

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 64 No. 2

FEBRUARY, 1996

CHEERFUL GIVERS

Money hits the headlines again. Grand Lottery fever reached new heights this week with an estimated "Jackpot" prize of over £40m. This colossal prize has stimulated gambling in this country to such an extent that nine out of every ten persons in the land participated in the lottery this week. One local man spent £10,000 on tickets and it took about four hours of frantic activity in a little shop to provide him with this huge amount of tickets. Some Bishops have, understandably, described the scale of the prize as "obscene" and most other churches have echoed their dismay, with fears that gambling has now reached epidemic proportions.

On one televised programme where the morality of the national lottery was being discussed one church representative rightly condemned the negative and immoral aspects of the lottery, as being ultimately an evil work, but after some close questioning admitted that her particular church had received, and accepted, financial help from the distributed proceeds of the lottery, and it had to be pointed out to her by the interviewer (if she did not already know) that it is highly inconsistent (if not stupid) to condemn the lottery as evil and then to accept money from the funds of the lottery (as one of the many 'good causes'). Religious groups always need money, especially the small denominational bodies, but that's obviously no justification for accepting the proceeds of gambling. Because of members failing to be generous when the collection plate comes around, many religious groups have to depend upon raffles, car-boot sales, garden fetes, bring-and-buy sales, sponsored walks and even sponsored parachute jumps to augment their funds. Surely the New Testament gives us guidance (the only legitimate guidance) as to how the Lord's body raise funds for the Lord's work.

OUR MONEY IS NEEDED

It is extremely sad to see a neglected building fall into decay. First of all a few tiles come loose; then unpainted windows lose a few panes; weeds obliterate the pathway; dampness brings plaster off the walls and soon the place is inhabited solely by pigeons and rats. Britain abounds in 'stately homes' and some mansion houses, although surrounded with acres of pleasant landscape parkland, lie completely abandoned and in a few years will become piles of rubble. Past glories are now forgotten and present economic circumstances decree the demise of such, once illustrious, piles. The Victorians built huge, and often very ornate, church buildings to 'the glory of God' and today, because the cost of upkeep of such edifices, many of them are abandoned, used as storage space or completely demolished. The obvious lesson, as all property owners know, is that unless care and money are spent on property in its preservation the consequences will be dire. 'The Lord's House' is not, of course, a literal building, of wood and brick, but consists of 'living stones' (men and women) cemented together by common interests and God's love. Nevertheless *the need for money* is

ever present in the execution of the Lord's work, and in many quarters the 'House of the Lord' languishes and has fallen into decay through lack of funds. New congregations are not set up through lack of funds. The gospel is not sufficiently dispersed abroad through lack of funds. It is sometimes alleged (rightly perhaps in some areas) that those with a vested interest like to harp on about giving and money, but most readers will know that can not apply to me. It would be extremely regrettable, and an indictment of church members, if the 'Lord's House' (the church) was to pine and fade away *through lack of financial support*. We gladly pay all the bills for our earthly comforts, television licence, road fund tax, insurance policies, union dues, theatre tickets, rent, rates, daily newspapers, glossy magazines, 'Radio Times', etc. etc. and then perhaps turn our noses up at having to pay a little, once a year, for a church magazine, or giving, on the first day of the week, to the extent of God's prospering of us.

A 'WILLING' HEART

Under the Jewish economy, the 'Lord's House' was very often very literal and the people were expected to contribute towards the construction of God's House and for its subsequent upkeep. Even when Moses was instructed to construct the Tabernacle, and the people were invited to subscribe towards its erection, the criterion was that offerings should be taken from "**whosoever of a willing heart**" (Ex. 35:5) and readers of that chapter will find that this 'willingness' was an important pre-requisite and is mentioned several times. Thus God expects not only 'that every man will do his duty' but that he will do it with a good grace, and in the proper spirit. It is not enough to give our financial resources, and our physical talents to the Lord, but they must be given, not reluctantly, but willingly. This is as important as the gift itself. Indeed this is **more important** than the gift. Giving to God is really a privilege and **how** we give is as much a measure of how we regard God, as is **what** we give. To those who say 'It's the thought that counts' the cynic replies 'It's the gift that counts' and, of course, men are inclined to equate the 'thought' with the actual value of the gift. thus very few young men would insult the young lady they hope to impress, with a shabby gift. Is it possible that we treat God shabbily with not only *the value* of our gifts, but also with *the spirit* in which we present them?.

God has always had a treasury and Jesus, on one occasion, sat watching how the people cast their gifts into the treasury. Jesus remarked upon the rich giving (of their abundance) and the poor widow casting in two mites (all she possessed). One wonders what went through the mind of Jesus as He regarded each contributor, as they queued to give, just as we, no doubt, wonder what He thinks as he watches us, today, as we cast into His treasury. Our late, and highly esteemed, brother Dougal used to tell of the preacher who, when he saw all the fine cars outside the church meeting house wondered where all the poor members were; and when he saw the contribution plate wondered where all the prosperous members were. Jesus watches our 'casting in to the treasury'.

WILL A MAN ROB GOD ? (Mal. 3:8)

Paul instructed (1 Cor. 16:2) that "on the first day of the week" (presumably when the Church was gathered together) every member of the Church should lay by them in store as God had prospered, that there be no gatherings when he (Paul) came. This collection was a special one 'for the poor saints,' but nevertheless the principle and the practice is a worthy one. Such a plan (contributing on the first day of the week) should, therefore, be regarded as the Lord's way of raising money for carrying on His work. We have no authority for gathering money *by any other method*. Thus, for this particular emergency ('the poor saints in Jerusalem') the brethren were not to save up the money in their homes, but each first day of the week were to pool their resources in a common fund so that when Paul arrived the money would be available, and the need for a sudden and hasty collection be obviated. And so if the Church contributes systematically, each first day of the week, the treasury will grow and any cause or crisis will be catered for without special collections. This seems to be the

intention of these instructions given by Paul, augmented a little later in his second epistle (chaps. 8 and 9). Doubtless the Christians were wondering **who** was required to give, and **how much** they were expected to give. They wondered, no doubt if they would be asked to tithe, and give a tenth as Israel of old. Paul, I think, answers those questions when he says that **"every one of you"** (each brother and sister) should contribute (not the husband contributing on behalf of his wife) and the extent of their giving was to be regulated, not by some percentage (as a tenth) but **"as God has prospered"** each one. This could mean that we could give less than a tenth or **more** than a tenth - depending upon how much we considered God had prospered us. It is possible to rob God, of course, and many of us might be indignant at the mere suggestion, but the possibility is ever present. The Jews were highly indignant when God suggested that they had robbed Him. The answer - **"In tithes and offerings."** (Mal. 3:80). It is truly frightening to think that we may robbing God in our giving and offerings. There are other facets of giving, of course, not mentioned in 1 Cor. 16:2, such as the giving of **our time** and **our talents** to the service of the Lord. Paul says that he was completely confident in the generosity of the church at Corinth and that they would respond liberally to the appeal 'for the poor saints' but reminds them (2 Cor. 9:5) of the broad general principle that **"he which soweth sparingly will reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully will reap bountifully."** Bearing this rule firmly in mind, Paul urges that "everyman" should contribute "as he purposed in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity; **"for God loveth a cheerful giver."** When we read this our minds go back to Ex. 35 "whosoever be of a willing mind" and clearly illustrates that **our attitude** when we give is of a vital significance. It's not just a question of God preferring a cheerful giver, but God **loveth** a cheerful giver. Paul (in the previous verse) expresses the hope that their contributions to their poorer brethren will be a matter of 'bounty' and not one of 'extortion' and perhaps there hangs the difference. We can either be bountiful in our giving to the Lord or merely dutiful. We can either take pleasure in it, or it can be a matter of having it extorted from us.

GIVING CHEERFULLY

We can surely understand why God likes a cheerful giver. None of us, I suppose, would like to receive a gift from someone which was clearly grudging. None of us would like to receive a favour given merely out of **necessity**. We would rather do without it. Likewise God does not twist arms or hold pistols to heads, but delights in the ready service given freely with joy and true enthusiasm. He deplores (and probably disregards) the gift which has to be squeezed from tight fingers and sweaty palm. (It is true that money does not come to us easily and we must look after it - the fool and his money are soon parted, and we must not be foolish - but surely we cannot put money to any better use than to give it back to the Lord, and employ it in His purposes.) Thus from Paul's words to the Corinthians we see:

(1) God deplores those who give only because **the necessity** placed upon them, and that is **expected** of them. It is a **matter of trust** between us and our God and only we ourselves can estimate **how much** God has prospered us. Fortunately God does not say He will prosper us *in accordance with the level of our giving*, but the other way around. Giving to the Lord should be considered a **privilege** and if we see it that way, our giving will be transformed (not only of money but of time and effort). Thayer defines 'grudgingly' as 'sorrow, pain and grief' (i.e. **ek lupes** - 'out of grief'). If, at any time, what we are asked to do for the Lord, or give to the Lord, gives us '**pain, sorrow or grief**' then we can be sure that we are acting 'grudgingly'. Some say that we should "give until it hurts" (and we know what they mean) but it would not seem scriptural, would it? If it hurts us, we give **ek lupes** - grudgingly.

(2) God loves a cheerful giver. Many, if not all, gifts are entirely **deprived of any value** if they are not given freely, gracefully and cheerfully. There are things 'that money cannot buy' in this world and sometimes gifts can be 'as cold as charity' if not given in the right

spirit. It is not always enough 'to write a cheque' to extricate us from our obligations. There is more to 'giving' than just giving, and gifts of money can mean much, or very little. Some would say, "What does it matter, as long as we get the money?" yet it greatly matters if principle is absent and especially if love is missing. **"Thy money perish with thee"** said Peter to Simon, and so money is not the 'be all, and end all' - it cannot buy everything. After all God can doubtless accomplish His purposes without us, and without our gifts, but He solicits our bounty and loves cheerful givers. Cheerful givers are a mighty power and have built many meeting-houses, sent many evangelists, spread the word into distant lands and relieved dire distress. **God Himself is, after all, a very cheerful giver.** There is nothing sour, grudging and mean about His bounty to us, unworthy of it as we are. God sends His rain and sunshine upon the just and the unjust and God gave us his all in the person of his only begotten son. We do not have to twist God's arm or prise his fingers apart - who is more bountiful to us, than God?

MORE BLESSED TO GIVE

Giving is, I suppose, very good for us. The giving up of material possessions, in the proper spirit for the good of others, will enhance our spiritual development and enrich our lives. This is doubtless why parents encourage small children to share their toys and eschew a selfish spirit. Paul quotes Jesus as saying, **"It is more blessed to give than to receive"** (Acts 20:35) and although these words cannot be traced in any of the gospels, Jesus uttered them, nevertheless. Our Lord's teaching was always radical and while nine out of ten of 'the man in the street' would urge the reverse - with a little reflection, our Lord is right again. The early Church (indeed the very first congregation - at Jerusalem) had a great sense of generosity and brotherhood, and we read **"the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common."** This is surely one of the most attractive attributes of the Church, that each and every member will rally to the help and assistance of all others, should the need arise. Thus the church at Corinth and throughout Galatia came readily to the assistance of all 'the poor saints.' It was tangible "proof of their love" (2 Cor. 8:24) and in the circumstance was more blessed to give than to receive.

We live in a prosperous land (relatively speaking) and we spend much not only upon our basic needs, but upon creature comfort, pleasures and even upon pastimes and hobbies. Let us also reflect upon the state of the 'Lord's House' and ensure that funds are available for its wellbeing - not only to save it from neglect and decay, but to extend its borders. May it be that the Church will not languish and die in any quarter through indifference or tight-fistedness. Let us give not only of our money but let us give of **our time**, and let us give of **our energies**, and **our talents** to the furtherance of the gospel and the increase of the Church; and let us do it joyfully for **God loveth the cheerful giver.** **"Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; whosoever is of willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord: gold and silver, and brass."** (Ex. 35:5).

"Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread.

For giving is living," the angel said.

"And must I give be giving again and again?"

"Oh, no," said the angel piercing me through;

"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."

EDITOR

GLEANINGS

"Let her glean even among the sheaves." Ruth 2:15

I GO A FISHING

"And Jesus said unto them, 'Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."

Mark 1:17.

THE BIBLE SPEAKS

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| I GO A FISHING . . . WE ALSO GO WITH THEE | John 21:3 |
| MAKE YOU TO BECOME FISHERS OF MEN | Mark 1:17 |
| LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP | Luke 5:4 |
| STRAIGHTWAY LEFT THEIR NETS AND FOLLOWED HIM | Matthew 4:10 |
| HE FIRST FINDETH HIS OWN BROTHER SIMON | John 1:41 |
| THAT I MIGHT BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME | I Corinthians 9:22 |
| WERE ADDED UNTO THEM ABOUT 3000 SOULS | Acts 2:41 |

FOR OUR LEARNING

William Carey, faced with the millions of India, exclaimed: "What is there on earth worth living for, but the glory of God and the salvation of souls!"

"I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake." (1 Corinthians 9:22,23).

Someone has said: "Bait the hook to suit the fish."

"The man who can put himself in the place of other men, who can understand the workings of their minds, need never worry about what the future has in store for him."

Owen D. Young.

"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from his angle as well as from your own."

Henry Ford.

"Every man I meet is my superior in some way. In that I learn of him."

Emerson.

Lincoln once began a letter by saying "Everybody likes a compliment."

TALES WORTH TELLING

I watched an old man trout-fishing the other day, pulling them out one after another briskly. "You manage it cleverly, old friend," I said; "I have passed a good many who don't seem to be doing anything." The old man lifted himself up and struck his rod into the ground. "Well, you see, sir, there are three rules for trout-fishing, and 'tis no good if you don't mind them. The first is, keep yourself out of sight; and the second is keep yourself further out of sight; and the third is, keep yourself still further out of sight. Then you'll do it." "Good for catching men, too," I thought.

M. G. Pearce.

KEEP OUT OF SIGHT

"Lord, hide this self from me that I no more, but Christ in me may live. These vile affections mortify, and let me to Thy glory live."

WE QUOTE JAMES GILMOUR

Missionary Mongolia

From his diary: "A stir by daybreak. Made porridge and tea. Several huts in sight. Oh, let me live for Christ, and feel day by day the blessedness of a will given up to God."

"My eyes have filled with tears frequently these last few days in spite of myself! Oh, the intense loneliness of Christ's life! He bore it! O Jesus, let me follow in Thy steps."

"In the shape of converts I have seen no results. I have not, as far as I am aware, seen anyone who even wanted to be a Christian."

GLEANINGS

"God does not hold me responsible for success but for faithfulness."

"The best things are the most difficult."

"The man who will present Christ to others must be occupied with Christ himself."

"We cannot minister Christ with freshness and power to others, if we are not feeding upon Christ in the secrets of our own souls."

"The world has yet to see what God will do in and through the man who is wholly yielded to him."

CHRIST IN ME

"If Jesus Christ abide in me,
Then I will prove it every day,
By every action I perform,
By every word, I think or say."

Tom Kemp.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

"I'M REDEEMED"

Are you saved? One preacher's answer to that question was, "I'm working at it - but I'll not know the final answer until judgment day," To which his inquirer responded, "Ah, an unsaved preacher who ministers with an unsaved congregation!" How sad! Oh, yes, there is a difference between being saved from the guilt of sin, of being brought into a state of salvation in Christ Jesus, and the everlasting salvation for those who have kept the faith (note Mark 16:15, 16; 1 Peter 3:21; and Romans 13:11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8). But that question deserves the positive answer, "Indeed! Yes, I am saved!!"

So, let's speak it, and pray it, and think it. This is not wishful thinking. You and I, believing in Jesus as the Christ with all our hearts, sincerely repented of our sins and were baptized into Him. We are saved. Just as the early Christians trusted in his promises, so do we. Just as they considered themselves to be saved, so do we. Just as they exalted in their salvation (see 1 Peter 1:3-12), so do we.

I Am Forgiven

Forgiven! What a difference there is between being forgiven and being unforgiven. Look at the penitent sinners - forgiven - in the Old Testament. How King David yearned for and pleaded for forgiveness (Psalm 51:1-17). Comes the objection, "Oh, but I have been taught that people back then didn't really have forgiveness of their sins. . . . Rather, their sins were 'rolled forward' year by year until the death of Christ on the cross." Ah, but they really did receive forgiveness of their sins! Among the many, many passages on this theme, please read at least these for confirmation of that conclusion: Exodus 34:7; Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; Numbers 14:18; 15:25-28; Deuteronomy 21:8; Psalms 32:1; 130:4; Isaiah 33:24. True, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4), but the forgiveness was granted by Jehovah in view of the death of the Christ who was to suffer and die in punishment for the sins. That's explained beautifully in Romans 3:25, 26. They didn't understand that forgiveness was in Jesus Christ, but they did understand that forgiveness was theirs.

You and I, however, do know how we came to be forgiven. For God to be just (in that sin was punished) and justifier (in that the sinner can be saved), Jesus **"his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness"** (1 Peter 2:24). What overflowing gratitude there is - not only because of the fact of our forgiveness, but also because One would love us enough to die in our stead so that we could be saved! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb!

Forgive Me!

Forgiveness was not a desperate need only of the past, i.e., when we turned from sin to Christ and were baptized for the remission of our past guilt (Acts 2:38; 22:16). We were baptized into Christ Jesus (Romans 6:1-4), and even now forgiveness comes day by day (1 John 2:1, 2). There are sins of thought and word and deed; there are sins of the flesh and of the disposition; there are sins of doing and of not doing; there are sins of doing right things for the wrong reasons; there are sins of erring from the truth; there are secret sins. We miss the mark. We transgress. We violate our consciences. We may even waver in our faith. Oh,

but we are on no guilt trip. Ours is a humble, penitent spirit that sincerely implores, "**Father, forgive!**" We even understand that when we fail to pray for forgiveness we are very likely to take our sins and weaknesses for granted, that we may grow to the point of being comfortable in our sins. Conscience can indeed be seared. "**Father, forgive**" has us facing ourselves as we face our Heavenly Father every day. Then - peace!

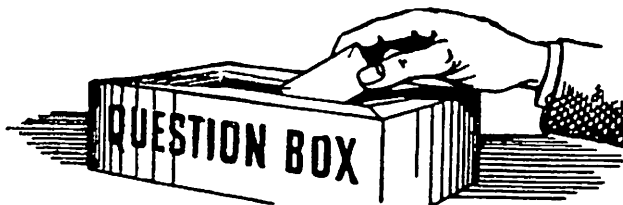
Accepting Forgiveness

The amazing thing is that many people have difficulty in accepting God's forgiveness. They keep feeling and acting as if they had not really been forgiven. Forgive means forgiven. Some would evidently feel far more comfortable about it if they could "make penance" - thereby earning their way back into the good graces of the Father. They are so ashamed - and, oh, if they could only somehow show God how ashamed and penitent they are! That isn't his way. The broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17) has been seen by him. The prayer for forgiveness in Christ has been voiced from a heart of sincere penitence. God has forgiven! Now is the time to accept his forgiveness, to rejoice in thanksgiving, to be at peace. Regrets may remain, even as surely the apostle Paul for a lifetime remembered that he had once been the chief of sinners in persecuting the Church of God. But those regrets can mellow life, sharpen gratitude, fire zeal! You are forgiven!

A New Creature

Forgiven! Praise the Lord!! But the whole of life is not found in that one concept. On that wonderful day we were forgiven of our past sins; we were brought into life, having been born anew (John 3:1-18). We are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17). All spiritual blessings are ours (Eph. 1:3). All that we have and know above and beyond the physical elements of life, we have because we are in Christ. These spiritual blessings are not known by the people of the world - regardless of prosperity, intelligence, or culture. The new person (Eph. 2:16-18), moreover, is part of the brotherhood of believers, is a member of God's family with congregational fellowship. All of that - and so much more - is found in "I'm Redeemed."

C. Rogers.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"What does the phrase 'by nature' mean in passages like Rom. 2:14 and Eph. 2:3? What are the implications of its meaning?"

This is an interesting question because phrases like 'by nature' and 'it's natural' are in common use in our language; I presume they must mean **something** to us, or we wouldn't use them. There is, however, a fairly complex distinction relative to the state of the people who use such phrases, e.g., when a non-Christian uses a phrase such as 'it's natural', he is referring 'nature' to his own condition as a natural man. A Christian, on the other hand, who has been 'born again' and is the recipient of the in-dwelling Holy Spirit, may come to the point when his **spiritual** condition becomes **natural** to him, although he is still a natural man, according to the world's definition. We must, then, try to find out what 'nature' means.

NATURE

Let's think about the Jews and the Gentiles (non-Jews). The Israelites (Jews) had a favoured position relative to God. Stephen, before the Jewish Council, reminded them that Moses had been given the oracles of God; he also reminded them of the perfidy of the nation at that time and after. (Read Acts 7:37-43). Paul in Rom. 3:2 also reminds them of this, and

the advantages they had over other nations. They had been given the Law to guide them, but their perfidious and rebellious conduct had angered God, so much so, in fact, that in the end only a remnant of that once great and proud nation would be spared. (Read Ezek. 6, and Rom. 11). They looked upon the Gentile nations with total disdain, and it must have come as a profound shock when Paul rounded on them and told them that they were no better than the Gentiles. (Read Rom. 3:9ff). The Gentiles, of course, had no similar provision or protection from God; they were 'natural' men.

THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN

When man was created, his classification was 'good', indeed, he couldn't be anything else since he was created from the Source of Goodness. The defection came with the advent of Satan into Eden, and man, who had been created essentially good, became somewhat **less than good** because he had become tainted with sin. He did not become **totally depraved** because there was that within him which could respond to goodness. We may argue that man slipped into a near-depraved condition, hence the destruction of the world by the Flood. We must remember, though, that Noah and his family were of **the same created stock** as the rest, so there must have been - and there still is - something in man which responds to goodness.

However, if there is in man the propensity for goodness (how would we respond to the Gospel if there wasn't), there must also be in man, because of his post-Eden nature, the propensity to sin. It has always been a serious problem to many people as to how a good God could condemn potentially good people to Hell. Surely, they argue, people who live their lives morally and ethically 'good' deserve something better. But that isn't the point. The propensity in man to sin will ultimately make him a 'sinner', and in that condition, as Adam and Eve were banished from God's presence, so we, too, shall be; as Paul says, "**There is none righteous, no not one . . . All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.**" The reason is straightforward. Ultimate Goodness cannot tolerate any semblance of evil, therefore, man must be cleansed from sin, made totally righteous with God, and that can only be done in Christ Jesus. This became necessary for both Jews and Gentiles. We must always bear in mind that God will only **account** for sin when the person becomes **accountable**. This removes the obscene idea that new-born babes can be sinners, and dispels the concept of **original sin**.

SO WHERE ARE WE?

Well, eventually at Rom. 2:14. If what I have said up to this point is right, then the 'nature' of man will make him do 'natural' things; these will, generally speaking, reflect what God would require. It seems equally true that the 'nature' of man can make him do 'unnatural' things, and these would be in direct opposition to what God would require. This, I believe, is made clear in Rom 1:26, 27 "**. . . even their women did change the natural use (of their bodies, presumably) into that which is against nature (unnatural; the Greek word is PHUSIS, with PARA, against). And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of women, burned in their lust one toward another . . . etc.**" See also Jude, who pin-points the advanced stage of corruption some can come to. This makes me conclude that there is a **regular law** or order of nature, which must not be corrupted.

Taking this reasoning a stage further, I believe we can understand what Paul means in Rom. 2:14. He rightly makes the point that the Gentiles did not have the Law. However, because of the 'nature of man' that I have referred to, they will at times do 'natural' things, i.e., their reactions will at some point coincide with the requirements of a Law which they

do not have; at such coincidental points, they will become a 'law unto themselves'. Being a 'law unto themselves' does not mean that they are at liberty to do **whatever** they want; no, they become a law unto themselves when their natural actions are coincidental with God's requirements as per the Law given to the Jews. The reader must understand clearly **that at no point here** are we talking about **salvation**. Paul asserts that both Jew and Gentile **must** have the righteousness of God, as personified in His Christ. Read Rom. 3.

IMPLICATIONS

First and foremost is this: if my analysis of the human condition is correct, then it means that the sinful part of my nature will exclude the Divine Presence, i.e., the Holy Spirit cannot in-dwell me, therefore, I cannot be saved. I must be cleansed from sin, and this can only be accomplished in Christ Jesus. See Acts 2:37ff.

Secondly, if my first implication is right, then the saved person, the Christian, has no right to confuse other people by his or her conduct of life. The Christian life must always reflect the righteousness of the God in whom we have placed our trust. I have been challenged a number of times about my interpretation of Rom. 7, the chapter in which it is said by some that Paul shows how much he is controlled by the sin of the flesh. I believe that Paul is speaking about his **pre-conversion** state, and I also believe the key is found in verse 14, where Paul says, "**For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.**" Are we seriously suggesting that when he wrote this letter, the great Apostle was 'carnal' and sold under sin? And are we further suggesting that "**the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**" is not capable of overcoming the sins of the flesh? If we are, then it would have been far better if we had remained in our 'natural' state, and ignored the Gospel. Perhaps some see the Apostle's so-called Christian life as 'soft option' for them to keep on allowing the flesh to control the Spirit.

Thirdly, the nature of God demands that if we want to return to the relationship which God had with Adam and Eve pre-Satan-intervention, then we must accept the sacrifice of Himself in Christ Jesus. That was the ultimate price which had to be paid.

Fourthly, for the Christian Paul's words must be valid in Rom. 6, "**Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body . . . etc.**" (But read the whole chapter. Incidentally, this is the same Apostle speaking. Could it be that he was exhorting others to do what he **couldn't** do? Which of us would believe that).

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

INTERESTING BOOKLET

Extracts from Dr. Hans Grimm's booklet, *Tradition and History of the Early Churches of Christ in Central Europe* (Translated by Dr. H. L. Schug).

Published by Firm Foundation Publishing House, P.O. Box 610 Austin, Texas 78767 U.S.A.

Excerpt from page 21, of what is claimed to be an *Eighth Century* report by a Byzantine monk of his debate with a group of believers who called themselves exclusively "Christians" and each other "brothers" and "sisters".

"Only the New Testament was accepted among them as the rule for faith and church practice; they rejected the worship of the Mother of God and of the saints, even of the great martyrs George and Sergius; they do not consecrate a special place of worship to the

Archangels or to Elias, have no church feasts at all; each Sunday they assemble in places of prayer which are not worthy to be named thus, since they have neither altar nor wall for pictures of the saints, nor a place for keeping of the holy vessels; they use neither incense nor chrism oil. They despise and scorn the baptism of the church and say that infants have no faith. They recognise neither jurisdiction of the Patriarch at Constantinople nor the Patriarch of Antioch and Jerusalem and have no respect for the schismatic church of the Armenians. They are proud of the fact that their churches are small and poor and that their evangelists live only from what sheltering believers give them voluntarily. They do not accept the false accusation that the heretic Paulus is said to have founded their sect, and say that they are not Paulicians, but Christians chosen of God."

Biographical information of author:

Hans Godwin Grimm was born in 1899 at Sablon-lez-Metz, Lorraine. The son of Gustaf Grimm, one of the three last elders of the Churches of Christ in Strasbourg, Alsatia. A descendent of one of the oldest Christian families in Central Europe, between the Moselle and the Alps, he was baptized at the age of 17 on March the 18th, 1916 in the freezing waters of Hanuer Weiher pond.

He attended college in Strasbourg. He started preaching whilst studying at Konigsberg and Hamburg universities, obtaining a licence in comparative history of religions. He researched information for a history of Churches of Christ in Central Europe.

In 1933 the Nazis imprisoned all elders and deacons of the Lord's Church on German soil in concentration camps. The Nazis interred Brother Hans Grimm in Hammerstein and Lichtenburg concentration camps, for illegally preaching in Anhalt, Germany. There he suffered hunger, thirst, constant thrashings about arms, shinbones and head, along with many political, religious and non-Aryan prisoners. He sustained deafness in one ear and crushed kidneys. His manuscripts were confiscated and after his release he had to sell his important books and furniture to survive. He continued preaching like his ancestors, in woods, hills, swamps and city hiding places.

In 1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War he was commissioned as an interpreter with the army. A second manuscript and collection of documents perished in the bombing of Leipzig in 1944.

In East Prussia adult members of the Church followed their shepherds into prisons and hard labour convoys. Not one survived beyond 1944. In 1942 a remaining eleven Alsatian Church of Christ families were deported to Poland. There, in January 1945 Hans father perished when advancing Russian tank regiments massacred and almost exterminated them.

In Christmas 1945, in Leipzig, Hans learned from a few survivors, of his father's death and of the extremities suffered by the churches in eastern Europe. Whilst preaching and teaching, he worked as a proofreader, reporter and lecturer at Leipzig Teacher's Training College. He supported not only himself, but also old and sick brothers and sisters in famine stricken, ravaged East Germany. Many young people responded to the gospel.

On July 9th, 1948, he married Ilse Hildegard Kohler of Leipzig, Germany. In October of 1948, the Communists imprisoned him for supposed conspiracy in religious circles against the Red government. He was incarcerated in the infamous prisons of Leipzig, Waldheim and Graefentonna. On his release in December 1952 he escaped to West Berlin and rejoined his wife. There he lectured at the Evangelical Academy for Social Ethics in Kassel, In March 1959 the Protestant State Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck invited him to become president of

the Academy providing he promised not to attack the teaching of the confession of Ausburg. He declined. The same month two brothers from the U.S.A., Roy Palmer and Otis Gatewood, met him and to their amazement learnt of the survival of the Lord's Church in Mid and Eastern Europe.

Brother Hans Grimm continued preaching and working with the Churches of Christ in Kaiserlautern and Mannheim, Germany and as late as 1963 in Biel, Switzerland.

Sent in by Allan Ashurst.

THE MUSTARD SEED

"Another parable put he forth unto them saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field. Which is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.'" (Matt. 13:31, 32). A mustard seed is very small and herbs are very large. The main lesson in this parable is that the kingdom had a small beginning but grew in numbers and power. This parable is still being fulfilled. Let us consider this parable under three headings.

The Importance Of Little Things

God places great value upon little things. A mustard seed is small. Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed. Men place great value upon big things. There are big companies, big businesses, big farms, etc. We are told that big farmers are better than little farmers. Bigness is in the Church. There are big workshops, big lectureships, big radio programmes, big TV programmes, etc. some think that bigger is better.

Jesus tells us to attend to the little things. Give food to the hungry, a cup of cold water to the thirsty, visit the sick, comfort the distressed, etc. Much of the teaching of Jesus was to one person at a time. We must not think we are too big to do as He did. One person's soul is worth more than all the world! It is a great privilege to teach one person the way of salvation.

Small Beginnings

The longest trip is begun with a single step. The greatest painting is begun with a single stroke. Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem and was laid in a manger. The Roman world was too busy to notice. He grew up as the son of a carpenter. There was nothing about His appearance to draw attention. His death was of no importance to the Romans. He was looked upon as the least of seeds. But the kingdom He established is the greatest kingdom to ever exist, and He is the greatest person to ever live on this earth. From the manger to the throne of God is quite a journey.

The Branches Of The Tree

"Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (Matt. 13:32). Some say that the branches are the denominations.

Jesus said, **"Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted shall be rooted up"** (Matt. 13:15). God did not plant the denominations. People do not stay in denominations when they believe and obey the truth. It is far better to root up wild plants now, than to wait for God to root them up at the judgment! The branches show the magnificent growth of the kingdom. As the seed is planted in good and honest hearts people become Christians, thus the kingdom grows numerically.

This parable should encourage Christians to serve faithfully and in all humility. If we plant and water God will give the increase.

Q. Dunn.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

| | | |
|----------|------------------|-----------|
| March 3 | Leviticus 20:1-8 | 1 Peter 1 |
| March 10 | Psalms 118:1-24 | 1 Peter 2 |
| March 17 | Genesis 7 | 1 Peter 3 |
| March 24 | Job 2 | 1 Peter 4 |
| March 31 | Proverbs 3:21-35 | 1 Peter 5 |

1 PETER

AUTHOR: the apostle Peter.

PLACE OF WRITING: Babylon (5:13). Some commentators believe that Babylon stands for Rome. Others take it simply to mean Mesopotamian Babylon.

DATE: Uncertain, but probably around the mid-60's A.D.

TO WHOM WRITTEN: ". . . the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (1:1). These regions were in north-east Asia Minor, which we know as Turkey.

PURPOSE: "In writing this epistle, Peter obeyed two specific commands which Jesus had given him: To encourage and strengthen the brethren (Luke 22:32) and to feed the flock of God (John 21:15-17)" (Chain-Reference Bible).

KEY WORD: "Suffering".

DOMINANT IDEAS: C. H. Dodd identified five fundamental ideas in the first epistle. In essence they are these: The Messianic age has begun. The new age results from the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus (all a direct fulfilment of prophecies of the O.T.). Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God and is the Head of the Body, which is the new Israel. Jesus will return in glory to judge the living and the dead. These facts are made on the grounds of appeal for repentance leading to forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the promise of

eternal life.

SUFFERING

This epistle has a great deal to say about suffering. For example: "For what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? but if, when you do well and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (2:20). "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that you suffer for well doing" (3:17). "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (4:1). "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings . . ." (4:12,13). "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (4:16).

A great fire in Rome had broken out in 64 A.D. The Emperor Nero diverted suspicion from himself by blaming the Christians. Persecution then resulted. The Christian historian, Sulpicus Servus, later wrote: ". . . the most cruel tortures were accordingly inflicted upon the innocent. Nay, even new kinds of death were invented so that, being covered in the skins of wild beasts, they perished by being devoured by dogs, while many were crucified, or slain by fire, and not a few were set apart for this purpose, that, when the day came to a close, they should be consumed to serve for light during the night. In this way, cruelty first began to be manifested against the Christians." Such were the horrors when Peter began to write his first epistle. It is any wonder that he refers to the subject of suffering so frequently.

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

There is so much in this epistle that it is difficult to know what passages to single out. One of my favourite passages of scripture is this: **"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy"** (2:9,10). The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of priests. This passage and others clearly teach that, under the new covenant, there is the priesthood of all believers. One of the tasks of the priest during the Mosaic dispensation was to offer sacrifices for the people. The priest of God still offers sacrifices, but they are now spiritual in nature. We read: **"You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"** (2:5). **"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name"** (Hebrews 13:15).

One of the great tragedies of history was the establishing of a professional priesthood within the community of God. Nowhere in the N.T Scriptures do we read of the division of God's people into clergy and laity. Such a division is not the work of God, but of Satan. I would venture to say that any church which makes such a division or distinction is not the Lord's Church.

BAPTISM

We read: **"The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ . . ."** (3:21). Of course, these words have to be carefully studied

within their context because the previous verse speaks of Noah and the flood and of how **"eight souls were saved by water"** (3:20). Noah and his family were brought to safety through water. Christian converts to Christ are also brought to safety through the water. Peter clearly points out that baptism is not merely a physical cleansing; it is a cleansing of man's whole being. Baptism also produces a good conscience toward God. The Greek word for "answer" in verse 21 is *eperotema* and is the word for a pledge. William Barclay has written: "In every business contract there was a definite question and answer which made the contract binding. The question was: 'Do you accept the terms of the contract and bind yourself to observe them?' And the answer was: 'Yes'. Without that question and answer the contract was not valid". Brethren and sisters in the Lord, when we were baptised into Christ Jesus we accepted all the terms of His service. May we continue to live up to the responsibilities and demands He places upon us. The third point is that the effectiveness of baptism is very much dependent on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

OUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL

At Motherwell, the saints have just completed a study in depth of the devil. Verses 8 and 9 of chapter 5 are very familiar to us. **"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world"**. The devil is a cunning, scheming, lying enemy, who is out to ruin the followers of Jesus. It is interesting that he is compared to a lion. This animal would be quite familiar to the people of Asia Minor in Peter's day. In the New Bible Dictionary we read: "At one time lions were found from Asia through the Middle East and Persia to India, with a

similar form in Greece up to nearly A.D. 100". I think the roaring lion refers again to the persecution of the saints. But one thing is clear: if bravely resisted in the strength of Jesus he will retreat. Yes, he can be overcome and Jesus has shown us the way.

SILVANUS AND MARCUS

Silvanus is described by Peter as "a faithful brother unto you" (5:12) and Marcus as "my son" (5:13). It is possible that this Silvanus or Silas is the same brother who participated in Paul's ministry. Marcus is, of course, John Mark. We tend to skip over these names when we read the epistles, but we should not. Each life of these faithful companions of the apostles was outstanding and an example to us all.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

"IS THERE NO BALM IN GILEAD"?

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" (Jer. 8:22).

The prophet Jeremiah seems to be chiding the people a little, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" The people of Jerusalem had back-slidden so far that God had given up on them. Jeremiah is asking the people, do you not know that God will forgive you and heal you, if you will turn back to him and ask his forgiveness?

Jeremiah is saying that the balm is there, if you will avail yourself of it. God had not forsaken the people. The people had forsaken God. They were moaning and complaining because of their sad plight, but they had no one to blame but themselves. Jeremiah points them to the balm that would heal them. The balm of Gilead would heal the physical as well as the spiritual ills of God's people, if they would only apply it.

Gilead was famous for its balm. The balm was exported to other parts of the world, Gilead belonged to Israel, to the

tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. Jeremiah is telling the people of God that they had the balm for their physical ills, in Gilead. He is telling them that they have the balm for their spiritual ills, in God.

The Christian has that "Balm of Gilead" to heal the "Sin-sick soul". Only he must seek it, go where it is. The balm for all of our ills is found in God's word, the Bible. God has not promised perfect health, but he has promised that he would not allow our burdens to be heavier than we could bear, but will make for us a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

Our way of escape is trust in God's promises. To obey His commands and above all, to study, so that we may know His will. The balm is there. God will not force it upon us, but He will not keep it from us, if we diligently seek it. (Heb. 11:6).

"The balm of Gilead" will heal the soul, lighten the heavy heart, bring peace to the weary mind, comfort in the time of sorrow, and give hope at the time of death to those that love the Lord and have lived by His word. (Rev. 2:10).

J. Boyd.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

- 1) Whom did the Philippian church send to help with Paul's needs?
- 2) In which city did Paul have his hair cut to fulfil a vow?
- 3) How many times was Paul shipwrecked?
- 4) Who was Philemon's slave?
- 5) What devoured Jezebel's body?
- 6) What place had twelve springs and seventy palm trees?
- 7) Under disguise, who went to see the witch of Endor?
- 8) Name Joseph's only sister.
- 9) Lamentations mourns the destruction of which city?
- 10) Who was Cain's first son?

COMPENDIUM ON ISLAM

A generous brother in Singapore has printed 1,000 copies of the Compendium on Islam. These are available free. Any brother or sister wanting one for their personal use, please write to Allan Ashurst, 60 Kenwood Road, Stretford, Manchester, M32 8PT.

We would be grateful if you could include a 52p. second class stamp or a 67p. first class stamp together with a pre-addressed adhesive label.

It is also available on P.C. compatible disk. If you would also like a copy on disk, please include either two DD disks or one HD disk. In this case a 61p. second class stamp or a 71p. first class stamp would be welcome.

ALLAN ASHURST

COMING EVENTS

(A note for your diary)

TRANENT ANNUAL SOCIAL

16th March, 1996
at Loch Centre

KIRKCALDY SOCIAL

20th April, 1996

KIRKCALDY LADIES DAY

18th May, 1996

OLD PUBLICATIONS RETYPESET

"An Outline of My Life" and "The Acts, Subjects and Design of Baptism" by James Anderson, 1912. Book and tract bound together, £3.50.

"Hitherto, or Our Journey to Jerusalem" by Stephen Cheek. An Australian tract of the 1890's. No Charge.

Also available on disk.

Miss R. M. Payne, 1 Kenilworth Avenue, Reading, RG30 3DL.

GHANA REPORT

Towards the end of last year a brother in Ghana requested £100 to make the trip to Volta to preach to the family of a recent convert to Christ. This brother was delayed because he was admitted into hospital for 2 weeks then on being discharged he took a brother who can speak the Lelemi language with him as a translator. They preached for a week and established a church having baptised 7 between 24th - 25th December. This brother left to return home on 27th December leaving a new congregation of nine. The all in cost of this trip was £85. The translator is prepared to move to Volta with his wife and 2 children (340 mile trip) if we support him with £30 per month. He is a blacksmith to trade. We have funds to initially set this up and we will but, should anyone / church wish to take this on as a long term project, please feel free to contact me.

As we enter into 1996 we approach the seventh year of the Ghana appeal and it is obvious that the requests of the churches in Ghana are greater than the fund can support. We hope to introduce some changes this year. Churches which have received aid for the past 7 years we hope to persuade to stand on their own feet to free up the system and encourage new young congregations. If individuals or churches would like to become involved with a single new church this would spread the work load. We don't know how easy this will be to organise and I suppose that it will depend on the response. We are pleased to inform you that we have now exceeded £60,000 in this appeal and we sincerely thank all who have contributed to this work. Anyone wishing to assist in this work, please contact Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel. 01383 728624. Cheques should be made out to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)"

P.S. Thank you IMB for yur gift received on 24/12/95 which has Receipt No. 670.

A SCRIPTURE STANDARD INDEX?

There are quite a few brothers and sisters in Christ who think this would be a good idea. There have been previous attempts to undertake this task. One of the larger tasks involves the time that it takes to read an article and decide what would bet the most appropriate title for the index. Some are easy. To have a comprehensive index it would be necessary to also list chapter and verse used in articles. In this age of computers punching the information into a PC is an easy task. I would therefore be very interested to hear from you if you would be prepared to read a single year of Scripture Standards. I am thinking about an eight-month time span for this task to produce a hand-written index of that year.

I am looking for 60 volunteers.

If you wish to volunteer, could you please write to me and let me know which (complete) years of Scripture Standard you have access to. Please also enclose a Stamped addressed envelope. (To reduce time and cost for me). If I get enough

volunteers I will allocate you a year and enclose a sample of the format to follow. If you don't want to help in the reading but you want to help in other ways, please contact me. Also if you have Scripture Standards that you would be prepared to lend to readers to complete this task (for the early editions must be getting rare). If you have an IBM compatible PC and want to punch in some data please contact me with your hardware details. The idea will be to produce an index on A4 paper and perhaps alternately a 3.5" floppy disk. If you are interested please write to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline. Fife KY12 0DU and enclose a stamped addressed envelope. (to reduce time and cost for me).

-
1. Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25)
 2. Cenchrea (Acts 18:18)
 3. Three (2 Corinthians 11:25)
 4. Onesimus (Philemon 10)
 5. Dogs (2 Kings 9:36)
 6. Elim (Exodus 15:27)
 7. Saul (1 Samuel 28:8)
 8. Dinah (Genesis 30:21)
 9. Jerusalem (1:7,8)
 10. Enoch (Genesis 4:17)

ANSWERS

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PRICE PER YEAR — POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL:

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| UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH..... | £ 7.50 |
| CANADA & USA..... | \$ 14.00 |

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