

**TRUTH
FOR
TODAY**

Volume 21 No: 6

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Podsnappery

YOU might readily be forgiven if you said, "Never heard of it!", or "What's it go to do with religious matters?" The origin of it goes back a long way and we are indebted to the author Charles Dickens for personifying it. In his book, *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens portrays the character of a large portion of society, whose importance in this little world of ours, if taken at their evaluation of things, is indisputable. This great descriptive writer introduces a character by saying, "Mr Podsnap was well to do, and stood very high in Mr Podsnap's opinion". Does that sound like anyone you know?

Dickens continues, "Thus happily acquainted with his own merit and importance, Mr Podsnap settled that whatever he put behind him he put out of existence. There was a dignified conclusiveness — not to add a grand convenience — in this way of getting rid of disagreeables which had done much towards establishing Mr Podsnap in his lofty place in Mr Podsnap's satisfaction. 'I don't want to know about it; I don't choose to discuss it; I don't admit it!' Mr Podsnap had even acquired a peculiar flourish of his right arm in often clearing the world of its most difficult problems, by sweeping them behind him, 'and consequently sheer away,' with those words and a flushed face. For they affronted him."

The foregoing gives the origin of the title of this article. Maybe it fits someone you know? Maybe it fits you in relation to your attitude towards God, in relation towards his Son, Jesus Christ, and the plan God offers for your salvation from this sinful world. Maybe it describes your attitude towards the Bible as the Word of God, his full and final revelation of his will for mankind. Do you have a tendency perhaps towards putting Jesus behind you and out of existence as far as you are concerned? Is consideration of your salvation so disagreeable to you that you do not want to know about it, discuss it, or admit its importance? Does consideration of the effect of Jesus upon your life become a difficult problem best dealt with by simply sweeping it away? Is this something which affronts you?

Modernism

Men with arguments for the authenticity and accuracy of the Bible which are absolutely unanswerable, are often swept aside. Instead of facing their arguments many, like Mr Podsnap, would condescendingly wave them aside as traditionalists; well-meaning but impotent.

This is just what the higher critics of earlier years and the “Modernists” of today are continually doing. This purely for their own convenience. They just wave aside arguments and facts which they cannot meet, ignoring the work of conservative scholars. To them, it is a good way of getting rid of disagreeables.

Are you assured by the critics? Do you claim that some great men, believing the same, agree with you? Have you no time for “traditionalists”? How often have you received a rejection to God’s offer of grace through Christ, or been guilty of saying yourself, “I don’t want to know about it; I don’t choose to discuss it; I don’t admit it”? Do you then put these things away as though they do not exist? Are you like the ostrich which puts its head in the sand and hopes that the problem will have gone away by the time it raises its head again?

Modernists Attack The Bible

We only have space for a few of the countless number of men who have made such utterances as the following:

Dr Lyman Abbott: “An infallible book is an impossible conception, and today no one really believes our Bible is such a book.”

Professor Shailer Matthews: “As for higher criticism, we not only use it in the study of the Bible, but we believe any person who does use it is not studying it wisely or efficiently (so say Russellites, Mormons, Christian Scientists and others, of their books¹). Most scepticism in college students is due to the extreme teachings of the inspiration of the Bible.”

Bishop Barnes: “The Old Testament is Jewish literature. In it are to be found folklore, defective history, half-savage morality, obsolete forms of worship based on primitive and erroneous ideals of the nature of God, and crude Science.”

Professor Peake: “It is no longer possible to insist on the literal accuracy of the Gospel narratives”. Again he avers, “Much in Genesis 1 to 11 is of mythical origin.”

Canon Streeter: “The Christian is aware that the infallibility of the historical records of the life of Christ is questioned by the majority of competent scholars.”

We could quote many more such examples, right up to Bishop Jenkins, of what is being openly stated in our day. Thus the Modernists’ leaders scoff at the Scriptures being infallible and inspired. Much of the Old Testament is discarded or ridiculed; assertions are made that the Gospels are inaccurate and their writers uninspired; that much of the Bible is merely folklore or pious forgeries which should be scrapped as worthless. “How is it that many true Christians with all this, and much more, in view, are constantly charging Fundamentalists with using extreme language about Modernists, yet they never open their mouths to rebuke the Modernists, for *their* extreme language about *the Word of the Living God*, and their attack upon almost every vital doctrine therein?”²

For Consideration From The Scriptures

Without making great comment upon any of the following, it might be worth the while of each one of us to soberly and prayerfully consider these few references to the Word of God himself, as he desires to reveal himself and his will to us in every age:-

A. In the Gospel record of Matthew Jesus is addressing the crowds, along with his disciples, when he uses the following words concerning the Pharisees: "Practice and observe whatever they tell you, but do not what they do, for they preach but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen of men . . . they love the place of honour at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi by men . . .". Jesus continues by calling them hypocrites (several times), blind guides, wrong, ignorant of both the Scriptures and the power of God (Matt. 22:29; 23:1-33). Many practise Pharisaism in works and attitudes today, if not in name.

B. Jesus also told a parable "to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others". The parable concerned the Pharisee and the publican who went together into the temple to pray, the Pharisee with pride and the tax collector with humility. Jesus' final words on this account were, ". . . every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted".

C. When Paul writes his letter to the Christians in Rome, he says, ". . . I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him" (Rom. 11:3). Remember Mr Podsnap, who "stood very high in Mr Podsnap's opinion".

D. When the apostle Paul was making his defence before king Agrippa, he outlined how he, in his earlier and misguided days, had sought out Christians with the idea of zealously persecuting them. Paul had become acquainted with Jesus, turned to God, repented, been baptized and was now a preacher of God's Word. Governor Festus accused Paul of being turned mad by great learning, to which Paul replied that he was "speaking the sober truth". Paul then addressed himself again to king Agrippa, asking if he believed what the prophets had written, and Agrippa made the remark, "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!"

If we go back a little (to Acts 24:24-37) we have record of an earlier meeting between Paul and Felix, at which Drusilla, wife of Felix, was also present, and on which occasion they had listened to Paul speaking about "faith in Christ Jesus". Felix had become alarmed when Paul raised such issues as "justice, self-control and future judgment". His answer to that alarm was not to examine what Paul was saying with great care as having an important bearing upon his life, but rather, "Go away for the present; when I have an opportunity I will summon you". It

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Lessons From The Wilderness — 4 Nadab And Abihu

J. Griffiths (Wembley)

IN this series of articles we have looked at some of the incidents that occurred on Israel's journey from Egypt to Sinai. At Sinai Israel's relationship to God was confirmed by the establishment of the covenant. Here also Moses received the Law from God, and the people committed themselves to obey that Law. In our last article we saw how quickly the people turned from God in the incident of the worship of the golden calf, and how God's desire to destroy his people was averted by the intercession of Moses.

The Tabernacle And The Priesthood

The people of Israel remained at Sinai for one year (see Ex. 19:1 and Num. 10:11, 12). As well as receiving the Law from God here, Moses was also given instructions concerning the building of the Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting. This Tabernacle was to provide the focal point of God's communication with his people; it represented the dwelling place for God amongst his people, and it provided a centre for the worship of God. After God had revealed to Moses the instructions concerning the building of the Tabernacle, the people themselves set to the task of its construction. In the first month of Israel's second year out of Egypt the Tabernacle was completed and erected (Ex. 40:2, 17). In connection with this building God had also instructed Moses about the institution of a priesthood to serve therein. The tribe of Levi was chosen, apparently because of their declaration to be on the Lord's side after the incident with the golden calf (Ex. 32:25-29). Aaron was appointed high priest and his sons would serve under him as priests. As such they represented the people before God. The other families of the tribe of Levi were given various functions in the transportation and erection of the Tabernacle when they began their journey from Sinai.

Aaron and his sons were to undergo a formal service of consecration to set them apart for their holy work as priests in the Tabernacle. Exodus 29 records God's instructions to Moses concerning this ceremony of consecration. Leviticus, chapters 8 and 9, record the fulfilment of these instructions when Aaron and his sons were set apart to serve as priests. Leviticus 8:35 indicates that this ceremony lasted for seven days then, on the eighth day (Lev. 9:1), Aaron and his sons began to function as priests by offering sacrifices for the priesthood and the people. These

first offerings were consumed upon the altar of burnt offering by fire sent from God (Lev. 9:24). This fire which God had provided was then to be kept burning continually (Lev. 6:13).

The Sin Of Nadab And Abihu

In the short period of time between the erection of the Tabernacle and the departure of Israel from Sinai a significant event occurred which provides us with an important lesson. Leviticus 10:1-7 records the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's two eldest sons. Leviticus 10:1 explains what happened, "each took his censer, and put fire in it, and laid incense on it, and offered unholy fire before the Lord, such as he had not commanded them". Nadab and Abihu were guilty of disobeying God's commands. Specifically, the text says, they offered "unholy fire before the Lord". This was an action which was unacceptable to God. The reason is apparent from Leviticus 16:12, which states that Aaron's censer was to be filled with "coals of fire from the altar before the Lord". This fire was that which God himself had provided, and which was to burn continually on the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 9:24; 6:13). It would seem that rather than use this fire, Nadab and Abihu had taken their fire from a different source — an unholy source.

God's Judgement

God's judgement was swiftly executed upon Nadab and Abihu when "fire came forth from the presence of the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord". Their two bodies were removed from the Tabernacle to a place outside the camp. Aaron and his two surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, were forbidden to leave the Tabernacle and mourn the deaths of Nadab and Abihu.

God's judgement upon this pair was a punishment for their sin, and serves as a warning to the people, and the priests in particular. Their action in offering unholy fire, whether done through negligence or deliberate disobedience, was certainly regarded as a serious sin by God, warranting an immediate retribution. God explains his swift response, "I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3). God's swift response to their sin succeeded in demonstrating his holiness and ensuring his glorification as a holy God.

As priests serving God, Nadab and Abihu occupied a privileged position which brought with it the responsibility of holy conduct. They must have been fully aware of the holiness of God and his intolerance of anything unholy. They knew what God expected of them, and thus their disobedience is without excuse.

Lessons For Today

This incident provides us with two important lessons. First, it emphasizes the importance of obedience to the word of God. Nadab and Abihu had done something which God had not commanded them to do. They had disregarded the commandments of God, thinking that they were free to introduce something into their worship which God had

not commanded. The fate of these two men serves as a warning to us that we must obey the word of God in all matters. We are not at liberty to introduce into our worship, or lives, things which God has not commanded. Disobedience of God's word evokes his displeasure.

Secondly, the incident provides a lesson in holiness and separation. Holiness is an attribute of God which must be reflected and developed in the lives of his people. Nadab and Abihu disregarded his holiness by using in their worship something which was common or unholy, something which had not been set apart for God's use. Having themselves been consecrated to serve God, they should have been aware of God's demands for holiness. Holiness of life and conduct is something that must be manifested amongst those who are associated with God. The New Testament describes Christians as a holy people, set apart for God's service and use. Consequently their behaviour and conduct is to reflect this position. Holiness is something which is insisted upon in the New Testament (Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:27; 1 Pet 1: 15, 16; 2 Cor. 6:14-17). The Christian's relationship to a holy God places upon him this obligation to holiness.

Conclusion

The tragic fate of Nadab and Abihu teaches us that we cannot treat God with contempt. From us he demands obedience to his word, and holy conduct befitting one who has been set apart for service to a holy God.

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was two years later that Paul came before Felix and Agrippa and we are still without record that any of those present to hear Paul's teachings and warnings ever heeded them. Many are still waiting for a "more convenient time". Remember Mr Podsnap again, he thought that by putting things behind him they would go away. He did not want to know. He did not choose to discuss. He would not admit things even to himself. Many will be like that when Jesus returns to introduce his own to God the Father. Many will be pleased to call him Lord in such a day. But we have Jesus' own words for what he will say to them: "I never knew you; depart from me, you evil doers" (Matt. 7:21, 22). Many Mr Podsnaps will be amongst such.

1. *Heresies Exposed*, Wm C. Irvine, p. 117.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Who Can Overcome The Sting Of Death?

(Concluded)

G. Bhaktamitran (Bangalore, India)

THE greatest information on this topic is recorded in the Bible, being God's full and final revelation of the will of the One who created man in his own image, and who realizes fully what man is and is to become. One of the greatest things the Bible does is to record that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on a cross voluntarily for the salvation of mankind, and that he arose again from the dead on the third day. This fact is established more authoritatively than the existence of King Ashoka, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, King Henry VIII, or any other historical person heard of by mankind for that matter.

Tendency Of The Human Mind

Humanity has a strange tendency to believe in fiction, mythological books and superstition in preference to the Book of books, the Bible.

An example of this which is still fresh in my mind is a true anecdote about a senior professor in a prestigious national institute of higher learning, a good friend of mine and a well-known scholar. I once asked him if I might share with him the central message of the Bible. I assured him that I would not take more than one hour and that he himself could fix a time on any day convenient to him. He crisply replied that he did not believe in the Bible, but with my own eyes I saw that same man, who was too scholarly to believe in the Bible, consulting with an aboriginal tribal man concerning astrological predictions about his future. Why will people not believe this book, written by innumerable saints under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit through eye-witness accounts? Why should they not take into consideration that so many historical characters saw the resurrected Jesus? Some of these witnesses are not ordinary folk but disciples of the Master himself, and many of them sacrificed their own lives for the truth they believed in. Apart from this:-

1. Jesus Christ, himself an historical person, said of himself that he was the Son of God, and God himself (I may not fully comprehend this, but neither can I understand Einstein's Theory of Relativity).

2. Jesus also predicted that he would die as a sacrificial lamb for the sin of the world (to redeem whoever believed in him, from death), and rise again from the dead on the third day. He did exactly as prophesied.

What The Bible States About Death

Based upon the Bible as source I want to explain what death is and how to face it. According to the Bible death is dreadful indeed since it has a terrible sting. Let none have any illusion or wishful thinking about it. Its terror lies not in the popular notions mentioned earlier, but also for the reasons explained now. The following might help to prepare ourselves to face these things.

Law Of Eternal Life Versus Law Of Death

1. The entire humanity (i.e. every person born in this world) is under the *Law of Death* since the first parents violated God's command.

Mankind was originally under the Law of Eternal Life, but conditionally. When that condition was violated they came under the Law of Death. ". . . through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

This Law of Death has a two-fold implication, (i) death physically, and (ii) death spiritually.

How Death Affects The Body And Soul Of A Man

Death, with its two-fold implications, affects the entire person, both body and soul: "The soul that sinneth shall die", die spiritually that is. Every person born into this world is afflicted with this death automatically, and it spreads in him like cancer unless it is arrested by a timely remedy referred to in the Bible. The body dies without exception, as we all well know, naturally or accidentally when the time comes for it. Death of the spirit means the spirit of a person being separated from God. This aspect of death is actually the sting, and not the death of the body as such, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God" (Isa. 59:2). Such a separation is more horrible than the death of the physical body. Actually it is this death of the spirit which causes the gradual death of the body, since that is the seat and instrument of life.

Sin Can Make One Numb To Reality

Grossness in earthly life and its allurements make a person insensitive to a horrible situation such as the spreading of death within. When the spirit separates from the body a person will suddenly realize (when it is too late to do anything about it) that he could be eternally doomed and damned.

The Living And The Dead

Though it takes place instantaneously at the act of transgression, its effects spread within the person's system by successive stages, and at several more or less distant intervals. Maybe, in the providence of God, such intervals may be granted to give individuals a chance to come to their senses and find a remedy for the sting of death. This delay in the consummation may thus result, ultimately, in either signal judgment or

the mercy of God, depending upon a person's unbelief or repentance, as the case may be. If one continues in the path of death he may live on in the body for a season though, as to God, "... he is dead while he liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6).

In but a little time the body returns to the dust from which it was first formed. Every individual, saved or unsaved, has to face this crisis, because of the Law of Death, as explained earlier. This is called the temporal death and is not the dreadful or stinging part. With regard to the latter, the Bible contains the Good News (the Gospel as it terms it); the Gospel concerning the restoration of the Law of Eternal Life, once lost by humanity. When the world comes to an end, the bodies of the dead, both redeemed (through faith in Jesus) and unredeemed will be raised. The redeemed will rise to an incorruptible and glorious life. The impenitent and unbelieving will undergo a resurrection to eternal damnation, called the "second death", wherein lies the real sting.

How To Walk Through This Valley Of Death Without Fearing Evil

In order to come under this Law of Eternal Life, or to overcome the sting of death, the New Testament suggests a way, which is both simple and free. The way to this glorious achievement is paved by Jesus Christ, the central message of the whole Bible. We need only to appropriate this gift, already made available by Christ, by obeying and adhering to the teachings contained in the New Testament — nothing more and nothing less, neither haphazardly nor partially, neither with supplements or complements. We speak only what the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent on these matters (or any other).

There may be certain phrases and expressions used in the Bible, such as "being washed by the blood of Jesus", "the Father", "the Son", "the Holy Spirit", "hearing the word of God and keeping", "faith", "repentance", "confessing by mouth that Jesus is Lord, the Christ, the Son of God", "being baptized in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of sins", "being added to the body of Christ, the church", and others of similar nature. But any disciple of Jesus, in the biblical sense of the term, can explain what these mean by comparing scripture with scripture, since the Bible is its own best commentary.

In the case of a person who has been cleansed from sin through the blood of Jesus by believing in him, repenting genuinely, confessing that Jesus is Lord, the Christ, the Son of God, and by being baptized in his name, death (i.e. the sting of death to be more precise) is swallowed up in victory, although still bound to a body of death and sin until his earthly life comes to an end. Such persons can shout victoriously, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST" (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

I believe in this Gospel because it is stated in the Bible. If I cannot believe the Bible, neither can I believe anyone or anything else in this world because nothing is more trustworthy.

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Paul And His Letters

G. Daniell (Bristol)

AS the "apostle to the Gentiles" (2 Tim. 1:11), Paul's work involved much travelling and contact with many diverse peoples. However, his writings seem to have been as prolific as were his journeyings numerous and widespread.

Bonds Of Affection

A deep bond of affection built up between the apostle and the congregations he established, as well as those he converted to become Christians. To the churches, that affection was demonstrated by the warmth of Paul's address (e.g. Phil. 1:3-8). Their love for him is shown in their respect for his Godly wisdom (1 Cor. 7:1b), and by their gifts for his material support (Phil. 4:18). Paul regarded both Timothy and Titus as "my own son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:1; Titus 1:4).

Circulation Of Epistles

Although written to particular addressees, Paul's letters were also intended to be circulated to other churches, and to be treated as generally beneficial (Col. 4:16). Galatians was, in any case, written to the churches of a region rather than to one location. Furthermore, towards the end of the first century, it seems that there developed a movement to gather together his various letters, and this collection was eventually circulated among the churches bearing the title "The Apostle".

Authority

Paul established the authority by which he wrote at the outset of each letter, invariably beginning with such words as "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (Eph. 1:1). He reinforced the divine appointment of his office by declaring that he was an apostle "not of men, neither by men but by Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:1). In Galatians 1:12, he declares, "I neither received it [*the gospel*] of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (cf. Gal. 1:17).

He claims that his writings constitute "the Commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37) and "the Word of God" (1 Thess. 2:13), Peter designates Paul's writings as "scripture" (2 Pet. 3:15, 16; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16).

Paul's "Thorn In The Flesh"

The evidence of scripture is not conclusive as to the nature of Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7), but is suggestive of poor eyesight as one problem. This would not be surprising in view of Paul's experience on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3, 8, 9). It might also explain Paul's use of

scribes in writing his letters. It is with obvious pride that Paul writes adding something to these letters in "mine own hand" (1 Cor. 16:21; 2 Thess. 3:17) and the largeness of his writing (Gal. 6:11) suggests some difficulty, perhaps in respect of poor eyesight. Halley¹ suggests that he may have suffered from "Chronic Ophthalmia" which, with its repulsive appearance, would certainly accord with Galatians 4:13, 14.

Writings

Some of Paul's letters appear not to have survived (1 Cor. 5:9; Col. 4:16). No doubt these too conveyed God's will but were intended more for the immediate spiritual needs of those to whom they were directly addressed rather than for posterity.

The chronology of Acts helps us to date the epistles. They were written over an approximate period of fifteen years, starting with 1 Thessalonians (A.D. 50/51) and concluding with 2 Timothy (A.D. 65).

Paul wrote against the background of a world desperately in need of the gospel, yet which was without the assembled New Testament canon as we have it today. The physical presence of the apostles was spread so thinly over the Mediterranean world that something more was needed. These young churches were largely faithful (Rom. 1:8), but they were also vulnerable to the influences of false teachers (Gal. 1:6). He roundly condemns those who were corrupting the pure gospel and jeopardizing the faith of those early Christians (2 Cor. 11:13). The time Paul was able to spend with each congregation was necessarily short. Often his departure was hasty and ill-planned (Acts 17:10a). So it was that by letter Paul sought to add to their store of teaching and to explain, or expand upon, teaching he had already given (2 Thess. 3:6 ff.). His correspondence also deals with some of their questions (1 Cor. 7:1). Paul also had to defend his own apostleship and confront this open challenge to his God-given authority (2 Cor. 11:5).

Paul vigorously counters the influence of those Jewish Christians who sought to impose the obligations of the Old Law upon Gentile Christians (Gal. 2:16). He refers to his own Jewishness (2 Cor. 11:12), but his only glory is in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14). He is contemptuous of those who thought that the Law had any continuing benefit to those now under the grace of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8).

Scholarship

The orderly presentation of his arguments reflects Paul's scholarship (Acts 22:3), and he uses every legitimate means to bring home to his readers the importance of his teachings. He offers them praise, thanks and remonstrance, presenting his scholarship, zeal and Jewishness. He repeatedly reminds them on whose authority he speaks, and does not allow false modesty to conceal his sufferings for Christ (2 Cor. 11:23-33). From his prison cell comes some of the loveliest language of the New Testament — a source of encouragement to generations of Christians (Phil. 4:8). Indeed, the Philippian church, which was virtually established from within a prison cell by Paul's joyous and uninhibited expression of Christian faith (Acts 16:25-33) is later exhorted, from

another prison cell, to "rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

Purposes

The general purposes of his thirteen epistles were to *teach* (1 & 2 Thess., Rom, etc.), to *reinforce the faith* of the Christians (Eph., Phil., Col.), to *resist heresies* (Rom., 1 & 2 Cor., Gal.) and to *stiffen the resolve* of those whom he had appointed to specific duties (e.g. Timothy and Titus).

Some commentators, detecting a different style in the so-called "Pastoral Epistles", have questioned their Pauline authorship, but in view of his experiences (including his then present situation), it is understandable that he should write differently. Now "Paul the aged" (Philemon 9), and having already expressed his own awareness of being near the end of his life (Phil. 1:20, 21), he writes that he has been largely deserted (2 Tim. 4:10, 11). He is probably susceptible in his old age to the cold (2 Tim. 4:13), and he is increasingly reliant upon younger men to pick up and continue his work. He entreats Timothy to instruct "faithful men" who will pass on his teachings (2 Tim. 2:2). Titus is given the charge of ordaining elders in every city (1:5), according to the qualifications set down in 1 Timothy 3.

Truly, and finally, Paul was able to declare "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. . . ." (2 Tim. 4:7).

1. Halley's *Bible Handbook*, page 607.

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Truly death is dreadful. Shall we continue to ignore a timely warning and escape the sting? Why should one succumb when there is a remedy, a sure one, available free of cost to us? In the beginning a person may need to have a guide to his reading and understanding. Later he can do things for himself. Herein lies the remedy to this sting of death.

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for this is the witness which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. . . ."

Paul gives one more example of the magnitude of God's help dispensed by the Spirit. In Romans 8:26 he tells us that we do not know what to pray to God for, ". . . but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (in a language that we cannot understand or, as one writer put it, "with sighs that baffle words"). How gloriously our great Helper, who stands with us at our side, assists us in living the sanctified life. How secure we feel with the power of the Godhead behind us. For the Christian, and for anyone who will accept Christ as Saviour — *Mors Et Vita* — Life from death.

Studies in Romans⁶

E. Marsden (Longshoot)

AFTER Paul has discussed the so-called “divided” state of the Christians, he ends chapter 7 like this, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”. He supplies the answer in chapter 8; it is to be “in Christ”. There is to be no further division for, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (verse 2). Anyone who is free is no longer bound by that which held him, so we can dispel the idea of the Christian being encapsulated in a fleshly tomb of sin, and whose responses in the flesh are always of a sinful nature. No longer should there be a constant “tug-of-war”. Paul envisages that the last bastion of Satan is in the “flesh” of the Christian, but praise be to God, Satan can be driven from there also by the power of the Holy Spirit, who indwells the Christian. The triumphant note of Paul’s argument is that the consecrated and sanctified life *is possible*, and indeed necessary, for the one who is “in Christ”.

Life In The Spirit

The apostle always develops his arguments so neatly and precisely, that there can be no misunderstanding as to what he means. He presents the human condition quite starkly: to be unspiritually-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace (v. 6). The unspiritual mind cannot be subject to the law of God, and therefore cannot please him (vv. 7, 8). The Christian, however, has accepted God’s standard of righteousness, Christ Jesus himself, and has now passed from death to life (vv. 9, 10); he is the recipient of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, our minds are driven inexorably to the power of the Godhead, which is available to every Christian; God, our Father; His Christ, our Saviour and life-giver; and the personal possession of the Holy Spirit, our Guide and Mentor. Is it any wonder then that Paul can say, “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make alive] your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (v. 11). This “quickening” is not just pointing to a future resurrection, but it is for *here* and *now*. We shall see the force of this as Paul develops his argument further.

We Are Debtors

To live the sanctified life is not a matter of choice for the Christian, we are *in debt* to God to do it. The debt we owe to God is because of his act upon us in the death of Christ. In Romans 7:4 Paul writes, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” As was said in our last study, the action of God in Christ has enabled the believer to pass from

death to life, but the expectation of God is that the believer should “bring forth fruit unto him”. We cannot do this by living after the flesh because, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (v. 13).

So, according to Paul, *it is possible* to “put to death” the deeds of the body; not only that, we have a *duty* to do so because *we are debtors* to live after the Spirit, and this means to live the sanctified life. Paul’s rebuke to the Christians in Galatia was quite precise — he reminded them that Jesus Christ had been set forth before them, crucified, so that they could have the blessings associated with the life of the Spirit. He then said, “Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”. The Judaizing teachers, who followed Paul wherever he went, had done a good job in undermining the faith of many of the Christians in Galatia; Paul was determined to “nip this in the bud” in Rome. He knew that it took courage, and particularly *confidence*, to live the life of the Spirit. He was about to teach that lesson; one which we today should do well to heed.

The Dual Witness

If the Christian believes, and is absolutely confident, that he is a child of God, then he should go on to live the sanctified life. If, on the other hand, he lacks this confidence, then he should refer himself to Romans 8:16, where Paul writes, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”. As the Holy Spirit is a Person in the Godhead, it is quite wrong for Him to be referred to as “itself”; the word in the A.V. should be “Himself”. We know from the Ephesian letter that the “sword” of the Spirit is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17), so, if the testimony by the Spirit in the Bible calls for faith and belief, then it must be a matter of perceptual consciousness on our part as to whether we have obeyed that testimony. Let us see how it works.

On the first Pentecost, Peter and the rest of the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:4 records that they all spoke in different languages “. . . as the Spirit gave them utterance”. Peter preached the Gospel; the people were convinced by testimony; it was spoken testimony; it was as the Spirit gave him utterance; therefore, the Gospel message was the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Now if we obey what the Spirit has borne witness to through the Word, and we are conscious that we have done so, then this must surely mean that the Holy Spirit bears witness *with our spirit* that we are children of God. This must also follow for *any* instruction given by the Spirit through the Word as regards the Christian’s walk in the sanctified life. Each Christian must understand that he is responsible for his own doubts; through our perusal and understanding of the Word we can be *sure* as to whether we have obeyed or not, therefore there should be no doubt.

It should be no surprise to us all that God has testified to the Sonship of Jesus Christ. He has done this through the Word, and also, as we have seen, through the indwelling Spirit. John makes this very clear in 1 John 5:9, 10, “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater:

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The Documents Of Christianity

TO understand any philosophy or system we may study it from several viewpoints. We could consider its effects or we could examine the organization advocating it, but one of the most effective ways of understanding any system is to consider the documents which purport to state its aims, purposes and methods. This is also true of the Gospel of Christ. One of the best ways of finding out anything about it is to consider the documents which present Christianity to us.

1. A DEFINITION OF THOSE DOCUMENTS

What are the documents of Christianity? If we look at the ranks of so-called Christendom today we might find many claims being pressed for various documents. Among such we would find:-

A. The Creeds Of Modern Christendom

Many supposed statements of faith have arisen, claiming to set forth the true religion of Jesus Christ. We do not have space to consider all of them, but one of the most important is the Westminster Confession of Faith. This document was produced by the Westminster assembly of divines around the year 1648. The story underlying it is long and would only serve to take us away from the main purpose of this particular article. However, from the beginning it was intended as a means of defining the faith of certain reformers to *distinguish them from the advocates of Roman Catholicism*. This document is still the confession of all Presbyterian bodies in Great Britain, and includes the Church of Scotland. The very fact that it was drawn up to distinguish one group of professing Christians from another makes it evident that it is not the basic document of Christianity.

The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion is a document drawn up in 1563. It begins by setting forth a declaration of the King's Majesty. The wording of this declaration begins, "Being by God's ordinance, according to our just title, **DEFENDER OF THE FAITH, AND SUPREME GOVERNOR OF THE CHURCH**, we hold it most agreeable to this our kingly office, and our own religious zeal, to conserve and maintain the church committed to our charge, in unity of true religion, and in the bond of peace. . . . That the articles of the Church of England . . . do contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God's word." Thus, in itself, the publication acknowledges that it is not the basic document of Christianity. Rather it is a statement of the doctrine of the Church of England.

Similarly, other books and creeds drawn up in modern times, such as the Book of Mormon, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,

etc., contain statements of faith which pertain simply to various religious bodies and are not accepted as authoritative by those who are not members of these particular bodies.

It becomes evident then that these statements of faith are, by their very nature, divisive. So we turn aside from them asking, "Is there no document that all who profess to follow Christ can accept as being authoritative?"

B. Ancient Creeds Of The Fathers

Much publicity is given to this today. In the year 325 A.D. a council was called by Constantine, the Roman Emperor, and attended by all the "Bishops" of the church to try to settle three questions. The first of these concerned the Godhead, the second the person of Christ, and the third concerned matters of sin and salvation. Arising out of this council a statement of faith was drawn up, known as the "Nicene Creed". It was the first in a long line of formal statements that have been drawn up in the history of Christendom. However, let it be clearly understood that, both in their history and their use, these statements have been just as sectarian and divisive as any modern creed.

Sometimes an exaggerated claim is made for a document called "The Apostles' Creed". It is claimed that it is a short summary of the teaching of the apostles. However, the first reference to it is found about 390 A.D., and we should not be deceived by the title.

What then are the documents of Christianity?

C. The New Testament

In a book entitled *Faith's Certainties*, the author, R. J. Drummond, has a chapter headed "The Primary Record Of Christianity — The New Testament". The chapter begins with these words, "Everyone knows where to turn if he wishes to learn what Christianity really is. Everyone knows where to point an enquirer. The New Testament is the record of Christianity, the indispensable document for acquiring first-hand knowledge of what it is in germ, essence and perfection." This surely makes the position clear! The New Testament is the document, or collection of documents, which sets forth the principles and practices of Christianity. No other document can be so described.

2. THE EXAMINATION OF THE DOCUMENTS

In a superficial way this is familiar ground to most of us. However, we need to keep on reminding ourselves of some evident things. In the New Testament we find:-

A. The Gospel Records

Bearing the names of their writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are four accounts of the Birth, Life, Miracles, Teachings, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. These books were written for a definite purpose. In Luke 1:1-4 we read, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things

from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

This makes it abundantly clear that the gospel records were intended for the purpose of setting forth the very things believed by Christians, that their faith might be strong. This is confirmed by referring to John 20: 30, 31.

B. The Book Of Acts

It is evident from the introduction to this book that it was intended as a continuation of the earlier record, contained in the Gospel of Luke. It records some of the things that were done by some of the apostles in carrying out the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ, given during the forty days that he appeared unto them following his resurrection. A study of this book will show that it contains the records of:

- (i) How people became Christians in New Testament times.
- (ii) How the word of God spread through the preaching of the apostles and others.
- (iii) How congregations were established, organized and developed through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

C. The Epistles Or Letters To Early Christians

These were written by apostles and others to various churches and Christians scattered throughout the ancient world. These too had a definite purpose, which was twofold. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:14, 15). The purpose of writing this letter was to give instruction how to behave as a Christian and as a servant of the Lord. The apostle John also wrote, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 Jn. 5:13). This epistle was obviously written to confirm some of the early Christians in their faith, in Christ.

D. The Book Of Revelation

This book was written by the apostle John while he was on the isle of Patmos. It is a message of encouragement to Christians in a time of great persecution and trial. The message of the book is of the ultimate triumph of the Lord and his people over all enemies. A careful reading of it, laying aside all theories and speculations, will be a source of great encouragement, even to Christians today.

These then are the documents of Christianity.

3. THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THEIR EVIDENCE

But what about these documents? Are they reliable? This is confirmed by:

A. The Laws Of Evidence Concerning Ancient Documents

Greeleaf, a noted legal expert of earlier times, stated, "When documents purporting to come from antiquity, and bearing upon their face no

evident marks of forgery, are found in the proper repository, the law considers such documents to be authentic and genuine, and the burden of proof to the contrary devolves upon the objector".¹

When applied to the New Testament documents, they stand the test of this law. They come down to us from antiquity. They bear upon their face no evident marks of forgery and they are found in the proper repository, that body of people which we call "the church".

Examining this matter a little closer, there are found to be three sources of evidence for these documents.

B. The Manuscripts Of The New Testament

The word "manuscript" means document written by hand. Those of the New Testament are written in the Greek language. The task of copying the entire New Testament in Greek, when it is not one's native tongue, is a very considerable undertaking. Yet, this was the only way in which the documents could be transmitted for about 1,400 years. Today there are in existence about 4,000 manuscripts giving all or part of the New Testament in its original language. From a comparison of these, scholars have shown that the present versions in English are as close to the original as it seems humanly possible to come.

C. The Early Versions In Other Languages

While a manuscript of the New Testament is a copy of the documents in Greek, a version is a copy in another tongue. It is a translation. Versions of the New Testament were made in the Syriac and Coptic languages in the second century and, a little later, into the Latin tongue. By comparing these with the Greek New Testament scholars have confirmed its accuracy and, as a result, the accuracy of the English translations we have today.

D. The Writings Of Early Christians

During the early period of its history the church suffered great persecution. The question has been asked, "If during that persecution all of the New Testament manuscripts had been destroyed, could the documents be reproduced today?" There is ample evidence which points to the fact that, had this happened, most of the New Testament could be reproduced from the writings of Christians in the first four centuries.

From these considerations it is evident that the New Testament is the collection of documents of Christianity. Their reliability is also established. Today, we have in our hands the New Testament as it came from the inspired writers.

When we examine these writings carefully we learn that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of the Jews, the Son of God and Lord of all. This is the basic message of these documents. It is also the foundation of the Lord's church (Matt. 16:13-18). It is the basic proposition on which our salvation rests (1 Jn. 5:1). To believe in him and to obey his will is God's purpose for men today (Jn. 6:40).

1. Quoted here from *Why Believe*. H. McKerlie (Brackmont Press), p. 49.

Editor's Note

This article was submitted some time ago and I have no record of the author's name.

“You Are Asking . . .”

A. E. Winstanley (Ulverston)

“**1** TIMOTHY 4:10 says that God is “*the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe.*” In what sense is he the Saviour of *all* men if all will not be saved?”

All Will Not Finally Be Saved

This fearful fact, that some *will* be eternally lost, is plainly taught in the Scriptures. In the judgment, the Lord will say to the lost, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”. Their final “lostness” is clearly stated: “And these will go into *eternal punishment*, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:41, 46).

Again, Paul wrote, “. . . when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and *exclusion from the presence of the Lord* and from the glory of his might . . .”

The apostle John concludes a description of the final judgment with these words, “This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14, 15).

“God . . . The Saviour Of All Men”

If, as the Scriptures frequently assert, some will be lost, in what sense is God “the Saviour of all men”?

“Saviour” (soter) may be translated “saviour, preserver, deliverer”.¹ The word was in common use in New Testament times. It was “a term of flattery given to authorities with political influence . . . it was ascribed to Caesar as the preserver of mankind and the protector of the Roman Empire”.² Among Christians it had a special significance, applied both to God the Father (1 Tim. 1:1; Titus 3:4) and the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk. 2:12; Titus 1:4; 3:6). Four explanations have been offered regarding “God . . . the Saviour of all men”:-

1. That every human being will finally be saved. This is offered by “Universalists”, i.e. those who claim that no person will finally be lost. But, as we have seen, this flatly contradicts the plain teaching of God’s Word. The theory withers and dies before the truth. Our Saviour said, “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that *leads to destruction*, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow, and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matt. 7:13, 14).

2. That God is the Saviour, or Preserver of all men *in the physical sense*. He makes all provision for all men’s material needs. Paul said to the pagans at Lystra, “He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness” (13:17). However, whilst God *is* such a Preserver (or provider), it does

not seem reasonable to force this meaning into our text. It is much more reasonable, and more consistent with grammatical usage, to believe that "Saviour" applied to two groups, in one sentence, would be used in the same sense with regard to both — viz. of salvation *in the spiritual sense*.

3. That "Saviour" here "has both a *temporal and eternal significance*. For the unbelievers it 'includes preservation and deliverance from evils and bestowal of many blessings during this life.' For believers it includes both present and eternal benefits".³ But this is also inadequate, for much the same reason as the second "explanation" mentioned. It makes Paul say, "God is the saviour *temporarily* of all men, but *spiritually* of those who believe", but there is nothing in the language used which suggests that "Saviour" should be given two different meanings in the one sentence.

4. That God is the "Saviour of all men" in this sense: *he has made provision for all* by sending Jesus to die for all: "the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn. 2:1, 2). This explanation fits the Bible facts.

"Especially Of Those Who Believe"

God does not desire that anyone should perish. He wants all men to be saved (Ez. 33:11; 2 Pet 3:9). This divine desire has been called God's "primary" or "antecedent" will. Salvation is offered when the gospel is preached. Some accept the offer, and in them God's primary will is realized. However, some reject it, and then God's "subsequent will" comes into play. "When men reject this blessed universal will which also includes them (Matt. 23:37), the subsequent will sends them to judgment and to perdition" (Matt. 23:38; Mk 16:16).⁴

"Redemption is universal yet conditional. All may be saved, yet all *will* not be saved, because all will not conform to God's appointed conditions".⁵ 1 Tim. 4:10 illustrates the difference between God's *provision* of salvation and man's *appropriation* of it. God is *potentially* the Saviour of all. In the death of his Son he has purchased redemption for all, and in the gospel he offers it to all. Sadly, many reject the offer and judge themselves "unworthy of eternal life" (Acts 13:46). Others gladly accept it, and God is therefore particularly or especially "the Saviour of all those who believe". A modern paraphrase renders 1 Tim. 4:10 thus, "... our hope is in the living God, who died for all and particularly for those who have accepted his salvation".⁶

Reader, Jesus died for *you*. The gospel offers you eternal life. If you are not yet saved, I urge you to believe it: believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent of your sins and be baptized (immersed) in his name "for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37, 38). Then rejoice in his salvation, and live for his glory!

1. *A Critical Lexicon And Concordance*, E. W. Bullinger.

2. *Stand True To The Charge*, R. G. Gromacki.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Commentary On 1 Timothy*, R. H. C. Lenski.

5. *A Bible Commentary*, C. J. Ellicott.