

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 54 No. 9

OCTOBER, 1986

ODD MAN OUT

Another intrepid sailor has just set out from these shores in a tiny boat, a few feet long, to row single-handedly across the vast Atlantic Ocean. This seems quite popular these days and the boats get smaller and smaller. A local lad tried the journey three times and perished on his third attempt. Some of us may regard these men (and sometimes women) as slightly soft in the head; even crazy, but we must all concede that there is a certain kind of raw bravery involved. To challenge, in this way, the awesome might of the Atlantic, on one's own, must take great courage and fortitude. There are many other types of 'loners' in the world, of course, past and present, who deserve our admiration for their individual challenges, not to an ocean perhaps, but to governments, to trade unions, to giant corporations, to tyrants and dictators of all kinds. These range from the martyrs of history to the Russian 'dissidents' of today. Man is a gregarious kind of animal and is most comfortable in the ranks of the 'majority' but occasionally a small minority (even a minority of only one) stands out from the crowd and follows some noble cause to the very end: even to death itself. The poet Burns was a great admirer of "the man of independent mind", the non-conformist; the man who was not always seen to be **walking in step** with 'society'.

I have been reading lately of the American naturalist Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) and he was a real non-conformist; a true 'loner' in many ways. Born in Concord (Mass.) he travelled little and was happy to explore the flora and fauna of his own beautiful locality. From an early age he was a naturalist and was officially collecting specimens at the age of 12 years. Although he studied at Harvard, and lectured for a while, he supported himself as a surveyor only to secure the very basics of life. He had the view that the less labour a man did, over and above positive necessity, the better it was for himself and the community in general, and he suggested the reversal of the biblical order and that there should be 6 days rest and 1 days labour. In 1845 he made the famous experiment at Walden in which he tried to show that man could exist in raw nature, just as the animals could. He retired to a hut in Walden Woods (which he built and furnished with his own hands) and survived there for 2 years before emerging once again to take up more serious pursuits (pencil making etc.). During his time in the forest birds came to his call, forgetting their hereditary fear of men; wild beasts licked and caressed him and even fish in the stream would glide unafraid between his hands. He was a truly interesting character, clearly of an independent mind, and notwithstanding his books and poetry, still preferred his furred and feathered friends to people.

Out Of Step With Society

Thoreau was an eccentric genius and author of much home-spun wisdom. When asked why he was so often at odds with 'Society' and out of step with the majority of other men, he replied, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step out to the music that he hears, however, measured or far away." This was typical of the Thoreau's homely sagacity and the way he could explain deep profundity with a simplicity both poetical and colourful. Surely it is true that men move in all directions, even in opposite directions, all obviously being driven by varying motives, all listening to different voices, marching to the beat of different drums, led by the music of contrasting rhythm. Certainly we are all out of step, and at odds one with the other, because we are all listening to different promptings, all receiving different instructions. What a difference it makes when we are all listening to the same drum. The 'Changing of The Guard' in London attracts, regularly, large and enthusiastic crowds and one of the fascinations is the precision marching of the Grenadier Guards and the Scots Guards. They are never out of step, for they are all listening to the same commands and the same drum.

A long time prior to Thoreau, Jesus said, "Can two walk together (in step) except they be agreed." The Christian world all claim to be led by Jesus, but why then are they not all in step: why the deep divisions and schisms? — clearly we are all listening to voices, other than that of Jesus. Obviously minorities are not always, *per se*, on the side of truth and we must ever be making double-checks that our stance, on matters of faith and practice, are indeed reverting back to primitive Christianity. Many minorities are as wide of the mark as majorities. I suppose we've all heard of the proud mother who, when watching a 'Passing-out' parade of a battalion of the Black Watch Regiment, in which her son was conspicuously taking part, exclaimed, "Would you believe it, they're all out o' step except oor Jock". And so, being out of step with the religious world is no ready guarantee that we are walking in close harmony with God; we must re-examine our position constantly.

Each time I see a band now, with men marching behind it, I shall think of what Thoreau said, and the kind of drums we should listen to. I suppose to the present generation a band coming to our village would be 'old hat' but I know that when I was young all the children used to run for miles 'following the band' quite oblivious to the distance travelled, and this often resulted in anxious parents hunting through the streets for lost children. What could be more exciting than the beat of the drums and the thrill of the music. I still have the urge to join the children and run after the band but manage to fight off the temptation and the possible explanation to the psychiatrist. I did, however, eventually join one of these bands and played the euphonium (rather poorly). Or was Thoreau, when he gave his answer, thinking of the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin? This story, usually thought of as a children's fairy-tale, was based, apparently, on the Childrens Crusade in the year 1212, and has, the more we reflect upon it, more affinity with reality than with folklore. Men are indeed, blithely following after all manner of present-day pied-pipers, to their certain destruction. **The devil is the real pied-piper**, and is bewitching the world with his seductive strains. Let us beware of the drums we hear and the music we follow.

The Real Question

On another occasion it seems that Henry Thoreau fell foul of the authorities, and on his refusal to pay some tax, or other, was sent to jail. When his good friend Ralph Waldo Emerson, (the great American poet and essayist), heard of Thoreau's incarceration he rushed to the prison and, peering through the bars, exclaimed "Why, Henry! What are you doing in here.?" To which the indignant and unrepentant Thoreau replied, "Nay, Ralph, the question is, What are you doing out there.?" The reply is amusing but once again there may be more wisdom in it than appears at first sight.

The apostle Paul, for instance, might have asked the same question to those who visited him in prison. If Paul was in prison for preaching the gospel, and for enduring the hardships of the Christian life, why were there not more Christians in prison? What were his contemporaries "doing out there"? Were they compromising with the authorities: were they conforming to the world; were they opting for the quiet life; were they walking in step with the devil? I suppose it is a good question to ask ourselves, "What are we doing out here"? If we are not encountering opposition is it because we are preserving a silence on things about which we ought to be militant? Have we come to terms with the world, and called a truce with evil.? Have we deserted the ranks of the Saviour and gone over to the enemy.? Are we hiding our light under a bushel, or are we giving no illumination whatsoever? Jesus said that the servant will not be greater than his master and that as the world had persecuted Him so it would illuse His followers. "And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake". James says, "Know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God, whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God".

It is difficult to believe that the apostle Paul had critics, but in 11 Cor. 11:23 he reluctantly replies to them. "Are they (his critics) ministers of Christ (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure; in prisons more frequent; in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeyings often; in perils of waters; in perils of robbers; in perils of mine own countrymen; in perils by the heathen; in perils in the city; in perils in the wilderness; in perils in the sea; in perils amongst false brethren. In weariness and painfulness; in watchings often; in hunger and thirst; in fastings often; in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches". "This" says Paul to his critics, "is what I have been doing. But what are you doing – out there"? This, indeed, is a very good question for us all. If we were to be arrested for being Christians would there be enough evidence to convict us.? Many of the heroic martyrs who died lonely deaths, or rotted in solitude in some dank dungeon, might well ask us "And what are you doing – out there"? It seems that when personal danger looms we all have a tendency to 'look after number one' and to take evasive action. Certainly when Jesus was crucified "all His disciples forsook Him and fled". Paul could say (at his trial in Rome) "...no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge". Doubtless we must all hope that a great number of things, quite apart from cowardice, will not be laid to our charge, especially when we reflect upon exactly what "we are doing out here," in our hours of freedom.

Conclusion

The chances are that if we remain faithful to our Lord we shall be out of step with the world and with much of what passes for Christianity – we might even find ourselves out of step with some of our brethren. Above all we must walk in step with Jesus; walking in love and as the children of light (Eph. 5); we must also walk in wisdom (Col. 4): walk in fear (Acts 9); we must not walk in darkness (John 12); but we must walk even as He walked (1 John 2). Often we may find ourselves alone, in a minority of one, 'out on a limb' in the religious world, but this is nothing really new. Most of the O.T. worthies and prophets were vastly outnumbered and fought lonely battles. Even Elijah found the odds too much for him at times and once, in a fit of depression, hid in a cave fretting that he was the very last prophet, and all alone. God asked him this same question that Thoreau posed: "What doest thou here, Elijah"? and later comforted him with the news that he was not really alone for God had reserved 7,000 men in Israel who had not bowed down to Baal. Paul also could say, when he mentioned that at his trial all men forsook him, "Notwithstanding the

Lord stood with me, and strengthened me ..." (11 Tim. 4:16), just as 'angels came' and ministered unto a tempted Jesus.

There are, of course, many who may not be comfortable in being associated with small minorities but who seek reassurance in being identified with large majorities (safety in numbers) and I suppose we all suffer from this 'herd' instinct but our salvation is an 'individual' matter (between one person and God) and so we must preserve an independency of mind. Jesus, we remember, said that the broad road led to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat, but narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few will ever find it.

Dare to be a Daniel
Dare to stand alone
Dare to have a purpose firm
Dare to make it known!

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

ELIJAH

"Elijah had a heavenly name, but he had, to begin with, but an earthly nature. Elijah was a man, to begin with, subject to like passions as we are. Elijah was a man, indeed, of passions all compact. We never see Elijah that he is not subject to some passion or other. A passion of scorn and contempt; a passion of anger and revenge; a passion of sadness and dejection and despair; a passion of preaching; a passion of prayer. Elijah was a great man. There was a great mass of manhood in Elijah. He was a Mount-Sinai of a man, with a heart like a thunderstorm. That man among ourselves who has the most human nature in him and the most heart; the most heart and the most passion in his heart; the most love and the most hate; the most anger and the most meekness; the most scorn and the most sympathy; the most sunshine and the most melancholy; the most agony in prayer, and the most victorious assurance that, all the time, his prayer is already answered — that man is the likeliest of us all to the prophet Elijah; that man has Elijah's own mantle fallen upon him. Only, alas! there is no such man among us. There is no man among us fit, for one moment, to stand like Elijah before God."

Alexander Whyte.

WE QUOTE — WILLIAM LAW

"If a Father is intemperate, if he swears and converses foolishly with his friends, let him not wonder that his children cannot be made virtuous. For there is nothing that teaches to any purpose but our ordinary temper, our common life and conversation; and almost all people will be such as those amongst whom they were born and bred. If a father would pray every day to God to inspire his children with true piety, great humility, and strict temperance, what could be more likely to make the father himself become exemplary in these virtues? How naturally would he grow ashamed of wanting such virtues as he thought necessary for his children."

THE ONE WITH THE BEST MEMORY

"Whatever appears in the mind, must be introduced; and, when introduced, it is as the associate of something already there ... The one who thinks over his experiences most, and weaves them into the most systematic relation with each other, will be the one with the best memory."

William James.

GOD'S EXCELLENCY

“Immediately after my conversation, God’s excellency began to appear to me in everything – in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, in the waters, and in all nature. The Son of God created this world for this very end, to communicate to us through it a certain image of His own excellency, so that when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezes of wind we may see in all that only the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and the snow-white lily, we are to see His love and His purity. Even so the green trees, and the songs of birds, what are they but the emanations of His infinite joy and benignity? The crystal rivers and murmuring streams, what are they but the footsteps of His favour and grace and beauty? When we behold the brightness of the sun, the golden edges of the evening cloud, or the beauteous rainbow spanning the whole heaven, we but behold some adumbration of His glory and His Goodness. And, without any doubt, this is the reason that Christ is called the Sun of Righteousness, the Morning Star, the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley, the appletree among the trees of the wood, a bundle of myrrh, a roe, a young hart. But we see the most proper image of the beauty of Christ when we see the beauty of the soul of man.”

Jonathan Edwards.

BEHOLD A SANCTUARY!

“Worthy and dear lady, in the strength of Christ, fight and overcome. Ye are now yourself alone, but ye may have, for the seeking, three always in your company, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I trust they are near you. Ye are now deprived of the comfort of a lively ministry; so was Israel in their captivity; yet hear God’s promise to them: “Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God, although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come” (Ezek. 11.16). Behold a sanctuary! for a sanctuary, God Himself in the place and room of the temple of Jerusalem! I trust in God, that carrying this temple about with you, ye shall see Jehovah’s beauty in His house.”

Samuel Rutherford.

WHO ARE THE MEEK?

“Who are the Meek?” once inquired a missionary in Jamaica from a class of black boys. One replied: “Those who give soft answers to rough questions.”

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

ARE YOU SEEKING TRUTH?

There can be no more noble mind than the mind of a man searching for the truth. Whether it be in the scientific, political, or religious realm, he alone who searches constantly for the truth has the possibility of progressing beyond the realm where he now stands. Those who are willing to follow blindly their human leaders and who are unwilling to search, themselves, for any additional truth they might find, will never be able to progress beyond the level to which their own human leaders have already led them.

In the religious realm, truth is described by Jesus simply as the “word of God” in John 17. Since the Word of God is complete, thoroughly furnishing us unto every good work, and since it is a perfect law of liberty, all the truth there is in the religious realm can be found in it. That which has for its authority no other source than some human source, can, of a surety, be branded as false in religion. Only the Word of God is true. The Word of God contains all religious truth we need for the present and the generations to come.

The New Testament was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit for the precise purpose of giving to the world God's complete law of liberty in absolute, infallible form. These men wrote not their own minds; they wrote as the Spirit gave them utterance. Therefore, God transferred to writing his immutable law. Today, he who picks up his New Testament and reads it, finds God speaking to him as surely as if the heavens opened and the voice of God were to speak to his natural ear. Every word in the New Testament has behind it all the authority of Heaven. It is eternal truth. Not one sentence can be left out without ruining its perfection; and not one sentence can be added to it without destroying its infallibility. It is perfect – undeniable, eternal truth – just like it is. Indeed as Paul wrote the Corinthian Church, "Which things we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but in words which the Holy Spirit teaches." In the New Testament we find the message of God as God wanted it delivered to human beings. He who reads the New Testament learns the will of God, and he who obeys the commands of the New Testament obeys God. It is foolish to refer to some of the facts stated in the New Testament as untrue. It is just as foolish to refer to some of the commands of the New Testament as non-essential.

If you are seeking after the truth, this principle must be constantly maintained in your mind. The religion of Jesus Christ offers the only hope to the world. Jesus died on Calvary's cross that his blood might empower the plan of salvation. That plan is the greatest plan the world has ever had. Everything else, regardless of the zeal with which it is proclaimed, falls short in its ability to save the soul.

It was Jesus himself who said in John 18:37, "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice. Those who are not of the truth, but are of error, hear the voice of another." Thus it was when Jesus walked among men; so it is now. Many men honour God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. "In vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15). The apostle John, guided by the Spirit, said: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the son" (2 John 9:10).

Those who seek the truth find it, for Jesus has promised that "He that seeketh findeth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Therefore, search for truth diligently. In no realm in all the world is the truth so important as in the realm of religion. The consequences of error stretch so far beyond the horizon of this present life that to be wrong in religion would be disastrous.

Ruel Lemmons,
Cleburne, Texas.

JONAH

Jonah was a prophet of some importance in Israel, (the northern kingdom of 10 tribes of the Jews) in the time of Jeroboam the second, who began his long reign of 41 years in 825 B.C. (2 Kings 14:25). Apart from this reference, all we know about him is:

THE EVENTS RECORDED IN THE BOOK IN THE BIBLE WHICH BEARS HIS NAME.

1. Told by God to go to Nineveh and preach the message, "Repent or Perish!" This was an assignment of tremendous proportions.
 - (a) It would involve a long, arduous and perilous journey.
 - (b) Jonah had lived all his life in the little territory of Israel and, as a parochial Jew, would have had no sympathy with the great outside world.
 - (c) Nineveh was a mighty city, capital of a vast empire. Its population at that time is estimated to have been 600,000.
 - (d) He would have had no desire to go on a mission of possible mercy to a heathen nation which he abhorred, and which was an enemy of his own nation.

2. Finding the whole idea repugnant, Jonah fled in the opposite direction to Nineveh, even though it involved a sea voyage. The facts of the story may be read in the book.
3. Jonah finally preached to the Ninevites, with wonderful results, but he gave way to jealous disappointment that the city was not destroyed as he hoped it would be.

SOME LESSONS FROM THE BOOK

1. That God is the God of **all men** and things. Nineveh, no less than Jerusalem, was under His scrutiny.
2. That it is disastrous to try to run away from God, to refuse the duties He would have us do. So don't be a Jonah.
3. That God's judgments are tempered with mercy. He always accepts genuine repentance.
4. That a narrow, bigoted, unsympathetic, self-righteous and unforgiving spirit is a great evil. So don't be a Jonah.
5. That God's message is greater than the human messengers.
6. That merely one act of repentance is not enough. Nineveh later went back to its wickedness (that is, later generations of Ninevites) and the city was destroyed. No generation of people can live on the spiritual capital of its predecessors.

SOME DIFFICULTIES ABOUT THIS BOOK

Is it history, or simply a figurative story told to convey some spiritual truth? Some question its historical accuracy.

1. It is said that it could not have been written by Jonah nor by anyone else living in his time. The argument is that Nineveh was destroyed in 606 B.C., but Jonah lived around 825 B.C. Now Chapter 3:3 says that Nineveh was a great city, so it is claimed that the writer lived after Jonah's time and was referring back to it. But this is a failure to note the normal meaning of the language, which simply means that when Jonah got to Nineveh he found it was a great city.
2. The psalm in chapter 2 contains many expressions and ideas similar to some of the Psalms which were written much later, so Jonah must have lived after those later Psalms were written to be able to quote from them. But is there anything against those later Psalms quoting from Jonah's?
3. The matter of Jonah being swallowed by the great fish has been objected to as fact. But consider:
 - (a) the original language does not say it was a whale, simply a great fish. It need not have been any special fish, for the word "prepared" only means "appointed".
 - (b) two things were not miraculous, namely, Jonah being swallowed by the fish, and Jonah being vomited up again.
 - (c) the miracle is in Jonah's being kept alive. To say that God **could** not do this is to deny God altogether. To say that He **would** not do it if He wanted to is absurd. To say that He **did not** do it is begging the question.
 - (d) the three days and nights need not mean more than 26 or 28 hours by Jewish method of counting time, but three **full** days is not out of the question.
4. The plain, straightforward meaning of Matt. 12:39-41 is that Jesus accepted the historical truth of the book of Jonah.

J. K. Robinson.

(Sent in by Trevor Streeton, Mayland, Western Australia.)

THE ELECTION OF GOD

“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” (1 Thess. 1:4) makes the doctrine of election a certainty, but is it the doctrine taught to the poet Robbie Burns who wrote as follows:?

“O Thou, who in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha as it pleases best Thyself,
Sends ane to heaven, and ten to hell,
A’ for Thy glory.
And no for ony guid or ill
They’ve done afore Thee.”

Surely the doctrine implied in the verse dishonours man and libels God!

The Bible doctrine of election harmonizes with all truth expressed in His word: “God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him.” Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.” “O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Unconditional Election

The study of this doctrine is simplified by dividing it into (1) Unconditional Election and (2) Conditional Election. Under the first let us consider (a) that CYRUS was unconditionally elected, **not to salvation**, but to be the conqueror of Belshazzar, the destroyer of the Babylonian Kingdom, and to be the restorer of Jerusalem. Long before he was born Jehovah called him by name, and appointed his work, which in due time he performed. (Isa. 44:28, 45:1-4) (b) PHARAOH was unconditionally elected, **but not to salvation**. “For this cause have I raised thee up for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth! If there be those who insist that he was raised to an unenviable position, let them be reminded that Paul distinctly tells us that the question of honourable use depends upon ourselves. (2 Tim. 2:20-21). If God be accused of hardening Pharaoh’s heart, let it be said distinctly that Pharaoh hardened his own heart by rejecting the message sent to him. (Exodus 8:1, 29-32). It is not hard to see why it is said, “The sun that hardens the clay melts the wax.” Surely it is a difference in the material! (c) JACOB was unconditionally elected, and the election was made before he was born. (Rom. 9:11). But to what was he elected ... **surely not to personal salvation**. Let us notice: (1st) that it was a national election ... “...and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” (Gen. 25:23). Therefore, it is plainly stated for all time that these two children were regarded as representatives of two nations, **and only thus was Jacob elected**. (2nd) This statement is corroborated by the fact that as individuals the elder never served the younger. Read the beautiful story of the reconciliation of Esau and Jacob and weep over the fact that two representative nations face each other today armed to the teeth and ready to fight each other in a war that might involve the world in a holocaust! When and how then was the prophecy fulfilled? Some seven hundred years after it was made it was fulfilled as recorded in 2 Samuel 8:14, “... throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David’s servants.” (3rd) Had the election been to personal salvation, then all the offspring of Jacob must have been saved, however bad; and all the offspring of Esau would have been lost, however good. But it is recorded that Jesus said to some of Jacob’s offspring, “... if ye believe not that I am He, you shall surely die in your sins.”

Conditional Election

And now to the second: **CONDITIONAL SALVATION**. The term **conditional** must imply the election of those who comply with **specified conditions**. "God has visited the nations to take out of them a people for his name." This election is presented in the New Testament in two different ways, the ideal and the actual, which must not be confused. Let us read Eph. 1:3-4. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or things) in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in Love." The word "world" here is **KOSMOS**, the material world. Therefore, before man had existence this election took place. We have the matter presented here as it was present to the mind of the Almighty. He calls those things which are not, as though they were; so sure is He that that upon which He has set His heart shall be brought about. There is no need for God to experiment, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning," "Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Now is there anything in the Bible which will help us to settle this problem? Turn to Romans 16:7 and read, "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and fellow prisoners who are of note among the Apostles; who also were in Christ before me." Now, if all the elect were actually in Christ before the foundation of the world was laid, how could some of Paul's kinsmen be in Christ before he was? God sees the end from the beginning and therefore speaks of plans as if already accomplished. He determines that those thus redeemed and reconciled shall be those brought into Christ. Can anything be plainer than 2 Thess. 2:13-14, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you **to salvation** through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: where unto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Can anything be plainer? We are called by the gospel; by our belief of the truth and sanctification of the Spirit, we are chosen or elected: not merely to some position of usefulness and honour: but **to salvation**. We choose to be elected. We can readily see how some of Paul's kinsmen could be in Christ before he was. "Knowing brethren beloved your election of God," is in full agreement with 1 Peter 1:1-2. The gospel is God's elective agency. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." This is our way to salvation. His resurrection makes possible our deliverance from the grave. "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." But those already in Christ must accept the warning of the apostle "to make their calling and election sure." There are those who teach that once saved there is no chance of falling. However, the apostle Peter warns us with a little word "if" that having escaped the corruption of the world we must **add to our faith**; and if we do these things we shall never fail: (read 2 Peter 1:1-11.)

Earl B. Severson,
Burnaby, Canada.

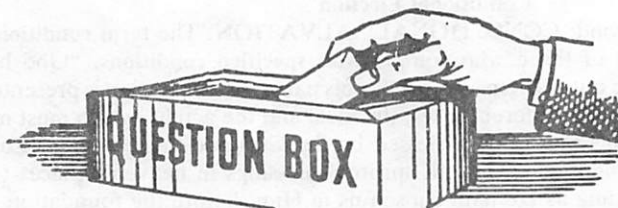
MONEY

Money can buy the husk of many things, but not the kernel. It brings good food, but not appetite, medicine, but not health, acquaintances, but not friends, servants, but not faithfulness, days of pleasure, but not pleasure and happiness.

Hendrick Ibsen.

An atheist has a reason, but no hope for his reason. A hypocrite has hope, but no reason for his hopes. But....a Christian has a reason for his hope and hope for his reason. This life with Christ is an endless hope — without him it is a hopeless end.

Charles Lasater.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I find great difficulty in understanding the Book of the Revelation of John in the New Testament. Is it a Book which it is important to understand?"

Dear questioner, you are not alone in your non-understanding of this important portion of God's Word, and in the past many so-called expositions of it have tended only to confuse rather than to illuminate. However, what we **do** know is that the Revelation is an accepted part of the Canon of Scripture, and consequently it **must** be important for us to try to understand what it teaches. The problem, it seems to me, is one of approach.

The Problem of Approach

The book is remarkable for its vivid symbolism and imagery. We read of a 'great prostitute, beasts, monsters, a great red dragon, false prophets,' etc., and a younger person of today could be excused for thinking that he was pre-viewing an episode of 'Dr. Who' for showing later on T.V. Because of this vivid symbolism many Christians have given up the study in despair, and consequently have not understood the important link with all that has gone before.

There are two basic approaches to the study of the Revelation. The starting point for the first approach is the pre-supposition that the content is wholly prophetic and the fulfilment futuristic. This approach has led to all sorts of problems, not the least of which has been the interpretation of the symbolism in terms of contemporary world events. Consequently, events which have had a perfectly rational explanation in social, economic, or political terms have had attributed to them unwarranted religious overtones. In other words, because the Revelation has been approached in **futuristic** terms, the interpretation has been **made to fit** with contemporary events, even when it has been obvious that there could have been no valid connection. This is **not** a very good method of scriptural exegesis.

The second method of approach pre-supposes that the recorded events had **already** been fulfilled when the Canon of Scripture was formulated into what we now know to be the Bible. The opening verses of the Revelation seem to lend some support to this view because the stated objective in verse 1 was "to show unto his servants things which must **shortly** come to pass", and in verse 3 the exhortation was "to keep those things which are written therein: for the time is **at hand**". As one of the tenets of sound interpretation is to give words their normal grammatical meaning, unless the context forbids it, the serious student must conclude that the phrases 'shortly come to pass', and 'the time is at hand', bespeak imminent fulfilment. Even so, it must be realised that the theory of making events 'fit in' with the interpretation can be applied in this approach also.

Therefore, there must be an approach to the understanding of the Revelation which is wholly consistent with the main thrust of the teaching in the Old and New Testaments, and as this teaching is concerned prophetically and actually with the Messiah then it would seem to follow that what was revealed to John on the Isle of Patmos should be vitally connected with Him and necessary for the affirmation of belief and faith in Him.

The Christological Approach

It seems to me that the whole cosmic drama has crystallised into one great conflict – the conflict between good and evil. The protagonists are Christ and Satan. God defines the outcome in the cradle of creative history, the Garden of Eden, when He says to Satan, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15 N.I.V.). In the very last book of the Bible, John is given an ‘unveiling’ (apocalypse) of this great unseen conflict, and it is portrayed in startling symbolism. There is a clear message at each stage. So, what is revealed to John, and how important are the messages?

The Candlesticks

There are seven of them, and they symbolise seven churches which are identified geographically. Even though these churches are symbolised by candlesticks they are nonetheless real. The Lord looks at them in turn, assesses their performance, and pronounces judgment.

The message to succeeding generations from that time onwards is plain and unambiguous. The Lord knows all about us wherever we are. He fought the initial great fight against Satan and defeated Him, but He knows that Satan is still rampant in the world. He desposited the Truth with those who should follow Him. The Church is His extended arm, and in its several localities He expects that the truth of the Gospel will burn brightly and with undiminished intensity. We Christians should never denigrate the value of the Church to the Lord. It is His executive arm in the unremitting battle against Satan in the quest for the souls of men.

Worthy the Lamb

John now sees a book sealed with seven seals. He wept because there was no one worthy in heaven, or in earth, or under the earth to open the seals. He is told not to weep because the Lion of Juda, the Root of David, had prevailed to open the book. John now sees a Lamb as it had been slain, and it took the book out of the hand of He who sat upon the throne. Then the thousands around the throne cried, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (5:12). John also saw a great multitude which no man could number arrayed in white robes. They had come out of great tribulation and had washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb (ch.7). Surely this is a re-affirmation that only Christ can save, and that any righteousness we can claim is directly attributable to Him. Only He is worthy.

The White Horse

John saw heaven opened, and a white horse whose rider was called Faithful and True. He went out to judge and to make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and he had many crowns on his head. He had a name written on His thigh, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. Prior to this (ch. 17) John had seen Satan symbolised as a red beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. Sitting on him was a prostitute with a golden cup filled with abominations and filthiness of her fornications. On her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS. There were also ten kings who were accomplices of Satan and the harlot, and an angel said to John, “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of Lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful”.

Here, surely, is unveiled to John the majestic power of Christ and His saints. What a conquering Saviour! The Lion of Juda shall break every chain, and give us the victory again and again! The beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. But we must remember that evil is still the weapon which Satan wields against the Church, but the message is that he cannot prevail against our champion, our Saviour and our Redeemer, the Christ of God.

The New Jerusalem

John is now shown the consummation of this apocalyptic vision. He sees the glorified Church, the Bride of Christ, coming down out of heaven, adorned for her husband. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband (21:1,2). What could be more appropriate? A glorified Christ and a glorified Church! The message from God is, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God and he shall by my son" (21:7). We overcome by our faith and obedience to Christ. We overcome because **He** overcame. He is our righteousness, and the promises of God are secure in Him, as Paul says, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4:13).

During my Christian life other Christians have said to me, 'You are obsessed with the Church'. Why should we not be obsessed with the Church? It is our spiritual heritage. It is the Bride of Christ. The beautiful picture that John paints of the glorified Church is breathtaking in its splendour and should make us echo the final words of the Revelation, "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Conclusion

Is it important for us to understand the Revelation? We may as well ask, "Is it important for us to understand the Bible." Over the years I have come to realise that the whole Bible is concerned with Christ and the battle with Satan. I feel sure that the Revelation gives us a real insight into that struggle, and expresses the ultimate outcome. Christians should feel uplifted and strengthened and ever ready to contend as their Lord and Master has, knowing that the victory is assured in Him.

(All questions please to: Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan, Lancs. WN3 6ES).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nov. 2	1 Chron. 16,7-36	Acts 14
Nov. 9	Amos 9	Acts 15,1-21
Nov. 16	Daniel 1	Acts 15,22-35
Nov. 23	Neh. 2	Acts 15,36-16,15
Nov. 30	1 Sam. 28,3-20	Acts 16,16-40

REJECTED BUT NOT CAST DOWN

The experience in Antioch in Pisidia made no difference in the plans of Paul and Barnabas and both spoke boldly in the synagogue at Iconium. It seems evident that the Jewish folk in these heathen towns had quite an influence in turning them towards worship of the true God for Gentiles heard the gospel in the synagogue to good purpose. The good tidings of God's love must have astonished them seeing the Jews did not proselytise enthusiastically, but new

men with so strong a message brought immediate response, and we suppose in any case "Grecian" Jews living among them certainly did exercise a good influence by their good moral habits, especially apparently among influential citizens (13,50:14,5 & 19). Growing numbers of believers produced a divided community, jealousy brought violent threats backed by local authority, and the preachers had to leave the town as at Antioch. Note the "signs and wonders" and The "longtime" effects (14,3).

LYSTRA AND DERBE

Here the vigorous preaching by Paul and Barnabas in a district away from hostile crowds, and taking opportunity, a striking public miracle drew special attention. Superstition excited by it led to the offer of heathen worship, very much against the preachers' wishes and gave opportunity for Jewish plotters to turn the would-be worshippers against the

preachers. The gospel had won some to the truth so that disciples gathered around Paul after he was stoned. It would appear he was miraculously restored. Some months of work must have brought assemblies of believers together in the towns mentioned, and assemblies grew up in which Paul and Barnabas appointed elders (see, of course, 1 Tim. 3: Titus 1 and 2) from the believers for mutual maintenance. These must have had special spiritual help in the absence of the preachers. Otherwise how could they continue to grow? Paul expected them to do so but urgently wished to revisit and upbuild them. It was a very real faith which bound them together in a heathen society, and the Jewish Christians must have had a great part in their progress. Returning to Antioch in Syria they took a different route and preached in the port of Attalia. Note the prayer and fasting (14,23).

REPORT TO SENDERS

What a recollection of the grace of God to which Paul and Barnabas had been commended! What prayer had meanwhile been ascending from that strong church, and how rejoicing now upon return with such glad news of progress, how a door of hope among the Gentiles had been opened! We can hardly realise how great was this event. It is not surprising that earnest Pharisees with their strict understanding of loyalty to Moses should be shocked at this great harvest of souls. Hence the discussion brought need to have divine guidance. How wise a decision to consult the apostles at Jerusalem, and for Paul and Barnabas to be there to demonstrate the divine approval of their work and attitude!

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

The journey to Jerusalem was a triumphant visit to churches functioning in Phoenicia and Samaria telling the story of the open door to the Gentiles and the joys of salvation spreading widely, backed by divine "signs and wonders". How good that such mighty work should thus have full advertisement by those who had been instrumental in the

growth. There can be no doubt that Paul is writing of this visit in his letter to Galatians (2,1-10, assuming the failure of Peter was later than the decision and letter). Peter's part in complete acceptance of God's special revelation with the conversation of Cornelius, and the subsequent letter, bringing peace with request of consideration of Jewish habits and obvious moral purity. We need to remember that the Temple, the priesthood and the sacrifices were still in operation. When these ceased (70 A.D.) and became impossible, conditions changed, but meanwhile James's quotation of Amos expressed God's decision as to the Gentiles. The message taken and followed up with prophetic personal help solved the problem doctrinally, though Paul still had to deal with the obstinate Judaisers.

SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Activity at Antioch (Asian) occupied all the members in spreading the gospel, and continuous increase in numbers and power but the further work upon Paul's heart was in view and with Barnabas, but a sad strife regarding Mark's going with them led to separation. Perhaps in particular consideration of Paul's persistence and Barnabas's conciliatory character, he took Mark and worked in Cyprus, and Paul took Silas and took the land route through Syria and Cilicia to Derbe and Lystra, going over the ground and passing into regions not visited before. Here we have Luke joining the company when obedience to a vision called them into Europe crossing by sea to Macedonia. We note at this point the choice of Timothy, Paul's insistence on circumcision for him as he had always the conversion of Jew in mind. Where they had been before we read "the churches were established in the faith and increased in number DAILY" (16,5). So further fields are to be entered with the great message. We bear in mind that Jews in all parts of the earth were regularly visiting Jerusalem for the many feasts. Philippi was the chief town in those parts and a Roman Colony,

perhaps specially heathen but important for that reason. We observe no synagogue visited but a place of prayer sought and joined. Here Lydia's worship became faith which brought her household also to obedience, and the preachers by divine mercy and power suffered persecution by violence from those whose gain was taken by the release of the woman from affliction which had become an advertisement for the gospel. We are made to wonder how far law and order was defied and magistrates lost control even in a Roman colony. All was over-ruled by divine interposition, and the Jailor brought to obedience with his household, and a church begun by a woman with a business and a jailor at his profession. Wisely did Paul take advantage of Roman citizenship to humiliate "authority". Just read through the letter to the Philippians and witness the development, and remember the riverside meeting of worshipping women, the afflicted girl and the prison staff. God was at work with His servants, was He not?... and is He not always?

R. B. Scott

ULVERSTON, CUMBRIA An Appeal

"The church here has been converting a former garage situated in a central position in the South Lakeland town of Ulverston. A great proportion of the building work has been completed by ourselves with help from many other Christians in physical labour which has taken a lot of time and effort. The building, to date, has cost £22,500 to buy and convert, with approximately £10,000 being donated by other congregations and individuals and for this we thank God and are deeply grateful. The remaining £12,500 has been contributed by ourselves. The main hall is almost ready for us to meet in but we require central heating and floor coverings. This time of the year is the cheapest for installing central heating and we would like to complete this before the winter. Our appeal is for

financial assistance with this final hurdle and so allow us to use our building fully as a centre to further the gospel in Ulverston and surrounding areas. If you can help in any way write to:- John Stanton, Woodcroft, Carley Close, High Carley, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0JS.

John Stanton (Secretary).

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Ulverston, Cumbria: the church here enjoyed an evening of fellowship around the gospel on 16th August, held in the Coronation Hall, Ulverston, when sixty Christians and friends from Wigan, Cleveleys, Skelmersdale and Dalmellington joined us. Willie Black, from Dalmellington, presented a fine lesson on the loveliness of Jesus. We thank everyone for the encouragement received from this fellowship.

John Stanton (Sec.)

AID TO INDIA FUND

The congregation at Haddington had a very interesting visit from brother Paul Suban, on 6th July, who told us, through an interpreter, of his valuable and extensive work in preaching the gospel in India. Bro. Suban not only preaches the gospel and sets up many congregations but also tries to help his fellowmen with medical facilities and looking after orphans. Brother Tony Tyson arranged the visit and produced literature and photographic evidence of the hospital built by Br. Suban, and the orphanage. Bro. Suban would, of course, like to extend his efforts but is obviously restricted by lack of funds. For instance, he would like to buy an X-ray machine for his hospital but this would cost around £5,000. Bro. Suban would like to have shown some video films of his work but unfortunately none of our members at Haddington possess a video machine. Our Aid to India Fund has, in

the past, sent small contributions to Bro. Suban and, having seen somewhat of his efforts, we hope, in the future, God willing, to continue to do so - modest though that help may be. We commend bro. Tyson for his interest in this work and for his efforts in support of Br. Suban. I shall be pleased to continue to receive any financial assistance to our Indian brethren.

RUTH NISBET,
1F Station Court,
Haddington,
East Lothian.
Scotland.

THANKS

Bro. Alex. Malcolm, North Shields, would like to express his thanks to all the brethren who sent him cards and letters while recently hospitalised. Bro. Alex. is presently making progress although further treatment may yet be necessary.

Joe Malcolm.

A Cautionary Tale

This is the story about four people, everybody, somebody, anybody and nobody.

It happened that there was an important job to be done and everybody was asked to do it. Anybody could have done it, but nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was everybody's job. Everybody thought anybody could do it but nobody realised that everybody wouldn't do it. Well it ended up with everybody blaming somebody but actually nobody asked anybody.....

A confusing story or is it? Perhaps if truthful we can see ourselves in the tale without much searching. Today the Church needs workers more than ever before, not just one but many. It is time to wake up and go: go thoughtfully forward, to seek and search out the lost. It is true that the workers are few, but if we work together and Evangelise outwards, then we become workers good and true. Could it be the case we have

been too inward looking these past years. An honest answer might be an emphatic "YES" in some cases. We need to come alive to self, to reality, to the cause. It is up to all of us to make a more concerted effort. Do not just keep the faith, share it, spread it, live it to the full. Brethren there is an important task to be done: go to it. God depends on you.

A. P. Sharp (Sec.), Newtongrange.

INTROSPECTION

To get his goodnight kiss he stood
Beside my chair one night,
And raised an eager face to me,
A face with love alight.

And as I gathered in my arms
The son God gave to me,
I thanked the lad for being good,
And hoped he'd always be.

His little arms, crept 'round my neck,
And then I heard him say,
Four simple words I shan't forget—
Four words that made me pray.

They turned a mirror on my soul,
On secrets no one knew,
They startled me, I hear them yet;
He said, "I'll be like you."

Author Unknown.

POINTS TO PONDER

Because of an inordinate desire to do all the talking a man has missed hearing a lot of needful information.

It is true that the willing horse gets the heaviest load. It is equally true that he develops the strongest muscles and gets the most corn.

A christian is in the world, but not of the world. His citizenship is in heaven. He thinks on heavenly things. He lives on a higher level. Unto the divine pattern — the life of Christ — he conforms his life.

When your neighbour's house is in flames, your own house is in danger. No man can live unto himself. To a certain extent your own salvation is bound up with the salvation of others. When you lift a fellowman, you lift yourself.

Christian education makes youth aware that he has a soul as well as a mind.

If people would quit digging pits on Saturday night, there would not be so many oxen in the ditch on Sunday morning.

STRENGTH BY PROVIDENCE

We never have more than we can bear. The present hour we are always able to endure. As our day, so is our strength. If the trials of many years were gathered into one, they would overwhelm us: therefore in pity to our little strength, He sends first one, then another, then removes both, and lays on a third, heavier perhaps, than either: but all is so wisely measured to our strengths that the bruised reed is never broken. We do not enough look at our trials in this continuous and successive view. Each one is sent to teach us something, and altogether; they have a lesson which is beyond the power of any to teach alone.

THE FOOTPATH TO PEACE

To be glad of life, because it gives you the chance to love, to work, to play, and to look up at the stars; to be satisfied with your possessions, but not contented with yourself until you have made the best of them; to despise nothing in the

world except falsehood and meanness, and to fear nothing except cowardice; to be governed by your admirations, rather than by your disgusts; to covet nothing that is your neighbour's except his kindness of heart and gentleness of manner; to think seldom of your enemies, often of your friends, and every day of Christ; and to spend as much time as you can, with body and with spirit, in God's out-of-doors — these are little guideposts on the footpath to peace.

Henry Van Dyke.

UNDERSTANDING ITS PURPOSE

The church is not a refrigerator for preserving perishable piety. It is a dynamo for charging human wills with power. The object of the church is not to tell men how to dodge difficulties, but to furnish strength and courage to meet them. The business of the church is not to furnish hammocks for the lazy, but rather it is to offer well-fitting yokes for drawing life's loads. — Woodstock (Cape Town) "Bulletin."

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER YEAR — POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH £ 5.50
CANADA & U.S.A. \$10.00

AIR MAIL please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Telephone: Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

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Scotland EH37 5PT. Telephone: Ford 320 527

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by
Lothian Printers, 109 High Street, Dunbar, East Lothian. Tel: (0368) 63785