

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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PLEASING GOD

Most things we do, or say, in this life pleases some and displeases others. Indeed a great deal of our time is spent trying to please. Shopkeepers and businessmen are in constant competition trying to please customers and at one time 'The customer was always right.' As employees, we try and please our employers, as husbands we try and please our wives and as parents we try and please our children. There are some who are difficult to please and there are some we have given up trying to please and don't care whether we please them or not. How good are we at trying to please the Lord? The apostle Paul expresses a truism (in 1st Cor. 7:32-33) when he says, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife." Notwithstanding that a lot of wives would care to challenge the latter part of the quotation, the statement is generally true. The bachelor evangelist can go anywhere at a moment's notice to preach the word and is completely unfettered by the responsibilities of parenthood and so has a distinct advantage in the Lord's work over the married disciple. However I only mention the quotation of Paul, at this time, to illustrate that, as far as Paul was concerned, the main object and consideration in life should be 'to care for the things of the Lord' and how 'we may please the Lord.'

Sometimes, to please God we must say something which will displease people, even our friends and thus sometimes we remain silent. In Matt 21:27 we read that the Chief Priests and Elders refused to answer a question from Jesus because they feared the people. The apostles and early disciples had no such reservations and received many floggings and spent many days in jails because what they said displeased their religious fellow-men. The early evangelists were not usually thinking of what their next hotel would be like; more often wondering how bad the next prison would be. Paul's attitude is summed up in Gal. 1:10. when he asks, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men, for if I pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you brethren that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul could have pleased a lot of men by altering, adapting and tailoring the message, but this was certainly far from his intention. On the other hand, Paul did not consciously set out to be offensive to his fellow-man but

tried as far as possible to live peaceably with all. To the disciples at Rome he wrote, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and *not to please ourselves*. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." (Rom. 15:1-3). We are not therefore, allowed the luxury of saying "I will please myself" but ought to please our neighbour for his good to edification. Again, in similar vein, Paul said to the Corinthians, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: Even as I *please all men* in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." (1st Cor. 10:32).

There were, of course, those who sought to please men for their own profit. Herod, for instance vexed the church because he discovered that this pleased the Jews. In Acts 12:1 we read, "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And killed James the brother of John with the sword. And, because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also." Similarly, we read that Paul was left bound because Felix saw that it would please the Jews (Acts 24:27). In turn, in Acts 25:9 we are informed, "But Festus willing to do the Jews a pleasure answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these things before me." It is also significant to read in John 12 that, "Among the Chief Rulers also many believed on him: but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Oftentimes since, there must have been multitudes who likewise have smothered their belief in Christ in case they displeased their friends and were put out of, not the synagogue, but the club, or clique, or gang, or circle.

How then can we set about doing the things well pleasing to God? The writer to the Hebrews informs us that they can never be pleasing to God unless we begin on the proper footing. He says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6). We must, therefore, have faith in God and all that that involves (i.e. belief also in God's word and in His Son) and not only believe that 'God is, but that He is a rewarder of those who seek him *diligently*.

If we are children, Paul instructs us, "Children obey your parents in all things for this is *well pleasing unto the Lord*." (Col. 3:20).

If we are employees Paul instructs us thus, "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in single-ness of heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ do the will of God from the heart." (Eph. 6:5,6).

To all disciples in general the writer to the Hebrews says "But to do good and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices *God is well pleased*," with what sacrifices is God well pleased? With the doing of good and with generosity. Two verses farther on in this wonderful closing chapter of Hebrews, the writer expresses the hope that "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you *that which is well pleasing in His sight*, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever." (Heb. 13:16, 20). May it be that we shall ever endeavour to do good, and to com-

municate our goods to the poor, and engage ourselves in every good work, working out that which is well-pleasing in God's sight.

We are informed that, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death: and was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that *he pleased God.*" (Heb. 11:5). May it be that when we die, we might share in such a marvellous testimony — that we pleased God.

Editor

THE BROKEN BODY

What would you think of a host, who had invited us to dinner, and when all were seated at the table, began to serve himself first? What would our reaction be to this kind of host who said, "I'll have mine first, then you can have yours"? Would we not think that our host was not only discourteous in the extreme, but was so devoid of good manners as to be positively rude? Would we not be reassuring ourselves that we would never be so unmannerly or so rude to any of our guests? We would like to think that we would never be so uncouth to any of our guests.

Yet it seems that the position of the unkind host is the one being ascribed to Jesus in the latest innovation being suggested for our conduct at the Lord's table. It seems incredible that Jesus, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, should be less courteous and less mannerly than the sinful, tarnished human beings He came to save. But, surely this is the case, if Jesus served Himself before the disciples, who were guests at His table, when the breaking of the bread was instituted. It is also alleged, that the word "break", as used in reference to the institution of this feast, means not only "to break" in the generally accepted sense of the word but that it must mean "to break and eat".

Now, it is true that this word "break" is used in conjunction with the word "bread" to refer to the eating of an ordinary meal. When it is so used, it refers to the whole meal, both the eating and the drinking of whatever goes to make up the whole meal, and not just to the breaking and eating of bread, which may only be part of the whole meal.

It does not always follow that the word "break", as used to describe the establishment of the breaking of the bread, necessarily implies "eating" as well. Our forefathers in the faith did not so comprehend this implication to be necessary in reaching a proper understanding of what was done at the institution of this feast.

However, it is always wise to accept the Lord's exhortation, "Wherefor, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall". It is good to be compelled to examine again the ground on which our beliefs and religious practices stand. Let us not forget the apostle Paul's exhortation to our brethren in Colosse, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving". From the information to hand, it would appear that the teaching and practice among the churches of Christ, in this country at least, with regard to our conduct at the Lord's table, has been consistent with the word of God, and has been so from the earliest days.

Let us remind ourselves again of the teaching of our brother Alexander Campbell in his book, 'The Christian System' (Quote) "We have said that the loaf must be

broken before the saints partake of it. Jesus took a loaf from the paschal table and broke it before He gave it to His disciples. They received a broken loaf, emblematic of His body once whole, but by His own consent broken for His disciples. In eating it we then remember that the Lord's body was by His own consent broken or wounded for us. Therefore, he that gives thanks for the loaf should break it, not as the representative of the Lord, but after His example; and after the disciples had partaken of this loaf, handing it to one another, or while they are partaking of it, the disciple who brake it partakes with them of the broken loaf: thus they all have communion with the Lord and with one another in eating the broken loaf. And thus they as priests feast upon His Sacrifice. For the priests ate of the sacrifices and were thus partakers of the altar.

The proof of all this is found in the institution given in Matthew xxvi., Mark xlv., Luke xxll., and 1. Cor. xi. In each of which His breaking of the loaf, after giving thanks, and before His disciples partook of it, is distinctly stated.

It is not, therefore, strange, that the literal designation of this institution should be what Luke has given it in his Acts of the Apostles thirty years after its institution. The first time he notices it is Acts 11. 42, when he calls it emphatically "te klasei tou artou", the breaking of the loaf, a name at the time of his writing, A.D.64, universally understood. For, says he, in recording the piety, and devotion of the first converts, "they continued steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the fellowship, in the breaking of the loaf, in the prayers — praising God". It is true there is more than breaking a loaf in this institution. But, in accordance with general if not universal usage, either that which is first or most prominent in laws, institutions, and usages, gives a name to them. Thus we have our "Habeas Corpus", or "Fieri facias", our "Nisi Prius," our "Capias", our "Venditioni Exponas", names given from the first words of the law.

But to break a loaf, or to break bread, was a phrase common among the Jews to denote ordinary eating for refreshment. For example, Acts II. 46: — "Daily, with one accord, they continued in the temple and in breaking bread from house to house. They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart." Also, after Paul had restored Eutychus at Troas, we are informed he brake a loaf and ate. Here it must refer to himself, not only because it is used indefinitely, but because he that eats is in the same number with him that breaks a loaf. But when an established usage is referred to, the article or some definite term ascertains what is alluded to. Thus, Acts 11:42, it is "the breaking of the loaf". And Acts xx.7, it is "They assembled for the breaking of the loaf".

This loaf is explained by Paul, 1 Cor. x. 16: "The loaf which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (unquote).

But "to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them". And when we examine the scriptures referred to by our brother Campbell, we see the significance of the disciples partaking of a broken loaf. The broken loaf is symbolic of the broken body of Christ, and all the disciples, including the brother presiding, should partake of a broken loaf. Thus the whole feast reminds us and shows forth, not so much the life of Christ, but His death.

GLEANINGS

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

GO BACK

“Far and away the most obvious need of today is a complete return to the Christianity of Christ and His Apostles. Men see but a semblance, and they long for the real thing. At bottom they are not opposed to Christ, but to His spirit-less anaemic representatives. The hatred for sham is an inbred tendency with every true-hearted Englishman. He regards hypocrisy with the intensest abhorrence; he is dead set against mere make-believe. Those who have a form of godliness but no vital power are the objects of his merciless derision. This is not unjust. Christ Himself is to judge the world, giving heed not to words but to deeds. “Many will say unto me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name . . . ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me ye that work iniquity.” With Christ bald hypocrisy invariably evoked bold denunciation. Go back to Christianity as it was at first. Vie with those early disciples in their zeal for right and truth and God. Are there commands as to mode of life, — love to the poor, the sick, the naked? Do not quibble but embody them in practise. Did Christ and His Apostles leave any instruction as to Church ordinances and polity? Obey and bring praise to the Creator. By word and deed let us get back to the “old paths,” and the prevailing indifference will flee as darkness before the dawn. — W.M.

No change

“When all the scaffoldings which surround the Bible are taken away, by which men have tried to prop it up, the world will begin truly to recognise its real glory. Kingdoms fall, institutions perish, civilisations change, human doctrines disappear, but the imperishable truths which pervade and sanctify the Bible shall bear it up above the flood of change and the deluge of years.” — James Freeman Clarke.

“The word”

“A word is the manifestation of a thought. If I wish to communicate a thought to you, that thought takes shape in words. You cannot see my thought, but what is there comes through the channels of speech, and so travels through your ear to your mind. Now, Christ became the Word to take the thought out of the mind and heart of God, and translate that thought so that we could understand it, so that what was before invisible and inaudible, and beyond the reach of our senses, comes into our minds and hearts as something that was in God’s mind and heart, but now is in ours.” — A. T. Pierson.

We beheld His glory

“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.” — John 1: 14.

Law and obedience

“Law demands a perfect obedience. No man can keep the law. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. God’s way of making righteous, by faith in Jesus, is easy. By works of law no man can become righteous, for this reason, all have sinned, and no amount of good works can atone for past offences. Yet men persist in the belief that a moral life will fit them for heaven. Adam in a sinless state was a free agent, yet he transgressed law, and in some mysterious way his sin involved the human race.”

Coming to Christ

"The practical error from which we need to warn the enquirer is that coming to Christ is getting up an impetuous feeling. Faith in Christ is not a process of forcing one's self up to a certain pitch of feeling and excitement, and then, having accomplished that, to be done with the whole business ever after; no more than marriage is a thing to have done, and then to have done with it. Coming to Christ is coming into loving, eternal union with the "chiefest among ten thousand." — John Hall.

We quote — Marcus Aurelius

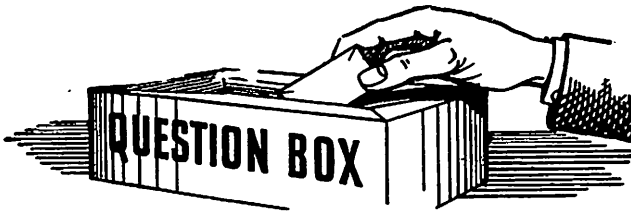
"If any man is able to convince me and show me that I do not think or act right, I will gladly change; for I seek the truth, by which no man was ever injured. But he is injured who abides in his error and ignorance."

Wise words

"There is only one right principle of living, and that is loving and choosing God with all the heart."

Bethesda 1907

Selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"In 1 COR. 7:17 the apostle Paul is recorded as saying: "so ordain I in all churches". Does this mean that he intended all local churches to do exactly the same things in all circumstances?"

Over the years I have heard this question discussed, debated, and argued over. Different points of view have been stated with much passion by various individuals, and on occasions it seems that more heat than light has been generated. However, I believe the Bible *does* give teaching relevant to this question, and even though we may not reach the ultimate answer, we shall at least learn enough to enable us to look at questions like this a little more objectively.

We must, therefore, keep certain questions to the forefront of our minds. What did Paul mean by 'so ordain I'? Was he just referring to one specific problem, or does the phrase 'so ordain I' embrace all the teaching which he gave to the churches? What are his views on the autonomy of the local church? Did Paul envisage his teaching lasting for two thousand years, or was the Holy Spirit through Paul giving teaching for all time and all conditions of society? These questions, and others, must exercise our minds as we look at the various problems in our Christian experience, and attempt to relate these problems to teaching which was given and which is recorded for us in the New Testament.

'So ordain I'

To 'ordain' means to arrange, appoint, or to prescribe. In 1 COR. 7:17 Paul, after some discussion on marital relationships, says: "Only, let everyone lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my

rule in all the churches" (R.S.V.) He then goes on to define certain conditions of life in which people might find themselves when called by the gospel, and the burden of his teaching seems to be that "every one should remain in the state in which he was called," (v20). But obviously, Paul does not intend the Corinthian Christians to think that this is a final and irrevocable command, for he goes on to say: "Were you a slave when called? Never mind. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity". So what was Paul arranging or appointing in all the churches? Precisely as he said, that if possible all Christians should be content to remain in the state in which they were when called. He gives his reason for these instructions in verse 29, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short". It would seem that he and the other apostles expected the imminent return of the Lord.

Furthermore, Paul himself stated that he had chosen not to be a partaker of that which had been 'ordained' by the Lord Himself.

In 1 COR. 9:13ff we read: "Do you not know . . . that they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things." So it would seem that even though certain things had been arranged or appointed for the well-being of the Church, there might be, under certain circumstances a modification of those things *as the scripture allows*. Where the scripture indicates absolute commands, and no modifications can be found then these commands must be obeyed implicitly; such things, I believe, would relate to the necessity to preach the gospel, obedience to the gospel, the government of the Church, etc.

We cannot leave this section without mentioning the authority for apostolic arrangement. This authority was given by the Lord in the coasts of Caesarea Philippi to Peter initially (Matt. 16:19) and then by extension to the rest of the Apostles (Matt. 18:18). The verb 'to bind' is used in the figurative sense in both of these cases. The first case would seem to indicate that Peter, by his ministry of the word, would keep unbelievers, i.e. those who did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, from entering the Church, and what Peter 'bound' by his ministry of the word at Pentecost (Acts 2:37-40) has stood until now and *will* stand to the end of the gospel era . . . As regards Matt. 18:18, the Lord seems to be teaching about disciplinary measures which would be required in the Church, and even though the offences which cause the trespasses may differ, the principle of dealing with these offences is set out quite clearly and authoritatively in Matt. 18:15-17.

The problem for the Church in these days is that the apostolic teaching is open to interpretation by all Christians (as it should be, of course), and it is a truism that hardly needs stating that we do not always arrive at the same conclusions. But God, in His wisdom, has catered for the well-being of the Church in its several localities by the authoritative 'binding' by the apostolic instruction as to how the Church should be governed and its affairs administered. (1 TIM. 3; Titus 1). This was why Titus was left in Crete, to set in order things which were 'lacking', viz., the establishment of scriptural government. A terrible responsibility rests upon the Elders of any community of Christians to guide and shepherd the 'flock' in accordance with apostolic instructions, and I wonder how many of us attempt to 'bind' upon brethren things which neither the Lord nor the Apostles 'bound' on the Church? But perhaps God in His infinite wisdom has also catered for our lack of knowledge and our inconsistencies. There are some things which are universally practised by Churches of Christ, but what would happen if there were absolute insistence that *all* things should be done in *exactly the same way* in *all* churches? If we 'got it wrong' then all would be wrong. But with individual assembly autonomy, then if one assembly became defective, *all* need not become so. Do we have an example of an apostolic instruction being left to an assembly decision: I believe we do.

The Example

The case I have in mind is recorded for us in 1 COR. 5 and is commonly referred to as 'the case of the incestuous brother'. A particularly crude form of fornication among the Corinthian Christians has evidently been reported to Paul. He refers to an earlier letter (v9), one not preserved to us (what a 'find' that would be) in which he has taught about fornication. Even though absent from them, he has judged the case already and wants the offender excommunicated. He wants this done "when ye are gathered together" (v4). It is to be 'in the name of the Lord, and with my spirit', but evidently the decision as to whether to obey Paul must be an assembly decision. The letter containing this instruction was evidently delivered by the hand of Titus.

In his second letter to Corinth and at chapter 2 Paul asks for forgiveness for the offender. He again indicates the original decision to excommunicate as being an assembly one, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many", (2 COR. 2:6). Paul, amid his joy at having another door opened unto him for the gospel, seems nevertheless unsettled because he does not know the complete reaction of the Corinthian brethren, "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother" (v12). However, as we read on in the letter about his trials in Macedonia, we also read about his unrestrained joy at the coming of Titus, "Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (2 COR. 7:6, 7). If we read on we see not only the apostles' concern but the obligation which is placed on every assembly of Christians, "In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." (v11).

To my mind this incident indicates that even in a situation involving the purity of a church, an apostolic instruction had to be ratified by an assembly decision; the Corinthian brethren *could* have refused to obey Paul. I believe Paul understood this, and his joy knew no bounds when Titus brought him the good news.

Conclusion

So where does this leave us? There are, I believe, many commands given to the Church which all should obey. Hence Jesus, "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 damned." (Mark 16:16). Hence Peter, "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Hence Paul, echoing the words of his Master concerning the Breaking of Bread, "This do, in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:23-26). So we could go on.

I am also persuaded that certain apostolic instructions must be interpreted relative to the time and culture of different peoples. Paul wrote to Timothy, "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," (1 Tim. 2:15). Prior to this Paul had said: "that women adorn themselves in modest apparel' that is an apostolic instruction, but 'modest apparel' is capable of being interpreted in every age and society without it necessarily being the same as that which would be worn by women of Paul's day, and the society in which he lived. The principles which do not change are modesty, and proper and decent behaviour in the Church (and I don't mean the building only).

I believe that if we will all give ourselves to a study of the Bible then we shall know what commands we have to obey, and we shall be able to wend our way successfully in life according to the principles laid down for our Christian living.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God . . ." (Ephesians 2:19).

What is it?

It is a remarkable fact that nowhere in history had any revelation been made about the "Household of God" until the year A.D. 64, when these words were used to describe the Christians at Ephesus.

It is true that Paul had described the Christians of Galatia in A.D. 58 as "the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). "Faith" simply means "belief," and so, by using this expression, Paul puts these believers or Christians into one community or family; but the later use of the words "household of God" so enlarged the meaning of the former expression that it is difficult for the human mind to understand its full significance or the wonder of its implications.

We may be sure, however, that it must have been a great honour to be included in such a household, to be made a member of God's family, to be able to have God as their Father, and to be looked upon by God as his children.

Additional meanings

The New Testament describes this valuable relationship in different ways. Galatians 3:26 describes Christians as "children of God," 1 Peter 2:9-10 as "the people of God." Elsewhere they are described variously as brethren, saints, sheep, flock, disciples, *ecclesia* (incorrectly translated "church" in the New Testament), chosen, and of course Christians (Acts 11:26).

Ephesians 2:19 describes the Lord's people as citizens and, since citizens are members of a kingdom, so the "household of God" is often described as the "kingdom of God." Indeed all these expressions are more or less the same, being used to describe the many different aspects and relationships in the household or kingdom of God of which these Christians were members.

Its Habitation — Present

Strange to relate, the kingdom or household of God is a family without any permanent habitation in which to live, and that is because its permanent home is not here, but in heaven. That is largely the meaning of Jesus' words, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

Its Habitation — Future

That this is so is clearly proved by the prophetic utterances of Hebrews 11:10, 16 and 13:14 — "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Jesus himself prophesied this when he said to his disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

That such a place has now been prepared may be inferred from the very use of such language as "the household of God," since it is unthinkable that God would not have prepared a habitation for his own household. This is promised to all true followers of the Christ in the words of Peter: ". . . thus shall be richly supplied unto you an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord" (2 Peter 1:11). In using the word "kingdom" here Peter is speaking of the heavenly kingdom or home and not of its people. This is a distinction which must be observed in the study of the Scriptures, if confusion is to be avoided.

Its Existence — Now

Notice the assurance of the writer in Hebrews 12:28 — “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with godly fear.” This shows clearly that this heavenly abode now exists. It is the wonderful heritage of all true believers and followers of the king of that kingdom, namely Jesus the Christ, God’s beloved Son.

Its Origin

All things have a beginning, and we may justifiably ask when such a kingdom or household of God came into being. In other words how and when did men and women become members of the family or household of God.

Obviously it had not come into being during Jesus’ sojourn on earth. That it was very near however, is shown by his words: “The kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). He also made it quite clear, on another occasion that it was to come during the lifetime of some of those listening to him. Moreover it was to come with power. (Mark 9:1).

When?

Nor had it come into being during the forty days after Jesus had risen from the grave until his ascension into heaven. This is shown by Acts 1:3 where we read that Jesus gave his disciples instructions concerning the kingdom which was shortly to come. (See also Luke 24:45-49).

Acts 1:8 and 2:1-14 shows clearly that the advent of the kingdom was introduced by his apostles through their spokesman Peter and that by a display of divine power which not only introduced the kingdom but also proved abundantly that its design and ownership was God’s — hence the term “household of God.”

How?

The remainder of Acts 2 shows just as clearly how those whom Peter addressed, of every colour and race, became members of the household of God. Note how closely the conditions of entry into that community in Acts 2:38 follow our Lord’s own command in Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:45-49, and the wonderful prophecy of these conditions in John 3:1-23, especially verses 5-6, 12 and 16.

Note also in Acts 2:47 that as a result of their belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, followed by repentance and immersion for the remission of sins and the receipt of the Holy Spirit, the Lord added to his *ecclesia* (or chosen) daily such as should be saved.

Who?

Since “ecclesia” or “chosen” was the original name by which the people or household of God, or Christians were known, it follows that in Acts 2 we have no less than a solemn account of how men and women enter the kingdom of God. The three thousand who accepted Peter’s instructions on how to enter, gladly received his word and were immersed (verse 41).

But this privilege was surely not confined to the three thousands souls. Verse 39 extends the promise to all whom the Lord calls, and since the Lord calls all who listen to his voice as contained in these divine instructions, it follows that whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and puts such belief into practice likewise becomes a member of his kingdom or of the household of God.

You?

If you, dear reader, have not complied with these instructions of the Good Shepherd (John 10: 27-29), but wish to become a member of his fold or household, ponder deeply on these words. They are not a reflection of our own opinions but of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. Seek therefore in these Scriptures of truth, and you will see "whether these things be so."

If you are convinced that they are indeed true, then ask those who distribute this pamphlet and they will gladly provide facilities whereby you may obey the Lord's command to believe and be immersed for the remission of your sins. By doing so you will become a member of God's family, his kingdom, the household of God. To this end may God bless you and yours.

W. BROWN

Keeping the Church Pure

The Lord demands that His church be kept pure and unstained from the doctrines and practices of men. Each congregation must guard against impurities in doctrine, worship, name, organisation, work, morals, etc. How important is purity in the Lord's sight?

Purity above accomplishment. "But look at what we are accomplishing," people are heard to say when questioned about the scripturalness of some activity. We agree that the Lord expects accomplishment on our part (In fact, He is the one who gives the increase — 1 Cor. 3:6,7), but He is displeased if we sacrifice a strict adherence to His will for the sake of accomplishment. Saul was going to accomplish great things with the choice sheep and oxen which he spared when he was to have utterly destroyed the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15). He was planning to sacrifice them unto the Lord. Who could question such a noble purpose? "*Is it better to be doing something in the wrong way than to be doing nothing at all,*" Saul could have argued. But Samuel reminded him: "*Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams.*" (1 Sam. 15:22) The Lord is more concerned for purity than for accomplishment.

Purity above peace. No-one would question the desirability of peace among brethren, but purity is of greater importance. Jesus demonstrated this truth when he drove out the money changers from the temple along with the sheep and oxen, poured out the money, and overthrew the tables (John 2: 13-17). Jesus was disturbing the peace in order to maintain purity. James taught: "*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable . . .*" (James 3:17). Woe unto that person who unnecessarily creates trouble among God's people (Prov. 6: 16-19), but equally in danger is that man who compromises truth for the sake of peace.

Purity above numbers. All are encouraged by good attendance, good contributions, and many baptisms. But numbers must not become an end in themselves. Purity is more important. God preferred the 300 courageous vigilant soldiers who overcame the Midianites under Gideon's leadership rather than the 32,000 who originally went forth (Judges 7).

We conclude then, that the supreme consideration in all our plans must not be accomplishment, peace, or numbers, but "*Is it from heaven, or of men?*" (Matt. 21:25). **Purity comes first!**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

DECEMBER 1980

7 Malachi 2, 17 to 3, 12 Mark 1, 1-20
 14 Lev. 14, 1-20 1,21-45
 21 Psalm 51 2, 1-22
 28 I Samuel 21 2, 23 to 3, 12

The Man Mark

There is little doubt that the man Peter calls "my son" (I Pet. 5, 13) is the writer of the gospel bearing his name. Tradition and Scripture agree in this, and it does seem reasonable that the name occurring so many times in relation to gospel work should signify the author of this shortest and most graphic memoir of the Saviour's brief but all-powerful life on earth. The chapters we are reading this month introduce Jesus to us as the man of action. We move at once into the activities of Jesus.

John Mark, nephew of Barnabas (Col. 4, 10) and son of Mary (Acts 12, 12) was the disciple who was chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 12, 25) and subsequently to serve with the same two preachers sent out into the Gentile world by a Gentile church upon instructions from the Holy Spirit Himself (Acts 13, 5). His uncle Barnabas was a property owner from Cyprus (Acts 4, 36) and his mother the owner of a house in Jerusalem which was used as a place for the Christians to gather for prayer at a time of crisis in the life of Peter and the life of the infant church. He turned back from the mission when it involved entry into the interior of Asia Minor, and went back home. This was regarded by Paul as disqualifying him for future efforts in the same area, but his uncle ("son of consolation" Acts 4, 36) separated from Paul and took Mark to work with him in Cyprus. We see wisdom in Barnabas in view of later notices of his work with and

without Paul, but it is specially pleasing that we became very dear to Paul during imprisonment in Rome (Col. 4, 10; Phile. 24) and finally so much wanted when death seemed close (II Tim. 4, 11). Early Christian writings indicate that Mark's gospel is in contents and spirit that of Peter, and Peter's reference to Mark as "his son" probably indicates conversion through Peter and closeness to him. There are features of the narratives which also point to this-closeness but we cannot give space to that here.

Preparation for Jesus

When we compare the beginnings of the gospels we are struck by the brevity of Mark's introduction. His quotation from Malachi and Isaiah is almost his only reference to prophecy fulfilled apart from statements made by Jesus Himself. The work of John Baptist is dismissed in a few verses but how pregnant they are! His message, his action, his character are summed up — a powerful influence by a self-effacing prophet of God. We do not know for how long the Baptist preached but Jesus was about 30 years old when He was baptised and John was the same age and would have had many years of outstanding preaching so as to awake the whole nation to a sense of expectation. The religious leaders feared to say anything against the divine mission of John because the whole nation had accepted him as a prophet of God. They dared not answer the question of Jesus (Matt. 21, 24-27). The people in general believed John but the Pharisees and Sadducees only pretended to do so — if even that. Nevertheless John's testimony prepared the way. We learn from John's gospel that John Baptist and Jesus preached at the same time (John 4, 1-3), but Jesus retired to Galilee after He had been in contact with Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael.

Preparation of Jesus

There is no word in Mark about the early days of Jesus but the glimpses we

have show us an innocent childhood in a family of boys and girls where He increased "in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2, 52). This was of course part of His preparation but the most soul-rending experience was at His baptism when the voice of God told John Baptist the identity of the man from Nazareth (who was his cousin by natural birth). The immediate work of the Holy Spirit in Him was to "drive" Him into the wilderness to be tempted. There for forty days fasting and tempted. Mark alone mentions the wild beasts but there was also the ministry of angels. That there was here a battle of the soul such as no other human being could experience, we cannot doubt, a testing to the uttermost at the beginning of His ministry as at the end in Gethsemane where also at the extremity of human endurance an angel appeared and strengthened Him (Luke 22, 43).

Gathering Disciples for Service

When Jesus left His contact with John at the Jordan where they had been baptising He went into Galilee. His preaching, teaching and healing ministry took such a public form that some were already following Him about. These would have been influenced by the personal testimony of John Baptist and had already witnessed teaching and miracles about Judaea and Jerusalem where He had already come into conflict with Pharisees including we think His interview with Nicodemus. His work in Galilee increased with such rapidity that He must gather and select His closest followers and use them and train them to become much more than followers. Mark relates this choice of five in these two chapters. That of the fishermen and that of the tax-collector. We assume that the contacts were not initial. It may be all five had been interested in the mission of the Baptist as recorded by the apostle John, but when we think over what the specific calls and

the deliberate answers meant, we are viewing steps taken which involved complete desertion of all life had meant before, for an unknown future.

No doubt there was misunderstanding such as was manifested when James and John sought the highest place in a kingdom of a material kind, but it was nevertheless answer to an all-demanding loyalty. We sometimes sing "Jesus calls us o'er the tumult" but His call to the apostles out of the routine of quiet industrious life into an unknown future of conflict which, after three years of close attachment to a triumphant healer and teacher, seemed to end with a humiliating defeat and death upon a cross. All except one of them found it to be victory over death and the grave, and triumphed with their leader and saviour. Their early experiences are given to us in these early pages of Mark. They heard the demons defeated, the sick healed in innumerable cases. They saw the leper touched with the healing hand, heard forgiveness given to the paralytic, the eminent teachers rebuked and taught with authority. We must note the widespread fame of Jesus. They came from Galilee, Judaea, Jerusalem, the other side of Jordan and even from Tyre and Sidon. We believe that many years afterwards people in these districts remembered His work, and certainly the preaching of the gospel by the early Christians was simplified by reference to the WONDER-WORKING JESUS. (Acts 10, 37 and 38).

R. B. Scott.

MONEY WILL BUY

A bed, but not sleep.
 Books, but not brains.
 Food, but not appetite.
 Finery, but not beauty.
 A house, but not a home.
 Medicine, but not health.
 Amusement, but not happiness.

"A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM"

A little girl was to undergo a dangerous operation. She was placed upon the table and the surgeon was just about to give her the anaesthetic. "Before we can make you well we must put you to sleep" he said. She spoke up sweetly: "Oh, if you are going to put me to sleep I must say my prayers first." So she got down on her knees and said the child's prayer:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

Afterwards the surgeon said, he himself prayed that night for the first time in thirty years.

No one can tell what power a little child has, even on those older in years.

Gospel Advocate

GENTLEMEN, give me a nation not spending its earning for drink, and I will take care of the Exchequer.

W. E. Gladstone

THE one who, in trials, will be found capable of great acts of love is ever the one who is always doing considerate small ones.

F. W. Robertson

EQUALITY

Whereas, God Almighty has given to every man one mouth to be fed and one pair of hands adapted to furnish food for that mouth; if anything can be proved to be the will of Heaven it is proved by this fact, that that mouth is to be fed by those hands, without being interfered with by any other man who has also his mouth to feed and his hands to labor with.

I hold, if the Almighty had ever made a set of men that should do all the eating and none of the work, He would have

made them with mouths only and no hands; and if He had made another class, that He intended should do all the work and none of the eating, He would have made them without mouths and with all hands.

Abraham Lincoln

QUESTION BOX

In reply to my answer on the question of Evangélists I received a letter from a brother (not in the British Isles or Eire, I hasten to add) who accused me of hardening of the arteries and myopic vision. If these physical conditions are thought by him to be indicative of some sort of mental condition, then my ultimate destination would seem to be assured.

As I have frequently pointed out, I am not the repository of all knowledge, but I do love my Saviour, my brethren, and the Word, and I would not consciously do despite to any of these. If any brother disagrees violently with anything that I might write, then please don't place yourselves in jeopardy by resorting to unchristian villification, but do take up pen and write a reasoned reply from the scripture so that it might be printed in the Standard, if the Editor allows. In that way, both I and the rest of the readers might learn something to our ultimate good.

Yours in Christ,

Alf Marsden.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

CHRIST VERSUS WITCHCRAFT

The man's name was Chanda and he lived in Kwacha East, a newer township of Kitwe. Chanda engages in the well paying profession of witchcraft and has small huts in the yard of his house, dwelling places for the spirits which he summonses. Then Chanda had an idea earlier this year. He re-named himself

'Jesus Christ', appointed twelve apostles, captured front page headlines in Zambia's national newspapers and continued to develop his witchcraft business. His disciples would bow down before him. However, in a court case, neither his witchcraft nor his blasphemy was able to prevent the magistrate from finding him guilty.

When Chanda hit the national headlines with his blasphemous claims, Chester Woodhall, as missionary for Churches of Christ, was also widely quoted on the front page, attacking witchcraft in the name of Jesus Christ and denying the blasphemy and false prophecy of witchdoctor Chanda. The Zambian Christians expressed widespread approval of this nationally publicised stand on this very important subject for Zambia, witchdoctor. However, the witchdoctors have been making Churches of Christ a special focus for their counter attacks — a matter which is commended to you for prayer. A "witches cauldron" has been stirred up!

Chester and Angela Woodhall,
Kitwe, Zambia.

Hindley. — Lord's Day evening, September 21st, was a very happy occasion, as we witnessed the baptism of Joy Gregson, daughter of our dear sister June. We are glad that she has remembered her Creator in the days of her youth and pray that she may find real joy and lasting contentment in the service of Jesus.

We thank our Heavenly Father for this upliftment and refreshment at a time when everything seems to be at a standstill, May we truly have learned that in "due season we shall reap, IF we faint not.

Tom Kemp.

Manchester: We again have reason to thank and praise our Lord.

The wife of the late brother Taylor decided to yield her whole life to our Saviour. Sylvia was baptised at Scholes

on Sunday the 7th September, 1980, together with her daughter Susan, who, responding to her mother's lead, confessed Jesus as her Lord and committed her young life to the service of Jesus. In this we saw how a parent's lead can be a strong deciding factor in decisions of eternal significance.

Join with us as we pray that God will bless them in their new life in Christ Jesus.

On behalf of the church at Kenwood church, Stretford. — A. Ashurst.

Peterhead, Scotland: The booklet entitled "The Privileges of Church Members" has just been reprinted by the church here. We shall be pleased to supply congregations or individuals with them at 10p per copy plus postage. Orders should be sent to Michael Gaunt, 23 St. Mary Street, Peterhead, and cheques made payable to Peterhead Church of Christ. — M. Gaunt.

OBITUARY

Hindley. — Sister Elsie Lowe fell asleep in Jesus on the 12th of September, and at the funeral service on the following Tuesday, Brother Leonard Morgan paid tribute to her life of devotion and service to the Lord Jesus. She will be greatly missed by many, for like Dorcas she was ever ready to render service to those in need. The closing scene of her life was attended by much pain and suffering which she bore with patience and fortitude.

We commend her loved ones to the care of our loving Heavenly Father who alone can supply every need through Jesus our Saviour, and pray that the example of the one whom they held in such love and high esteem may encourage them to follow as closely as she did in the Master's steps.

Tom Kemp.

EVANGELIST WANTED

The Slamannan District Churches of Christ require an evangelist and all interested brethren should apply in writing to the District Secretary, Hugh Davidson, 21 Glen Lyon, St. Leonards, East Kilbryde, Scotland, G74 2JJ.

BOOKLETS FOR SALE

For details see 'News From The Churches' — Peterhead.

SPELLING ERRORS

The Editor regrets the spelling errors which appear from time to time in the 'S.S.' and which, unfortunately, make a considerable difference to the sense of a sentence e.g. 'loaf' being rendered as 'load'. The Editor does not see proofs of the magazine and so cannot have spelling errors remedied but the editor does re-type much of the copy he receives to try and minimise any errors. The Editor and brother Blackmore disclaim any blame in last month's issue for the rendering of 'bretheren' for 'brethren' three times during a very short item, but would at the same time remind contributors to make their text as legible as possible.

**A WARNING FROM
A CENTURY AGO**

The churches of Christ in the whole land owe it to themselves and to the high and just ground they have taken, to guard with sleepless vigilance against even a semblance of an innovation on the practices and usages of the apostolic church.

Apostasies begin with things that "have no harm in them," and end in ruin. At first they creep in, but in the end, they stride continents with a single step. Finally, we say, "Watch, Beware!" — Moses E. Lard.

**HAPPINESS NOT DEPENDENT
ON CIRCUMSTANCES**

It is reported by those who know the Eskimos well that they are the most cheerful people on earth, though the race lives continually on the verge of starvation.

Improvements of condition happen . . . every generation. And even so, it is not very evident that those living in the present conditions are any *happier* than the people described by Dickens.

C. G. Darwin:
The Next 1,000,000 Years.

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