

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 60 No. 2

FEBRUARY, 1992

HOW READEST THOU?

Why can't we all see the Bible alike? This, essentially, was the subject discussed at the most recent Mutual Benefit Meeting of the Slamannan District of Churches. Why indeed do interpretations of God's word vary, often quite radically? I was to have been one of the speakers at that meeting but was hospitalised at the time. The subject is not only interesting, but very important; for if we could find the reason we might be able to do something about it. For what they are worth I offer a few thoughts on the matter but, obviously, in a short article they are but brief generalisations.

In the first place, we might think it strange that God did not ensure that the Bible would be incapable of misconstruction. Critics express surprise that the omniscient God would not foresee the problems in the religious world due to the many divergent interpretations of His word, and would have so constructed it that more than one interpretation would have been impossible. God can only communicate with man through **language**, words written or oral, and language is always capable of more than one meaning. Also, some human beings are better at understanding words than others. God could certainly have skirted around this difficulty by making everybody exactly the same: a world of mechanical robots: but he made us all unique in ourselves, each with a distinctive personality: no mean feat when we consider the teeming millions of men and women, now and in previous generations. Even if we think we understand all the various words in the Bible some of the obscure subject-matter, themes and prophecies might prove too deep for us, and we might well end up with different opinions on these. The Jews certainly did not all see the O.T. alike, and even had difficulty with very small and ordinary words like "work" and "rest". During six days, work was to be done, but "**whosoever doeth work (on the sabbath) shall be put to death**" (so says Ex. 35:2). The definition of "work" would become an extremely vital definition if a man's life was at stake, and we can imagine the convoluted arguments advanced by friends of the accused. Thus, even in respect of one little ordinary word, we can see how all men would not see the Bible alike. I'm sure we would all quickly grasp the problem if we (personally) were forced to provide not only a complete definition of "work": but one which would perfectly coincide with everyone else's.

A BOOK OF WORDS

As the Bible is essentially a book of words, we must all come to grips with these words, for God does not send a representative to each successive generation to explain them. His representatives were the apostles who, through the Holy Spirit, provided the words nearly 2,000 years ago, **and even at that time** had difficulty in getting men to see their words in the same light. An added difficulty for us English speakers is, of course, the fact that, originally the words were given in the Greek language and

have had to endure the shock of translation into English. To minimise any loss that may have occurred in the translation, we are required to scurry back and forth to Greek Grammars and Lexicons. Like the Jews, we too, have difficulties with prophecy and I doubt if anyone has the audacity to claim, for instance, he, or she, entirely and accurately understands the Book of Revelation, or that there is the slightest possibility of everyone seeing it in a similar light.

It is true, however, that the GOSPEL MESSAGE is crystal clear, and no one will ever be able to say that they could not understand what was required of them. In almost one verse alone (Acts 2:38) the gospel terms are almost entirely encapsulated in the statement of Peter (on being asked what men must do to be saved): viz. **“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** I know, of course, that even that short instruction can be sabotaged by false teachers and penitents can be sidetracked on the question of what ‘baptism’ means, but it must be generally true that any honest and ardent student of the N.T. can not fail to learn from the N.T. that baptism requires immersion.

Most of what Jesus said could easily be understood, even by the simple minded: although He had to help sometimes with the **application** of His words; and this is where we often don’t see eye to eye: on the **application** of God’s word. Christ had, for example, to explain the **application** of the parables to the disciples. Later, when the apostles got embroiled in debate and disputation with false teachers (like the Gnostics, Nicolaitans, Stoics, etc.) and Judaizers, Paul in his rebuttal, engaged in some deep argumentation in his epistles to the Romans, Corinthians and Hebrews, etc. which require sincere and lengthy study, and which even Peter described as, **“some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction .”** (2 Peter 3:16). Here Peter obviously acknowledges that not all might see Paul’s writings alike, and that the unlearned and unstable would wrest, or twist them, to their undoing.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

NO WRITTEN DOCUMENT, the Bible or otherwise, can possibly be free from the risk of misunderstanding, misconception or misuse by the ignorant or unscrupulous. The meaning of the words is of little consequence if we are reading a light novel, but is extremely important if we are dealing with instruments of a legally binding nature such as an Insurance Policy or Last Will And Testament. The N.T. is, after all, Christ’s Last Will And Testament, and some might also see it as a great Spiritual Insurance Policy. Words make sentences and sentences make paragraphs, and we will not all see the Bible alike if we differ in our understanding of words: and of course words vary with context, and often have more than one meaning in any case. In my office days it was quite common to emerge from a meeting, where a dozen fairly intelligent people had all been listening to the same speaker, or the reading of the same document, and to discover that none of those present had understood the matter alike. In short, no document, whether the Bible or an Act of Parliament, is proof against misquotation, misconception or distortion, and, lets face it, no book is oftener misquoted than the Bible.

It is also a character of the human animal that he is moved by emotions as well as intellect (heart as well as head) and is not always consistent or rational in what he believes. Man often believes **what he wants to believe**: and this certainly applies to the Bible. This being so, **nothing** is likely to be seen in the same light, by human beings. Some would describe a bottle as half empty while others would say it was half full. Man is a fairly perverse creature (‘Stiff-necked and impudent’ as God described His people, the Jews) and in most fields of human endeavour there is usually a contingency plan for ‘Disputes’, for within five minutes of human concourse, disputes

will surely arise; especially over the meaning of words. Even a tennis match was held up, the other day, until the umpire gave a decision on the wording of the rules. It would certainly be most difficult for anyone to maintain, after looking at Church history over the last 2,000 years, that any generation of men have seen the Bible alike, and there is a school of thought around today, that we can not expect it.

SOME COMMON REASONS

And so the question is not “DO people see the Bible alike”? for clearly they don’t (not even the Churches of Christ), but WHY do they not? Some of the most obvious reasons might include:— **IGNORANCE** Sadly, in the world at large, there is a high degree of ignorance concerning the Good Book. In lands previously in the grip of Communism, where the Bible was actively suppressed, ignorance is understandable, but even in this country where the Bible is not so much suppressed as ignored, in most homes the occupants may not even possess a copy. Often, our knowledge of the Bible is confined to what we may have been taught at school, often by teachers who were not only sceptical but downright cynical. Many have avoided the Bible believing it to be boring, difficult to understand and full of contradictions. Some, trying to understand it, have mistakenly got bogged down in the O.T. and given up in despair.

BACKGROUND. Many are biased in their perception of the Bible by virtue of their religious background . Any child brought up in the R.C. faith will, for instance, have a very different conception of the word of God from a child brought up elsewhere. Religious denominations are largely self-perpetuating and have their own distinctive application of the Scriptures which is passed from generation to generation. Because each denomination protects, defends and promotes its own particular brand of teaching or doctrine; it follows that all men are most unlikely to see the Bible alike.

TRADITION This is similar to the previous heading and results in God’s word having superimposed upon it the Traditions of men to a point where the latter smother the former. Jesus encountered the same thing in His day and told the Jews that “**the commandments of God are made of none effect by your traditions.**” (Matt. 15:6). ‘Church Traditions’ abound today, and God’s word is set at naught by man-made Creeds, Confessions and Traditions, supported by a fiction that the great age of a Tradition gives it some validity, and God’s approval. This factor also influences our inability to see the Scriptures alike.

MISINTERPRETATION. Obviously much depends upon our approach to the Bible, and the **respect and value** we accord to it. There are some among the trendy clergy who cast doubt upon the veracity of the Book and question the miracles, virgin birth, resurrection, Garden of Eden etc. and these have a very adverse effect upon the general public. Also, in our interpretation, if we isolate a verse from its context we are never likely to understand it as others do. If we isolate not just a word but a whole verse, and build a meaning or doctrine upon it we shall never understand it as others do. For instance, Paul and Silas said to the jailer, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved . . .**” and if we isolate that verse and build upon it a ‘faith only’ doctrine, and ignore the rest of the N.T., we are never all likely to see the Bible with the same eyes.

These rough headings merely scratch the surface and readers will be able to think of other factors bearing on this question, ranging from vested interest to casual indifference. Certain by on the matter of indifference it must be said that Bible Studies are not always well attended: and although we are “babes in Christ” at baptism surely we should not still be babes twenty years later. Also under the heading of ‘indifference’ we might include those who are just such nice people that they agree with everything and everybody.

CONCLUSIONS

What rough conclusions, then, can we draw? The evidence of our eyes and ears

is that the world, in general, does not see the Bible alike, and there are great variations in its interpretations. Some things in the N.T. are, of course, simple: some are extremely profound. Everybody can understand alike the words, “**Jesus wept**” (shortest verse in the Bible) but might differ in their understanding of “**The Word was with God and the Word was God.**” Indeed Paul called it a mystery, viz. “**Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh.**” (1 Tim. 3:16). We don’t all share the same I.Q. and some of us have difficulty in grasping the import of Income Tax Returns, let alone Divine Mysteries. Bible Study is an ongoing process requiring time and effort and we might, in a few years time, understand something we don’t rightly understand now. Some understand the N.T. better than others because they spend more time trying. Surely there are a host of reasons why we might not all have a common understanding of the N.T. Jesus knew of this propensity in man, and having witnessed His own disciples in dispute as to who should be the greatest, prayed that His disciples might all “be one” and that no divisions would separate them. Nor was Paul naive in the matter, for even when he was busy raising congregations some were busy preaching ‘another gospel’ and perverting the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1) and Paul himself predicted that, after his departure, grievous wolves would not spare the flock but draw away disciples after themselves. Paul recommended “sound doctrine” that would “convict the gainsayer” thus acknowledging that there were gainsayers and un-sound doctrine, and that even in N.T. times men were not in unison in their interpretations.

It is, of course possible to exaggerate in all of this. False teachings and interpretations can, after all, be identified as such, by comparison with God’s word. No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, and the Bible is self-interpreting. We might not all visualize God alike, but we can still believe in God; we may not all agree on what heaven will be like, but we can still believe in heaven; we might not all agree on what will transpire at “The Second Coming” but we can all believe that Christ will certainly return in due time (and, of course, the events attending His coming will occur whether we fully understand them or not). Where the N.T. speaks plainly and categorically (which is most of the time) we must accept it and obey: but where the N.T. leaves room for opinion or speculation we can hold an opinion **provided we do not foist it upon others, or teach it as fact.** We must always approach God’s word honestly, humbly and with an open mind. Paul said we must “Study (or agonise) to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth . . .” (2 Tim. 2:15) for it is possible to “**handle the word of God deceitfully**” (2 Cor. 4:2). “**If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God,**” says Peter. Our interpretation of the Bible carries a responsibility (James 3:1) and although we may all belong to various congregations we are, in the final analysis, **personally responsible** for what we believe, practise, accept or teach. Jesus said to the Lawyer, “**How readest thou?**” THOU! I am sure that that means YOU, and me: the buck stops with us.

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 excellence of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.” (1 Peter 2:9 R.V.).

MASTER

“MASTER, speak! Thy servant heareth,

Waiting for The gracious word,
 Longing for Thy voice that cheereth;
 Master, let it now be heard.
 I am listening, Lord, for Thee;
 What hast Thou to say to me?"

WE QUOTE J. GRINSTEAD

"EXCEPT the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain!"

"As has been so often declared by our honoured brethren — the pioneers in this movement — we are pleading, not merely for some measure of reformation, but for a complete restoration, a complete return to Christianity as taught by Christ, the greatest, most chivalrous, and tenderest of all Teachers and Leaders, and His inspired Apostles, who alone are His ambassadors. We plead for nothing short of this! Such a saving clause as "as far as it is possible and wise" is a mistake, because it renders the whole plea negatory.

HE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED INIQUITY

The churches with which we stand associated are Churches of Christ and of God. They owe no loyalty to, because they recognise no authority in, either monarch, synod, council or conference to legislate for them. God gave Christ to be the Head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all! Because He loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God — even His God — and our God — anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows!

TEN THOUSAND LIVES SHOULD ALL BE HIS

To Him we have lovingly bowed the knee! In the light of His countenance we walk day by day! In His service we joyfully give our time, our energy, our whole life! And had we ten thousand lives to give, ten thousand lives should all be his. For His sake we bear reproach! We are stigmatised and branded; but our only sorrow is for those who, blinded by sectarian bigotry and intolerance, are not able to look upon the pure, simple truth, which carries with it its own justification.

WORKING FOR OUR GLORIOUS MASTER

But so long as we can win sinners for Christ, and lead those who love Him, out of the bondage of sectarianism, into the enjoyment of perfect freedom, and of that perfect love which casts out all fear, we are content to go on working for our glorious Master in the sure and certain hope that bye-and-bye we shall "spread our trophies at His feet, and crown Him Lord of all." We have no greater delight for the present. We have no higher ambition for the future."

J. Grinstead.

THE OLD CHURCH

"Reader take upon you the name of Christ (if you have not yet done so). Be a Christian, in name and in life. Unite with those who congregate, not as a Church of human origin, bearing a name of man's devise, but as a Church of Christ, having no scriptures but the Bible, no Plan of Salvation but that preached by the Apostles, no Order of Worship but that known to the first Churches, no Government but that instituted by Christ, and no Aristocracy but that of Christian excellence. Such is the Church of God, and such is the Church for the people, and such, the Lord being our helper, we determine to be. That we may edify each other in our most holy faith and proclaim to sinners, the Only Name by which a sinner can be saved, we attend every Lord's Day to "the Apostles' Doctrine, the Fellowship, the Breaking of the Bread, and the Prayers," and proclaim the Gospel and way of Salvation, as of old, making no charge for seats, nor appeals to the world for Church funds. For those who are

not yet with Christ and the Church, it is our duty to ask nothing, but freely to give, even as we have freely received from Him, who freely gave Himself for us.”

David King.

“MY CHURCH”

“My Church.” Our word “Church,” from the standpoint of etymology does not strictly convey the thought embodied in the word employed by our Lord. The word “Church” is derived from a Greek word meaning “the Lord’s”, and is strictly accurate in describing the Church. But the word employed here, and everywhere in the New Testament, is the word *ecclesia*. It was a familiar word at the time, and it had a Hebrew and Greek application

The whole emphasis of our Lord’s utterance is to be placed upon the personal pronoun “My”. He declared His purpose to build or create a people who should be a God-governed people, a Theocracy, and of transferring an office and responsibility to the new Institution.”

Campbell Morgan.

“OLD PATHS”

“Of course I am well aware that the ‘old paths’ for which I have been pleading are not popular in some quarters at this day. In fact, the views I have just propounded are in direct antagonism to much of the so-called wisdom of these times. “Effete systems,” “old-world creeds,” “fossil theology,” “exploded theories,” “worn-out doctrines,” “old-fashioned divinity,” and the like phrases, — who does not know the heavy fire of such language which is continually poured on the “old paths” of faith in some organs of public opinion, and from some pulpits and platforms? Novelty is the idol of the day. Free handling, enlightened views, rational interpretation, science (so called) before the Bible, these are the guiding principles of many in this age. Tell them that any religious idea is old, and they seem to think it is probably false! Tell them that it is new, and it is probably true!

J. C. Ryle.

THE CHURCH — ITS INSTITUTION

“In Acts 2:47, we are told: ‘**And the Lord added to them** (literally “added together”) **day by day, those that were being saved.**’ If we look back a little in the same chapter, we find the people referred to are those who, having heard the Gospel — the glorious news of salvation full and free — asked what they were to do. Peter gave the Spirit-inspired answer. Having heard and believed, they were told to repent and be baptised, and were promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. About three thousand responded on the first day, and so the Church came into being. Guided by those specially appointed Apostles, they continued steadfastly in living and being and doing what they were taught. They became the called-out people, characterised by gladness and singleness of heart, rapidly recognised and commended for the care of and love for each other, their devout lives, their piety, their constant praise of God for His marvellous deliverance. It was to these the Lord added, day by day, those that were being saved. We see first that it is the Lord’s building and He adds to it those that are being saved.

Remember Jesus said: ‘**Upon this rock I will build my Church.**’ The powers of evil, He assured His apostles, would do their utmost to prevent Him carrying out His purpose, but all the combined hosts of hell could not hold Him back. He burst the gates asunder — came forth, and here we see the commencement of the mighty structure to which Jesus Christ is still adding those living stones, day by day.”

F. C. Day.

Compiled by Leonard Morgan.

SUCCESSFUL SOUL-WINNING

Almost two thousand years ago, Jesus spoke to eleven frightened men and gave them the staggering command to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Today, that same command still comes down to us through the pages of the sacred writings. If we as Christians are to successfully carry out the commission of our Lord, we must endeavour to prepare ourselves.

All the manuals and books written on personal evangelism will be of no value to the personal-worker unless he first endeavours to become more like Christ. The apostle Paul said, **“Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus”** (Phil. 2:5). If we are to be effective soul-winners for Christ, we must have the mind of Christ. In reading the gospel accounts of our Lord, they present to the personal-worker several qualities that an effective soul-winner must have.

SEE AS JESUS SAW

Mark’s account tells us that when Jesus and His disciples were on their way to a desert place to find rest, a great multitude saw them and followed after them. When Jesus turned and saw them, he saw them as **“sheep without a shepherd.”** Sheep left unattended by the shepherd often cannot find food and water and will die of thirst and starvation, or they will be destroyed by their adversary.

Jesus saw the people as sheep without a shepherd. People, like sheep, when left to themselves become estranged and separated from God. Jeremiah wrote, **“O Jehovah I know that the way is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”** Man left to himself becomes lost, and life becomes bewildering. He is like the man at the crossroads of life who does not know which way to take. Therefore, if we are to be effective in our service to Christ, we need to **“see as Jesus saw.”**

FEEL AS JESUS FELT

As Jesus saw the great multitude who were following him, Matthew records, **“He was moved with compassion.”** The word which is used for **“moved with compassion”** is the strongest word for compassionate pity in the Greek language. The word refers to the inward man, or to the very deepest depth of his being. When Jesus saw the multitude he was moved to the depth of his being. That which moved Jesus with compassion was seeing a multitude of souls upon the road of life travelling toward eternity and destruction.

If we as servants of the Master could have just a touch of the compassion of Jesus, we would be more effective soul-winners. If we are to be effective, we must **“feel as Jesus felt.”**

PRAY AS JESUS PRAYED

When Jesus saw this great host of people rushing out to meet him, he was greatly disturbed at what he saw. Even though Jesus was tired and weary, He never forgot the mission for which he had come to earth. At seeing such a great multitude, Jesus turned to his disciples and said, **“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into the harvest.”** In verse 37 he stated that the harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few.

Since the time that Jesus gave the great commission, almost two thousand years ago, there has never been a greater need than that of labourers in the field of soul-winning. Soul-winning is for the preacher, elder, teacher and every member of the Lord’s Church. **Every member** should be involved in some way. Every member can do something. If one cannot teach, preach, or hand out tracts, he can always pray. Even when the hands of our Lord were nailed in anger to a Roman cross, he prayed, **“Father forgive them . . .”** If we are to be successful, we need to learn to **“pray as Jesus prayed.”**

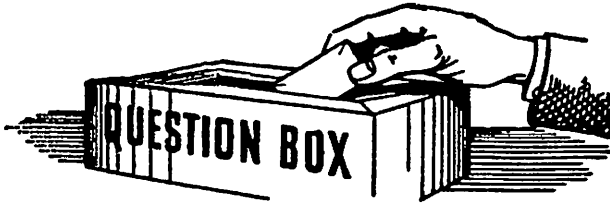
DO AS JESUS DID

When Jesus saw the condition of the multitude, he was so moved within himself that he had to act. Mark records that when Jesus was moved with compassion, **“He**

began to teach them many things." Jesus said that He came to "seek and save that which was lost." We as servants of Christ, need to be involved in leading others back to the safety within the fold. As servants of Christ, we need to be so stirred from within that we can say with Jeremiah, "And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forebearing, and cannot contain."

For every Christian desiring to be a more effective soul-winner, these four keys need to be part of his life, and they will help him to be the soul-winner that the Lord wants him to be. May we as servants of Christ endeavour to have the mind of Christ.

W. Simmons.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Could you please help me in understanding the relationship between God and Jesus. I have always thought that understanding such a relationship didn't really matter so long as Jesus was my Saviour, but I now feel that further knowledge would help?"

As I have pointed out many times in these columns, I have never pretended to be an expert theologian. However, it is undoubtedly true that there are many references, particularly in the N.T., to this relationship, and it is to these we must turn. I shall refer to them and offer comments which I believe are pertinent. The best way to explore this question, I believe, is by looking at the great themes of the Bible, i.e., Reconciliation, Justification and Redemption.

RECONCILIATION

In Cor. 5:18, 19 Paul says, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. . ."

There are one or two explicit points here that we must take note of. The Apostle says quite categorically that "all things are of God," i.e., everything begins with God and ends with Him. He also affirms that God "hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." It is from God that we have been estranged by sin, and it is to Him that we need to be reconciled. There is no need for God to be reconciled to us, but there is a great need for us to be reconciled to Him. The reconciliation is effected through and by Jesus Christ. Paul then goes on, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." How are we to interpret the phrase, 'God was in Christ.' Which words do we emphasise, and does it make any difference? Do we read it 'God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself'? If we do, then we would be indicating that God was ordering an action to be performed by Jesus which would be independent of Himself? If, on the other hand, we say, 'God was in Christ', then we would seem to be indicating a unified action by God and His Christ. There is a difference, and I believe it to be a fundamental one. On the one hand we are looking at a God in Heaven aloof from the suffering of His Son; on the other, we are looking at a participatory God, sharing the suffering in the Person of His Son on the cross, and alleviating the sinful condition of man which His own justice has demanded should be dealt with. We will need to return to this point when we look at Justification.

What I am saying, then, is that God finished His work of reconciliation in Christ Jesus on the Cross. The sacrifice for sin, as I see it, was a sacrifice of divine integration. In terms of the unique unity of the Godhead, God suffered as Christ suffered on the

Cross. It was the closeness of the relationship as stated by Jesus in His prayer in John 17, **“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:”** and again, **“I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one”** (vv. 21,23). Jesus never doubted His Oneness with the Father; it is this unique relationship which reconciliation to God elevates us to.

JUSTIFICATION

I believe Christians, generally, should take a more radical look at the God in whom they believe. The unchanging nature of God is reflected in His unchanging counsel and will. In His unchanging nature, we must look upon God as being complete and entire; He **cannot** act outside His own nature. Therefore, when we speak about the love of God and the justice of God, we are not speaking about separate entities, displayed independently at various times. When God loves, His love is integral with His justice; when He rebukes and chastens, these aspects of His nature must be seen as incorporating His love and His justice. If we do not see God like this, then we are in danger of seeing a capricious God who sometimes acts **outside His own nature**; isn't this the criticism so often levelled against Christians by people of the world when they see the desperate plight of people, and make such comments as, **“If your God was a God of love, as you say, He wouldn't allow this to happen”**. Comments like this are only possible when people do not understand the true nature of God.

The way God has dealt with sin ought to indicate to us His true nature, and the way in which His nature acts together in complete harmony. He loves us because we are His creation, and He wants to see that love reciprocated by us. He is gracious because He gives, and His giving is beyond our asking; we can never merit what He gives, particularly in salvation. He is merciful, because under all considerations we **should** bear the penal consequences of our sin but He has opened a way for us to escape through Christ Jesus His Son. He is just, because He did not leave sin unattended to, but He dealt with it decisively at great personal cost to Himself, and nowhere do we see that justice more clearly explained than in the letter that Paul wrote to Rome; a brief glance at Rom.3 will explain.

In v25, speaking about Jesus, Paul says, **“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God”**. The word **‘propitiation’** means, **‘to placate an offended deity’**, and there are many Christians who do not like this word; they say that God does not need to be placated. But is this strictly true? Are we saying that the wrath of God is not turned against sin? If we are, then how do we account for the fact that millions of people will go to hell if they do not repent of their sin, and why do we preach and teach this? There is strong evidence in the O.T. that the wrath of God had to be placated, particularly against the children of Israel (Read Numbers 16:41-50). You see any declaration of God's righteousness **demanded** that He act justly, not only by divine fiat but also in world view of His creation. He would have been an **unjust** God and it would have been inconsistent with His true nature of love, if He had allowed His creation to bear the full penal consequences of sin without dealing with it, and remember, only **He could** deal with it. So what did He do? He sent to us **Emmanuel**, in the Person of His Christ, and **‘Emmanuel’** means, **‘God with us’**. The astounding impact of the sacrifice on the Cross means that God interposed **Himself**, in the Person of His Christ, between sin and ourselves, thus providing a way for us to avoid the penal consequence of sin — even though we deserved it — and bearing the penalty Himself in Christ. What a wonderful Father we have. Paul puts it like this, **“To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”** What was seen on the Cross was an almost incredible declaration of the power and majesty of the Godhead in action to procure our salvation. The greatest wonder of all is that through the Gospel we can enter this glorious relationship which Christ envisaged in His prayer,

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” We can, as Peter says **“become partakers of the Divine Nature.”** We need to understand our relationship with God better.

REDEMPTION

I suppose the foundation passage for our understanding of redemption is to be found in Mk 10:45 where Jesus says, **“For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”** There can be no redemption without a price being paid. According to Jesus, the ‘many’ would have had to pay the price, but instead of that, His own life was given as the ‘ransom’. This was the price paid to buy us out of the bondage of sin. The glory of redemption, however, does not end with the forgiveness of sins. Paul assures us that even after we have lived in the flesh, greater blessings await the children of God in the future, for he says **“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”** It is here that we see the other Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, entering a relationship with us. He ‘helps us in our infirmities’; He makes intercession for us according to the will of God.

Do we Christians really understand the great power at our disposal in the Godhead? We ought to, because Christianity is a great deal more than just ‘refraining’ from doing things which might be considered sinful; it is a positive attitude to our relationship with the Godhead. Once we understand this, our Christian lives will not be a reluctant ‘letting go’ of things here, but will be a ‘reaching forward’ to the greater glory. Yes, we **do** need to understand more concerning our relationship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit; thereby, our lives will be enriched.

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

A LITTLE ERROR

The filler on the back page of the December issue, (Vol. 59 No. 12), quite rightly raised the dangers of those who teach ‘a little error’ since the unsophisticated amongst us may not be able to spot the differences. It is far harder to convince an Independent Baptist that he is not presenting the whole council of God than it is a Roman Catholic. We have a lot more success converting Roman Catholics to the truth than we do those of the Baptist persuasion. It is usually not that they always preach positive error but rather they preach mainly truth but not the whole truth thereby leaving their hearers with an incomplete picture.

To assess whether what is said is a ‘little’ error or a ‘big error’ however, we must beware of judging on the basis of how many words are changed. It is somewhat unfortunate that the example given of a seemingly ‘little’ error was that of the devil altering God’s statement, ‘thou shalt surely die’ to ‘thou shalt NOT surely die’, in the story of the Fall. Simply because only one word was altered, or rather inserted, does not make the error a small one.

Changing a positive into a negative is to stand the truth on its head or make it do a 180° change of direction, and vice-versa. The clock would then not be seen as five minutes slow, or even five hours slow, but rather it would be running backwards. Spiritual unsophisticates could easily spot that!

For example let us take a couple of the Ten Commandments. If the teacher came along and taught, ‘Thou shalt commit adultery’ or ‘Thou shalt steal’, we could spot the errors instantly. If he said, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery but it is not a bad idea before taking the step of marriage that you might live together for a while to see

if you are compatible', which is very largely the given morality and wisdom of today, it could well be harder for some to identify. If he said, 'Thou shalt not steal but don't pay that iniquitous Poll Tax and fiddle what you can on the Income Tax', again it might be harder for many to spot. Many more words are being used to gloss over the error, however, given our modern society, quite a lot would not spot them half as easily as they would spot the Devil's negative reversal presented in only one word.

Therefore, it is not the number of words used which helps us to identify the dangerous 'little' errors being taught, but rather how close to the truth do these teachers go before they either sell us short or deviate from God's known ways.

Graham A. Fisher.

WORLDWIDE DEMAND FOR BIBLE

Wigan Bible Society's Action group met for a rally this past week and during the year have collected over £600 to help further the work of printing and distributing the Bible. The world's best seller is still in massive production.

As the Communists countries become relaxed there is an even greater demand for Bibles. Even Cuba has now lifted its sanctions and given the Bible Society unprecedented access to supply scriptures to Cuba.

In one town people were standing in a long line to buy pizzas and ice cream, but left their places when they heard that the bookstore around the corner was selling Bibles, which were sold out in less than 30 minutes. In the past, people typed, or copied the Bible by hand, or memorised whole books of the Bible. Now the Bible Society is printing one million Bible selections a week.

Wisdom

Every person coming into prison is given a Bible if he wants one. We just can't get enough of them. We believe that if a prisoner has a Bible in his cell, he has a library of books, enough to absorb his attention for a lifetime and hopefully enough wisdom to change his life so completely that he would never again hurt others.

In college I learned to read the Bible in the original Greek. It was tough going, for six years I struggled. But it was worth it and most rewarding to have insight behind the words used in the Gospels and to discover the many shades of meaning.

My first Bible was given to me at the age of fifteen years, I read it and my life changed completely. It is still my constant companion I am never without it and I can never exhaust its riches.

Down in Frog Lane there is a musical instrument shop, specialising in guitars. The owner Russell Cauldwell, was once in a rock band, became a Christian and now uses a tenth of the profits of his business to give away Bibles from his shop. He says he is happy spreading the good news in this way.

Training some people for membership of the Church, I said it was important to read the Bible every day. Now daily Bible reading notes are available from any Christian Bookshop. They offer each day a story from the Bible and a short prayer.

It is surprising what a lift it gives to your day. It takes but minutes and it will leave you with thoughts to meditate the whole of the day.

Atheist

Altaa and John met in Mongolia, he went to Mongolia to translate the Bible, she was a university student who wanted to learn English. She agreed to help with the translating in exchange for lessons in English.

Altaa was a Marxist and totally atheist and when she first heard John talk about God she thought he was crazy. But as she read his translation of parts of the New Testament she knew this book answered many vital questions about life.

She realised that there was a God she could trust. A few months later she was

arrested, locked up and interrogated. She told the police that she no longer believed in Marxism but in God. She asked God for help in an underground cell and she said he came to her. Seven years later John Gibbons married Altaa and now they are together translating the Old Testament.

This is one love story that has a happy ending and the Bible offers us all happy endings if we but trust Him.

Terry Frost.

(From *Wigan Evening Post*: sent in by Bro. John E. Breakell).

VALUES

Tell me the things you value most, and I can tell you what you are, and which way you are going. Do you value only the things that can be bought with money? Do you value pleasure above purity, fame more than faith, or self above service? Do you estimate the applause of the crowd above the approval of God? Do you value things because they shine and dazzle now, or do you estimate them by the way they may appear in after years? Do you realize that some experiences, duties and obligations which may seem burdensome for the present may bring happiness and peace as you go toward the sunset? Do you know that many things that give fleeting thrills of joy now may later **"bite as a serpent, or sting like an adder?"**

Young people may not value the rebuke of parents, or the advice of judicious friends, when they start down some dangerous path, but later when remorse and tears bring sad remembrance, the disillusioned ones will wish they had known more about values. **"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,"** and **"He that hateth reproof is brutish,"** said a wise man a long time ago (Prov. 22:1, 12:1). After this wise man had much worldly pleasure and fame, he described these things the world values so much, **"vanity and vexation of spirit"** (Ecc. 2:11). He learned true values the hard way, and left a record of his conclusion: **"Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man."** (Ecc. 12:13).

Parents who value any service of the church less than the same time spent in school lesson preparation are not manifesting wisdom in training their children. If education, wealth, or pleasure can be had without the sacrifice of faithfulness to the Lord and his Church, well and good; but if such sacrifice is required, the cost is too great. Jesus said, **"What doth it profit man, if he gain the world and lose his soul."**

Selected

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Mar. 1	Daniel 7:13-28	Revelation 14
Mar. 8	Exodus 15:1-18	Revelation 15
Mar. 15	Joel 3:9-21	Revelations 16
Mar. 22	Jeremiah 51:1-19	Revelation 17
Mar. 29	Jeremiah 50:33-46	Revelation 18: 1-20

CHAPTER 14

This chapter is a chapter of **Triumph**. In verses 1-5 we have the **Triumph of the Redeemed**; verses 6-7, the **Triumph of the Gospel**; verse 8, the **Triumph Over Babylon**; verses 9-12, the **Triumph Over Apostasy**; verse 13, the **Triumph of the**

Faithful; and verses 14-20, the **Triumph Over All Evil**.

The **"hundred and forty four thousand"** (14:1,3) were the first fruits of the Gospel, namely Jews (Revelation 7:4). **"These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins"** (14:4) is a statement in reference to their chastity. In other words, they were a moral people.

The Gospel is an **"everlasting gospel"** (14:6). It is for all nations and for all time (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

Babylon (14:8) means **"confusion"**. Edward Gibbon, for example, described

Rome as another Babylon. The fall of mystical Babylon was to be as real as the fall of the literal Babylon (Isaiah 13; Jeremiah 25).

“**The wrath of God**” (14:10,19) is an important subject in this chapter. A lot of people do not like to hear that the God of Love is also a God of wrath. The wicked will surely be punished “with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). For the faithful, it will be a completely different story (14:13).

The latter verses of this chapter reveal two reasons. The Son of man will reap **His own** (14:16) and an angel will reap **the rest** (14:19). The judgment of God is given in graphic terms here. It is a terrible scene which vinegrowers in that day would easily understand.

CHAPTER 15

Emphasised again in this chapter is the “**wrath of God**” (15:1,7). We read: “**And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen and having under their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts (living creatures) gave unto the seven golden vials (bowls) full of the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever**” (15:6,7). The pouring out of these bowls of wrath, refers to the destruction of Papal Rome.

“**Victory**” (15:2) is mentioned in this chapter. The term is a key one in the book of Revelation.

“**The song of Moses**” (15:3) refers to the song of victory following the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15). So there was a song sung at the Red Sea and a song sung at the sea of glass.

CHAPTER 16

This chapter deals in detail with the pouring out of “**the seven bowls of the wrath of God upon the earth**” (16:1). I can only touch upon a few of the points of this great chapter.

“**And the second angel poured out his bowl upon the sea and it became as the blood of a dead man and every living**

soul died in the sea” (16:3). This might well be a reference to the great naval powers of Spain, Portugal and France, which were defeated by Protestant Britain.

Verse 4 reads: “**And the third angel poured out his bowl upon the rivers and fountains of waters and they became blood**” (16:4). B.W. Johnston has written: “The seat of the disasters is described as the rivers and as we may expect some historical events, connected in some way with rivers, that result in the injury of the Papacy . . . If the reader will look upon the map of northern Italy he will find it crowned with rivers . . . This river region of Italy has been the battle ground of nations . . . The blood of Protestants of the Alps had for centuries dyed the rocks and streams with crimson . . .”

The pouring out of the **fourth bowl** (16:8,9) refers to the wars in Europe following the French Revolution.

The pouring out of the **fifth bowl** (16:10-11) had to do, not with the final overthrow of the Papal Power, but of severe judgment against it. Albert Barnes has commented: “The phrase ‘the seat of the beast’ means the seat or throne which the representative of that power occupied, the central point of the Anti-Christian dominion. I understand this as referring to the very seat of the Papal power—Rome—the Vatican.”

Under the **sixth bowl** (16:12-16), the great river Euphrates could be a reference to the Turkish powers. “**Armageddon**” is mentioned. The word literally means the “Mountain of Megiddo” and is used here symbolically to describe the last great spiritual battle.

The **seventh bowl** has to do with great upheavals, Mystical Babylon, the mother of confusion and rebellion, is seen to collapse.

CHAPTER 17

The best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself. The “**Many waters** (17:1), the “**Woman arrayed in purple and scarlet colour**” (17:43) the “**seven heads**” (17:3) and the “**ten horns**” (17:3)

are all clearly identified in this chapter.

One commentator has written: "Ch. 17:1-6 describes spiritual Rome under the figure of a great harlot. The true Church is described throughout Revelation as a pure woman, the Bride of Christ; the false church as a harlot. That this harlot refers to the same wicked power already described as Babylon is evident from the words on her forehead."

We read in verse 12: "**And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.**" The horn is a symbol of power and often is used for a kingdom in prophetic language. This, then, implies **ten powers** which sprang out of Rome and supported the false church. Sir Isaac Newton, who was a great scientist and Bible student, identified them thus: 1. Kingdom of the Vandals in Spain and Africa; 2. Kingdom of the Visigoths; 3. Kingdom of the Suevi in Spain; 4. Kingdom of the Alans in France; 5. Kingdom of the Burgundians; 6. Kingdom of the Franks; 7. Kingdom of the Britons; 8. Kingdom of the Huns; 9. Kingdom of the Lombards; 10. Kingdom of Ravenna.

CHAPTER 18

The Babylon of the Old Testament fell as the result of pride (Isiah 13). Pride also caused the fall of mystical Babylon (18:7). C.S. Lewis once described pride as "the great sin". He wrote: "It is Pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began . . . Pride always means enmity — it is enmity. And not only between man and man, but enmity to God."

The **kings** (18:9,10), the **merchants** (18:11-17) and the **Shipmasters and seamen** (18:17-19) were to lament over her. No wonder! Because their source of wealth was now destroyed.

In verse 20 we read: "**Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her.**" Albert Barnes has commented:

"This is not the language of vengeance, but it is the language of exultation and rejoicing in view of the fact, that the cause of truth might now be spread, without hindrance, through the earth"

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

GHANA REPORT

As I write this appeal, I don't know if Brother Bill Cook will be returning to Great Britain on the 20th January or not for at this moment his flight has not yet been confirmed.

Bill has done a very good job in the Lord's Service in the past year and is to be commended for the work he has undertaken.

If he should be home by the time this article is read, I would ask those who are interested in this work to be patient for a little while before asking him to speak about the work in Ghana at any formal meetings.

Bill is suffering a parasite infection in the stomach and is receiving treatment for this. On his arrival home, Ann will take him to the Tropical Disease Clinic in Liverpool for further treatment.

Bill also had an accident one dark night when he fell into a ditch at the side of the road (3 feet deep) and suffered a gash to the head. He was later x-rayed in hospital and was all right.

To add to his misery, Bill was bitten by a dog which gashed his leg. He has also lost weight. Please remember Bill in your prayers.

Ann Cook and Martin Price were married by Abraham Mante of Koforidua, in Odumasion, on Friday, 27th December. May God bless them. On their return from Ghana they reported that they were deeply impressed by the enthusiasm and sincerity of the saints in Ghana and especially in Pechi, where four souls, who had been studying the Word of God, heard the gospel on the Sunday and went straight to the nearest river to be baptized.

John Mensah Bonsu was particularly mentioned, as a man who can't stop talk-

ing about Jesus.

This month I would simply ask for the continued support of the work in Ghana and when I see Bill Cook, I will distribute the funds as per his instructions. Cheques should be made payable to "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal" and sent to: 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU.

Thank you ANON for the cheque received on 7th January which was dated 4th January for £250. (The Leeds it was given receipt No. 299).

Thank you IMB for the £50 Barclays cheque dated 4th January which was received on 10th January. This was allocated receipt No. 300.

LATEST NEWS (Bill telephoned on 12th January).

After a week of campaigning, another church has been established in Kumasi. The first service will take place next Sunday (19th January). The church at Pechi had another three baptisms today (12/1/92) bringing the membership to 18 since they began on 17th November, 1991. Bill is feeling better and thinks he has got rid of the parasite. As Bill's return ticket is with a Russian Airline and because of the fuel problems etc. in Russia, he may now have to spend four days in Moscow at his own expense on his return flight (if he gets a seat). The churches in Ghana are arranging a "Thank you send off party for Bill on 18th January in Accra."

Graeme Pearson

COMING EVENTS

Kirkcaldy Annual Social
Saturday, 11th April, 1992
at 3.30 p.m.

Speaker: John Mooney
Ruth Moyes, Sec.

Fellowship Weekend

Longshoot, Wigan, Friday, 1st May
- Monday, 4th May, 1992. For details of Programme and Booking Information please contact Bob Marsden (0942 212198) or Doug Melling (0942 53020) or Alf Marsden (0942 223694).

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Buckie, Banffshire: The Lord has truly blessed us in Buckie in the past year. We had our Youth Weekend and our Social both in May, and these were a great success. In June, after four months of studies, Andy Buchan was baptised into Christ. Two weeks later after completing several correspondence courses, Jeannie Banks was also added to the Lord's body.

In August Marion Moffat was baptised (her father was a member of the church in Buckie many years ago).

In October Avril Bowie, known better to many as James George and Betty Addison's daughter, turned to the Lord and was baptised. This was a great night and made many consider their position with Christ. A week later Avril's husband Ian was baptised into the Lord's body.

We thank God for the growth in 1991 and we ask for your prayers for us in 1992 as we strive for more progress.

Our Social is to be held on May 16th, 1992, speaker: Brother Frank Worgan, Corby.

Hunter Pirie, Sec.

Slammannan District: The Mutual Benefit Meeting, each quarter, took place on this occasion, at Motherwell, on Saturday, 7th December when the Chairman was Bro, Peter Sneddon, Dennyloanhead and the speakers were Harry McGinn, New Cumnock and Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline. Graeme Pearson, at very short notice, was a replacement speaker for James R. Gardiner, Haddington, who was indisposed due to recent surgery. The subject was "A common complaint today is that there are so many interpretations of the Bible: why should I believe yours?" As usual a great deal more than was anticipated came out of the subject and much interest was engendered, and many interesting points raised. Also a fine time of fellowship was enjoyed, and the usual

high standard of home baking and tea greatly appreciated.

Our next meeting, God willing, will be on 7th March, 1992, when the subject will be "What day is referred to in Heb. 10:25?" The venue will be at the meeting-place at New Cumnock, and the speakers will be James Moncrieff, Haddington, and David Chalmers, Ayr. The Chairman will be Graeme Pearson. The time of meeting will not be the usual time of 4 p.m. but will be 2.30 p.m. (repeat: 2.30 p.m.).

Harry McGinn, Sec.

CONSCIENCE

There is an unseen part of us for which the theory of evolution has no explanation. Conscience. Evolution's "survival of the fittest" allows no place for the development of a "sense" that, when properly trained, both accuses bad conduct and applauds the good. Our Creator gave us this faculty.

To know God's will but refuse or neglect to obey, should stimulate an alarm in our conscience. If there is no alarm, it may be evidence that we have allowed our conscience to become seared and insensitive to disobeying God. This is an extremely dangerous state, for the hardened heart may never again respond to the stimulus of the gospel message. It can be likened to the loss of feeling in a badly burned hand. This is what is meant by the Bible expression,

"hardened heart," and the description of some who were "past feeling" (Eph. 4:19).

No one is serving God in good conscience who knows what God requires but refuses to do it. Granted, we can so harden our hearts that disobedience no longer stimulates an alarm in our conscience, but such hardening does not mean that conscience did not at one time exist. The sense of feeling may be destroyed in a hand because of a burn, but who would say feeling existed?

The reason Britain no longer blushes at immorality, divorce, and other sins, is because she has (by and large) hardened her heart. She has lost her consciousness of sin. The media – especially television – has so desensitized the British public, that only the basest of sins alarm, and then for only a relatively short time. With few exceptions, the heartbeat of Britain no longer reflects the Christian values our foreparents held. On a great number of moral issues, the British public apparently has no conscience at all. What too many never realize is that they are personally contributing to the overall decay of our nation. If you are living in sin, YOU are. Every one of us needs to look at our values, our morality, our integrity. What do you stand for – or do you stand for anything "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God" (Psa. 9:17).

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER YEAR — POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH £ 7.00
CANADA & U.S.A. \$13.00

AIR MAIL please add £2.00 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

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

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian,
Scotland EH37 5PT. Telephone: Ford 320 527

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