

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE LIST OF BOOKS

At the Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting of the Slamannan District of Churches on 1st March the subject discussed was the Canon of Scripture. Unfortunately, due to indisposition, I could not be present but as the subject is of great interest to Bible students I offer these remarks for what they are worth.

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 'Apocryphal' or 'hidden away' books. The Roman Catholic Church still makes full use of the O.T. apocryphal 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 Apocrypha. There are also 109 apocryphal books of the N.T. (such as the Epistle of Barnabus, the Epistle of Hermas) which we rightly hear little of today.

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 inclusion of Ezekiel, yet Jesus Himself had been here and set His own seal upon the O.T. Canon. Jesus reminded His disciples that **"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 form 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).

THE N.T. CANON

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 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 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.

GRADUAL STAGES

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 of 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 has 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*.

THE LOST BOOKS

Some Bible students worry about the "Lost Books"; i.e. books mentioned in the Bible but which were never included in the Canon of scripture and which, therefore have no place in the Bible. They wonder if the Bible can be considered *complete* if some of these books have been "lost." For instance, there are several documents mentioned in the O.T. such as "The book of the Wars of the Lord" (Num. 21:14); "The Book of Jasher" (Josh. 10:13) "The Book of Nathan the Prophet" (1 Chron. 29:29); "The Book of Cad the Seer" (1 Chron. 29:29); "The Visions of Ido the Seer" (2 Chron. 9:29) and "The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite" (2 Chron. 9:29).

It seems obvious from the passing references to these documents in the passages quoted, that there were, extant, uninspired writings which, although of some interest at the time, were not inspired of God and were not, therefore, part of the O.T. We don't know anything about the contents of some of these books but it would seem that they were of local interest and limited in scope. For instance, we read, "Now the rest of the Acts of Solomon, first and last, are they not written in the Book of Nathan the Prophet, and in the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the Vision of Ido the Seer" (2 Chron. 9:29). And so it seems that the REST of the acts of Solomon had been recorded in the documents mentioned (presumably for any interested party to read out of personal curiosity) but ENOUGH had been written in the inspired writings for God's purpose. In short, the mere fact of having had a mention in the Bible can mean nothing more than that, and does not necessarily confer lasting significance. Paul, for instance, when speaking to the Athenians, quotes the writings of a Greek poet ("as certain also of your own poets have said") but that certainly did not confer any God-given inspiration upon the utterings of Greek poets.

Again, there is reference in the N.T. to what appears to be a missing "book" where Paul, it seems, in 1 Cor. 5:9, refers to having written to the Corinthians a previous letter. There is no trace of this previous letter in the N.T. and so it is presumed "lost." The general opinion is that this lost letter may have been merely a short note, the contents of which is now encompassed in what is called the First letter to the Corinthians; i.e. Paul reiterates in First Corinthians the things he said in the "previous" letter and so it is necessary only that "First Corinthians" should enter the Canon of the N.T. One is surely not to imagine that every letter that Paul ever wrote, either to individuals or churches, must appear in the N.T. Surely in their lifetimes, Paul, Peter, and the other apostles would write a great mass of notes, reminders, "thank you" letters, and little encouragements and exhortations, which fulfilled their purpose at the time, but are not in the Canon of the N.T. Be that as it may, John certainly tells us that a great deal of what Jesus said and did is not recorded or preserved for posterity, for the very practical reason that space forbids, but that does not mean that the N.T. is "incomplete" or lacking. John said, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written down, every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should have been written." Thus if the sayings of the Man who spake, as never man spake, could be abridged for the sake of lack of space, it should not be surprising that not all the writings of the apostles could find their way into our "Pocket New Testament." Of course, John went on to say that, (whereas these restrictions on the recording of the sayings and doings of Jesus were necessary for the stated practical reasons), that which was recorded is ENOUGH (and sufficient) for God's purpose.

THE BOOKS SELECTED THEMSELVES

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 that 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, 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.

EDITOR.

LOVE NOT THE WORLD

(1 John 2:15-17)

INTRODUCTION

The words of our text were spoken to Christians. These were walking in the light (1 John 1:7). They had come out of darkness and had fellowship with God (1 John 1:3,6). They had been cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:6). Their sins had been forgiven (1 John 2:12). They knew God because they kept His commandments. The love of God was perfected in them (1 John 2:3-5). The apostle John affectionately calls them little children (1 John 2:1). In thinking of various ages, he speaks of children, fathers and young men.

John warns of the possibility of apostasy. This passage clearly indicates that those who are children of God can so live as to forfeit their eternal inheritance.

THE WORLD DEFINED

What is the world that Christians are forbidden to love? Surely all recognise that the "world" is used in different senses in the Bible. The context will help us in knowing the meaning in each case.

John is not referring to the physical universe. God made the world (Gen. 1:1). When God created something, it was good (Gen. 1:10,12,18). Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused (1 Tim. 4:4). As we view these good things, we should love and appreciate the Creator more (Rom. 1:20; Psalm 19:1-2). Everyone has a right to love life (1 Peter 2:10). The created universe is for man's joy and happiness. Jesus noticed the lilies of

the fields and called attention to their beauty. The world which Christians are not to love is of life which is limited to this earth. It is base in nature, contrary to all that is good. One who thus loves *the "world"* is one whose sole affection is tied to that which will end with the physical world.

The child of God must live in the world (earth), but he cannot be of the world (a partaker of the base things that belong only to this physical life).

LOVE NOT THE WORLD

The "love of the world" is not a wholesome, compassionate love, such as God had for mankind (John 3:16). This love may be described as evil desire or lust. Such is forbidden, because it separates one from God. Demas was a fellow-worker with Paul, but his love for the world caused him to forsake Paul (2 Tim. 4:10). The love of the world and the love for the Father are incompatible, God is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5). He will not share His love and devotion with another. **"Ye cannot serve God and mammon"** (Matt. 6:24). **"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"** (James 4:4).

God requires a full love. The greatest commandment of all is **"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: That is the first commandment"** (Mark 12:30).

There are those who limit worldliness to such things as dancing, immodest dress, social drinking and such like. These are indeed condemned as works of the flesh, hence, of the world (Gal. 5:19-21). Yet, one might refrain from all these and still be guilty of loving the things of the world. This was the downfall of a rich young ruler. He trusted in riches, immorality was not his problem. In order to be right with God, he was to sell his possessions and give to the poor, that he might have his treasure in heaven (Mark 10:17-22). The successful farmer of Luke 12:16-21, was guilty of loving the world. He laboured for self and neglected God.

AVENUES OF SATAN'S APPROACH

Satan's approach to temptation has not basically changed. Man still has the same appetites, Sin remains the same. In our text John lists the avenues of approach toward, worldliness: (1) The lust of the flesh; (2) The lust of the eyes; and (3) The pride of life.

In the garden of Eden, Eve saw that the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh); it was pleasant to the eye (lust of the eye); it was desired to make one wise (pride of life) (Gen. 3:1-6).

Our Lord was tempted in three respects. it was suggested that He turn stones to bread (lust of the flesh), He was allowed to view the kingdoms of the world (lust of the eye), and was taken to the pinnacle of the temple and instructed to cast Himself down with the promise of divine protection (pride of life) (Matt. 4:1-10). We must be alert for such approaches today lest we fall into temptation.

PENALTY FOR LOVING THE WORLD

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). God will not fellowship with the world (1 John 1:3).

God demands separation from the world if He is to be our Father. **"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"** (2 Cor. 6:17-18). If we are not children of God we belong to the devil.

Loving the world will result in the loss of our greatest possession, our soul. **"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"** (Matt. 16:26). **"And the world passeth away and the lust thereof"** (1 John 2:17). Those who live

after the world will perish. They have no hope beyond this life.

The child of God is not powerless in overcoming the world. **"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye might be able to bear it"** (1Cor. 10:13). Our faith will be able to overcome the world, if it is an obedient faith, **"and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith** (1 John 5:4). This faith involves doing the will of God (Matt. 7:21).

Overcoming the world gives assurance of eternal existence with God. **"But he that doeth the will of God abides forever"** (1 John 2:17).

B. C. CARR.

PANDORA'S BOX RE-OPENED

There never was a Pandora. She was the product of Greek epic mythology. Hesiod, who flourished about 776 B.C., recounts how he found a jar, the so-called "Pandora's Box", which contained all manner of evils. When Pandora opened the jar, all sorts of evils flew out over the earth to cause misery and confusion. Though the story is only a myth, it sought to teach a lesson concerning the introduction of evil forces.

The last third of the nineteenth century saw the opening of a "Pandora's Box" among members of the Lord's Church. Earl West in the second volume of **Search for the Ancient Order** has described how a number of preachers in that period began to digress from a faithful adherence to Biblical teaching. He described their basic error in one sentence:

"There are always those who believe they sense something in the "spirit" of a thing contrary to what may be found in its 'letter' or, who, reacting against what they consider a radical extreme of isolationism (emphasise mine, RDM), devote their energies to popularise a movement.

This changing attitude toward Scripture and the unique nature of the Church led to the division which was first recognised officially in the 1906 census in the United States. Later it was to divide the liberal wing of that former division into two distinct bodies - the 'Disciples' and the 'Independent Christian Churches'. The Disciples have since shown a willingness to compromise almost any doctrine in the interest of an ecumenical union.

THE SILENCE OF SCRIPTURE

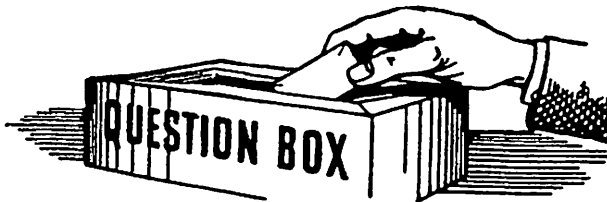
Some of the same problems which plagued the Church before the turn of the nineteenth century are again surfacing among our brethren. There is a tendency to sneer at the strong emphasis on scriptural authority which has been held by faithful preachers for many years. In order to lead the Church out of what West called a radical extreme of isolationism some voices are calling for a much wider fellowship. The fact that this cannot be obtained without sacrificing some vital principles does not prevent certain individuals from "bad-mouthing" the Church and extolling the innocent nature of innovations. These ideas are not new, as many of them like to believe, but constitute a re-hashing of the follies of the past.

Recently the **Gospel Herald** ran an excellent series of articles by Albert Kleppe concerning the silence of the Scripture. The series showed how, by ignoring this silence, we open a Pandora's Box of false doctrines and practices. The principle which calls for a "Thus saith the Lord" for every article of faith and practice is a sound one. To disregard it would be to open the way not only for the introduction of instrumental music but also for a wide variety of other erroneous beliefs and practices. Our rejection of these innovations is not just a tradition or the adherence to man-made rules, but respect for a vital scriptural principle. If ever our brethren were to decide to remove this restraining principle, the barrier would be breached and a "have-it-your-way" religion with all manner of false doctrines would ensue.

Each generation must assume the responsibility to defend the authority of the Scripture. The threat to sound Biblical principles is being promoted by brethren who should know better. We live in an intellectual environment of rapid change. This change presents challenges and opportunities if we remain firm in the faith. We should not be as much afraid of "radical isolationism" as of compromise with error. Unity without principle is unity without purpose.

ROY D. MERRITT.

*Sent in by Bro. Severson, Burnaby, Canada,
and surely deserves to be read and re-read a great many times. (Ed.)*



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

1 Samuel 16:14 reads: "But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him". What does this mean?

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The problem of evil and its origin has, down the ages, perplexed the speculative mind. Sometimes in my own reasoning I employ what I call 'reverse reasoning' i.e., I don't start from the point where I decide what a thing can be, but rather from the point of what a thing can't be; in that way I can avoid the pitfalls of a hastily-thought-out opinion of what a thing can be. On this particular problem this approach may yield some benefit.

I believe we can make the following statement with some conviction: "God is not the author of sin, and its consequent evil, but He permits it". Sin entered into the world when Satan seduced Adam and Eve into disobedience to God. At that time God said to Satan, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" Gen. 3:15. The speculative mind asks, "Why didn't God finish it there and then, and consign Satan and his host to the abyss? Why had 'the fullness of time' to be a few thousand years in the future"? There must be a pertinent reason because God could have dealt with the problem initially. I believe we shall have to look at the nature of God Himself in order to find some of the answers.

God is just, righteous, loving, gracious, and forgiving among His many other attributes. The one thing that He demands from His creation above all else is obedience to Him. This obedience acknowledges the infinite perfection of God because it means that the obedient soul recognises the ultimate good of all of His works. But where, you might ask, do sin and evil fit into all this?

God has to manifest His goodness. Have you ever thought how He could do this without His permission of sin, abhorrent though it is to Him? How could God have been a just God if He had allowed sin to go unpunished? How could He have justified us if He Himself had been seen to be unjust? (see Rom. 3:23-26). How could God have shown His forgiveness if there had been nothing to forgive? How could He have demonstrated His grace and favour without seeming to be partial? Yes God permitted sin so that His creation might see His ultimate perfection and righteousness, and so make the distinction between a loving God and a rebellious Satan. We must understand, however, that ultimate goodness could not generate ultimate evil; that would be nonsense.

WHAT OF SAUL?

Since the question demands an explanation of the alien spirit which invaded Saul, we must now turn our attention to the context in which this is stated.

Because of the proximity of potentially dangerous peoples on their borders, the Israelites demanded a king. Against His better judgment, God allowed Samuel to anoint Saul; it seemed that the people were losing faith in the invisible God and wanted to place their confidence in a visible king. This shouldn't surprise us at all, because down the ages people have put their confidence in earthly rulers they can see, rather than have faith and trust in a God they cannot see.

The contextual happenings were as follows. Jonathan, Saul's son, smote a Philistine garrison at a place called Geba. The Philistines were a little bit peeved at this, to say the least, and they held the Israelites in abomination; they also arrayed a vast army against the Israelites. Saul called all the people to Gilgal, in order to offer a sacrifice unto God, presumably to solicit His help. Samuel, however delayed his coming for seven days so Saul presumed to offer the sacrifice himself. But Samuel came the following day and rebuked Saul for transgressing God's command; he also informed him that because of his disobedience there would be no dynasty of Saul (1 Sam. 13:13, 14). Later, the Lord, through Samuel, told Saul to wage a war of extermination against the Amalakites. No one, and nothing, was to be spared. Saul waged the war, but he spared the king and many of the cattle which, presumably, he intended for sacrifice to the Lord. For this second act of disobedience, God concluded that Saul could not be trusted to act as the instrument of His will, so Saul was rejected as king. Samuel was sent to Bethlehem to anoint David king.

THE QUESTION

Having filled in the context, we must now return to our question. I have concluded that God, the Ultimate Goodness, cannot be the author of sin, but He does permit certain things to take place. Consider the state of Saul: he has been disobedient to God on two occasions; his dynasty has been removed, and even his kingship has now been taken away. The Spirit of the Lord has left him; he now has no one to guide him. He is in a state of melancholy madness, so much so, in fact, that a harper was needed to charm away this spirit. David was the one chosen to carry out this duty. Do we see the hand of God, working out His Divine Will?

The end came at Mount Gilboa. The woman of Endor had reputedly called up Samuel from the dead. Samuel told Saul that he and his three sons would be killed in the forthcoming battle with the Philistines on the morrow. In the battle Saul saw his three sons killed. He himself was seriously wounded, and he called upon his armour-bearer to take his sword and thrust him through. The man was afraid, and wouldn't, whereupon Saul fell on his own sword and died. An inglorious end to the first anointed king of the Israelites.

I have recounted this episode for one reason only, i.e., to suggest that whatever spirit invaded Saul, it was **self-induced** and God permitted it. The NIV in a footnote says it was 'an injurious spirit'. Young's Analytical Concordance uses the word 'straitened', which may be defined as 'distressed'; on the 'horns of a dilemma'; in need. This is how the Apostle Paul describes himself in Phil. 1.

The main thrust of the teaching so far as I am concerned is the havoc that can be caused by disobedience to God. Just think of what has happened to the human race because of the intervention of Satan. Some will say that God should have prevented man from sinning, and should have made man do His will. But do we want a human creation of automatons? God requires that we should **choose Him; want Him** so that we can reciprocate His love. We should heed the words of Samuel to Saul, "**Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams**". 1 Sam. 15:22.

GOD AND SELF-DETERMINATION

If we read the first chapter of the Roman letter we can see there a picture of people who wilfully deserted God. What did God do? He merely let their self-determination lead on to their self-destruction. v24. Then there were those whose vile passions got the better of them. What was God's reaction again? He 'gave them over' to those vile passions. v26. Then there were those who had tested God and decided to reject Him. What was God's action again? Yes, He 'gave them over' to their own mental attitudes; they were of a reprobate mind.

The message from the above ought to be quite clear. God will not **beg** people to come to Him. He has done everything possible to assure their salvation if they will but be obedient to Him. Those outside of Christ should rest assured that if they want to determine their own destinies apart from God, then He will 'give them over' to the type of life they have chosen; **their own spirits will determine their own fate**. I believe that Saul found himself in this position. It was of his own making, so let us beware. God **wants** us, but He doesn't **need** us. But we need Him.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,
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LAW OR CHANCE

When men realised that the behaviour of the universe is governed by **law** rather than by **chance**, superstitious beliefs crumbled and magic charms and lucky talismen gave way to a search for the laws that govern the surroundings in which we live. Thus the way paved, for the rapid development of Western Civilisation during the past few centuries.

It is also true in the spiritual realm that progress will be made when it is realised that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus Christ, and that there are spiritual laws that are just as definite and clearly defined as are the laws that govern in the natural realm.

The fact that God is the author of religious law, and that He works accordingly, does not deny the power of either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. The miracle of creation, and the miracles that marked the early days of the Church, show God's ability to act outside normal laws.

The farmer who prepares the field and sows certified seed does not overlook the fact that germination and growth depend upon God. But no farmer expects God to act arbitrarily and unpredictably, so that the seed sown may produce either water-melon or wheat, according to the whim of the Lord.

Since the Creation, each plant has brought forth after its kind, for this is a law of God. Only the superstitious and ill-informed expect God to vary this rule at man's request.

Some years ago a farmer found dock seed mixed with his oats. He sowed the mixture after praying that God would not let the dock seed germinate. The resultant crop of oats and docks caused him to "lose his faith". His experience should have increased his faith, for has not the Word of God stated, "**Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap**"?

Many who do not expect God to suspend laws that operate in the natural realm, are inconsistent in that they expect a suspension of laws given to govern spiritual or religious life. The apostles made no such mistake. There is not a single case recorded in the New Testament of an inspired man asking God to vary the terms of the gospel for any individual.

When Jesus commissioned His apostles, He stated the Law of Pardon. "**Thus it behoved Christ to suffer and die, that repentance and remission of sins in His name should be preached to all people**". "**Go, preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved**". "**Make disciples of all nations, baptising them, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded thee**."

Here is the law showing how a sinner may be reconciled to God, and when answering anxious inquiries inspired men always recognised the validity of this law.

WHO WILL DARE TO ALTER GOD'S LAW

To the Jewish murderers of Jesus Christ, Peter preached His resurrection and ascension to David's throne at the right hand of the Father, and then commanded those who believed to **"repent and be baptised for the remission of sins"**. (Acts 2:38).

The God-fearing, just and generous Centurian (Acts 10) was commanded to conform to the same law and obey the same commandments. The educated religious Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, was likewise told to **"arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins"** (Acts 22).

Although Saul of Tarsus had been in conversation with the Risen Lord, and in a special way the Holy Spirit had manifested His presence to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, and to Cornelius at Caesarea, God did not vary the law. Each person was reconciled to God in the same way.

The way into Christ is by baptism, **"for as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ"** (Gal. 3:27). **"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God"** (Jno. 3:5).

So certain, and final, and definite was the teaching of Christ and His apostles, that no one ever entertained the idea of asking God to suspend the law and receive believers in some way other than repentance and baptism.

Those baptised into Christ continued to study the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42; Matt. 28:20). This was inevitable because God's law governing all religious life had been revealed to them (John 16:13).

Spiritual growth is dependent upon knowledge of, and conformity to, the law governing one's religious life. Since the law has not changed, those baptised into Christ today, must study the teachings of the apostles lest they perish through lack of knowledge.

"If you leave out what the Bible teaches about baptism this building will be full," was the remark of a visitor during a question-period at a Church of Christ, mission recently. Perhaps he was right, but the church of the Lord is dishonest if it trims its way to seek popularity. It is charged with the duty of declaring the whole counsel of God that honest folk might know how to live in accordance with the Law of God.

C. SMITH

HOW MUCH TIME IS LEFT?

A man's house was burning. At the first sign of smoke he had rushed out to buy a fire extinguisher. Before he returned, the roof and walls had collapsed, destroying his furnishings.

A man's doctor warned him of a bad heart condition. From the doctor's office he went immediately to the insurance salesman, but he was refused in his attempts to provide financial protection for his wife and children.

A man was endowed by God with a strong healthy body. Because his appetite was stronger than his moral convictions, he squandered his powers and dissipation brought him to weakness. Then disease struck, and without normal reserve of strength the surgeon could not cure what ordinarily would have been a minor ailment.

A man had a Bible, knew the church was interested in him, had friends who regularly encouraged him to live more for God. With consistency he made reasons not to, while his conscience grew fainter, and the black wrong and white right faded into medium grey. When the critical temptation came, he was only faintly aware of it, and certainly he had no moral reserve to resist it.

David said it this way; "For this let every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when Thou mayest be found: surely when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach unto him" (Psalms 31:6).

Jesus said the same thing in describing the five foolish virgins in Matthew 25, and the wise and foolish builders in Matthew 7:24-47.

When the operation begins, it is too late to take vitamin pills. When the battle begins, it is too late to train the troops. When the flood waters rise, it is too late to find a rock foundation. When Satan tempts, they only can resist who have prepared themselves properly.

Memorize that verse now; when you need it you won't have time. Worship God this Sunday; when you need that strength you won't have time. Repent of that sin now; when the Lord comes you won't have time. Renew your broken connection with the Church now; at your funeral you won't have time. Become a Christian now; in the judgement it will be too late.

Selected.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 4	Proverbs 29:11-23	Mark 10:32-45
May 11	Psalms 118:15-29	Mark 10:46 to 11:10
May 18	Jeremiah 7:1-11	Mark 11:11-26
May 25	Isaiah 5:1-17	Mark 11:27 to 12:12

JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH

Jesus plainly told His apostles: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again" (10:33-34). This, of course, is exactly what happened to Him. It could not have been easy for the Master to utter these words. I like what the Hebrew writer later penned: ". . . looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2).

God sees the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end. He is not subject to time and space as we are. His realm is eternity. The vision of God is

quite staggering. He knows the future because past, present and future are nothing to Him. Dear reader, what future does the Almighty see for you?

THE REQUEST OF JAMES AND JOHN

These two brothers asked for this: "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on your right hand and the other on your left hand, in your glory" (10:37). They wanted the most privileged positions in Jesus' kingdom (I am certain that they thought in terms of an earthly kingdom.) They were ambitious and Jesus, therefore, had to go on and give them and, indeed, the other apostles, a lesson on humility. Jesus used Himself as the supreme example (10:45). William Barclay has written: "In the Kingdom of Jesus the standard was that of service. Greatness consisted, not in reducing other men to one's service, but in reducing oneself to their service. The test was not, What service can I extract?, but, What service can I give?"

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

The crucifixion of Jesus is now far away. But first we read of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This was a fulfilment of prophecy. We read in Zechariah: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: he is just

and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (9:9). What did all this mean. It meant that the King was coming in peace. You see, when a king went to war he rode on a horse, when he came in peace he rode on an ass. So the lesson is clear: Jesus was King and he was the King of peace.

What was the significance of the coats and the branches? It was to give Jesus a right royal welcome. We are reminded of a similar incident in the anointing of Jehu (2 Kings 9:13). The people cried: "Hosanna!" which is a Hebrew expression meaning "Save" and which became an exclamation of praise. (The latter verses of Psalm 118 should be read in conjunction with verses 9 and 10.)

JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE

The temple in Jerusalem dominated the city. It is clear that Jesus regarded it as holy. Remember, the word "holy" simply means different. That which is holy is different from ordinary things. So the Sabbath day is different from other days; the temple is different from other buildings; and so the sabbath and the temple are holy. No wonder then that Jesus drove out those who bought and sold in this unique edifice! In getting His point across He, as ever, appealed to the Scriptures (Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11). It is clear from this incident that Jesus was never fearful of being controversial in His day for the truth's sake. The wicked leaders responded by planning to kill Him (11:18). Our Lord was no stranger to danger.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

The power of prayer should never be underestimated. Tennyson once wrote that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of". I have the following statements about prayers in my folders: "Prayer is not a means of escape, it is a means of conquest". "Prayer does not normally promise or achieve release from some situation; it brings power and endurance to meet and to overcome that

situation". "Prayer is the cooperation of our effort with the grace of God". "Prayer is keeping our friendship with God in constant repair". "Prayer is at least as much accepting the will of God as asking God for what our will desires". "Prayer is the most natural activity in the world". "Prayer is not a way of making use of God; prayer is a way of offering ourselves to God in order that He should be able to make use of us". "Prayer should be the greatest thing in life, for in its power we shall find that we will emerge triumphantly from anything that life can do to us".

We read: "Therefore I say unto you, **What things soever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them**" (11:24). The Master went on to speak about the importance of forgiveness. I like what Barclay has written on this subject: "For many people prayer is either a pious ritual or a forlorn hope. It should be a thing of burning expectation. Maybe our trouble is that what we want from God is our answer and we do not recognise his answer when it comes". Incidentally, William Barclay is an author I like to read. I possess most of his books - and there are plenty of them! I know he is controversial and too liberal for many. Nevertheless, he has some tremendous insights, given his outstanding knowledge of Greek. But the main point I want to make about him is this: his books on prayer are second to none and I personally use them all the time and would recommend them to any one. I think they are his best works.

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS QUESTIONED

Jesus could handle the verbal attacks of His enemies with, of course, unique ability. They were always trying to get the better of Him, but to no avail. In this incident (11:27-33), He had them on the proverbial horns of a dilemma. Whichever way they answered Him would bring condemnation. So they said: "We cannot tell. And Jesus answering said unto

them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things" (v.33). However, it should all have been clear to them that this man was special - that He was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God. How true it is to say that "there is none so blind as he who will not see!" Physical blindness is a terrible affliction; but, surely, spiritual blindness is far worse.

THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS

Edward E. Armstrong had written: "Since Israel was commonly thought of as a vineyard (Isa. 5:7; Jer. 2:21) the parable would be interpreted by hearers as a description of God's dealing with His recalcitrant and rebellious people". Personally, I have always seen the son in this parable as depicting Jesus Himself. We read: "What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? HE will come and destroy the husbandmen and will give the vineyard unto others" (12:9). I take it that "others" refers to the Gentiles.

Jesus went to quote Psalm 118:22,23. What exactly is its meaning? James MacKnight has commented: "Does not that passage of Scripture plainly foretell that the Messiah shall be rejected by the Jewish great men; and that though they crucify Him, He shall become the head of the corner, or head of the Church? Now, what else is this, but that He shall be believed on by the Gentiles and unite them to the Church of God. as a head cornerstone unites the two sides of a building?"

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TRIBUTE TO LEONARD MORGAN

Our early recollections of Leonard go back to our childhood days when we visited our individual assemblies (Scholes and Albert Street Newtown). Leonard was a very energetic young preacher. The

Bible-School days of the 1940's brought us all closer but it was during those lonely days between the death of Doris (Leonard's first wife) and his remarriage to Rene, that our friendship was really cemented. At that time his visits were frequent; until Rene became his companion for life. When we were asked to write a history of the church in Wigan, Leonard gave us invaluable help from his large library and the church Year-Books, dating back to the commencement of many assemblies, formed around Wigan. In this regard he worked tirelessly (although almost ninety years) to supply us with photostat copies of all the information he gave us: which later proved to be the most helpful information of all. It is very doubtful if anyone else in this country took, or would take, such pains to collect and preserve such meticulous records of churches past and present. It delighted him to do this for us and without his help our task would have been a failure. Leonard took great pleasure in what he could do to be of assistance to anyone.

Around this time we visited each other more frequently and Leonard just loved to talk over past times amongst the churches and we learned a great deal. Latterly it became obvious that his time with us was shortening but still he struggled to do whatever he had to do, for the Lord. What an example he set to us all. Our last visit saw us around his bed, whilst he quoted Psalm 62.

My soul finds rest in God alone;
my salvation comes from Him;
He alone us my rock; and my salvation;
He is my fortress and I shall never be
shaken.

He looked up and said, "That's it". It was time for us to leave. He was a remarkable man.

JACK and DOROTHY PARKER.

(In connection with Leonard's passing I have just received the following interesting letter which is worth inclusion. Ed.)

Dear Mr Gardiner,

I have just read with interest the tribute to my late uncle, Leonard Morgan in the *Scripture Standard*. He really was a remarkable man. I have kept for years a Morgan's Quote he wrote for myself and my husband before we married in 1974. It is perhaps a pity other young couples did not have the same quotations written for them to keep their marriages in harmony.

*"When you marry him, love him,
After you marry him, study him,
If he's secretive, trust him,
If he's sad, cheer him,
When he's talkative, listen to him,
When he's quarrelsome, ignore him,
If he's jealous, cure him,
If he cares nought for pleasure, coax him,
If he favours society, accompany him,
When he deserves it, kiss him,
let him know how well you understand him,
But never let him realise that you manage him"*

Not everyone has had their own personal "gleanings" from my uncle Leonard.

Yours sincerely

KATH and KEN ALSOP (nee Johnson),
6D Caribi Tower, West Moorings,
Port of Spain, Trinidad.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. How many brothers had Joseph?
2. Who was Moses' wife?
3. What was David's native town?
4. What king did Elijah oppose?
5. Name Job's eldest daughter after all his tribulation?
6. Rahab hid two men under the stalks of this plant.
7. Who climbed a tree to see Jesus?
8. Give the two names of the seamstress of Joppa.
9. Who was the chief man of Malta?
10. Who was the Areopagite who cleaved unto Paul and believed.

OBITUARY

Slamannan: The church here regret to announce the death of our eldest brother, George Sneddon. George died on Sunday morning, 23rd February in Bankview Nursing Home, Banknock. He was a very faithful member of the church here; very much respected and will be sadly missed.

To his loving wife Grace, and son David, we extend our deepest sympathy, and may the Lord bless and strengthen them at this time. The service was held in our meeting place, conducted by brother Peter Wilson, and brother John Wilson officiated at the grave side.

MARY M. WILSON

Haddington: the church here is sad to report the passing of brother Jack Nisbet on Thursday, 6th March, 1997, aged 73 years. Jack was one of the founder-members of the small church here (which began in the home of his father, the late Tom Nisbet some forty five years ago) and took an active part in the work of the Church, preaching and teaching. Due to his work commitments Jack and Alice attended the church at Peterhead for about three years, and the church at Ulverston for about ten years, but returned to Haddington, at retirement, some ten years ago. Sadly, soon after retirement, Jack suffered a serious stroke which severely curtailed all his activities thereafter, and, after another recent stroke, Jack died in hospital. Jack had a comprehensive grasp of the scriptures and a ready capacity to pass this knowledge on to others. All his life he went to great lengths to be present at all meetings of the church, and particularly, of course, to be in his place at the Lord's Table on a Sunday morning. He was a wonderful example to all, and will be sorely missed here. We commend Alice, Tom and Ruth to the grace of God at this sad time; and also Tom's wife Joyce and grandchildren Catriona and Struan Jack Nisbet. Jack was held in high regard

everywhere and this was reflected in the large numbers attending his funeral: with a service at the Meetinghouse and Haddington Cemetery.

Newtongrange: We sadly report the death of our highly esteemed brother John Wilson, on Wednesday, 12th February, 1997, in the Marie Curie Hospice in Edinburgh, aged 70 years. John became a member of the church as a very young man and has remained entirely faithful all his life. John was kind and friendly and always in his place at all meetings of the church. For a great many years John had the rather onerous task of ensuring that a different speaker each week spoke at the Thursday afternoon Ladies' Meeting (consisting largely of non-members) and this he did right up to the time of his death. For three long and arduous years John fought a losing battle with his illness, showing remarkable fortitude, courage and cheerfulness. We commend Janette and all the family to the grace of God and pray that He will sustain them in their very sad loss. Brother Joe Currie officiated at a service in the Meetingplace and the Crematorium, with brother David Ferguson leading the prayers

THANKS

The family of the late George Sneddon wish to thank everyone who expressed sympathy by way of letters, cards, telephone calls or visitation. The support shown at a difficult and trying period was deeply appreciated.

Grace Sneddon (Mrs.)

Sister Jannette Wilson and family of Newtongrange would like to thank all those who telephoned, sent letters, cards and flowers during their recent bereavement and those who attended the funeral of her husband John. They also appreciated the support and visits John

received during his illness and would like the brethren to know that they were a real help and comfort during a very trying time.

Alice, Ruth and Tom Nisbet wish to thank all those who sent letters and cards, and who 'phoned and visited, during their recent bereavement.

They also were greatly helped by the support of brethren, and visits made, while Jack was in hospital. All of this was greatly appreciated.

COMING EVENTS

KIRKCALDY ANNUAL SOCIAL

19th April, 1997
at 3.30 p.m.

Speaker: IAN DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

"A JOURNEY INTO FAITH"

We hope to have copies of this book sent to those who ordered it by the time you read this notice. We have had a few minor difficulties but these are all behind us now.

ALF MARSDEN.

GHANA APPEAL

A few months ago we appealed for Solar Lamps for Ghana and last month we reported that one lamp was now installed in the Western Region. I have money in the funds to purchase another two but I was hoping to achieve the target of five before placing the order to attract a discount from the supplier. This month I would like to appeal again for solar powered hand lamps for Bible studies and evening worship. These lamps are about 18 inches high and 7 inches in diameter. They are plugged into a lightweight unbreakable solar panel and it takes about 7 hours to charge the lamp. The lamp will give light to the equivalent

of a 60 watt bulb for 16 hours or 8 hours at the boost setting which gives equivalent of a 100 watt lamp. The lamp, solar panel and cable cost £295 (including VAT) each. The bulb life is 8,000 hours. It is shatterproof and stormproof with 360° of uniform light. If we could raise enough money for another three then there would be one for each meeting place that we have built through the Appeal in the *Scripture Standard* and we know they will be greatly appreciated. Having experienced meetings in the dark with a kerosene lamp which gives off a 15 watt bulb we know this will be extremely helpful in Bible studies. We take our light so much for granted.

Please make cheques payable to Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal), and send to G. Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU, Scotland. Tel: 01383 728624.

THE LONELY CRITIC

Jesus made it painfully clear the judgmentalism always boom-a-rangs. The Bible says in Matt. 7, "Judge not that you be judged, for with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And the measure you give will be the measure you get." Judgmental people are lonely people. Not only do others avoid a self-appointed critic, but they are also motivated to return

judgment for judgment. It was Charles Kingsley, the 19th century English preacher and writer who said, "If you wish to be miserable you must think about yourself, about what you want, what you like, what respect people ought to pay you. Then, to you, nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch, you will make sin and misery out of everything God sends you. You can be as wretched as you choose." And I think of those words, "as wretched as I choose"?! Why absolutely yes! Judgmentalism is the sure path of wretchedness! The loneliness of the self appointed efficiency expert who tries to check everyone's productivity according to his own standards is obviously self-imposed.

10. Dionysius (Acts 17:34).

9. Publius (Acts 28:7).

8. Tabitha and Dorcas (Acts 9:36).

7. Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-4)

6. Elisha (Joshua 2:6).

5. Jemimah (Job 42:14).

4. Ahab (1 Kings 18:17-18).

3. Bethshehem (1 Samuel 16:1).

2. Zipporah (Exodus 2:21).

1. Eleven (Genesis 35:22).

ANSWERS

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