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*a rallying cry to
uphold the Scriptures*

kevin geoffrey & c. h. mackintosh

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PREFACE

I HAD NEVER BEFORE HEARD of C. H. Mackintosh when I recently happened upon a reproduction of his pamphlet, *The Bible: Its Sufficiency and Supremacy*. I had only read a few lines of it before needing to stop and begin again, this time reading aloud to Esther and the boys. As she and I wept—hearing the travail of our hearts captured so succinctly and eloquently in the words of an obscure, nineteenth-century, Irish preacher—we suddenly felt a little less alone in our seemingly solitary and hopeless campaign to exhort the contemporary Body of Messiah to bear the standard of Scripture.

Over the course of that initial reading, I was immediately struck by Mackintosh's clarity of thought, conviction of conscience, and kindred spirit. But what ultimately moved me to tears was the realization that he had sounded his clarion warning *more than a hundred and fifty years past*. He saw then, in germinating form, Messiah's gravely infirmed Body of *today*: infected by and succumbing to the philosophies and compromises of man; carelessly permitting the erosion of Scripture as the bedrock of our faith. It didn't take long for me to recognize the providence of having intersected with Mackintosh's essay. The heart of this message must be made an unavoidable issue in every generation—we need to courageously promote the Scriptures and combat its assailants, now more than ever.

The ravenous manner in which we indiscriminately consume information and opinions suggests that what Mackintosh maintains is true: be it politics or academia, the media and entertainment, the bowels of an egocentric internet, or the high places of spiritual celebrity, every surrounding force is bent on persuading us that “we need other guidance than that which [the Bible's] precious pages supply.” Rather than each one of us taking personal responsibility to turn to God and His Word for *every* answer and *every* directive, we instead deceive ourselves and default to those deemed more experienced, more educated, or more enlightened. Whether by oth-

er men's design or our own self-inflicted disability, the light of Scripture grows ever dimmer in our collective eyes.

Mackintosh's point—and the purpose of this expanded work—is to assert and champion the single fundamental belief that “men must either deny that the Bible is the Word of God, or admit its sufficiency and supremacy.” There is no middle ground. The Scriptures must be either complete and outright foolishness, or the unrivaled pronouncement of God's revealed wisdom and truth. As disciples of Messiah, walking daily in the Spirit, we have no choice but to completely abandon our half-hearted, compartmentalized faith, and confess that God alone has full and utter authority. Our only valid response to the sufficiency and supremacy of Scripture is absolute submission and immediate obedience.

It is to this most awesome end that we humbly and soberly send forth the call to uphold the Scriptures. I would be remiss in failing to make clear, however, that while the entirety of this book assumes the belief that the Scriptures are the solely authoritative, written revelation of God's perfect Word, it is not my goal here to defend such an essential belief (indeed, I have written about this subject at length elsewhere). Rather, the message of *Bearing the Standard* simply rests on the glorious, foundational truth that “every Scripture”—from Genesis to Revelation—“is God-breathed” (2Timothy 3:16);

that God inspired men to infallibly and inerrantly encode His divine Word into the stuff of human language and thought.

It is also worthwhile to mention that I am writing here to a broader audience than I am usually accustomed. Much of what I have written and taught over the last fifteen years has been aimed primarily at those known as Messianic Jews; that is, Jewish believers in Jesus—among whom I am also counted. As such, it is my usual practice to refer to the Messiah as *Yeshua* (which, in Hebrew, means “salvation,” see Matthew 1:21), and this is the name that I use throughout the book. You will also notice my occasional use of other Hebrew words and phrases, though, for the sake of my Christian brothers and sisters, I have tried to keep such instances to a minimum. To be sure, my frame of reference and peculiar expression of faith are couched in my identity as a Jew, but that same identity *in Messiah* also fuels my passion for proclaiming the perfection of the Word, and the message of its sufficiency and supremacy for all.

My fellow-servant of Messiah, the overflow of faithlessness abounds in this lost generation. Yet even as the threadbare fabric of society’s morals hastens to unravel—even as humanity gives way to unthinkable depravities of every kind—there remains but one crucial issue for this and every age: will we surrender our wills and trust our lives *solely* to the Word of God? This is the ques-

tion that I pray will arrest you as you consider *The Bible: Its Sufficiency and Supremacy* (which I have reproduced below with only minor revisions for clarity) and my following exploration in *Bearing the Standard of Scripture*. Though such discussion marks merely the beginning of a critical conversation, we must nevertheless commit ourselves in advance to reaching the only legitimate conclusion: the fostering of a generation who will disregard all other influences, and pledge its life—without compromise—to bearing the standard of Scripture.

For the sake of the Messiah,

Kevin Geoffrey

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**THE BIBLE:
ITS SUFFICIENCY
AND SUPREMACY**

BY C. H. MACKINTOSH

SOME, WE ARE AWARE, would gladly persuade us that things are so totally changed since the Bible was penned, that we need other guidance than that which its precious pages supply. They tell us that society is not what it was; that the human race has made progress; that there has been such a development of the powers of nature, the resources of science, and the applications of philosophy, that to maintain the sufficiency and supremacy of the Bible, at such a point in the world's history as the nineteenth century of the Christian era, can only be regarded as childishness, ignorance, or imbecility.

Now, the men that tell us these things may be very clever and very learned; but we have no hesitation whatever in telling them that, in this matter, "they do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." We certainly do desire to render all due respect to learning, genius, and talent, whenever we find them in their right place, and at their proper work; but when we find them lifting their proud heads above the Word of God; when we find them sitting in judgement, and hurling an insult upon that peerless revelation, we feel that we owe

them no respect whatever; yea, we treat them as so many agents of the devil, in his efforts to shake those eternal pillars on which the faith of God's people has ever rested. We cannot listen for a moment to men, however profound in their reading and thinking, who dare to treat God's book as though it were man's book, and speak of those pages that were penned by the Allwise, Almighty, and Eternal God, as though they were the production of a shallow and short-sighted mortal.

It is important that the reader should see clearly that men must either deny that the Bible is the Word of God, or admit its sufficiency and supremacy in all ages, and in all countries—in all stages and conditions of the human race. Grant us but this, that God has written a book for man's guidance, and we argue that that book must be amply sufficient for man, no matter when, where, or how we find him. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God... that the man of God may be *perfect* (ἄριστος), *thoroughly furnished* unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This, surely, is enough. To be perfect and thoroughly furnished, necessarily renders a man independent of all the boasted powers (falsely so called) of science and philosophy.

We are quite aware that, in writing thus, we expose ourselves to the sneer of the learned rationalist, and the polished and cultivated philosopher. But we are not very careful about this. We greatly admire the answer of a

pious, but, no doubt, very ignorant woman to some very learned man who was endeavouring to show her that the inspired writer had made a mistake in asserting that Jonah was in the whale's belly. He assured her that such a thing could not possibly be, inasmuch that the natural history of the whale proved it could not swallow anything so large.

"Well," said the poor woman, "I do not know much about natural history; but this I know, that if the Bible were to tell me that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would believe it."

Now, it is quite possible many would pronounce this poor woman to have been under the influence of ignorance and blind gullibility; but, for our part, we should rather be the ignorant woman, confiding in God's Word, than the learned rationalist trying to pick holes in it. We have no doubt as to who was in the safer position.

But, let it not be supposed that we prefer ignorance to learning. Let none imagine that we despise the discoveries of science, or treat with contempt the achievements of sound philosophy. Far from it. We honour them highly in their proper sphere. We could not say how much we prize the labours of those learned men who have consecrated their energies to the work of clearing the sacred text of the various errors and corruptions which, from age to age, had crept into it, through the carelessness or infirmity of copyists, taken advantage of by a crafty

and malignant foe. Every effort put forth to preserve, to unfold, to illustrate, and to enforce the precious truth of Scripture, we most highly esteem; but, on the other hand, when we find men making use of their learning, their science, and their philosophy, for the purpose of undermining the sacred fortress of divine revelation, we deem it our duty, to raise our voice, in the clearest and strongest way, against them, and to warn the reader, most solemnly, against their exceedingly harmful influence.

We believe that the Bible, as written in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, is the very word of the only wise and the only true God, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, who saw the end from the beginning, and not only the end, but every stage of the way. We therefore hold it to be nothing short of positive blasphemy to assert that we have arrived at a stage of our career in which the Bible is not sufficient, or that we are compelled to travel outside its covers to find ample guidance and instruction for the present moment, and for every moment of our earthly pilgrimage. The Bible is a perfect chart, in which every necessity of the Christian mariner has been anticipated. Every rock, every sand-bank, every reef, every strand, every island, has been carefully noted down. All the need of the Church of God, its members, and its ministers, has been most fully provided for. How could it be other-

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BEARING
THE STANDARD
OF SCRIPTURE

BY KEVIN GEOFFREY

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PART ONE

**No OTHER
STANDARD**

ISRAEL HAD BEEN MIRACULOUSLY delivered from centuries of Egyptian slavery. No one could have known she would soon find herself wandering the desert of punishment—awaiting the slow death of her faithless and eldest generation. At God’s hand, Israel experienced both grave loss and monumental triumph; yet despite His abundant presence and provision, Israel’s trust of God was severely lacking. With *barely six months remaining* in their desert exile, the people of Israel could still speak the unthinkable: “*Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in a wilderness?*” (Numbers 21:5). God was invisible and unreal to Israel... after forty long years, they simply did not believe.

With Israel blinded to their ever-present salvation, God then unleashed upon the people a danger of the desert—reminding them just Who had the power to hold it back. In answer to the defining, forty-year-old lesson which Israel had failed to learn, God gave His condemning response:

And ADONAI (the LORD) sent among the people the burning serpents, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died. כָּנִיף־בַּר NUMBERS 21:6

As the people recoiled from their chastisement, they repented to God in their usual, short-lived desperation. Even so, ADONAI once again brought salvation to Israel—but this time, by *lifting up a standard* before them. Israel would receive deliverance and life anew because the invisible God gave them something to see.

And ADONAI said to Moses, “Make for you a burning *serpent*, and **set it on a standard**; and it will be, everyone who is bitten and has seen it—he has lived.” And Moses made a serpent of brass, and **set it on the standard**, and it was, if the serpent bit any man, and he looked expectingly to the serpent of brass—he has lived. בְּמִרְבֵּר NUMBERS 21:8-9

Anyone who “looked expectingly” toward the standard: *he has lived*.

SOMETHING TO SEE

Had you or I been one of those poor, afflicted souls, what sight would our eyes have seen? A magical, bronze snake tacked atop a pole? Or the faithful, creative, steadfast salvation of the One True and Living God?

By lifting up a standard—setting something up high above for all to see—Moses provided a *tangible* rallying point, a *perceptible* place of focus, to draw the peoples’ attention and hearts toward the Source of their deliverance. The upholding of God’s *standard* made God Him-

self visible and real to the people—as they looked expectingly toward the upraised standard, they experienced the restoration and revival of their lives.

Because the mind of man so quickly forgets God (or chooses to ignore Him), and our trust so easily wanes, God establishes His standard—lifts something up high for us to see—that He might increase our faith, and we might believe. And this is why,

...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so **it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up**, [so] that everyone who is believing in Him may have life age-enduring. For God so loved the world, that His Son—the only begotten—He gave... וְכִי יִשָּׂא מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַנָּחָשׁ JOHN 3:14-16A

The Master Yeshua (Jesus) has been lifted up for us (cf. Isaiah 11:10)—to reconcile all people to God, to focus us on His power and love, to draw our attentions and hearts to the only Source of all true redemption and deliverance—for “he who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In Yeshua, God truly gave the world something awesome, amazing, and astounding to see! And yet, the Messiah’s dwelling among men would be brief—the habitation of Imanuel (“God with us”) would last but a moment—then “the world will see Me no more” (John 14:19).

How, then, would the world profess the One they had not known?

How, *now*, will He become real to us who have never seen?

Though intangible, we may yet run to Him; though imperceptible, still, we perceive. For the Master, too, has *lifted up a standard*—set something up high above for all to see—something that draws us to Him.

And He said to them, “...it is necessary for **all the things that are written about Me...** to be fulfilled.” Then He opened up their understanding to understand **the Scriptures**. LUKE 24:44-45

As we look expectingly toward the upraised standard of Yeshua, we experience the restoration and revival of our lives. By the Spirit of Truth, we know and see the reality of Yeshua when we look faithfully to the standard of Scripture.

FIXING OUR EYES

Since the beginning, *the Word* of God has been continually speaking to all creation (see John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17).

In Yeshua, *the Word* became flesh, to demonstrate and proclaim to us the reality of God.

And in the Scriptures, the encoded archive of *that very same Word*, God continues to speak to us of His re-

ality and truth, so that we in turn may demonstrate and proclaim His salvation to the world.

The Master Yeshua upheld Scripture as a standard, not simply because it *speaks* of Him, but because Scripture itself *is* His very Word. When we read and believe that the Scriptures are true, the reality of God is within reach.

But belief alone is not enough.

Our outward response to God's Word is the *exact measure* of our inner devotion to Him. If we trust God with our lives, then we must permit *His Word alone* to establish our values. If we accept that ADONAI is true, then we must allow *His Word alone* to determine our beliefs. If we rely upon God for His care and protection, then we must invite *His Word alone* to dictate the boundaries of our behavior—from the seed of each instigating thought, to the execution of each resultant action. Walking each day by the Spirit, Scripture *must in every way* be the objective authority and guide by which we find, fix upon, and follow the Master Yeshua... “the author and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

Let us not forget the lesson of Israel's obstructed eyes: Daily, she walked with God, was led by Him, and experienced His presence and provision; yet in so many ways she remained blind to His salvation. And so is it with us today. We walk with God (or so we confess), are

led by Him each day (or so we believe), and experience His presence and provision; and still, Yeshua—God’s most potent and present reality—remains *unreal* and *invisible* in our everyday lives. God came to us in the flesh, yet we act as if He is *intangible*. His salvation is clearly evident, yet we behave as if He is *imperceptible*. We “hear, but do not understand... see, but do not know” (Isaiah 6:9). Why? Because we have not fixed our eyes on the standard of God’s Word and, through that discernible witness, believed that He is real.

This is where bearing the standard of Scripture begins: fixing our eyes on God’s Word as the *only acceptable standard* for establishing our values, determining our beliefs, and dictating the boundaries of our behavior. *There is no other standard.* This is the absolute truth to which we must dedicate our lives—the truth we have been selected and placed upon the earth to proclaim: “God! perfect is His way; the word of ADONAI is tried [and true]” (Psalm 18:30). Though every force and influence of the world is bent on dissuading us from this truth, we must commit ourselves to *look expectingly* toward the uniquely sufficient and supreme standard of Scripture. For the fulfillment of our destiny as disciples of Messiah, this is the banner we must raise—the standard we have been called forth to uphold—that we may demonstrate and proclaim the reality of Yeshua, so that all who may see... shall live.

IDENTIFYING HOSTILE INFLUENCES

IN *THE BIBLE: ITS SUFFICIENCY and Supremacy*, C. H. Mackintosh takes his stand for the Scriptures, defending the honor of God's holy and perfect Word. Not only does he agree that no other valid standard exists; he also declares that to claim otherwise is an offense against God. Stating that "the Bible, as written in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, is the

very word of the only wise and only true God,” Mackintosh then makes his position clear.

We therefore hold it to be **nothing short of positive blasphemy** to assert that... the Bible is not sufficient, or that we are compelled to travel outside its covers to find ample guidance and instruction....

For Mackintosh, this is *the* fundamental attack on *God’s authority*: the belief that we need more than His Word to guide us through life. Such an assertion utterly degrades the Scriptures. When we look to and lift up standards that originate outside of Scripture, we are saying that the Word of God is *insufficient* to teach us what we need to know.

So strongly does Mackintosh hold to this conviction that, in relating the story of the so-called “ignorant” woman who would have believed the Bible to be true even if it said that *Jonah* had swallowed *the whale*, he concluded, “[W]e should rather be the ignorant woman, confiding in God’s word, than the learned rationalist trying to pick holes in it.” Even our understanding of those things we are *convinced* are reality must be made subject to the authority of the Word of God. We can permit *nothing* to stand against Scripture, share its prominence, or divide our attention. Every word, voice, and idea must be held in no higher regard than Scripture; nor may any be re-

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PART TWO

**TESTING
OUR AIM**

REMEMBER THAT A *STANDARD*—something set up high above for all to see—serves as a tangible rallying point; a perceptible place of focus to which we may “*look expectingly*.” As such, the Scriptures are in every way the objective authority and guide by which we as disciples of Messiah are supposed to find, fix upon, and follow the Master Yeshua (Jesus). What has happened, however, is that we have made ourselves vulnerable to hostile influences such as *tradition, expediency, and rationalism*, which draw our focus away from Scripture and shield its brilliance from our eyes. Our cooperation with these forces not only compromises our submission to God’s Word, but also weakens our ability to uphold Scripture as our standard. If we truly hope to follow Yeshua, we must fully commit to bearing the standard of Scripture—and it begins with fixing our eyes on God’s Word as the only acceptable standard for establishing our values, determining our beliefs, and dictating the boundaries of our behavior.

Let’s take some time now to test our aim, and consider what this all means in practical, twenty-first century terms—to evaluate our own real-life effectiveness at

bearing the standard of Scripture. Consider these questions for a moment:

Have I been demonstrating in my walk with Yeshua that the Scriptures are the sufficient and supreme guide for my daily life?

Have I truly accepted the Scriptures as the ultimate and final standard for determining my values, beliefs and behavior?

Have I unknowingly fallen victim to certain hostile influences, and been persuaded to undermine, bypass and ignore what the Scriptures say?

To answer these questions and begin our self-examination, we'll take some practical examples from real, everyday life on a subject of relevance to everyone. While we could consider a broad host of topics—such as how we spend our time, use our finances, or treat our families—nearly every human being is highly concerned with one overarching theme: the forming and maintaining of *relationships*; specifically, relationships involving love, intimacy and sexuality. Everyone wants to *belong*, and everyone wants to be *loved*. The universal nature of the topic of *relationships*, then, will serve as an ideal framework for an open, thought-provoking evaluation.

To be sure, moving beyond superficial, theoretical ideas in order to become more transparent with our-

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selves will intrude on our comfort zones... and delving into the themes associated with *relationships* may do just that. We don't often talk candidly about such things, and, depending on our personal histories, discussing them could stir up painful thoughts and feelings about ourselves and others. If it does, that's okay, because we need to be able to see inside ourselves, and allow the Father to use that exposure for our eventual healing and maturity. But while a discussion about *relationships* may lead to this experience, our purpose here is not to pass judgment for past failures (which we've all had), make social commentary on controversial issues (though there is a time and place for that), or conduct an exhaustive analysis of the examples themselves. Rather, we are simply using a relevant topic to establish a common frame of reference, in order to illustrate in real-life, practical terms how we often fall short of bearing the standard of Scripture.

The following discussion will be divided into three sections corresponding to the hostile influences we have already encountered: *tradition, expediency, and rationalism*. Within each section, we'll focus on one or two specific examples that relate to the general topic of *relationships*. Aided by the use of relevant statistics and quotations, this will allow us to demonstrate and examine the effects of hostile influences, and to recognize how they often lead us to compromise God's Word in our rela-

tionships. Throughout each section, we will see how upholding the Scriptures as the standard for our relationships enables us to overcome those influences, leading us to a righteous and profoundly different destination. By the end of the examination, you will hopefully begin to perceive the extent of your own susceptibility to these hostile influences—not just in your relationships, but throughout the various areas of your life. **This is the whole point of the discussion: to raise our overall awareness of our weaknesses, and to lift up Scripture as the sole standard for effectively following Yeshua.**

THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITION

LET'S BEGIN OUR EVALUATION by examining the influence of *tradition* on our ability to bear the standard of Scripture. Remember that tradition—the handing down of religious, family or cultural beliefs and customs—is morally neutral in and of itself. Yet tradition has the tendency to assert itself as a voice of authority, positioning itself as a companion to or replacement for

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PART THREE

**SUFFICIENT AND
SUPREME**

AND IT CAME TO PASS [that] Hezekiah...king of Judah had reigned... and he did that which *was* right in the eyes of ADONAI (the LORD)... He has turned aside the high places, and broken the standing-pillars in pieces, and cut down the אֲשֵׁרָה, 'Asherah [poles], and beaten down the brass serpent that Moses made—for up to these days were the sons of Israel burning incense to it—and he called it “a piece of brass.” כְּלָכִים ב 2KINGS 18:1-4

The standard that had once saved Israel, the people now lifted up as a *god*. More than seven hundred years earlier, Moses had raised up the brass serpent for all Israel to see, so that anyone who “looked expectingly” toward it would survive the burning serpents’ stings. But in the days before King Hezekiah, the people had turned the standard into an object of profane worship: they placed it among the idolatrous high places, pillars and poles as one of countless venerated things. There the standard stood—disgraced, obscured, and perverted—nothing more than a useless and defective “piece of brass.” But King Hezekiah, responding to this abom-

inable desecration, “did that which *was* right in the eyes of ADONAI”—he beat down the serpent of brass, crushing it into dust.

In the same way that Hezekiah pulverized that iconic serpent, we too must utterly obliterate the way we—the Body of Messiah—misappropriate and misconstrue the standard of the written Word of God. We have erred by erecting the Scriptures upon a crowded landscape of spiritual and social high places, pillars and poles. We have sinned by reducing the thunderous voice of God’s Word to a whisper among a thousand conflicting sounds. Amid the expansive field of a million flying flags, we have lost sight of the standard of Scripture. No longer do men see us lifting up that blessed banner, because we ourselves have no idea where we left it.

As disciples of Messiah, the Scriptures are supposed to be our sole *standard*—something set up high above for all to see—serving as a *tangible* rallying point; a *perceptible* place of focus to which we must “*look expectantly.*” Indeed, it is the only objective authority and guide by which we may reliably find, fix upon, and follow the Master Yeshua (Jesus). But when we lower that superior standard so that it becomes indistinguishable from and intermingled with the banners of men, we inevitably find ourselves swearing allegiance to treasonous, foreign flags. Our focus is drawn away from the standard of Messiah; our eyes, shielded from the brilliance of God’s Word.