

# *The* **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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## **THE WITNESS OF GOD IS GREATER**

According to recent media reports, there is a great deal of heartsearching going on just now in Russia, particularly in Moscow, over the question of what is to be done with all the statues (and busts) of the men now in great disfavour. For the last 70 years or so factories in the former USSR have been churning out vast quantities of bronze statues and busts, ranging in size from a human fist to a block of flats, representing, in the main, Marx, Lenin, Stalin and a few others. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the granting of liberation to people previously held in thralldom, well-preserved monuments are being seriously defaced and a great number are being pulled down and hacked to pieces. The problem of what to do with all the unwanted statues is now a great embarrassment. It has been truly said that when a revolution (bloody or otherwise) takes place the first items to suffer attack or destruction are the statues of the former regime. After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Lenin gave orders for all the statues of the Tsars to be removed and be replaced by statues of himself and now (quite apart from the thousands of statues of Stalin, Marx, Trotsky, etc.) the statues of Lenin are numberless, with 60 in Moscow alone. As we watch, on T.V., the large crowds of Russians attacking these statues with great relish, (statues previously looked upon almost as sacred shrines), we can but marvel at how fortunes change, and how that, eventually, truth will out.

Why must these statues be demolished? Because they represent something despicable. They are silent witnesses of the fact that all these men have been tried in the balances and found wanting: even by their own people. The statues are quite inanimate, of course, yet extremely eloquent and they speak volumes. What do they say? They speak of failure: the failure of a political system: the failure of a philosophy based on atheism: the failure of an economic system completely under State control: and a failure, over decades, to bring even a smattering of happiness to millions of honest and hard-working Russian people. These statues also speak of oppression, corruption, hardship, privation, misery, persecution, tyranny, cruelty, torture, murder, labour camps, lunatic asylums and salt-mines. Even Stalin's statue, with its wistful, benign and fatherly smile belies the fact that Stalin, over a few years, butchered about 25 million Russians, and even murdered most of his own family.

### **SILENT SENTINELS**

My intention in this article is to say something about "witnesses" and "witnessing" and my reference to the statues is intended to show that "witnesses" don't necessarily need to be human beings but can be inanimate objects: any item that has something to say. Abel's blood "**cried out from the ground**" that Abel had been murdered. The

O.T. contains many other such examples.

In Gen. 21:30, for instance, Abraham in his transaction with Abimelech, said, **“These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be A WITNESS unto me, that I have digged this well.”**

In formalising some business transactions between Jacob and Laban, Laban said to Jacob, **“Let us make a covenant, I and thou, and let it be for A WITNESS between thee and me.”** When the covenant was eventually made, Jacob raised a large stone pillar and buttressed it with boulders, saying, **“This heap is A WITNESS between me and thee this day.”** (Gen. 31:48).

And Moses, on one occasion was instructed to compose a song for the people. God said, **“Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it to the Children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be A WITNESS for Me against the Children of Israel,”** (Deut. 31:19).

The Book of the Law was also used as a witness. **“Moses also commanded the Levites which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this Book of the Law and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for A WITNESS against thee. For I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck.”** (Deut. 31:25).

When the tribe of Reuben and the tribe of Gad separated themselves from the rest of the Children of Israel they built a huge altar, and this greatly perplexed the Children of Israel and almost precipitated a war. Tranquillity was restored, however, when the two tribes assured the Children of Israel that their new altar would never be used for sacrifices but was merely a monument and a witness. They said their intention was that the altar **“May be A WITNESS between us and you, and the generations to come . . . that we may say, Behold the pattern of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made . . . and the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar ED: for it shall be A WITNESS between us that the Lord is good.”** (Josh. 22:26). (The Hebrew word for “witness” is Ed.)

And in Joshua 24:26 we read, **“And Joshua wrote these words (the Law) in the Book of the Law of God, and took a great stone, and set it under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people. Behold this stone shall be A WITNESS unto us for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us: it shall be therefore A WITNESS unto you lest ye deny your Lord.”** (Josh. 24:26). Evidently the power of hearing is attributed (figuratively) to this stone.

And so, from these few examples we see that blood, sheep, a covenant, a heap of stones, a song, a Book, and altar, and a great boulder all functioned in the capacity of witness.

### EYEWITNESSES

In the N.T., however, there are no inanimate witnesses. All God’s witnesses in the N.T. consist of flesh and blood: men who could give the real testimony of actual eyewitnesses. Luke could say that he, and certain others, **“. . . From the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word”** (Luke 1:2). The apostle Peter could also say, **“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty”** (1 Peter 1:16). God’s witnesses were not reduced to giving second-hand information, or hearsay evidence, but were able to confirm all that they had seen with their own eyes. After all, those who had not actually seen the Saviour after His resurrection, would have made poor witnesses of that claim. At Pentecost, Peter could say, **“This same Jesus hath God raised up whereof WE ARE ALL WITNESSES”** (Acts 2:32). And when Matthias was chosen as a replacement for Judas Iscariot the qualifications (described by Peter) required that any candidate should be one of “. . .

. the men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us. Beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that He was taken up from us must one be ordained to be A WITNESS with us of the resurrection." (Acts 1:21).

The apostle Paul did not, of course, possess any of these qualifications but this was, in due course, rectified when Christ appeared to Paul on the Damascus road, and when Paul had received instructions from Christ in Arabia (Gal. 1:17). When writing to the Corinthians on the matter of the Lord's Table, Paul could say, "**FOR I HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD that which I also delivered unto you . . .**" (1 Cor. 11:23). Thus Paul, out of due time, was a qualified apostle and WITNESS (eyewitness) of Christ and His resurrection. Peter, (at the conversion of Cornelius) in preaching the gospel, added, "**And we are WITNESSES of all things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day and shewed Him openly not to all the people but UNTO WITNESSES CHOSEN BEFORE OF GOD: EVEN TO US who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.**" (Acts 10:39-41). All of this in keeping with Christ's prediction just before His ascension when He said, "**But ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall BE WITNESSES UNTO ME both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.**" (Acts 1:8).

Whereas the Hebrew word for "witness" is ED; the Greek word is *Martus* which means "to give testimony at the risk of one's life" and is the word from which "martyr" is derived. Certainly there have been many martyrs for Christ; not least the apostles themselves, and men like Stephen. From time to time we hear people talking about "their witness for Christ" or "witnessing for God" and perhaps, in view of all that has gone before, they use the term "witnessing" inadvisedly. All of Christ's witnesses gave their testimony about 2,000 years ago and since that time there have been no additional witnesses or testimony; nor has there been any need for such. The record is closed; notwithstanding the claim of so-called latter-day prophets like Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell and the like. Men and women of today have no function as "witnesses" but rather have the responsibility of weighing up the testimony of God's witnesses, and coming to some conclusions upon it: a task more akin to a juror than a witness. "Jehovah's Witnesses" (so-called) when challenged to state exactly what they have "witnessed" have to confess that they have witnessed nothing, and in this respect are the same as everybody else. The authentic witnesses "**chosen before of God, have already spoken and there will be no additional testimony.**"

#### WITHOUT EXCUSE

God "**has never left Himself without witness**" (Acts 14:17) and even those in N.T. times who found it difficult to believe "unlearned men" like the apostles were without excuse when one considers that there were additional witnesses close at hand.

(1) First of all, there was the testimony of Moses and the other O.T. prophets in the scriptures. Jesus once said to the Jews, "**Ye search the scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life, and these are they which BEAR WITNESS OF Me,**" John 5:39). Peter said, "**To Him (Jesus) give all the prophets WITNESS, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.**" (Acts 10:43). Paul, "**mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.**" (Acts 18:28). Jesus talking with the two men on the way to Emmaus said, "**Ought not Christ to have suffered these things. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning Himself.**" Obviously many other quotations of similar import could be made if space allowed.

(2) Secondly, there was the testimony of John the Baptist. If the Jews considered the apostles untutored and gullible men, they had no excuse in rejecting the witness

of John: for John was generally regarded as a true prophet from God. Jesus said, **"If I bear witness of Myself My witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of Me: and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of Me is true. Ye sent unto John and he BARE WITNESS unto the truth."** (John 5:31). Earlier in John's gospel we have a brief record of that interview with John the Baptist, viz, **"And this is the record of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him. Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed I am not the Christ . . . And they asked him. Why baptizest thou then, it thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not: He it is, coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith. Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."** (John 1:19).

(3) Thirdly there was the witness of Christ's work. Continuing His theme of God's witness (in this fifth Chapter of John) Jesus says, **"But I have GREATER WITNESS than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do. BEAR WITNESS OF ME, that the Father hath sent Me."** (John 5:36). Jesus, in the synagogue, read from Isaiah a brief description of that work; viz **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath appointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."** As Jesus laid down the book He said, **"This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears."** (Luke 4:8). Apart from Christ's work: there was also the evidence of His works: His incredible miracles, wonders and signs. Jesus reckoned these constituted an even better witness than John's witness.

(4) Fourthly, and lastly, there was the testimony of God Himself, and who could want or expect more than that? Going back to John 5 (v.37) Jesus said, **"And the Father Himself, which sent Me, hath borne witness of Me."** Three times God took the trouble to personally bear witness to Christ verbally from heaven. At Christ's baptism God said, **"This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased"**: a testimony He repeated at the transfiguration (Matt. 17): with another verbal acknowledgement in John 12:30. The writer to the Hebrews (2:4), speaking of the "great salvation" says, **"Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, GOD ALSO BEARING THEM WITNESS both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will."**

### CONCLUSION

I began with a reference to silent witnesses, and man's preoccupation with statues erected to the world's "great" men, "Their works do follow them" however, and surely a man is no better than his works. There is no statue in London of Charles Dickens, for in his will he discouraged such a thing: hoping to be remembered by his works but saying that if there was no merit in his works he did not deserve a statue. Jesus is remembered for His words and works. God has not littered the world with statues of His Son: the Son's deeds speak for themselves. Many claim Messiahship but their words are not matched by their works. This is the real test. And yet only a small fraction of Christ's mighty deeds are known to us. John said that **"Many other signs did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing ye might have life in His name."** (John 20:30). There has certainly been no lack of testimony from God's many witnesses, and if we do not **"receive life through His Name"** we are **"without excuse,"** and can have no complaints.

We are well conditioned to weighing up the testimony from witnesses: indeed it is a daily occurrence. We readily believe what some people say to us: but distrust

what certain others say. The world is full of thieves, cheats and charlatans and we do well to investigate the claims some make to us: whether from a salesman or chance acquaintance. More than ever, we perceive that many are not to be trusted. John (in discussing the three that BEAR WITNESS in heaven, and the three that BEAR WITNESS on earth) points out that **“If we receive the witness of men (and we often do) the witness of God is greater . . . He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.”** Surely the testimony of God is preferable to man’s. God (apart from all His other witnesses) says, **“This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”** The world replies, **“WE can’t believe it.”** Thus the world makes God a liar and a purveyor of falsehoods. Dear reader, if you should share this worldly rejection of Jesus, you are, in effect, accusing God of falsehood. This is the charge, the very deadly charge, that unbelievers will face on Judgement Day: viz. that they classed God with all other liars, and withheld from Him their trust. There is little merit in believing something we have seen with our own eyes, but there is a real blessing to be had taking God’s words and witnesses on trust. Jesus said to Thomas (surely the greatest of sceptics) **“Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed, but blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”** (John 20:29).

May we gratefully accept “the record that God has given of His Son” (through all His chosen witnesses) and may we also resolve not only to accept Christ as Lord and Saviour, but to serve Him faithfully all the days of our lives.

**“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater”**

EDITOR.

## GLEANINGS

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

### KNOWING

“I know the shrinking and the fear,  
When all seems wrong, and nothing clear;  
But now I gaze upon His throne,  
And faith sees all His foes o’erthrown,  
And I can wait till He explains,  
Because I know that Jesus reigns.”

F.R.H.

### “AND THE LIFE”

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6).

### “FOR THE LIFE WAS MANIFESTED”

What do we mean by life?

Some words of the apostle John may help us here.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John 5:11-12).

**“ETERNAL LIFE . . . IS IN THE SON.”**

Rotherham: “age-abiding life.” Weymouth: “life of the ages.”

**“HE THAT HATH NOT THE SON OF GOD HATH NOT LIFE.”**

So we can say that there are millions of men and women alive today who are “dead.”

**Men and women who can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell.**

Surely this truth is fully borne out by that statement made by our Lord Jesus as recorded in **Matthew and Luke.**

(Matthew 8:21-22):— **“And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.**

**But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead.”**

(Luke 9:59-60):— **“And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.**

**Jesus said unto him. Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God,”**

### WE QUOTE – CAMPBELL MORGAN

**“Follow Me.”** Here, then, He is heard addressing to this man, already a disciple, a new command and charge, calling him to some yet more complete relationship with Him.

His reply reveals him, as he said to Jesus:

**“Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.”** It is in the light of this fact of his discipleship that we are compelled to consider this answer. That answer reveals the fact that he was a man devoted to high duty, and capable of earthly affection. So strong were these things that when the Lord called him to this higher and closer relationship, he replied that he could not obey awhile, because of present duty.

### OFTEN BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD

It is quite certain that this reply has often been misunderstood, and I think it well here to give an account of the moment when I personally came to understand it. Travelling back from the United States some years ago in the same boat as Sir George Adam Smith, he told me this story. We all know how intimate was his familiarity with those Eastern lands, and how he had travelled there, not only on the ordinary roads, but off the beaten tracks, and on the byeways. He told me how upon one occasion, desiring to go into a region unknown to him, he was very anxious to secure the services of a fine young Arab sheik, who knew the district well.

When asked to go, the chief declared that he regretted he was unable to do so. As they conversed, sitting at the entrance to the tent was the young chief's father, a venerable man, still hale, but aged. As Sir George urged the young man to accompany him, he used the very words of this story as he said, “Sir, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Thus, the intention of the declaration was to show that he had obligations to the father as long as he lived. That undoubtedly is what this man meant when he said this thing to Jesus. He declared that he was not able to take the high adventure to which Jesus called him, because of his obligation to his father.”

### THE LAND OF THE DYING

J. Owen, a servant of Christ, upon his dying bed, was dictating a letter to a friend. He had just had the words written, “I am still in the land of the living . . . Stop alter that.” he exclaimed; “write, I am still in the land of the dying, but I hope soon to be in the land of the living.”

### SHALL NOT SEE LIFE (John 3:36)

**“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.”**

**“Not everyone that saith unto the me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21).**

**“BUT BY ME”**

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, *but by Me.*” (John 14:6).

“*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life.*” (John 5:24).

**“THROUGH DEATH TO LIFE”**

“I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on Me, though he were dead yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.” (John 11:25,26).

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

**DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE ?**

You’ve heard this argumentative statement numerous times during your lifetime, “It doesn’t make any difference what you believe religiously just so you conscientiously believe what you do.” The companion verse is, “We will be judged finally by what we sincerely believed the truth to be on a given subject, not by any fixed one-for-all standard.” These expressions – and may others akin to them – are simply saying that each person has a right to his or her belief and religious practice, and that personal belief constitutes truth. Really, now, *does* it make any *difference*?

**RESPECT FOR SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY**

“*Hereby We Know . . .*” Making all the allowances we may in view of differences in talents and opportunities, we are eventually brought face to face with the Lord’s demand and expectation that all peoples of the world come to know and keep His revealed will. The good news preached and taught in the first century was expected to be accepted and obeyed all over the world. How clear that is when we read the great commission Jesus gave His apostles, “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of The Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you . . .” (Matt. 28:19,20). The apostle Paul pointed to the extension of the unchanged message from one generation to another when he instructed the younger preacher, Timothy, “The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

That same demand for a consistency with the original message was given again to the younger preacher shortly before Paul’s death, “Preach the word . . . For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine . . . and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:2-4). No wonder the aged apostle John insisted, “Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3). That’s how people of the early days of Christ’s Church knew (Acts 2:42), that’s how those of the second generation of people composing the Church knew (Col. 2:8-23), and that’s how those of the third generation knew (1 John 2:3). “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath no God: he that abideth in the teaching, that same hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9) was true then *and* it is as true for us today.

*True to the Original Order.* The multitudes of professional believers in Christ who reason that change from the original order of things as pictured in the New Testament should not be viewed as apostasy or as departure from the truth or as a rebellion against the Lord, generally feel that the picture of the Church of Christ provided in the New Testament is one ideally suited to the needs of the people of that age. Some forcefully state, “Christianity was never intended to be static or unchanging. It was

rather intended to be moving, changing, developing." In this view, no claim is made for heaven's revelation of the changes. Instead this is something relating to the experiences and wisdom of the believers. If in religious faith and practice something demonstrates itself to be helpful to spiritual life and growth, it should be used – and, in time, it should be refined and made more useful. If it proved itself to be of little value, it should be modified so as to be advanced in value. If it is of trivial or no value, it should be discarded. In effect, this is "trial and error" procedure on the part of sincere and devoted people. Thus without any feelings of disobedience to the Lord and His word, they believe there can be additions to the revealed will as pictured in the Bible, there can be deletions, there can be substitutions and modifications. The right of change is warranted by the perceived good result.

Consider what Henry Ward Beecher had to say on the subject of infant baptism a long time ago, and you will see how the will of the Lord is abridged by such reasoning:

I concede and I assert, first, that infant baptism is nowhere commanded in the New Testament. No man can find a passage that commands it; and if it can stand only on this ground, we may as well give it up first and last. Secondly, I affirm that the cases where it is employed, as in the baptism of whole households are by no means conclusive and without doubt; and that if there is no other basis for it than that, it is not safe to found it on the practice of apostles in the baptism of Christian families; therefore I give up that which has been injudiciously used as an argument for baptism. And thirdly, I assert that the doctrine that, as a Christian ordinance, it is a substitute for the circumcision of the Jews, is a doctrine that is utterly untenable, to say nothing more. If there were no other argument than this for it, I should not blame those who rail at it and set it at nought. It is not commanded by scripture; there is no well attested case of its administration in the New Testament; and is not brought down as a substitute for circumcision. "Where is your text for baptizing children?" I reply that there is none. And if I am asked, "Then why do you baptise them ? I say, "Because it is found to be beneficial."

#### IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

*"Not of Any Value."* That changes have been made from the faith and practices of first-century Christians is glaringly obvious – changes which were intended to help, to bless, to strengthen. There is really nothing new about the disposition to change or accept change. Read Colossians 2:23 – **"Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh."** All of these self-sacrificing attitudes and actions, **"after the precepts and doctrines of men"** (Col. 2:22), are valueless in achieving what men thought they could and would achieve. How sad that one should waste so much of life needlessly. "Not of any value" says clearly, "It does make a difference."

*"Rob You Of Your Prize."* The difference between following the teachings of men rather than the revealed will of Christ is of greater consequence than even "not of any value." Hear: **Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ . . . Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling on the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshy mind, and not holding fast the Head.** (Col. 2:8,18,19).

The fact that all of us recognise the difficulty of learning what the Lord has revealed for us in His word, and the added fact that none of us wants to be self-righteous (setting all others at nought), must not diminish our conviction that "it does make a difference what people believe and practise religiously." This is especially important in our day of subjectivism when many of our brethren in the Lord are depending upon "I can't see any harm in it" or "I feel good about it before the Lord, so it must be all right" rather than the verification of **"thus saith the Lord."**



## LETTER FROM CANADA

*(The following Letter was received from a regular reader in Canada raising comments on a recent Editorial "Never say Never")*

Dear Brother Gardiner,

I always read with great interest and enthusiasm your editorials. The May issue was no exception and I agree wholeheartedly with your comments and, the scriptures used to refute the false doctrine of "once saved always saved."

For a great number of years I was puzzled over the passage of Heb. 6:6 and the strong impression it leaves that if someone "falls away" they can "never" be renewed. If we understand it that way, then it appears to contradict quite a few passages to the contrary.

Just as you pointed out in your editorial "the only way which men and women can be separated from God's love is by their own action."

Having thus separated themselves from God by their own actions; can we find scriptures that confirm that by their own actions of repentance, and their pleas for forgiveness, they can be restored?

Some that come to mind are Rom. 11:18-25 in reference to those Israelites who had sinned and been cut-off and then grafted in again. 1st John 1:9 tells us that IF we repent and confess our sins we will be forgiven – leading us to the conclusion that IF we DO NOT repent we of course have cut ourselves off and ultimately will be lost.

It appears that the condition for the first instance of salvation is the same as the condition for being re-ingrafted.

Even the crucifixion of Jesus was no bar to salvation for those who were saved on the day of Pentecost; for Peter said "**this Jesus whom you have crucified**" and those who obeyed the gospel were saved.

Jesus himself told us that "**All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men**" Matt. 12:31.

In Heb. 6:6 it is the figurative "crucifying" of Jesus that is used to seemingly close the door on renewal.

As I said; this caused me to puzzle over the implications of the passage.

Any public sin committed by a Christian brother surely puts Christ to an open shame. Yet in Gal. 6:1 we are told to "**restore**" any brother who has been "**overtaken in a fault**": (It must be presumed here that we have one who is in fact repentant and asks for forgiveness). Further, there would be no point in Jesus warning the church at Laodicea unless the warning was intended to have them repent and ask for forgiveness before He executed the judgement pronounced.

Now these passages satisfy me that one who sins publicly can be forgiven and restored (perhaps even after many years of denial and unfaithfulness). If this is correct then we must come to a better understanding of what is being said in Heb. 6:6.

As always we MUST consider the whole context in which the statement is made. Going back to Chapter 5:12 we see that there is an admonition to return to "the first principles" because they were making no progress. In 6:1 they are told that they must "go on to perfection" – they were Spiritually "imperfect" – and of course in this imperfect condition they were very likely to commit a public sin. And if this happened it would be "impossible" for them to make any spiritual progress. But NOT impossible for them to be restored (provided always that they repented and asked forgiveness).

I have a copy of George M. Lamsa's translation from the Aramaic of the Peshitta and when I turned to this to read Heb. 6:1-6 this is what I found: "Therefore, let us leave the elementary word of Christ, and let us go on to perfection. Why do you again lay another foundation for the repentance from past deeds and for faith in God? And for the doctrine of baptisms and for the laying on of hands and for the resurrection of the dead and for eternal judgement? If the Lord permits this we will do (Now here

we see that it is the “going on to perfection” that they would do)

Then it continues with this statement:

vs. 4 “But **THIS** is impossible for those who have once been baptized and have tasted the gift from heaven and have received the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come.”

vs. 6 “For them to sin again and be renewed again by repentance, they crucify the Son of God a second time and put Him to open shame.”

We must note that in this rendering it is clear that this class of person CAN be renewed again.

But it is impossible for them to progress if they are continually going back to the necessity of learning the “elementary” things.

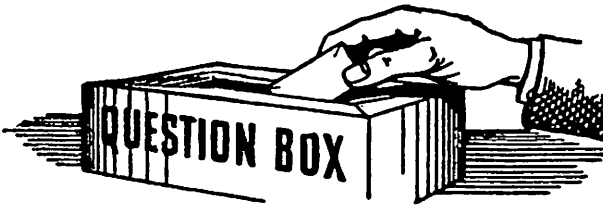
The key to the proper understanding is in the comparison of the venerable K.J.V. and the Peshitta in both verses 4 and 6.

Notice in your K.J.V. that the words in vs. 4 “it is” are in italics and this indicates that they were arbitrarily inserted by the translators. The Peshitta says “but this is” thereby changing the meaning from “being renewed” “to going on to perfection.”

In vs. 6 the K.J.V. says: “if they shall fall away” but the Peshitta says: “For for them.”

I humbly submit this observation for your scrutiny and observations, or if you deem it worthy of publication you may do so.

GEORGE SILLMAN,  
Box 327 Chilliwack, B.C., Canada.




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**“Why as in Isaiah 9:6, is one of the titles given to Jesus that of Counsellor? I thought this was a fairly recent vocation for which people could be trained.”**

I understand what the questioner is saying, and also what might be implied in the question, i.e. how can someone give counsel if not present with us? I would say that in many people’s eyes, ‘counselling’ is a fairly recent branch of the science of psychology insofar as it is employed in industry, commerce, and society generally, but the concept of giving counsel goes back beyond antiquity. Perhaps it would help if we defined ‘counselling.’

The noun ‘counsel’ means deliberation or debate. We can counsel **together**, or we can counsel **with** someone, or we can counsel **ourselves**. It is a means of giving advice, so a counsellor may be called an ‘adviser’ (We must realise, however, that unless we are prescient, the giving of advice to others is always fraught with difficulty). So what is the scriptural significance of counselling, and how does Jesus significantly fit into the scheme of things?

#### Immutability

In Heb. 6:17, the writer there speaks about the ‘**immutability of the counsel of God.**’ If something can be spoken of as ‘immutable’, that means such a thing is ‘unchangeable’. Referring that to God, we can say with some certainty that whatever or whoever changes, God Himself will not change, nor will His counsel. As Paul says in Rom. 11:34, “**For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His**

counsellor?" The same apostle asserts, "**His ways are past finding out**" (11:33). Happily, however, God has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus, His Son, and He has called people to deliberation and debate concerning their state before Him. In Isa. 1:16 we read, "**wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil . . . Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool**" (v.18 Read to V.20).

There is no doubt that God, in the Isaiah passage, is referring to Jesus. The fore-ordained plan of God was to be revealed: Jesus was to be delivered – as God had always known – in order to die for the sins of mankind. Peter makes this clear in Acts 2:23, "**Him (Jesus), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands, (the hands of the Romans) have crucified and slain**" (words in brackets are my own). It is interesting to note that Peter refers to "ye men of Israel" to take heed of what he says. It is patently obvious that the Jews didn't crucify Jesus, but Peter says "ye have taken . . . and have crucified and slain." This makes it plain that one doesn't have to have committed the overt act to be blameworthy; Jesus Himself reiterated this principle when He said, during His so-called Sermon on the Mount, "**Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart**" Matt. 5:28. a very sobering lesson to us all in our dealings with God. I digress a little, however.

### Christ and the Holy Spirit

In Matt. 5 through 7, there is a classic example of Jesus counselling the people of His day, and even though what He says may seem radical, He is simple telling the people what they **should** be doing but which they had **neglected** to do for a long time. In John chapter 5 we read of Jesus in one of His many confrontations with the Jews; this time about His relationship with God. He counsels them to do what they should already have done. "**Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.**" v. 39. He compounds their error also regarding Moses, "**For had you believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me**" v46. Further on in the gospel of John, Jesus gives some good advice to His disciples, and to us also, "**If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you**" 15:7. Further on in the same discourse, "**If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love**" 15:10. He also warns them about what to expect from the world, "**Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than His Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also**" v 20.

Need I go on? The gospel records abound with counsel given by Jesus, and who better to give it than He who was named 'Counsellor' so many years before His advent into the world? Did not God Himself counsel the world to 'hear' His Son, both when Jesus stood in the Jordan river and on the Mount of Transfiguration? Did not Jesus Himself say, "I and My Father are one"? Who better to know the mind of God than He who was with God before the world began? The counsel of God was clear and authoritative: the counsel of His Son complemented that clarity and authority. The advice to listen to Him is good advice which we should all take to our hearts.

Could we expect anything less, or anything different, from the Holy Spirit regarding counselling? It was he, the Comforter, who was to guide the Disciples into 'all truth'. You remember what Jesus said, "**He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I, shall he take of mine, and I shall shew it unto you**" John 16:14,15.

### Counsel of the Godhead

Reasoning this out we can understand that the truth which was in Jesus, and which was His from God, should also be evident in the counselling of the Holy Spirit. Paul, defending what the apostles taught, speaks about the Holy Spirit, **“For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God”** 1 Cor. 2:10,11. Now every Christian has the in-dwelling Spirit, so how does He help us and counsel us? If we look at Rom. 8 we shall find an important answer. Paul teaches, **“For as many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”** The operative word here is ‘led’; the Spirit leads, guides, suggests; we respond to that and follow. We respond because we know He will lead us to the truth. But Paul goes on, **“Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”** v14-16.

Do you realise the significance of this, dear reader? He who knows the deep things of God in-dwells in us. What bliss is this? If we will but let Him, He will guide us into spiritual treasures that we have not even dreamed of. He will counsel us about the compassion and love of God; the soul-edifying sacrifice of Christ; the glories of Heaven. And yet, we mortals, to our detriment, can quench the power of that welcome Guest. But Oh! we must never do that. How, then, in times of deep distress, when all seems lost, would we hear the that calm, re-assuring, inner voice saying, **“Your Heavenly Father knows all about it; be calm and feel the security of His everlasting arms. He will never fail you. I know, because I have searched the deep things of Him.”**

Well, dear questioner, we’ve said a little about the Great Counsellor, Jesus. But you know, when we talk about Jesus, the Christ of God, we are also talking about the Godhead; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The formidable resources which they have, and which are at our disposal, can take us beyond this temporal world and, as on eagles’ wings, transport us to that spiritual eyrie from where we can look down on the largely Godless world, and from that eyrie to come down, as Jesus came from Heaven, in order to help some poor benighted soul to find the way to God and salvation. It is the counsel of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit that we should do this.

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

## THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

Since man has been on the earth, he has wrestled with the problem, **“Why do we suffer?”** The man set forth as an example of how to overcome suffering is Job. Although the answer to man’s question is not found in any one place in the book, much light is shed to help us endure.

Job blamed the wrong person. **“Pity me, pity me for the hand of the Lord has struck me”** (Job 19:21). Because of the circumstances, and his erroneous assumptions, Job and his friends, thought God was the one who sent suffering. God he assumed, only used it as punishment. In reality, the first two chapters of Job show that Satan is the cause of suffering. God only allows it to come on man. The fact that the trial of our faith is limited, indicates that God loves man and intends for him to profit from suffering.

Job sought the right person for healing. Although he did not know the right source, Job saw that God was his hope for healing. **“God reproves . . . For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, but His hands heal”** (Job 5:17-18). If our suffering is Divinely permitted, we should realise that help is also Divine. True humility is our understanding that we are helpless without God. Suffering teaches this lesson so well.

Job saw the ultimate result of suffering. **“But he knows the way I take; When he has tried me I shall come forth as gold”** (Job 23:10). No suffering is ever pleasant. Yet the results can be. There are lessons taught in the school of suffering that are taught nowhere else. Job saw this and saw he would become as precious as gold if he would endure the crucible.

Why do we suffer? We may never know. Yet we again learn from Job the lesson of trust. He said . . . **though he slay me, yet will I trust him**” (Job 13:15). The answer to suffering is faith. We may not all be allowed to know. “Why”. Yet we can know why we believe in God who knows “Why.”

A JENKINS

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Aug. 7	Exodus 2:1-22	Acts 7:1-29
Aug. 14	Exodus 32:1-14	Acts 7:30-60
Aug. 21	2 Kings 17:21-41	Acts 8:1-25
Aug. 28	Isaiah 53:	Acts 8:26-40

### STEPHEN'S SPEECH TO THE SANHEDRIN

Stephen will always be remembered as the first Christian martyr. He died simply because he told the truth. People either warm to truth or in the end react with hostility to it. The Sanhedrin took the latter course.

Stephen's defence takes up most of chapter seven. In it, he outlines the history of the Jews from Abraham to Solomon and then rebukes the unbelieving Jews of his generation by saying: **“You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them who showed before of the coming of the Just One: of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it”** (7:51-53).

Moses features strongly in Stephen's apologies. He is one of the great characters of the Old Testament scriptures and has a special place in the history of God's people. Jehovah had selected Moses as an ambassador because he was the right man for the job. We must remember that here was one who had been reared and educated in the Pharaoh's palace and described by Stephen as **learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and in deeds**” (7:22).

Here are some comments on the character of Moses: “He was as great as any man could have been before the gospel” (Anonymus). **“There arose no prophet since like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face”** (Deuteronomy 34:10). “Moses has not only been honoured as the meekest man on earth, but no man has risen out of humanity with whom God spoke face to face for days and days as He did with Moses” (Alexander Campbell). “Moses was not merely a redeemer, but a prince who ruled those whom he redeemed and in this quality was a type of Christ” (Walter Scott). “He was the meekest among the brave and the bravest among the meek” (Anonymus). “He was born under sentence of death, yet he lived a full span. He grew up amid the luxury of a royal court, yet he threw in his lot with slaves. Protected and pampered by an absolute monarch, he joined the monarch's most persecuted victims. Trained in the strict tenets of a ritual conservatism, he became a revolutionary. Halting of speech, he uttered words of exalted wisdom. In a world of turmoil and corruption, he put forth an inspired code of ethics for humanity. Taken at birth from his people and his faith, he established their distinctive religion and moulded them into a nation” (Moshe Pearlman).

Stephen also spoke of Joseph, who is my favourite Old Testament character. His life is summed up in the words: **“. . . but God was with him”** (7:9). He, of course, was the reason for the Israelites being in Egypt. His story is a familiar one. He was detested by his brothers, but loved by the Egyptians. His brothers hated him for his interpretations; the Egyptians honoured him for them. His

brothers deprived him of his coat of many colours; the Egyptians arrayed him in the vestures of royalty. His brothers cast him into a pit; the Egyptians released him from one. His brothers sold him for a slave; the Egyptians proclaimed him their ruler.

#### PHILIP IN SAMARIA

Philip was one of the original deacons of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). On the persecution of the Church and following the martyrdom of Stephen, he preached the gospel in Samaria with much success (8:5-13). The Samaritans were outside the pale as far as the Jews were concerned. Indeed, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9). But the gospel is for all and so the message was for Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

I will never forget when I first read Francis Schaeffer's book **Death in the City**. I had actually purchased four of his books in one go and read them all in a hotel in London from midnight to 4 a.m. They all made a lasting impression on me. Of course, Schaeffer took the title **Death in the City** from the description of Jerusalem by the prophet Jeremiah in his book of Lamentations. The words of this outstanding prophet well sum up the state of the world's cities today. The point is this: the only way true and lasting joy can be found in a city is through the power of the gospel. Acts 8:8 is a wonderful verse of the Bible: "**And there was great joy in that city.**" Alexander Campbell once said: "So it was in all cities where Christianity was embraced. The apostles taught the Christians that God 'had forgiven them all their trespasses'. Of their joy, Peter says: "**Whom not having seen you love, but on whom not now looking, but believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.**" The forgiveness of sins, the removal of guilt, and the consequent termination of all fear that has torment, were, in all cases, simultaneous blessings enjoyed by all Christians on their putting themselves under the guidance of Jesus

Christ. The same cause will produce the same effect, and wherever the ancient gospel is proclaimed, believed and obeyed, the same effects will uniformly follow."

#### THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch is a great example of what a one-to-one encounter can achieve. The eunuch had a position in the Ethiopian government of Secretary to the treasury or Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had been to Jerusalem to worship God (probably to attend the Passover) and was returning in his chariot. He had travelled a long way, which is a clear indication of his devoutness and piety. The scroll he was reading was that of Isaiah the prophet and, specifically, what we now call Isaiah 53. This chapter is one of the outstanding chapters of the Old Testament scriptures in regard to the suffering and death of the promised Messiah. Philip, under the direction of God, approached the eunuch and offered guidance in the interpretation of the passage.

We read that Philip "**began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus**" (8:35). I like that. He did not take him away from Isaiah, but used the very passage he was studying to lead him to the Master. There is a lesson here for all Christians.

In preaching Jesus to the eunuch, Philip must have mentioned baptism. (a lot of people today who preach Jesus never mention baptism). Baptism is an integral part of God's plan of salvation. Alexander Brown has commented "The eunuch saw it to be a privilege to attend to the ordinance (baptism) and was consequently eager to attend to it. According to the teaching of Christ and His apostles, salvation was associated with baptism. To be baptised as a repenting believer was to make sure of Christ's promise of salvation given in Mark 16:16 and of the Holy Spirit's promise through Peter of forgiveness, as recorded in Acts 2:38. There is no wonder that the worshipping, studious, honest, teachable,

anxious foreigner longed to meet Christ in His own appointment.”

The record says: “**And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing**” (8:39). Personally I am so glad that I have responded in the same way as the Ethiopian eunuch to the preaching of the gospel. Joy follows obedience to the commandments of God.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

### TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. What kind of wood was used to make the poles for carrying the ark of the covenant?
2. Who fell off his chair and died when told of the death of his two sons?
3. What age was Joshua when he died?
4. Lot wanted to flee to what town?
5. From which city did Paul escape in a basket?
6. In which book do we read of the origin of the Passover?
7. What was the third plague God sent upon Egypt?
8. Paul was commissioned to start his first missionary journey from which city?
9. Who was the son of Beeri?
10. Who was Rebecca's brother?

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Slamannan District:** The Quarterly Mutual Benefit was held on 14th May, 1994, at Haddington Meetinghouse. The subject for discussion was “What did it mean to be a Priest in the O.T.: and what does it mean to be a Priest under the N.T.?” The chairman was James R. Gardiner and the speakers were John Kneller, Tranent and Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline.

As usual each speaker spent fifteen minutes introducing the subject: Bro. Kneller dealing with the O.T., and Bro. Pearson the N.T., part of the question. This was followed by one hour's discussion by all those present; with questions asked and answered. A most profitable and interesting time was enjoyed. Tea and refreshments were, as usual, served before and after the meeting. A collection was taken for the poor brethren in Ghana.

Our next meeting, God willing, will be at Motherwell, on Saturday, 10th September, at 4 p.m., when the subject will be “What does the Bible teach about abortion? and is the R.C. Church viewpoint right on this issue?” The Chairman will be Ian Davidson, Motherwell, and the speakers Jimmy Grant, Wallacestone and Peter Sneddon, Dennyloanhead.

HARRY MCGINN (Sec.).

**Kirkcaldy:** April has been a very busy month for the Church here. On the 16th of April we had our Annual Social with Albert Winstanley as our speaker. It was also a day of joy for us as a baby girl was born to Diane and Wayne Campbell. Albert's lessons greatly encouraged and uplifted us. The day couldn't have been a success without all our guests, thank you to each and everyone whether you listened spoke or sang.

On the 30th of April we had our 1st “Ladies Day” We were delighted to have 100 ladies in attendance. Our theme was prayer. The day went very well. The speakers were Pat Moncrieff, who spoke on “Communicating with God is a Must”, and Barbara Starrs who spoke on “The Trouble with Prayer is Me”, both excellent lessons. Thanks to all who took part in the programme.

RUTH MOYES (Sec.)

### CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Wayne and Diane Campbell (Kirkcaldy) on the birth of their daughter Kerin Holly Campbell, on the 16th of April, 1994.

**GHANA APPEAL**

(And Short Update)

In the month of May we were able to send from the Ghana Appeal Account (which contained £2024) £2000 to Ghana for the following use:-

£1000 to go to the churches in Volta Region to be used to promote the growth of the Church by the preaching of the Gospel. The Church in Accra will attend to the distribution of this money in that area.

£200 to go the Patriensa church for Medical Aid. A sister there, is dying from a disease which can be cured by ten injections costing a total of £100 which have to be flown in from Nigeria.

£100 to go to the Church at Angu for Medical Aid. There is a brother whose River Blindness can be cured free of charge providing he attends a hospital (funded by ex-president Jimmy Carter) in Burkino Fasso, the country to the North of Ghana. This £100 will be used for his transportation costs as our brother is unemployed.

£100 to go to the preacher who has taken the Gospel to a new area in Ghana.

£200 to go to the Church at Ayigya, a small congregation and it has been a long time since we helped them in any way. The £200 will be used for Gospel work and hopefully will encourage them to know that we have not forgotten about their efforts.

£200 to go to the Church at Koforidua. For their Church building.

£200 for Medical Aid in Accra as informed by Brother Wisdom in his letter dated 6th May, 1994. Many of the congregation are sick.

On behalf of our Ghanaian brethren may I once again thank everyone who is helping to make these things possible.

We have recently received a few letters concerning the proposal to start another three congregations in Ghana. The request is for Bibles, hymn books and study material. One of these congregations have not directly asked, but they would appreciate some help in the costs towards renting a hall for Gospel preaching.

Anyone interested in assisting in this project please contact me, Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel 0383 728624.

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- 10. Laban (Genesis 24:29)
  - 9. Hosea 1:1)
  - 8. Antioch (Acts 13:1)
  - 7. Lice (Exodus 8:16-19)
  - 6. Exodus (Chapter 12)
  - 5. Damascus (Acts 9:19-25)
  - 4. Zoar (Genesis 19:22)
  - 3. 110 (Joshua 24:29)
  - 2. Eli (1 Samuel 4:18)
  - 1. Acacia wood (Exodus 25:13)

**ANSWERS**

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