provide for it. Our starting point is Rom. 8:28: "But we know that to those who love God all things work together for good, to those who are called according to His purpose." This passage is often misused, and is generally read to mean that everything in the Christian's life works together for good. But that is not stated here, nor is it strictly true in life's experience. There are things to be laid aside (Heb. 12:1; 1 Peter 2:1; 2 Tim. 2:21); also the command, "work out your own salvation" (Phil. 2:12)—that is salvation from the surrounding snares and pitfalls and vices of the age in which the Christian lives, always remembering that Satan can and does hinder—even an Apostle (1 Thess. 2:18).

God's Creation and its Purpose

In Rom. 8:28 Paul is speaking of God's purpose in His grand scheme of redemption. We also read of the purpose of God in 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2-3 and Gal. 3:8). We are told by Paul (Eph. 3:11) that God worked according to a plan—"according to the purpose of the ages, which He established in Christ Jesus our Lord." (See also Heb. 1:2 and 11:3, and note that the word in the Greek is "ages" in each case and the same truth is taught). This purpose or plan of God embraced the Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian ages. It was not an afterthought of God. Let one read Rom. 1 to 11, which deals with this plan, and with which every young disciple should make himself familiar. Then let him turn to Prov. 8:22-31, where he will discover that in the remote past God had a purpose—a heaven and an earth furnished and made habitable for His lord of creation, Man. Let him consider the ideas we think fairly presented to our minds. Consider use of the words "before" and "when." Ideas like this: that there was a time when there was no earth or universe, but God was; that matter is not eternal; a time when God was the universe; a time when He was distinct from the universe—He brought it into being. So then the material universe is a Creation, mark that! That the universe was planned with a view to the future, matter being prepared for life before life appeared: "Fire and hail, vapour and smoke, stormy wind fulfilling His word" (Psalm 148:8). That His infinite wisdom presided over all His work for the reception of that creature Man. Some imagine "wisdom" in this chapter to refer to Christ the Divine Logos. This we think a mistake, as it assumes too much, was far from the mind of the writer and has no reference to the pre-existence of Christ. "The works of the Lord are great: in wisdom hath He made them all."

If He planned for the future He had a desire to do so: "Rejoicing in the habitable parts of His earth, and my delights were with the sons of men" (v. 31). The writer starts with God breaking the silence of eternity and working by stages culminating in a habitable earth ready for man. Consider such terms: "mountains being settled"; "beginning of the dust of the world"; "skies being made firm"; "fountains of the deep becoming strong"; "foundations being marked out."

Moses in Gen. 1 takes the same line, leading by stages terminating in Man. No sign of haste. For all Moses says to the contrary those days of creation were of untold length and were not governed by time as we know it. No one can say how long that first day was. And Paul has something to say about the seventh, which is still with us. God is in no hurry. In this complicated work of creation God was forming, fashioning, furnishing, weighing by balance, measuring by line and compass, adding here, taking away there, making sun, moon, and stars. "HANGING THE EARTH UPON NOTHING" (Job 26:7), all in preparation for man according to the purpose of God, which was completed.

God's Purpose for Man

Accepting the fall and all that goes with it, God's delight is still with the "sons of men." God so loved "He sent" (John 3:17). That first purpose was fulfilled. With the fall another was brought into action, that great scheme of redemption through which Paul leads us in Romans 1 to 11. In this scheme of redemption we have God planning for the future. Consider: "in thy seed shall ———"; "I go to prepare a place"; "the Lord shall descend ——— we shall be caught up." "God our saviour who wills that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). So that if the whole universe were swept away into original nothingness (2 Peter 3:10) there would be those in whom He would find repose: "to be ever with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16).

It is of this great purpose of God which Paul speaks in Rom. 8:28, teaching us that in this great purpose all that God does or has done works together for good for all those who have accepted Jesus as their saviour. Therefore to be called according to the purpose of God is to be called by Jesus to salvation and glory. Here is security.

ALFRED JACKSON

ENTANGLED

WE may well be impressed by the word picture found in 2 Peter 2:20 "For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." One is in a pathetic condition when he is entangled and overcome in the pollutions of the world. Verse nineteen speaks of such people as being in bondage or as being servants or slaves of corruption. Is this a vivid way to describe drug addicts and alcoholics? How many such entangled and enslaved people are there in our land?

Enemies of Mankind

The last half of this second chapter of second Peter uses several impressive remarks to help us realise the danger of this entanglement. Verse twelve refers to those who are entangled as being like "natural brute beasts." Men are made to be in the image of God, but this image can be marred until they become more like animals. They can lose respect for life, for property rights and, of course, for God. We should bring the body into subjection by crucifying the flesh with its lusts, but some allow the carnal or lustful side to win the battle with the higher part of man. (Read 1 Corinthians 9:27; Galatians 5:16, 17; Colossians 3:5, 6; Romans 8:13.)

Look at verse fourteen in this passage that deals with those who are servants of corruption. It speaks of some as "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." That must be vulgarity gone to seed. It seems that some of the beatnik type start their indecent talk as soon as they reach the age of accountability, and they stay with the immoral, animal-like people until they are not capable of being respectable, honourable people. They think only of selfish lusts of their own animal desires. What chance is there of converting such? Their hearts are hardened. People cannot hear if their ears are stopped. They cannot see if their eyes are closed. (See Matthew 13:13-16.) Working to reach them with the gospel is like casting pearls before swine.

People who have escaped can be entangled again and overcome. How sad to think of the fact that many of the little children who are now innocent will not be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, but, as servants of corruption, will be more like "natural brute beasts." Give diligence to see that your children do not become entangled. Will your children "count it pleasure to riot?" Will they become "spots and blemishes" on society? Will they "speak of evil things that they understand not," or shall they "utterly perish in their own corruption?" Read this chapter again and think. There is not enough "salt of the earth" to save our nation if the number of beatniks continues to increase. Sin is a reproach to any people.

"Cares and Pleasures of the World"

There are other ways to become entangled. A person can come to be so involved in so many businesses that he does not have time to be a father, a husband, a Christian, or a neighbour. He cannot study his Bible, worship God, or talk with his children because he is too busy. A man IS too busy if he does not have time for the things that are truly important.

Reference is made to this entanglement in the affairs of life in 2 Timothy 2:3, 4. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wareth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." The soldier cannot afford to plant a crop in the spring near the camp or set up a business of some kind. He is in the army and is subject to orders. The Christian must remember that he is a soldier. He is to take responsibility, but he must not become too involved even in legitimate things. "Cares and riches and pleasures" of this life may become the thorns that hinder fruit bearing. (Read Luke 8:4-15.)

Some are entangled in the pollutions of the world. Some are so entangled or unequally yoked in the daily routine of life that they are hopelessly lost to spiritual things and to the kingdom of God which we should seek first as the pearl of great price. Some are also enmeshed or entangled in their creeds, false doctrines, or traditions so that their worship is vain, and their deliverance next to impossible. These pathetic people may think that they serve the Lord while they by their traditions make void the law of God. (Read Matthew 7:15, 21-23; Mark 7:1-13; Matthew 15:1-14.)

Galatian Christians who had been made free through the knowledge of Christ, were about to become entangled with Jewish law and tradition. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Christ would then profit them nothing. They were fallen from grace. Read the first several verses of the fifth chapter of Galatians carefully.

We must know of several who are so entangled in the alcoholic habit and in bad company that their salvation is almost hopeless. Are there not many who are too busy in earning and in worldly pleasures to be concerned with the soul? They are too busy with the affairs of this life. Let us think of those who are so confused and entangled in speculations and false doctrines that their escape is almost hopeless. The way of truth is simple, but God hath chosen the simple things to confound the wise. One must love the truth to find it. Strong delusions are available for those who love not the truth that they may believe a lie and be damned. It is truth that makes us free—not error. Truth may be hidden from some by the god of this world. (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 8: 31, 32; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.)

Many members of the body of Christ are being blown about by the digressive doctrines relative to the social gospel concept, and to systems of centralisation that are being promoted among us. The devil is not asleep. Many of those who are being entangled have seemed wonderfully capable and excellent in so many ways and now it seems impossible to turn them back to the simple pattern of activity and government for the church. They are entangled and overcome.

It is no marvel that the words "fear and trembling" are used in warnings concerning working out our salvation (Philippians 2: 12). Taking heed and giving diligence are different from drifting with the crowd (Hebrews 2: 1; 2 Peter 1: 10; 1 Corinthians 10: 12). We need to exhort one another daily, because sin of all kinds is deceitful, and it has a hardening effect (Hebrews 3: 12, 13). Are you aware of the danger of entanglement?

IRVEN LEE in "Truth Magazine"

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S "SYNOPSIS OF RESTORATION"

1. The restoration of a pure speech, or the calling of Bible things by Bible names.
2. The Bible must be proposed as a book of facts, not of doctrines, nor opinions; it must be understood and regarded as arranged upon the principle of cause and effect, or that action is to produce corresponding action.
3. The Bible alone, instead of any human creed, as the only rational and solid foundation of Christian union and communion.
4. The reading and expounding of the sacred scriptures in public assemblies instead of text preaching, sermonising, and philosophising.
5. The right of private opinion in all matters not revealed in contradistinction from the common faith, without the forfeiture of Christian character or Christian privilege.
6. The church of Jesus Christ is constitutionally composed of those who have confessed their faith in the celestial proposition—that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the only Saviour of the world, and have put him on by a baptism into his death.
7. The administration of the internal and external affairs of the Church is placed in the hands of bishops, deacons, and messengers extraordinary.
8. The sanctification of the Lord's day by meeting in honour of the resurrection of the Saviour, and especially with a reference to the celebration of the Lord's supper, is essential to the edification, to the spirituality, holiness, usefulness, and happiness of the Christian community.
9. The church not being of this world, cannot levy any contribution on those without for any religious or political purpose, neither ought she to go a-begging to the world for aid to support or extend Christianity.
10. The gospel is the proclamation in the name of God for remission of sins, and eternal life through the sacrifice and mediation of Jesus Christ to everyone who obeys him in the instituted way. The gospel is not preaching about faith, repentance, baptism, regeneration, or any other word or phrase or thing in the Bible. It is rather the authoritative statement of pardon and eternal life from the philanthropy of God through the interposition of Jesus.
11. Three things are essential to a Christian—a peculiar disposition, state, and character. These must be changed from a preternatural or fleshly state to that which is spiritual or heavenly.
12. The resurrection of the just, the coming of the Lord Jesus in his own proper glorified person, and eternal life, constitute the grand objects of the Christian's hope.
13. No theory of spiritual influence in conversion is the influence of the Spirit. Therefore, to deny any theory, is not to deny the influence of the Spirit.
14. As personal intelligence, purity, and happiness is the end of all public and private, theoretical or practical reformation, the present standard of personal knowledge, faith, piety, and morality being too low, must be greatly elevated.
15. Family education and domestic religion must be greatly advanced.

("THE TRUTH")

A NEW MAGAZINE FROM AMERICA

Some readers may in time past have received from the U.S. the magazine "Restoration Thoughts," edited and produced by Bro. J. Ervin Waters. Owing to many difficulties this publication has had to cease, but a new magazine—"Outreach"—more than fills its place. This also is edited by Bro. Waters. It will be of interest to "S.S." readers that one department of "Outreach," under the title "Hands Across The Sea," is edited by Bro. James Orten, who will be remembered by some for his visit to England and Scotland in the summer of 1966. There are thus close links between "Outreach" and the "S.S."

"The new paper is in every way to be recommended. It is tastefully and attractively printed and produced, and the contents consist of well-written articles of deep spiritual tone, yet intensely practical. Of greatest interest to British readers will be that written by David Dougall on "Neither Invited Nor Excluded," an examination of the scriptural position as to "open communion." This is commented upon by James Orten, in which Bro. O. expresses his conviction that the position of British churches on this matter is nearer the New Testament than is the American practice; the editor also makes the favourable comment that "belatedly I state substantial concurrence in and with the views [Bro. Dougall's] herein postulated."

This first number is devoted to the topic suitable to the paper's title—"Outreach." Articles appear on "Reaching out for Christ," ". . . For Truth," ". . . For the Lost," ". . . For World Wide Evangelism," ". . . The Future." The December issue will be devoted to the theme of Christ "as the answer to . . . Sin, Life, Morality, Race, War and Peace, Youth, Unbelief and Death."

No charge is made for "Outreach," but in each issue is an envelope in which to place and post any monetary donation readers would care to make. If you would like a copy, the "S.S." is trying to arrange for a bulk supply to be distributed among British brethren. Or, if you prefer to write direct, please address J. ERVIN WATERS, Editor "Outreach," 391 No. Blackstone, FRESNO, Calif., U.S.A. 93701.

BAPTISM: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

"FOR by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Let us first consider the comparison the inspired writer is discussing here. He uses the human body with the different members performing duties and tasks, composing yet one body, to illustrate the body of Christ, the church, with its various members performing the duties and tasks necessary to the propagation of the body. Thus the body referred to the body of Christ, is the church of which these Corinthian Christians were members, as well as Paul himself.

As we read the thirteenth verse we can better understand what Paul is telling these brethren, if we know what is meant by the three terms—spirit, baptism, and body.

1. The spirit (*Pneuma*) here refers to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is spoken of under various titles in the New Testament, such as Holy Ghost, Eternal Spirit, Spirit, etc., yet the same Greek word PNEUMA is used. When the word PNEUMA, substantially a proper Greek name, is used in the Greek text the rendering "Spirit" is probably better used as it can be always used and properly understood, this case being such an example.

2. Baptism either means the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the immersion in water. Of the word *baptized* in this verse, W. E. Vine in his dictionary says: "A baptism to be undergone by believers, thus witnessing their identification with Him in death, burial, and resurrection."

To those who believe this baptism was with the Holy Ghost and not with water, please consider the following by Foy Wallace: "Baptism could not be "by" and "with" at the same time, or both the agent and the element. Since the Spirit is the agent of the baptism, it is not the element. The element is therefore water." (*Bulwarks of the Faith*, Vol. 2.)

The baptism here mentioned is immersion in water, the same as that mentioned in Acts 2:38 and other places.

3. The "body" here comes from the Greek word SOMA which means the body as a whole, the instrument of life. The word is used in a metaphorical sense, as it is in the 27th verse, to refer to the church or body of Christ."

Having the meaning of these words, let us proceed to determine the meaning intended and stated by Paul here. The apostle tells his brethren "for in one Spirit we were baptized into one body." As the body is animated by one Spirit and guided by one Spirit, all of the members act and are guided by one spirit. As a result they are one in intent and purpose. By baptism "we" entered into the company of the saved and were united "into one body." Paul is merely saying that we are baptized by and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and furthermore that baptism puts us into the one body! What is it that puts us into the one body? Paul says it is baptism!

Since the inspired apostle Paul said baptism put him and his Corinthian brethren into the body, and we know that the body is the body of Christ wherein the saved dwell, why can't we just accept this today? Accept God's plan as taught plainly by the apostle Paul. Isn't this more reliable than what men, creeds, or manuals say?

K. Hirshey in "Apostolic Doctrine."

DID ELDERS PASS AWAY WITH MIRACLES?

THE erection of the Jewish tabernacle was accomplished over a period of time by the united effort of men who were raised up and qualified for the work. In like manner, the complete erection of the new temple, the church, was accomplished.

The Apostles, as wise masterbuilders, laid the solid foundation. They loved and cared for the infant church like a mother loves and cares for her infant child. With authority from King Jesus, the Apostles nourished the new church in that they were her first preachers, teachers, pastors, overseers and ministers.

In verse 8 of Ephesians chapter 4 we have these words: "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." The Apostle is simply saying, Christ, because he was going back to glory, gave gifts unto the church: that is, he gave men endowed with spiritual gifts. Just as God gave Christ to be the head of the church, Christ gave ministers to the church to serve in its various functions. Paul continues this matter by writing in verses 11-13: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Paul, in these verses, refers simply and exclusively, I think, to the continuance of the supernatural or miraculous gifts for a limited time.

In Ephesians 4, and in other passages, we can clearly recognize two classes of officers in the primitive church. The first class of officers was necessary to the establishment of the church on a firm foundation and to administer her affairs until the canon of the scriptures was completed. Thus we hear Paul saying in I Cor. 13:8-10: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Paul is saying, when the perfect Law of Liberty is completely revealed, partial gifts used in the construction and infancy of the church, will be done away.

The second class of officers was necessary to the continuance, power and efficiency of the church. Their office would be perpetual—continuing for an unlimited duration. In such an office, of course, men would function scripturally, properly and efficiently under the influence of the oracles of God.

When we ask, "Did elders pass away with miracles?", we must first distinguish between officers in the church which were temporary and those which are permanent. In I Cor. 12:28 we find in regards to the infancy of the church: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities, of tongues." The Apostles and prophets were intimately associated with the establish-

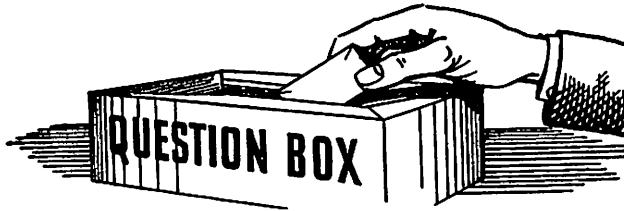
ment of the church, and were endowed with miraculous gifts. Thus, by the very nature of these offices, we see that they could not belong to the permanent structure of the church. Hence, in setting up the Kingdom, there was a display of Divinity seen in the array of Apostles, prophets, extraordinary teachers, gifts, powers and miracles. But after the church was firmly established she had, and still has, the power of multiplying and growing. And although the Spirit Himself ceased to operate in all these splendid displays of supernatural grandeur, He is still causing the Body of Christ to grow and increase in stature, as well as in the knowledge and favour of God.

Are elders a vital and necessary part of the permanent structure of the church? I believe so and I believe the Bible gives us sufficient proof that they are. In every city, town and country where the Apostles planted a congregation, in setting that congregation in order they appointed elders, or overseers, to preside over the affairs of that congregation. No church in primitive times was regarded as complete and capable of adequately sustaining itself without elders. Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church where they laboured. Acts 14:23 says: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they believed." Titus was left in Crete (Titus 1:5) ". . . that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." In I Tim. 3:1 we find this statement: "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." As long as the church stands, there will be a need for elders—men of superior age, wisdom, and experience. As long as the church stands, there will be a need for shepherds to watch over and care for the spiritual needs of the sheep.

Miracles, as we have noticed them in relationship to the establishment and infancy of the church, are no longer necessary. But elders, labouring faithfully, diligently and prayerfully for the welfare of us all, are—and will always be—a vital part of the church.

PAUL WALKER

in "Restoration Thoughts"



Conducted by
James Gardiner

Is Acts 2:42 a pattern for New Testament worship (by "pattern" meaning the order of meeting necessarily to be followed in that sequence), and does "fellowship" in that verse mean simply giving (in the contribution)?

We have here, it appears to me, two questions of sufficient depth to justify being answered separately, and I therefore propose to attempt to deal with the first part now and the second part next month, God willing.

Is Acts 2:42 a pattern for New Testament worship? I doubt that God's pattern for worship is crystallized in any verse of the New Testament, let alone Acts 2:42. The worship of God's people in the Old Testament economy certainly was not embodied in the terms of any one verse in the Old Testament scriptures. I therefore don't think that anyone can point to any verse in the New Testament, such as Acts 2:42, and say that that verse entirely sets forth the pattern for man's worship of God. In much the same way I do not think that God's terms of salvation through the gospel are to be found reposing in any one single verse of the word of God, although some of our religious friends quote John 3:16 as if this verse indeed said it all.

"According to the Pattern"

The use of the indefinite article in the question "a pattern" seems to presuppose that there are more patterns than one for New Testament worship in the word of God, but I am hoping that the more we think of it the more we shall be convinced that whatever God has said in the New Testament about worship constitutes the only pattern for New Testament worship and "only" means "one"—God had an "only" Son. All therefore that God says in the N.T. regarding worship, as being required of His disciples, constitutes not only the pattern for worship but the *only* pattern.

It is sometimes argued that God is not specific enough or has chosen not to be specific enough concerning many matters related to worship, and that there exists no pattern at all. It seems to depend to a large extent on what one means by the word "pattern," and I repeat that we shall not go far wrong if we regard all that God has chosen to say on the question of worship as *the pattern*, the *only pattern*, and the *God-given pattern*. Men who meddle with what God has spoken and revealed on this matter, and indeed any other matter, do so at their great peril. *John 4:24* "God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." In truth? *John 17:17* ". . . thy word is truth." Every generation produces men who are not entirely satisfied with what God has revealed in His word on this question of how we should worship Him, and they try, many times with good intentions no doubt, to bolster up the poor job God has made of it, and they give to their fellow men a "much improved" method of worship, more up-to-date and more acceptable to an "enlightened age." The Roman church with all its many offshoots illustrates the folly and danger of embarking on such a line of pursuit.

The questioner, however, is postulating whether Acts 2:42 is setting out any particular order to be followed for items of worship in the public assembly. Presumably he means, should we on the first day of the week when we meet to worship, carry through our worship following this form, *i.e.* teaching from the apostles' doctrine, followed by acts of fellowship, followed by the breaking of bread, followed by the prayers, all in that order. Luke's purpose in writing this book to Theophilus, covering some of the acts of some of the apostles, was to set out a brief history of the early days of the church, capturing something of the thrill and excitement of the first immersions, the breathtaking signs and wonders and the drama of the arrest, imprisonment and even death of the early disciples. Acts 2:42 is part of this historical account, and as such is *primarily* a historical statement. Rather than prescribing the order in which items of worship should follow one another, the verse is acquainting us with the fact that the early disciples were neither slack nor slothful in spiritual things, but that in fact they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. The emphasis is on the word "steadfastly" and the faithful steadfastness of the early Christians in those things, rather than the order in which those things are placed in the verse. This point of view (that no order or sequence is intended) is reinforced, I think, by the fact that some of the things mentioned, *e.g.* the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship and the prayers, are too general in character to be restricted to the public assembly on the first day of the week. Surely the early disciples continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine seven days of the week. Surely they enjoyed "the fellowship" all the time—indeed one of the manifestations of this fellowship is described in the following verses of this same chapter: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." This is really what is meant by the phrase that "they continued steadfastly in the fellowship"—day to day transactions, not restricted to the assembly on the first day of the week. Surely, also, they engaged in "the prayers" oftener than on the first day of the week assembly, and prayed "without ceasing."

What the First Christians Did

It would appear, therefore, that when Luke penned Acts 2:42 he was making an historical statement regarding the *fidelity* of the early Christians, recording the fact that they were completely faithful in the things mentioned in the verse. He was not spelling out a set form or procedure to be followed in the public assembly. At the risk of labouring the point could I sum up by saying that the "apostles' doctrine" of Acts 2:42 was not to be considered synonymously with a twenty-five minute exhortation on a Sunday morning; and although 1 Cor. 16:2 says "Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store," the "fellowship" Luke is talking about was much more far-reaching than mere contribution of material possessions; and the "prayers" of Acts 2:42 were intended to include all prayers at all times.

Acts 2:42 is not therefore a pattern for New Testament worship in the sense meant by the questioner but is merely a statement of historical fact. However this verse helps us to understand what God desires of us in our worship of him, and assembly on the first day of the week is a proper time, although not the only time, to teach the apostles' doctrine, engage in the fellowship, and avail ourselves of the opportunity of joint participation in the prayers.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

IT will be observed that we have gone back to reading through a gospel this year. We feel that we must give much time to the study of the LIFE, while reluctant in any way to neglect those very practical epistles we have been considering. A consecutive reading of the New Testament is valuable; the Old Testament must not be neglected either. But if the brethren in general would prefer another system for future years, suggestions would be welcomed. We have considered three shorter readings on selected scriptural topics for each Lord's Day, but prefer that speakers should tie up subjects for edification themselves rather than that.

JANUARY 1968

7—Deuteronomy 6 Col. 3:18 to 4:18
 14—Isaiah 7:1-17 Matt. 1, 1 & 2:16-25
 21—Micah 5:2-15 Matt. 2
 28—Isaiah 40:1-26 Matt. 3

MATTHEW AND HIS GOOD TIDINGS

It is clear from the three records of his call that Matthew's name was also Levi. We remember that Simon became Peter and Saul became Paul. So changing of name or having two names was not uncommon. There are other instances: we think Nathanael (John 1:45) is certainly "Bartholomew" in the lists of apostles (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18 and Luke 6:14). Matthew was the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14) and might even be related to both Thomas (who is called Didymus meaning "twin") and James, son of Alphaeus. But these are conjectures—not without interest seeing that we have the brothers James and John and Andrew and Peter taking so important a place in the Saviour's work. Spiritual relationship supersedes physical in Christ but how wonderfully the two can blend is hereby proved. There may indeed be exceptions to Solomon's statement "Bring up a child in the way he should go and . . . he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6), but we cannot know how great a part the parents of these apostles of Christ had in the work their sons did through this upbringing of their boys.

As a tax collector Matthew would not be popular with the Jews, though his employment was probably under Herod

Antipas—not quite such a disgrace in Jewish eyes as direct employment by the Roman Government. He would have to have some ability in writing and calculating to be in the custom house. Doubtless there were levies on the fish caught in the lake and marketed in Capernaum, and on merchandise passing south through Galilee from Damascus. He must have both seen and heard Jesus before he was called. The people in Galilee were seeing a great light indeed and the whole countryside must have hummed with the "stories of Jesus" (Matt. 4:13-16). He was a house owner/occupier and when we read "he left all" (Luke 5:28) we must recognize he was making a complete sacrifice of his life to follow the One Who had not where to lay His head (Matt. 8:20). All that was apparently solid and substantial in his life was left behind. What a powerful personal influence the Saviour had upon those who were seriously exercised by His word and work! The same is true today.

He began his service to Jesus by using his house for a feast at which his friends associated with him in the tax service were present, and also some people of very doubtful character—known locally as such. The descriptions given indicate the friendly attitude of Jesus and His disciples towards such. There was no compromise with sin in this, but a love for sinners and a consciousness of their great need (Matt. 9:10-17; Mark 2:15-22; Luke 5:29-39). In the words of Jesus we cannot but see a reference to the self-righteousness of the Pharisees who stood aside and criticised.

The only further reference in the scriptures to Matthew is his name in the list of apostles, given in Acts 1:13. There are late traditions about his life and death, but these are not worth notice. He has the honour of being first in the lists of the New Testament books, and his gospel remains a priceless part of the revelation of God. His authorship has been ascribed to him by an unbroken tradition, and some have held that he first wrote it in Aramaic for the benefit of his own countrymen. This seems more than doubtful as nothing has ever been found of such a copy, and the Greek conforms closely to the other New Testament writings, showing no signs of being a translation.

Allowing for the fact that much of the three first gospels is substantially of one piece, each has its peculiarities, which a glance at any "harmony" makes clear. Here are some of Matthew's.

1. Numerous quotations from prophecy.
2. Prominence of the thought of a Kingdom of Heaven.
3. Special denunciation of Jews and their rulers.
4. The genealogy traced through David to Abraham.
5. References to the Law in the "Sermon on the Mount."

We notice quite a systematic way of recording certain teachings. He gives us those outstanding teachings of the "Sermon on the Mount" in three chapters. He sets out at length the instructions the Saviour gave to His apostles when He sent them out two by two (ch. 10). The prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age occupy a chapter at some length (24). The denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees is given more fully in chapter 23. Parables about the kingdom are largely grouped together (ch. 13). We find too that his accounts of incidents are quite often shorter and less detailed than Mark's. An illustration of this is found in the incident of the demoniacs of Gadara (Matt. 8; Mark 5; Luke 8).

Sceptics have exercised themselves in finding disagreements in the gospels as we have them. Those who have come to know the Lord through these very testimonies bless and praise the Divine Author Who has superintended their construction in so wonderful a manner. Where we cannot resolve apparent differences we gladly leave it, "trusting where we cannot trace."

R. B. SCOTT

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Buckie.—From mid-October to mid-November Bren. Claude Parrish and Andrew Gardiner served the church, Bro. Parrish taking the first two weeks and Bro. Gardiner the last two.

The preaching and exhortations were powerful, and we trust that the seed sown will produce an abundant harvest. Our brethren spent much time in visitation, as quite a number of our older brethren are sick.

We ask for your prayers in this corner of His vineyard. JOHN GEDDES

Dalmellington.—With joy we report that one has been restored to the faith: Bro. William Miller was received into fellowship on Lord's Day, October 22nd. Because of this we take courage.

HARRY MCGINN, Sec.

Eastwood, Seymour Road.—The church rejoices in the progress of the Gospel, resulting in three precious souls being added to the church—two scholars from the Bible School, and one adult, the husband of a sister recently transferred to us. We pray that these will find much joy in their new relationship. We give God the praise.

CHAS. LIMB

Loughborough.—On Sunday, the 10th December, the Church at Loughborough heard the confession and witnessed the baptism into Christ of Desmond Dove. We once again thank God for the power of the gospel.

P. D. HILL

OBITUARY

Blackburn, Mill Hill.—The church mourns the passing of Sister M. Haworth. She had suffered illness for a number of years and was therefore unable to meet at the Lord's Table. She died soon after entry into the local infirmary. Our late Sister was associated with the church at Blackburn for over fifty years. We commend the Love of God to our Brother Haworth and the rest of the family.

R.R.

Wigan: Scholes.—With great sorrow we report the death of our young Sister Edna Atherton, on December 12th, 1967. Sis. Atherton was baptised only last March. As recently as August 5th she was married to Bro. Bernard Atherton. It is doubly tragic that after little over four months of marriage this union has been so quickly broken. The suffering of our young brother and of Edna's father and mother and her brothers is all the more grievous because of her early death. We cannot understand such a tragedy, but we accept it because we believe and are sure that God will use even this for the good and blessing of His children. In that assurance, and certainty that Jesus Christ is "the resurrection and the life" we commend those near and dear to our sister to our heavenly Father. May He assuage their grief and be their strength and hope.

COMING EVENTS

Wigan, Albert Street.—Gospel Mission Saturday, February 24th, to Lord's Day, March 10th, 1968.

Meetings on Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday each week, all 7.30 p.m. Speaker: Bro. Clarence Eckman of Belfast.

We look forward to the Lord's blessing on the mission and request your prayers and support.

CORRECTION

"S.S." December 1967, p. 144, col. 1: Change of Address, Hugh Davidson: delete "of Motherwell church." Bro. Davidson is Secretary of Slamannan District churches. Bro. Leslie Purcell, 98 Addie Street, Motherwell, Lanarks., remains Secretary of the church in Motherwell.

"NEW TESTAMENT TIMES"

This is the title of an excellent duplicated periodical issued by the church at Ince, Wigan. It contains notices and news of the activities at Ince, but also in a much wider sphere. Best of all are its well-written and thoughtful article on "Maturity" and detailed Bible studies on "Acts of the Envoys (Apostles)" and Paul's Letter to Philemon.

To interest younger children a "Children's Page" (or rather two) gives Bible-searching tests and hints on "Things To Do" in hunting up Scripture passages.

The paper is well worth writing for to Ernest Makin, 95 Haigh Road, Haigh, Wigan, Lancs.

DEBATE
ON
BAPTISM

between

FRANK WORGAN & D. P. KINGDON
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HUMANITY IS ONE

Humanity is one! no weakest brother
Can fail or falter, sin or suffer woe
But that the suffering reacheth every
other
And all the world with him doth fainter
grow.

Humanity is one! who thinks to conquer
By crushing down a weaker in the way,
Knows not that in his own unreasoning
rancour
He beateth down the steps that lead to
day.

Humanity is one! Thou that overcomest;
O Thou be strong for those who are but
weak:
So shall a thousand triumph where thou
winnest
And many find what few know how to
seek.

LAURENCE E. TERRY

BIRTH

To Margaret and Douglas Melling,
November 20th, a daughter—Jayne Louise.
6 Ludlow Avenue, Hindley, Wigan, Lancs.

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