

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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THE NOBLEST WORK OF GOD

We rarely read articles, or hear sermons, on "Guile" albeit the scriptures mention it. "VE-DAY" was commemorated a couple of days ago, with street-parties and the like, and one radio commentator remarked on how impressed he was with the enthusiasm at one stall where volunteers were queuing up to offer their services, until he discovered that they had been promised as much drink as they could consume. I suppose we have all been guilty, at times, of being energized by motives which are less than noble. Indeed, in the world at large, the motives behind most human endeavour would scarcely welcome the light of day. It was Robert Burns, the Scottish bard, who said that "An honest man is the noblest work of God", and things have deteriorated since even his day. At one time we presumed men honest until proved otherwise; but now we are inclined to treat every situation with some suspicion. Even in small everyday matters, such as the delivery of a new bed or other small item of furniture, the chances are that we shall be lied to a dozen times during the process: i.e. on the matter of the delivery-man's non-appearance on the arranged day; the delivery of the wrong item; how the item got damaged; or how the item went to the wrong address, etc. etc. Indeed, human ingenuity is such that although we've heard many of the excuses; e.g. the delivery van had a puncture; the driver had a heart-attack; item temporarily out of stock; a dog ate the delivery-note; item stolen over night; a fire at the warehouse; van struck by lighting, etc. etc. we have certainly not heard them all. Anyone who tries to be scrupulously honest nowadays is regarded as "having a screw loose" and honesty which used to be "the best policy" is now a museum piece. "Today" we are told, "We must look after number one" and join the "wide boys". We won't beat them, so we must join them. The world is devious and we must be devious to survive.

The mother of a rather aggressive and fairly uncontrollable small child, tells me that she is bringing him up like this because he will need all his guile and aggression when he enters the big bad world outside. A peep over the wall at any school playground suggests that many mothers are doing the same thing. The implication seems to be that if we teach our child to be honest and upright he will be left at the starting-gate by all the other crafty, wily and "street-wise little monsters". There seems no place today for the innocent and the guileless, in the cut-and-thrust of modern living. And yet Jesus, an expert in all these things, did not, even for a moment, subscribe to such a philosophy but highly disapproved of the crafty, the schemer, the devious and all those well practised in guile. To Jesus, a person lacking in guile was a breath of fresh air and, let's face it, Jesus lived amongst Jews; past-masters of deviousness. When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming towards Him, He said, **WITH EVIDENT PLEASURE, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."** Obviously this was an occurrence so rare that Jesus remarked upon it. However, it is surely not inevitable that, if we are to be "without guile" we must therefore be, as is commonly

thought, naive to the point of being a simpleton, or even slightly idiotic. Jesus who knew conditions, and could read men's minds as easily as we can read books, was certainly no village simpleton, and yet He, Himself, was "without guile". The apostle Peter commented upon this fact when he recommended Christ as our great Exemplar, in that by His actions He was sinless, and by His words without guile. "For hereunto were ye called: Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (1 Peter 2:22) Some may pride themselves as being "just as crafty as the next man", but Jesus, in all His infinite wisdom and knowledge, spurned the very thought of resorting to guile. Guile was never to be found in our Lord's mouth.

TO BE SEEN OF MEN.

We can't often know what people are thinking until they clothe their thoughts in words. Then again, what people say does not always correspond with what they actually do. Thus, people are not to be judged by what they say, as much as by what they do. This, we remember, was one of the serious charges made by Christ against the Pharisees; "For they say, but they do not do."

Jesus instructed the Jews to obey all the legitimate teaching they received from the Scribes and Pharisees for, He said, "they sit in Moses' seat" (i.e. they are official interpreters of the Mosaic Law). "Do what they tell you," said Jesus "but don't follow their example, for although they teach they don't apply their own teaching to their lives. They bind heavy and grievous burdens on other men's shoulders but they themselves will not move such burdens with one of their little fingers". The Jews wore phylacteries (little boxes containing scripture references which they attached to their heads and arms) and they also enlarged the borders of their garments (as enjoined by Num. 15:38 to remind them of all of the commandments of the Lord). The Pharisees, however, wore not only phylacteries, and broad fringes on their garments, but they wore much larger versions of them, to show how much holier they were. This cut no ice with Jesus however, for He knew their true motives and said, "But all their works they do for to be seen of men." They also commandeered the most prominent seats in the synagogues, and the very best seats at feasts and functions; because they loved the pre-eminence. And this was said of the Scribes and Pharisees: the priestly Crème-de-la-Crème of the greatest religion, at that time, in the world. In nearly all their religious observances and rites: and their apparently pious works and saintly appearances, they had ulterior motives. Jesus said that they robbed the houses of widows and for a pretence made long prayers: they took sacred oaths and repudiated them on a tiny technicality (i.e. whether the oath was based on the temple or just the gold of the temple): they had double standards; choking on a gnat but cheerfully prepared to swallow a camel; they carefully paid the very smallest of tithes (on mint, anise and cummin) but were completely out of touch with the real weighty matters of the law; things like compassion, mercy, faith, and justice. And, perhaps worst of all, they not only refused to enter the Kingdom of Heaven themselves but they prevented others from doing so. Surely this shows that although men be engaged in religious activity there is no guarantee that they will be any better than devious politicians. It must be remembered that these men were not average Jews, but were so dedicated to their religion that they spent their every waking moment in pursuit of it. They were perfectionists and went to incredible lengths to conform to what they understood was required of them in the law (and the Traditions of the Elders) and they had literally no time for any worldly consideration; or any other interest whatsoever. Yet several times, Jesus pronounced a solemn "Woe" upon them, describing them as being like whitened sepulchres: beautiful on the outside but full of rottenness and dead men's bones. Yes, they studied their scriptures and discussed them at very great length: yes, they meditated on God's word by day and by night; yes, they made long prayers many times per day; yes, they were always in their seat in the synagogues; yes, they punctiliously kept the feast days; the

sabbaths, the fastings, the tithings and all the other requirements of the law: but their motives were flawed, and they did it all mainly to be seen of men, and to impress others with their apparent piety. Unlike Nathanael, these were not "Israelites indeed" but were full of guile.

Surely this shows that not only can a man not be judged by his words: he can not be judged by his works either. Men can only be judged by their motives. In short, it is quite possible for men to immerse themselves in works of benevolence and charity, but to do so with the basest of motives. Many a charity worker has been found with his hand in the till. Our motives are, therefore, of the utmost consequence.

GOOD PREVAILS OVER EVIL

Needless to say God can read all men as open books, and knows their motives. Indeed God often uses the ulterior motives of men to His own purpose. In the case of Balaam, for instance, we find that albeit the prophet had been bribed to curse Israel: each time he opened his mouth to do so, he blessed Israel. Although, in the event, he blessed Israel his true motive was to injure Israel, and on that he is judged. Quite often God has extracted good from the actions of the evilly disposed. The twelve tribes of Israel were eventually divided up by God into two kingdoms. This cleavage was precipitated by the selfish motives of the Jews, themselves, although it was the purpose of God. God's motive was good i.e. to bring idolatry to an end. The Jews saw nothing wrong with idolatry but found the taxation irksome and complained of a "grievous yoke" under Rehoboam (2 Chron. 10). Thus good came from motives of aggressive self-interest. Likewise, when Joseph's brethren sold him into slavery in Egypt, great good emerged in the outworking of God's will, but it was no thanks to them. When Joseph made himself known to his brethren down in Egypt, he explained that although there had been 2 years of famine, there were another 5 years of famine to come and said, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives with a great deliverance. So now, it was not you that sent me hither but God, and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house." Although God had saved Jacob and his posterity by the nobility and talents of Joseph in Egypt; Joseph's brethren could claim no honourable part in the transaction for their motives were heinously criminal. They had, therefore, good reason to be dumbstruck with shame and embarrassment when confronted by their, now famous, brother. Their motive had been fostered by jealousy and hatred. "Behold, here comes the dreamer. Come now, let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say that some evil beast hath devoured him, and then we shall see what will become of his dreams." But for Reuben's intervention these men would have killed Joseph. And so, although good emerged the intentions of the brethren were entirely wicked, and on that basis they must be judged.

Again, (in Acts 4:27) we read "For of a truth, against the holy child, Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do so whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done." We may often have wondered how a man like Pilate, or Herod, or the men who crucified Jesus, could be guilty of any crime when what they did was, in fact, the will of God, previously determined, (as stated above in the scripture). The answer lies in the question of motive. God was motivated by love in giving His Son to die ("For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son...") but the Jews, who unwittingly accomplished God's purpose, were motivated by hatred. They cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him, His blood be upon our heads and on our children..." They crucified Christ of their own volition: they were not compelled to do it: and so will be judged for their evil motives and consequent action.

Again, (in Acts 24) although Paul was kept imprisoned by Felix, he seems to have been

accorded many privileges and courtesies, Felix also conversed with Paul quite often, and heard him "concerning the faith in Christ." We might think that this was very kind of Felix, but in v.26 we read that "he (Felix) hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him." It might have appeared to Paul that Felix was becoming very interested in the gospel, with all these requests to hear about it, but alas the real motive behind it all was that Felix was hoping for a bribe.

And so, no matter how devious men might be (even very religious man), God can circumvent their plots and guile, and use it to His own advantage. This will not, of course, exonerate the crafty schemers. Felix was obviously not the only cunning person with whom Paul had to deal: in fact Paul had a long succession of them: but the experience never induced Paul to match them in craftiness or compete with them in guile, and especially the "beguiling" influences which continually assaulted them. Guile is the hall-mark of the devil, and it was with guile that the serpent corrupted Eve. This prompted Paul to say to the Colossians and Corinthians, "**But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent BEGUAILED EVE through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus.**" And so, Paul in seeking honesty and integrity was certainly no village simpleton or country bumpkin, but was well aware of the subtleties of guile and of its unholly origin. And Paul certainly was not one of the "If you can't beat them, join them" brigade.

CONCLUSION

How can we sum up? As Christ showed in His assessment of the Pharisees, the best "Holy Men" can be just as artful as the best politicians. Indeed, base motives in the religious world attract (understandably) greater attention and condemnation than in the political world. People are always vaguely suspicious of the motives of "Holy Men", and it used to be said that "if a man goes to church once on a Sunday keep an eye on him: if he goes twice on a Sunday keep both eyes on him." Even on the simple matter of "going to church" motives can vary. Years ago people like bank managers, teachers and policemen were *required* to attend church services because it looked "respectable". Some still go on that basis. Some go, as we know, to show off a new hat or expensive outfit: some go out of interest in some member of the opposite sex who goes there: some like to be in the choir: some go to please their parents: some go because it is expected of them: some go because they like the present clergyman but didn't go previously because they didn't like the previous one: the clergyman goes because he prefers this to other forms of work and it pays quite well. And so, even in church attendance, motives can vary and we should constantly analyse our own.

The spirit of Pharisaiism is certainly not dead, and neither is "the Judas kiss." As we ponder the motives of Judas (who kept the bag) and the other apostles who squabbled about greatness. we should consider our own weaknesses. Human weakness is ever with us and, (like the rulers who believed in Jesus but did not confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue) we may prefer "the praises of men rather than the praise of God." Paul, (in a slightly different context) says, "**But let a man examine himself**" and that must be good advice in any context: and certainly with reference to all our motives. We prefer, of course, to examine others, and look for "hidden agendas" but we have enough to do to work out our own salvation, with fear and trembling.

Space has gone but we surely could not do better, I suppose, than to close with the following good advice from the apostle Peter (a loose translation of Psalm 34:12) where he says, that "**He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips THAT THEY SPEAK NO GUILE.**" (1 Peter 3:10).

GLEANINGS

"Let her glean even among the sheaves." Ruth 2.15

TRIUMPHANT FAITH

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Habbakuk 3: 17-18

ALTHOUGH - YET

What seemeth him good.

"And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

1 Samuel 3:18

We quote - Francis Ridley Havergal

"Let Him do what seemeth Him good." Eli spoke these words under the terrible certainty of heavy judgement upon his house, because the Lord had spoken it. But how often God's dear children tremble to say an unreserved *'Let him do what seemeth Him good,'* though they are under no such shadow of certain coming events! It is almost easier to say it when a crushing blow has actually fallen, than when there is suspense and uncertainty as to what the Lord may be going to do. There is always more or less of this element of suspense and uncertainty."

Into our Father's Hands

"One can hardly imagine a life in which there are no clouds, little or great, within the horizon, even when the sky is clearest overhead. We hold not a treasure on earth which we are sure of keeping; and we never know whether gain or loss, failure or success, ease or pain, lies before us.

And if we are allowed to put our finger on the balance of uncertainties and turn it as we choose, we should be sure to defeat some ultimate aim by securing a nearer one, and prevent some greater good by grasping a lesser.

I think if we were permitted to try an experiment, we should soon grow utterly puzzled and weary, and find ourselves landed in complications of mistakes; and if we had any sense left, we should want to put it all back into our Father's hands, and say *'Let Him do what seemeth Him good,'* then we should feel relieved and at rest."

"It is the Lord"

"Then why not be relieved and at rest at once? For *'it is the Lord'* who is going to do we know not what. That is a volume in itself, - The Lord who loves you, the Lord who thinks about you and cares for you, the Lord who understands you, the Lord who never makes mistakes, the Lord who spared not his own Son but gave him up for you!

Will you not let him do what seemeth him good? Then think what it is you are to let him do, what seemeth him good? Then think what it is you are to let him do. Something out of your sight, perhaps, but not out of His sight. For the original word in every case is "What is good in His eyes". Those eyes see through and through, and all round and beyond everything.

So what is good in his eyes must be absolutely and entirely good, a vast deal better than our best! There is great rest in knowing that he will do what is right, but he crowns the rightness with the goodness; and when we see this, the rest is crowned with gladness. Ought it, then, to be so very hard to say, "Let him do what seemeth him good?"

"The Just Shall Live by His Faith"

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold,

and there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Habbakuk 3:17-18

Selected by Leonard Morgan

DOES THE BIBLE CONTRADICT ITSELF?

Does the Bible contradict itself? Apart from sceptics and critics of the Bible, many of its followers think it does. From many so-called Christian pulpits and publications, this idea is propagated. A true follower of the Bible believes that it is, altogether without contradiction, a book of harmony.

In the Psalm on the works and word of God, it is claimed that the word of God is perfect, sure, right, pure, true and righteous altogether (Psalm 19:7-9). That rules out contradictions.

Psalm 119:89 claims God's word is forever settled in heaven. The word that spoke the universe into being and counsels all generations stands fast forever, according to Psalm 33:4-11. How could the Bible be firmly fixed, stationed and settled if, as people think, it is bursting its bindings and contradictions?

People who say it contradicts itself disagree with Jesus Christ. He said, unequivocally, that the scriptures cannot be broken or set aside (John 10:35). The Bible doesn't conveniently cancel itself out by self-contradiction. If it did, it would destroy itself, and one would be justified in setting its broken message aside. But the scriptures cannot be broken. They can be trusted. The Bible is not a broken reed with sharp points of contradiction. It can be leaned on. It is a rod and staff of comfort.

What about 2 Timothy 3:15? That's the verse that says that all scripture is inspired of God and profitable. If it is, where can contradictions come into it? That would be tantamount to God contradicting Himself. If some parts of the Bible are inspired, and some are not, we may expect contradictions in it. But then who is going to sort out the wrong side from the right side of a contradiction? None of the Bible would be profitable under such circumstances.

The Bible claims to be perfect altogether, settled in heaven, trustworthy, and completely God inspired. To profess to follow the Bible, yet to disbelieve its claims by entertaining the idea that it contains contradictions against its integrity, is an untenable position.

Technically there are no problems to our faith in the Bible; but this is not to say that the Bible poses no problems in the minds of its readers. To the mind of every Bible reader who is neither naïve nor all-knowing in his thinking there appear to be problems and contradictions in the Bible. It must be emphasised that these problems are apparent (and in the case of sceptics, alleged); they are not real. That is, the problems exist only in the human mind, not in the Divine mind or in the Bible.

Suppose we have such a problem. Let's analyse its nature.

The Nature Of The Problem

The nature of the problem is essentially our own limitations.

The Bible is not a revelation of God's absolute knowledge. It reveals but a very limited portion. For a man to know all the Bible would, in one sense, be to "know fully" (1 Corinthians 13:10, 12). But, in the final analysis, there is infinitely much that is unrevealed, and cannot be known, because it was "not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:4). Thus we are limited in what we can know of the mind of God.

But we are further limited, because what we actually do know is less than what we can know. We can know all that is in the Bible, but practically no one knows even half that much.

These limitations in *our* knowledge lie in the nature of the problem. Let's look at some cases in point.

In Matthew 27:5 we read that Judas hanged himself. But in Acts 1:8 it says that, falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out. In many minds this constitutes a contradiction. But if we had *more knowledge* of the facts, possibly we would see a connection instead of a contradiction between these two accounts. What if we knew that Judas hanged himself from a rooftop, but his rope gave way, and he fell down, hitting some sharp object and bursting his middle? We don't know, of course, but if we did, there would be no contradiction.

In Genesis 2:17 Eve was told, "Thou shalt surely die." But that statement is contradicted in Genesis 3:4, where she is told, "Ye shall not surely die." Would you believe it? Some people think this is a contradiction against the integrity of the Bible. *More knowledge* of the facts reveals that this is a reasonable contradiction between God and Satan; and if they didn't contradict, there would be a real problem, wouldn't there?

In Genesis 1:31 God saw that His creation was "very good". But in Genesis 6.6 God is not satisfied with His creation. It grieved Him because he has made man on the earth. This is supposed to be a contradiction against the Bible's integrity. *More knowledge* dispels the difficulty. The fall of man and many centuries of increasing sin intervened between the times referred to.

In Hebrews 10:31 it says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But in 2 Samuel 24:14 it says "let us fall into God's hands, for His mercies are great." With a little *more knowledge* we see that this is not a contradiction, but that the first statement is true from the point of view of an impenitent sinner, whereas the opposite is true from the believer's viewpoint.

We Need More Knowledge

Study the above alleged contradictions carefully, and you will see that the statements are made from different viewpoints, or under different circumstances, or by different persons, or at different times. When we do not *know* this, the contradictory statements may appear to militate against the integrity of the scriptures. But with *more knowledge* we find the contradiction was only in our own minds.

It is human nature to find a distinction, and often a conflict, between what a person says and what he means. Often it is our *interpretation* of what the Bible says that creates a conflict, whereas if we had *more knowledge* of what the Bible *actually said*, we would have no problem.

It may come as a shock to human pride that it is human ignorance and not Divine bungling that is the cause of "contradictions in the Bible". They are only apparent. They are not real. They exist on in our minds where there is a gap in our knowledge. Fill that gap with better knowledge, and the problem is squeezed right out.

Notwithstanding this, there is a limit to justifiable ignorance. We are told to study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15). Some people study to show God's word disproved unto men. Their ignorance and lack of comprehension of the scriptures is appalling. Perhaps this explains why the majority of alleged contradictions in the Bible appear to have been manufactured by very stupid and prejudiced people.

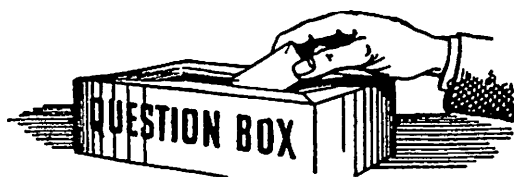
I am reminded of a young sceptic who once challenged me with the bromide, "The Bible is full of contradictions." I asked him for just one example. He had to "look it up", like his type do. He had to be prodded and reminded for several days, like his sort do. Finally he offered this:

"In St. Luke, chapter 17, in verse 31, Jesus said He was coming 'in that day'. In verse 34, though, He said He was coming 'in that night'. There you are: Jesus contradicted Himself."

I explained that at Christ's coming it would be night on one part of the earth but day on another party. He seemed surprised that Christ, in His day, would speak as though the earth were not flat.

Our question was, "Does the Bible contradict itself?" To the honest heart, and to the mind filled with Bible knowledge, the answer is "NO."

R. Graham.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"In view of the recent happenings in America, what should the Christian's attitude be to capital punishment. Is there scriptural teaching to guide us?"

The 'recent happenings in America', as you may have guessed from the question, concerned a young Englishman resident in America, and coming under the law of the State concerned. He had committed a particularly violent crime, i.e., he had evidently killed two people in a cold-blooded murder. He had been incarcerated in prison in the part notoriously named 'Death Row' which, I understand, is in close proximity to the final place of execution. As very often happens in such cases, his lawyers had kept going to court with technical points relative to the conviction; each appearance resulted in a 'stay of execution'. The sort of appeal had been going on for some twelve years and seemingly had the backing of a condemned man. What was being sought on his behalf was life imprisonment instead of execution.

There is no national policy in the States regarding capital punishment; each State legislates on its own behalf. Even the way in which the execution is carried out varies from State to State. Any State, of course, can decide whether or not to have capital punishment for capital offences. The above is just a 'thumb-nail' sketch of the system; names and place-names have been excluded because I do not see them as germane to the thrust of the question.

Punishment.

Punishment itself is well attested to in the Bible. In the Old Covenant it was given as God's Law, and we can read the specific details in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; these Laws deal in the main with offences against person and property. Sometimes God punished the whole nation for their infidelity and contravention of His Laws. None were exempt, no matter what their station in life; even Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land with the children of Israel; kings also felt the full force of God's wrath because of disobedience.

A crime, then, is an act punishable by law. Many people have taken the Gilbert and Sullivan 'Mikado' view of this; 'to let the punishment fit the crime'. Perhaps we have tried to bring up our children in this way in the discernment of 'right' and 'wrong', but 'rightness' and 'wrongness' can have as many variations as there are people. We can set the standards in our own families, but in general terms the law of the land has to set the standard as best it can to deal with most offences, and inflict such punishment as it appropriate. That is far from perfect, but it is the best system we have.

The Old Covenant View.

As I have already pointed out, God gave specific instructions to the nation of Israel after He had brought them out of the bondage of Egypt. Concerning murder He said, "He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall be surely put to death". Ex.21:12. He also mentioned pre-meditated murder, "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him

with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die". 24:14. There was also a law against kidnapping, "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death". 21:16. So here we see summary judgements concerning murder, pre-meditated murder, and kidnapping; if found guilty of these crimes, the criminals were put to death.

There was also a law concerning manslaughter, "If a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee". 21:13. These were the so-called Cities of Refuge (see Num.35:9-14). There were three East of the Jordan, and three West of the Jordan. No part of Palestine was far from a City of Refuge. These cities were an attempt to stop 'blood feuds' in the land of Canaan so that the land would not be desecrated. It had been laid down in Gen.9:6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man". In practice this meant that if a man murdered another, then the nearest relative of the murdered man was expected to avenge his death; he then became known as 'Avenger of Blood'. This was done irrespective of whether the first death was deliberate or accidental. You can see how this system would develop into a 'blood feud', because the avenging would just go on and on. If in the first instance the death was accidental, then the killer could flee to a City of Refuge and there receive a fair trial. If at the trial it was decided that the killing was in fact deliberate, then the killer would suffer the death penalty (I have tried to give a brief explanation of one of God's most complex laws. Hope you understand it).

The above follows the principle laid down in Lev.24:19,20., "If a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth".

The New Covenant View.

In his sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill..." Matt.5:21. He then goes on "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement". To some, this may seem that Jesus is saying something different from what the O.T. scriptures say, but you will notice from His discourse with the rich young ruler that he exhorts him to keep the Commandments. The young man says, "Which"? Jesus answered, "Thou shalt do no murder,... etc.". Paul also taught, "he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill... etc." Rom.13:8,9. Peter in 1 Pet.4:15; and John in 1 John 3:15, also reiterate the same teaching.

New Covenant teaching takes individual responsibility to the extreme. Jesus said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart". Matt.5:28. In 1 John 3:15, John makes the same point regarding 'hate' and murder. The teaching of Jesus and His Apostles is designed not to 'destroy' the law but to 'fulfill' it, therefore, the Commandments are given even greater force by their teaching. So we can see that killing is not only an offence against God's law, but it is also an offence against the dignity of man, God's creation.

The View of Society.

Crime, and its punishment, is still a very complex issue, perhaps more complex than at any other time in history. Some want the death penalty for all capital offences; others want it on a more selective basis, e.g., the killing of policemen; abolitionists want life imprisonment instead of the death penalty; some want life imprisonment to mean life, others want remission on life sentences, and so it goes on. As regards the recent case in America, we must not forget that the convicted man had agreed to the way his lawyers had conducted his case; I think what caused the most revulsion was what happened in the final hours before his death; even a murderer is allowed some dignity, even though he may not show it himself.

The scene is further complicated by acts of violence, terrorism, the ever-increasing disregard for the sanctity of human life. Many people are concluding that not only is law and order failing them, but that God also is failing them; and that, if course, makes the Gospel more difficult for people to accept.

The Christian, I believe, must remain aloof from all this clamour. He must follow the dictates of God, and God has said that while we are here in this arena of life that we must be "subject to the powers that be... for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil". Read Rom.13. Therefore we can at no time take the law into our own hands. If it is decided by Parliament that capital punishment should be restored for capital offences, so be it, no matter what our personal views may be about the issue. Furthermore, we Christians must never lose sight of God Himself. Paul's word from God is, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath... Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good". Rom.12:17-21. Our loving God protects us from evil by saying, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord". No matter what evil we may have to endure here, ultimately that promise of God will be fulfilled. In a different sense, our 'City of Refuge' is God. With Him, justice will be done.

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

THE APPLE OF HIS EYE

How many times have we heard people say about someone else, "He (or she) is the apple of my eye"? We all understand what they meant by that statement, didn't we? They meant that they thought a great deal of that person, that they had really strong feelings of attachment to them. This is often used by parents in thinking of their children, especially when they want to get across to some one else their feelings for their children.

Where did this term of endearment come from? It is used at least four times in the Old Testament. It always describes God's feeling for his people, Israel, or the feeling they ought to have for his law. Let's look at these passages where they are used and then let's think about our relationship to God.

In Deuteronomy 32, beginning with verse 7 Moses is reminding the children of Israel how God had called them out of slavery and how God had led them through the wilderness and in verse 10 "he kept him as the apple of his eye." This describes the feelings that God had for his people, the Israelites. He loved them dearly, they were very, very special to him. They didn't choose him; he chose them.

In Zechariah 2:6-9, the prophet was encouraging the people of God. The Babylonians had inflicted great pain upon them and the prophet said: "For he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." In other words, God is pained when his children are pained. Why? Because they were the "apple of his eye." In the next verse, the prophet reminds them of God's power over the nations and that he will shake his hands and the tables will be turned on their enemies.

In Psalm 17:8, David's prayer is "keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings." How David wanted to be the favourite in the sight of God. How he wanted the love and approval of God. Don't we all want that?

In Proverbs 7:2 the father says to his son, "Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye." The father was advising his son to have the same respect for the law of the Lord as he had. When God's word is the apple of our eye, then we will have no trouble with doing the will of God.

What about God and his people today? Does God think any less of his children today than he did for those in the yesterday? In Ephesians 1:4-13, Paul makes it plain that the

Ephesian Christians had been chosen of God in Christ Jesus so that we might be the adopted children of God.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul referred to these Christians as the "beloved of the Lord." Yes, God loves you and has the same feelings toward the child of God today as he had towards the Israelites under the Old Covenant.

Yes, dear brother in Christ, we are the apple of God's eye. We are his beloved and he demonstrates his love toward us every day and in every way. Don't disappoint him. Give yourself to him, unreserved and with all your might serve him out of love and devotion. "Oh Lord, may we always be the apple of your eye."

K. Marshall

TRUTH AT THE DOOR

Anyone been by your door lately wanting to discuss their religion? If not, they will be. The following information is designated to be helpful to you and to them. Please be kind and courteous to them at all times. Our people are making door-to-door contacts too and appreciate being treated courteously.

Most, if not all, of these door-teachers have some sectarian manuals and "extra" books by which they wish to teach you. Following are some suggested aids for your conversation at the door.

First note John 8:31, 32 with them. Here Jesus said "my word" is truth, and truth will set you free from sin. So! No literature is needed outside Christ's own words and that which he authorized in the New Testament. Rutherford, Russell, White, Joseph Smith nor his golden plates are needed. Jesus' word is enough!

Second, note Galatians 1:8, 9, Here Paul said anything outside the gospel he preached would damn a person's soul. If the "books" being offered you are in *addition* to the Bible, then they are condemned by Paul in this passage. If they *are* just the Bible, then you already have your copy and do not need their books or commentaries etc. etc. All such is an addition to the word and are condemned.

Third, note 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 with your friend at the door. This passage clearly says the inspired word will furnish a man or woman unto *every* good work. What is needed if the inspired New Testament will do it all? So no outside books are needed.

Fourth, note Revelation 22:18, 19, which of course applies to the book of Revelation, but the principle applies to all 27 New Testament books. No additions are needed. No subtractions are allowed!

But! Suppose your friends say they will use just the Bible in your study. Fine! Immediately turn to Acts 1 and start reading. Read through Acts 2 and the plan of salvation. Note the worship of the early Church (Acts 2:42). These false doctrines fall by the way when compared to the New Testament pattern. They are not in the New Testament in name, worship, nor practice. Their ways differ from the N. T. ways and are therefore false. Many of these sincere people have been led to the Lord's gospel by a patient and loving discussion like this. Pray that the Lord will bless you with such a wonderful experience!

W. Sawyer

THE WORD OF GOD

The evidences of the characteristics of God revealed by the Bible should cause us to prize the written word as the Scriptures of Truth.

Only men inspired by the breath of God could speak of Him as the writers of the Scriptures do.

Whence, but from heaven, should Moses and the prophets, and the unlettered men of Galilee, obtain those views of the Divine Majesty and glory which we have now contemplated."

SCRIPTURE READINGS

July 2	Exodus 20:1-17	John 4:46-5:18
July 9	Genesis 49:1-12	John 5:19-47
July 16	2 Kings 4:38-44	John 6:1-21
July 23	Psalm 78:9-31	John 6:22-40
July 30	Isaiah 54	John 6:41-71

MIRACLES OF JESUS

In this portion of Scripture we read of Jesus healing the official's son and the man at the pool; the feeding of the five thousand; Jesus walking on the water. These, of course, are just a few of the many miracles Jesus performed during His Ministry. John later wrote: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written", (21:25).

The miracles of Jesus have been denied by many in the past. One name that immediately springs to mind here is that of David Hume (1711-76), the Scottish philosopher. In his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* he had a section entitled "Of Miracles" in which he rejected all possibility of such phenomena because they were contrary to human experience. He defined a miracle as "a violation of the laws of nature". Of course, there was an immediate reaction to this scepticism and his arguments were brilliantly handled by those of the Scottish School of Common Sense of which Thomas Reid (1710-96) was the chief spokesman. Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) was also of this School and Alexander Campbell once described him as "the greatest of metaphysicians". Dr. George Campbell (1719-96) should also be mentioned here as an opponent of Hume. Indeed, this outstanding Professor of Aberdeen University corresponded with Hume on the very subject of miracles, which later appeared in book form. It is said that Hume later acknowledged that "the theologian had beaten him". But such

was his pride of understanding that he did not publicly acknowledge his defeat in any other way than by never presuming to answer the Essay.

I have just recently read the book *Miracles* by the popular writer C.S. Lewis (1898-1963). It was a timely read because of the widespread scepticism today. Lewis moved a long way from his once atheistic position. I also studied a lot of other articles on this subject. One of them had this to say: "I have no intellectual problems with the miracles of Jesus. I would have problems with Jesus if it were not for His miracles. What he did to attest His deity is exactly what I would expect of one who claimed to face a sceptical world as the Son of God. Those poor souls who are always talking about the problems raised by miracles put their mental finger on the wrong sore spot. Their problem is with God, not with His alleged acts. When they get their directional finders tuned in the right direction they will cease to be trouble by distorted images of infinity".

LIFE THROUGH THE SON

What is life? "Union with nature, or union with God, is life, separation from nature or from God is death". I think this is the best definition of life and death I have heard. We read "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My word and believes on Him that sent Me has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (5:24). Jesus' words are clear. A person can in this world be alive and dead at the same time. A person can be physically alive (in union with nature), but spiritually dead (separated from God). The important thing, therefore, is to come to the Son for that spiritual life. We can say this. There is life more than human, possessed by every Christian, so that the Christian person has at the same time the human and the Divine life.

Life is in the spirit. The body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). The person without the Spirit of Christ is also dead.

The consequence of spiritual death is eternal death or eternal separation from God. This latter hardly bears thinking about and, yet, the word of God reveals quite a bit about it. For example, "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12). "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Jesus said: "I am the bread of life" (6:35). the Jews, of course, had once eaten of the manna from heaven, but the true manna of heaven is Jesus Himself (6:32,33). Eating this manna (Jesus), one will never hunger (6:35). Many of us reading this article have never really experienced physical hunger, not like countless millions in Africa, for example. But I venture to say that today the Western World is full of starving people, who are really pretty desperate. Only Jesus can satisfy their needs. Remember, it was Jesus Himself who once said: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

MANY DISCIPLES DESERT JESUS

I know of a lot of disciples in my day who have deserted Jesus. This is nothing new. Jesus experienced it at first hand (6:66). Their action then must have pained Him greatly. How could people leave the One who has the words of eternal life? it can only be put down to the work of Satan, whose power and influence in this world should never be underestimated. However, we should rejoice that Jesus overcame him, and we can too, if we but put our trust in the Master. Brothers and sisters in Christ, Satan will do everything

to drive us from Jesus. He will also do everything to drive us from one another. But our love must remain strong at all times no matter the pressure he puts us under. Take comfort from the later words of John when he wrote: "...greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

JUDAS ISCARIOT

I recently watched a television documentary which dealt with the Frank family in war-time Amsterdam. they were hidden from the Nazis for many months, but finally betrayed by a person or persons unknown. Jesus foreknew He would one day be betrayed. He knew also the name of the betrayer - Judas Iscariot, one from His own group of apostles. Personally, I can hardly take it in at times that a man so close to Jesus was willing to turn Him over to the Jewish authorities for thirty pieces of silver, and thus perform one of the most dastardly deeds in the history of the world.

The work of the traitor was the subject of prophecy. "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). "And I said unto them, if you think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver" (Zechariah 11:12). God, of course, sees the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end because he is not subject to time and space as we are. But foreknowledge is not foreordination. Judas had the freedom to do good or to do evil. he choose the latter and paid the consequences. He died knowing that he was fully responsible for all his actions. His story is one of the most tragic in history.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

BREVITIES

Do not approach a man for the sin which he has committed, when God has forgiven him.

ROUND THE WORLD IN 360 DAYS

Over the years the world has walked through our house. Many have asked us to visit them, particularly from Singapore. In our wildest dreams we never thought we would be able to do it. We dearly wanted to revisit brethren we met in India 13 years ago and also to see our son and grandchildren in the USA. Thanks to being made redundant and to the Tax man accepting that he was overcharging by £2,000, with the help and promise of hospitality in many places, we fulfilled our dream. Gretchen and I flipped, packed our bags and took our hook around the world from January 1994 to January 1995. Just like that.

Now we are settling down and reflecting on all the wonderful brothers and sisters we met. We are overwhelmed with gratitude for the love and kindness we received everywhere. We experienced close fellowship with brothers and sisters of each race and nation. It is wonderful how love, flowing from the cross of Jesus, binds all in one.

We saw, first-hand, dedicated brothers and sisters in India struggling to alleviate suffering, and telling lost humanity about Jesus. We related our experience as we continued our travels. We saw the love of brothers and sisters in Christ spontaneously extend to those of other nations, even to those whom they had not seen.

The generosity of brothers and sisters in Singapore and Australia has enabled Dr. Alexander to install a state-of-the-art operating theatre light in Philip's Hospital, Madras. There this wonderful Christian family and their assistants do free surgery to all who need it. The lamp will help them to do it more easily. It is a wonderful bond of fellowship with this highly-skilled family of surgeons that for 25 years has unstintingly given free treatment to the impoverished of Madras.

Fellowship from Brothers and Sisters of the churches in Byron, Georgia, USA,

and here at Bramhall Green, is helping Brother Paul Subhan and his assistant to provide beds for the trainee nurses at the converted British Raj bungalows. There they provide free medical treatment for the poor of the surrounding villages in Nandavaram, Andhra Pradesh. They struggle along with minimal equipment. There are no beds in the wards. They have nothing to serve as an ambulance. Except for local homeopathic medicines they rely on dated drugs sent from the USA. Even so, gratitude for the work they do has turned the hostility of the surrounding Muslim villages into positive support. They now want Paul and his colleagues to start a school for their children. They trust him to educate their children. There is sufficient land available for this, but no funds.

Nearly everywhere we went, in India, in far eastern countries, in Australia, and in the USA, I was invited to preach and also talk about Islam. Many have asked for printed copies of our tracts and booklet. We like to supply copies of the booklet *Compendium on Islam*, the tracts and the IBM compatible disks, free to any brothers and sisters who wish to introduce Muslims to Jesus. Many in the third world cannot afford to pay. Sadly our bank account for this work is very low, less than £70. So far we have had one quotation for printing the *Compendium*. This was £2,430 for printing and hot glue binding a thousand copies. On top of printing costs there will be the cost of distribution.

Also we get lots of correspondence reference Islam and requests for our material on Islam from Africa, India and other countries. Sister Marjorie Purcell does Trojan work responding to these where she can. Complex queries are referred to me. Currently I am out of work so I am able to give more attention to these and to reworking our tracts and booklet.

We are grateful for all who have helped us in this work in the past. It has enabled many to reach out to Muslims and several

have given their lives to the Lord. Now we are appealing again to those who can help fund this ongoing work. Those who can please contact myself or:-

Brother and Sister Purcell,
3 Dale Ave., Bramhall,
STOCKPORT, Cheshire SK7 2JP.
Telephone: 0161-439 1758

Whether you can help in this way or not, please pray for the efforts made by devoted brothers and sisters in Christ, who take the knowledge of the cross of our Lord Jesus to the Muslim, the ancestor worshipper, the Hindu and the Buddhist. As you know, all need Jesus. Without Him all are lost.

If you want copies of our information we can let you have it on IBM compatible disk. Please send us a first-class stamp and two formatted disks. let us know if you want to be on our mailing list for printed copies.

We value the privilege of having met brothers and sisters in many nations. We love and miss them, dearly. you might not have the joy of meeting them in this life but there is a wonderful reunion awaiting the saints. So come Lord Jesus.

Alan Ashurst,
60 Kenwood Road, Stretford,
MANCHESTER, M32 8PT, UK.
Telephone: +44 (0) 161-865 4242

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. For how long did Samson judge Israel?
2. What was the sixth commandment of the ten?
3. Who was Hosea's wife?
4. What was Zacchaeus's occupation?
5. In which city did Paul ask Titus to spend the winter with him?
6. Who was Jeremiah's father?
7. Who closed the door of the ark?
8. Where did Lazarus live?
9. How many brothers did the rich man in Hades have?
10. Who was Dinah's mother?

OBITUARY

Slamannan: The church in Slamannan is sad to announce the passing of Sister Frances Wilson, Inverness, April 24th aged 43 years.

Sister Frances was a regular and faithful attender at the church. Some wish they had the strength and tenacity of our dear departed sister.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to John, Niall and Graeme, family, relatives and friends who mourn her loss

Our sister has fought the good fight and now reaps the just reward.

The funeral service took place in Inverness on 28th April and was well attended. Brother W. Pirie, Buckie officiated at the service and Bro. Sneddon, Canada, assisted.

A word of thanks to all brethren and friends who attended at the cemetery.

Grace Sneddon,
(Secretary).

THANKS

John, Niall and Graeme would like to thank all those who sent cards and letters and expressed their sympathies to them in their recent great loss.

The task is beyond them to acknowledge each individual card and letter, and they were greatly uplifted by them all; and would like to say "thank you" to everybody concerned.

Grace Sneddon,
(Secretary).

GHANA APPEAL

Again we sincerely thank those who have contributed to the growth of the Lord's Kingdom in Ghana and encourage the contribution of the vital work. The results have been extremely encouraging and the number of congregations continues to grow. This as we have said before has been a combined operation for our Ghanaian brethren have an outstanding

zeal and enthusiasm to spread the world, bring others to Christ and extend God's Kingdom.

In the May report I said that we would be sending tracts to Takoradi, that was a mistake, I meant to say Huhunya. These tracts have now been sent. In the last week, we were informed that the printing of Twi Bibles were now available. After the Bible Society had taken their allocation there were only 197 left and we purchased 172 (again at half price) with the funds available. Anyone wishing to help with the postage of these Bibles (delivery is due in the coming week) please contact me. It costs about £1.00 to send each Bible. Postage for the 2000 tracts exceeded £100.

It will please those who have contributed to the Ghana Appeal to know that we have now received in excess of £53,000 since this appeal began in mid 1988.

Please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 ODU. Telephone: (01383) 728624.

Seen on church Bulletin Boards "God is alive and well - Visiting Hours each Sunday 11 a.m."

VITAL IN RELIGION

Christianity is a quality of life and not a set of theological beliefs, not measured by correctness of creed, but by the uprightness of his life.

Jesus said that we should let our lights so shine that others seeing our good works might glorify God, (Matthew 5:16).

The great tragedy of the church is that the secondary things such as creeds, sacraments, rituals and ecclesiastical regulations so often have taken the place of the primary in religion, which is living in the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth and learning from His teaching how to live usefully and abundantly with love for God and for one's fellowman.

What Jesus did equaled what he taught, Acts 1:1.

-
1. 20 years (Judges 16:31).
 2. You shall not kill (Exodus 20:13)
 3. Corner (Hosea 1:3)
 4. Tax collector (Luke 19:2)
 5. Nicopolis (Titus 3:12)
 6. Hilkiah (Jeremiah 1:1)
 7. God (Genesis 7:16)
 8. Bethany (John 11:1)
 9. Five (Luke 16:28)
 10. Leah (Genesis 30:21)

ANSWERS

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