

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 46. No. 6

JUNE, 1978

SPIRITUAL VANDALISM

IN Acts 15:20 and in 2 Peter 2:20 the early christians were exhorted to abstain from the pollutions of idolatry and to escape from the pollutions of this world. Any pollution in the world is, of course, man-made. God's world, the world of creation, is beautiful. It seems sad but true that everything with which man comes into contact suffers from the encounter. Man has a very unhappy knack of bringing to ruin everything he touches. Everything Midas touched turned to gold - nowadays everything modern man touches turns into much nastier items like smoke, grime, fumes, dust, effluent, nuclear waste, Even the English Channel isn't big enough to escape the horrible sticky stuff ditched by passing oil tankers. Two words prominent in our vocabulary these days are 'pollution' and 'Vandalism' - the terrible twins. The greed and selfishness and stupidity of man is highlighted in the way man vandalises the world he inhabits and pollutes the environment in which he lives and breathes. It really is sad to hear of birds, animals (including the blue whale) and fish going into extinction because man is criminally stupid enough to hunt a species to such a point that not one remains. Man pollutes his air, his rivers, his food, his heart and his mind. We hear more than enough these days about pollution and vandalism and it is certainly not my purpose to add to the agony but just to point out that this unfortunate trait of man's is nothing really new and to draw particular attention to man's activities in this respect in his dealings with God. For instance, just contemplate for one horrible moment, the religious world of today, and consider the way in which God's truth has been polluted by the religious vandals of each generation.

To 'pollute' means to defile; corrupt, profane or violate and is quite a common word in the Old Testament. There were religious vandals in Old Testament times, too, and we read of the land being polluted, God's sabbath being polluted, the sanctuary being polluted, God's name being polluted, the altar being polluted, and these are but a few examples. Indeed after centuries of communion with God we read in Malachi (Chap. 1) of the sad spiritual state of the people of God, in that remarkable conversation God has with man. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if I then be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O priests that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon my altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible". We notice how God has to spell out to those concerned exactly wherein they dishonoured Him, and it seems to be true that those who are guilty of spiritual vandalism are rarely likely to be convinced of it and

indeed are amazed at the suggestion – but God continues, “And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts... Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindly fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand”. Thus the disgust of God for his people is made known and continues into the following chapters. They had the attitude that anything would do for God – it didn't matter very much. They sacrificed the animals in their flock which were, in any case likely to die of old age or illhealth and they wouldn't open the doors or light the fires unless they were going to be paid for it. In later chapters of this last book in the Old Testament God further accuses His people of having robbed Him in tithes and offerings and having expressed the opinion that it was vain to serve God and devoid of any profit. (Chap. 3:8 & 14).

Living, as we do, in the twentieth century gives us a unique opportunity of looking down over the centuries to see the turn of events since the time of Malachi. Has man improved in any way? What has man done with God's expressed will? What has man done with God's Son? I suggest from the evidence at our disposal that man is as much a religious vandal as ever, and that man has polluted the design and purpose of God as much as ever he did. What, for instance, has man done with, or to, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. I suggest that if Jesus returned tomorrow He have great difficulty in locating or recognising it. Think of how it has been splintered and shivered and split asunder since the days when Paul said, Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:13). His words, it seems, have been of little avail.

Jesus prayed for continued unity amongst His followers but what do we have? Think of all the denominational bodies. From whence did they come? It is a very worthwhile exercise in our quieter moments to contemplate the current religious scene and to consider how it got that way. Paul said in his charge to the elders (Acts 20:30) that men would arise (of their own number i.e. from within the church of Christ) who would speak perverse things and draw away disciples after them. The same is true today – the real digression is to be traced to members of the Lord's body, and so diligence, on the part of everyone, is required. The bulk of the digression which has taken place in the kingdom of God has not come external enemy aliens but has come from within, from oftentimes sincere and well-meaning members of the church of God.

Think of what man has done to the Word of God. Think of how the Bible has been vandalised. Clergymen, not just the Higher Critics, have denied the veracity of the bible and have described as fables the record in Genesis of creation; Noah's ark; the crossing of the Red Sea; Jonah in the whale's belly; the virgin birth of Christ and so on. Man has mutilated the word of God but carving pieces out and by grafting pieces in - all finely tailored to suit the purpose of the time. Hell has allegedly had the hosepipe turned on it and the devil is, apparently, a medieval device to put the fear of God into us. The charge that “You can prove anything from the bible.. is literally true depending upon exactly who is trying to prove what. The bible is thus misapplied, mutilated and quite often murdered. Fortunately the Bible has a habit of surviving all that man can do to it and indeed is an anvil that has worn out many hammers. Think also of what man has done to God's holy ordinances of baptism and ‘the communion!’ Man has done such an efficient ‘demolition job’ on baptism that there are scarcely any groups left in this world who practice immersion or who know anything of its implications. Anyone advocating immersion is looked upon askance and regarded as some kind of ‘religious nut’. Then there are those who practice baptism for the dead and intend to be baptised in proxy on behalf of all the dead who ever lived (since Adam). What indeed has man done with baptism? The Breaking of Bread started off as a very simple observance (indeed simplicity personified) out that was before man got to work on it. Now men have incorporated it into High Mass and woven in a few theories around it, such as the doctrine of trans-substantiation. Even in more modern times the feast has been seen to be fraught with danger - from a hygienic point of view. The praise of the Lord has not gone unscathed and men have imported into the worship the contraption once accurately described as ‘a kist O’ whistles’ and so in many places of worship,

devotees must, in order to be heard, compete with the booming tones of this machine. These are but a few of the acts of violence upon God's will inflicted by man. They did not all happen at one time but have gradually found their way into the world over the centuries. They were often stoutly resisted - indeed there were almost riots sometimes - but in due time the resistance was eroded and the innovation received general acceptance. Thereafter it was, of course, 'quite easily justified' from scripture to the satisfaction of those who practised it. The passage of time has given it acceptance in man's eyes but does it ever get acceptance in God's eyes? Do men imagine such a thing possible? And so we see, perhaps, that man since New Testament times has polluted God's will and vandalised His word just as much as men did in Old Testament times and we should be careful that we are not to be found amongst the number of such men. Are we to imagine that the process of innovating God's word has somehow stopped and that there will be no more of it? A foolish hope indeed. We should, therefore, continually be on the alert to ensure that we do not perpetrate on the world some new act of religious vandalism and occasionally engage in a little introspection and re-examination of what the congregation, of which we are members, believers and practices. Are we all really committed to a restoration of the simplicity of Christianity as it was at the beginning? God hopes we are. EDITOR

THE NEGLECTED CUP

"AND after the same manner also He (Jesus) took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" 1 Cor. 11:25.

Why 'the cup'?

In all the four gospels we read about the suffering and the death and the eventual resurrection of our Lord. Three of the writers tell us that prior to His death he instituted the feast - the Breaking of Bread. All the three writers state that he took 'the cup'. Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:20. Why 'the cup' and not 'a cup'? Is there anything special about the cup He used? This has been the question which has been agitating my mind for more than six years. We know from the accounts of the feast that it was instituted at the time of the Jewish Feast of Passover, the account of which is given in Exodus 12:1-24. A memorial feast of the Jewish nation. Christians do not celebrate Passover (we celebrate the Breaking of Bread, every Lord's Day), for Jesus brought an end to that ritual. We know that some Jews accepted Christ but many did not. Those who did not accept Christ still follow the old ritual. To properly understand why the Bible talks about 'the cup', this 'cup' or 'that cup' let us examine the Table of the Passover. A full account of this is given in an article published by some Jewish New Testament believers in the United States of America. Let us have a look into this pamphlet to see what it has to teach us.

This is how the pamphlet describes the scene which took place 1900 or so years ago: "It is Pesach (Passover) again. The Seder (Passover Table) is set, as for 1900 years it has been set. Elijah's Cup, untouched and undrunk, stands in its place, a mute but eloquent reminder that some day He will come Who is the Hope of Israel and the Desire of the Nations - our long-looked for Messiah. There, too, is the miserably dried-up bone taken from the shank of a lamb, a melancholy reminder that now in the sad years of our Golus (captivity) we have no temple, no Priest, no sacrifice, no way of approach to a just and holy God, exactly as God had warned us would be the case if we disobeyed Him. (Hosea 3:4-5...) and the Matzos (the unleaven bread)" The Afikomon-or: The Broken Matzo by Joseph Hoffman Cohn. Published by Sar Shalom Publications (ABMJ) P.O. box 1331, Englewood Cliffs, N. J. 07632 U.S.A.

The significance of this Table is given in Deut. 6:21-24. Jesus, the blameless Son of God, born under the law of Moses, Gal. 4:4, also observed the Passover so we expect Him to have the

same set of elements at His table with the disciples. Note that on the Table was Elijah's Cup. This cup is set aside for the Messiah and as such it was present at the Table of Passover whenever it was prepared.

The feast was over, the cup for Elijah still standing at its place. Have you ever imagined the surprise on the faces of the disciples when Jesus reached for the cup and began to give thanks. Those who were still unsure who He was would begin to see the man they have been serving for the past three years. Yes, that moment they realised that their Master was the great I am. That moment Jesus proved to them that He was the Hope of Israel, the Desire of the Nations. He was the one who can take the cup which has been untouched, undrunk and unused for generations.

Dear reader, this is where we get the phrases 'the cup', 'that cup' or 'this cup'. You see the cup signifies an important element in the participation of the Breaking of Bread. This is why Paul took the trouble to write to the Corinthian Church instructing the members to follow specific instructions when partaking the Lord's Supper.

We need also to understand that Paul, being a Jew, knew quite well the significance of 'the cup' and so he did not play the necessity of it down in his epistles. We, like the Christians of Corinth, may not have the very cup that the Lord used, but this should not deter us from setting a special cup aside for this purpose. Let us seek to follow Christ's example diligently 2 Thess. 2:15.

It is wrong to think that the cup can be used as a metonymy. Remember that when Paul was advising Timothy to drink a little wine, he stated 'wine' by name. In the New Testament wherever the word 'wine' is required the word cup is not substituted. Let us, again, understand that even though we may not be struck dead as happened in the Old Testament times, (Lev. 10:1-2; 2 Sam. 6:6-7) a day is coming when we will all be judged by our Master and King. Let us follow the Master and do His will. Remember, we have promised to do what He says. David Arku-Mensah, 14 Kingsthorpe Close, Kildare Road, Nottingham NG3 3AZ.

ASK

His Love is Fathomless.
 His Power is Omnipotent.
 His Wisdom is Infinite.
 His Resources are Exhaustless.
 His Riches are Unsearchable.
 His heart is full of Unspeaking Love.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" Ephesians 3:20.

ASKWHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God".

If you have read carefully and prayerfully, the last two articles on the above subject, you will realize to some extent the power of the Devil, over the lives of some of God's mighty men of old, and also of many good men who have tried to live near to the Lord Jesus. Well might the hymn writer say –

"And some, O Lord, crave perfect rest,
 And to be wholly free from sin;
 And they who fain would serve Thee best,
 Are conscious most of wrong within".

Speaking generally though, there does not seem to be the same concern and sorrow, for the awfulness and deceitfulness of sin in our own day. Ezra the prophet of God, when he heard of the transgression of God's people said:- "And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my

heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" Ezra 9:5,6. Many of God's children today, have a great need to come to Him in humility and penitence, (and of course I include myself in the many,) because of our failure to share in "the fellowship of his sufferings" Philippians 3:10 in our attitude to the sinfulness of sin. Yet, strange as it may seem, in spite of the sin of the world, and also of our own sinfulness, the glorious message from the precious word of God, still shines forth:- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". John 3:16. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee". Jeremiah 31:3. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". How can we grasp this wonderful truth? Shall we go to the Word of God together, and search for some of "the unsearchable riches of Christ". Ephesians 3:8.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God."

"Your Father Knoweth". Luke 12:30 "Your Father Knoweth" Luke 12:30.

There is a beautiful incident recorded in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 12 connected with the walk of Jesus and His disciples through cornfields on the sabbath day. His disciples being hungry, began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat. "But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day". After replying to them, the word of God continues: - Matthew 12:9-13 (RV) "And he departed thence, and went into their synagogue: and behold, a man having a withered hand. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, as the other".

"HOW MUCH THEN IS A MAN OF MORE VALUE THAN A SHEEP!"

Of course we are, you may say, what a comparison - well remember it is the Lord Jesus that makes the comparison. How simple and yet, how profound the message:- "Your Father knoweth," that you are of more value than a sheep. Ah, but what a sheep! This sheep is very, very, very, special, to find out how special let us now go to "the unsearchable riches of Christ" again, this time to the Gospel according to Luke chapter 15, verses 1-7 (RV). "Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him for to hear him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, which need no repentance".

This very, very, very, special sheep was lost "Your Father knoweth". God so loved this very, very, very, special sheep, that He sent "HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON" to find it. "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost". Matthew 18:11 (AV) "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance". Matthew 9:13 (AV).

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God".

"HOW MUCH THEN IS A MAN OF MORE VALUE THAN A SHEEP!"

THERE were ninety and nine that safely lay

In the shelter of the fold;

But one was out on the hills away,

Far off from the gates of gold,
 Away on the mountains wild and bare,
 Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

'Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
 Are they not enough for Thee?'
 But the Shepherd made answer, 'This of Mine
 Has wandered away from Me;
 And, although the road be rough and steep,
 I go to the desert to find My sheep.'

But none of the ransomed ever knew
 How deep were the waters crossed,
 Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
 Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
 Out in the desert He heard its cry,
 Sick and helpless and ready to die.

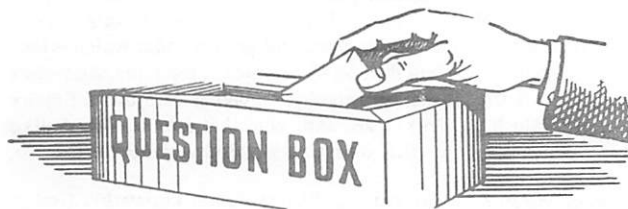
'Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way,
 That mark out the mountain's track?'
 'They were shed for one who had gone astray
 Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.'
 'Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?'
 'They are pierced to-night by many a thorn.'

And all through the mountains, thunder-riven,
 And up from the rocky steep,
 There rose a cry to the gate of heaven,
 'Rejoice, I have found My sheep!'
 And the angels echoed around the throne,
 'Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!'

Eliz. C. Clephane.

ASK..... WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God".
 "HOW MUCH THEN IS A MAN OF MORE VALUE THAN A SHEEP?"
 "Your Father knoweth". "Your Father knoweth".

May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion. LEONARD MORGAN'



Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

"There are many christians facing personal problems, as I am at the moment. How does the christian set about overcoming his personal problems?"

THIS is a very important question. The christian will always have personal problems. God has never said that the christian will be excluded from having to face problems, rather the reverse; by the very nature of being a christian we shall have many problems to contend with which will not be common to the non-christian. It is easy enough to say, "Well, just leave it to God: He'll sort it out for us". God has never said that either, and it is perfectly plain to me that He will help us if we help ourselves.

The first thing that we have to notice is that the problem is personal. This realisation, if looked at in the wrong way, can lead to many anxieties because it is too easy for me to think that only I as a person has this particular problem. The problem becomes less fearsome and more manageable when I appreciate that other people have problems similar to my own.

Another important point to realise is that as christians our problems can only be overcome within the framework of our christian knowledge and experience, e.g. if I am short of money I cannot, as a christian, steal or defraud in order to alleviate this problem. Therefore, as a christian, if I come to realise that other christians have problems similar to my own, I must seek them out and talk and pray with them so that we might be mutually helpful to each other. We must also learn the strictures that God's standard of righteousness places upon us so that we shall always operate in our lives within the christian context. Let us, then, examine things we can do in order to overcome problems.

Learn to Accept

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). So spoke the apostle Paul, and so is his message to each one of us. He concluded that particular statement by saying, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me", or as the R.S.V. has it, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Without the acceptance of the situation and the realisation that divine power and strength is always there to sustain us, we shall "beat the air" and resolve nothing. We shall all, no doubt, find ourselves in situations that we would rather have avoided but if we are to achieve any success in the resolution of our problems, the very first thing we must do is to accept the situation as it is and not as we would like it to be.

Self-help

Realising that God is always there to help, we must not leave to Him those practical steps which we ourselves can take. It is up to us to make decisions when we are faced with problems, and it is the quality of our thinking which will assist us greatly in the resolution of them.

Examine the whole environment of a problem. Too many times we are either afraid or unwilling to examine everything associated with a problem. Suppose, for instance, that we have an estrangement problem with someone. It is easy enough for us to dwell on what they have done to make the problem worse, but what I mean by examining the whole environment of the problem is to think quite freely about what we might have done also to exacerbate the situation. It is never easy for us to do this, but I am convinced that we need to do this in order to come to a true assessment of the situation. We must find out where we are, and what has brought us to that point.

We must then think the problem through from beginning to end. So many people make judgments based on the most superficial knowledge. Sometimes the end frightens us and consequently we stop short in our thinking, but we have ample evidence in the N.T. to show that we must think over our problems through to the end, whatever that end may be. When Paul spoke to the elders at Ephesus he could say, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God, And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more". (Read Acts 20:22-25). Yes, Paul had many problems, but he was never afraid to look right to end of them and to face up to what was there, no matter how unpleasant.

Correctly defining the problem

It is never easy to define the real problem. Sometimes we are guilty of trying to apply the right solution to the wrong problems. In order to illustrate this point let us look at the case of the Rich Young Ruler (Luke 12:16ff). The young man defined his problem, didn't he? According to him, his problem was one of lack of space, "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods". It was easy, wasn't it? Just increase the size of the storage facilities and all will be well; take ease after that.

Another might say that his problem was one of insecurity. He needed all these extra goods so that his soul could feel secure. But was this really his problem? Wasn't he rich already? The scripture supplies the answer. His real problem was in wrongly diagnosing the needs of his soul! "Thou fool", said God. "this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided". I wonder how many of us wrongly diagnose our problems simply because we do not like to face up to the real issues?

Some problems that afflict us.

I would like us now to examine some common problems which christians many times say cause them great concern, and indeed, they may cause great frustrations if viewed from one angle alone.

1 Not enough money. To the wife the problem may seem to be that the husband is not earning enough money, and I have known cases where the pressure has seemed so great that wives have badgered their husbands to such an extent that they have moved away from the church so that promotion could be gained with a consequent raise in salary. But is it possible that what has been earned has been mis-managed by the wife, and hasn't her actions created more problems than they have solved?

2 "Nobody cares for me". People who say this may see the problem as a lack of concern by other people towards them. But many times the real problem could be the attitude of the person who makes such a statement. Sometimes peoples attitudes encourage others to stay away from them.

3 "I don't have any time". Christians many times quote this as a problem in defence of not being able to do things for the Lord. The real problem could be that we are wasting that precious commodity. If we were to keep a diary of the time many of us spend on certain activities it would frighten us to death.

4 "Our marriage isn't going right". The problem is seen as the husband or wife being inconsiderate, or maybe even the relatives. The real problem may be that we have taken each other for granted too much, and we have not really been working to make the marriage succeed.

So we could go on. But I think I have said enough, dear questioner, to make us all understand that we need to think seriously about our problems. They are seldom, when explored, as they appear to be on the surface. By all means let us avail ourselves of the power and help of God, but let us never forget that we can do much to help ourselves.

(All questions please to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JULY 1978

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 2-Psalm 139 | John 3:1-21 |
| 9-Malachi 3 | John 3:22-36 |
| 16-Isaiah 55 | John 4:1-26 |
| 23-2 Kings 4:24-44 | John 4:27-45 |
| 30-1 Kings 17:8-24 | John 4:46 to 5:18 |

TWO GREAT INTERVIEWS

WE think of great contrasts, Jesus dealt with a great Israelite, and with a lowly, if not a low down Samaritan woman. The first was a person of some wealth, eminence among his fellows ("a ruler of the Jews") and the highest

moral character. The Pharisees lived on a higher moral plane than normal Jewish people — their effort was to be as well as to appear the most loyal adherents of the Mosaic law. Some fell below their standard obviously, or would not have merited the denunciation of the Saviour (Matt. 23). We cannot say this of Nicodemus. He remonstrated against condemnation of Jesus (John 7:50). He respected Jesus if he did not love Him and showed it with Joseph of Arimathea after the crucifixion (John 19:38 & 39). We do not know any more of him but hope that from being a secret disciple, he became an open one with so many others. It seems he was of a thoughtful and enquiring disposition, and his coming by night might well be more for careful judgement than for fear. Jesus was very busy with crowds otherwise,

and Nicodemus would not wish to make a hasty estimate. He was not to be moved by jealousy or dislike of One who appeared to be a rival for the respect of the people.

How different a character was the Samaritan woman, but she received respectful and sympathetic treatment. She was apparently a dissolute person, bound up with sinful moral habits. It was surely unusual for the water to be drawn at midday. Did the other women feel contempt for her? Therefore she avoided them. We do not know, but it seems likely. We are surely to learn that "the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind". Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost - I wonder if we are failing somehow and seeking rather the Nicodemuses than the Samaritans! Do the intellectuals ever love Jesus as much as the "lost", or do they know too much to be saved? "Where is the wise?" (1 Cor. 1:20). We are sure Jesus dealt with Complete wisdom with both persons, and out of it what measureless blessings have flowed as thousands and thousands of souls have learned truth and enlightenment from His words.

Jesus and John Baptist

We cannot tell where John the Evangelist ceases to report the words of Jesus, and begins his own comments. It does not matter anyway. The truth is revealed. We do learn more of the Baptist in this gospel, and must understand both John and Jesus for a time worked for the repentance of the people and their preparation for the kingdom of heaven to be set up at Pentecost. John had a powerful influence with them, and many thousands must have been prepared in mind and heart for Jesus's ministry. It is probable that all the apostles, except perhaps Matthew, were originally disciples of John, either intimately or at a distance. We are not told exactly what the point of argument was about "purifying". It may have been to do with baptism in its significance as a cleansing act. The facts are made clear that John carried on his work until Jesus was well started, John's arrest and imprisonment closed it. Like many of the prophets of old he suffered for his bravery, and we should read in this connection the estimate Jesus gave of his nobility (Matt. 11:7-15). This we see so clearly here in ch. 3:27-30, where he

again disclaims being the Messiah. He humbly accepts his appointed place, although he was in fact the "Elijah who was to come" (Mal. 4, 5 & 6). It is a heart-moving and noble word - "He must increase, but I must decrease". How moving too is his cry from prison, "Art Thou He that cometh or look we for another?" (Matt. 11:3). Was this from or for himself, or was it for his disciples who still followed him though he was locked up in the prison? They would surely turn to Jesus when John perished by the sword of Herod. As an incidental thought did John baptise, or his disciples did it for him as in the case of Jesus (4:2), and Paul (1 Cor. 1:13-17)? Jesus moved away from Judaea to avoid too much Pharisaic interference or interest at that time. His work had to continue "today and tomorrow", and the third day I am perfected" (Luke 13:32, and 33 please).

John 3:16

Here we have the best known text in the Bible. We cannot think of the gospel without being involved in its truth. It is so simple and yet so profound. The first three words might almost be said to explain the whole Bible by telling us the motive of God's heart. The next few state his consequent action. This "He gave" is echoed with emphasis in Romans 5:6-8 where God's giving is compared with possible giving from man to man. Jesus too repeated the comparison from the fact that God's gifts in nature are given without discrimination. We find it easy to love those who love us, particularly if they show it by their attitude. Here we do not view man as making approach to God. God has taken the initiative. However man having the offer and opportunity can receive or reject it. So it is obvious he must BELIEVE if he is to receive, and that belief cannot be just mental acceptance of a fact. If we believe in or on a person we will trust him and accept what he says. We are definitely involved in action. Otherwise we are in line with the demons whose belief results in terrible fear. Once we have acknowledge of the gospel we are judged by it because we must either accept or reject. We are acquitted or condemned. So there is a sense in which Jesus "for judgement came into the world" (9:39). The contradiction between this and the fact

that He did not come to judge the world (3:17) is on the surface only. It is the reaction of a person to the truth which becomes a judgement either to save or condemn. In the same way it is true "on earth peace" (Luke 2:14), and yet "I came not to send peace but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). The reaction of human kind to the divine Visitor decided the results

Great News

The Samaritan woman was so thrilled by the conversation that she forgot her waterpot, and ran to give her news to the townfolk. She came with a question. To her it must have seemed impossible that the Messiah had been speaking to her. The Samaritans shared with the Jews the expectation of a mighty king coming to raise them to a high place among the nations. Their origin is set out in 2 Kings 17, and they were so to speak a thorn in the side of the Jews because they claimed to have the law, and to be obeying it upon Mount Gerizim instead of Jerusalem. How gently and how firmly Jesus refuted this claim, and gave the woman such greater truths in a few minutes of talk. She gave her testimony in the town with such eagerness that the people were stirred to come out and see Jesus, doubtless to listen to Him there, and to beg Him to stay with them. He did so for two days only, but even that short stay won the hearts of His hearers. Jesus talking to His disciples in anticipation of the readiness of SAMARITANS to believe, spoke of the harvest of souls then won over in so short a time while His sojourn and His signs in Judaea had resulted in rejection to all intents and purposes. "He came unto His own and they received Him not" (1:11), but the despised Samaritans listened gladly and BELIEVED. Naturally our thoughts go to Acts 8:5-25. The false claims of the Samaritans did not prove so great a hindrance as the just claims of the Jews, National pride can be a great enemy to truth. So the province of Galilee was a more fruitful field than the Holy City where the formalities were so earnestly practised.

R. B. SCOTT.

INCREASE IN SUBSCRIPTION RATE

New subscription rates come into effect from this month and are printed on the back page. We apologise for this increase but it is necessary if we are to remain financially viable without recourse to constant appeals for assistance. It is over two years since we last increased our charges and most brethren will not be affected until they renew in January next year.

EDITOR

INDIVIDUAL COMMUNION CUP WANTED

I am writing on behalf of the church meeting in the Y.M.C.A. building, The Chessels, Bristol, to enquire in any congregation may have a communion cup they would be willing to sell. If any information, please write to Ivor Carey, 24 Glynn Vale, Bedminster, BRISTOL.

When a task is once begun,
Never quit until it's done.
If your task be great or small,
Do it well or not at all.

I have often regretted my speech; my silence, never.—Seneca.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Capetown, S. Africa: "From the 23rd Feb. including 9th and 16th March '78, have been conducting Biblical visual series entitled "How We Got The Bible", "1st Century Christianity Today", with good attendances in the home of a Christian family, whose 4 sons I baptized during a gospel campaign in last Oct. '77. This family invited neighbours and friends to these visual aid series, and which resulted in one of the daughter-in-laws requesting to be baptized on the evening of the 22nd March 78.

Then it was on the evening of the 12th March that I conducted a special, what I termed a "one night gospel campaign" with one of the local congregations namely Bokmakirrie, Athlone, there were 110 present young and old, when I presented "1st Century Christ

"The thoughtless are rarely wordless."

"Common sense is the most uncommon thing in the world."

ianity today", this meeting culminated in a mother and daughter requesting to be baptized (a Mrs Duplessis, and the daughter Mrs. Eileen Coetzee). This was the small congregation who meet in a school room in that area who were hoping to have me conduct a campaign from 15th to 19th January '78, but this was not possible and it was cancelled. But praise God that those two souls mother and daughter had fulfilled in their life of having become a 1st Century Christian, in the 20th Century" all to the Glory of God.

Will be continuing home Bible studies in the home of the same family, where the daughter-in-law was baptized on the evening of the 22nd March Lord willing because of the encouraging interest exhibited by those visitors attending. Have also been busy presenting these visual aid series at a City Hospital at Green Point, Cape Town on the evenings of the 14th and 21st March '78 with good attendances by the patients and nursing staff. Have been conducting services at this hospital for the past 10 years from which, to the Glory of God, two precious souls had been baptized. And ask you to one and all who read the "S.S." "to share in your prayers on my behalf, to the intent that whatever may be my labours towards reaching the lost, mediums used etc. its results might be "fruit-bearing", giving cause for one and all of us to rejoice". T.W. HARTLE.

Peterhead, Scotland: We had two baptisms during the month of January, Bro. Alec Tait was baptised on the 22nd January and Sister Francis Geddes was baptised on the 15th of January. Bro. Alec is a fisherman and has already shown a willingness to take part in public worship. His wife also has been coming to the gospel meetings. We pray too for her that she may also make known her need of Christ. The above article was originally sent for insertion in the March issue but may have got lost in the post.

Also the church at Peterhead greatly rejoice at the addition of another five souls to the kingdom. We appreciate the work done by Bro. Michael Gaunt from Corby during the past three weeks. He built up and encouraged the brethren at Peterhead.

On the 23rd of April Isobel Alexander, Daughter of Bro. and Sis. Jim Buchan came to Christ.

On the 29th of April Jack and his wife Alexa McLean obeyed the gospel. It was a great joy to study with this couple as they are both deaf.

On the 30th of April Isobel Alexander's husband David also obeyed the Gospel. Also on the 30th of April Christine Tait became a christian. Her husband Alec was converted to Christ in January. W. M. Strachan, Sec.

Slamannan, Scotland: Our hearts were made glad by the confession of an elderly lady (mother of our Bro. Peter Wilson). We had the great joy of seeing our Sis. Wilson put on her Lord in being immersed into His name on Sunday evening 9th April and received into the church the following Lord's Day, 16th April.

Sis. Dorothy Hay was also restored into fellowship the same Sunday morning.

M. Neilson.

OBITUARY

Burns Street, Ilkeston: It is with great regret that the church here has to report the passing of Bro. Horace Gee who departed this life on 4th April, 1978, aged 63. Horace was a faithful elder and servant of the church at Burns Street and his loss is deeply felt within their slender ranks. He had been a Christian for almost 40 years and was respected by all who knew him for the quiet and humble christian character and manner of life he displayed. His duties as an elder were performed with integrity and love and with a deep sense of the responsibility that his office required. He will indeed be missed, and to his wife Dorothy and all who loved him, we commend the sustaining grace of our Heavenly Father.

Our brother was taken to his last rest on Monday 10th April, the service in the meeting-room being conducted By Bro. Tom Woodhouse and the respects and remembrances were spoken by Bro. Bob Eckman at the crematorium. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness".

On behalf of the church, Tom Woodhouse.

The Blessedness of God.

THE revolt of angels, the fall of man, and the miseries of sin, do not, for a moment, interrupt the blessedness of God. They were not, to Him, unexpected events, starting up suddenly while the watchman of Israel slumbered. They were foreseen by God as clearly as any other events of His government, and have occasioned neither perplexity nor dismay. With infinite complacency He beholds still His unshaken counsels, and with almighty hand rolls on His undisturbed decrees. Surrounded by unnumbered millions, created by His hand, and upheld by His power, He shines forth, God over all, blest for ever.

What an object of joyful contemplation, then, is the blessedness of God! It is infinite; His boundless capacity is full. It is eternal; He is God blest for ever. The happiness of the created universe is but a drop—a drop to the mighty ocean of divine enjoyment. How delightful the thought, that in God there is such an immensity of joy, beyond the reach of vicissitude! When we look around below, a melancholy sensation pervades the mind. What miserable creatures! What a wretched world! But when from this scene of darkness and misery, we look up to the throne of God, and

behold Him, high above the darkness and miseries of sin, dwelling in light inaccessible and full of glory, the prospect brightens. If a few rebels, who refuse to love and participate in His munificence, are groping in darkness on His footstool, God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

LYMAN BEECHER on Matthew 6:10.

A Word NOT in season

A barber who had been converted during a mission was anxious to get others to share his own happy state. He asked the missionary what he could do to be helpful and was told that he was fortunate in being brought into such close contact with his fellow men. He was recommended to offer a 'word in season' to his customers, and determined to do so.

The next morning the first customer happened to be one of the toughest characters of this district, who gruffly said 'Shave,' has he slumped into the chair. While lathering him the barber was striving to pluck up his courage to offer the 'word in season,' and as he took up the razor and bent over towards the customer's face he became brave enough to ask, with great solemnity, 'Are you prepared to die?' 'No,' screamed the customer in terror as he jumped out of the chair and rushed in the street, with his face covered in lather, seeking a policeman and protection.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID

| | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|-----------------------|
| UNITED KINGDOM | .... | .... | .... | .... | £1.50 |
| COMMONWEALTH | .... | .... | .... | .... | £1.50 (Surface Mail) |
| | | | | | £2.00 (Air Mail) |
| CANADA & U.S.A. (Dollar Bills) | .... | .... | .... | .... | \$3.00 (Surface Mail) |
| (Please add 50 cents to cover Bank charges) | | | | | \$4.00 (Air Mail) |

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Tel. No. Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd., Langley Mill, Nottm. Tel. 07737 (Langley Mill) 2266