

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE ALPHA AND OMEGA AGAIN

In the June issue, in an article entitled "The Alpha and Omega" I offered a few thoughts on the deity of Christ and the Godhead: placing Christ on an equality with God. This view is, of course, like much else in the Bible, subject to challenge and indeed was denied as far back in history as 320 AD, by Arius and his disciples. As a result of the article I have received a letter from a good brother in India informing me that some members of the sect known as "Jehovah's Witnesses" (J.W.'s) have been attending his Bible Study Meeting and have been claiming that Christ was never co-equal with God but clearly shown in the N.T. to be much inferior to God. Individual members of the J.W.'s are, of course, not allowed any independency of thought on scriptural matters but simply repeat the doctrines into which they have been brain-washed by the teachings prepared for them in their magazines from Brooklyn, USA. This, however, is no reason for not considering what they say and measuring it against the things revealed in God's word. I know also from years of experience in discussion with J.W.'s, that nothing I say is likely to have the slightest effect, but I will say it, nevertheless. We should not be too surprised that J.W.'s do not accept the deity of Christ, in view of the fact that they accept very little of what is plainly taught in scripture: e.g. they deny the bodily resurrection of Christ: they deny man has a soul: they teach Christ was but one of God's creatures: they deny that heaven will be open to all faithful Christians, and also deny the possibility of hell: they deny that the earth will be destroyed and teach that Christ's return to the earth occurred in 1914, to mention but a few of their variances with scripture. It is not surprising, therefore, that they describe the "Trinity: as a doctrine from Satan."

HUMAN REASON & LOGIC

When confronted with the question of the deity of Christ, J.W.'s say, in their literature, (Quote): "To hold that Jehovah God the Father, and Christ the Son, are co-eternal is to fly in the face of reason . . . The advocates of the Trinity admit that it is not a subject of reason or logic and so they resort to terming it 'a mystery'. But the Bible contains no divine mysteries. It contains sacred secrets . . . there is a vast difference between a secret and a mystery. A secret is merely that which has not been made known, but a mystery is that which cannot be understood." (Unquote). J.W.'s justify their claim that everything to be believed must "be reasonable" on the basis of Isa.1:18 where God said, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord . . ." As this tenet of 'reason' is basic to what J.W.'s find believable and thus acceptable in God's word, we should, I think, first of all, consider it on its merits.

When God (through Isaiah) said to man, "Come let us reason together" it was (as we shall see if we finish the quotation) in the context of God asking man to mend

his ways, and, in return, receive the forgiveness of God. God said, **“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”** This is a far cry from God suggesting that God and man are equals in any sense whatsoever, and that man could renege on any suggestion of God that “flew in the face of reason”. When God said, “Let us reason together” he was not suggesting that man would, or could, find a reason for all that God says or does, or that man could, even in a very tiny degree, plumb the depths of God’s mind or actions. Indeed God has, elsewhere, assured man that **“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”** (It was the same Isaiah who said this: 55:9). In other words, God’s thoughts and ways are light-years away from man: and the very wisest of men have little chance of plumbing the depths or scaling the heights of God’s thoughts or ways. And Paul could say, **“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory for ever.”** (Rom.11:34). Just because God said, at a certain point in history to the Jews, “Let us reason together”, it does not follow that we will find ‘reasons’ for all that God has said and done. J.W.’s say that they can’t believe things like the deity of Christ because ‘reason’ rebels (human reason, that is) against its acceptance. Anything “which flies in the face of reason” they can’t accept: yet there are countless things in the Bible for which God has never given a reason.

REASON VERSUS FAITH

Certainly, as human beings, we must use our powers of reasoning in the understanding of God’s word: indeed we use our reasoning faculties every day in all walks of life. However, many things in the scriptures confound human reason, and we must believe and accept them solely on the basis of **faith**. Most ordinary people (not just J.W.’s) say that the idea of life after death is not ‘reasonable’ to believe, and so they reject the idea. Equally they say that ‘it flies in the face of all reason’ to suppose that a dead man could come to life again and rise from his tomb; and so the N.T. teaching on the resurrection is denied and rejected. When reason is impossible **FAITH** comes into play. It flew in the face of reason that Abraham (at the age of 100 years and him as good as dead) and Sarah (long past child-bearing age) could ever, as God had promised, have a child, much less a progeny as numberless as the sand of the sea. It was so ‘unreasonable’ that it was a matter for mirth and levity: but, **by faith** Abraham never doubted it. The concept of ‘reason’ is virtually irrelevant when we are dealing with God, for God has given us no reasons for a host of things: like Satan; sin; blood sacrifices; human emotion; sleep; pain; ageing; life; death etc. etc., many of which appear unreasonable to us.

As Walter Martin remarks in his book *The Kingdom Of The Cults*, the term “reason” (and all its derivatives) is used some 88 times in the Bible but only once in reference to man; (i.e. in the portion already quoted Isa.1:18 “Come let us reason together, saith the Lord.”) and even that quotation can never lead us to suppose that we shall always find a reason for God’s words and ways. Many of God’s ways are clothed in mystery, so much so that even the hymnwriter discovered that God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out. One of the greatest mysteries in the Bible is with reference to the incarnation (taking of bodily form) of Jesus: and, in consequence, His deity. Paul says, **“And without controversy GREAT IS THE MYSTERY of godliness, God (He who; RV) was manifest in the flesh . . .”** (1 Tim.3:16). J.W.’s may say

that there are no mysteries in the Bible but Paul and John mention several, including this 'great' mystery regarding God being born of a woman, in the likeness of men. The first part of the mystery is that "God" was manifest (seen visibly) in the flesh. The RV and RSV state that the oldest MSS render for "God" in this passage "He" or "He who" but this does not materially alter the weight of the verse for, if Christ had not been immeasurably superhuman there was little point in the apostle mentioning that "He" (God) was "manifest in the flesh." Had a man been manifested in the flesh Paul's statement would have been a nonsense. Had an angel been manifested in the flesh it would have been of some interest but nothing new. But when Paul says that God was manifested in the flesh, then that was, without controversy 'mind-blowing' and certainly worthy of being referred to as a 'great mystery'. E. M. Zerr says on this passage (referring to the word "God"), "We should bear in mind that the word 'God' is a family name, and that each member of the Deity or Godhead is entitled to the name. Hence the present passage means 'God, the Son' for it was He who was on the earth in the flesh."

MYSTERIES OR SECRETS?

In order to destroy this great element of mystery surrounding Christ's incarnation, J.W.'s have chosen to try and deny that there are such things as mysteries in the Bible and, as we saw in the quotation from their literature, reduce them all to 'sacred secrets'. If this were true (that there were no mysteries in the Bible) then why should the sacred writers refer to "mysteries" at all; and why do it 24 times? The Greek word for 'mystery' is *Musterion* (a completely different word than that used for 'secret') and means "that which is known to the initiated." Sometimes mysteries and secrets may come into close proximity but they are really quite separate. Nicodemus was a "secret" disciple but surely this was no 'mystery', whereas Paul said that Christ's incarnation was "a great mystery". How Christians could be members of Christ's body, flesh and bone; or man and woman be one flesh; was baffling to Paul and he said this was "A great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church". (Eph.5:32). The Jews were completely baffled as to how David's 'Lord' could also be his 'son' (and this mystery was only solved by Christ's teaching about His pre-existence: because Christ was David's Lord and also David's Son. Matt.22:45). Yes, there were and are many mysteries in God's word. If we don't find anything mysterious about God it must mean that we know as much as He does.

CHRIST'S KENOSIS

The brother in India mentions two passages of scripture in particular, which J.W.'s have presented to him as proof that Christ was not equal with God but inferior to Him. The first is Mark 3:32 where Jesus said, concerning the end of the world, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." This, it is claimed, shows Christ's inferiority; being ignorant of something known only to God. The other passage is in 1 Cor.15:28, "For He (God) hath put all things under His (Jesus) feet. But when He sayeth all things are put under Him it is manifest that He (God) is excepted which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may all in all." Again it is claimed that this shows that Christ is subject to God and thus inferior.

These verses certainly indicate that Christ was subject to God the Father, and there are many more such. Jesus said, "I do always My Father's will," and "My Father is greater than I." God was the sender: Christ was the sent. In the matter of the headcovering in worship Paul said that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man, and "the head of Christ is God." Many other such passages to like effect could be quoted. After stressing Paul's words that Christ's incarnation was a

mystery, I am not likely to try to explain it, but would suggest that we closely examine Phil. 2:5-11 where Paul describes Christ's kenosis, or demotion of Himself from Godhood to manhood. He says, **"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."** This passage clearly states Christ's equality with God, but also His kenosis, or the divesting of Himself of power and status; accepting subjugation to God the Father, as a puny man. Jesus did not count it 'robbery' to claim equality with God, but evidently J.W.'s do. The word "equal" (equal with God) is the Greek word *Isos* which Young defines as "equal to; the same as", and which Vine defines as "the same in number, size and quality." Thayer defines it as "Equal in quality as in quantity; to claim for oneself the nature, rank and authority which belong to God." Paul's declaration here that Jesus prior to His incarnation was co/equal with God is supported by the fact that in John 5:18 **"the Jews sought the more to kill Him"** for breaking the sabbath and for **"making Himself equal with God."** Although truly God, Jesus became truly man, and subjected Himself, quite voluntarily, to all the weaknesses and frailties of humanity. This is difficult to imagine; and how Jesus could be truly God and truly man, both at the same time, is part of the mystery. A footnote in the RSV on Phil.2:5 says, "Kenosis' is the theological name often used in connection with Christ's incarnation, and means He 'emptied Himself', or 'stripped Himself', or 'divested Himself' of His divine powers and prerogatives as God the Son, when He assumed the limitations of becoming a true human being. It was a voluntary, self-imposed limitation. Christ in human form was both God and man — two very distinct natures united in one person. Yet scripture does not make clear the full implication of the Kenosis. There are aspects of mystery connected with it which the minds of finite men are not able to fathom." There certainly were many contrasts, and apparent contradictions, in Christ's life which we, with our limited understanding may fail to comprehend. Jesus could walk on water yet get 'tired' on a journey; He could read men's thoughts yet often 'marvelled' at man's disbelief; He could feed 5,000 yet had to send his disciples out to buy victuals: He made the worlds yet had nowhere to lay his head; He could raise the dead yet sweated (as great drops of blood) at the prospect of His own demise:and readers will think of many other similar puzzling incongruities. Jesus had to be protected by flight as a vulnerable babe, and had to grow and learn like the rest. **"He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."** (Luke 2:50). Surely in the context of Christ's **humanity** we can understand 1 Cor. 15:28; that Christ needed God to put all things under His feet, and that God the Father is the exception when **all things** are made subject to Christ. Surely we understand that in 'divesting Himself' Christ limited Himself in knowledge and power. Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, and stated that, even as He spoke, the day and hour of the latter event was within the ken of the Father only. In view of Phil. 2:25, Christ's drastic kenosis, that should not surprise or perplex us a great deal. I'm sure Jesus has that information now.

CONCLUSION

Space has more than gone but a few final remarks. Clearly, while Christ was in the body, He was subservient to God, and even prayed to God the Father. Nevertheless, as we have just seen from Phil. 2:6, Christ was co-equal with God, a fact that cannot be gainsayed, even by J.W.'s. There are many confirmations of this. John (1:1) said, **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and was God."** Again this means co-equality with the Father. Paul said, **"in Him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily."** (Col.2:9). Isaiah described the Messiah to come as,

“Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.” and these are, of course, powerful terms; especially “the Mighty God”, and the “everlasting Father”. Christ is also described as (Rev.1:8) “the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” What more can be said? We either accept these statements or reject them. If we can’t understand that Christ’s temporary demotion, from true God to true man, has its mysterious aspects, then not much can be done. The deep things of an infinite God do not always conform to human (finite) reason or logic, and quite often genuine Bible students are mystified. Indeed much in scripture “flies in the face of reason” and that’s why we walk by **FAITH** and not by sight, and “have great confidence towards God.”

EDITOR

GLEANINGS

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

CALLED OUT

“Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.” 1 Peter 2:9 (RV).

I COULD NOT DO WITHOUT THEE

“I could not do without Thee,
O Saviour of the lost!

Whose precious blood redeemed me
At such tremendous cost.

Thy righteousness, Thy pardon,
Thy precious blood must be
My only hope and comfort,
My glory and my plea!”

WE QUOTE G. H. HOLMES

Growth In Grace

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

“Grace is the all-important and absorbing theme of the New Testament Scriptures. As employed by the sacred writers the word is suggestive of God, and of things divine. Truly there is music in the word grace, and the great and heavenly truths that revolve around, and are associated with it, bring much happiness and blessedness into the life of the Christian. The primary meaning of grace is favour; it is therefore expressive of goodwill, of kindly consideration and love, which is absolutely unmerited and undeserved. Jesus Christ, God’s unspeakable gift to the world, is the full expression of His favour to mankind. Jesus came full of grace and truth, and so the favour of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. It is by this favour of God that we are saved and constituted His children. As Christians we are under the reign of grace or favour.

Grace To Help In Time Of Need

Sometimes the word grace as used in the Scriptures signifies the divine help and presence vouchsafed to the believer. In Heb. 4:16, the apostle exhorts to draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need. Paul was comforted with these words, “My grace shall be sufficient for thee.” But here the apostle Peter’s exhortation seems to suggest another thought. “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Divine Gracefulness

It is said of Jesus that He advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. His life was adorned and made beautiful with a divine gracefulness.

His manner was elegant, dignified, refined, and graceful. His whole life was really an exhibition of virtues and excellences, which go to make up true character. Now, the thought conveyed by growing in grace is that we should grow up into Christ, and that Christ should be formed in us. It is a growing into religion, and religion into us. It is Spiritual culture and refinement, the inculcation of divine principles into the life, which will render the character both noble and beautiful.

A Complete Consecration To Him

It is the progress of the soul. It is the placing of ourselves in the Gospel mould, which yields nothing but Christians. No counterfeits, only that which is characterised by genuineness and reality. To grow in the favour of God means the development of a character that is noble, pure, and exalted, and a complete consecration to Him.

This high life is only attainable by a growth, and so we are exhorted to grow in grace. The life of the Christian is clearly set forth in the Scriptures, as one of progression. It is a life that should be a gradual unfolding and development into Christian manhood. Onward and upward is the divinely appointed pathway of the Christian. There is no such thing as remaining stationary in the Spiritual life; it is either progression or retrogression, and as soon as we cease to go forward we at once begin to recede, and consequently drift into indifference and degeneracy.

The Growth In The Divine Life

The growth in the divine life has no limitation; it is a life process, commencing with the new birth, and should continue until the close of life's mission. This new life is the work of grace begun in the soul, and its nature is well defined by the inspired penmen. It should be a life full of goodness, an exemplification of virtues and graces, the reflex of the great Light of Life. As Christ is the effulgence of God's glory, the express image of His Person, so the disciples of Jesus ought to be a re-production of the Christ life. Christ was the incarnation of all goodness. From every point of view we see in Him perfection. His was a life without blemish, pure and spotless — a life which demonstrated all the principles of truth, and ethics which He taught.

The Standard and Ideal Of All Christians

This great and perfect life is the pattern for all succeeding ages, the standard and ideal of all Christians. Has not Jesus proved it to be gloriously possible to live a good, a holy, and an exalted life, under adverse conditions? He went through life's warfare, waging many conflicts with the evil one, without a single defeat, and came out of the battle unscathed. This perfect example should give inspiration and encouragement to all His followers; and surely with such a model before us we can follow in His steps, catch up His Spirit, and grow into His likeness. Just as nature responds to the warm and genial rays of the sun, and bedecks herself with exquisite beauty, so Christians under the life-giving influences of the great Sun of Righteousness will blossom into all the beauty of holiness.

The Development Of A Christ-Like Character

This is what really takes place when growth in grace is in progress. The Apostle Paul (Ephes. 4:15) exhorts the brethren to grow up in all things into Him, which is the head, even Christ. The growing into Christ is therefore the development of a Christ-like character, the moulding of the life according to His teaching, allowing the divine nature to become dominant in the life. Growth in the grace of the Lord Jesus is really a state most blessed and desirable. But it must be remembered that Spiritual life is not self-originated; the new life in the soul is begotten by the Holy Spirit, through the Gospel.

Into A New Relationship To God

Hence the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 1:23) speaks of "being begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth." The hearing and accepting of the Gospel brings the believer into a new

relationship to God. All who are begotten by the Gospel and are born of water and of the Spirit are introduced into the Kingdom of Grace, and are described as babes in Christ, and, placed under proper conditions, are capable of developing into manhood in Christian life."

Bible Advocate, June 5th, 1903.
Selected by Leonard Morgan.

THE RICH — (James 5:1-6)

In James 5:1, the writer says, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." If those addressed had learned their lesson of old time, these verses would never have been penned. James appears to be talking about rich, unbelieving Jews. Their fathers before them were guilty of some of the same sins. "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail. Saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?" (Amos 8:4,5,6). Look at the problems that existed then and you can see the same in the day of James. They took advantage of the needy and made the land of the poor not to produce as it normally would. They were interested in cheating with the weights of all that they sold. They made the ephah small, the money great, and the weighing devices wrong. When the land of the poor would not produce as it should, the rich could go in and buy them and their land for a pittance. They would have the needy ready to be bought for the price of a pair of shoes and would sell chaff for wheat.

The problem was greater, if possible, when Micah wrote. He told of judges or "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money . . ." (Micah 3:11). All of these things were done for the love of money and the things that it could buy. Malachi, the last Old Testament Minor Prophet wrote, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (Malachi 3:8,9).

Jesus taught much regarding this same problem. One occasion was the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19, 20). The rich farmer had the same problem that is spoken of in our text. His ground produced an abundance, and he thought that the thing to do was to tear down his old barns and build newer ones so he could store up all that he had produced. He would then say to his soul that it had plenty and had enough laid up for several years to come (cf. Luke 12:16-20). The Lord had other plans for him and said, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). This farmer's soul was required of him that night.

Judas also put material things before godliness. He sold the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Ananias and Sapphira had this same disposition toward wealth. They lied about their possessions and died the same day. With these illustrations in mind, we are ready to go back to our text to understand it better.

The prophets and Christ had taught great lessons on the evils of the love of money. But, the people of our text had not learned those lessons. So the very thing that they had striven for, riches, were now corrupted and, one of the signs of wealth, their costly garments, was now moth-eaten. Isn't this exactly the teaching of both the Old and New Testaments? Look back at the statements of Christ in Matthew 6 and

hear him say again, “. . . where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt . . .” (v. 19). Look at what the moths had done in James 5 verse 2. Don’t stop there but rather go on to James 5 verse 3, and you will see that their money, gold and silver, was “**cankered,**” and was also rusty. The rich farmer of Luke 12 had to give an account that night, and in James 3, the people are told that they had, “**heaped treasure together for the last days.**”

THERE IS A JUDGMENT

What awaited them also awaits us . . . namely, the judgment. Finally, there is the payday for all such actions taken by them and us. Can’t you see now the scales that weighed the ephah and made it short; the scales that caused the shekel to be greater; the deceit of the balances that were used; the poor that were lined up who had been bought for silver; the needy who had been bought for a pair of shoes; and the judges, priests, and prophets who had great desire for reward? See the picture? Beside them are those of James’ day. Rust was a witness against them. The field workers who were underpaid, or not paid at all, cried out against them as witnesses. They are reminded of all the pleasure that they had lived in on this earth. Their hearts had been nourished as if there had been a great slaughter. They had killed the just, but there was the payday for the rich. They would now receive their just reward. Money did not make them wrong, but **the improper use of wealth** did corrupt them. Attitude regarding possessions is very important in this lesson. We must be rich toward God and our fellowman who is needy, poor, and distressed. Surely none of us would want this list of witnesses lined up against us.

H. D. Davidson.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“I don’t understand what Paul means in 2 Cor. 5:21. What does it mean ‘to be made sin’?”

This is another question which was put to me after a recent study session. Whenever I teach, I always encourage those who listen to look **beyond** the text to what is portrayed by the text; by doing this I have to suffer from self-inflicted wounds whenever passages of Scripture become difficult. This is one of those difficult passages which I personally have wrestled with over the years. I am not sure that I fully understand it yet, but I can at least say where my thoughts have led me.

Whenever we comment on any part of the Scriptures, whatever we say must not be in conflict with what I term ‘the unity of revelation’ of the Scriptures as a whole. Therefore, as we study this question, we should keep in mind certain biblical statements. The first one concerns Jesus during one of His many discourses with the Jews. The Jews took up stones to stone Him because He said, “**I and my Father are One**” (John 10:30). This statement I take to be crucial to our understanding of His true nature. Another is found in 1 John 5:7, “**For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one**”. This statement, I believe, is crucial to our understanding of the Godhead. So according to these statements we can say that God and Jesus were and are One; and that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are One in heaven. From this I reason that no matter where and in what form these three Deities subsist in time, space, and location, then the essential Oneness cannot be destroyed, nor can any word or act attributed to any one

of them be disagreeable to the united revelation and witness which they would seek to portray. I think we can now proceed.

The Problem of Sin

If we advance the argument that 'God is Good', then we are saying that He is all Goodness and that no part of His nature can be evil: that being so, we can also advance the further argument (with absolute justification) that God did not create evil, nor can He condone it. If a Divine Creator issues Divine laws, and those laws are transgressed by some of His Creation, then such conscious transgression is designated as sin against those who perpetrate it; the overt acts of transgression are acts of rebellion against just laws given by a just God: in effect and in fact they constitute rebellion against the Creator Himself. The clay does not have power over the potter, nor do the created have power over the Creator. A just God can do no other than punish the transgressor: He cannot allow the transgression to 'slip by', otherwise it would have been pointless to have issued the instructions in the first place, and future generations could have had no confidence in a God who changes His mind and neglects the administration of justice.

Referring the above to the situation in the Garden of Eden, we can understand that Adam and Eve, the progenitors of the human race, had to be punished for their transgression against God's instructions. The penalty for their sin affected the whole of the human race, for as Paul argues, "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Rom.5:18a). Sin and its terminal consequence, death, passed to all men, and it has been borne throughout future generations, even to the present day. A loving and merciful God, however, provided a way of atonement for His people in O.T. times, and that way we must now consider.

Ritualistic Sacrifice

In the first few chapters of the Book of Leviticus we read of God's instructions to the nation of Israel concerning the offerings they should bring for the alleviation of sin. Apart from the cereal offering, all the other offerings involve flesh and blood sacrifice of animals. The worshipper brought his animal before the altar, placed his hand(s) on its head, and then killed it. The priest then took the blood, sprinkled it around the altar, and then arranged for the disposal of the residue of flesh. The laying on of the hand symbolised the identification of the offeror with the victim; the sinful offerer with the innocent victim. The shedding and sprinkling of the blood symbolised the 'covering' of the offerer's sin; the innocent victim (the animal) stood 'in the place of' the iniquitous offerer. A life was given and a life was spared. Blood, however, had to be shed and sprinkled, for, as the Hebrew Writer says, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood: and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb.9:22; but read the whole of chapters 9 and 10).

We must understand, though, that under the O.T. system sins could not be taken away; an animal sacrifice would not suffice for human beings, for as the Writer says, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (10-4). So another way had to be found, but this way would involve and require the shedding of human blood from a physical body of flesh in order to remove the sin of humankind. This is where Jesus, the Christ of God, comes into the picture.

The Cross Of Christ

It is here that the poetry of some of our much-loved hymns tends to obscure the reality of the sacrifice. We sometimes sing a hymn which says that Jesus 'interposed His precious blood', and another which says, "So out of pity Jesus said, He'd bear the punishment instead." I believe it is not helpful for us to consider Jesus as intervening between God and man, and seeming to induce God into giving a salvation which He was unwilling to give; nor is it helpful for us to consider God as singling out Jesus for a punishment which He (Jesus) was unwilling to offer. No, I believe it is most helpful

for us to see God and His Christ in complete unison concerning our salvation. When we read that **'God gave His Son,'** we also read that that the Son **'offered Himself: if the cup of bitterness was given by God for Jesus to drink of, then in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus accepted it willingly. And isn't this consistent with what Jesus said to the Jews, "I and my Father are One"?'** If there was, and is, no unity of purpose between God and His Christ, then surely there can be no unity in the Godhead, and if that is so, then Christians at best have been the victims of a grim joke, or at worst the victims of inexplicable caprice on the part of God. But even a cursory examination of the Scriptures will convince us that God and Christ acted in complete harmony in procuring our salvation and future spiritual well-being. The Scriptures teach us that Christ **"was slain from the foundation of the world"**; are we now to conclude that our salvation depends on the whim of a capricious God and an indeterminate Christ? In no way!

The Sin-Bearer

A few lines in another of our hymns read like this, "And was there then no other way for God to take? I cannot say." Could God have reconciled us **without** the sacrifice of Christ in the flesh? A belief in the omnipotent power of God must make us answer in the affirmative. But, you see, the **substance** of the New Covenant in Christ had to be consistent with the **shadows** as depicted in the Old Covenant; a detailed consideration of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah will bear this out. So Jesus had to **'bear in His own body our sins on the tree'** (1 Pet.2:24).

In 2 Cor.5:19 Paul says that, **"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."** A dictionary definition of the word 'imputation' might give us a wrong idea for it is said, 'to ascribe another's righteousness or guilt to a person'. Imputation does **not** mean that you can **transfer** sin to another person, i.e., Christ, so as to make that person **sinful**; in the same way you cannot transfer the **righteousness** to another, i.e., God's righteousness, so that a person can become as righteous as God is. If God was **in** Christ, as Their Oneness demands that we think of them, then we can no more ascribe sin to Christ than we can to God. If Christ bore our sins on the tree, and Christ and God are One, then there is a sense in which God Himself bore our sins also. What Jesus did was to accept the **liability** for the sin of mankind, and consequent upon that, to also accept the **penalty** for sin. He became the **scapegoat** of O.T. depiction. You remember that **two** animals were involved; one which was sacrificed so that the blood could be shed, and the other which took away the burden of sin to a far off place. Christ accomplished both these functions in a perfect sacrifice of Himself. Never let it be said, or thought, that He who was without sin, was **made** sin. The righteousness which Christ won for us was a **right standing** before God, not a transfer of **His own** righteousness to us. His blood availed for us; He stood **instead** of us, not because He was made **like us** in sin. I trust these few thoughts will have a little merit in helping us to understand the mystery of salvation a little better. For the sake of Him who died for us.

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

THE DENOMINATIONS

7.—THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

The beginnings of the Baptist Churches go back to 1525, when Hubmaier and Denck started the Anabaptist cause in Germany. They rejected infant baptism, and set up free self-governing congregations having the Bible as their law. They were ascetic in tendency rather than puritan, and eventually developed an apocalyptic outlook which was politically left-wing. They advocated community of goods and finally community of wives. This led to the fierce persecution and massacre (between

1533-35) in the province of Munster. The best that was in the Anabaptist movement passed into the Mennonite Churches of Holland. Mennonites exist to this day, especially in U.S.A. and Canada. They reject infant Baptism and are strict pacifists. English reformers who fled the country during the reign of Mary came in contact with Anabaptists and learnt something of their objection to infant Baptism.

Spreading Throughout The World

But the real beginnings of the English movement must be traced to John Smyth, a Cambridge man and a Minister of the Church of England, who in 1606 joined himself to the Separatist Church at Gainsborough along with Thomas Helwys. This Church emigrated to Amsterdam, and it was there in 1609 that Smyth came to the conclusion that infant Baptism was no Baptism at all. He baptized himself and then baptized his friend Helwys and others. In 1612 Helwys brought this Church to London and established the first Baptist Church on English soil in Spitalfields. Helwys soon found himself in Newgate prison for circulating a book called *The Mystery of Iniquity*, which is one of the earliest tracts advocating religious toleration, a principle to which Baptists have been faithful throughout their history. Perhaps no community has so emphasised the principle of religious and political liberty. So began the struggle which was to spread the Baptist cause throughout the world. It was in 1630 that Roger Williams left England for America, where in Rhode Island he set up the first modern State in which the principle of complete tolerance in religious matters prevailed. In 1639 he established the first Baptist Church on American soil. In the eighteenth century an indigenous Baptist movement arose in Scotland out of the Glasite Churches, led by Archibald MacLean, giving rise to the Scotch Baptist Churches, a community which exists now only in a few Churches in Lancashire and North Wales. Indigenous Baptist Churches have also arisen in Russia, Sweden, Poland, Latvia and other European countries. Most of these Churches are now joined together loosely in the Baptist World Alliance, which has no legislative functions and meets every five years.

Differences of Emphasis

It must not be supposed that all Baptist Churches were alike in every detail of practice or belief. The principle of congregational independency, held more strongly in some areas than in Congregational Churches, allowed for much diversity. They were alike in rejecting infant baptism, but at first affusion was still the mode of Baptism. It was only gradually that all Baptist Churches came to practice immersion in the seventeenth century. From the first almost, they were divided theologically between Calvinism and Arminianism, and thus came to be known as either 'particular' or 'general' Baptist Churches. At the present time in this country there are small groups of Baptist Churches which are not in the Baptist Union, such as the Strict Baptists or Particular Baptists, the Scotch Baptists, and the International Old Baptist Union. The latter body practise 'the laying on of hands' after Baptism. In America during the Civil War, the Baptist Churches were divided between North and South, and still are. Formerly in America all Baptist Churches were close communion and close membership. Those of the South still are. Amongst Northern Baptists there are many open communion Churches and some open membership. In this country, within the Baptist Union, there are both close membership Churches and close communion Churches. The whole of the Welsh Baptist Churches are both close membership and close communion, as are many of the Baptist Churches in Scotland.

Organisation and Practice

Perhaps no Churches so stress the priesthood of believers as Baptist Churches, and consequently there is no religious act which a layman may perform as well as a Minister if called on by the church to do so. The principle of Congregational independency is also strongly held. Churches in this country are federated in the Baptist Union, which has no legislative functions over the individual Churches. More recently

Superintendents have been appointed over areas, but neither have these any *power* to intervene in local Church matters. Their functions are purely advisory. In Great Britain churches in the Baptist Union reported (1962) a membership of 313,885. The membership of the World Baptist Alliance at the same date was 24,309,538.

In the seventh century most Baptist Churches appear to have celebrated the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day. Most Baptist Churches in this country celebrate once a month, though there are many which celebrate every Sunday either after the morning or evening service. All are strongly evangelical, and perhaps for that reason have not developed the strong interest in the *doctrine* of Baptism which characterises Churches of Christ, fearing to make Baptism an *effectual* sacrament; but amongst Baptist scholars and Ministers there is a growing interest in these matters. It would indeed be difficult to distinguish the doctrine of Baptism as advocated by such scholars as the late Dr. Wheeler Robinson and Dr. Underwood from that taught by Churches of Christ. Likewise there is a growing feeling towards making the Lord's Supper the centre of Christian worship.

W. Robinson.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec. 6	Micah 5:2-15	Matthew 2
Dec. 13	Isaiah 40:1-11	Matthew 3
Dec. 20	Psalms 91	Matthew 4
Dec. 27	Deut. 5:1-21	Matt. 5:1-26

HEROD THE GREAT

In the veins of Herod the Great flowed the red blood of Esau, for Esau was Edom, and Herod was an Edomite. Secular history narrates how he was a cunning man and a hunter, but he hunted for souls and wreaked his vengeance as readily upon his own family as upon his foes. He caused the death of his wife, Mariamne, and of three of his sons, and his life story is largely written in red.

He also attempted to kill the Messiah to enable his continuance of power, but, of course, did not succeed. Not long after Jesus was born, Herod died in Jericho, "his deathbed being the scene of the most awful agonies in mind and body," as Flavius Josephus remarked. John Buchan wrote of him: "He was a man of infinite audacity and resource. . . His aim was to combine Judaism and Hellenism and to have behind him a strong arm of Rome. . . He attempted to ride two horses and failed with both. He did succeed in making Judea the

most important of the client-kingdoms, but he won the undying hatred of all orthodox Jews, especially the aristocracy, and he failed to Hellenize his land beyond the surface. . . He broke every law of Jewry, put his sons to death, massacred the Pharisees and descended to the grave in an orgy of blood. It is probable that he had become mad."

It is interesting that Joseph and the family fled to Egypt to escape the persecution of Herod. Egypt was the nearest country not under the jurisdiction of this evil tyrant. Egypt, which was once a place of bondage for the people of God, had now become a haven of peace for the holy family. Hosea had prophesied of the event (11:1) and Matthew referred directly to it (2:15). Later the family returned to "the holy land" and settled in Nazareth, which was also the subject of prophecy (Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12). Remember, the word "Nazarene" comes from the Hebrew *netser* and means "Branch".

JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist is one of the great characters of the gospel records. The apostle John wrote of him: "*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness*

of that Light" (John 1:6-8). Alexander Campbell once said of Him: "Now the Pharisees placed the highest degree of sanctity, just in such a demeanour, dress and manner of life, as John the Baptist assumed. Thus he dressed himself to the taste of those who could give the most influence to his message. Hence we find that so soon as his preaching, dress, food and manner of life, were known, the Jews in Jerusalem deputed very honourable characters, both Priests and Levites. to wait upon him to hear his testimony and to report it in the metropolis. Thus the testimony of John in favour of the Messiah was favourably announced through Judea and to the nation. In all respects the testimony of the harbinger wonderfully accords with that of the testimony of the twelve original heralds, both in its general character and accompaniments."

John's message was clear. He taught his hearers to share their food and clothes with those in greater need than themselves; he forbade tax-collectors to exact the little extra for themselves; he told soldiers to be content with their rations and pay and not to extort money from civilians by violence or by threats of denunciation. F. F. Bruce has commented: "Those who confessed their sins and received John's baptism in token of their repentance were required to 'bear fruits that befit repentance' (Luke 3:8), to live lives which accorded with the 'way of righteousness' inculcated by John (Matt. 21:32). . . This way of righteousness did not differ essentially from that on which the earlier prophets insisted — to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God."

The climax of John's ministry was his baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17). The event marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus undoubtedly recognised John as a prophet and acknowledged his baptismal ministry as the work of God.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

The devil did everything to prevent the Messiah entering the world, but when He came he tried to tempt Him and destroy Him. Satan's bait in the temptation of Jesus was the same as that used against Eve — appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Jesus overcame him by reference to Scripture. Three times He said: "*It is written*" (4:6,7,10), which shows how important it is to have knowledge of the word of God. This is why some saints are a pushover for the evil one because they are simply ignorant of what is written.

The Hebrew writer said of Jesus: "*For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (4:15). Robert Milligan wrote: "He feels for us; because, in the days of His flesh, He was constantly tempted as we are. While treating of this subject, we should never forget that Christ was a man like ourselves. He had every faculty, every power and susceptibility that we have."

THE BEATITUDES

The so-called Sermon on the Mount by Jesus has been described as the essence of His teaching. The Beatitudes have been described as the essence of the Sermon. So we can say that in the Beatitudes we have the essence of the essence of the Christian way of life.

The word "blessed" is from the Greek word *makarios* and is best translated "O the bliss!" The characteristic of the word is that it describes a bliss which belongs only to God. As William Barclay has written: "If this Christian bliss is the bliss of the blessedness of God, we will not be surprised to find that it completely reverses the world's standards. O the bliss of the poor! O the bliss of the sorrowful! O the bliss of the hungry and thirsty! O the bliss of the persecuted! These are startling contradictions of the world's standards; these are sayings which no man could

hear for the first time without a shock of amazement."

The word that is used for "poor" (5:3) in the Greek is *ptochos*, which describes a man who is completely destitute. In such a state ("poor in spirit") he can be moved to put his whole trust in God.

"Mourn" (5:4) is from the Greek verb *klaiein* and is one of the strongest words for mourning in the Greek language. It describes the sorrow which issues in tears. In other words, it speaks of a sorrow which is poignant, piercing and intense. A man who feels that way about his sinfulness will be ready to come to God for comfort.

The Greek word for "meek" (5:5) is *praus*. It is a word that speaks of strength under control and was used, for example, to describe a horse subject to the bit. One writer has commented: "In its Godward look it describes the man who gives to God perfect trust and perfect obedience." Meekness should never be equated with weakness.

Those "who hunger and thirst after righteousness" (5:6) are those who hunger and thirst for *all* of righteousness because that is what is meant in the original Greek. "Righteousness" is *dikaiosune* and speaks of a right relationship with God.

"Mercy" (5:7) is the word *eleos* and is the opposite of self-centredness. W. E. Vine defines it as "the outward manifestation of pity. It assumes need on the part of him who receives it and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him shows it."

"Pure in heart" (5:8) is a beautiful phrase. The word "pure" is *katharos* and speaks of something which is absolutely pure. As one writer put it: "The beatitude describes the bliss of the heart whose thoughts, motives, desires are completely unmixed, genuine and sincere."

"Peacemakers" (5:9) are those who are breakers-down of barriers. (Note Jesus did not speak of peace-lovers, but peace-makers.) "Peace" is *eirene* and

has a lot to do with harmony or right relationships in every sphere of life.

Jesus also spoke of "those who are persecuted for righteousness sake" (5:10). As He suffered at the hands of enemies, so his disciples would suffer.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Newtongrange: Our Annual Social was held in the Meeting Place on Saturday, 10th October, 1992. Bro. James Sinclair opened the meeting in prayer and thanksgiving.

The chairman was Bro. Robert Hunter and the speakers were Bro. John Kneller, Tranent, and Harry McGinn from New Cumnock. They both gave excellent addresses which left the gathering with much food for thought.

During the Social solos were sung by sister May Wilson, Slamannan, and Bro. Harry McGinn: and enjoyed by everyone. Bro. David Chalmers, New Cumnock closed the meeting with prayer and benediction.

The church at Newtongrange was most appreciative of all the churches who notified them of the numbers likely to be attending so that catering arrangements were greatly simplified. A grand time of fellowship was enjoyed by all.

Joe Currie, Sec./Treas.

Kentish Town, London: The church here is very pleased to report the baptism of Ray Doyle on September 20th. Ray has been studying the scriptures and attending our meetings for the past few months. We pray that we will all be blessed by his decision in our desire to follow our Lord more perfectly, and that Ray will become a great asset to our Lord in His church.

Mrs. Dorothy Proud, Sec.

Hindley: We are delighted to report the immersion into Christ of Sister Joan Thompson, and Sister Betty

Wolstenholm, on 13th September, 1992. Our two Sisters have been under the conviction of sin for some time, and we rejoice with them in their newness of life. We pray that God will bless them both.

John Morgan.

OBITUARY

Hindley: It is with sorrow that we record the passing of our dear Bro. James Matthew, and his dear wife, Sister Alice on 5th and 3rd September, respectively. James had, for a great number of years, suffered from a lung complaint which kept him housebound; although during the summer months, whenever possible, he came to the gospel meetings. If not with us in the flesh he was with us in the spirit. On the eve of his death he told the writer that two people had laid down their lives for him; the Lord Jesus and his own wife.

Sister Alice devoted her life to the care of her husband, daughter Dorothy and two adopted sons. She was a giver of her time: visiting, years ago, hospitals and the workhouse taking food and spiritual help to the inmates. She spent her life witnessing for her Lord.

They were both lovers of God's Word and Missionary work, particularly the project in Ghana, giving freely to it, often anonymously. They were also great intercessors in prayers: indeed they were beautiful Christians and brightened our lives. The wonderful assurance we have is that they are now clothed in the righteousness of Christ and one day we will meet them again.

Hindley: On the 23rd September, 1992, the writer was asked to take the funeral service of Mr. Richard James, aged 87 years, who attended our gospel meetings and enjoyed singing with us. We express our love to his widow, Jane and family and would point the family to the Father of all mercies, and the God of all comfort.

John Morgan.

EVANGELIST TRUST FUND (Former Committee)

This notice is to inform brethren that the Trust Fund has now been wound up, and no further contributions can be received.

We wish to thank all brethren who have, in the past, supported this branch of the Lord's work.

On behalf of the Trust Fund,
Len Daniell, Tom Woodhouse.

GHANA APPEAL

In the past month we have sent £2,000 to Ghana from the Appeal funds, £1,000 to Angu to complete their meeting place, £800 to Odumasi for their meeting place, £100 for Bibles £100 for a megaphone to preach the Word.

The Brethren continue to send their grateful thanks for the money received to date. There are so many projects that we could easily become involved in, but I think we should continue to complete the existing Meeting places before we consider any new work. I would therefore ask anyone or church, to continue helping in the completion of buildings partly built. Donations should be made out to: Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal) and sent to 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU.

Thank you, IMB for your cheque dated 29th September, 1992, it was allocated receipt No. 378 and was sent to Angu as part of the money sent on 8th October for their roof.

"ALMOST, OR ALTOGETHER"

As the peerless apostle Paul pled his cause before Herod Agrippa II in Acts 26, he took advantage of the occasion to preach Christ unto the ones at that gathering. Festus doggedly dodged the emphasis of Paul's sermon by accusing him of insanity. The immoral Bernice complacently and indifferently sat through the tiring speech. Agrippa, however, seemed to be of a different disposition; he was gracious and courteous to this man of God and listened with interest to his lesson. Yet, at the conclusion of the sermon he could only muster

these words: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." To that Paul retorted: "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

Modern Applications

Many are like Festus in trying to discredit either the gospel or the man who preaches it. Such a rationalization, of course, does not change the Truth. To shout such prejudicial statements as — "You're narrow-minded" or "You need to have more love" or "That's just what your little group teaches" does not alter what God has said about any matter.

"You're narrow-minded" or "You need to have more love" or "That's just what your little group teaches" does not alter what God has said about any matter. Folks in the religious world need to realize that when God has spoken, it does little good to discredit the messenger of His Word, for It shall abide for ever.

Others imitate the unconcern of Bernice. This attitude is a foolish one in view of eternity and the judgment to come. "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment." This writer has actually heard people say: "I don't need all that religious stuff." How pathetic it is to realize that many will be lost because they have failed to manifest a concern for things of a spiritual nature.

But today many are still trying to soothe their conscience by almost being Christians. Untold thousands are lost because they keep waiting and being almost persuaded. This devilish deception is not uncommon in our day and time. How many hundreds or thousands have heard the Gospel preached with a realization of their needs, but have not obeyed? How many "Agrippa's" do we have who are almost persuaded? Friend; do not let the angel of death arrive and find you *almost* a Christian. Be a child of God today!

From *The Truth*.

GOING HOME

One day, I'm going to leave this place,
And go across the sea,
Where Jesus, with His smiling face,
Is waiting now, for me.

He'll take my hand, and walk with me
Across the shining sand,
And gently lead me, all the way
Into His golden land.

My loved ones, there, I'll meet once
And hand in hand we'll stroll [more
For ever, on that lovely shore,
OUR songs of praise will roll.

Sadness and pain, no more I'll know,
My heart will be at peace,
And with a wondrous joy will glow —
When my spirit finds release!

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