

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## AN OPENING DOOR

Nothing ever remains the same. We live in a very dynamic world ever reflecting great change: usually for the worse but not always. I suppose my own generation must have witnessed more dramatic change than any other generation since time began. This might seem a remarkable boast but certainly very recent radical advances have taken place. In a single generation we have advanced from outside toilets to men walking on the moon: from slateboards in school to table-model computers capable of prodigious calculations in split seconds: from old horn gramophone to compact disc with stereo sound: from the magic-lantern to sophisticated T.V. screening current events over the entire world and video copying at the touch of a button. And we could go on and on. I once had a surgical operation at home on the kitchen table, carried out by a local G.P. and was anaesthetized by drops of chloroform on a gauze over the face. Now just a few years later, we continue to be astounded at the advances in medical science with scan-machines, lasers, and even internal operations carried out without opening the body. These local changes have, however, been more than matched by great political upheaval on a global scale, with wars, countries changing hands, (even genocide), and whole nations kept in virtual slavery. Some older citizens can recall two world wars with the slaughter of countless millions and sweeping alterations to national boundaries, (exemplified, perhaps, by the Berlin Wall). But surely even these changes have been easily surpassed by the sudden and dramatic demise of **Communism**. Since the Second World War Communism has been spreading (like a canker, some would say) all over Europe, parts of Africa, Cuba, El Salvador and other banana Republics, etc., etc., right up to America's doorstep. Suddenly, almost overnight, all that has radically changed, and Communism has been renounced all over eastern Europe. It has even been rejected at its very epicentre: in Russia itself. By what seems to be the influence of one man (Mikhail Gorbachev), the 'winds of change' have suddenly been blowing, almost at gale-force, through the Baltic States. Even the Berlin Wall has virtually now gone. Surely something so strikingly wonderful **calls for some thoughtful consideration from us:** and some comment. Even the Russian people are still reeling and blinking with surprise at the rapidity of these events, but are now gradually expressing opinions they have had to smother all their lives. Russia, to date, has, to westerners, been as remote as the dark side of the moon and held captive in a vice-like thralldom since the days of Stalin. Stalin was so gratuitously evil that he made even Adolf Hitler look like a Sunday-schoolteacher. He murdered well over 25 MILLION Russians, civilians and army personnel, and even destroyed his

own relatives (only a daughter managing to escape). Since his death his place has been taken by men equally sinister. It seems utterly incredible that Mr. Gorbachev, **surrounded by such men**, could have effected changes amounting to a complete and total renunciation of all that they have stood for. Obviously this turn-a-bout will have ramifications not simply in terms of economics, or confined to mere consumer goods, and leaves us pondering why such a massive part of the world should have been so suddenly transformed in this way? How could this be.?

#### **An Effectual Door is Opened**

In seeking an answer to this puzzle (if there is one) one is tempted to say that, perhaps God has raised up a man, such as Mr. Gorbachev, to release these great multitudes from their long servitude. Have they not been in bondage long enough? Of course, the sceptic would ask where God was when Stalin was exterminating the millions of his own nation, or when Hitler was annihilating five million Jews, and I suppose that if we had the mind of God we could answer these questions. But God's ways are not our ways, nor are God's thoughts our thoughts. As the poet Burns says, it is **"man's inhumanity to man"** that makes countless thousands mourn. Certainly there has already been a **marked relaxation of the strict controls on religious worship** in these communist regimes. According to the National Bible Society, which is about to launch an appeal for funds, **"enormous numbers of Bibles are required"** for Romania alone. 100,000 Hungarian Bibles are required and that is just a beginning. In the Soviet Union itself copies of the scriptures trebled last year at 850,000 and the longer term estimate is that 100,000,000 copies of the Bible will be required. In Estonia (mainly Lutherans) 125,000 Bibles are required and these are presently being printed in Finland. The Romanian Orthodox church, for instance, is **"reviving"** after a very long period (when members have been afraid to worship in public) and is appealing for paper to print 200,000 copies of the scriptures, (and this church reckoned to have 17,000,000 members). We can see from these fragments of information alone, that we are not talking about a handful of small groups of believers, but of countless millions. According to the Keston News Service a Russian Bible Society has now been established in Moscow itself. It has been registered as an independent organisation and hopes to set up its own printing press, described understandably as a **"considerable achievement."** Mr. Averinstev is the author of a modern Russian translation of the New Testament currently being serialised in a literary magazine in Russia.

Thus it would seem that freedom of worship, and full access to the scriptures, is now generally available in eastern Europe and believers who previously had to meet in secret, can now emerge and actively promote their faith. Paul, we remember exhorted **"That supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for Kings and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our saviour. Who will have all men be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:2).** And so, prayers for kings and statesmen are continually made, i.e. that peace and godliness amongst men might indeed prevail and that the gospel, without let or hindrance, might be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. It appears that many millions who have been confined to darkness are now about to be able to comprehend a great light. Could this be in answer to the prayers of many over a long period?

#### **God Sees and Knows**

I suppose that it has always been a matter for our own personal conjecture as to how far we think God intervenes in the daily transactions of the world, or the part He has played in the formation of a world history. Since the fall of Adam, man has had to cope with weeds as well as flowers, pain as well as pleasure, sadness as well

as joy and the world continually has had to flinch from tyrants and paranoiac despots. Quite often the forces of evil seem to have gained complete supremacy over good. Even the Psalmist was constrained on one occasion to speculate up-on how it was that the evil men seemed to prosper and good men were driven into the ground. And even amongst the kings of Israel and Judah there were more evil rulers than benevolent ones. All these circumstances have led some to suppose that God, having made the earth and spun it into orbit, left it to its own devices and only gives it a glance now and again (remembering God's time scale differs from ours and a thousand years is with God as one day, and vice versa). Has God put the world on 'automatic pilot' and in the words of Paul, given mankind over to a reprobate mind? Or does God notice what goes on, and, more importantly, does He intervene?

The prophet Isaiah (Chap. 40) was once accosted by some who reasoned along those lines: i.e. they reckoned that they had been deserted by God, (or God had fallen asleep) and this prompted Isaiah to launch into a wonderful description of God's omnipotence and solicitude for man. God is not impotent but omnipotent. Did not He measure the seas in the hollow of His hand at creation; mete out the heavens as span (handbreadth); comprehend the dust of the earth in a measure; weigh the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? And who instructed God in all this, and gave Him advice? **"Behold the nations are as a drop of the bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance: Behold he taketh up the isles as a little thing. All nations before Him are as nothing and they are counted by Him less than nothing and vanity."** The prophet then enquires as to how men would describe God **(To whom then, will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare Him to?)** and reminds them that the nearest they can get to an answer is to make pathetic little totem-poles and icons overlaid with gold. **"Have ye not heard. Have ye not known or understood, or have you not been told"** that God is **"He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth (Isaiah knew even in those early days that the earth was an orb) and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. That bringeth princes to nothing; and maketh rulers of the earth as vanity."**

**"Lift up your eyes on high (to the stars) and behold who hath created those things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power: not one faileth."** Why then asks Isaiah, if God is so powerful, do Jacob and Israel complain that God seems unaware of them? Do they really imagine that God does not see their circumstances, or is too feeble to assist them; or has dozed off or gone off on a journey? **"Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard? That the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and grow weary: and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary: they shall walk and not faint."**

#### God So Loves The World

And so, from this marvellous declaration by Isaiah we learn that the God of Creation is infinitely wise and all-powerful. He created not only this beautiful globe but also the firmament of heaven. To God the nations are as a drop in a bucket and men are but grasshoppers in His sight. As far as kings and rulers of great nations are concerned, **God bringeth Princes to nothing and rulers to vanity.** Nor does God ever sleep or go on a journey. The Psalmist says that God slumbers not, nor sleeps. Nor does God faint, grow weary or lose concentration. The Psalmist also describes God's attitude to **"The Kings of the earth who set themselves and the Rulers who take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed, and says that "He that sitteth in**

**the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.” (Ps. 2:2).**

Certainly the Old Testament bears eloquent testimony to the frequent intervention of God in the affairs of men, and gives us an insight into the waxing and waning of great nations and how God raised up certain men and women to accomplish His purposes. He used men (sometimes evil men) and nations (even Barbarians) in bringing His eternal plans to fruition, and the redemption of man. Even in the matter of Christ’s own lineage we see how God manipulated the affairs of men and changed the course of history: not once but a great many times. Yes, God notices: God understands and God cares. When we remember that, for decades, the Soviet nations have been spending all their resources on amassing vast quantities of bullets, submarines, tanks, bombers, etc., and a great holocaustic Third World War was in prospect, it certainly seems incredible that they now seem bent upon beating their spears into pruning-hooks. A change so inexplicable and sudden that the playwright Vaclav Havel was, within a few weeks, not only released from a dissident’s cell but made President of Czechoslovakia. Whether or not, we see the hand of God in these momentous events is obviously a matter for individual contemplation and conjecture, but the sheer scale of the change would almost put it into the category of a modern “miracle.” And the **religious consequences** of the change might mark it as one of the most significant events since the Reformation. Time will tell.

The N.T. exhorts us to continuous prayers, (including, as we have already noticed, prayers for the politicians and statesmen of the world) that peace might prevail and the gospel might be preached. Such prayers would have little meaning if **God was never prepared to intervene** in the affairs of men. Jesus once remarked to His disciples that even the very hairs of their heads were numbered, and that God noticed even the fall of a little sparrow: and so God notices and God cares. The Communist regime was, of course, basically atheistic and now, quite apart from any question of Divine intervention, we must greatly welcome the changes and the ‘liberation’ of the fine and honourable average Russian. After all, apart from scheming politicians the ordinary average working person of Russia (and Eastern Europe) is just like any of us; with similar hopes and fears. We rejoice, therefore, that by virtue of these new found freedoms, many millions of copies of the scriptures are destined for these lands with a great harvest of souls in prospect. “Good news” indeed, in more senses than one. God be Praised. Yes, the Lord sees, and cares. In fact God cares so much for man and **“so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** (John 3:16).

EDITOR.

## GLEANINGS

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

### WE QUOTE PAUL

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. Now the God of patience and comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”

Romans 15:4-6 (RV)

### THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE COMPLETE

“But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and best been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which

is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (R.V.)

**HOLD THE PATTERN OF SOUND WORDS**

“Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ. That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”

2 Timothy 1:13-14 (R.V.)

**MADE KNOWN THROUGH THE CHURCH**

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in Him.”

Ephesians 3:8-12 (R.V.)

**WE QUOTE PETER**

“And we have the word of prophecy made more sure: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost.”

2 Peter 1:19-21 (R.V.)

**A PEOPLE FOR GOD’S OWN POSSESSION**

“But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that ye might shew forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

1 Peter 2:9-10 (R.V.)

**WE QUOTE JAMES**

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.”

**WE QUOTE JOHN**

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name’s sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To

him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

Revelation 2:1-7 (R.V.)

### WE QUOTE PAUL

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9 (R.V.)

Selected by Leonard Morgan

## A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility rests upon each member of the Church of Christ to contend earnestly for the pure faith of the gospel. Repeatedly in his letters the apostle Paul inculcates this duty in the most persuasive manner. Warnings are given against carelessness and indifference in their professed loyalty to Christ, admonitions to strive for the truth as the spirit-guided apostles and prophets had taught it. These warnings and exhortations became necessary very early in the history of the Church. Ravenous wolves adorned themselves in the garments of professed godliness, and making their entrance into the Churches deceived the more credulous brethren. In this way many were lured from simple truths of the gospel, whilst the faith of some was hopelessly shipwrecked. This actually happened during the life time of the apostles. Not even their prestige and authority as men endowed with a supernatural revelation could keep error away from their converts. To the apostle Paul this was exceedingly grievous and his great heart stirred within him as he beheld the danger which menaced God's people from within their own house, and with loving entreaty he besought them to watch, labour and pray, that they might escape the evils around them.

But looking down the vista of time, illumined by that wonderful power granted to him as an apostle of Christ, he was permitted to behold the awful dimensions which error would assume. In 2 Thessalonians, chap. ii. he outlines the great apostasy, or falling away from the faith, which was to take place whilst Christ delayed his second coming, and it must have been with great sorrow that he penned those words 'the mystery of iniquity doth already work.' With the death of the inspired teachers the leaven of the false ones permeated the Churches rapidly, and the simple truths of the gospel were lost in the wrangles of bitter and incessant controversy. As a consequence the faith of many waxed cold. Idolatry revived, Paganism and Judaism became prominent features of the Christian worship. The Man of Sin was born. He thrived in an atmosphere congenial to his nature, and when the power of Imperial Rome was broken he raised his throne upon its ruins, exalting himself above all that is called a god, or any object of worship, so that as God, he took his seat in the temple of God. Thus the great climacteric was reached in the deification of a human being blasphemously described, Lord God the Pope.

Since the arrogance of the Papal See was challenged numerous attempts have been made at reformation, most of which have ended in confusion. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that the reformers did not recognise the imperative necessity of strictly adhering to the New Testament as their sole guide and authority. Consequently, their reformations became little better than emendations of the systems which they sought to reform, and gave rise to bitter discussions about creeds and confessions which have landed Christendom in a labyrinth of sectarianism.

We plead for a complete return to the primitive faith and worship, and without doubt, it is the grandest and most elevating movement of our day. Yet there are those among us who are not content with the old epigram, 'Where the scriptures speak, we speak, where it is silent, we are silent,' who blight the cause with their human whims and fancies. I venture to assert that all the questions troubling us today are not about things which are written, but mere impositions of misguided men. The Co-operation, with its organic network of committees and funds, secretaries and treasurers, minutes and resolutions is a mere human device which we are beginning to discover is a snare and a delusion. It is the same with 'open' communion, instrumental worship, the bible college, flower services, organising secretary concerts etc., etc., all of which have not a vestige of scripture authority for their support. Why seek to impose them on the Churches? Let Paul's great outlook be ours. 'If there is therefore any comfort in Christ, if any consolation in love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, fulfil ye my joy that ye be of the same mind.' (Phil. ii iv.). But how can this be done when there is such cleavage of ideas? Let the apostle again speak. 'Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes, that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written.' (1 Cor. iv. 6). There, then, is an end to the dispute. It is not the prerogative of any brother to ask acquiescence of another brother to things which are not taught in the New Testament, but it is the plain duty of every brother to abide by the instructions of the Apostles that the word of Christ be not hindered. If this spirit could prevail today we should be able to launch out into the deep and trust in Christ for a greater ingathering of souls.

John B. Kendrick.

(Written in 1919 but worth a re-print).

## COVENANTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Having read John Grimditch's letter in the April S.S. which invites comments I would like to make the following observations which struck me as I read the article.

In paragraph 2 John touches on the subject of ignorance. From a careful study of Leviticus chapter 4 and chapter 16 I have come to the conclusion that the sins we commit in ignorance interrupt our peace and harmony with God. In the Old Testament sin offerings were made for the sins of ignorance by the High Priest once every year for all the sins of Israel committed unknowingly. No sin of Israel was ever passed over without penalty or the shedding of blood. God has not changed. If ignorance carried a penalty before the cross it would surely be unwise to ignore the lessons learned from the Old Testament after the cross. For the Christian the animal offering is no longer necessary since Christ's death has brought purification but confession is, if fellowship with God is to be re-established.

In paragraph 3 emphasis is placed on the supposition that the alien will know why he is lost. Does this not contradict the clear teaching that at the judgement many will say "Lord, Lord, have we not done . . . . ." and a multitude of works are named, but they will be rejected. There are many sincerely wrong people around us today all expecting to enter Heaven and many of them overlook that small word "EXCEPT" in John 3 v 5.

I agree with brother John's 5th paragraph but not the conclusion drawn from it in the 6th paragraph, line 1. I would not expect an alien woman coming to attend a gospel meeting to have her head covered, but I would not go as far as John has because of Acts, chapter 17. In Paul's Athenian message he charges the people with idolatry. They had not broken a civil law or a Grecian law but they had broken the law of Christ. For people to have violated the law of Christ it must have applied to them.

Jesus used universal terms such as “Whosoever” in Matthew ch. 5, verses 31 and 32 and chapter 19 v 9. This applies to all who enter marriage not just to Christians who are married. Any person who puts away a wife except (if and only if) for fornication and marries another commits (continuous action) adultery. If no-one outside Christ is applicable to God’s law on marriage then the world could never be guilty of adultery in God’s sight, could it? That does not make sense to me. It is true that Matthew 19 v 9 and 1 Cor. 7, verse 10 are identical in extent of application but not in the sense held by brother John. They are identical in that both refer to ALL marriage situations not just to marriages in which a Christian is married to a Christian. There is to be no departure in marriage – Matthew 19 v 6. We do not need to be arbiters as suggested in paragraph 15 when Jesus clearly used the word “whosoever.”

Finally, may I refer to paragraph 16 and put a point or two forward on the subject of civil government. We know that Christ possess all authority and power in heaven and on earth; how many civil governments recognise this fact? Civil law makes no attempt to govern people in the thought processes. Civil government does not classify as sin what Paul did in Roman 14 v 23. Civil government does not count as lawlessness what John does in 1 John 3 v 4. Human government would be powerless in seeking to invade a man’s mind and convicting him of lustful thinking. If an alien sinner is under civil law only, because he is not under a covenant relationship, are we then saying he has not sinned against God’s law at all?

I have put these brief comments on this article together in the same frame of mind as brother John Grimditch, not to be dogmatic but in an effort to find a clearer expression of the truth in these things. It is a very important subject that has been raised and the ramifications are certainly thought-provoking.

G. Pearson,  
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### COVENANTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY continued

In reply to Bro. Grimditch’s article, I would just like to make the following short query:-

Single people are free to marry, whether or not they are christians at the time. This is not a sin, but the taking of an obligation. Let us suppose they are then divorced and remarried, and subsequently become converted to Christianity. Baptism will wash away their sins, but the first marriage was not a sin. How can baptism then nullify the first marriage, which was quite in order when it took place? Baptism does not provide a way of escape from our obligations and responsibilities, but should rather make us more anxious to fulfil them. I believe the New Testament only commends remarriage in one place (Rom. 7:3) and that is for widows. If the early church accepted a pagan form of marriage as being valid in the sight of God, it must surely have regarded a pagan form of divorce and remarriage as being wrong in the eyes of the Lord.

Miss Rose M. Payne,  
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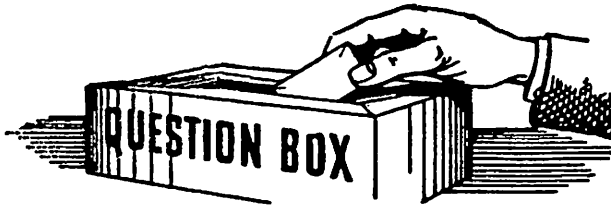
**The Bible does not need to be re-written,  
but re-read.**

READ, and you will know;  
KNOW, and you will love;  
LOVE, and you will serve;  
SERVE, and you will be HAPPY.

STUDY the Bible to be wise;  
BELIEVE it to be safe;  
PRACTISE it to be holy.

God is for us – that is good  
God is with us – that is better  
God is in us – that is best






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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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A large number of people believe that it was not possible for Jesus Christ to sin. I believe it was possible, but he did not. Could you please comment on this.?

This question comes from a brother whom I have known, respected, and admired over many years. I also know that he is not given to flippancy so I treat what he says quite seriously, therefore I shall attempt to answer this question in a serious manner. Personally, I consider the question to be very important for reasons I shall make clear in my answer. Let me also point out once again that the views I express and any of my answers may not necessarily be the views of the Editor, and he has absolute authority to say so or to refrain from printing if he so decrees.

The method I shall adopt will be to place before you certain ideas based on scripture, comment on these ideas, give you my opinion based on them, and then leave you to make up your own minds.

#### An Early Declaration

Let me take you to the Garden of Eden. Sin had entered the Garden; it was Satan in the guise of a serpent. He tempted Eve, she drew Adam into his orbit, they both sinned and were subsequently banished from the garden. It was at that time that God made his declaration to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15 R.S.V.). This statement is generally accepted as meaning that the Christ of God would ultimately destroy the **power** of Satan, but in so doing He Himself would have to suffer, but not so as to have **His power to save** destroyed. The Christ of God would be victorious over sin and death, and even though Satan himself would still be rampant in the world, he would have no ultimate power over those who came to the Christ of God for salvation; **His power to save** would be eternal and absolute because He had conquered sin and death by coming into the world in the flesh and dying in the flesh, with all the spiritual and physical agony entailed in that.

#### The Nature of God

The Bible tells us that God is Spirit; not a spirit, but the great, all-pervading, universal Spirit of Creation. It also teaches us that He is Omnipotent, Omni-present, and Omniscient, i.e., all-powerful, ubiquitous, and all-knowing. As regards His omniscience, one might argue that Jesus the Christ of God – would have the propensity to sin, but God **knew** that He would not; or that he **would not** have the propensity to sin and would therefore be the perfect sacrifice for the sin of the world.

Furthermore, we have to consider the nature of the Christ Himself. He was of the Godhead, as Paul says, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). He was present at, and assisted in, Creation, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col.1:16,17). He was and is the Everlasting Word; to quote John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1,2 but read on to v 6). In v 14 John says, "And the Word was

made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

Whatever Christ left when He left Heaven He certainly did not leave His divinity; He was divine by nature of the Godhead; and He was human by nature of the flesh. Is it so different a concept to grasp that the divine nature was encapsulated in the flesh? Why, even Peter says of us who are Christians, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4). And why should the Christian mind doubt it when it believes that every true Christian is the recipient of part of the Godhead, the in-dwelling Holy Spirit?

I fear that we make the elementary mistake of trying to bring the Christ down to **our** level in the flesh, and not appreciating the **upward** call of God to the divine nature of the Spirit. Why do we want to make the Christ of God like us in the flesh? He was not like us, except in the **likeness** of flesh. He was not conceived as we are. The only revealed knowledge of Him as a child suggests that He did not act or think as we do; He knew at the **age** of twelve years that He must be ‘about His Father’s business,’ and He certainly didn’t mean Joseph’s business. If I have to speak personally about **my** idea of divine intervention in human affairs, then I must say that I want **my** God to be the majestic God portrayed in the Word. I want **my** Christ, **my** Saviour, to have supreme **power** to save, for have I not placed my life in His hands? I want Him to ride high over Satan, rather than to be skirting the edges of the vile marshes of sin, barely escaping being dragged into the morass of sin, by the power of Satan. Oh, I know that He suffered cruelly in the flesh, after all, that was the only medium in which He **could** save us. It was necessary for Him to be in the flesh, but it was **not** necessary for Him to be **as all flesh is**, i.e. subject ultimately to sin; if He had been like that, then in His humanity He would have been merely a man who **proved** himself fit to be the Son of God. I cannot believe the Bible teaches us that! Either we believe that a Person from the Godhead came down to earth to save us, or we don’t. If we do, then it is extremely difficult for us to conceive of such a Person, from such a Source, having any potential to sin, unless that Person had undergone a radical and complete transformation **into** sinful flesh, rather than appearing in the **likeness** of sinful flesh.

### An Unsure God?

Are we to assume that at the inception of God’s redemptive scheme that God Himself was unsure of the outcome? We have already said that God, being omniscient, would know the end from the beginning, and therefore, even though Jesus **could** have sinned, God would know that He wouldn’t. But this raises one or two neat philosophical points. If we say that Jesus was manifestly a natural man – such as we are – then we would have to say that he **could and would** have sinned, because that is what natural man inevitably does, “There is none righteous, no not one. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:10-23). If, on the other hand, we say that Jesus **could** have sinned, but didn’t, then we raise Him **above** natural man, because mankind until redeemed in Christ, is inevitably lost in sin; ‘sold under sin’ as Paul puts it, Satan having ‘closed the deal’ on all mankind.

Must we then assume that God “took a chance” on Jesus turning out exactly as He, God, intended Him to, or was there enough of the **divine nature** in Jesus to prevent Him from sinning, because I personally find it inconceivable that the divine nature could possibly be tainted with sin; if it can, then our salvation is not on the sure foundation that we believe it to be. Furthermore, if we believe that Jesus had the propensity to sin, would not God have over-ruled any natural desire on the part of His Christ to obey Satan, so that His divine Scheme of Redemption – ordained from the foundation of the world, remember – would not have to be jettisoned as an

abject failure? The answer to that is quite clear in my mind; the immutability of the Will of God would not allow it. God does not make mistakes.

#### What about the Temptations?

When I talk with other Christians about this subject they invariably say "What was the point, then, in the temptations of Jesus. You are making them of no effect or value?" Really! If the Bible says, as it does, that Jesus "was tempted and tried in all points such as we are, yet without sin," then there is no argument in my mind; that is what happened. But what does that statement prove or disprove? It proves that Jesus was tempted in the flesh by Satan, and that He did not sin, i.e., succumb to Satan. What we infer that it proves is that Jesus **could** have succumbed but He **didn't**. But if someone asserts that Jesus **couldn't** have responded to Satan by sinning, would that have made the temptation or the suffering any less real in the flesh of Jesus? Furthermore, if we consider the deity of Jesus, then, as far as we know, the advent of Jesus was the first time that deity had experienced the limitations of the flesh.

Some Christians try to make Jesus **too** human; God knows how he suffered in the flesh. But have we really considered the suffering of deity within the human frame? The divine part of Jesus would recoil in horror from sin, and yet He knew that He, who knew and had known no sin, had to be made the sin-bearer for the whole of humanity. Was this not the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane? Even in our limited understanding, don't we see that the wrongfully accused innocent suffers more than the guilty. It is because the innocent **knows** his own innocence that he suffers more, and don't you think that this was true of Jesus? I love to think of my Saviour **knowing** that He was above sin, and yet resolutely and purposefully walking the road that God wanted Him to walk, the road of pain, and suffering, and shame, and ignominy, in order to save a humanity which could do nothing to make itself worthy of salvation, and would have been lost eternally except for the love, mercy, and grace of God. I can understand the suffering of man, but in this context I cannot **begin** to understand the suffering of God. I know that He undertook this for us because He loved us, and that is sufficient.

There is just one other point. There are those who quote Heb. 5:8,9 which tells about Jesus 'learning obedience' by the things which He suffered. Are we to assume that Jesus only learned how to obey when he came in the flesh? No, the word 'learned' in this passage means literally to 'understand by experience'. Suffering in the flesh, as we have said, was a new experience for Jesus; this experience made His compassion all the more urgent to Him: Gods don't normally suffer in the flesh as humans do. But doesn't this give us a great sense of belonging: I know now that He understands my suffering in this human coil.

Do I believe Jesus could have sinned? When I consider the God who loves me, the Christ who saved me, and the Holy Spirit who in-dwells me, I arrive at the conclusion that there was too much at stake. No, I do not.

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

### SOLOMON'S MINES (OF WISDOM)

Someone has said that the book of Psalms teaches us how to get along with God, while the book of Proverbs teaches us how to get along with people.

**The Psalms** bring us into the "heavenliness" while **Proverbs** sets our feet in the grass-roots of human life. If we take a look at these books of scripture in this light, a new insight into the word of God will be ours.

It is said that the Proverbs were mostly written by Solomon, 'the wisest man who ever lived'. He enjoyed great material wealth and a rich spiritual heritage, passed on to him from his father King David.

His advice on daily living is the solid practical advice of someone who has fathomed the problems, and solved all the enigmas of life. Solomon begins by listing the benefits of studying the same Book of Proverbs. **"The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behaviour. Righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naive; to the youth, knowledge and discretion."** (Prov. 1:1-4). 1:1-4).

Few books can make this claim. A study of the Book can only make us better, and much wiser, persons. One benefit is that we will **"know wisdom and instruction."** Wisdom is looking at life from God's point of view. To often we look at life from our own rather selfish point of view, and consequently fail miserably.

A second benefit, is that we will learn **"to discern, the sayings of understanding."** If wisdom is looking at life from God's view-point, **understanding** is responding to life from God's view-point. As a benefit, we receive instruction in wise behaviour, righteousness, justice and equity. The term "receive" suggests action, or mobility, and clearly involves making some effort to get into the mind of Solomon.

Another benefit is that we will gain **"Prudence, knowledge and discretion"**; surely something we could all profit by. Solomon puts no age limit on the beneficiaries of his wisdom, albeit verse 4 is directed mainly at the young. But grey hairs do not always go hand in hand with wisdom. We are constantly bombarded with the world's wisdom and so it is doubly essential that we can identify the real thing.

Towards the end of chapter one, Solomon takes the abstract principle of wisdom and personalises it, and from this we can make three important observations.

1. **Wisdom is available** (v. 20,21,23).

**"wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square; at the head of the noisy street she cries out at the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings . . . ."**

**"Turn to my reproof, behold I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my words known to you."**

Thankfully God did not empty His supply of wisdom solely upon Solomon. Not a bit of it. It is still there and available to us every time we open our Bibles and read Proverbs.

2. **Wisdom can be spurned** (v. 24,25).

**"I called and you refused: I stretched out my hand, and no one paid attention and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof."** Our problem is not over-exposure to wisdom. Our problem is in not experiencing it! We walk daily by that out-stretched hand, yet many of us still prefer to go our own way ignoring that wisdom which is from above (James 3:17).

3. **When Wisdom is rejected** the results are always bitter (v. 26, 32).

We reject God's admonitions at our peril for **"When they call upon Me I will not answer: and though they seek Me early they shall not find Me. For they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would have none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.** Man is certainly the victim of his own foolishness, the martyr to his own indiscretions. All the world's problems can be traced to a rejection of God's counsel and reproof. We all have to lie on beds of our own making.

Quite often in our search for wisdom, understanding and human discretion we overlook the fact that this wonderful Book of Proverbs is crammed absolutely full with the profundities of such a sage as Solomon, and his marvellous sayings go largely ignored. The education of any man is quite incomplete without a working knowledge of this matchless Book. **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."**

A. P. Sharpe, Newtongrange.

### A REPORT FROM THE THOMAS BLACKMORE LITERATURE FUND

The interest which accrued in 1989 from the invested Fund was £722.26. Together with a balance carried over from 1988 of £118.33 this left us with a total amount at our disposal of £840.59.

Responding to the various requests for assistance from this Fund, we have been able to make fifteen awards to several churches and individual Christians in pursuit of the general aims of this Fund which are:

"to provide Bibles, tracts and other religious literature to persons or churches in this country and abroad . . . ."

Some of the uses to which these awards have been put are these:

Bibles and tracts to Ghana, Malawi, Cameroon, Peru, India;

General evangelistic literature for use in gospel campaigns in six cities and towns in Britain;

Help with funding correspondence courses;

Spanish language literature and Assistance with those corresponding with overseas Bible students by providing Bibles.

We shall shortly receive the interest for 1990 and we invite churches and individuals to let us know if they think we can be of financial assistance in their evangelistic efforts. Please write to the Trustees c/o 21 Stoneleigh Crescent, Knowle, Bristol. BS4 2RF, but remember, our ability to help is strictly limited to the stated aims of this Fund (see above).

We thank all who have helped us in our work, including those who have alerted us to areas where we might help. Of course, our special thanks to Tom and the late Dorothy Blackmore whose generosity established this Fund.

G.M. Daniell.

on behalf of the Trustees.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

June 3	Psa. 115	2 Cor. 10
June 10	Neh. 6	2 Cor. 11:1-15
June 17	Psa. 116	2 Cor. 11:16-33
June 24	Isa. 6	2 Cor. 12

### RIGHT THINKING

Paul wrote: **"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every sort of act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete"** (10:5-6 N.I.V.). Albert Barnes in analysing this passage commented: "The figure here is evidently taken from military conquests. The idea is, that all strongholds of heathenism, and pride, and sin, would be demolished, and that when this was done, like throwing down the walls of a city or making a breach, all the plans and purposes of the soul, the reason, the imagination, and all the powers of the mind would be subdued or led in triumph by the gospel, like the inhabitants of a captured city."

My brethren, Albert Barnes was right, there is indeed a battle going on,

and it is for the hearts and minds of men and women. A person is as he thinks. Proverbs 23:7 says: **“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”** Francis Schaeffer wrote: “This statement from Proverbs is really most profound. An individual is not just the product of forces around him. He has a mind, an inner world. Then, having thoughts, a person can bring forth actions into the external world and influence it. People are apt to look at the outer theatre of action, forgetting the actor who ‘lives in the mind’ and who therefore is the true actor in the external world. The inner thought world determines the outward action.”

Jesus in his ministry taught the importance of the mind and the heart very clearly. He said: **“Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man . . .”** (Matthew 15:19-20). Change the heart and you have changed the man. Change the man and you have changed society. Change society and you have changed the world. People say you cannot change human nature. They are wrong! That is what the gospel of Christ is all about. It can penetrate the inner space more effectively than any man-made probe to the outer space.

### CHALLENGE TO PAUL'S AUTHORITY

The second visit of Titus to Corinth was not as happy as the former one. F.F. Bruce has written: “Some members of the church may have felt that, for all his insistence on the voluntary character of the gift for Jerusalem, Paul was really putting them on the spot, placing them in a situation in which they had no choice but to make a generous contribution if they were not to lose face – and make Paul lose face – before the representatives of other churches. A new feeling of resentment showed itself among some members of the church, and it was fostered by certain visitors to Corinth who did their best to undermine Paul's prestige in his converts' eyes.”

In 11:5 we read: **“But I do not think**

**I am the least inferior to those ‘super-apostles.’”**(N.I.V.) Who were they? Certainly, they were **“false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ”** (11:13, N.I.V.). In other words they were of Satan, who was the master counterfeiter behind them. W. Carl Ketcherside in an essay on this subject wrote: “Jesus chose certain men to be apostles or envoys to an alien world. These he qualified and commissioned and sent forth with the good news. They were designated as holy apostles (Ephesians 3:5). Immediately the devil began his work of duplication of the method adopted by our Lord. He sought to overthrow the work of the apostles by denying the authority of one of them (Paul) and by creating false apostles to deny the truth. These men, operating under a disguise, claimed to work on the same basis as the real apostles.” J. B. Phillips translated 11:12,14 thus **“They are counterfeiters of the real thing, dishonest practitioners, ‘Special Messengers’ only by their own appointment. Nor do their tactics surprise me when I consider how Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”** This will serve to explain the statement in the letter to Ephesus: **“You cannot bear evil men, but have tested those who call themselves apostles, but are not, and found them to be false (Revelation 2:2).**

### PAUL BOASTS ABOUT HIS SUFFERING

C.K. Barrett, one-time Professor of Divinity, University of Durham, wrote one of the most highly-regarded commentaries on 2 Corinthians. (We should not paint everyone from Durham with same brush!). On 12:1 he commented: “Paul is asking ironically, that he too may boast a little; others have boasted of their qualifications, which, we may deduce from the letter as a whole consisted of commendations from high authority, impressive speech and behaviour etc. and Paul seeing the peril of the Corinthian church, decides, against his will, to beat them at their own game – to answer them according to their folly. His difficulty is that he recognises, as

they do not, that viewed from a Christian standpoint he is making himself a fool. Christians, except under duress, do not act or speak in this way." I recall the proverb: "Answer a fool according to his own folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit" (Proverbs 26:5).

Paul's "boastings" included his suffering for Christ. The list of hardships and hazards is quite horrendous. As one writer has put it: "The matter-of-fact recital of imprisonments, floggings, shipwrecks, narrow escapes from death and the like that he had been through in the course of his apostolic work tells its own tale of the resilience and staying power of the man who has endured it all. The scars which those experiences left he wears with pride. They were indelible *stigmata* which proclaimed him to be the bondsman of the Lord in whose service he had received them. (A number of the hardships detailed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:23,27 are not mentioned elsewhere in the Scriptures).

### PARADISE

Many are of the view that the man "caught up to the third heaven" (12:2) or "caught up into paradise" (12:4) was Paul himself. The third heaven, of course, is the dwelling place of God. The first heaven is where the birds and bees fly and the second heaven is the home of the sun, moon and stars. Paradise is a beautiful word. It comes from the Persian language and literally means "a walled garden." Again, it speaks of the dwelling place of our God or heaven itself.

An American brother recently wrote of the "out-of-this-world experience" by Paul (if we accept it was Paul). He commented: "We can only guess as to why Paul would be the only person in human history – insofar as we know – to go to heaven and return to earth to finish out his life in this world. For some reason he had need for such an experience, especially for the revelation he received while in paradise, perhaps because of the sufferings he had to endure."

Paul in this passage mentioned his "thorn in the flesh." We do not know what it was. Paul prayed that it might be taken from him, but God, as William Barclay has pointed out, "answered that prayer as he answers so many prayers – he did not take the thing away, but gave Paul strength to bear it. This is how God works. He does not spare us things, but makes us able to conquer them."

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

### GHANA REPORT

In the month of March £1092.98 was received for the work in Ghana from the readership of the Scripture Standard.

On 24th March £1500 was sent to Ghana to be split into three equal parts. The congregations who received this money were Koforidua, Huhunya and Nyarkrom. Each congregation is presently building and the money was given to assist them with the purchase of cement.

At the end of March a parcel of seeds was sent to David Arku-Mensah for forwarding to the congregation at Nyarkrom (a congregation of 82 saints which had not received any seeds to date).

At the time of writing (3/4/90) £12,303.78 had been received from the date of the first donation in 12/6/89.

The money left in the Ghana Account now stands at £214.89 (General Fund – £10.96, Medical Fund – £55.00, Cement – £68.09, Seeds – £35.00, School – £20.00 and Ophthalmic Care – £25.84).

On behalf of the Brethren in Ghana, who deeply appreciate this help, may I express their thanks to all who have helped to make this possible.

*Correction to April Edition*

Page 62 Ghana Report . . . Paragraph 4 should read:-

£50.00 was sent to a sister who lost her husband in a car crash in December.

Graeme Pearson,  
13 Fairways,  
Dunfermline,  
Fife. KY12 0DU.

**GHANA APPEAL**

Now that a number of churches have purchased ground and started building, the main hurdles have been crossed.

In the past month I have received a great deal of information from Ghana which has relieved my growing frustration.

As with every fund there are always the odd one or two who write directly to short cut the system which is being set up and this, if badly handled, can lead to petty jealousies, etc.

In an effort to avoid such situations, I have been requested to send money to a central fund held in Accra, under the watchful eye of David Arku-Mensah. Chosen men from each congregation will meet to discuss their individual needs and the money will be distributed. This would seem to be a logical way ahead. I will, of course, require a monthly report from Ghana on how this money is used which will serve as 'Feedback' to the Scripture Standard.

As the General Fund is currently containing only £10.96 this month I would appeal for donations to build up this fund.

Anyone wishing to donate to specific needs can still be accommodated.

Donations should be made out to:- Graeme Pearson, (Ghana Appeal), and sent to:-

Graeme Pearson,  
13 Fairways,  
Dunfermline,  
Fife. KY12 0DU.  
Tel. (0383) 728624.

**THANKS**

Brother and sister Leslie Purcell, of Motherwell, would like to thank all those who 'phoned, and sent letters and 'Get -well' cards on the occasion of Leslie's recent hip-replacement operation. These were very much appreciated, and helped a great deal.

James and Elsie Sinclair wish to thank the many brethren, friends and relatives, for the cards and best wishes received on the occasion of their recent Golden Wedding.

**COMING EVENTS**

**Buckie Annual Social:** Saturday, 26th May, (D.V.). Meeting Place, Buckie. Speaker: Nat Cooper. All Welcome.

**Saturday Meetings:** The church at Dennyloanhead intend (D.V.) to hold Saturday evening Gospel Meetings on:-  
26th May, at 6.30 p.m.

23rd June, at 6.30 p.m.

John Dodsley will be the Speaker in May and Stephen Woodcock in June.

All Welcome.

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