

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

It's frightening to think that almost everything we say, or do, forms an example to those around us, for good or ill. It's also frightening to realise that those who observe us, and the example we set, may be resolving within themselves that they never want to be like us. Every day we encounter examples; and sometimes these examples involve bad manners; or selfishness; or discourtesy; or dishonesty; or arrogance; or duplicity; or greed etc. and we resolve never to be like those giving the bad example: forgetting, of course, that others may be seeing similar traits in us and vowing never ever to be like us. Obviously the reverse is also true, and a good example may instil within others a desire to emulate that good example. And so, whether consciously or otherwise, every person; *in what they say* (and even in how they say it) and *in what they do* (or fail to do), provides an example of some kind, good or bad. On balance, it must be true to say that a bad example is much stronger than a good one, and, as we look at the state of the world it seems very clear that man prefers to follow a bad example rather than a good one; i.e. it is much easier to be bad than to be good (apparent since the Garden of Eden).

Politicians wring their hands in anguish at the sorry condition of the country: at the violence, crime and indolence; at the crammed prisons and the empty churches, and seem to be totally unaware that for decades now, each successive generation of our bright-eyed children have been (and still are) reared on a steady, daily T.V. diet of brutalising films of sex, violence, drugs and sadism. Small children and adolescents alike, are educated on moral issues, not so much in the classroom as by their regular T.V. "Soaps" where lies, deception, violence, bad language, intrigue, homosexuality, adultery and casual "sleeping together" are portrayed as being *the norm* and perfectly usual family behaviour. These "Soaps" also incite and encourage young children to be disrespectful to the elderly and their teachers; and to be disobedient to their parents. Any character in such "Soaps" who presumes to be religious, or who speaks up against evil deeds, is usually portrayed as being, at best a humbug, but usually as a slightly unhinged eccentric. Thus the broad-ranging EXAMPLE given to the British public on their T.V. sets, is, in my humble view, very largely responsible for the very sad state of the nation: notwithstanding the claims of the government that "there is no evidence" that such is the case. Our children have been abused by T.V. for decades, and we are now reaping the harvest, and will increasingly do so.

These children are continually bombarded by BAD EXAMPLES from all sides;

certainly from T.V. (and many children have their own T.V. sets in their bedrooms); from newspapers and glossy magazines; from bookstalls; from many parents; from T.V. personalities; from some teachers; from clergymen; from politicians; and, it has to be said, even from the royal family. The grim results show the sheer power of example.

#### THE NATURE OF AN EXAMPLE

Things have greatly changed in the classrooms of our schools these days, but when I was at school little boys and girls were to be seen but not heard. In schools today the children chat during lessons and call the teacher by his or her first name. I was not long at school before I readily understood what the teacher meant when she said "*I'll make an example of the very next person who talks.*" Teachers in those days meant what they said and after teacher had "made an example" of somebody the rest of the children were convinced and had no intention of becoming example number two. Examples are very effective - much more effective than mere words and can be for good or ill. An evil example is just as effective for ill as a fine example is for good. Little children naturally depend greatly upon examples being given to them and are inclined to pick up, and copy, the virtues and faults of those close to them. Their hungry little minds and sharp little eyes are constantly absorbing the vast quantities of information continually bombarding them.

An example could, I suppose, be described *as a visual aid* - a visual aid that is, to the understanding of some truth or principle. I think that it is an accepted fact that the eye is as good a facility for receiving information as the ear, and perhaps much better than the ear. Thus if a motorist stops and asks me the way to Manchester I would have some difficulty in explaining it to him, but I would have little difficulty in indicating the route on a map. The engineer would be lost without his blue-print, just as the architect would be lost without his plans and elevations. Picture magazines sell well today because the population of today seem to prefer looking at pictures to reading writing. Thus it has been truly said that although man spends little time reading the writing in the Bible, he spends a considerable time critically eyeing up the comings and goings of those who profess to be following the Bible, and is quick to notice the kind of examples given. It is true that God teaches through His word and if we want to learn the truth we must read the writing, but nevertheless God extols the merit of good example, and God's word teems with examples, good ones and bad ones. Some men in God's word left an example to be avoided and some to be emulated.

#### EXAMPLES IN THE O.T.

Paul reminds us (in Rom. 15:4) "**That whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope**" Why is the O.T. suitable for "our learning"? Because it is punctuated, from Genesis to Malachi, **with examples**, and with personalities who left examples, which were either good or bad, but mainly bad. Early on, for instance, we have Cain's murder of Abel, an event referred to many times thereafter. Paul gives a similar recommendation of the value of the O.T. when to the Corinthians, he says, "**Now, all these things happened unto them FOR EXAMPLES and they ARE WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION upon whom the ends of the world are come**". (1 Cor. 10:11). "All these things" says Paul, "happened unto them" (the Israelites) as **EXAMPLES**. What "things" were these? It is worthwhile quoting the whole passage. "**But with many of them (Israelites) God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.**"

Now these things were **OUR EXAMPLES**, to the intent that we would not lust after evil things, as they lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, **The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.** Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for **ENSAMPLES**: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Cor.10.:5-11) Thus God "*made an example*" of all of those Israelites who lusted after evil things; and because of their idolatry; and because of their fornication and their murmurings; and because they tempted God. These examples are now *our* examples. "**Now these things are OUR EXAMPLES to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.**" And, of course, *the merit* of the example is not confined to being a warning of things to be avoided, but illustrates *the kind of response* that can be expected from God to evil doings; i.e. swift and awful retribution.

Jude (and Peter) share Paul's estimate of the value of the examples in the O.T., and uses some of these examples as a warning, not only to those "**Certain men, crept in unawares**", but indeed to us all. Jude says, (4-7) "**For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estates, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgement of the great day.**

Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, **ARE SET FORTH AS AN EXAMPLE, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.**" And so, although God has *rescued* Israel from bondage in Egypt, He nevertheless *destroyed* a vast number of those who proved themselves unworthy. Even the very angels who had forsaken the angelic world, God has reserved in captivity until Judgement Day; and in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, God had just wiped them from the face of the earth. Thus these are all *strong examples which declare that God is not to be trifled with*. Jude continues his theme and says, "**Woe unto them**" (the "certain men crept in unawares") for they have gone in the way of Cain (i.e. followed his bad example) and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward; and perished in the gainsaying of Korah." Clearly many other O.T. personalities left us examples worthy of consideration had we the space and time: i.e. Abraham, Moses, David, Joseph, Jezebel Daniel Job, Noah, Enoch, Samson, Solomon, Jonah, Lot, Esau and so on.

Jesus, Himself, said, "**Remember Lot's wife.**"

To offset any impression that God *confines* His activities to the punishment of evil, we should take notice of the fact that, conversely, God is very pitiful and of tender mercy to those who strive to do good. James says, (5:10) "**Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for AN EXAMPLE of suffering affliction and of patience. Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is**

very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Certainly God was not inattentive to the plight of men such as the O.T. prophets, as they suffered for their efforts, and, in the case of Job, rewarded him most handsomely for his patience under severe trial.

#### THE EXAMPLES OF PAUL AND OTHERS

Paul was always very much aware of the power of example, and was sure that everything *he* said and did, would be picked up by those around him. Accordingly, he made sure that he acted blamelessly, and was confident enough to say to the Philippians, "Brethren, be ye followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as YE HAVE US FOR AN ENSAMPLE. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.") We ask ourselves if we could dare to invite others to follow us, and to walk exactly as we walk.

Again, to the Christians at Thessalonica, Paul could say, "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us; for we behaved ourselves not disorderly among you. Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail, night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any you. Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves AN EXAMPLE unto you to follow us." (2 Thess.3:9) Just previously, Paul had been able to congratulate those same Thessalonians for their evangelical zeal and for the wonderful example they had set to other churches. He said, (1 Thess.1:7) "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit. So that ye were EXAMPLES to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing."

And so Paul knew the importance of example, and recommended that the Philippians follow him (his example) just as he followed Christ (Christ's example). Indeed, Paul hoped that all Christians would present a good example to the world, and to the young evangelist Timothy (his son in the faith) said, "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou AN EXAMPLE to the believers, in word, in conduct, in faith and in purity." (1 Tim.4:12). In essence, Timothy was to give a lead and a blameless example in every sense, both inside and outside the Church: (in WORD, CONDUCT, FAITH and PURITY). Elders, as well as evangelists, as we can imagine, were also expected to give a wholesome example to the brethren, and Peter exhorted the elders to "feed the flock of God, not of constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre. Neither as being Lords over God's heritage, but BEING ENSAMPLES to the flock." (1 Peter 5:3).

Clearly the apostles recognised the great impact example would have upon the churches.

#### THE GREAT EXEMPLAR

The teaching of Jesus was, most certainly, embodied in *words* ("words whereby we must be saved") but Jesus also exploited the power of teaching by *actions*: by *deeds*; by *example*. Indeed, Jesus was the Great Exemplar. Jesus was, in Himself, the great visual-aid by which we might understand God; as He said to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father". As suggested previously, one picture is worth a thousand words, and if this is so, perhaps one demonstration is worth a thousand pictures. Obviously Jesus could have spoken at length to the disciples on the matter of humility

(and perhaps did), for we know that they were dull on the uptake at times), but once He had given them a demonstration, hopefully they had embraced the lesson. I refer, of course, to the last Passover and to the fact that while the disciples seem pre-occupied with which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom, Jesus quietly took water and a towel and carefully washed the feet of all the disciples, saying, "**If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you AN EXAMPLE that ye should do, as I have done to you.**" How could such an example be lost upon anybody, and certainly the disciples must have found it difficult to forget the experience.

From time to time Jesus commented upon the examples given by others and His observations should, of course, receive our close consideration. One one occasion He was so impressed with the actions of a poor widow that he called the attention of His disciples to the fact that in casting her mite into the treasury she had given God everything she owned. He commented also on the example of the one leper (a Samaritan) who returned to thank Jesus for his cure, and the other nine lepers (Jews) who didn't bother. The Scribes and the Pharisees presented an altogether different picture, of course, and brought scathing comments on the image they presented. Even in the parables given by Jesus we have examples presented to us which leave an indelible impression upon the mind. For instance, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the example shown by those "**who passed by on the other side**" is so powerful that it would prevent us from ever behaving in any way similar. The example given by the actual Good Samaritan, on the other hand, is even stronger, for good. Nearly all the parables present us with examples upon which to reflect: the *indifference* of the slothful servant who buries the talent: the *initiative* of the unjust steward: the *persistence* of the importunate widow: the *ingratitude* of the unmerciful servant; the *insincerity* of the two sons, and so on. All of these present a strong impression on the mind and we should allow ourselves to profit from them, for that was indeed their purpose.

Jesus very consciously made sure that all He said, and all that He did, would form an infallible guide not only to His contemporaries, but also to every succeeding generation: whether it be in His walking seventy miles to be immersed; or His refusal to take reprisals against His enemies; or in the bottomless depths of His humility; or in His friendship to the hostile; or in His endless good works; or in His great self sacrifice (in the giving of His life for an evil world). Truly "**Christ also suffered for us LEAVING US AN EXAMPLE, that we should follow in His steps.**" (1 Peter 2:21).

### CONCLUSION

In summing up it seems obvious that we are (1) expected to profit from the good examples left to us in the O.T. and the N.T. (and to be warned by the bad ones), and (2) We, ourselves, are expected to show a good example on our own account. God has not left us in any doubt as to His abhorrence of evil, or of the pleasure He takes in righteousness.

As stated at the beginning, it is quite unnerving to think that whatever we say or do projects an image and an example to those with whom we come into contact, outside the Church or within it. If we are casual in our approach to Church attendance then that can't fail to show. If we are fairly indifferent to the efforts of the church in evangelization, then that too will be the example we will provide. Likewise, as church members, we can't avoid projecting an image in visiting the sick, in giving, in encouraging the downhearted, caring for the weak, in good works, in personal integrity

and in our speech. The responsibility is considerable, even awesome. As we have seen, Paul exhorted Timothy to be an example to all, in word, conduct, faith and purity. The world has been seduced by the devil and our children are being shown all the wrong examples: good ones being in very short supply.

As Peter said, "**Christ suffered for us leaving us AN EXAMPLE that we should follow in His steps.**" Yes, Jesus left us so many examples and we must follow in His steps. It is difficult to live without leaving some kind of example, and we should strive to leave a good example; (1) because we love God; and (2) because our salvation depends upon it; and (3) because others may follow the example we give. Surely this illustrates the power, the influence and the ultimate effect of every example: for good or for ill.

EDITOR.

## DOES ANYONE CARE?

Physically exhausted, mentally depressed, spiritually searching, the Psalmist cries out for help in Psalm 142. Devoted loyalty to his king had only resulted in his being a wanted man due to the insane jealousy of Saul. Innocent of the charges against him, he had no chance to defend himself in court. He could only flee for his life.

These circumstances would likely make a despondent man of the most courageous. It was perfectly normal that at times David should feel that he had not a single friend in the world. The world seemed to conspire with Saul against him. In this moment of intense loneliness and despair it was only in God that strength could be found. We hear him crying out, "*I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul*" (Ps. 142:4). It is only to God he feels he can turn for assurance and refuge.

Likely, very near each of us today is one who is overwhelmed with a mood of loneliness and despondency just like David. Is it not a sad thing that this could happen with Christians in the very neighbourhood of such people? It does not take a Gallup poll to know that such people do exist and they do not feel spiritual help is available from those around them who profess to be followers of Christ. This is due in large measure to the failure of Christian people to express compassion and concern in their daily lives. This ought not to be!

Both anger and grief are attributed to Jesus as a result of this type of attitude on the part of the religious Jews of his day (Mark 3:1-5). Those people were far more concerned about giving proper consideration to the traditions of their fathers than they were to caring for the needs of suffering men and women. Before we become critical of these Pharisees we had best consider our own record in similar circumstances.

The good works of Christ's disciples are to cause men to glorify the Father (Matt. 5:16). As we look at the lost world today and express despair at the lack of spiritual concern of people around us, it is quite possible that our failure to express compassion is directly responsible for their lack of concern.

Of all the people in the world it is only the Church that has direct responsibility to bring men to Christ and carry out the Great Commission. The general lack of concern for lost souls is a reflection on the lack of compassion commonly found among professed Christians. Perhaps many have not stopped to think that such things as neglect of worship services, inadequate support of various aspects of the Church and being so pre-occupied as to be unable to be an integral part of the activities of the

Church indicate a lack of real concern for the unsaved. It is inconsistent to profess concern for the lost souls of the world while being unconcerned about the above mentioned things.

### COMPASSION

Since even the casual student of the Bible knows that compassion is an important part of the Christian life it seems appropriate to raise the question, "**Why are we hardhearted and unconcerned?**" There are a number of things that are involved in the answer to this question. One thing that is so obvious is the preoccupation we have with the cares of the world and the responsibilities of life. These things so easily occupy all our available time that there is simply no time left for concern for others.

A second cause for our being hardhearted and unconcerned is that we have forgotten what it feels like to be without God and without hope and without peace and the assurance of heaven as our eternal home. One of the great dangers of having been reared in a Christian home and having known God all our lives is the fact that we have no empathy for the individual who does not know God. We simply do not know the terror of being without God and therefore are not concerned enough for those who are in this position.

Thirdly, we are often ignorant about the actual spiritual condition of those who know not Jesus Christ and who have not a faith in God. Maybe we are vaguely aware of the fact they are lost, but we do not really grasp what it means to be without God. Shut up in our fortresses, associating only with the saved, avoiding carefully those mired deep in immoral conduct, we just cannot visualize their real state.

Possibly we just have not really grasped the concern God has for lost souls. God loved sinners enough to send his only begotten Son to die for them. How can we fail to have compassion and concern for lost men if God cared so much? Obviously we cannot really grasp the extent of God's concern and remain unconcerned ourselves.

### CONCERN

The Church today needs to promote a campaign to increase concern. We need to let the concern of the Saviour capture and overflow our hearts. "**But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd**" (Matt. 9:36). With penetrating insight Jesus was able to see the heart condition of these people. He suffered for them. He wept over them. He knew that people were following a pathway that was going to lead to failure and disappointment. He knew the fate that awaited them and his compassion moved him to do all within his power to save them from the ill-fated destiny of dying under the condemnation and guilt of sin.

Surely we realise that without Christ men are lost (Luke 19:10). Man has no hope without Christ (Eph. 2:12). Sonship cannot come to man apart from Christ (Gal. 3:26). Without Christ our unsaved friends will miss heaven. What kind of friend would we be if we knew how someone we knew could enjoy a trip to Hawaii but we refused to tell him? How much more our lack of compassion shows when we refuse to tell that friend how he can go to heaven. In short, without Christ man is a complete failure and it is a total lack of compassion that will let us fail to tell the good news far and wide.

David indicted his contemporaries with being unconcerned about his welfare. Jesus was both grieved and angered by the hardheartedness of the religious leaders of his day. If we would be better than they, then we must let compassionate concern for lost men taken command of us.

In a day when millions are wandering in sin, lost without direction of life and feeling that no man cares for them it is high time that Christians let it be known that we do care and that we are willing to sacrifice time, money and our very selves to help those in need. Some men need material help while others need simply a kind word in an hour of trial. All men need to know that they have a Saviour and Christians must care enough to present them the very best (Jesus Christ). Does anyone care?

G. COOK.

## "CHRIST, OUR ADVOCATE"

(1 John 1:8-2:2)

In John's day false teachers known as Gnostics were troubling the Churches of Christ, Gnostics derived their name from *gnosis* the Greek word for knowledge. They taught that they had superior knowledge to that of other Christians due to a special enlightenment which they had experienced. Further, under the influence of Eastern religions, they considered all matter evil. Only the spirit was regarded as good. Since the human body is material, Gnostics reasoned, it is evil. It therefore mattered little what one did with his body. He could commit all manner of immorality with it and yet maintain purity of spirit. The logical consequence of such reasoning was the denial of sin or the possibility of a Christian committing sin and a rejection of the need for the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. In the passage under consideration and its broader context, the aged apostle John refutes this erroneous and deadly heresy.

The spiritual posterity of Gnostics can be found today in groups such as Christian Scientists who deny the reality of sin, and certain Holiness groups who affirm that Christians are incapable of sinning. It is also found in some Calvinistic groups who, in order to bolster their doctrine of "once saved, always saved," affirm that whatever a saved person does with his body does not affect his spirit at all. He can, if once saved, actually engaged in acts of immorality and never lose his salvation.

### DENIAL OF SIN

Some were saying that they had no sin (1:8). Sin here is spoken of in an abstract sense, not in the sense of specific acts committed in violation of God's will. John said that two consequences stem from such a denial of sin: 1) "**We deceive ourselves**", and 2) "**The truth is not in us.**" It is sad for a person to be deceived by others but sadder still that one would deceive himself. Those who say they have no sin actually fly in the face of the facts to the contrary. They have persuaded themselves that they are sinless. For one to lie to himself is for him to be utterly devoid of the truth.

### CONFESSION OF SIN

One must acknowledge that he is a sinner and confess his sins, specific acts of disobedience, to the Lord (1:9). The pioneer preachers used to emphasize that God has two laws of pardon, one for the alien sinner which requires faith, repentance, confession of Christ, and baptism in order to the remission of sins, and one for those who have obeyed the gospel thereby being added by the Lord to his Church but who have wandered back into sin. This "second law of pardon" requires repentance and confession in order to receive God's forgiveness (Acts 8:12, 13; 18-24). If an erring Christian in penitence comes to God confessing his sins, he has the assurance that the same blood of Jesus which washed his sins away in baptism will now cleanse his sins committed as a Christian.



To deny that one has sinned is to call God a liar, for God in his word has warned numerous times that a child of His can sin and fall from grace (1:10). Please note the following passages which clearly teach the possibility of apostasy (1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 5:4; 1 Tim. 1:19,20; Heb. 6:4-6; 2 Pet. 2:20-22).

### CHRIST, OUR SINLESS ADVOCATE

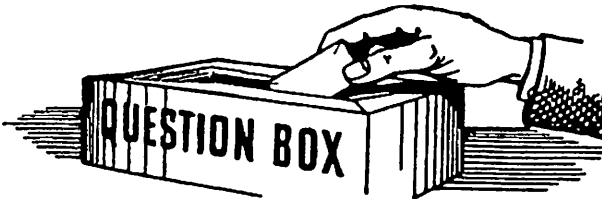
John, the aged apostle, writes to Christians, his beloved children in the faith, and pleads that they keep themselves from sin, yet knowing the frailty of human nature, he is aware of the possibility that they can and may sin (2:1). In that case he points them to our Advocate, Jesus Christ. An advocate is a lawyer who represents one on trial in a court of law, He stands before the judge to plead his client's case. Jesus, not Mary, not any human being, be he called pope, priest, preacher, or president, stands between God and the Christian. Jesus is our Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). He is our High Priest (Heb. 4:15). He is deity, yet has lived as a man and understands man's weaknesses and temptations. ". . . **He ever liveth to make intercession for them**" (Heb. 7:25).

Not only is Christ our Advocate, he is also the propitiation for our sins (2:2). To propitiate means "to appease, to render favourable." By his atoning death, Jesus has taken away our sins, thus removing the barrier to fellowship with God. Jesus died not only for Christians but for the sins of the whole world. However, the benefits of this salvation are available only to those who comply with the conditions which he himself has laid down (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matt. 10:32; Mark 16:16).

In the Church of the third and fourth centuries there arose a false teaching based on a misunderstanding of the purpose of baptism. Because baptism is for the remission of sins, some taught that if a Christian sinned following baptism, there was no more forgiveness for him. It is said that it was for this reason that the Emperor Constantine put off his baptism until the day before his death. Somehow believers in that time had missed the wonderful teaching of First John in this passage and did not avail themselves of the "second law of pardon."

As Christians, we are privileged indeed to have continual access to the cleansing blood of Jesus knowing that we can approach our Advocate and High Priest and find grace to help in time of need!

R. RUTHERFORD.




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Conducted by  
Ian S. Davidson

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### "Why did God create the universe?"

The word universe is from two Latin words: *unus* meaning "one" and *vertere* meaning "to turn". Just as there is one God so there is but one universe, which really is a system of systems which are "separate, but united; distinct, though amalgamated; heterogeneous, though homogeneous" (Alexander Campbell).

The universe is not a product of chance, but design. It was created by Almighty God - a fact clearly revealed in the Scriptures. **"In the beginning God created the heaven**

and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is and rested the seventh day..." (Exodus 20:11). "You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you" (Nehemiah 9:6, N.I.V.). "He stretches out the north over the empty place and hangs the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). "In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands" (Psalm 102:25, N.I.V.). "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. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). "God who made the world and all things therein, seeing He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands..." (Acts 17:24). "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). There are many other passages which could be quoted here, but these suffice for our purpose.

### BIG BANG

Many people today reject creationism. Many scientists are included in their ranks. The majority see the existence of the universe as the result of a Big Bang. (what caused the Big Bang? What was there before the Big Bang? These are questions that immediately spring to mind.) This theory is a popular, secular explanation for the origin of the universe. Donald B. DeYoung in his book *Astronomy and the Bible* explains the theory thus: "the process supposedly began with the explosion of a nugget, or 'kernel', of mass energy, about fifteen billion years ago. As the energetic radiation spread outward, temperatures slowly cooled enough for hydrogen and helium atoms to form. About ten billion years ago, the first stars began to form from the cooling gas as in the young universe. This star-forming process eventually gave rise to the Milky Way and other galaxies. When these initial stars had sufficiently aged, some of them became supernovae explosions. The resulting star fragments later recombined into new stars to repeat the formation disintegration process. Our sun is said to be a third-generation star, a relatively recent addition to the family of stars, and to have formed around five billion years ago. Other star fragments are thought to provide the material for planets and life forms, including people". Clearly, this theory is completely contrary to God's revelation. I agree with Dr. Henry Morris (creation scientist) in his declaration that such theories are part of "the long war against God".

### LIGHT YEARS

The universe staggers the mind. I believe it speaks of God's eternity, immensity and infinity. The distances in the universe are so great that scientists talk in terms of "light-years" to describe them. Remember a light year is 5.58 times  $10^{12}$  miles or roughly 6 trillion miles (about 10 trillion kilometres). A light-year is also the approximate total distance that all motor vehicles on earth travel during the course of a year. Alpha Centauri (the nearest star to the earth after the sun) is 4.3 light years away, which is a distance 250,000 times greater than that to the sun. Our normal spacecraft would take 100,000 years to reach Alpha Centauri. And that is only a drop in the proverbial ocean! Consider the following statistics: the moon is 1.3 light seconds from the earth; the sun, 8.3 light minutes; Pluto (the most distant planet in our solar system) is 5.3 light hours away; Andromeda Galaxy is 2 million light years from earth; and Quasars are 10 billion

light years distant. In the "light" of all this, we can surely say of God: "How Great Thou Art!"

### WHY

A lot of modern scientists have a problem with the question; *why?* I do not think this was the case with the founders of modern science. I agree with Frances Schaeffer when he wrote in his book *How Should We then Live?* It has been said that seventeenth-century scientists limited themselves to the *how* without interest in the *why*. This is not true. Newton, like other early scientists, had no problem with the *why* because he began with the existence of a personal; God who had created the universe. . . . Newton's intense interest in the Bible came out of his view that the same God who had created the universe had given people truth in the Bible. And his view that the Bible contained the same sort of truth as could be learned from a study of the universe. Newton and these other scientists would have been astonished at a science obsessed with how the universe functions, but professionally failing to ask the question 'Why?'

But back to our question: Why did God create the universe? Alexander Campbell in his book *The Christian System* has written: "One God, one system of nature, one universe. That universe is composed of innumerable systems, which, in perfect concert, move forward in subordination to one supreme end. That one end of all things is the sovereign and infinite pleasure of Him who inhabits eternity and animates the universe with His presence." His words are in accordance with God's Word. In the book of Revelation we read: "And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him: and they were all full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. And then those living creatures gave glory and honour and thanks to Him who sat on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, four and twenty elders (certain angels) fall down before Him who sat on the throne and worship Him who lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for you have created all things and for your pleasure they are and were created" (4:8-1). So the answer is clear: the universe and everything in it was created for *the pleasure* of God - and that includes you and me! If we are not living to please God then we have missed the whole point of our existence. And I would add this. The universe is also created for man's enjoyment. He is the crown of God's creation. He was made in the image and likeness of God and was given dominion over the earth. "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth has He given to the children of men" (Psalm 115:16). Enjoy it all while you can!

### CONCLUSION

Finally it is clear from God's word that one day this universe will be destroyed and there will be inaugurated a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness (2 Peter 3:10-13). The present universe had a beginning and will have an end. I believe the fall of man has brought about its inevitable destruction. Carl Sagan, scientist and atheist, died recently. He was author of the famous work *Cosmos* for which incidentally, Vangelis wrote a brilliant soundtrack. Sagan declared: "The cosmos is all that is or ever will be." He could not have been more wrong. For him it is now too late to acknowledge the Creator of the universe. Truly, to know the Lord is to know what it is all about.

(All questions, meantime, to Ian Davidson, 21 Glenlyon,  
St. Leonards, East Kilbride. G74 2JJ)

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

|        |                |                 |
|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| Aug 3  | Isaiah 53      | Mark 15:1-20    |
| Aug 10 | Deut 21:15-23  | Mark 15:21-41   |
| Aug 17 | Job 19:19-29   | Mark 15:42-16:8 |
| Aug 24 | 2 Kings 9:1-14 | Mark 16:9-20    |
| Aug 31 | Neh. 1         | 1 Thess. 1-2:9  |

### JESUS BEFORE PILATE

I have recently returned from Rome. It is, of course, one of the great cities of the world. Here was the centre of one of the greatest empires in history. I write this article from Scotland - a land that was partially conquered by the Romans. I find it incredible to think that Palestine - all those miles away - was also subject to Rome. The government of such a huge area was an almighty task. The Romans must have been brilliant administrators to hold everything together for so long.

Pilate was part of the great administrative team. He was officially *procurator* of the province of Judea, the control of which demanded the utmost political skill because of the rebellious nature of the Jews. It is interesting to note that Pilate was directly responsible, not to the Roman senate, but to the Emperor himself. He must have been under considerable and constant pressure. He held office for ten years.

The encounter between Pilate and Jesus is a most memorable one. Here we have a representative of the son of the gods (Caesar) meeting THE Son of God. Pilate was not stupid and knew that an innocent man was before him (15:10). It really was his intention to let Jesus go (Acts 3:13). However, the Jewish leaders put him under so much pressure that, in the end, he caved in to their demands. Even the release of Barabbas, who was guilty of murder and insurrection (15:7), failed to suppress their evil intentions. On the great

judgement day to come, Pilate will find himself before the throne of Jesus. It will all be so different. Then, the guilty will not be freed and the innocent will not be condemned by the righteous Judge of all.

### THE CRUCIFIXION

It was cruel, tortuous, barbaric, brutal, and inhumane punishment and death that our Lord endured at Golgotha or Calvary. To make matters worse, Satan saw to it that Jesus was placed between two malefactors when crucified. In the eyes of the world, He was but a common criminal - the lowest of the low. Why was He willing to go this far? We read: ". . . **who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame. . .**" (Hebrews 12.2). In other words, the way to glory was by the way of the cross. One commentator has written: "The drama did not end with the cross. The final curtain did not descend at Calvary. On the third day, the one who died came forth from the grave and thus proved He was the Son of God, triumphant over death. And so the cross was not the end of hope but its beginning, not a sign of failure but of triumph. That is why the very symbolism of the cross has been changed in our day".

What did Jesus say on the cross? To His mother and the beloved disciple: "**Woman, behold your son! Behold your mother!**" (John 20:26-27). "**I thirst**" (John 20:28). To the thief: "**Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise**" (Luke 23:43). "**My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?**" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). "**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do**" (Luke 23:34). "**It is finished**" (John 20:30). "**Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit**" (Luke 23:46).

### THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF JESUS

Jesus died on the cross. His death

had a huge impact on the centurion. If only the whole world would repeat his words: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (15:39) and change accordingly. Jesus tasted death for everyone. He died that we might live. His sacrifice was the real and all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all the world. The doctrine of the cross is the great central doctrine of the Bible and the very essence of Christianity.

Jesus' body was placed in a tomb. The burial was supervised by Joseph of Arimathea, "a good man, and a just...who also himself waited for the kingdom of God" (Luke 23:50-51), "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews" (John 19:38), and a member of the Sanhedrin who had not voted for Jesus' death. A stone was rolled unto the door of the sepulchre (15:46).

### THE RESURRECTION

But who moved the stone? Frank Morrison wrote a famous book under this title. It became a best seller. He "set out to write one kind or book and found himself compelled by the sheer force of circumstances to write quite another". The greatest fact in history - the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead - got through to him. Personally, I cannot understand why everyone in the world is not moved by Jesus' triumph over the grave. It is the greatest story every told.

Dear reader, what Jesus did for us we must do for Him. He died, we must die; He was buried, we must be buried; He rose from the dead; we must rise from the dead. This identification takes place in the waters of baptism (16:16). Remember, the word baptism consists of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence from water. I like what Paul wrote to the Romans: "Know you not, that so many of us were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? therefore we are buried

with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection..." (6:3-5).

### I THESSALONIANS

**AUTHOR:** the apostle Paul.

**DATE:** uncertain, but probably one of the earliest epistles, if not the earliest. Dates suggested: 49-59 A.D.

**CHURCH:** founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-10).

**PLACE/PURPOSE:** probably Corinth. "He was in Corinth by the time Timothy returned with good news. I Thessalonians...is full of relief and joy. Paul answers questions that had arisen and repeats his teaching on matters where the Church was weak" (The Lion Handbook).

**THESSALONICA:** "modern Salonika, situated at the northwest corner of the Aegean Sea, facing a fine harbour, on a rich well-watered plain, on the great northern military highway from Rome to the East. Within sight of Mt. Olympus, home of the Greek gods. Leading city in Macedonia in Paul's day. Still a prosperous city" (Halley's Bible Handbook).

**KEYWORD:** Joy. "this is not the main emphasis. That is the coming of Christ. Every chapter closes with that theme. But the arteries of the letter throb and pulsate with joy. This is the pulse beat of the letter" (W. Carl Ketcherside).

### THE SAINTS

The saints at Thessalonica were quite a group. Paul speaks of their "work of faith, labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ..." (1:3). They had become "examples to all who believe in Macedonia and Achaia" (1:7) because they were followers of Jesus and the

apostolic teaching (1:6). From them had "sounded out the word of the Lord" (1:8). They had once been idolators, but had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God..." (1:9). They were a people who eagerly awaited the return of Jesus (1:10). They may not have been a particularly large congregation, but I like the fact that their faith was well known in the region (1:8). They were God's elect (1:4) and they lived up to their responsibilities. Churches today could learn a great deal from them. Personally, I think they are a tremendous example.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

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## TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. This prophet had a vision concerning Edom.
2. Who was the daughter of Caleb?
3. This child was hidden in the house of God for six years.
4. By what name was Joseph known in Egypt?
5. How many figures resembling living beings did Ezekiel see?
6. Who won Caleb's daughter to be his wife?
7. How many gates has the New Jerusalem?
8. Paul left his cloak with this man.
9. Name a gate of the temple familiar to Peter and John.
10. Who was also called Didymus?

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## SOMEONE IN YOUR SHOES!

There are little eyes upon you,  
And they're watching night and day;  
There are little ears that quickly  
Take in every word you say;  
There are little hands all eager  
To do everything you do,

And a little boy who's dreaming  
Of the day he'll be like you  
You're the little fellow's idol,  
You're the wisest of the wise:  
In his little mind about you  
No suspicions ever rise.

He believes in you devoutly,  
Holds that all you say and do,  
He will say and do in your way,  
When he's grown up, just like you.  
There's a wide-eyed little fellow,  
Who believes you're always right;  
And his ears are always open  
And he watches day and night.  
YOU are setting an example,  
Every day, in all you do,  
For a little boy who's waiting  
To grow up to be like YOU.  
*Selected (Cape Town "Bulletin")*

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## GHANA APPEAL

We have a unique problem to this appeal. We have received so many gifts of Bibles, New Testaments, glasses, hymn books etc to send to our brethren in Ghana that we do not have enough money for the postage and to pay the import tax in Ghana. Anyone with such items for Ghana, please hold until we clear the present backlog. Anyone wishing to help with the cost of the postage, please contact Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU. Tel 01383 728624 Cheques should be made out to "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal".

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## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*(by Toby Huff for Ruth Coles)*

Where do I start? I have just spent 3 days walking and living in an area of the Papua Waria (Papua New Guinea) that resembles a war zone. I spent 18 months in Vietnam and never saw such destruction. I am now sitting at my

computer terminal trying to piece together what I witnessed this weekend and the real tragedy which is unfolding in the Kira Sub District of the Papua Waria.

This disaster first began to unfold with the cyclonic winds which affected the area from March 6th to the 14th. These were hot dry winds blowing from the northwest produced from cyclone Justin. The winds were so dry that people did not sweat even in the noon time heat. (These same winds affected other areas such as Lae but to a lesser degree). Older people and small children suffered nose bleeds and the majority of the people were affected with very dry skin and cracked lips. The winds were of such a force that thousands of hectares of trees were blown down (after being dried out and what trees still stand have little foliage. The houses were blown over as well. Many of the people on exposed ridges packed up and moved down by the rivers to try and find relief from these winds. When the wind did subside people tell of flocks of birds which landed in clearings too exhausted to fly. The people went around picking them up by the handfuls and then killing them and eating them. During a slight lull of the ferocious winds some people began burning their gardens in the Kira area. The winds shifted and came behind the fires driving flames up the mountain sides and into the tender dry Orouba area. Ground level smoke preceded the fires which many people watched on the far ridges. The wind picked up in intensity and literally drove the fire down the mountain valleys and up and over into other valleys and jumping across the rivers to the inner areas. The wind then got behind the fires again and drove it back down the other side of the valley, back down to Kira station. The majority of the people went to the water and sat there while the fire roared all around them. People covered their faces

and bodies with water soaked clothes and towels in the river. Many people brought what they could from the houses and what they didn't bring they dug holes and buried. Even some of these suitcases caught fire even as they sat in the water and the contents were lost in the water. The fire was of such a destructive nature it consumed everything in its path - trees, houses, animals, brush, gardens - everything.

The magnitude of the affected area is hard to imagine. The Aro and Aroba areas were affected but without the house fires. They had the high, hot and dry winds which felled trees and de-roofed houses as well as knocking over not a few. These winds then heated the ground in the gardens and then brush fires raged throughout those gardens. When scattered showers did fall the rain steamed the root crops and most crops have rotted in the ground. This area lost a lot of roofs and tarps were needed to provide cover. Limited bush is available to repair and rebuild. Food is going to be in short supply for a number of months to come.

#### **Long-term Needs:-**

1. Food until gardens can be cleared and replanted (4-5 months)
  2. Poultry replacement with day old chicks and chick starter
  3. A chain sawmill to harvest the fallen timber before it rots in the ground
- All the required supplies and items can be bought locally. We have thus far received just under US\$18,000 dollars. We think that US\$30,000 dollars is still a reasonable target but might not be enough. I am going to be trying to put out an appeal to the US Embassy here to meet the cost of a portable sawmill. If they do then it will allow us to use our funds for food supplies and air freight to get it in.

The brethren in the Papuan Waria send their unceasing thanks for the help you have thus provided. If you have not

helped yet or wish to help with additional funds they can either be sent to our sponsoring congregation, direct to us or by mail or bank transfer.

Church of Christ Relief: ANZ Bank -  
 Lae, Papua New Guinea.  
 Acc. Number: 1442004900

Toby Huff,  
 P.O. Box 409,  
 Lae, MP,  
 Papua New Guinea.

**NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES**

**Slamannan District:** The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting, took place at Haddington on Saturday 31st May, 1997, when the following question was discussed: "Does it matter who marries us, buries us or baptises us?". The Chairman was Mark Plain, Tranent, and the speakers were Peter Sneddon, Dennyloanhead, and James R Gardiner, Haddington. As usual, the speakers introduced the subject by speaking for 15 minutes each followed by one hour's general discussion and questions from the audience. As usual, the question proved to be much more interesting than it appeared at first and the lively

discussion was enjoyed by all.

Our next meeting, God willing, will be on 6th September, 1997, at 4p.m. in the meetinghouse at Motherwell, when the question will be: "Does Acts 15:19-20; (abstaining from blood) require us to abstain from 'black pudding' and the like." The speakers will be Ian Davidson, Motherwell, and Bill Cook, Dunfermline, and the Chairman will be Graeme Scobbie, Dennyloanhead.

Again, we thank the church at Haddington for the use of their premises and thank the sisters for the excellent refreshments.

Harry McGinn.

- 10. Thomas (John 20:24).
- 9. Beautiful (Acts 3:1-2).
- 8. Carpus (2 Timothy 4:13).
- 7. Twelve (Revelation 21:12).
- 6. Othniel (Judges 1:13).
- 5. Four (Ezekiel 1:5).
- (Genesis 41:45).
- 4. Zaphnath-paaneah, meaning "the man to whom secrets are revealed"
- 3. Joash (2 Chronicles 22:10-12).
- 2. Achsah (Judges 1:13).
- 1. Obadiah (Obadiah 1).

**ANSWERS**

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