OUR PLEA AND MISSION

BY D. R. DUNGAN

Continued

6. As has been indicated in [illegible] the [illegible] of the church of Christ, they judged offenders and withdrew from disorderly walkers by the divine rule as furnished by the apostles. They [illegible] themselves by these, but they had no other. And the idea that any congregation, or any number of congregations, could [illegible] or synod, has any right to make rules of discipline in addition to the inspired teaching, did not obtain during the first century. Such things are of the apostasy. God will be the only ruler of his people.

II. Did that organization exist at the beginning of this century? This question must be answered in the light of the essential features of the church as set in order by the apostles. To find that organization, we must (1) find a people who adopt and walk by the same rule, that have, as their only rule of religious faith and manners, the word of God. 2. They must wear the same name that the first church did. 3. Their officers and church polity must be the same. 4. They must convert sinners and add them to the church in the same way. 5. They must have the same ordinances, administered at the same time, and for the same purpose. 6. They must have no rule in the church by which to deal with disorderly walkers but the word of God. The question then, did that organization exist in the beginning of this century? must be answered in the negative, except as here and there an isolated congregation might be found that was faithfully following the commandments of the Lord. Not one could be found with these essential features, that had a co-operative, effective force in the field to do battle for the Lord. We know of no general body of people that had even one of these essential features, just as the apostles taught!

Instead of the divine creed and discipline, those made by human hands and man's devices were regarded. Theological dogmas, rather than the Lord Jesus, were objects of faith. They had chosen other names in the place of the name of the Master. The officers and church polity were in many instances almost wholly unlike those of the church of Christ. The plan of salvation, as made known by Christ and his apostles, had been made to give place to sights and sounds, fancies and feelings. In lieu of the faith, repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins men were left to *feel after* God and to trust to their ever-varying and unreliable emotions and impressions, rather than the word of God, for an evidence of pardon. The design of baptism was not in the minds of those who demanded its observance, and the ordinance of the supper was nowhere kept as in the days of the apostles, except as before noted, by a few small bands of men and women, who were, as in all ages of the church, still faithful. Indeed, men seemed to have lost sight of the divine pattern altogether, and were about as likely to form a church after the order of the encampment of Israel before Sinai or Jericho, as after the church of Christ, established by the inspired apostles.

We do not mean to say that there were no Christians then. There were many. That fact, however, does not make the organizations of those times churches of Christ. There are Christians among the masses, but that does not indicate that a body of [illegible] is a church of Christ. There were many Jews in Babylon, but that did not [illegible] [illegible] of the city of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to read the Scriptures [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] would not be understood [illegible] that the [illegible] [illegible] good. They did much good [illegible] formed a [illegible] [illegible] to those who were trying to serve the Lord, to some extent, a [illegible] missionary effort. Even [illegible] [illegible] I thank God for Protestantism [illegible] [illegible] to reform and [illegible] [illegible]. While its various [illegible] have failed to reproduce a church after the apostolic plan, which they have not presented the whole gospel of God or the Lord's way of saving sinners in its fullness; yet, so much of divine truth has shone through the services of their doctrines, that great good has been the result. We speak of these reformers with the most profound respect. We thank God from the very depths of our heart for having raised up these noble men to assist in bringing back the world to the authority of Christ. Each prepared the way for his successor, who stood upon his shoulders and held the lamp of life a little higher than it had been held for ages past.

But though these organizations have accomplished good in the world, and were brought into being by the efforts of true men, yet the return to the primitive order was only partial, and we are not ready to stop with them. We have the divine model before us, and can not be satisfied with less.

III. Are we the church of Christ? and are we doing the work for which it was established?

We have seen that at the beginning of this restoration movement there was no organism of power and effectiveness in existence, such as that which was set in order by the apostles and denominated *"the Church of God."* But now comes the question, are we that church? So far as appearances are concerned, we may at least answer in the affirmative. We have the same creed, constitution, and by-laws, we wear the same name or name that the first Christians did; we have the same officers and church polity that they had; we preach the same gospel that they preached; convert sinners and add them to the church just as they did; and we walk by the same rule in dealing with offenders, that was delivered to them by the apostles. These are our outward claims to identity.

But whether we are as devoted, as zealous for the cause of Christ; whether we are inwardly as pious, as prayerful, as holy in our lives, as they were; whether we enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit, and such intimate communion and fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ, as they did, are not so clear, nor so easily determined. We are not vain enough here to institute any comparison between ourselves and the other religious bodies of the present time. We are feeble enough in this respect, and, no doubt, fall very far below our privileges, and the perfect standard of truth and duty. But, without the appearance of vanity or boasting, we have a better understanding of the Scriptures, and are more earnest and uncompromising for the commandments of God than are other religious bodies. This point is generally conceded by our [illegible] [illegible]. The reason is obvious. We go to the Scriptures for all our religious faith and practice. We have built upon the apostolic [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] right and a right [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] revealed will [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

That we have arrived at the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] perfection [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. What [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] We have not [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] from any [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] we could not do if we would. And if we were to be successful in such an effort, then we would only have a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. It would [illegible] [illegible] better nor worse than it was at the beginning. Our effort is to return to apostolic order, to that teaching and practice once presented to the saints. There we are right and cannot be wrong.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

ORDER OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

FROM THE "OCTOGRAPH," EDITED BY D. LIPSCOMB.

About three score years have elapsed since a movement began to re-establish the primitive church in its faith and practice—its doctrine and worship—its belief and obedience. Previous movements proposed reformation, this proposed restoration. Previous movements endeavored to separate from Rome, this endeavored to get back to Jerusalem.

As might have been expected, such a movement found much in modern Protestantism that was not commendable, and in proportion as disapprobation thereof was manifested the displeasure of Protestantism was incurred. The first principles of the gospel were the first to receive attention. Faith, repentance, confession and baptism were all examined in the light of the New Testament, the traditions which had accumulated on and around these important items of its true were denounced unauthoritative; the practices resulting from those traditions were exposed as wrong, and the fact pointed out that the gospel of Christ when [illegible] by the apostles made those who believed and obeyed it simply Christians. It was also maintained, that the same gospel, as recorded in the New Testament, when believed and obeyed in the nineteenth century will likewise, make people simply Christians, and that belief and obedience of this gospel never did, never can, and never will make those who obey it from the heart anything else than Christians. Hence it was maintained with a clearness and success that was provoking to Protestantism, that in order for a professor of Christ to be worthy of any of the modern denominational titles and to be a sincere member of any of the modern denominational churches it was necessary for him to believe something else and obey something else than the gospel of Christ as preached by the apostles. That gospel simply, without addition, subtraction or modification, it was maintained would simply have made those worshippers Christians, neither more nor less and nothing else.

Such a plea and such a position separated those who made and maintained it from all other religious bodies and made them "a peculiar people." Peculiar they were because as it respects the obedience required of alien sinners in order to become Christians, catechisms and prayer-books were thrown aside as unauthorized of heaven. Anxious seats and their accompaniments were denounced as human innovations. Infant sprinkling and infant baptism were [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. Mysterious rituals and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] were pronounced a delusion. But on the contrary, the New Testament was regarded as [illegible] [illegible] of faith [illegible] the Savior's [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] primitive worship [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the history of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] In Acts [illegible] [illegible] 7 we read, "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread." [illegible]. The Lord's supper [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and was a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of Christ's body and was [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the Savior's own [illegible] [illegible] way his sufferings and death. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the just for the unjust that he might bring them to God. This institution in its own divinely appointed purpose the Disciples of the nineteenth century proposed to restore. In some places this has been done, but in most places there is preaching or mutual teaching and exhortation before the table is approached. In other words, a large majority of congregations have religious exercises from an hour to an hour and a half and then crowd off to the last end—to the one o'clock corner of their meeting this divine institution. Disciples of Christ, is it right so to do? Is it in harmony with scripture? Is it well pleasing to our Savior? Let all who read this meditate upon these things, and in the next number of the *Octograph* will be presented, the Lord permitting, "a more excellent way."

—o—

A. GERRARD.

Goderich, Dec. 31st, 1883

BRO. SHERMAN.—Please answer the following questions referred to in my last:

1. Disciples to tell What? Is the fault or trespass, or the whole transaction between the offended parties?

2. Does church, assembly kingdom or congregation, body of Christ, Christ's church, or church of God mean the same thing?

3. Mat. 16, 17 and 18, does church not mean all believers in every part of the world through all time?

4. Rev. 1 chap. 20 v. we read of seven churches. Does not this mean the church of God meeting as a worshipping assembly in seven different places?

5. Could you not tell it to the church if one or two members were absent or if one or two members were present?

6. Does Christ mean in this command "tell it to the Bishops, or we find this in the duties of officers or in any of the inspired letters?

7. Does it stand thus,—1st, go yourself, 2nd, take a Bro. or the elders or any men of the world, 3rd. Tell the Bishops, 4th, They may report to the assembly that the church may require their action?

8. If the church will do nothing but give the transgressor a letter of recommendation to another congregation, shall the aggrieved brother count the brother or congregation who failed in their duty, heathens or publicans. Many other questions cluster around this important subject. If the teaching of the Holy Spirit touching this matter could be pointed out giving chapter and verse by some good bishop or brother, who like Timothy hath known the Holy Scriptures, we think it would interest most of the readers of your valuable paper.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

Bro. Gerrard's introduction is approved. Have not space for it.

1. The trouble, difficulty, the trespass or sin.

2. Yes.

3. All christians

4. Yes

5. Yes

6. Yes. For the best of reasons, the duties are not given in detail

7. (a) Tell *no one* but the offender, and that to effect a reconciliation. (b) Take one or two of the best adapted to bring about a reconciliation. (c) Tell the overseers who represent and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] way will try [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] (e) And the [illegible], will resort to the church [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] that are a typographical error

8. (a) The overseers can give a letter stating the answer [illegible] [illegible], but [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] commendation. (b) Shall [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], &c. Yes.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS.

The Bro. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] upon this [illegible] [illegible]. And Bro. G. is quite correct in [illegible] estimation of its importance. Yes, a plain and important subject and to be opened [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] we know. This view will justify a few more words. There are two extreme views to be avoided. 1st To tell every small trespass to every member of the church directly. 2nd To have the overseers settle every such difficulty independently of, and without regard to the church. The 1st generally prevails and is fatal to the church which practices it. It is antagonistic to reason, common sense, and sound rule of propriety, and perhaps in consequence opposed to the Master's will. Those who advocate it are sticklers for the view, that telling it to the church means telling every individual member directly, which is not done in 99 cases out of 100. And involves the practice of telling something to the whole body which are not fit to [illegible], and are [illegible] [illegible] the plan with which the Master [illegible], and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. And when the party is [illegible] [illegible] by the majority vote, he [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to start [illegible] [illegible].

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] or a son of [illegible] or a member of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in order [illegible] the world, and [illegible]. For [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the Great [illegible] should commence in [illegible] the communications between them. "If thy brother trespass against thee go and show him his fault, between thee and him alone." Matthew 18th. To the brother on the other side he says—"If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar and there [illegible] rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Matthew 5. To this agrees the master's teachings in Matthew 6. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your "Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6, where he gives a model of prayer.

C. J. L.

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