

Shirley

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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“THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD”

PERHAPS we shall better appreciate the idea in our text if we remember that to a Jew a city appealed as a place of refuge and security (Prov. 10:15).

Present or Future ?

In Heb. 11:9-10 Paul tells us certain persons were promised a city, though they were sojourners and pilgrims, and, in verse 16, that God “had prepared for them a city.” Yet according to verse 13 this city did not materialise in their lifetime. When we come to chapter 12, verse 22, we are confronted with a factual statement concerning those to whom the letter was written: “But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads, the festal assembly of angels, and to the church of the firstborn ones enrolled in heaven, and to the Judge, God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to the mediator of the new covenant, Jesus.” The keyword upon which all the rest is based is *Jesus*. Paul is affirming that these converted Jews, in coming to Jesus, have also come into possession of all the things he enumerates. This testimony of an inspired Apostle should be accepted as applying to all the saints. This shows the folly of being guided in spiritual matters by hymn writers. How can twentieth-century saints intelligently sing “We’re marching to Zion” when first-century Christians were told they were THERE ? A case of “zeal but not according to knowledge.”

In Rev. 21 & 22 we have a city brought before our view. John is plainly told it portrays the church—“the bride the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. 21:9). It has a point of access; sickness is found within, for which healing is provided (Rev. 22:14 and 22:2). If, then, it represents the church it pertains to this life, as this is the only time one can be added to the church. It appears to us that the case stands thus: from Pentecost onwards the church had opposition, preventing her from enjoying her rightful position in the world. This opposition increased so that the truth became veiled and no man could discover it for himself. In the providence of God this opposition was removed, and the truth as it is in Jesus again became available with an open manifestation of the church of Christ on earth. Deny this and we cannot explain our position as churches of Christ. According to the testimony of Paul and John the church is the “city of the living God.”

The Church Is Visible

Now some remarks concerning the church and city which we hope will provide food for thought. We take so much for granted that we do not pause to think. Thinking is purely personal, many prefer not to be engaged therein, preferring their thinking to be done for them.

If a city is visible it can be SEEN, SOMEWHERE, by SOMEONE. The same applies to the church. This is precisely the point of Heb. 12:22 and Rev. 21 and 22. The church is local, visible, can be seen. From our own investigations we learn that the word church is used in two senses in the N.T.: singular referring to any local assembly and plural referring to Christians of several congregations (1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2). Nowhere do we read of an "invisible" or "universal" church, nor are Christians called One church.

The word church has a limited application. It is an institution applying solely to this life. A believer is added to a particular church and leaves it at death. The command of Jesus in Matt. 18:17—"Tell it to the church" could not be carried out in a universal or invisible church. A church is visible when it functions:—"fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers." It is a visible congregation having domestic powers, officers, and binding regulations—"This do in remembrance of me" and "Upon the first day of the week." Matt. 16:18 refers to the strictly local church. Jesus builds a visible assembly and is seen when it worships (2 Thess. 2:1), whether it be at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, or elsewhere. There is no idea of a church yet to be. "The death of the Lord you announce till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). At that point the church wherever it is located ceases to be an institution and cannot function. It cannot be otherwise. A similar truth is found in Luke 5:34. We do read of a kingdom being delivered up to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24) and note Paul is instructing a church on this matter. The kingdom is everlasting. This is not said of the church. The invisible (Luke 17:20) becomes visible and the visible church ceases to function. The church is not the Christian's hope, nor was it intended to be (Col. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:4). Even in the prayer of Jesus (John 17) he is not praying that believers might be ONE church but that the Apostles and disciples might present oneness of TESTIMONY. Why? "That the world might believe"—a totally different thing. The church is the proving ground for eternity; as a city it is a place of refuge and security.

Glory of the Church

In Eph. 5:25-32 all Paul is saying is that the word taught by the Apostles provides the means whereby ANY church can attain the standard of verse 27 and be glorious NOW by its own volition. The terms "spot," "blemish," "wrinkle" are applied to individuals. Let the individual be right and the church is a glorious church in the sight of its Head. It is now or never. Thus Psalm 87:3 is fulfilled. Peter and Paul should be heard upon this matter: 1 Peter 1:10-14; 1 Cor. 2:9:13. It is in the church, the city of the living God, that God tabernacles with men. Let us hear Paul: "In whom [Christ] every building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye [the church at Ephesus] are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit"—the local congregation (see also 2 Cor. 6:17). When we read of "one body"—"one flock" it is the institutional use of the word church, applying to each local assembly wherever located.

According to Paul there can be zeal without knowledge (Rom. 10:2) and Phil. 1:9-11 goes to show that zeal must be sustained by knowledge—that is, all that has been revealed by the Apostles; then understanding that knowledge, to be able to distinguish between good and evil and to make a correct assessment of values and thus be "without offence."

Now as regards those of old "who looked for a city" but received it not: Paul says "these all died in faith," which was all that was required of them. Mark that. We who enjoy the fulfilment of the promise "live by the faith," which is all that is required of us (Gal. 2:20).

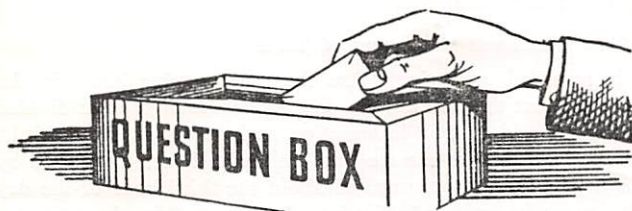
When we read terms like "glory" and "glorious" let us abide by the N.T. use of them. For instance, in John 17:22 Jesus says the Apostles were glorified, and this is corroborated by Paul in Rom. 8:30. In 2 Cor. 3 we have a discussion regarding the relative glory of two covenants. This should be meditated upon. From this chapter and from Ex. 34, 1 Peter 4:14; Eph. 5:23-27, John 17:22, Rom. 8:30 the glory referred to is the presence and authority of God. So the case appears to us. When Jesus said to the

Jews "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" we understand He meant the removal of the presence and glory of God. This was transferred to the church. Hence the church, the city of the living God, a glorious institution.

It is because of this fact that a corresponding way of life is so urgently insisted upon by the Apostles of Christ:—"That I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2); "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly and entire, and may your spirit, and soul and body be kept without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

Let us hear and view things of the Spirit from Paul's standpoint; God had promised a city. He had prepared a city. "Ye are come to the city of the Living God" (Heb. 12:22). "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints" (Eph. 2:19). If the city of the living God is a present possession of the saints it is useless looking for another, just as it was useless for the Jews to look for a continuation of the old economy with its earthly city, which city was a doomed one. (see Heb. 13:14).

ALFRED JACKSON



Conducted by
James Gardiner

"Could you qualify the phrase the 'first day of the week'? Our pioneers always practised the breaking of bread every Sunday morning or afternoon at the latest. Now in some of our Churches Sunday evening communion is held. Is this correct scripturally?"

Old Testament Reckoning of Time

IT is not quite so easy to define exactly when the first day of the week begins and ends, as is apparent when we consider the matter; but perhaps our best approach to an answer would be to consider briefly from Genesis onward the use given to the term "day."

"Day" is used sometimes to denote a period of twenty-four hours that make a complete day (Gen. 1:5 etc.)—notice that "the evening and the morning were the first day" (evening *preceding* morning and both fusing to form one day). The hours of *light*, as contrasted with the night, the time of darkness, are called "day" (Gen. 1:5; Psalm 121:6 etc.). The time at which something special happened is sometimes referred to as a day, *i.e.* "the day of calamity" (2 Sam. 22:19). *Periods* of time are called "days" as "in the days of Herod the King" (Matt. 2:1).

The day is one of the commonest and most basic divisions of time dating, as we have seen, from the dawn of time in Genesis. It marks an entire revolution of time, *i.e.* a period of twenty-four hours and, as remarked above, it appears that in reckoning a day one commences at the sunset of the previous evening. Such in the process of time became the *Jewish* method of reckoning and this can be illustrated by one example taken from Lev. 23:32: ". . . from even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath," and also in regard to the paschal feast which was appointed to commence on the 15th day of the month, immediately after sunset on the 14th (Ex. 12:18). There seems no reason for believing that this rule did not also obtain with regard to all other days.

In the early periods of Old Testament history no divisions of the natural day appear other than those of morning, noonday, evening and midnight (Gen. 1:5, 43:16;

Ex. 11:4). The night, in like manner, appears under a threefold division of first, middle and morning watches (Lam. 2:19; Judges 7:19; Ex. 14:24). The mention of *hours* first occurs during the time of the Babylonish captivity (Dan. 3:6) and the Babylonians and the Hebrews, it is said, were probably first to divide the day into twelve hours or equal portions; in the New Testament we read of the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day—which were the more marked divisions of the twelve.

“Sunset” and “sunrise” are of course natural phenomena and vague terms with regard to time. Such terms are not exact enough for civilised and sophisticated nations to use with reference to time, and so men fell upon the plan for adopting midnight as the fixed point from which a day’s revolution would be reckoned. One can imagine the chaos if, for instance, a factory owner arranged for his workers to commence work at “sunrise.” They would come straggling in at various times, depending on their interpretations of “sunrise,” and so the employer fixes a time of say 6.30 a.m. in preference to sunrise. Life’s arrangements are now governed by punctual regard to and careful consideration of hours and minutes (and in the case of astronauts, tiny fractions of a second). The greater part of the civilised world has now adopted this practice of counting time from midnight to midnight, although in places where time is regarded as being of less importance, as in some parts of the Near and Far East, the old mode of reckoning time from sunset to sunset continues.

New Testament Reckoning of Time

In John 11:9 Jesus is recorded as saying “Are there not twelve hours in the day . . . ?” thus recognising the fact that the day (in contrast to the night) was divided into twelve hours and when we add to this information such terms as the “third,” “sixth” and “ninth hours” of the day we can see that the twelve hours mentioned by Jesus were from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Jesus was crucified about the third hour of the day (Mark 15:25) which was 9 a.m.—witness Acts 2:15, where Peter says, “for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.” Darkness prevailed over the earth at Jesus’ crucifixion from the sixth hour to the ninth hour (Matt. 27:45) or our noon to 3 p.m. Jesus would be buried somewhere between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., probably nearer to 6 p.m. If the *day* of twelve hours began at 6 a.m. and lasted to 6 p.m. then *night* must have begun at 6 p.m. and finished at 6 a.m. Jesus was three days and three nights in the grave and rose upon *the first day of the week*—Mark 16:9 says, “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week he appeared first unto Mary Magdalene out of whom He had cast seven devils.” If Jesus rose the third day as He said He would, and He was in the grave three days and nights, then He must have risen about 6 a.m. on the Sunday and been buried about 6 p.m. on the Thursday evening. This issue is of course surrounded by controversy, in view of the Jewish reckoning of part of a day as a day, but the point I am trying to make is that if the *day* began at 6 a.m. and the *night* began at 6 p.m. then the first *day* of the week (on which Jesus rose) began at 6 a.m. It all depends upon how we believe that time then was computed and I do not believe that one can be quite dogmatic on the matter. Take for instance the quotation I gave from Mark 15:25, which states that Jesus was crucified at the *3rd* hour, yet in John 19:14 we read at the *6th* hour Pilate presented Jesus to the people and said “Behold your king.” This is just another example of counting time not from 6 p.m. to 6 p.m. but midnight to midnight as we do.

Jewish or Roman Reckoning ?

The crux of the matter as far as our question is concerned is whether we are to compute the first day of the week from the evening of Saturday to the evening of Sunday, or to measure it in some other way, *e.g.* the way we measure every other day—from midnight to midnight. Perhaps the importance of the problem wanes a little when we consider that the first day of the week for Chinese Christians differs from our own and that in different parts of the world there is all the time this disparity. Are we expected, being in the Christian economy, to be any longer subject to a *Jewish* reckoning of time, or can we follow the then Roman (and now European) computation of a day, *i.e.* from midnight to midnight ?

I personally would not be happy in breaking bread on the Saturday evening (as being the first day of the week), and while this may be partly or wholly due to prejudice on my part I cannot help recalling the passage in Matt. 28:1: "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." When these two women came it was yet dark but was beginning to *dawn* towards the first day of the week. To "*dawn* towards the first day of the week" seems to me to indicate that the first day of the week had not yet begun but commenced at dawn.

Take also the fact that the church is said to have begun on the first day of the week—the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:1 says: "When the day of Pentecost was *fully* come . . ." and when we relate this to the Old Testament reference to this day we read in Lev. 23:15, 16: "And ye shall count unto you *from the morrow after the sabbath*, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the *morrow after* the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord."

We may feel justified perhaps therefore in reckoning the first day of the week as beginning on the morrow after the sabbath or *at dawn*, as it dawns towards the first day of the week, but I don't see that we could insist in the matter. If we are going to use the Jewish reckoning of time (*i.e.* from sunset to sunset) we could break bread from 6 p.m. on the Saturday evening to 6 p.m. on the Sunday evening. If we are going to comply with our own and the ancient Roman computation of time (*i.e.* from midnight to midnight) then (as per the question) we could break bread on the Sunday morning, afternoon or evening. Similarly if we believe that the first day of the week commenced at dawn (as per Matt. 28:1) we can break bread morning, afternoon or evening of Sunday.

I hope this has not made "confusion more confounded," but has provided a rough basis for further meditations and study.

(More questions are required please — to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland)

“IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH”

“HE that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to Jehovah” (Proverbs 17:15). Solomon warned about the danger of judging others. It is easy for a sincere man zealously to pronounce conclusions about the state of other men's souls, but is that what God asks of us? Jesus Christ told us to “judge not” (Matthew 7:1). He explained that God would use His Word to judge us in that last day (John 12:48). Since Christ's words will be judging us on that day, it is to no advantage, either to us or to those that we teach, to speculate on their souls' destiny. Would it not be better for us to “Preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2), and leave the conclusions to God? Remember that Paul once said that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). That “all” includes *us*. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8). We realize that we sin, but at the same time we hope for God's pardon and love. Is that same hope not open to others who are trying also? There must be some other people who are also incorrect on some points that will be saved because of God's mercy, not damned because of their misunderstanding. If we negate the possibility of their salvation since they have sinned we would have no hope of salvation either, because *all have sinned*. I am not saying that we are not supposed to preach the truth; I am saying that after we preach the truth, we had better leave the judging to the Lord.

All my life I have accidentally misapplied James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." I have been thinking that this applied to the law of Christ. Actually this is talking about the law of Moses—that nobody could possibly keep in its entirety. We are no longer under this rigid Old Law, but under "a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). We are now under a system in which we are "justified by his grace" (Titus 3:7). Does this mean that we do not have to obey the Lord then? No! James 2:17 states that, "faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself." The Hebrew writer showed that even Christ had to obey, and that He is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him. A person is not saved, however, by his complete obedience, because none of us is perfect. We are saved by the mercy of God, "for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"; "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:8, 10). We are expected to fill our lives with good works and obedience to complete our part.

How does an understanding of this help us? I believe that it cuts out some of our uncalled for fears and gives us more "hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). We need to understand that the whole burden of our salvation doesn't rest upon our shoulders, but that God's grace will make up the difference between what we have been able to do and what we should have done. When we realize this for ourselves, perhaps we will show more mercy on those sincere people who have not "inferred" the same thing that we have on all points.

Some people choose to combine fasting and prayer to grow closer to God. That is between them and God, not a case for us to pass judgement upon. What if some person chose to wash his brother's feet with the tears from his eyes and dry them with the hairs of his head? Would it be necessary for us to convince him that that was just a custom of the first century, or could we let him do something which we do not customarily do? Am I saying that everybody has to do these things? No. I am saying that there can be liberty and diversity in our worship as long as it does not contradict what our Lord taught.

Let's consider an example: If our keen eyes spot some "inferred reference" that some other congregation of baptized believers does not spot or understand as we do (assuming that we are right) does God make a general statement of their condemnation in His Holy Word? Would we be the only saved, and they the condemned, all other things being equal? Do we have to pass judgement on this issue? No! Should we pass judgement on this issue? Christ said, "Judge not." We had better leave the judging to God, remembering that "judgement is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy" (James 2:13). Instead of depending on our exactness, why not depend on God's grace?

Someone is probably remembering some of the observations that Christ and Paul made like "ye hypocrites" or "thou whited wall." Can we make that same kind of statement today? We probably could if we had the ability to see into the heart of a man, or special powers given directly from Christ; but I know of no man with these qualifications.

Is someone thinking that it's too dangerous to preach that "grace stuff"? Paul didn't think so. Should we not pray, "be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13) and wish the same for all others who are trying to live as the Lord taught? Is it possible that many times we have championed a cause of criticism, instead of "teaching with meekness and fear"? (1 Peter 3:15). Are we too afraid of not following the letter of the law and not concerned enough about following the "weightier matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23)?

Christ taught that we should worship God "in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). I believe that the churches of Christ have done a good work of staying close to the "truth." I hope to see us get closer to that "spirit" of compassion and dependence on the Lord's mercy that the New Testament Christians had. Perhaps we could have more

of that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding . . ." (Phil. 4:7) if we remembered that "faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). We should fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith depending on God "to forgive us our trespasses as we have forgiven those who trespass against us" (Matthew 6:14-15).

G. R. WALLACE

THEOLOGICAL FADS OR A DEAD-END STREET

The divine record, as far back as Athens, Greece, at the time of the apostle Paul's visit, parenthetically states "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing."

Times have not changed. The last century gave rise to what was called "Rationalism." Then came "Modernism." This was succeeded by "Liberalism" which in turn was supplanted by "Neo-Orthodoxy," then "Existentialism" and now at last, the "God-is-dead" philosophy. All are cut out of the same cloth—rejection of the infallibility and authority of the scriptures. They have their variations or different emphases, but all stem from the elevation of man—ego-centric worship. Lip service is paid to God, to Christ and His Word, but the deity they worship is a manufactured one and not the Biblical one; therefore, it is basically ego-centric.

It was inevitable that these theologians should come to this dead-end street. Many would not go so far as to affirm "God is dead" (atheism) but it is the only logical conclusion to their philosophy. The Bible is infallible and authoritative, and God and Christ are Who They are portrayed to be in the scriptures, or they are not. It is all or none at all.

The small, but vocal and *avant garde* of this new philosophy consists principally of Wm. Hamilton, Professor of Theology at Colgate Rochester Divinity School; Thomas J. J. Altizer, Associate Professor of Religion at Emory University in Atlanta; and Paul Van Buren, an Episcopal minister and Associate Professor of Religion at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Mr. Altizer has written a book entitled *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*. In earlier writings he stated: "We must recognize that the death of God is a historical event. God has died in our time, in our history, in our existence."

Time magazine reporting on this new "godless Christianity" says: "The death-of-God theologians don't argue merely that Christianity's traditional 'image of the creator is obsolete' . . . They say that it is no longer possible to think about or believe in a transcendent God who acts in human history, and that Christianity will have to survive, if at all, without him. . ."

"Instead of trying to put God back into human life," says Altizer, "the Christian should welcome the total secularization of the modern world. . ."

Dr. Hamilton stated in an interview that he had sensed recently "considerable support not only from scholars and students but from pastors as well." He said that several New Testament scholars had shown an interest in the movement and that efforts will be made to establish for the new theologies a historical Scriptural base.

Such "theologians" who do not have the integrity to drop the pretence of being Christians, endeavour to maintain the respectability Christianity affords by seeking a scriptural rationale for their positions.

The apostle Peter spoke of such efforts when he referred to some of Paul's difficult writings, say: ". . . which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the

other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye, therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3 : 16-17).

It is little wonder that some church circles are deploring the empty pulpits. They rationalize the loss of ministers, blaming tensions and economic pressures. But these are no deterrent to men called of God to service, who desire to minister, rather than to be ministered unto. The main reason is the shifting sand and the collapsing house of a faithless religion.

These fads are contrasted with the constancy of God. He is changeless, the great "I AM," "the ALPHA and the OMEGA . . . who is and who was and who is to come, the ALMIGHTY, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." This Christ is "The first and the last, the beginning and the end," "the same yesterday and today, yea and forever." His word "cannot be broken." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." "Now abideth faith, hope, love"—"the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints," "a living hope," "and that everlasting love" which finds its base in the fact that "God is love."

Man's environment may alter but his nature does not change, nor does his basic need. Our changeless God in the person of His changeless Son, Whom He has revealed through His changeless Word can richly supply our every need for time and eternity.

But these proponents of "godless Christianity" have reached the ultimate in theological fads—a dead-end street—a hopeless religion.

"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" (Ps. 2 : 4).—"Restoration Herald."

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SEPTEMBER 1969

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 7—Genesis 13 | Hebrews 6 |
| 14—Genesis 14 | Hebrews 7 |
| 21—Jeremiah 31:23-37 | Hebrews 8 |
| 28—Exodus 24 | Hebrews 9:1-22 |

"FIRST PRINCIPLES"

(Hebrews 5:12)

THE writer of the letter we are now studying does not in so many words mention the terms of salvation. He does not say "You must believe the gospel, repent of your sins, obey the Saviour in baptism and confession." He does lay down with emphasis the further condition for victory over sin and for eternal life—continuance in faithfulness. His words are terrifying when he thinks of the possibility of his readers falling away—apostasy. The supreme position of the Saviour, pressed all through the letter, and the grave possibility of not giving sufficient attention to His word, weighs on his mind as he thinks about those to whom he was writing. He saw them as in danger. Hence at the

beginning "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (2:3).

Warnings Against Turning Back

Jewish Christians are in view. How plain were the moral principles by which they had been guided in their history, and how clear was God's judgement on failing to observe them! The penalties of the nation's disobedience were with them at that very time. Their scattering over the world and the domination of Rome surely indicated God's displeasure. The very fact of their presence in their own land, however, was evidence of God's mercy. They had forfeited possession centuries before, and His mercy had been exercised in restoring them when the prayers of Daniel and the work of Ezra proved repentance. Of all people who had accepted the gospel they should have known best the need for "giving earnest heed" to things which were revealed to them. Prophecy and history enforce the need.

The foundation must be well laid before a reliable building can be erected, but if it is not built upon it is worse than useless. Hence the anxiety of the writer to see progress. His readers had accepted the fundamental points of the Christian faith, and these are mentioned as points established.

Fundamentals

We think some consideration of them is important, on account of confusion due to differences about them, and considerable misunderstanding. I suppose no one has ever taught that repentance is not necessary for salvation, though often mere regret or sorrow for sin is mistaken for it. It is a change in mind and heart. The will to turn away from sin and pursue righteousness is involved. The dead works could be sins committed or fulfilment of legal requirements of the Law of Moses, looked upon in the light of the gospel. In either case the change had taken place in the Christians' hearts. Faith toward God had come into their hearts through knowledge of the truth that Jesus was God's Son, and that through His sacrifice they had forgiveness. Neither of these requirements was new for a Jew, but both involved a break with the past—a break which involved them in trouble, though they had "not yet resisted unto blood" (12:4). The unbelieving Jews were originally the fiercest enemies of the faith, and some of their nation had been made to suffer death—witness Stephen in the earliest days.

They had all submitted to baptism and they must have known of the baptism in the Spirit which took place at Pentecost. They knew also of the washings or ablutions under the law of Moses through which uncleanness was purged, and this important feature of the law certainly taught that physical cleanliness was necessary for acceptable approach to a holy God. We are reminded of the words of Jesus to Peter at the last supper: "He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet" (John 13:10). Both John's baptism and Christian baptism teach a lesson of spiritual cleansing through faith and obedience. The form of the word in the Greek is exceptional, hence our reference to the ablutions.

We would think it unlikely that any of the Christians addressed in the letter had themselves experienced the laying-on of hands, but all would know of the apostolic power to pass on the miraculous gifts, and possibly they had met some who had been recipients of one of them. This would depend upon the location and the date of the letter, but some were in Corinth (1 Cor. 14), and we suppose in many of

the churches begun by Paul or other of the apostles. Under the law sins were confessed as the hand of the sinner was laid on the sacrificial victim. A poet has written

"By faith we lay the hand
On that dear head of Thine;
While full of penitence we stand,
And there confess our sin."

It could also indicate transference of blessing from one to another.

The resurrection and judgement are essential parts of the gospel.

Once these matters have been grasped, we stand so to speak on redemption ground, but it must be with the word of God as a constant source of strength and activity—the whole armour for defence and attack (Eph. 6:13-17). Progress in spiritual stature must follow.

R. B. SCOTT

TWENTY OBJECTIONS TO INFANT BAPTISM

1. The Bible does not mention it.
2. The child must depend upon the testimony of others in after years. What is such obedience worth?
3. It robs the individual of the joy of personal obedience.
4. It is done "in the name of the Father"; but the Heavenly Father does not require it.
5. It is done "in the name of the Son"; but the Son never taught it.
6. It is done "in the name of the Holy Ghost"; but the Holy Ghost never authorised it. It is purely fiction.
7. It is practised not only without the will of the child, but often against its will!
8. Men say it comes in the place of circumcision; but the Bible does not teach it. Only male children could be circumcised.
9. Teaching must precede baptism; but infants cannot understand (Matt. 28:19).
10. Preaching must precede baptism; but infants cannot hear preaching (Mark 16:15-16).

11. Faith must precede baptism; but infants cannot exercise faith (Heb. 11:5, 6; Mark 16:15, 16).

12. Conviction of sin must precede baptism; but infants cannot experience this (Acts 2:37, 38).

13. Repentance must precede baptism (Acts 2:38); but infants have not the power to repent, and are without sin.

14. Baptism must follow a confession of faith in Christ with all the heart; but infants cannot make such confession (Acts 8:36, 37).

15. Only "those who gladly received the word" were baptized; but infants cannot thus receive God's Word (Acts 2:41).

16. Those who were baptized "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Infants can do none of these (Acts 2:41, 42).

17. Infant baptism is sinful because it is without faith (Rom. 14:23).

18. Infants are already fit subjects for the kingdom of heaven without baptism (Matt. 19:14).

19. Infant baptism originated in the idea that without it infants would be lost. This is opposed to Bible-teaching.

20. Infant baptism must be traced to Rome and not Jerusalem.

Selected

MY FAMILY

Will nobody give me a knock at my door?
I've cleaned all the house up and scrubbed
every floor.

The house is so quiet, there isn't a sound;
I've tried music and action, no comfort
I've found,

I feel Oh so lonely, won't someone please
call,

Just someone to talk to? Oh watch that
snow fall!

Sometimes when they've kissed me and
said their goodbyes,

The workers, the scholars, they don't hear
my sighs.

I long for the moment when life starts
again,
And each rushes home from work, school,
or den.
The house is so empty when they are away,
A WEEK seems to be the length of a
DAY.

The telephone's silent, won't somebody
call?

The number of times I've walked through
the hall

And longed for the door bell or just one
wee tap,

But there isn't a sound, not a purr from
a cat.

At last! there are voices, wet feet on the
mat,

Red frosty fingers, we'll soon alter that!
I'll hold each one closely against my warm

heart,
And shut out the thought that a new day
will start.

My loneliness ended, I gather my brood,
Surround them with love and some jolly
good food.

Those long weary hours I now can forget:
Please don't ring my doorbell—at least not
just yet.

When I'm lonely tomorrow perhaps you
will phone,

But just now I'm happy: MY FAMILY
IS HOME!

Lily Renshaw

MISCELLANEA

A man may be affected by religion in any of three ways: (1) Only by the atmosphere of it round about him; (2) by occasional efforts to raise his mind to spiritual things; or (3) by the constant reference of his conduct to a perfect standard.

The Christian who battles and runs away will fight the same battle another day.
Everett Morgan

If you are eager to investigate the works of Omnipotent Wisdom, there is no need to seek them the wide world round.

Who Saved This Child?

A little child fell from the path into the canal. A young woman who saw it threw herself from the wall into the water and grasped the child's arm. She had not sufficient strength to lift him to the wall, for her utmost energy was taxed to keep his head above water. For more than twenty minutes she was in this position, when a man, hearing her cries, found her and raised the child to safety. Yet the village honoured and applauded the girl as the child's rescuer.

Teacher, if you first succeed in keeping those children's lives above the current of sensuality and vice by your utmost endeavours, some evangelist may come along and lift them to safety. The community may call them his converts, but some day in heaven you shall be acknowledged as the rescuer of their lives.

REPORT ON "A MISSIONARY" EFFORT

We regret to report that to date we have no word from the Malawi immigration authorities regarding Bro. Grant's application for a residency permit. Our Bro. David Macy was recently ordered out of the country with no official reason given. While this was disappointing, we have an indication through informal sources that there may be a change in the government's attitude within six months. The brethren here plan to wait a reasonable length of time before altering our plans to send the Grant family.

We hope the brethren who sent money for Bro. Grant's fare will be patient with us until enough facts are in to warrant a decision. Should it appear impossible for the Grant family to enter Malawi, the money contributed for fare will either be returned or used in some other mission effort with the donors' approval.

We want the brethren there to know we are not discouraged with the work in Africa. There have been temporary setbacks in the past and there will doubtless be others in the future. But the gospel has been preached, souls have been saved and the work there will be carried on by faithful African brethren whether or not

any of us are able to go and help them. If we aren't able to continue in Malawi, the brethren here will select a new place and continue to carry the good news of the kingdom. Should that become necessary we would want the co-operation and help of the brethren in Britain which has been so valuable to us in this venture.

We will keep you apprised as new developments come to light. The 21st Street church and I personally would appreciate your comments or suggestions on the above matter.

For the 21st Street Church,

James Orten,
7525 N. W. 27,
Bethany, Oklahoma.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Peterhead.—On Lord's Day, 29th June, Margaret Duff was baptised. We thank God that the gospel has again proved itself to be "the power of God unto salvation."

A. E. Strachan

Bonteheuwel (S. Africa).—Mr. Abrahams was baptised on 28th June, 1969.

OBITUARY

Devonport.—It is with great sorrow that we have to report the passing away after a long illness of our dearly beloved Sister Ellen Goodfellow on August 2nd, aged 83 years. Our sister was baptised December 5th, 1911, in Canada, and came to England in 1914 attending churches in Scotland and Plymouth. She will be greatly missed; yet we sorrow "not as others, which have no hope" but take comfort and rejoice in the knowledge that our loss is her gain. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

Peter A. M. Lakeman

COMING EVENTS

Newtongrange.—Intensive mission, week commencing 6th September. Preacher: Bro. Tom Kemp, Hindley, Lancs. Gospel meetings every night commencing 7.30. Please book the dates.

Pray for us, brethren.

M. Ferguson (Secretary),
17 Lawfield Road, Mayfield, Dalkeith,
Midlothian. 031 663 1899

SEPTEMBER CONFERENCE

The Ulverston Church is again entertaining the Conference on September 13th.

Speakers in the afternoon devotional session will be Bros. Tom Nisbet and Robert McDonald, on the subject "Women in the Church."

The evening meeting will be presided over by Bro. Black of Ulverston and the speaker Bro. John Partington (of Ince) on the subject "Becoming a Christian citizen in God's Kingdom."

Accommodation can be obtained by writing to Miss I. D. Marsh, Sefton House, 39 Queen Street, Ulverston, Lancs.: B. & B. 21/-; Dinner, B. & B. 27/6; Garage 1/- nightly; or by writing to Bro. J. Thistlethwaite, 3 Lancaster Street, Dalton-in-Furness, Lancs.

Book this date and come along to give your support to the work of evangelising for Christ. Tom Woodhouse (Secretary)

Wigan (Scholes).—Five Nights' Gospel Mission, Saturday, Lord's Day, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, October 4th to 9th; all meetings 7.30 p.m. Preacher: Leonard Morgan.

MARRIAGE

On 5th July, in the Town House, Haddington, Bro. John Fairgrieve, only son of Mr. & Mrs. Fairgrieve, Balerno, to Sister Penny Gell, eldest daughter of Bro. and Sis. F. Gell, Haddington. Bro. D. Dougal officiated.

May the Lord bless them and grant them many years of happiness.

GOLDEN WEDDING

Bro. and Sis. T. McGinn, New Cumnock, celebrated their golden wedding on 18th July in the Town Hall, Cumnock.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Doncaster.—John Garnett (secretary), formerly 55 Chestnut Avenue, Doncaster, to 216 Thorne Road, Doncaster.

Prejudice is a great timesaver. It lets us form opinions without bothering to get the facts.—*Gospel Beacon.*

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