

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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ONE MAN AND HIS DOG

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). This was, and still is, the promise of Jesus to His disciples. If we are faithful until death, we will receive that crown of life. Jesus was referring, at the time, to many thousands of His disciples who were being hounded by the authorities, and were being slain for their claim to discipleship, but the promise also extends, nevertheless, to those who will die peacefully, in old age.

I was driving along George IV Bridge, in Edinburgh, the other day, with two of our grandchildren in the back of the car, and as we passed the small bronze statue to “Greyfriars Bobby” there were large numbers of Japanese tourists, taking photographs and chattering away. The grandchildren did not know the story of “Greyfriars Bobby” and as I related it to them it occurred to me that it might also be of interest, and profit, to most readers of the “Scripture Standard.” When I say that ‘Bobby’ (Greyfriars Bobby) was a little shaggy dog (a Skye Terrier) you may be wondering what relevance ‘a shaggy dog story’ has in the pages of a religious magazine. This is quite a fair concern to have, and I can only reply that it has the same relevance as all the other animals, birds, fish, insects, reptiles mentioned in the Bible. Over forty different animals are referred to in the scriptures, to say nothing of the many birds, insects, reptiles, etc. Many of them are mentioned for no other purpose than that we should profit from some lesson to be derived from them. Dogs are mentioned, for instance, with their disgusting tendency to return to their vomit ; pigs to wallowing in the mire ; leopards who can’t change their spots ; being wise as serpents ; harmless as doves ; and so on. Jesus said “ Consider the ravens ” and grasp the lesson. Solomon said “ Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise.” Indeed Solomon was intrigued by four apparently weak and ineffectual creatures which were, in reality, exceedingly strong and wise, viz.- the ant : the conies, the locusts, and the spider (Prov. 30). He was also impressed (too wonderfully) with an eagle in flight, the lion, the greyhound and the he-goat. Thus there are characteristics to be seen in the world of animals, birds, and insects which give us instruction if we have the ability to recognise the lesson. In view of all this I offer readers the account, the very true account, of the remarkable fidelity of the little Skye terrier to its master. To those who don’t care about history, or those who do not like dogs I apologise in advance, and can only hope that some readers may feel that the story was worth telling.

Greyfriars Churchyard

To say that Edinburgh is steeped in history would surely be a gross understatement, and even many of its Churchyards and cemeteries are places of enthralling interest and have exciting tales to tell. Greyfriars Churchyard is no exception and even gets a mention in Encyclopaedia Britannica. It is tucked away at the top of Candle-maker Row and, within its high mossy walls, it is cool, shady and surprisingly cut off from the traffic noise. On sunny days, large numbers of office workers eat their lunch-time sandwiches there, sunbathing upon those ancient turfs and contemplating the permanent inmates (I participated in this practice, myself, over many years). The list of those 'officially buried' there reads like a "Who's Who" of famous Scots from early date, and it was here also that the famous National Covenant was signed on Feb. 28th 1638. Sir Walter Scott's family lie there as does Allan Ramsay, as does Duncan Forbes of Culloden, as does Sir Robt. Sibbald (Physician to Charles II) as does the headless corpse of Douglas, Earl of Morton (interred in 1581 in the place for criminals), as does Sir George (Bloody) Mackenzie, the clever lawyer and Judge who sent innocents to the gallows and a great many others. Many victims of the plague, of 1568, are also buried (in a great pit) there. One thousand, two hundred captured Covenanters were, for their faith, kept captive there (the prisons being full) for six months, in the open-air with no shelter or any facilities (men, women and children) during a freezing Scottish winter and were buried where they fell dead. Soldiers posted on the walls, with muskets, shot any who tried to escape. Over the centuries so many people were buried there that they had to raise the earth level and begin again — thus the interred are numberless and probably four or five layers deep. Thousands of tourists and historians visit the place every year — but amongst all those ornate headstones erected to the wealthy and illustrious, many visitors come mainly to see the little tombstone erected to the memory of this little terrier dog.

Faithful unto Death

Some readers, as children, may have seen the full-length feature film made by Walt Disney of Bobby, but the following are the simple facts. John Gray of Hall's Court, was the owner of 'Bobby,' and the year was 1858. Hall's Court was half a mile from Greyfriars Churchyard and was part of an area of drab and wretched housing. Most of Edinburgh's citizens at this time lived in great poverty and squalor (in tenement type housing), many houses consisted of a single-roomed hovel, rat infested, with no water and occupied by as many as twenty people. As can be imagined crime, violence and vice abounded. John Gray was employed as a member of the City Watch (what we would now call the Constabulary) and acquired Bobby when the dog was but six months old. I suppose this makes Bobby one of the original 'watch' dogs. John Gray and Bobby went everywhere together and became really firm friends. Living conditions being poor, and sanitation being less than primitive, Edinburgh was, apart from all else, a very unhealthy place. Thus it was that John Gray, in his late forties, on 8th Feb. 1858, died after a long struggle against tuberculosis. Accordingly the nearest burial place being Greyfriars Churchyard, he was interred there. Bobby, apparently un-noticed, had followed the funeral procession and when discovered had to be carried from the cemetery with great difficulty, and struggling furiously. At the very first opportunity however, Bobby was back in the cemetery, lying on top of his master's grave. Time and again the gravediggers threatened the dog with their spades and chased him from the vicinity but he always returned as soon as it was safe. Eventually, as the months went by, local well-wishers would marvel at this dog lying on the grave, in all weathers, and would bring it little scraps of food. A friendly grave digger supplied a little canvas sack for him to lie upon in the shelter of an adjacent tomb, and as the months merged into years a local restaurateur used to provide him with one meal per

day. Scottish winters are particularly severe, with bitter icy winds, freezing rain and snow. Notwithstanding sub-zero temperatures Bobby rarely strayed far from his master's grave, night or day, and was often dug out from great drifts of snow. A local upholsterer, James Anderson, occasionally could entice him into his home on a particularly stormy night, but in the morning Bobby was back continuing his vigil at the graveside. After four long years of this Bobby became somewhat of a local celebrity and had many visits from well-wishers and from the merely curious. Many used to weep at the sight — the poor man's unmarked grave adorned only by a little dog, kept there in all weathers by an imperishable love for its master. As the years rolled on Bobby's 'fame' spread internationally and he had visitors from abroad, especially America. Eminent artists came and paintings and sketches of him are to be found in many lands. Even photographers (in the early days of photography) came to take his picture and one of these can be seen, with etchings, etc., in the Huntly House Museum, in the High Street, Edinburgh. Indeed in November, 1871, there was a suggestion that a monument to Bobby be made but as he was still alive nothing was done : albeit sculptor's sketches were made. As the dog grew older John Traill, owner of a local Coffee House, did as much for him as he could, and Mr. Traill's daughter nursed him through his last months, but on 14th Jan. 1872, Bobby fell asleep by the fire-side never to re-awake. Mr. Traill, and a few friends, buried him secretly beneath a tree in front of the door of Old Greyfriars Church. We might think it tragic that the poor heart-broken dog was not buried with its master in the grave it lay upon all those years, but the graveyard was for 'Christian' burial only, and certainly no dogs were allowed to be interred in the place. Even the rough stone with "Greyfriars Bobby" etched upon it was quickly removed by the then Burial Officer.

In Retrospect

Baroness Burdett-Coutts, a wealthy English lady, and animal lover who had known of Bobby before he died, had a bronze statue erected nearby, in George IV Bridge, to the dog's memory which bears the following inscription :- " A Tribute To The Affectionate Fidelity Of Greyfriars Bobby. In 1858 this faithful dog followed the remains of his master to Greyfriars Churchyard, and lingered near the spot until his death in 1872. With permission, erected by Baroness Burdett-Coutts." Thus the statue has been there for a hundred years and will probably remain there for another hundred. A number of American visitors, with typical American generosity, collected money and tried to erect a stone on Bobby's grave, but as the dog's grave could not be countenanced, the stone was eventually erected over the unmarked grave of John Gray, Bobby's master. The stone says, " Let his loyalty and devotion be a lesson to us all."

There are I think many truly remarkable features about this astonishing narrative. In the first place it seems amazing to me that a dog, small or otherwise, could appreciate that its master had 'died' (whatever that may mean to a dog) and that his remains had been placed in a coffin. How could a dog work all that out. It equally seems amazing to me that the dog could also follow the procession to the churchyard, and readily understand that he was attending his master's burial (whatever that could possibly mean to a dog). But realise it all he did, and he had to be forcibly removed from the cemetery. However the most incredible facet of the circumstances must surely be that a dog could have such a love (if 'love' is the right word), or affection for its master that it would wait, apparently in hope, for such a length of years, in the sure confidence of a happy reunion. Can we possibly imagine the forlorn sadness of that little creature? Nothing, however, was allowed to deflect Bobby from his purpose. There were countless well-wishers, over those fourteen years, who, with the best of intentions, tried to befriend the dog, to adopt it as a pet, to take it with them and

give it a good home — but although the dog appreciated the kindness, it could not be diverted from its master's side. There may be those who scoff at sentimentality, or resent being asked to accept the example of a mere canine creature, but of such I would merely ask **how often their love for a dead relative takes them to the cemetery.** Not many humans, motivated with what is said to be the strongest of human emotions (love), would be likely to spend the rest of their life-time lying on the grave of their nearest and dearest. Occasionally we may here of humans dancing (for joy) on certain graves but rarely lying prostrate on them. We should, therefore, belittle Bobby's devotion to his earthly master only when we can surpass it in our own devotion to our heavenly Master. Bobby was 16 years old when he died and had spent fourteen of these years in unswerving constancy to his absent owner. He had certainly been **faithful unto death.** As the stone says, "Let his faithfulness be a lesson to us all." All we can say is, that if we are as devoted to our **heavenly Master** as Bobby was to his **earthly master** we shall do exceedingly well. **Jesus says to us, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of Life."**

Editor.

GLEANINGS

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

HE AIMED AT NOTHING, AND HIT IT

"We shall preach to no purpose unless we have a purpose in preaching. Archbishop Whately said of some preacher that "he aimed at nothing and hit it." But preaching may seem to be very effective, may attract great crowds, may produce intense excitement, may win for the preacher a wide reputation, and may yet be practically worthless and even mischievous. We cannot altogether escape the spirit of our times. When sensuous poetry is corrupting the public taste; when coarse, sensational fiction is popular, not only among the half-educated boys and girls, but among women who claim to have cultivation and refinement; it is only natural that we should be in danger of adopting a melodramatic and hysterical kind of preaching, which stimulates the passions, but conveys no solid instruction and produces no wholesome moral or religious results.

I believe in the duty of consecrating to the exposition and defence of Divine truth every faculty and resource which the preacher may happen to possess. There is no power of the intellect, no passion of the heart, no learning, no natural genius, that should not be compelled to take part in this noble service."

R. W. Dale.

WE QUOTE — JOHN MILTON

"The martyrs slew the powers of darkness, through the invincible power of darkness."

HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS

"The sheep is a very timid creature. Especially is it afraid of swiftly moving water, which it has good reason to fear. The sheep is a very poor swimmer because of its heavy coat of wool. It would be like a man trying to swim with his overcoat on. The water soaks into the sheep's coat and pulls it down. Instinctively, the sheep knows it cannot swim in swift current. The sheep will not drink from a moving stream. The sheep will drink only from still waters. The shepherd does not laugh at the sheep's fears. He does not try to force the sheep. Instead, as he leads his sheep across the mountains and valleys, he is constantly on the watch for still waters, where the thirst of the sheep may be quenched. . . . This petition of the Twenty-third Psalm has wonderful meaning for us. God knows our limitations, and He does not condemn us

because we have weaknesses. He does not force us where we cannot safely and happily go. God never demands of us work which is beyond our strengths and abilities. Instead God is constantly ministering to our needs. He understands the loads upon our shoulders. He also knows where the places of nourishment and refreshment are located."

Charles L. Allen.

A TRIBUTE TO HIS MOTHER

"All that I have taught of art, everything that I have written, every greatness that has been in any thought of mine, whatever I have done in my life, has simply been due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read with me a part of the Bible, and daily made me learn a part of it by heart."

John Ruskin.

JESUS WAS WONDERFUL IN HIS SORROWS

"Jesus was wonderful in his sorrows. The sun smote him, and the cold chilled him, the rains pelted him, thirst parched him, and hunger exhausted him. Shall I compare his sorrow to the sea? No; for that is sometimes hushed into a calm. Shall I compare it with the Night? No; for that sometimes gleams with Orion, or kindles with Aurora. If one thorn should be thrust through your temple you would faint. But here is a whole crown made from the **Rhamnus, or Spini Christi** — small, sharp, stinging thorns. The mob made a cross. They put down the long beam, and on it they fasten a shorter beam. Got him at last. Those hands that have been doing the kindnesses and wiping away tears — feel the hammer driving the spikes through them. Those feet, that have been going about on ministrations of mercy — battered against the cross. Then they lift it up. Look ! Look ! Look ! who will help him now? Come, men of Jerusalem — ye whose dead he brought to life; ye whose sick he healed; who will help to seize the weapons of the soldiers? None to help ! Having carried such a cross for us, shall we refuse to take our cross for him?

" Shall Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?

No; there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me."

T. De Witt Talmage.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

OVER 1200 RELIGIONS IN AMERICA

Over 1200 Religions in America? Yes, there are that many — from A (Adventist Churches) to Z (Zoroastrianism), in addition to the well-known denominations, there are ritualmagic churches, flying saucer fellowships and 48 different groups of spiritualists — all part of the "religious fabric" of this country.

For years we have taught that there are over 300 denominations or religions in America. Well, brethren, according to the latest documentation that I have seen, you can chalk that number up to 1200. They are all listed, by name, in the March 1980, issue of **Good Housekeeping Magazine**. Dr. J. Gordon Melton the compiler of the list, spent 16 years studying the breadth and depth of spiritual beliefs in this country. Dr. Melton stated that he might have been better qualified to research this topic had he been "a detective instead of a Methodist minister" because he had to uncover what he calls the "hidden religions." For example, while Dr. Melton has included the 72 different churches within the well-known Baptist religion, he has also listed the various flying saucer churches, witches' covens, Satanists, pagans, Psychic (ESP) groups, communes, mailorder churches, Sufis and even some brand new Jesus-people churches (including the colourfully named Holy Ghost Repair Service, Inc.).

The article goes on to state that while most of us are probably familiar with the hundreds of 'Christian churches,' the Jewish faiths and with some of the Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism that these only scratch the surface. Did you know, for example :

That there is a formal church of **Kennedy Worshipers**? These people worship the late President John F. Kennedy, who they believe can cure them of congenital and even terminal diseases.

That the **Ministry of Universal Wisdom** is a church based on a belief in flying saucers? Its founder, George Van Tassel, an aviation technologist says that in 1953, clad only in his shorts, he was given a ride at two o'clock in the morning by an extraterrestrial named Solganda.

That there really is a **Church of What's Happening Now**? Imogene Williams Stewart, the church founder has had trouble with the authorities because her church's name is identical with that of a fictitious church made famous by black comedian Flip Wilson.

That the Eastern religion of Jainism, though 2,500 years old, did not reach our shores until 1971 because one particular taboo made it difficult for Jain leaders to get here? It was a taboo against travelling over water by means other than foot.

These are just a few of the statements that I found in this comprehensive article and list of American religions. Dr. Melton, the article states, established three main standards for inclusion in his list :

1. The church must seek the chief religious loyalty of its members.
2. It must promote its beliefs.
3. It must be big enough to have at least two congregations or one congregation with over 2000 members. If not organized into congregations, it must have members in more than one state.

The article has all these "churches" listed by name. I was amazed and shocked at some of the names I read. I will list a few out of the 1200; "A Candle," "Unification Association of Christian Sabbath Keepers," "End Time Body- Christian Ministries, Inc." "House of Prayer for all People," "Shiloh True Light Church of Christ," "National Baptist Evangelical Life and Soul Saving Assembly of the U.S.A." "Two Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists," "Macrobiotics." "The Farm" (a commune church), "Church of the Awakening," "Church of the Tree of Life."

Others include : "Solar Light Center" (a flying saucer group), "Peoples Church-Community of the Love of Christ," (a homo-sexual religion), "Lower Rights Church," "The Church Which is Christ's Body," "Two-by-Two's," "Adams Apple," "Jesus-People U.S.A.," "Love Inn," "Inner Powers Society," "Pagan's Way," "Church of Satanic Brotherhood." "Witches International Craft Associates," "and The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity" (the Unification Church).

BE NOT DECEIVED

As I read through this article and the names of those religions. I realised how successful Satan has been in his work of deception. The devil has deceived many into thinking that religious division is good. I undersand that one author has written a book in which he maintains denominationalism is from God Almighty. Friend I can assure you that it did not come from God. The Bible is crystal clear on this matter. Listen to Jesus as he poured out his heart in prayer to his Father in John 17:20-21. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word: That they all may be one: as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that

they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Listen to Paul, as he condemned division in 1 Corinthians 1:10. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all **speak the same thing**, and that there be **no division among you**: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

The Bible tells us in Matthew 16:18 that Jesus would build HIS CHURCH. We read in Acts 2 where the "Lord added to the church those who were being saved." In Ephesians 4, we are told that there is "one body." In Colossians 1:18; we are instructed that Christ is the "head of the body, the church."

Since the church was established in 33AD there have been counterfeit "churches" which have sprung up. The devil has deceived many into believing that one church is as good as another; that you can just take your pick and join the church of your choice! Whatever happened to Christ's choice?

BE NOT DECEIVED! One "church" is not as good as another. There are counterfeit churches — over 1200 in America alone. After recalling the words of Jesus, "Upon this rock I will build MY CHURCH," then observing the present religious world, it doesn't take long to realize that the deceiver has been at work. Hundreds of religions with unbelievable names and doctrines are growing in number within our country.

OUR GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

As members of the body of Christ, we must continue to "cry aloud" the truth on THE CHURCH. We must carry the message to the world that Christ still has a body, and that we must be members of that body to be saved. He is still the "saviour of the body." The Lord still adds to the church those who are saved (Acts 2:47). It is still possible to be just a Christian without ever joining any of America's 1200 religions. "Unto him be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus through-out all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21).

Bob Loudermilk.

From 'Old Paths' Advocate.

HIDING FROM GOD

Can a man hide himself in secret? That was the great question the prophet Jeremiah placed before the Israelite nation. They had, time and again, amid great blessings from God, displeased and disobeyed God, thinking that they could hide from Him, but God declared "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him" (Jeremiah 23:24).

Let us look at a few examples in the Old Testament and New Testaments and then apply the lesson. Adam tried without success to hide himself from God. After he realised he had sinned, God called to him (in Genesis 3:9). "Adam, where art thou?" Adam replied, "I was afraid, because I was naked: and hid myself." then Adam, like so many men today, including professed Christians, tried to camouflage his sin by blaming Eve. Eve, in turn, attempted without success to blame the serpent. It was entirely their own individual responsibility and guilt for going against God's will. Oh! that we as Christians could imitate the humble spirit of David, who (in Psalm 139:23) admitted his unworthiness before God. This followed an acknowledgment of God's goodness and intimate acquaintance with the creation. David's daily witness of God's goodness, and action convinced him to understand. He also admitted that even if he tried to hide himself from God, such would be impossible (V 6). Jonah, likewise, tried to conceal himself from God but we know the sequel.

David spoke also of his birth and claimed that: the mere thought of it was very precious to him (Psalm 139:14-18). Thus when David appealed to God, and admitted his unworthiness, no doubt pride was absent. We see an attitude of sincere humility when he said, (V23) "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me: and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Who of us, in our day and time, would be so bold and courageous as to ask God to search, and try, and know us? Are we willing to call upon God, to give Him the opportunity to search our hearts and know our thoughts, and to face the matter fearlessly? Bear in mind that the Creator, the God who heard and saw the disobedient acts of ancient Israel and others through the ages, the God who heard the sincerely admitted unworthiness of David, is the same God we will answer to. He said through the apostle Paul. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit (Romans 8:27).

We must serve with reverence and Godly fear, in an acceptable manner, because "our God is a consuming fire" (see Hebrews 12:28). It is no wonder that Jeremiah the prophet could acclaim with confidence and surety "Can any man hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? It is further written, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest (known) in His sight . . . with whom all of us . . . shall have to give an account. (see Romans 14:12, 2nd Cor. 5:10).

Or are we like Peter who tried vainly to hide his identity as being one of the disciples of Jesus by saying "I know not the man." (Matt. 26:69-74). Are we like his disciples in general, who hid their true identity and forsook Jesus by fleeing from the arrest scene? are we like Judas who hid his tenuous love for the Master by selling Him for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:46-49)?

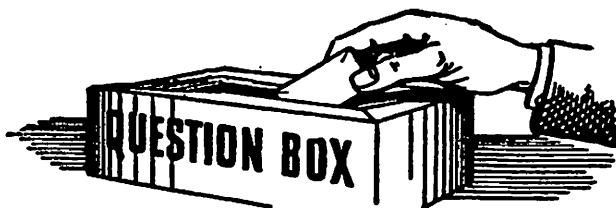
We can behave as these did by exchanging the things of Christ for the temporary things of the world. Are we like Ananias and Sapphira, of unquestioned prosperity yet who both agreed to lie to God, and the Holy Spirit i.e. to hide something . . . from God. This was a vain attempt resulting in utter tragedy (see Acts 5:1-10).

Maybe as Christians we too could be imitators of these weak persons. We may think we hide our capabilities, talents and blessings for God and man. We may be successful in hiding from man, but from God we cannot. Whether our talent is preaching, singing or visiting, or writing, etc., God still expects such person to make full use of the abilities given to spread the borders of the Kingdom. Souls are perishing and destined to a Christless Eternity if we fail in teaching them of Christ. It is the obligation and responsibility of all who name the name of Christ to be "steadfast unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (1st Cor. 15:58).

We have all been put in trust with the gospel and are obligated to proclaim it.

May we be like David of old (who had much in his life that he would have wished to conceal) and so live that we might invite God to "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me: and lead me in the way everlasting." Each day this should be our ardent prayer. Certainly we can never conceal our lives from God.

T. W. Hartle (Evangelist)
Cape Town, R.S.A.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“ I am not a member of the Church of Christ, but I am asking this question in the hope that you can help. I have been taught that a child is born in sin, but I find this very difficult to accept, Could you please explain?”

This is a very difficult question to answer insofar that it is well-nigh impossible to give a complete psychological account of why man sins; the Bible never professes to do this. Sin cannot be explained; it is there, and the most we can do is acknowledge the fact. We can, and we will, explain its nature and its consequences, but there is an area of this subject over which much controversy has raged and which has caused more confusion than enlightenment; I refer, of course, to the teaching that a child is born with a totally depraved nature. However, let us return to first principles and try to unravel this complex subject as objectively as we can.

Initial Acceptances

We must begin our study by accepting a number of facts as being true, otherwise we shall have no ‘solid ground’ on which to build our arguments.

We start by accepting that there is a Creator God who is Good, all Good. Therefore, everything which He created must have been of His essential nature, i.e., Good. In that case, His essential nature of Goodness would not allow Him to be the originator of evil. This argument is confirmed in the early chapters of Genesis where the record says, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

We now have, on the face of it, what seems to be a problem. Gen.3:1 states, “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” In view of this statement, do we then believe that the serpent (which is subsequently identified as Satan) was one of the beasts that God created? No, because Gen. 1:25 states, “And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the face of the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.” So we are driven to the inevitable conclusion that if God did not create Satan in the garden, then Satan, in the guise of the serpent, must have entered from elsewhere. Furthermore, the Bible, by its frequent allusions to a diabolic agency, asserts quite forcibly that the advent of sin into the world is not explainable in terms of the God-nature.

According to the words of Jesus when He said that He could call down legions of angels to defend Him, we cannot doubt the creation of an angelic host. If God, as we teach, gave to man the freedom of choice, it is reasonable to assume that He did exactly the same to His created angelic host. If one in the hierarchy of the angelic host, say Satan, had opposed the Good Will of God, then that would have been the antithesis of Goodness as per the Divine Will and would consequently be designated as evil. As essential evil cannot exist in the presence of essential Goodness, then banishment from God would have been automatic; there is a place prepared for the Devil (Satan) and his angels. What is then more predictable than that Satan, from his place of banishment, should have entered into the world to attempt to thwart the Divine Will in the creation of man?

You see, dear questioner and reader, we are dealing with the direct bearing of evil against the Divine Will; it may be popular to personalise the sacrifice of Jesus and say 'He died for my sins' but we are dealing with something which is more significant than even that. Jesus died to relieve us from the state of sin as embodied in Satan. Once the true nature of God has been revealed as absolutely holy, then the sin is revealed in its stark opposition to that holiness. The final exposure of sin was in the Person of Jesus. The limitation of sin is in the victory of Jesus over death through His glorious resurrection, and through the preaching of the Good News and our acceptance of it. It is significant that David realised the enormity of what he had done when confronted with Nathan when he had to cry out to God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4). It is quite evident that man could not have relieved himself of this sinful state; the burden of guilt was placed on the Christ of God and He carried it to Calvary.

So what is the most important lesson we have learned from this? The Bible teaches us that sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), so consequently there is no transgression until man chooses to assert his own will as rule of action against the declared and known will of God. In short, the Sinner becomes a law unto himself.

What About Infants?

In view of what we have learned I would confidently assert that infants are not capable of knowing and understanding the revealed Will of God, therefore, they cannot assert their wills against God's Will, and consequently they cannot sin. When the time comes that they know and understand the Will of God and either ignore or oppose it, then they will sin, but that will be their responsibility and they will thus be accountable before God, but that is vastly different from saying that a child is born with a depraved nature.

Furthermore if we are to ascribe total depravity to infants then we must say that sin is a hereditary disease and is present from birth because of our Adamic nature, but what does the Bible say? In Duet. 24:16 we read, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; everyman shall be put to death for his own sin." Also in Job we read, "And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself" (Job 19:4). Over in the N.T. we have Paul exhorting the Galatians as Christians to bear one another's burdens, in fact, to help one another. But further on he says, "For everyman shall bear his own burdens" (Gal. 6:5), and it seems that he is referring to the burden of personal sin. The idea that infants who die unbaptised are doomed to eternal perdition finds no corroboration in the Bible, and indeed, is repugnant to the spirit of Christ and to human reason.

The Consequences of Sin

From what we have said, we have learned one cardinal fact, namely, that sin makes a person answerable to God. We are 'in debt' to God, and it is a debt that we ourselves have not the power to discharge. No amount of meritorious works can relieve us of sin; only the blood of Christ can do that. Outside of Christ we are 'lost,' and this means we have no communion with God. If we are denied communion with God because of sin, then this means we are cut off from the source of life, therefore, the Bible refers to us as 'dead.' Indeed Paul argues quite clearly that "wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). In order to live again a person must come into contact with the source of life; this life is to be found in Christ Jesus, the Son of God. When we believe in Him, repent of our sins, confess His name and are immersed in water into Him, then the 'sting' of death will be removed. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But

thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

The current social tragedy is that sin has become so devalued that people see it merely as drinking, swearing, lying, etc., but these are only symptoms of that greater malady which assumes cosmic proportions, and which required the direct intervention of God in the Person of His Son for its alleviation. The sooner people realise this the more they will come to fear the consequences of sin; loss of communion with God; social maladjustments; and all the frailties and ills which the flesh is subject to. Unhappily, in many quarters, the subject of sin has become unmentionable. Sinners are referred to as maladjusted, environmentally unsuited, spiritually deprived, etc. This suits satan fine; he can keep people in his kingdom of darkness from which love and grace would seek to draw them. But let us not delude ourselves; the message of the Bible is "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Dear reader, even though the consequences of sin are dire, we are offered a lifeline. That lifeline is Christ. Lay hold on life. At the same time let us realise that our Heavenly Father is not a monster who will condemn helpless and harmless babes to perdition. Our God is a loving God. Let us trust Him.

All questions please, to :-

Alf Marsden, 20 Contessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan, Lancs. WN3 6ES.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jan. 4	Isaiah 8, 5-22	Acts 19, 11-22
11	Isaiah 41, 1-13	Acts 19, 23-41
18	Numbers 10, 1-13	Acts 20, 1-16
25	Exodus 18, 10-27	Acts 20, 17-38

EPHESUS

In the extensive province of Asia the word of God was spread abroad by the **mouth** of Paul, and God saw fit to confirm it specially by granting signs and wonders by Paul's **hands**. For two years and three months opportunity to witness this power resulted, so that "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord" (19,10). History confirms that early christianity grew and thrived in this area, now known as Asia Minor. The Roman province was ruled from Ephesus, which was then a busy port on a busy road from east to west of the empire. Paul paid a preliminary visit with Priscilla and Aquila when concluding his second missionary journey. He seemed to be favourably received, and promised to return (18:18-21). Hence we read "having passed through the upper coasts he came to Ephesus" (19:1). The

miraculous signs must have powerfully influenced the public, and two very false phases of heathenism were affected, exorcism and the wearing and use of images and charms. Jewish exorcists saw a possibility of profiting by the use of the names of Paul and Jesus, and tradesmen who manufactured images and charms felt the damage that the truth about Jesus with its complete denial of idol worship became a menace to trade. The first effort to use names became a powerful blow to superstition by a terrifying demonstration in favour of christian truth through the attack upon the exorcists who tried to use the sacred names and received violent treatment, thus becoming a public evidence against the pretended power. It must have affected the whole population to bring about such a bonfire of scrolls supposed to contain effective magic charms against evil. We suppose some christians had not appreciated the evil practice until this incident so plainly showed it, and others took notice as well. The estimate of value tells the story. The other means of livelihood became a menace so serious that it resulted in a riot. We admire Paul's courage in willingness to face the mob, but some friends in offi-

cial positions (Asiarchs), and the brethren, prevented much risk, and ultimately the town clerk more tactfully than truthfully calmed the people. Gaius and Aristarchus were seized but apparently took no harm. The Jews attempting to dissassociate from Christians could not escape the anger due to idol-worship, and local pride.

PAUL'S PLANS AND JOURNEYING

We have suggested a strong wish brought Paul to Ephesus, and whether by plan or circumstance he stayed and did a mighty work there, but he had also planned to go to Jerusalem, undoubtedly with the contribution he was gathering, he planned to go to Jerusalem, but after the riot he gave words of encouragement to the disciples to prosecute their work and faith in Asia, he must go into Macedonia via Troas with anxiety to meet Titus with the news from Corinth (II Cor. 7: 5-7). How long he was in Macedonia we are not told, but he did spend Three Months in Greece, probably at Corinth, thence by sea to Jerusalem. The plot against him discovered when about to sail, made him pass again through Macedonia with that faithful company — Sopater (Berea), Aristarchus and Secundus (Thessalonica), Gaius (Derbe), Timothy and Tychicus and Trophimus (Asia). These went on to Troas in advance of Luke and Paul. Here again Paul separated from the main company, travelled by land to Assos, and then joined the company to sail along part of the west coast of Asia calling deliberately at Miletus to avoid calling at Ephesus.

“ FIRST DAY AT TROAS ”

A great door had opened for Paul at Troas, and it is not surprising that the delightful association of travelling christians stayed for seven days after being joined by Paul so as to celebrate the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day with the Lord's People, nor that Paul talked to them a long time. I dare to hold the opinion that the fall of Eutychus and his restoration led to delay in partaking of the Bread (loaf) when the Day was past, and then at least for Paul “eating” for bodily neces-

sity before departing for Assos by land, not necessarily by foot. It may be he needed the time of mental solitude, yet twenty miles is a long walk ! We are satisfied he had good reason for the temporary separation from the other travellers with whom he had such holy spiritual and human relationships. We cannot perhaps picture the trials, discomforts and hardships of journeying in those times, the primitive conditions, the cramped accommodation of a coasting vessel, calling here and there, anchoring at night. What mutual fellowship was experienced.

THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

Paul's farewell address to these men is one of the most touching passages in the scriptures. The church was, of course, composed of men and women “of all sorts and conditions” but were bound together by the common bond of love for Jesus. These men whom Paul addressed were at least some of the twelve originally accepting the Lord on account of the testimony of Paul on his first arrival in the town, when prepared by Apollos, accepted Christ and received gifts of the Holy Spirit (19, 1-7). They would be at the centre of the Asian work, had experienced the holiness, character and labours of Paul. They knew him so well that his words went to their hearts, and they could look back on his true record of faithfulness. What an example to have before their minds — and ours ! It seems likely that Paul did have opportunity to visit Ephesus again, but he was burdened with the assurance that bonds and afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem, and this burdened his soul for the future of a specially influential eldership. Writing his letter years later from his Roman prison, he sets forth the lofty privileges and great responsibilities of the church, and the men he is speaking to are to face the future so as to deserve some commendation in the Revelation (2, 1-7), showing that the encouragement given at this time was taken to heart, but also that the dangers are present which needed to be guarded against “from among your own selves.” They had indeed

a peerless example, and esteemed him and loved him dearly. They joined him in prayer, and wept sore, both exercises he had taught them by precept and example. We do not see enough of them in these days, but the warnings of the apostle predominate in this passage, and were in place at the later date for the letter to Timothy shows much concern for behaviour in this particular church, and we need to "take heed" today — may the Lord also grant us "humility of mind" (20,19).

R. B. Scott.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dennyloanhead: The church here has had occasion, once again, to rejoice when Ann Nelson was baptised into Christ on Friday, 10th October, 1986. Sister Ann is a friend of sisters Bess, Chris and Ina Brown in Cumbernauld. Through their talks together on the scriptures Ann became convinced of her need to be baptised into Christ for the remission of sins. Sister Ann stays in Callender, and, although elderly, hopes to meet with us at Dennyloanhead when she has the opportunity. Our prayer is that she may be kept faithful to her Lord and Saviour until He returns for those who are His. We again thank God for the increase in this part of His vineyard. To Him be all praise, glory and honour.

Joe Malcolm, Secy.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The New Address of
JOHN PARTINGTON, is
2 SANDY LOAN,
HINDLEY,
WIGAN, LANCs. WN2 4DB

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

The 'Scripture Standard' has been going for half-a-century now and many of us hope it will continue for another. It started off as an 'Old Paths' paper and we

hope to keep it that way. It belongs to **the readers** ultimately and all those associated with it do so entirely voluntarily free of any charge. The contents of the paper come from **the readers** and notwithstanding any dangers in this, we hope to continue to encourage readers to express their thoughts in these columns. There may, indeed, be much more danger from an elite-ist panel of writers, if we had one. So if you feel you have any thoughts you would care to share with the brotherhood you are invited to send them, in the form of an article, not too lengthy, and typed (if possible). Some brethren often give a fine sermon or exhortation which would benefit a much larger audience — if so please commit it to print and share it. I look forward to hearing from you.

Editor

VANDALS AT WORK

As is common with many places vandalism is a problem. Here at Newtongrange it is no different. Recently the vandals have been more active than ever before, so much so that they have destroyed our Function Hall. After a spate of continued break-ins the Hall was set on fire. The Village at the moment is in a partial state of dilapidation and perhaps this may be the root cause of the problem. As the houses are being rebuilt and repaired we look forward to a new community for contact. We may be down, but certainly not out. We are thankful, that the Meeting place was not affected in any way. It appears the Devil is hard at work among the young. Brethren we need your earnest prayers that we might be fitted to continue in the work of the Lord.

Brethren pray for us.

A. P. Sharpe.

APPEAL FOR CLOTHING

Dear Brethren,

For many years the church at Wallacestone has been sending parcels of clothes to our brethren in Malawi. In the past we have always had more clothes than finance to send them. In recent months,

however, our sources of clothing seem to have dried up, and so it is that the church has asked me to make this appeal through the S.S. Brethren, if you have any used clothing you are considering disposing of we would be delighted to receive it. We can never realise how much it is needed or appreciated. In so doing we can in some small way alleviate our brother's needs and demonstrate our love for the Lord. I would take this opportunity to thank all who have assisted us in the past and the church at Motherwell in particular.

On behalf of the church

James Grant

APPEAL FROM ALAN ASHURST

Dear Brethren,

Seeing the pressure I am working under, several brethren have suggested, some very insistently, that I ought to devote myself to gospel work full-time. This is easier said than done, especially when there are so many other demands being made on the British churches' limited financial resources and there are so many young brethren much more deserving than I, who are eager to do full time gospel work and have not been able to raise support. Also Manchester already has two full-time workers whilst many places have none (so why should Manchester have another one).

Two things have finally persuaded me in spite of all the apparent adverse reasons. A brother who has spent many years working amongst Muslims in north Pakistan asked why I did not do full-time gospel work. To my suggestion that in thirteen years when I retire, God willing, I would be able to devote every moment of my time to the Lord's work he responded vigorously that I had no right to withhold my talents from the Lord (only to offer them to Him when I am old and dodderly). Now I could not have said that of myself (the talents I mean . . . old and dodderly perhaps!!!), but when a brother whose opinion I deeply respect says it, I've got to seriously consider it.

Brethren I am loath to ask you for money, which in effect is what I am doing. In my present employment I have a fairly good salary and a measure of security which enables me to assist others and to some degree be Steven Masood's mainstay should he fall on hard times. So the thought of relinquishing this security and thus undermining Steven's 'last ditch stand' held me back from committing myself, which brings me to the second reason for deciding to go ahead and try to get full-time support. Steven is constantly putting his head into the lion's mouth when he goes into the mosques and Islamic centres to preach the word of the Lord. He faces a constant barrage of hostile questions and malicious criticism. So when he said to me he could not carry on much longer facing these people alone, and urged me to come full-time I knew what I had to do. Pray for Steven and for all those lost that he is trying to bring to the Lord. I feel an inadequate earthen vessel. If the Lord does bless me with this privilege please pray for me too. I'm sure you will. God bless you.

So what would Steven and I do if I should go full-time? Two things: We would be able to devote our evenings to personal work with the numerous contacts we have, evenings being the best time for visiting people: we would be able to spend our days collating the valuable research information Steven is amassing in Urdu (Steven's mother tongue) into succinct English to form a useful reference work which in conjunction with a series of guides would assist brethren engaged in preaching the gospel to Muslims to have answers they need at their finger tips. This would be a non-profit venture! We want this information to be readily available to anyone in the brotherhood who needs it. It is estimated that there are more than two million Muslims here in Great Britain, of all places, the majority being Pakistani. The Lord has brought to our doorstep, the opportunity of preaching the gospel to the Muslim and in the form of Steven Masood has brought with it a worker of

exceptional talent to aid us. This opportunity may never be repeated. That is how I feel about it. Ask those who know Steven and I think they will be inclined to agree.

Brethren whether you are able to help financially or not, please use us and please pray for us. We do value your fellowship. Please pray that the Lord will enable me to see clearly whether this desire is of any selfish desire or whether it is motivated purely by the love of our Master on the cross. May our Lord Jesus be glorified in all things.

Allan Ashurst,
60 Kenwood Road,
Stretford
Manchester.
M32 8PT.

THE BISHOP AND BAPTISM

“ If there is one thing more certain than another about these early churches, it is that admission to them was by Faith and Baptism. The New Testament knows nothing of membership in the church by Faith alone, without the accompanying act of obedience and confession. The epistle to the Romans was probably written in A.D. 56; that is less than 30 years after the death of Christ; Paul takes it for granted that all his readers will have been baptised, and that the extra-ordinary high and realistic doctrine of baptism which he presents to them is the familiar tradition of the church and not a strange new doctrine which he himself has thought up under the influence of some Hellenistic tradition or other.

Whether we like it or not, from the very beginning, the Christian church, which had grown out of the Jewish church, had its institutional element. We may say, if we wish, that baptism was merely the outward expression of a living faith, and that faith was the all-important thing. This is true, but does not alter the fact that, until faith has found its expression in baptism the believer was not a member of the Christian community, the Body of Christ. Non-sacramental Christianity, as it is to

be found today in almost all the Protestant churches of Europe, is an invention of the Rationalistic nineteenth century; it has little to do with the Christianity of the New Testament and cannot be made to square with it.”

Bishop Stephen Neill,

“The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961.”

SOMEWHAT BELITTLING

Church members sleep a little late. They go straggling into the assembly a little tardy. The leader of the service reads a little low and a little slowly. Some of the brethren chew gum a little, joke a little and sleep a little. Brethren in class argue a little, laugh a little, figure a little, whisper a little, commune a little, and contribute a little. Then they gossip a little after dismissal, go home and forget what little they heard, and act a little like they cared but little for the grandest, greatest, holiest and most precious instruction on earth — the church of our Lord Jesus Christ ! I may have exaggerated a little, but very little, and think in some of these things. I have omitted a little. Brethren will you think on these things a little.

Selected.

JOHN HUSS CHALLENGES US

John Huss, martyr, who was burned at the stake for his faith, July 6, 1415 leaves us this challenge : “ If I cannot deliver the truth in spite of all I do, at least I refuse to be the enemy of the truth and will resist to the death all argument with falsehood. Let the world run its course as God permits. It is better to die well than to live badly. We must not sin to avoid the punishment of death. To end in grace the present life is to be banished from misery . . . He that fears death loses the joys of life. Above all else Truth is Conqueror. He conquers who is slain; for no adversary hurts him. No iniquity hath dominion over him.”

Sixty-six muscles are required to produce a frown. Only sixteen are required to smile. Wear a smile and save the difference.

SCRIPTURE STANDARD 1987
(Treasurer's Statement)

Readers will remember the statement in the May, 1986 Issue regarding increased printing costs due to Walter Barkers (Printers) ceasing publication. Barkers, due to their long association with the churches, had printed the standard at a very low price. The change of printer means that we are now paying at normal commercial rate for our printing and it is due to this change that we need to examine our future strategy carefully.

In the May issue we suggested two options — print 12 issues at £7 a year or 10 issues at the existing price of £5.50 a year. To print 12 issues would require those who already generously support us being asked to contribute even more in the form of gifts. This we did not feel able to ask nor do we think it to be in the best interests of the 'Standard'. We will therefore, God willing, print 10 issues next year at the present subscription rate.

Should it become possible we will, of course, return to the practice of publishing 12 issues each year. The best means of achieving this is through increased circulation. If we sold one hundred additional copies each year we would be able to print 12 issues at the existing price. Please use your best endeavours to make this possible.

We are pleased to be able to post the magazine out to you at the beginning of the each month which is due to the prompt delivery from our new printers. The present year has been an eventful one and we hope for a time of re-development in the future.

J. K. Kneller, Treasurer.

THE BOARD OF ABSENTEES

We are the Board of Absentees,
We attend church about as we please,
We judge it will run itself, you know
And Sundays we're just too tired to go.

We are the Board of Absentees,
At business meeting our chance we seize
To tell exactly how things should run
But lift not a finger to get it done.

We are the Board of Absentees
Men and women of all degrees
Shall we give up the church? Oh, no, never!
Shall we go today? Well scarcely ever.

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