

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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BAPTISM : ITS PROMINENCE AND IMPORTANCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

IN the concluding words of our article on BAPTISM last month we said, "It is hoped in a future article to show the prominence and importance of baptism." This article will attempt to demonstrate from the New Testament the position that the subject holds.

The Prominence of Baptism

It is a good plan when studying a subject in the Bible to use a concordance to find out how often that subject is mentioned. On the whole the frequency of such references is an accurate indication of the importance of the subject.

In Young's *Analytical Concordance* we find the word "baptism" or its derivatives occur some 115 times in the New Testament. A significant feature of these occurrences is that no fewer than 27 references appear in the book of Acts. Why is this significant? Because of the nature and purposes of the book. These aims and purposes are well expressed in another name which has been applied to Acts—"The Book of Conversions". It is the book which records how in those first days of the church men and women became Christians, how they were "added to the church", how they were saved. We find, then, that a quarter of the whole N.T. references to baptism appear in the book which shows who and what are Christians. Indeed, we find that some almost casual, incidental references are made to baptism, as being taken for granted (so to speak). Perhaps to quote these references will make the meaning clearer. In chapter 8 the conversion of Simon (the magician) is recorded. We read in verse 12: "But when they (the Samaritans) believed Philip as he preached good news concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized..." Then follows, in verse 13, the record of Simon's baptism. Notice how this is mentioned: "Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip." It sounds quite matter-of-fact, as though it would be understood by Luke's readers as being part of Simon's conversion, not some extraordinary event. With many people today that is just what baptism is — an extraordinary event.

Two other similar references to baptism are in Acts 16 : the first is the instance of the conversion of Lydia, of whom it is said (vs. 14 & 15) : "The Lord opened her heart, to give heed to what was said by Paul. And when she was baptized, with her household..." How naturally is baptism spoken of here : no suggestion that it is extraneous to what was preached, but rather a natural result of Paul's teaching. The same truth is apparent in the conversion of the jailor at Philippi : "...and he was baptized at once, with all his family." We do not read that baptism had been mentioned in Paul's preaching, yet it is obvious that it was, for the jailor's action was a perfectly normal consequence of gospel preaching in those days. We shall look in vain in the pages of the New Testament for any instance of an unbaptised Christian, so that we are justified in asserting that there were not any in those days.

In answer to every question concerning salvation the command "be baptised" is given. Acts 2:37,38 : "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' And Peter said, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you...' " Again, in Acts 8:37,38 : "... And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water...and he baptized him." As a third example we have the conversion of Saul of Tarsus : In Acts 9:6 Saul is told to "rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The being told what he was to do was in answer to his question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Auth. Versn.) That Saul asked that question is obvious from his own account in Acts 22 : There, in v.10 Paul asks, "What shall I do, Lord?" And the Lord said to me, 'Rise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told what is appointed for you to do'." He himself tells us that among the things he had to do was to be baptised, for Ananias tells him, " 'And now, why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.' " And yet a fourth case : In Acts 16:30 the jailor at Philippi cries out, " 'Men, what must I do to be saved?' " What Paul told him to do is obvious from what follows (v.33) : "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and was baptized at once, with all his family." It is clear that, in those first days of the gospel, when a person asked how to be saved, he was told, among other things, to be baptised.

Do We Preach Baptism Enough?

In the light of the foregoing cases of conversion recorded in the New Testament how can baptism be evaded, ignored, omitted or opposed? In all the examples given baptism was taught, although all of the converts were hearing the gospel *for the first time*. In other words the preachers from the first brought the hearers to make a decision. Those who preached or taught realised that, even if this were the only occasion on which they would preach the gospel to these persons, they would teach them the way of salvation. Preaching baptism too much? James Anderson in his *Story of My Life* tells of a case where he was accused by a clergyman of that very thing. James Anderson replied, "I admit, I do preach baptism too much. But you preach it not at all, and I have therefore to make up for what you leave out."

So far in these articles on baptism we have covered only the prominence of the subject in the New Testament. There remains much ground still to cover before we have even skimmed the surface of this vast subject, upon which hundreds of elaborate, exhaustive and systematic treatises, and thousands of pamphlets have been printed. It remains in this series to touch upon the IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM, and the BLESSINGS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND PRIVILEGES which become ours through baptism. These topics we shall attempt to present in a further article.

EDITOR

CHRIST'S BODY, THE CHURCH

R. K. Francis

IV : HOW WE BECOME MEMBERS OF THIS BODY

HOW do we enter this body? How do we become members of it? All true, intelligent disciples of the Christ must be Church members, for such is the Lord's design. They must be members of His body, because He is the Head, and there must be union with the Head. No man can fully follow Christ, or obey His commands and hold aloof from His Church. The Church is a part of Christ's plan. He gave Himself for the Church. But how are we to enter it? If this body is a human institution, men can appoint the way to enter it : but if it is a Divine institution, a society founded and governed by CHRIST, then the Lord must Himself have prescribed the form of admission. Further, men can only be admitted into a visible society, by a visible rite, form, or ceremony. It is so with the body of Christ, the Church.

All *changes* are *conversions*. But the conversion of which we now proceed to speak is a change of mind and heart, a change from sin to holiness. When this body of Christ came first into existence, the question was asked by certain, "What shall we do?" Acts 2:37. Remember! this question was called forth by the declaration of the most amazing and important truths that ever escaped human lips. There is nothing in the whole range of ancient oratory to be compared with the theme which was the burden of Peter's speech on that first Pentecost after the Crucifixion. His was the greatest effort of speech ever made. What a storm of mighty eloquence was then poured from his lips! What an array of testimony and argument, of illustration and logic, of reason and persuasion! He spoke of a Conqueror who had conquered death and hell by a power which was holy and divine. Reaching back to the time of the prophet Joel, he commenced his oration by referring to the wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth beneath ; he showed also the gospel truths contained in the utterances of the Psalmist in reference to the Captain of our salvation. With facts which they could not question, Peter charged home upon his hearers the murder of our Lord ; and showed that Him whom they had killed God had raised up to be a Prince and Saviour. Then the listeners stood self-convicted – smitten with a sense of the sin they had committed. They were "pricked in their hearts." Here we see the influence of truth, the power of motives.

Conviction

The result of Peter's discourse was, that the hearers were compelled to believe by the authenticated testimony so forcibly presented by the preacher ; and believing, they exclaimed, in the bitterness of their souls, "Brethren what shall we do?" The answer was, "Repent ye and be immersed every one of you in the NAME OF JESUS CHRIST unto the remission of your sins ; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" etc. Acts 2:38. Peter saw the wants of the people, he knew their precise condition, and prescribed the only means of relief. They believed him. Faith is the result of testimony received, the channel through which the love of God enters the soul of man, and the blood of Christ reaches the conscience of the sinner.

Faith in Action

These Pentecostians received the Gospel as a divine message upon its proper testimony ; and instead of faith being the immediate gift of the Spirit, as some have

assumed, the Spirit is promised as a gift to the believer — the obedient believer. Every spirit is to be found in its own body. How then do we get into the body of Christ, and partake of His Spirit? "For in one Spirit were we all immersed into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free ; and were all made to drink of one Spirit," 1Cor. 12:13. We see, then, how on Pentecost converts to Jesus were translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Hearing, they believed and were immersed. Not baptism disposing to faith, but faith expressed in baptism. We can show no one our faith without our works. When, therefore, faith is demanded as the very condition of salvation it is appropriate that there should be an outward and visible sign by which it is expressed. Consent is the essential element in the transfer of land by sale or purchase, but until that consent is expressed visibly in the signature and seal to the document it is not deemed sufficient. The "I will" of the marriage ceremony is a necessity, for it gives voice to the inward resolve for union, but words do not abide, and it is felt desirable to add the registration and the ring as the witness to the vow.

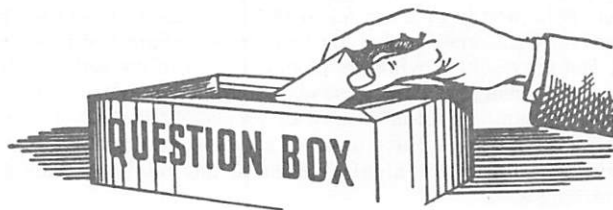
Baptism

Many methods of expressing the great decision have been devised by men—the penitent form, the uplifted hand, the written pledge — all of which are avowedly for the purpose of declaring openly the unseen faith of the heart, but the only Scriptural method of so doing is the ordinance of immersion ; and it is the privilege as well as the duty of all who trust in the Lord Christ for salvation, to make known that trust in the way he has ordered in His Commission, sanctioned by His own example, and confirmed by His bestowal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was always thus that members were added to Christ's Church in New Testament times. It was so with the Samaritans, the Ethiopian eunuch, Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius, Lydia, the Corinthians, and all the members of the apostolic Churches. Men have adopted whatever plan they have seen fit, for the introduction of persons into what they have termed the church or body of Christ.

But men can have no power, whatever their assumptions, to legislate their fellows into Christ. Men become members of Christ's body when they "put on Christ" — as it is said, "Ye are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were immersed into Christ *did put on Christ.*" Gal. 3:26,27. The phrase "immersed into Christ," found in Rom. 6 and Gal.3, fully implies that the *believer* is introduced into the body of Christ by baptism. Paul explains the matter in Eph. 5:25,26 ; "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for it ; that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by WASHING OF WATER with the word." If the Church then, as a whole, was to be cleansed with a "*washing of water* by the word," none can belong to that Church, but by submitting to that washing of water or baptism. For if the Church which had its origin nineteen hundred years ago, is still in being, then, as the Church was to be thus cleansed, every one who will now belong to it must submit to this washing of water. And this is all in perfect agreement with the rule given by the Lord to His Apostles, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matt. 28:19. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved ; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." Mark 16:15,16.

From a careful reading of our earliest Church history — the only authentic Church history—the Acts of Apostles, we find that emotions, experiences, "religious consciousness," "attending class," never made a man, woman, or child a member of Christ's body, the Church. It cannot do so now, human practices notwithstanding.

(To be continued)



Conducted by
James Gardiner

"I have been having discussions on Acts 2 and would be grateful if you could tell me exactly what the gift of the Holy Spirit is in Acts 2 : 38"

The study of all aspects of the Holy Spirit is one of considerable depth, and I think that very often we are a bit put off when we read of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. We feel that the study of such a subject is best left to the "scholars" and "Intellectuals". While agreeing that the subject is a profound one it is nevertheless possible to learn a great deal from a perusal of the references to the Holy Spirit in the scriptures, and gradually build up a picture in our minds of His nature and work.

The above verse (Acts 2 : 38) has caused it s fair share of discussion and controversy and has had many a false construction placed upon it - especially upon the term mentioned, "the gift of the Holy Spirit". I shall try to make some helpful remarks on the matter.

Commandments and Promises

From the narrative in Acts 2 we understand that the apostle Peter is, and has been, preaching the gospel to a great company of Jews. He so successfully convicts them of their sinfulness and unworthiness in God's sight (as Christ's murderers) that they are forced to call out "Men, and brethren, what shall we do?" (v.37) The following verse, incorporating Peter's reply, is the verse our questioner is referring to. It runs thus: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

It is most important, I think, that we notice that the verse contains *two commands* and *two promises* and we must carefully distinguish between them, and not confuse them. A *command* and a *promise* are two very different things. The two commandments are (1) "Repent" and (2) "be baptized". These two commands of God are directed towards *everyone*. Those who would be saved *must* obey the commands - they must repent and be baptized. The two promises are *not* directed to *everyone* but are promised only to those who have obeyed the two commandments. The two promises are (1) "remission of sins" and (2) "The gift of the Holy Spirit".

Baptism in The Holy Spirit

Before suggesting what the phase "the gift of the Holy Spirit" does mean, let us begin by stating what the phrase *cannot* mean. It cannot have any reference to Holy Spirit baptism as is sometimes claimed by some. The baptism Peter *commanded* was baptism in water; the baptism in the Holy Spirit was a *promise* with a restricted application, and indeed occurred only twice. These two occasions are recorded for us : Acts 2 - when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles; and in Acts 10 : 44 - upon Cornelius and his household. These manifestations of the Holy Spirit were in fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, in Joel 2 : 28, where the prophet said "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions..." God said He would pour out His spirit upon

all flesh: the apostles represented the Jewish segment of the world, and Cornelius represented the Gentiles. It is worthy of note, as to the importance of baptism in water, that Peter commanded that Cornelius and his household be baptized in water even although they had, just previously, evidently been baptized in the Holy Spirit. 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit' means just what it says *ie.* an obvious *immersion* in the Holy Spirit with *visible* manifestations of cloven tongues "like as of fire" (see Acts 2:3) and clearly does not take place today. Those who, today, talk about having been baptized with the Holy Spirit signify, to me at any rate, that they do not know what they are talking about.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Again, 'the gift of the Holy Spirit' of Acts 2:38 is not to be confused with the very special and miraculous "gifts" of the Spirit given to some of the members of the church in its early days. Such gifts were given solely by the laying on of the apostles' hands and were for a temporary and specific purpose - which purpose is not relevant today. Jesus, in giving His final instructions to His disciples before ascending to heaven, said (Mark 16:15) "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved : but he that believeth not shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; and they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." These then were some of the miraculous, or supernatural, "gifts" of the Holy Spirit and in the following verses we are informed of their purpose (v.20) "And they (the disciples) went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and *confirming the word* with signs following." The signs, or gifts, were necessary for giving confirmation to the spoken word in those early days of Christianity; but now the word has been confirmed and needs no further confirmation. Thus miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit no longer exist, nor are necessary. In any case these gifts could only be conveyed or bestowed upon the recipients by the laying on of *the apostles'* hands, and were thus confined to the lifetime of the apostles. In Acts 8 we read of Philip evangelizing in Samaria. Although Philip possessed miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit he could not *transmit* such gifts to others, and so Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem to impart such gifts (see verses 6,17). In v.18 we read "And when Simon saw *that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given*, he offered them money, Saying Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit." Thus by reason of the very nature of the impartation of such gifts of the Holy Spirit (by the laying on of the apostles' hands) we are all precluded from receiving such gifts today.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Having thus briefly touched upon what the phrase in Acts 2:38 does not mean, let us deal with what it does mean. We recall that the promise of (1) remission of sins and (2) the gift of the Holy Spirit was to be available not only to Peter's immediate hearers, but to all men in all ages - to the children (or descendants) of Peter's immediate hearers - *ie.* to us today. "The gift of the Holy Spirit" of Acts 2:38 clearly refers to the indwelling of the Spirit in the heart of every believer. To *Christians* in Corinth Paul could say "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that *the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*" (1Cor. 3:16); and again "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *which is in you*, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own".

The miraculous gifts of the Spirit passed with the infancy of the church but the Spirit did not pass. He has stayed on: He remains within Christ's followers. There is therefore a great difference between the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit and the gift of the indwelling of the Spirit. We sometimes also confuse the Holy Spirit and the word of God, especially in the context of 'conversion'. The Holy Spirit, being a person, is *the agent* in conversion, and the word of God is *the instrument*. The

surgeon uses the scalpel, but the surgeon is not to be confused with the scalpel or instrument. There is a great wealth of scripture which confirms the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in Christ's followers. Here are a few further examples: Peter said (Acts 5:32) "*We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit; whom God hath given to them that obey him.*" Paul said to the disciples at Galatia (Gal. 4:6) "*Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*" To the Christians at Rome Paul said (Rom. 8:9) "*But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.*" Here we have sure sanction for using the term, 'the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.' We could also refer to "the communion" of the Holy Spirit with us. In 2 Cor. 13:14 Paul commends the Christians at Corinth to God in the following way: "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*" In writing to Timothy, as a faithful disciple, Paul recognized that the Holy Spirit dwelt in him, and said "*That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.*" (2 Tim. 1:14).

These verses serve as an illustration of the fact that the Holy Spirit sojourns with Christ's faithful followers and is received, together with remission of sins, at baptism. When we accept Christ as our saviour and are obedient to His instructions to "repent" and "be baptised" we receive 'remission of sins' and 'the gift, or indwelling, of the Holy Spirit'. We can allow Him to bring about our spiritual increase and enrich our spiritual lives, or we can smother and thwart Him by our indifferent lives. This is what Paul terms as *quenching* the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19). We can also *grieve* the Holy Spirit by our bitterness, anger and evil speaking, Paul warns us of this in Eph. 4:29, when he says "*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*" He also helps us with our prayers as they ascend to God (Rom. 8:26). The flesh is subdued by means of the indwelling Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit can be produced in our lives: love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against which there is no law (Gal. 5). All of these matters are associated directly with this "gift" (or indwelling) of the Holy Spirit.

My space has gone but I hope these remarks may stimulate further interest and study of the subject and have been of some service to the questioner.

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:9,14)

(Questions please to : James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland. Brother Gardiner stresses that this feature depends upon the regularity of questions sent in by readers. Keep him supplied with these.

EDITOR.)

A PLEA FOR SEPARATENESS

"Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord". 2 Cor. 6:17.

The substance of these words may be found many times in the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the appeal was first used by the prophets with reference to God's ancient people in Babylonian captivity.

But what does the Apostle mean by quoting such words to the Church at Corinth? It is evident that Isaiah and Paul were applying them to widely differing circumstances; but one can also see that one common danger besets the Jew in bondage, and the Christian surrounded by sin, and prophet and Apostle saw only one way of escape, and that was in separateness. To Jew and Gentile alike came the appeal. To Babylon and to Corinth came the message, the hope, and the plan of salvation.

"Come out" — "be ye separate" — "touch not the unclean thing" — "and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you" — "and ye shall be My sons and My daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Separateness

Upon this matter of being separate all sorts of extremes, illogical, impossible, and un-Scriptural, have been advised. Monasticism, originally, was an attempt along this line. The old monks sought to attain this separateness, and though it appears strange to us, it was nevertheless in all sincerity that Thomas à Kempis said, "The greatest saints avoided the society of men, when they could conveniently, and did rather choose to serve God, and to live to God, in secret." But we know what became of the monasteries, and the monastic orders in this country. Froude himself said, "Never were any institutions brought to a more deserved judgement than the monastic orders of England."

We may rest assured that this was not what Paul wanted the Christians to do at Corinth. The cell and the convent are no places for those who are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

Look at the circumstances of the church to which the Apostle is writing. Here is a company of men and women who had heard the Gospel, and by its power had been rescued from the lowest depths of sin. Anyone reading the two letters addressed to them afterwards will be able to appreciate the peculiar danger and peril of their position. They had begun well, but what of the difficulties which lay in their way? Just learning self-control, and surrounded by appalling temptations, should it be wondered at that the battle sometimes went very hard with them? Corinth, the home of wealth, luxury, and dissipation, among the ancient cities one of the gayest and most dissolute — here is an environment indeed in which to live for Christ. The Paris of antiquity was an unlikely place to afford help to any struggling in the ways of righteousness.

To these men and women, members of the Church of God, beset within and without by the old atmosphere, the old associations, the old tendencies, there could only be one hope of ultimate triumph, and that was in standing quite clear of all the old past:

It just meant that the old habits, the old friendships, the old sinful pleasures were to be cut off. There is no thought of compromise in such a plea for separateness. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?"

Paul, in his own graphic way, shows that there could be no common ground of fellowship. "What part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever, and what agreement hath a temple of God with idols?" And because of this the Apostle pleads for separateness, quotes Isaiah, and says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers". These were very penetrating words, and doubtless the Corinthian Christians felt that the preacher was getting into close quarters with some of their inconsistencies. To follow all the way meant a loss of friends, of business, of home, perhaps, of many promising things, and probably life itself. But their salvation, and their power in witness-bearing, depended on their response to this call for separate-ness.

Applied

What are the lessons of this appeal to us today? How would Paul interpret the plea to the Churches of Christ in this country? The principle needs application to our modern surroundings. There are several particulars which maybe named, in which we ought to remember this Apostolic appeal.

Compromise

The compromise of the Church and the world is one of the saddest things of

our modern times. We see unequal yoking in a thousand ways, and also that it has become quite a common expression that the line of demarcation is almost gone. In a word, there is little or no separateness between the Church and the world. We remember how the Master was in the world, ever mixing with the people to bless them. But to be identified with worldliness, with wordly fashions, and pleasures, and ambitions, surely that is a vastly different thing altogether! It is because we are seriously compromised in so many ways that our witness-bearing has little weight or influence over men at large.

Marriage

In this question there can be no two opinions, no, not even one, as to being unequally yoked. We have seen the disastrous failure of unions not in the Lord. It must be a bitter disappointment when the chief qualification for happiness is absent. Young Christians should make their choice of companions with this in view. It is the greatest folly to unite ourselves, our lives, and largely our destinies with those who know not Christ. I would go further and say that it is unfortunate to marry out of the Church of God. It cannot be ideal for husband and wife to be apart, or to be compelled to pass the other at the breaking of bread. What is to become of the children in these conditions? The principle needs to touch all unions, and friendships, and responsibilities attached to our varied conditions of life.

Dress

Both Paul and Peter dared the whole length in their separateness. They insisted on women standing clear of the besetting weakness of the sex. And while others follow the fashions in fine clothing, and costly jewellery, the Apostles would rather see at all times the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and good works.

Brethren and sisters need the courage of their convictions even in an item of this kind. We can dress becomingly, with taste, without imitating the foppishness and vanity of the world.

For Primitive Practice

"Ratae" made a serious statement several years ago, in which I could hardly agree with him at the time. He said, speaking of the worldwide influence of the apostasy, that there was no body of believers who had escaped its pernicious and destructive power. We read in the book of Revelation of this apostasy, likened to a woman arrayed in scarlet, drunken with the blood of saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, on whose forehead is written, "MYSTERY-BABYLON THE GREAT". And John says, "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues." Do we view with sufficient seriousness this plea for separateness in its relation to the apostasy? Are we careful not to jeopardise the truth, and ourselves? Are we watching with intentness any and every compromise of the principles we profess?

We have an example in Paul as to the attitude we should take toward others. So fervid was his desire toward his fellow countrymen that he said on one occasion he could wish himself "accursed from Christ" for their sake. Paul was prepared to do much to save them, but he was not prepared to compromise with his old faith, Judaism. "If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." So he wrote to the Galatians, and we shall do well to follow Paul in such faithfulness. We ought to be willing to make every effort and sacrifice to bring our friends to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; but come what may, it must be the truth as it is in Jesus. This is not the popular way. It is not the path of the majority. The world will love its own; but dare, stand, come out, be faithful, and "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

W. MARSHALL

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JUNE 1971

6-1 Chron. 16:7-34	Acts 14
13-Amos 9	Acts 15:1-21
20-Nehemiah 2	Acts 15:22-35
27-Daniel 1	Acts 15:36 to 16:15

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

WE view the growth of the church with wonder and realise it to be the work of the Lord. What an astonishing change for the disciples from what they thought themselves to be on the day of crucifixion! From seeming to be a dispirited and forsaken few they had developed into a mighty spiritual army, "conquering and to conquer" (Rev. 6:2). Their influence was extending through all the civilised world. If those who were from Rome on the day of Pentecost were in a few years known all over the world for their faith (Rom. 1:8 & 9), we may be sure the gospel had also been taken to other places (Acts 2:9-11).

The efforts of the authorities to stamp out the cause in Jerusalem had resulted in an outpost at Antioch in Syria, from whence Asia Minor was being evangelised. It became another centre from which Christ's power over men and women was spread. Here in particular the barriers were broken down. Jew and Gentile worshipped and worked together. They fasted and prayed together. They bore one name. The prophets and teachers under divine inspiration encouraged pure and holy living. In obedience they sent out two of their number to preach in distant places. These, returning, reported God's effective use of them.

News coming through to Jerusalem of all this progress disturbed the minds of some of the members of the church there, because they retained the idea that the law of Moses ought to be obeyed. Without authority from the apostles and elders they went to Antioch and began teaching that circumcision was necessary

to salvation. This was against what had been accepted by the brethren in general (Acts 11:18). Nevertheless we can understand their failure to grasp the truth and what it involved. Fortunately Paul and Barnabas had returned from their first missionary journey, and immediately took issue with this wrong teaching. We need to read the second chapter of Galatians, as this undoubtedly refers to the council. -

The Question of Circumcision Settled

The dissension and questioning naturally disturbed the Christians and action had to be taken. Nothing is so harmful to a church as differences among its teachers. What a wise decision it was to take the matter up to Jerusalem to those who must have been regarded as having the authority of Christ! So Paul and Barnabas went. Others from the church went with them, including Titus. Their journey was a joyous triumph as they told the good news to the brethren in the various places through which they passed. It would seem that many of the converted Jews in Jerusalem did regard the law of Moses as still more or less obligatory, and those who had been Pharisees would be influential. We should bear in mind that not all Pharisees were wicked: many were sincerely devout persons, and when converted would surely prove to be earnest in their new faith. Thus after a private consultation the contention of the Pharisic party was brought into the open and considered.

A powerful threefold testimony made the church's decision clear. First Peter's testimony of God's action in the conversion of Cornelius was given. Secondly Paul and Barnabas witnessed to the wonderful blessing of God upon their work among the heathen, how signs and wonders accompanied their preaching. Lastly James quoted the word of God, showing that the conversion of the Gentiles had been purposed by God Himself. James then made his suggestion that certain instructions should be given to the Gentiles to remove social barriers which could otherwise hinder close fellowship.

We note that the whole church (15:22) joined with the apostles and elders in

agreeing to a letter for the Gentile Christians ; but they also appointed Judas and Silas to go to convey the message by word of mouth — an extra sign of courtesy and goodwill. We believe the four prohibitions were wisely designed to make for unity at that time. Wherever Jews and Gentiles ate together the food restriction would be necessary, and fornication had to be mentioned in view of its prevalence among heathens as a social custom if we may correctly use that term. To us it would seem unnecessary to mention this last.

Regretfully we have to say that even the decision of the council did not end the contention of the extremist Jewish teachers. Paul was compelled years afterwards to contend against the efforts to impose the rite of circumcision on Christian converts. Nevertheless the battle was really fought and won there.

R.B. SCOTT

WANTED : GREAT HEARTS

- The Word is solemn, therefore don't trifle.
 The task is difficult, therefore don't relax.
 The opportunity is brief, therefore don't delay.
 The path is narrow, therefore don't wander.
 The prize is glorious, therefore don't faint.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Blackburn, Mill Hill : We rejoice in a further manifestation of the Gospel's power as two more souls showed their obedience to the faith in the waters of baptism. On Tuesday 11th. May, 1971, Mr. and Mrs. Atkin were added to the church upon confession of their faith in Jesus, and now "walk in newness of life". Pray with us that they shall be kept faithful, always abounding in the work of the Lord. To God be the glory.

R. RENSHAW

Slamannan : We rejoice that another young person, Frances Kennedy, has given her life to the Lord and was baptised on 17th. February. We pray that she may have a long life of great usefulness in the service of God.

M. NEILSON

(We are very sorry for the late appearance of this notice. It was received over a month ago, but had slipped out of the editor's book of copy for Scripture Standard and was found out of the way. Please forgive us, Sis. Neilson and the church in Slamannan. Editor.)

Woodstock, Capetown : "March 21st. was a great day of rejoicing when Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Beastley were baptised into Christ."

OBITUARY

Newtongrange : Francis Dudgeon died on April 16th. at Roodlands Hospital, Haddington, East Lothian, and was cremated in Seafield, Edinburgh on 20th. April. He is sorrowed by his widow, Sister Dudgeon, two sons—Francis and Mervyn, and a daughter—Sis. Mrs Hunter, also two grandchildren.

Bro. Dudgeon became a member of the church in April 1945. He and his faithful companion had such an influence on their children that two became Christians.

Robert Morris passed from this life on April 24th. at Siberton Hospital, Edinburgh. The burial took place in Dalkeith Cemetery on April 27th. He is survived by his widow, Euphermia, his son James, and two daughters, Euphermia and Jean — all of them members of the church.

Bro. Morris became a member in April 1929.

The writer of these lines considers it a very great blessing to have known Brethren Dudgeon and Morris and their families for a good number of years. Their influence lives on. May the Lord bless and comfort their sorrowing loved ones.

W.H. ALLAN

GEMS FROM HENRY CLAY TRUMBULL

No man is really ready to live until he is ready to die.

A truth is no less a truth because we cannot explain it.

It takes but very little time to commit a sin, but a long while to get rid of its consequences.

A child is never spoiled by a mother's love, but many a child is spoiled by a mother's unwisdom.

A readiness and desire to serve are the proofs of true affection.

If a man has anything to do that he *ought* to do, he should do it whether he can or not.

It is not more evidence of the truth of Christianity that men need, but more willingness to accept the evidence they have.

CHRIST'S WORKMEN

The Carpenter of Galilee

Comes down the street again:

In every land, in every age

He still is building men.

On every day we hear His knock:

He goes from door to door.

"Are any workmen out of work?"

The Carpenter needs more."

Hilda W. Smith

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