

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS

1980

May this year, for all our readers, be one of real spiritual progress; then it will be a truly happy one. To this end, let us do and give

OUR BEST FOR GOD, WHO GAVE HIS BEST FOR US.

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

The word 'Canon' I am told has a root meaning which denotes 'a rule or standard' or a cane used for measuring, 'a measuring rod.' Origen, one of the Greek 'Fathers' used the term to denote what we, today, would call 'the rule of faith' but it was much later before the word was used to denote *the lists of books* accepted as the Bible, or the inspired books. Uninspired writings and thus those rejected from inclusion in the list of books in the Bible are called the 'Apochryphal' or 'hidden away' books. The Roman Catholic church still makes full use of the O.T. apochryphal books and many bibles are sold which include them. Indeed I believe that the Bible presented to the Queen at her coronation was returned because it did not contain the Apochrypha. There are also 109 apochryphal books of the N.T. (such as the Epistle of Barnabas, the Epistle of Hermas) which we rightly hear little of today.

The question of the 'Canon' of scripture came up at a recent Bible study here in Haddington, and no doubt many followers of Christ must have wondered, from time to time, how the books in the Bible came to be there, and why some came to be rejected. God certainly does not seem to have issued an 'official list' of the books to be considered as inspired and when one considers the vast span of centuries over which the O.T. was written, it is remarkable that all the books were eventually put together to form the O.T. Although it is reckoned that some Rabbis were still arguing about the canon of the O.T. at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, particularly the in-

clusion of Ezekiel, yet Jesus himself had been here and had set His own seal upon the O.T. canon. Jesus reminded His disciples that "all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms concerning Me." (Luke 24:44).

Thus he indicates the main sections of the O.T. and gives them His sanction and seal of authority. No literature ever received better approval. Some have mentioned the fact that the Jewish historian Josephus (who lived about the same time as Jesus) refers to the O.T. having only 22 books (in conformity with the number of letters in the Jewish alphabet) but they overlook the fact that Josephus used a different manner of counting and 'lumped' many books together in his sum. Quotations from the O.T. books by Jesus and the apostles confirm for all time their right to be included in the O.T. canon. The apostles did all their preaching from the O.T. — the N.T. not yet being in existence.

To say that Jesus sanctioned the O.T. canon but died before He could similarly endorse the N.T. canon is, of course, obviously true but just as Jesus accredited the O.T. retrospectively so, we might say, he accredited the N.T. prospectively. Did Jesus not say, on the eve of His crucifixion, that He would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and that "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said unto you ..." "he shall guide you into all truth ... and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 14:26, 16:13).

It seems that all 27 books of the N.T. were completed by 100 A.D. but who collected them to form one volume and who decided which books would and would not be included? Probably the best way to think of it is to consider the very early church and the N.T. growing together and alongside one another. Before the gospels and the epistles had been written the teaching was entirely oral and I suppose it is true to say that in the very early years the followers of Christ had no intention of adding to God's word (the O.T.) anymore than we, today, would think of adding to the N.T. In any case, after the ascension of Jesus (around 30 A.D.) the disciples expected His imminent return. Daily in the temple and from house to house did the disciples and apostles preach and teach. A written N.T. was probably far from their thoughts. Think of how often the witnesses of Christ's life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension would have to repeat their testimony. As the years went by and Jesus did not return, and as the apostles grew older, and as the church enlarged, the need for written testimony would become more and more apparent. Paul particularly found the need to write to the many congregations he had established. These epistles would circulate independently of one another and would be copied many times by churches other than the recipients. Thus preaching and teaching probably remained oral until about 50 A.D. or so. It is thought that most of the Pauline epistles had been written by about 65 A.D., by which time the apostle was probably dead, but as yet none of the gospels had been written.

It would seem as if there were two main stages in the forming of the canon of the N.T. (1) The growth of religious writings, Pauline epistles etc., but also many uninspired writings. (2) The gradual acceptance and recognition of this literature as inspired, or otherwise. Already much of this literature had been classified as inspired or otherwise so that its fitness for *public reading in the churches* could be established. Christ's actual eyewitnesses had been well established in identity and their authority had been confirmed by their deeds (in the working of miracles and signs). Each book in the N.T. carries an authority inherent in *the writer* of the book, and this concept of authority was most important. The writer was recognised and accepted by the early church as either having this authority or not having it, and his writings were accepted as being inspired or not being inspired. There is therefore, a

distinction to be drawn between the canonicity of a book in the Bible and its authority. Its canonicity is dependent upon its authority and not the other way around. Why is a particular book recognised as part of the canon? — because of general recognition of the early church as to its authority based upon the authority of its writer. Books of the O.T. or N.T. are not authoritative because they form part of a sacred list (or canon) but rather the reverse — they are on the sacred list because of their own inherent authority. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai and repeated all the words he had received from God, reading them from the “Book of the Covenant” in which he had written them, all the people answered, “All that the Lord hath spoken will we do.” (Ex. 24-7). In other words they acknowledged the *authority* of Moses and that the words he had spoken were from God. The canon of the O.T. was not something which entered the minds of these Jews nor did it give rise to any consideration until many hundreds of years later. Similarly Paul could say, “If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord.” (1st Cor. 14:37). Again, at this point in time, the canon of the N.T. was not something under review and something which didn’t arise until many years later. Nevertheless both logically and historically, authority preceded canonicity.

Just after 100 A.D. when the N.T. canon had not really emerged as such, some of the great men of the early church, such as Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp were drawing distinctions between their own uninspired writings and the inspired writings of the apostles. Justin Martyr, in 140 A.D. talks of the “Memoirs of the Apostles” and in the churches the O.T. is read and “The Gospels.” In 170 A.D. we encounter probably the earliest ‘list’ of the N.T. books. This list was discovered some years ago in the Ambrosian Library, Milan, and is called the ‘Muratorian Fragment’ (after the finder). The list includes all the books of the N.T. known today, except for James, 1 and 2 Peter and Hebrews. From then on it was a matter of time before most men acknowledged the canon of the N.T. as we have it today. There were some in the early church who voiced their personal disagreement with the inclusion of books otherwise universally acknowledged as inspired, but this perhaps was to be expected and the same would happen in any generation and would happen today. There are always those who can be counted upon to disagree with well established fact. Eusebius, around 330 A.D., still seemed to regard as doubtful the books of James, Jude, 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John, but when the Emperor Constantine ordered him to supervise the printing of 50 Bibles it would appear that Eusebius included all 27 of the N.T. books (the 27 books we have in the N.T. today). We ought not to be surprised that some men cast doubt and disagreement upon the inclusion of all 27 books remembering that some doubted the apostleship of Paul even during Paul’s lifetime and that Paul in some of his epistles had to advance his claim to be reckoned as much an apostle as any of the others. What is important to remember is that the ‘church’ did not select the canon of the N.T. — the books selected themselves by virtue of the authority vested in them and in the writers thereof. When a ‘Church Council’ — The Synod of Carthage, in 397 A.D. — listed the presented 27 books, it did not give to these 27 books any authority they did not already have, but simply recorded the fact that these books formed the N.T. canon. Historians do not make history they merely record it.

And so the New Testament came into being, just like the old, not with any dramatic suddenness or noise but as quietly as falling snow and as gradually as an unfolding flower, precept upon precept, line upon line, holy men of God speaking and writing as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

THE SIN OFFERING

(PART II)

Let us now then, consider some of the typical details of the sin offering of Lev. 4: We shall notice that the offering is divided into four and is relative to the kind of people who sin; the priest, the assembly, the ruler and the common man. Whereas in the trespass offering it is the kind of sins in view, in the sin offering it is the kind of people who sin. And here four are mentioned and these divide themselves into two groups, the priest and the assembly on the one hand and the ruler and the common man on the other. What makes the difference is the kind of offering they must bring. For the priest and the assembly as they sin, it had to be a young bullock. This links these two together. For the ruler and the man it had to be a kid of the goats or a lamb. This links these two together with the one exception that for one it was a male and for the other it was a female. But there is something else that divides them into two groups and the difference lies in what happens to the animal and its blood. Notice then, for the priest and the assembly, the blood had to be taken into the sanctuary, sprinkled seven times before the vail, touched upon the horns of the incense altar and the rest poured out at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering. Also the body of the victim had to be burned without the camp in a clean place where the ashes are poured out. Hebrews 13 vs 11 and 12, give a wonderful comment upon this, reminding us of what it signifies and therefore confirming the typology. 'For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into sanctuary for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate' on that little green hill far away, outside the city wall. But not so the ruler and the common man. The blood of their sin offering was not taken into the sanctuary, but touched upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering and the rest poured out at the bottom of the altar. And all the fat and the inwards, like the peace offering, were burned upon the altar and the flesh of the victim was eaten by the priests in the holy place, for it was most holy, Lev. 6 v 29 and whosoever shall touch the flesh thereof shall be holy, v 27.

What then is the meaning of these two divisions and why the difference? What lessons can we learn and what is the Holy Spirit trying to teach us? May I suggest that the first is basic and fundamental and the second, practical and experimental. One is our position before God as a priesthood and assembly; the other our condition in the camp as individuals. The first, our once and for all cleansing, the one sacrifice for sins for ever, for Christ is not entered into holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. And in figure His blood has been sprinkled before the Lord, notice it says seven times which means perfect atonement, as Naaman dipped seven times in Jordan and was perfectly clean. The blood touched the incense altar which speaks of the fragrance of Christ, now in God's presence, in the completeness of His atoning work for His people. When Israel rejected and crucified Him they unknowingly offered the greatest sin offering of all and when it was offered to them as such, as a nation they fully and finally rejected it, God took away their sacrifices and priesthood and even destroyed their temple. When at the trial of Jesus the High Priest rent his garment contrary to the law and thus forfeited his right to the priesthood, God answered by rending the vail of the temple from top to bottom when Jesus died. But God raised Him up and He is now in God's presence as our great High Priest by virtue of the blood that He shed. This is basic and fundamental, which nothing can change.

But the sacrifice of the ruler and the common man would suggest our daily need of cleansing to maintain us in holy fellowship with God. The first epistle of John suggests this. Having been made free from sin's penalty we need to be freed from its power. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. The blood then, was left at the altar but the flesh was eaten in the holy place for it brings us into the sanctuary and provides a feast of holy fellowship in His presence. Whereas in the first instance the body of the victim was burned without the camp, in the second it was eaten by the priests, thus suggesting the dual truth, of what we are in Christ and what we should be in our daily walk.

Now we have seen that the burnt offering finds its place in the Gospel of John, the peace offering in the Gospel of Luke, so the sin offering is represented in the Gospel of Mark. For Mark is also the gospel of the great Servant of God Who was both capable and worthy of this stupendous task of making atonement for sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Only in Mark and Matthew do we find the cry of forsaking upon the cross because these two represent that which separated Him from God, our sins and trespasses. We shall also notice that in each case of the sin offering it had to be a young animal, a young bullock, a kid or a lamb. We have already commented on the youthfulness of Christ as a man as seen in the green ears of corn in the meal offering. Here it comes to us again. He was comparatively young, cut down in the prime of His life. And the emphasis seems to be placed upon the word young, in the Gospel of Mark, in relation to the Lord's Passion. In Gethsemane, when all the disciples forsook Him and fled, who was the young man that still followed Him in a linen cloth, but fled naked when they tried to lay hold of him? Mark 14 v 51. And could it be the same young man that announced victory over death in the tomb in Mark 16 vs 5 to 7? Is it possible that this might be Mark himself, for at that time he was a very young man. And Mark uses words that tell us that Jesus was truly dead, that goes against all the arguments of Him simply swooning. The centurion saw that He so expired. Pilate marvelled that He was already dead and gave the corpse to Joseph. The word BODY in Mark 15 v 45 is the same word used by Mark of the corpse of John the Baptist in chapter 6 v 39. It's the same word translated, corpse! So here is the evidence of His death, He Who knew no sin, the unblemished spotless Son of God, Who was made sin or a sin offering for us (Isa. 53 v 10) but lives as our Advocate with the Father, to make real and good to His people the value of His atoning death and to guarantee the eternal efficacy of His precious blood. So He fulfils that which was written of Him in type and in shadow and is the great sin offering of His people.

John D. Hartburn,
Houghton Le Spring.

GLEANINGS

"Let her glean among the sheaves." Ruth 2:15

"Looking longingly at the top of the ladder will avail nothing; it's the climb that counts." — R. L. Stevenson.

"Sunday is the golden clasp that binds together the volume of the week." — Longfellow.

"The secret of success is constancy of purpose." — Disraeli.

"Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, and its power of endurance. The cheerful man will do more in the same time, will do it better, and will persevere in it longer than the sad or sullen." — Thomas Carlyle.

"Our littleness does not alter God's promise." — C. H. Spurgeon.

"Not a day passes but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words and suffer noble sorrows." — Charles Reade.

"God needs, to do His work, those who know no fear; and those whose devotion forbids them taking any risks. Courage and caution are the essentials of victorious campaigning." — Campbell Morgan.

"What indeed does the word 'cheerfulness' imply? It means a contented spirit; it means a pure heart; it means a kind and loving disposition; it means humility and charity; it means a generous appreciation of others and a modest opinion of self." — Thackeray.

"Jesus, I can trust Thee, trust Thy written word,
Though Thy voice of pity I have never heard;
When Thy Spirit teacheth, to my taste how sweet!
Only may I hearken, sitting at Thy feet." — M. J. Walker.

"Trust keeps open the line of communication between the soul and God. Along that line convoys of blessedness are brought into the heart; manifold gifts of grace for the weak and defenceless spirit. When I trust I keep open the 'highway of the Lord,' and along that road there come to me from the Eternal my bread, my water, my instructions, my powers of defence."

"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

"I can work out my own salvation with fear and trembling." — J. H. Jowett.

"Upon the Word I stand, that cannot die;
Christ seals it in my hand, He cannot lie.

The Word that failing never Abideth ever. — F. R. Havergal.

"Believe His love more than your own feeling. Your rock doth not ebb and flow, but your sea." — Rutherford.

"There are two books which should be in every home. They are the Bible, which tells of the miracle of God and the seed catalogue which proves it." — Burton Hills.

"We make a mistake in trying to clear ourselves. It would be wiser to go straight on humbly doing the next thing, and leaving God to vindicate us." — F. B. Meyer.

"N O W": "These are the three greatest letters in the English language." — Sir Walter Scott.

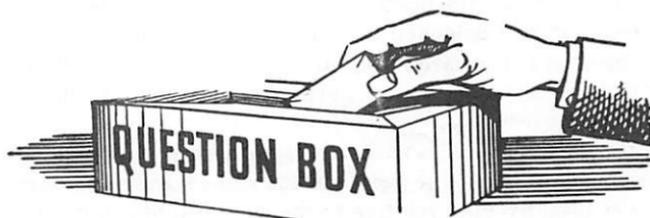
"She was sitting on a travelling trunk, reluctant to begin a big job, when she came across a little dusty autograph album. Idly she turned the faded pages, recalling friends with whom she lost touch long ago. One autograph stood out a mile. It read — Stop meaning to Do it!" — F. B.

"I have never heard anything about the resolutions of the apostles, but a good deal about the Acts of the Apostles." — Horace Mann.

"Brought safely by His hand thus far
Why wilt thou now give place to fear?
How canst thou want if He provide,
Or lose thy way with such a guide." — J. Newton.

"Some murmur when their sky is clear and wholly bright to view, If one small speck of dark appear in their great heaven of blue. And some with thankful love are filled, if but one streak of light, One ray of God's good mercy gild the darkness of their night." — R. C. Trench.

"So now we come to ask again,
What Thou hast often given,
The vision of that loveliness
Which is the life of heaven. — B. Waugh.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“In Matthew 18:17 we read, ‘but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.’ What is a heathen, and are there heathens today?”

The insidious march of universalism — the belief that ultimately all men will be saved — is rapidly gaining ground throughout the world. This dangerous doctrine, which seriously minimises the effect of sin in the world, holds that the most depraved people who have ever lived or will live will ultimately share heaven with Peter, Paul and all the other saints who have ever lived. The only way in which we can counteract the onslaught of universalism is by accepting that the Bible is the fully inspired Word of God and that it is the sole and adequate authority in all spiritual matters. If we do not cling to the impregnable rock of Holy Writ we shall find ourselves on the shifting sands of human philosophy and speculation. Therefore, it is to the Word of God, as always that we must look for our answers to these very important questions.

Why is Universalism so wrong?

The universalist would teach that God’s radical love will pursue every man until every man is redeemed. But if this is the case, where is there room for the individual to exercise his free-will? If love isn’t voluntary then it is not love at all. It is part of the intrinsic dignity of man to say ‘no’ even to God, if he so chooses, but he must then bear the consequences of that.

Furthermore, universalism denies the authority of the Word. It makes the mistake of exercising human judgement on revealed truths which by their nature are independent of it. In other words, it purports to ascribe to God different actions to those which He has explicitly stated in His Word. For this there is no excuse. Throughout the Bible there is a consistent contrast drawn between good and evil, the saved and the lost.

Universalism also minimises the gravity of sin. If the atheist will reach the same end in the life to come as the saint will, then why the teaching concerning the wages of sin? This doctrine teaches men to treat sin and its effects lightly.

Finally, the preachers of universalism would teach that Christ has already redeemed the world, and that one day He will gather the whole world to Himself; in the meantime, some will live in rebellion but in the end all will be well. Some will not even *hear* the gospel, but in the end they will reap the benefits in heaven along with all others.

Who are the heathen?

When ‘the heathen’ are mentioned, there immediately springs to mind those people who live in the fastnesses of mountains and jungles who do not enjoy the benefits of our so-called Christian civilisation. This is not consistent with what scripture teaches.

Nowhere does the Word connote that the heathen is someone of low social class or dubious moral conduct. Heathendom is looked upon as that condition of men and women whose worship is directed not towards God but Satan. It is the condition of 'the lost,' and you will remember that the express purpose of Jesus coming into the world was to "seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10).

In the New Testament the word 'Ethnos' is variously translated as 'Gentiles,' 'nations,' 'heathen.' It represents a multitude of people of the same nature or genus, a nation or a people; so it was used by Paul relative to the Gentiles. Speaking about the Jews Paul said, "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles (ethnos), for to provoke them to jealousy." (Rom. 11:11). Since the Greek language was the common means of communication in the Roman Empire, Greek and Gentile became more or less interchangeable terms.

Paul was sent to the Gentiles to turn them from the power of Satan to God. He said concerning their worship, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Cor. 10:20). This, of course, was written to the church in Corinth. In his Ephesian letter, Paul refers to those who were "the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). So it appears that the point at issue is not social status or degree of civilisation, but of a fundamental relationship with God. It is true to say that in the most advanced societies there will be found the 'heathen,' because disobedience to God's Word implies some degree of knowledge of it, and the disobedience constitutes a rejection of the truth as God has revealed it. The 'heathen' are the 'lost.'

What does it mean to be lost?

The Lord stated that His fundamental purpose in coming into the world was "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). You will notice that in this statement there is nothing which would make us differentiate between those who hear the truth and reject it, and those who never had a chance to hear the truth; Paul said, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that *are* lost," not those who are *in danger* of being lost. So we conclude that *all* are lost, and consequently *all* need to be saved; the Word surely states this.

The truth is that man has hopelessly lost his way, and there is no way he can find it apart from Christ; Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Nobody incurs the displeasure of God save those who choose to do so, because God's desire is that no one should perish in sin.

What the Church has to do is to evangelise the world. There are those who hold the view that in some way best known to God the unevangelised will have a special dispensation from God; whether this is true or not is a question which, perhaps, we are not competent to judge. We can only reiterate that the Bible condemns *all* under sin and consequently unrighteous before God; indeed, the Bible seems to teach that even though the heathen do not hear the gospel, they are in some way answerable to God for their actions, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law . . . For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves" (Rom. 2:12-15).

In conclusion, then, I think we can say with some certainty that the 'heathen' are the 'lost,' and if this is so then we must also conclude that there are countless millions of heathens today in all cultures and societies, no matter how advanced or

retarded. If people are lost then they need to be saved, and the only person who can save them is Jesus, the Christ. He gave the command to His disciples, "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 16:15, 16). Perhaps the motivation to preach the gospel should not be just to please God, but because we have a duty to 'heathens' to give them a *chance to hear it* and be saved.

A CHURCH FORMED IN THESSALONICA

It is always instructive and interesting to read the history of the formation of the work, given in the Acts of the Apostles. We are told how the Church was founded in Thessalonica, in the first few verses of Acts, chapter 17. Paul and Silas had been roughly treated in Philippi, being beaten and put in the stocks; but they witnessed the Power of God in an earthquake and the conversion of the jailer and his family. They left Philippi and reached Thessalonica where there was a Jewish synagogue.

(verse 2) 'And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.'

We are given the three subjects of Paul's sermons: —

- (1) The suffering of Jesus — the Cross.
- (2) The resurrection of Jesus — the empty Tomb.
- (3) Jesus is the *CHRIST* — the *annointed of God*.

(verse 4) (The result) 'And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women *not a few*.'

A church was formed in Thessalonica

Envious, disbelieving Jews, assisted by troublemakers set the city in an uproar and accused Jason, Paul's friend of receiving men who taught things that were contrary to Caesar, when they said "— there is another king, one Jesus." (verse 7).

The Church sent Paul and Silas to Berea by night — from there to Athens and Corinth. Paul did not forget the newly formed Church, for whilst in Corinth he wrote to the Thessalonians. "The first epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians." — possibly one of his first epistles to be written.

In it, after greeting the Church with affection and thanksgiving and telling them that they were always mentioned in prayer, he reminded them of three outstanding spiritual characteristics which are clarified for us in the last two verses of the first chapter:—

- (verse 3) (1) Work of Faith. (verse 9) Turning from idols to God.
- (2) Labour of Love. (verse 9) Serve the living and true God.
- (3) Patience of Hope. (verse 10) Wait for His Son from Heaven.

This was a New Testament Church, established under the guidance and teaching of a divinely inspired Apostle, and can therefore be an example to today's Christians. 'Work of Faith' — turning to God from idols. When we think of idols today, our minds go to countries such as India or Africa, where our missionaries are working to woo people, by love and Bible teaching, from superstition, cruel customs, devil worship and fear of evil spirits. These lands across the sea are not alone in their need, for we too need a 'work of faith,' a greater trust in God and a freedom from fetishism.

'Labour of Love' — serve the living and true God. Labour is Service and is a natural and spiritual outcome or development. In Romans, chapter 8 Paul tells the Christians that they are more than conquerors, through Christ that loved us. Having

conquered idol worship, by the grace of God, progress is service, for Him *MUST RESULT*. The language of the world must change to the study of the Word of God.

Throughout his letter to the Thessalonians Paul exhorts the Church and individuals 'to continue.'

Chapter 3, verse 12. '— increase and abound in love toward another, and toward all men.'

Chapter 4, verse 1. '— to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.'

Verses 9-10. '— taught of God to love one another. — that ye increase more and more.'

How different this life of service to the former way; knowing a living, true God instead of dead idols.

Paul taught that the 'new life' would not be easy — there would always be the jealous, with their evil companions — persecution would be part of the price to pay for publicity serving God and acknowledging Jesus.

'Patience of hope.' Chapter 1, verse 3 '— and patience in hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.'

Verse 10. "And to wait for his Son from Heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Turned — serve — wait.

Hope and it was 'patience of hope.' which was to continue in the Church in Thessalonica and in every Church today.

Each chapter in the first Epistle ends with mention of the *second coming*; in fact both Epistles were written around the promise of Jesus' *return*.

The Christians in Thessalonica had come into a great inheritance. Paul the missionary, had led them from idolatry to a new way of life — an *abundant life*. They had been taught that there *is* an hereafter. Physical death is followed by *life eternal, reunion with loved ones* and there is a *glorious future* for the Church of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians in order to give them every assurance and to add to the knowledge, which he had given them, during his three week mission. Verse 5. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance —"

No doubt — No perhaps — No if — No maybe.

In verses 13-18 Paul answers a question. He explains that the Church always consists of *two* companies. There are those, who having served, have passed on to be with the Lord and those who are still in active service, awaiting His return. These two companies will be reunited when Jesus calls His people from earth to Heaven.

Verse 18. 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

"Comfort one another" — is it a comfort? — or a half understood, scarcely believed, neglected truth?

To be participants in this third Spiritual condition, we must have experienced the other two stages of growth and have *complete trust in Jesus as a personal saviour* — "*whom God raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*"

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY 1980

Acts 27, 1-26 3 Genesis 41, 1-16
 Acts 27, 27-44 10 Jonah 1
 Acts 28, 1-15 17 Psalm 107, 23-43
 Acts 28, 16-31 24 Isaiah 6

FRIENDSHIPS

We regard friendship as a manifestation of love with confidence (John 15, 14), and there are some delightful instances of it in the Bible — we mention a few — Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1, 16 & 17), Jonathan and David (2 Sam. 1, 26), Ashpenaz and Daniel (Dan. 1, 9), Artaxerxes and Nehemiah (Neh. 2, 2). We are concerned with Julius the Centurion who was entrusted with escorting and guarding a number of prisoners, suspected criminals, including Paul. He was expected to deliver them to Rome for trial. With Paul were Aristarchus and Luke. We suppose it was a concession to allow companions to prisoners, unless Aristarchus was a prisoner himself (Col. 4, 10). At the first call of the coasting vessel at Sidon, Paul was "courteously entreated" and allowed to visit his friends at Sidon — a place where anyone could "get lost" if he wanted. Here friendship was shown so soon indicating trust and an estimate of character. This was the beginning of friendship shown later by his consideration of Paul's counsel at Fair Havens. We could not expect prisoners to be consulted. Events during the voyage could only confirm the friendship and at a critical moment the seamen were prevented from deserting the ship (27, 30) by Paul's advice, and the lives of the prisoners were saved through friendship (27, 42). Keeping the seamen on board contributed if it did not entirely enable the ship to be satisfactorily beached. The friendship of the natives on Melita was due in large measure to the presence of the Roman officer, as that of Publius

also. The three months ended in goodwill and presents.

We do not know that Julius introduced Paul to his lodging. It seems likely he had a hand in it, and we may be allowed to hope that his experience led him to follow the example of a noble centurion named Cornelius.

SHIPWRECK

This is the fourth shipwreck that Paul experienced, and one of them had involved a whole day and night "in the deep." We are apt to overlook adventures not recorded in Acts. This is the only one of which we have detailed description through Luke's eyes. With very little experience of travel by sea, and any we have in very different circumstances, we cannot perhaps conceive the terrors and sufferings of those 276 persons who in one of the biggest ships of the time gave up hope of survival. We understand the largest vessels were Egyptian grain ships and about the beginning of October they would not face the open sea. Hence Paul's good advice at Fair Havens was more than in order, but the desire for more comfort and doubtless amusement during the winter months led to the risky adventure of trusting the south wind to blow long enough.

It was not to be. The seamen realised their mistake and took in the boat they had towed. They passed cables around the hull to better secure the timbers of the ship, and then had to drift with the wind. With a minimum of canvas and use of the rudders they faced the wind as far as they could and so drifted for fourteen days. They had no means of knowing where they were as sun and stars could not be observed. We assume there was some shelter in the form of a deck and bulwarks but everyone would be soaked and cold. Little wonder they had taken no food. The mariners with experience would hear the breakers as they neared shore and when the anchors had been dropped from the stern Paul had opportunity and gave encourage-

ment, and his testimony to God, whose angel had spoken to him in this time of tremendous trial. His warning to the Centurion prevented those, who could handle the ship's last effort, from leaving in a selfish plan to desert her, and thus when the daylight came she was thrust into a beach from which by divine providence and human effort everyone got to land — in what condition we may imagine. The natives, not barbarians in our sense of the term, in pity and sympathy helped with some measure of shelter and warmth. What a rich reward for this kindness they received. Some have entertained angels unawares! Their superstitious estimate of a prisoner was quickly reversed when God's promise to the apostles was fulfilled to Paul. The sick were healed and the gospel preached.

WELCOME & UNWELCOME

We are not told whether there were Christians at Syracuse and Rhegium. Presumably there were not but at Puteoli some were found, and a week spent there. We wonder how this delay was managed — perhaps another case of kindness. During the three months spent on Melita news was received at Rome. This is not certain but it would travel to Rome readily during the seven days at Puteoli — seven days of earnest and blessed fellowship. The band of prisoners in charge of Julius made its way from Puteoli to Rome. How they travelled we do not know, probably on foot. The brethren from Rome came about fifty miles to Appii Forum and thirty-three to Three Taverns in order to meet Paul. This was evidence of their love and thought for him.

This was evidence of their love and thought for him. The great classic phrase describes his feelings in response. "He thanked God and took courage." Looking over the journey we see three companions together through it, all, bearing the trials of the way together, and think what a comfort Aristarchus and Luke must have been. The long

separation and impossibility of communication must have weighed heavily upon them all and upon Paul in particular "the care of the churches." We have assumed that the loose form of imprisonment at Caesarea would be tempered by many visits. The fulfilment of his heart's desire must have filled Paul with thanksgiving but it was the sight of his brethren that gave encouragement. However he is a prisoner. His working among the churches so dear to his heart are stopped. His mind and pen were not imprisoned.

To the Jews in Rome he was an enigma. It is strange that the Jerusalem Jews made no communication to their Roman friends, and it is surprising that tidings of Paul's testimony and rejection had not spread, seeing some Roman Jews must surely have been to Jerusalem for the six or more feasts celebrated so widely over the world over the two years spent in Caesarea. However there may have been deliberate silence. Christianity was still the "sect that is everywhere spoken against." Paul's entry undoubtedly fulfilled the Saviour's words "I came to cast fire upon the earth" (Luke 12, 40-53). We are gratified to notice they were willing to listen from morning till evening. It was not to be expected that all would accept Paul's reasoning but that some did so in spite of the world's opinion indicates a better spirit than many showed. We observe that in concluding his effort a very direct warning was given, and the Gentiles specially mentioned. Rome was the centre of the Gentile world. It has been a matter of concern that these Jews knew nothing of the church in Rome. We assume these men were the Jewish leaders in Rome maintaining an exclusive position in the city. As a comment upon the last verses of "Acts" we refer to Phil. 1, 12-18. The Roman Christians did require encouragement, and some even appear to have resented Paul.

R. B. Scott.

Traditions

Recently someone said to me that teachings and practices in his local congregation ought to be respected and kept because they were traditions there. Is this really so? Do we have practices and teachings that are perpetuated only because they are tradition? Jesus had much to say in His day about the tradition of the elders (See Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13).

Traditions are those things that are handed down or passed on from generation to generation. The religious leaders of his day were angry because Christ's disciples transgressed "the tradition of the elders." Jesus said: "*Why do you yourselves transgress the command of God for the sake of your traditions?*" Continuing to His conclusion, Jesus said, "*You invalidate the word of God for the sake of your tradition*" and He quotes Isaiah's prophecy. (See Mt. 15:6-9; Is. 29:13).

The apostle Paul had formerly been "*more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions*" than his contemporaries in Judaism (Gal. 1:14). Paul considered all such things "*as loss for the sake of Christ*" (Phil 3:7, 8): When writing to the Colossians (2:8) he said, "*See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the traditions of men ... rather than according to Christ.*" Peter adds his weight of authority to the vanity of the traditions of their forefathers (I Peter 1:18-19).

Nevertheless, there are traditions we have received from the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42) that we are urged to hold fast. "*Brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us*" (II Thess. 2:15). Confirmation of this is given in II Thess. 3:16, for we are told "*to keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the traditions which you received.*" The apostle Peter exhorts us to "*sanctify Christ as Lord in your*

hearts, always being ready to make defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (I Peter 3: 15).

If things are being taught or practised by you, or by the church where you attend, which are traditions of men, this makes worship vain and displeases our God and Saviour. If we have no "*thus saith the Lord*" for every thing we practice and teach, then we need more faith to lay these things down for the sake of honouring Christ and His word.

Traditions can be traditions of men or traditions received from Christ through "*the apostles' teaching.*" Practices and teachings are not right or wrong simply because they are traditions, but depending upon whether they come from Christ. May we love Him so much that we gladly maintain only those traditions received by direct command, approved example or are necessarily implied by command or example.

(Quotations from NASV).

Derek Daniell, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Glorious things of Problems are Spoken

Writing in the *New York Times Magazine*, Neil Postman said, "People in distress prefer a problem that is familiar to a solution that is not." Postman simply recognised the widespread fear of the unknown.

There is another aspect to this holding fact to our problems. Our problems can be convenient excuses. Churches found out about that a long time ago. Perhaps learned it from ancient Israel. If one is looking for an excuse he can always find a problem. "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without I shall be slain in the streets" (Prov. 22:13). In the unlikely event there is a lion in the street, it is not too hard to think of solutions, but then we would really have a problem. What worse problem could we have than a solution that robs us of our problem! Without a problem we might have to go to work.

I have learned that churches love their problems. And why not? They are the greatest labour-saving device since the invention of the wheel. Thanks to our problems, we have been spared the toil of evangelizing many nations and numerous good works would not have been avoided without them. I dare say that many churches would rather part with their most cherished tradition than with their beloved problems.

"Some of the members object" is a beautiful problem. This can impale a church on the stake of indecision forever. And of course indecision is a delightful way to do nothing. A church can study, analyse, probe, ponder, dissect and defer anything that could be called work by not making a decision. In case there is some slow learner around who can't understand how we are always caught on a snag, he can be told, "Some of the members object." If the poor fellow can't understand that, anybody can see that he is a troublemaker. What worse trouble could we have than to have no excuse for procrastination?

We have some other problems which are just adorable. We recite them as regularly as politicians invoke God, motherhood and country. Wouldn't it be a sight to behold if we all suddenly couldn't remember what our problems are? Now that would be one of those unfamiliar solutions, wouldn't it? Can't you imagine the bedlam we would have without our problems? I suppose some fellow would rescue us with the suggestion that we appoint a committee to find our problems. But wouldn't it be a boon to the work of the Lord if we all got our problems off our mind? Then maybe we could get off the stool of do nothing.

From: Firm Foundation

WHY?

When people go to a football game, they want a seat on the fifty yard line.

When they go to a basketball game, they want a seat at mid-court.

When they attend a play they want a seat about midway in the auditorium.

When they go to a boxing or wrestling match they want a ring-side seat.

When they go to a circus parade, they want to stand in the front line.

BUT — when they go to Church everyone wants a back seat.

Why? — *Selected.*

BRIEFS

A ship in the harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are made for.

Character is not made in a crisis — it is only exhibited.

Jumping to conclusions is not half as good exercise as digging for facts.

It is better to take things as they come than to try to catch them as they go.

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.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

When a boy gets up at four o'clock in the morning to deliver his papers, people say he is a go-getter.

If the Church were to ask this same boy to get up at four o'clock to do some work for the Lord, they would say, "That's asking too much from the boy."

If a woman spends eight hours away from home working in the factory or raising a garden, she is called an energetic wife.

If, however, she is willing to do the same for the Church they say, "Religion has gone to her head."

If one ties himself down to make payments of thirty dollars each week on a car for pleasure or some other item for personal enjoyments he pays willingly.

But if that same person placed that much in the collection plate each week, many people would say he was crazy.

This is a crazy world indeed, where first things come last and last things come first. — *Canadian Christian.*

THE DIARY OF A BIBLE

'The Word of the Lord was precious in those days' (1 Sam. 3:1). What is it to you?

January 15th. — Been resting quietly for a week. The first few nights at the beginning of this year, my owner met me regularly, but he seems to have forgotten me once more.

February 2nd. — Clean up. I was dusted with other things and put back in my place.

February 8th. — Owner used me for a short time after dinner, looking up a few references. Seemed to be in a great flurry. Went to Sunday School.

March 7th. — Clean up. Dusted and in my old place again. Have been down in the front hall since my trip to Sunday School.

April 2nd. — Busy day. Owner led meeting and had to look up references. He had an awful time finding one, though it was there in its right place all the time.

June 5th. — In grandma's lap all afternoon. She has come here for a time. She let a teardrop fall on Col. 2:5-7.

June 7th, 8th, 9th. — In grandma's lap every afternoon now. It's a comfortable spot. Sometimes she reads me and sometimes she talks to me.

June 10th. — Grandma's gone — I don't think she felt very much at home here. I seemed to be her chief friend. Am back in the old place now.

July 3rd. — Packed in a trunk with clothes and other things. Some talk about 'vacation,' whatever that means.

July 10th. — Still in trunk; though nearly everything else has been taken out.

Sept. 29th. — Home again. Rather stuffy and hot. Have two magazines, a novel and an old hat on top of me. Wish they would take them off.

October 5th. — Used by Mary a few moments today. She was writing a letter to a friend whose brother had died, and wanted an appropriate verse.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Newtongrange. On Wednesday 28th November last, the brethren and friends met together for a time of fellowship. At the hour of 7.20 p.m. Bro. Wilson opened the meeting with prayer. Following this the evening was spent by watching a sound and vision programme of Biblical Archaeology as arranged by Bro. A. Sharp. The lecture lasted about one hour and a half. To see so many historical facts relating to the Bible did, indeed impress the friends gathered. At the close of the lecture a time of fellowship and tea, seemed a fitting end to the evening. It is hoped to continue such type evenings.

A. P. Sharp.

Slamannan District, Scotland. The quarterly 'Mutual Benefit' Meeting of the Slamannan District of Churches took place on Saturday 1st December in the Meeting House of the Tranent church. A very large attendance was present to discuss the topic for the occasion which was "What is heaven, and What is hell." The speakers were John Colgan, Tranent, and William Black, Dalmellington, and the Chairman was Ian Davidson, Motherwell. A very animated discussion period followed the speakers and a great deal more emerged from the subject than many had anticipated. The next 'Mutual Benefit' meeting will God willing, be held at Haddington, on 15th March, 1980, when the subject will be concerned with the restoration of lapsed members and the speakers will be David Chalmers, Dalmellington, Jim Sinclair, (Sen.) Tranent, and J. R. Gardiner will be the chairman. Thanks are due to all concerned with the Tranent meeting and to the brethren there for their kind hospitality.

COMING EVENTS

Tranent. Social to be held on March 1st, 1980 (DV) Speakers Bro. W. Mair, Buckie and Bro. R. Parker, Wigan. Place of meeting still to be arranged.

THANKS

Sister Wardrop and family of Motherwell, would like to thank the brethren for their prayers and expressions of sympathy and condolence during their time of bereavement at the passing of brother William Wardrop. Letters of sympathy received have been too numerous to reply to individually but sister Wardrop would like all concerned to know how precious these letters have been and would like to thank everyone for their kindness and help at such a sad time. This has been a great source of comfort and strength.

Carlton Melling, 38 Lulworth Drive, Hindley, via Wigan, Lancs, thanks all the brothers and sisters in the fellowship of Christ who remembered him in prayer, by card, letters, or in any other way during his recent stay in hospital and his operation. All these messages have been a source of great blessing sustaining him and helping him to realise the continued faithfulness of God our Heavenly Father, and by it "my strength is made perfect in weakness."

WANTED

Copy of the 'Graphic Bible' by Lewis Browne, and 'Stranger Than Fiction' by the same author. Price etc. to the Editor.

GOD GIVE US MEN

"God give us men. A time like this demands Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands;

Men whom the lust of office does not kill;

Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;

Men who possess opinions and a will;

Men who have honour; men who will not lie;

Men who can stand before a demagogue

And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;

Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog

In public duty, and in private thinking;

For while the rabble with their thumb-worn creeds,

Their professions, and their little deeds,

Mingle in selfish strife, lo, Freedom weeps,

Wrong rules the land, and waiting Justice sleeps."

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