

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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LET JUSTICE BE DONE

Britain is becoming so violent, that once again, it is proposed that the policeman on the beat should carry arms. This suggestion has come up many times before but has always been resisted, especially by the police themselves. They realise that such a move would merely escalate the exchange of gunfire in the streets. Britain has always been slightly proud of the kindly "Bobby" whose perceived function appeared to be telling people the time, escorting old ladies across the road or giving street directions to tourists. Sadly all that has changed somewhat and now fear, violence and even death itself stalks the streets. More and more are sawn-off shotguns being presented to passers-by by muggers, and grievous-bodily-harm is now common-place. Our American cousins have had to cope with this nightmare for many years, and Mafia-type gun battles are not unusual over there. Britain has been described as "a little America" and what happens there often comes to these shores some ten or twenty years later (whether it be fads in clothes, music, pastimes or religion) and so perhaps the days of the friendly British "Bobby" are numbered. (I noticed the other day that the first U.S.A. 'televangelist' has appeared on our screens). Another British 'institution' under threat seems to be our Law Courts and Legal System. "British Justice" used to be a by-word for its impartiality and fairness in many parts of the world, especially the old Commonwealth, but recently that has taken a severe knock due to apparent miscarriages of justice, and alleged police malpractice.

Man being the belligerent and aggressive creature he often is, requires some effective scheme of law whereby his uncivilised and anti-social behaviour is held in check. The Police and Prison Service: the Courts of Law and Judges, have the very difficult task of detecting crime, identifying the criminal, proving guilt, judging culpability, and having an appropriate penalty brought to bear. Every society in every country has eventually to come to terms with man's criminality, and even in Jewish history, the chosen people of God required a system of prescribed offences and penalties to fit the crime. INJUSTICE, through failure of the legal system is not unknown, and many prisoners have spent their entire jail sentence in trying to prove their innocence. Obviously most prisoners protest their innocence, but a small percentage are, indeed, vindicated and later released. We all expect justice in a free society, and find it difficult to tolerate injustice, or unfairness. Even as very small children we bitterly rebelled against unfairness and greatly resented being blamed for something we didn't do: so much so that even in old-age, such occasions still live in our memory.

VARIOUS TYPES OF JUDGEMENT

In the context of Justice and Injustice, a small family of words comes to mind, beginning with the word "JUST". A just man is one who is fair, honest, reasonable and upright. Joseph (Mary's husband) "was a good man and just" (Luke 2:50). Simeon was "just and devout" (Luke 2:25) and the Centurion "was a just man" (Acts 10:22). "JUSTICE" is the next word in the family. We expect justice from just men. Christians are supposed to be just; and we should expect justice from them. In the big outside world, however, justice is often a very scarce commodity and men have to repair to Courts of Law for "JUSTIFICATION". If their cause can be justified they will receive a "JUDGEMENT". A fair "Judgement" depends upon the quality of the "Judge" and in some countries, where bribery and corruption obtain, 'bent' Judges are not uncommon. If juries are involved, the prospect of fair play can become even more remote, and there is currently considerable unrest in Britain over the jury system. (The recent city riots, and deaths, in the U.S.A. caused by a jury, who, having seen an authentic film of a man being beaten nearly to death by the police, gave a decision in the police favour, is a case in point).

All these words, **Just, Justice, Justification, Judge and Judgement** all apply in the spiritual realm as well as in the worldly. God is the ultimate Judge, of course, and will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained: even Jesus Christ. Such is the importance of this little group of words that they appear in the Bible about 900 times. Obviously the word "**Judgement**" carries various shades of meaning, and we must handle it accordingly. Cruden gives quite a nice little definition of these various meanings, thus:- (1) A sentence, or decision of a Judge. (2) The necessary wisdom or prudence to discern right from wrong, or good from evil. (3) The righteous statutes and commandments of God (see Ps. 119:7,20). (4) Justice and Equity (Is. 1:17). (5) God's decrees and purposes concerning nations or persons. (Rom. 11:13). (6) Courts of Judgement (Matt. 5:21). (7) The Last Judgement (Matt. 25:31).

Every hour, we are called upon to make decisions, form opinions and make judgements. As Cruden suggests, there are various types of judgement, and as the N.T. suggests, some kinds of judgement we are forced to make, and some form of judgement we are required to avoid.

OUR UNSUITABILITY TO JUDGE

For instance, in Matt. 7:1-5 Jesus reminds us that man is largely quite incapable of rendering justice to his fellow man and should, therefore, refrain from passing judgement on others. "**Judge not**", says Jesus, "**that ye not be judged**": i.e. if we want to minimise God's judgement of us, we should minimise our judgement of others. Jesus went on to describe the rather ludicrous picture of men, and women, with large planks in their eyes trying to remove little splinters from the eyes of neighbours. William Barclay makes some interesting comments on this passage, too lengthy to quote here, but he cites his three main reasons for man's unsuitability to pass judgement on his neighbour: viz. (1) **We never have the full facts, nor do we know the whole person.** This is very true and quite often we form a whole theory based upon the slightest snippet of misinformation. My elderly neighbour says the worst form of exercise is jumping; jumping to conclusions. Were we to be privy to all the facts, and special circumstances, our criticisms might prove to be entirely misplaced, and even extremely cruel. (2) **Mr. Barclay's second point is that it is almost impossible for man to be entirely impartial in his judgement.** Few of us would quarrel with this generalisation, and as Dickens said, it is the easiest thing in the world to find faults in people we don't like. We are all swayed by former bad experiences, or even by perceived slights. We also instinctively react to the general appearance of a person, and 'pigeon-

hole' him or her accordingly. This, indeed, was the reason behind the admonition of James' (James 2:1) against "respect of persons" and the adulation given in the church to the rich man, with the gold ring, and goodly apparel: and the relegation of 'the poor man in vile raiment' into a quiet corner. This spirit, unfortunately, is not entirely dead. Our innate prejudices affect our judgement and we react accordingly: often adversely to those who are German, French, black, white, or who are car salesmen, turf accountants, or who have long hair, etc., etc. As a small boy I remember that my mother would never have trusted a woman who dyed her hair, or a man who wore suede shoes, and often wonder what she would make of the sights and sounds of today. A well qualified accountant said, the other day on the radio, that his interview for a top Executive post was going really well, until some of the panel noticed that he had an ear-ring. (3) Mr. Barclay's third point was **that no man is good enough to pass judgement upon another man.** (Perhaps some readers may disagree with this third point, but I think we know what he means). The best of men are men at best. We have all sinned: there is none righteous, no, not one. We have all quite enough to do with our own shaky existence, without pontificating on the efforts of others to cope with their lives. The old Indian proverb says "Never criticise a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins".

We should also note the warning that Jesus added to His admonition to "Judge not". He assured us that **"with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again"**. When tempted to pass judgement on others we should bear Jesus' words in mind. The standard we look for in others God will look for in us. The measuring tape we use in our assessment of others will be the tape that God will use to measure us. If we think that others should be doing more (and we usually do) then God will require us to be doing as much. If we think that others should be giving more, or loving more, or praying more, or sacrificing more, or forgiving more, then that is fine, but God will require that level of service from us. In this passage Jesus has been using the term "Judge" in the sense of personal criticism, or condemnation. We can say this with some confidence, because in a parallel passage (in Luke 6:37) Jesus said **"Judge not and ye will not be judged: condemn not and ye shall not be condemned: forgive and ye shall be forgiven. Give and it shall be given unto you again, good measure and pressed down"**

APPEARANCES: THE DANGER

But, as Cruden points out, the word "Judgement" has various shades of meaning, and occasionally we all have a responsibility, and a duty, **to form judgements.** Faced with the problems and difficulties of everyday living, we are **forced** to make decisions, implement them and stand by them. If someone comes to us with a doctrine, or point of view, we have to decide **and judge** as to whether we are hearing truth or error. Similarly, if we read a tract, book or other literature we, again, must form some judgement upon it. If we listen to a speaker, publicly or privately, we quite naturally, find ourselves in agreement or otherwise. We may be cordially invited to go down a certain path and we must judge the wisdom of such a course. Sometimes the Church may decide upon a specific plan of action, and presumably all the members have employed **their own judgement** in reaching such a decision. This was true even of Spirit-inspired apostles, and we find (Acts 15), in the dispute over circumcision, that the matter was referred to the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem for a **judgement:** and it was only after much "disputing" that the apostles (James being the spokesman) passed their judgement (or "sentence" v.19) on the issue. Similar instances may come to mind: I suppose that the neglected Gentile widows (Acts 6) would be another one.

Presumably it is because of this necessity for us to make judgements that we should be exhorted to make honest judgements. Although Jesus said, **"Judge not"**, He also said, **"Judge not according to appearances, but judge righteous judgement"**.

There is no contradiction in this: as some suppose. Jesus is saying that we should not judge (condemn) others: but, when judgements were required of us, we should make sure that they were just and fair: not necessarily based upon how things look. One of man's many weaknesses is that he is unduly influenced by what he sees; even mesmerized; to the point where his common sense and judgement is affected. Man looks upon appearances: God looks beneath and beyond. Just before David was chosen to be king, seven of the sons of Jesse were paraded in front of Samuel with a view to selection to be king. Samuel was impressed with what he saw, for in outward appearances the men, especially Eliab, were very handsome, tall and strong; **"But the Lord said to Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature: because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for men looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart"**. (1 Sam. 16:7).

GOD ALONE, IS JUDGE

Even centuries after Samuel's day, nothing had changed and Paul found it necessary to challenge the Corinthian Christians thus: **"Do you look on things after the outward appearance?"** (2 Cor. 10:7). The opinion (or judgement) that many had of Paul was that he was unimpressive in appearance, weak, ineffectual and inconsequential: and certainly not an apostle. Paul finished the quotation by saying, **"If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's even so are we Christ's"**. In the context of "judgement" Paul had much to say, and disdained the criticism he received from the Corinthians. He said, **"But with Me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgement, Yea, I judge not mine own self . . . but He that judgeth me is God."** (1 Cor. 4:3). Paul also condemned lawsuits among brethren; not only should it be unnecessary to have to go law to get justice from a fellow Christian, but it would be far better for the wronged party to accept it. Paul also insisted that if the saints were to "judge the world" they should certainly be able to judge their own internal disputes. Nor should a brother **"judge or set at naught"** a brother. (Rom. 14:9). None of us are paragons of virtue and quite often we condemn and criticise others for something we occasionally do ourselves; and, in such circumstances, Paul says are merely passing judgement upon ourselves. (Rom. 1:1). We are all equally servants of the same Master, even Christ, and to that Master we stand or fall. Only the Master can fairly judge the servant, and this is perhaps Paul's most powerful argument against us setting ourselves up as judges. He says, **"Who art thou that judgest another man's servants; to his own Master he standeth or falleth."** (Rom. 14:4). James also has much to say on this subject but space is short. James it is who describes how partial we are in our judgements, making allowances for those and such as those, and coming down heavily on those we never really liked much in the first place. He also agreed with Paul, **"There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy: who art thou that judgest another."** (James 4:12).

CONCLUSION

Surely it has already all been said. "Judge not" and we shall not be judged. We should be quick to hear but slow to speak. We should possess all the facts before making pronouncements. Solomon said, **"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and a shame unto him"** (Pro. 18:13). We all want justice and to be treated fairly: we should try to accord the same to others. Nicodemus said, **"Doth our law (Moses' law) judge a man before it hears him"** (John 7:51). James also reminds us to mix great helpings of mercy into our judgements, and says, **"For he shall have judgement without mercy; that hath showed no mercy: and mercy rejoices against judgement."** (James 2:13)

Even everyday men saw the sense of all this and Abraham Lincoln said, "He has a right to criticise who has a heart to help." Archbishop Garbett said, "Any fool can

criticise and many of them do." C. E. Carruthers said, "In judging others, folks will work overtime for no pay." The poet Burns said, "But gently scan your brother man; still gentler sister woman."

Paul's advice is best. If we have to judge at all, we should judge our own selves. He says, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. 11:31). In all, let justice (at least) be done and let us mix it, if possible, with a little tolerance, love and understanding.

Editor.

GLEANINGS

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

CALLED OUT

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9 (R.V.)

MASTER

"JESUS, Master, whom I serve,
Though so feebly and so ill,
Strengthen hand, and heart, and nerve
All Thy bidding to fulfil;
Open Thou mine eyes to see
All the work Thou hast for me."

THE CHURCH ASSEMBLIES

"The prophet Malachi speaks of the Lord's people meeting together (3:16): 'Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name.' So under the new dispensation, the writer to the Hebrews warns us of 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day drawing nigh' (10:25).

THE SPIRIT-CONTROLLED APOSTLES

In the Acts of Apostles, we are told that, under the guidance of the Spirit-controlled Apostles, the Christians met together on the first day of the week to break bread. Here we have the second of the ordinances of the Lord's providing. The first was the baptism of believing, contrite sinners, by which means we put on Christ, become a child of God, enter His Church: and now the ordinance of the Lord's Table, which is inside His Church: and meaningless to those who are not. Meaningless, because the amount of bread eaten will not satisfy any physical need. Shall we note, very carefully, the institution of this feast, for its importance is fully stated by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. (1 Cor. II 23-30): 'For I received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, This is My body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of Me.'

IN LIKE MANNER ALSO THE CUP

In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood; this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him

eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgement unto himself if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few asleep.'

F. C. Day

WE QUOTE — J. GRINSTEAD

"Some there are who recognise the fact that the apostasy is very widespread, who do not see the need to restore to the people the pure, simple truth as it came from the lips of its Author. We do! We have not been miraculously called to do this work; but led on, step by step — not by fate, but by the God of providence — we have come to look upon this great work and to realise the need for putting our hands to it — to do it with all our might . . . Let us, with one mind and one heart, put on the whole armour of God, and stand prepared for the battle, responding valiantly to the call of the captain of our salvation, who has been commissioned to bring many sons unto glory."

"I do not know if I shall live to see a single convert, but I would not leave my present field of labour to be made king of the greatest empire on the Globe."

Adoniram Judson

PETER AND THE CHURCH

"An elect race." I want to remind you first of the thought behind that word of Jesus which I read to you, when He said to that little group of His first disciples before He left them: "Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you." For a moment I am not interested in the reason for His choosing. I ask you to remember, my fellow-students of the Word, that the word that Jesus used, when He said, "I chose you," is the word "elect". We should not be wrong if we read it, "I elected you." I am not dealing with it now save as we bear it in mind. Two things demand our attention in this first phrase — an adjective and a noun, "elect" and "race." I am going to put special emphasis upon the noun; of course I am not going to leave out the adjective "elect."

TO THE ELECT

Now I go back to the beginning of the Letter, and I find Peter says: "Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect . . . according to the fore knowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." He was writing to people who were chosen out, who were elected, according to that fore knowledge. We find as we read the Letter, that there are certain sentences, showing how closely the thought of election is identified with the idea expressed in the word "precious" and "preciousness". Let us compare two or three paragraphs in the 1st and 2nd Epistles where this great description of the Church is found.

ELECT, PRECIOUS

I go back to verse 4, and I read, "Unto whom coming, a living Son, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious." The reference is to Christ. God's election of Christ is based upon his preciousness. Then turn over to the 2nd Letter of Peter, verse 1, "To them that have obtained a like precious faith," Then on to the 4th verse: "Whereby He hath granted unto us His precious and exceeding great promises." Once again in 1 Peter 2:7: "For you therefore, which believe is the preciousness; but for such as disbelieve,

"The stone which the builders rejected,

The same was made the Head of the corner.

Then go back again and read: "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious."

The stone which the builders rejected,

**The same was made the Head of the corner.”
For you therefore which believe is the preciousness.”**

Let us gather up the thoughts suggested by those scattered sentences, and gain from them the main ideas We see in those verses 4 and 6 of the 2nd chapter of Peter's first Epistle that Christ is described as “elect” — “precious,” that is chosen by God. God's election is based upon the preciousness of Christ. “Precious” is a very remarkable word, not so much from the standpoint of its etymology, or derivation, as from the standpoint of our use of it. There is a special value in it.”

Campbell Morgan

OUR LIVES KEPT FOR JESUS

“Not for ‘me’ at all, but ‘for Jesus’; not for my safety, but for his glory; not for my comfort, but for His joy; not that I might find rest, but that He may see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied !”

“Yes, for Him I want to be kept. Kept for His sake; kept for His use; kept to be His witness; kept for His joy !”

“Kept for Him, that in me He may show forth some tiny sparkle of His light and beauty; kept to do His will and His work in His own way; kept, if may be, to suffer for His sake; kept for Him, that He may do just what seemeth Him good with me; kept, so that no other lord shall have any more dominion over me, but that Jesus shall have all there is to have; — little enough, indeed, but not divided or diminished by any other claim.”

“Is not this, O you who love the Lord — is not this worth living for, worth asking for; and worth trusting for ?”

Frances Ridley Havergal

Selected by Leonard Morgan

PRACTICAL FAITH

Any pursuit, whether in the realms of music, art, medicine, building or whatever, requires, first of all a good grounding in theory. Theory, however, is of little consequence if not coupled with practice. If in the erection of a building, materials such as sand and bricks are delivered to the site but the workmen simply stand back looking at the stuff, the building will never come to completion. The theory, in such circumstances, means nothing. The same applies in the spiritual realm. The plan and guide for the church is found in the New Testament but if we are experts in the theory only, then little will be accomplished for the Lord. Even God's own infallible word is quite worthless if not coupled with practice. Faith without works is most certainly dead.

In Hebrews 2:7 we read that “Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” Noah's faith in God's plan was so strong that he was motivated into real action, over a very, very long period of years, to build the ark. Here was indeed an exhibition of PRACTICAL FAITH. Some are spurred into short bursts of activity, followed by periods of lethargy but Noah was consistent in effort over the years until the goal had been reached and the ship of salvation was ready for launching. Such faith resulted in “the saving of his house.”

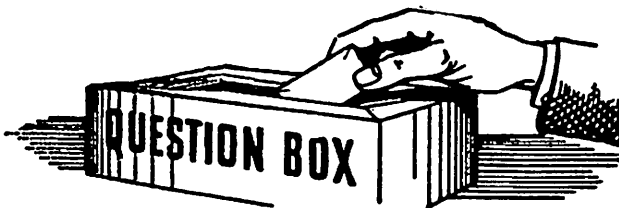
When Abraham was called of God (Gen. 22) he did not deliberate or argue but obeyed. Even when required to offer his son, his only son, he never faltered. He gathered the wood, provided the rope and even answered Isaac's terrible questions. As he lifted the knife to strike his son, God could say, “Now I know” that thou are faithful. This is the proof of the pudding as far as faith is concerned. This is the only confirmation of faith. How practical is our faith?

Elisha, the prophet, (2 Kings 5) instructed the Gentile Naaman to go and wash seven times in the Jordan. Naaman came close to rejecting these instructions and would never have lost his dreaded leprosy if he had not complied. He came around to the knowledge that the God of Israel not only required faith, but a faith that operates, and is active. The word of God abounds with similar examples, ranging from the blind man, who was told to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, to the woman who said, within herself, "If I may touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole." Hebrews (Chap. 11) is, of course, filled to capacity with ACTIVE FAITH.

After citing dozens of examples Paul is forced to admit that time would fail him to quote more. "And what can I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, were valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." These all obtained a 'good report' through faith. James confirms all this (2:22) and asks us to see "how faith wrought with works, and by works was faith made perfect." PRACTICAL FAITH is faith made perfect (complete). Quite often we are mere hearers of the word, and certainly that is HOW faith comes — by hearing the word. "But" says James, "Be ye DOERS of the word and not hearers only." *So often we are but hearers of the word, only.*

ARE YOU, dear unsaved friend, amongst those who have perhaps, heard the gospel, or read it and have been disposed to believe it. If so, I urge you also to quickly obey it. May your faith be an active faith — "a faith that worketh through love." When the apostle Paul heard the gospel he asked "Lord what will thou have me to do" and when he was told what to do HE DID IT. He repented and was baptised for the remission of his sins. He was told, "arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Do likewise and be ye reconciled to God in His own appointed way, and join the ranks of those who believe that faith without works is very dead, being alone.

Thomas Hartle, Evangelist, Cape Town, R.S.A.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Could you please explain the statement made by Paul in Rom. 14:22, "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." Does this mean that I can allow *anything* in my Christian life so long as I am happy about it?"

This is one of those perennial questions, the answers to which never seem to be passed on from generation to generation. What can I allow in my life and still please God, seems to be the criterion for Christian living in some people's minds. The underlying principles governing this attitude of mind seem to be apparent in such things as sexual relationships — what can I get away with and still keep my partner happy; in work situations — what can I get away with and still keep my boss happy; in child/parent relationships — how far can I go and still keep my parents happy? It seems to me that such an attitude indicates a spirit of self-gratification taking precedence over other important Christian virtues.

However, the context will tell us how to proceed, and it is to that which we must now turn in order to arrive at the answer.

THE CONTEXT

The 14th chapter of the Roman letter shows Paul concerned about three very important aspects of Christian relationships. In the first place he abhors the disputations and contentions among brethren regarding the eating of meats and the observance of days; those who eat with an untroubled conscience he refers to as the 'strong'; others whose conscience troubles them he seems to refer to as the 'weak' (it would help if the reader read and considered 1 Cor. 10:23-33 at this point). Secondly, he seems to be concerned about the judgmental attitude among brethren, one toward the other. Thirdly, he acknowledges that in the almost embryonic days of the Church this contentious and judgmental spirit could easily destroy the faith of some, consequently he calls for peace and a greater restraint and responsibility from brethren who seem not to realise that their most serious endeavours should be concentrated on promoting love and unity within the Body of the Lord who, ostensibly, they have all committed themselves to. This, then, is just a broad interpretation of the context; we shall fill in some detail as we proceed.

WHAT DO I ALLOW ?

This, in line with my earlier remarks, can also be a vexed question among Christians, as well as people generally, and if we are not very careful can result in an almost farcical approach to practical Christianity. Obviously, the Christians to whom Paul was writing had different opinions as to what they should eat; some **allowed** meat in their diet (even though they might be aware that it had been offered to idols); others were conscious-stricken about this and didn't allow it in their diet. The former-referred to by Paul as the 'strong' — saw the food for what it was, just **meat**; the latter-referred to as the 'weak' — saw the eating of such meat as in some way condoning idolatry. The remarkable thing was that **they were both right**. The meat-eaters were eating in faith; the herb-eaters were also by faith refraining. Each party was 'fully persuaded' its actions would be acceptable to God. The trouble was, of course, that the 'strong' were going ahead without any consideration of the feelings of their 'weaker' conscientious-stricken brethren; they, on the other hand, would be quite convinced that the 'strong' should be prevented from, as they would see it, contravening God's spiritual law. But in Rom. 14:14 Paul makes the point that there is nothing wrong or impure concerning the food, "**I know, and I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself**"; the problem wasn't the **nature** of the food itself, but the Christian's **perception** of it (it is interesting to note that by this statement Paul seems to put himself with the 'strong', as he does in the Letter to Corinth). But he has something extremely important to teach which will be considered a little later. As regards the observance of 'days', it is quite probable that newly-born Jewish Christians would still be celebrating the **seventh day**, the Sabbath, while Gentile Christians would be celebrating the first day of the week in memory of the Lord's resurrection. At this point Paul is appealing for liberty, although he is no libertine, as we realise when we study his letters.

I mentioned earlier that our views on this subject could be come somewhat farcical if we weren't careful; I say this not without some experience. I have known Christians whose consciences have been offended by the casual clothes that other Christians have worn, by the kind of music they have listened to, by their attendance at a concert or ball-game, by where they holiday and for how long, and so on. Others have looked askance at Christians who use the banking system, make wills, use investment services, insurance services, and perhaps buy shares in privatised public services. Yet other consciences might be offended by the purchase of expensive homes, cars, the range of sophisticated audio /visual equipment, tools, cameras, creature comforts, etc., while

many of God's creation are living (and dying) in abject poverty under the most appalling conditions. The list of such 'offences', if pursued to its logical conclusion, could be never ending. Perhaps the comment of Oliver Wendell Holmes is appropriate when he said, "The greatest act of faith is when man decides that he is not God".

But there is one more vital element of this question to consider, and it is perhaps the crux of the problem as to what a Christian should allow.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

So far as the Christian is concerned, there is no escaping this. In v.22 Paul says, "**Hast thou faith? have to thyself before God.**" It is true that each individual Christian has the right to choose what he or she will **allow** in life, but it is absolutely essential for us to remember that such a choice is made **before God**, and is made with due regard to the rights of **other brethren**, if we are to interpret the teaching of Paul aright.

He then goes on, "**happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth.**" This is how it works, as I see it. A Christian thinks about something which he either wants to say or do; he ponders it before God; he approves it to himself; he then goes out and says or does it, and is quite happy having no doubts at all that he has done the right thing. There are two snags, however, he may not have considered the effects of his actions on brethren who are not so strong as he is; and he may, in his desire to do what he wants to do, have put aside some other part of God's law which would forbid his intended action. To act to the limits of our personal responsibility demands that we know and understand God's requirements of us, and that we know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of our brethren.

In v. 23 Paul shows us the reverse side of the coin. If a Christian doubts an intended course of action, but does it regardless, then he condemns himself, because his action is not of faith and is therefore sin to him. A practical example of this would be a young Christian (or an older one, for that matter) with a group of non-Christians. They allow things which the Christian is doubtful about and has a conscience concerning; nevertheless, not wanting to lose face and standing in the group, he quells his conscience and does what is expected, not by God but by them. He condemns himself by so doing.

The supreme summation of this problem is given by Paul in 15:1-3. We are "**to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves**". Why? "**Because even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.**"

So there you have it dear questioner. Whatever you approve must be approved by the Word in the first place (remember, the Jews thought their actions were approved by the law but Paul condemns them as sinners along with the Gentiles. See chapters 2 & 3). Whatever you do must be done before God (we do it unto the glory of God). We are 'our brother's keeper', so whatever we do must have due regard to their rights as Christians. This applies equally to the 'weak' as to the 'strong'. We must never, I repeat never, allow so many things into our Christian lives that the conscience becomes, as it were, 'seared with a hot iron', and becomes no longer the guardian of our actions. It is true that we have been rescued by Christ from the onerous bondage of Satan, and have willingly entered the bondage of Christ. It is a benign bondage, but nonetheless a bondage, where love is reciprocated to God, His Christ, and the brethren. Christianity is a joy, but also a serious business. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, but a comfort to be upheld by the everlasting arms. We cannot, and dare not do just what we want. Our true happiness comes from serving God, His Christ, our brethren, and by extension, the community at large.

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

THE DENOMINATIONS

4. – THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Presbyterian is that Church which springs from the following of John Calvin. We must remember, however, that the word 'Presbyterian' is practically confined to the English-speaking races. In all other languages the name for this Church is 'Reformed', a word which distinguishes it from the Lutheran Church. Calvin, who was a Frenchman, was undoubtedly the greatest of the Reformers. His *Institutes*, published when he was still in his twenties, is one of the theological classics of the Christian Church. Although he was a Frenchman, he did his main work in Geneva. It was there that the Scottish and English Divines were influenced, especially John Knox. The Jesuits, in the early seventeenth century, paid Calvin the compliment of recognising that his system was the only one worth combating. The work of Calvin was much more thorough-going than that of any other Reformer, and its results more ecumenical. The Reformed Church was well established in the seventeenth century in Switzerland, France, Hungary, Slovakia, Germany, Holland, and Scotland, and came near to being established in England. Its form of government is mainly presbyterian, and certainly Calvin demonstrated the parity of Bishop and Presbyter: but in Hungary and in part of France it has an episcopal constitution. From these countries Presbyterianism spread to U.S.A., Northern Ireland, and the British Dominions as well as to the Dutch Colonial Empire. In Holland, today, it is the chief Protestant Church as it is in Scotland, where it is established as the National Church. Many English people hardly realise that in Scotland an Anglican is a dissenter. It is also the chief Protestant Church in Switzerland, Northern Ireland and Wales. In the seventeenth century it came near to being the established Church in England, and after the Restoration was still in a strong position. From the beginning of the eighteenth century it began to dwindle in this country, and some of the stronger local Churches became unitarian. The present Presbyterian Church of England is made up, partly of a few old Churches founded in the seventeenth century, and of a larger number of Churches formed by Scottish people crossing the border in the nineteenth century. In Wales its strength is derived from the work of Whitfield, who founded the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church, now known as the Presbyterian Church in Wales. There is an Alliance of Reformed Churches which links the world group.

The Scottish Situation

In Scotland the fact that the Reformation took on a presbyterian form was mainly due to the work of that intrepid warrior, John Knox. There were areas where his work was resisted, especially around Aberdeen. More than one attempt was made to put Episcopacy over on the Scottish people, but each failed. In the earliest days, too, small minorities stood out, the remnants of the Roman Catholic Church, mainly amongst the Western Highlands, and Episcopalians of the type who were set for a measure of reform and the abandoning of Papal Supremacy. The modern Roman Catholic Church in Scotland is an uneasy union of this older Catholic Church and that formed by the modern mission, and largely recruited from Irish immigrants. The Episcopal Church is a genuinely Scottish Church and not an English incursion. It has grown, but is still comparatively small. There are also in Scotland a number of other Churches like Methodist, Congregationalist, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Quaker, and most of the cult sects, but they are small. The situation in Scotland is entirely different from that in England. There the great majority of Church-going folk are Presbyterian and most of these belong to the Established Church. Presbyterians in Scotland have been divided and still are. In our own time the greater schism, which dated from 1843, has been healed by the United Free Church of Scotland and the Established Church joining forces. Some parishes of the former elected to stay out and there are still a

separate Church. Beyond this there are a number of older Presbyterian bodies, divided from each other and from the National Church mainly on the matters of practice and constitution. Some, for example, debar instrumental music and sing nothing but the Psalms of David. The largest of these, which is strongly represented in the Gaelic-speaking parts of the far north, is the Church often called 'The Wee Frees'. They sit to sing and stand to pray and have many interesting customs, some of which date back to the Middle Ages. But the main part of the religious population, except in the Highlands, belongs to the National Church. As in England, the country is divided into Parishes, and the Parish Minister is an important person in each village or country town. But there are no Diocese nor Diocesan Bishops. The establishment, too, is on a different basis from that of the English Church. The Scottish Church has complete spiritual freedom over matters of doctrine, worship and the appointment to charges.

Standards of Doctrine

All the different national Presbyterian Churches differ from such Churches as Congregational and Baptist in that they have standards of doctrine and discipline. They are quite definitely credal and not non-Credal Churches. The standard of doctrine of the Church of Scotland and the other Presbyterian Churches in these islands is 'The Westminster Confession of Faith,' together with the 'Longer and Shorter Catechisms'. Continental Reformed Churches have other, but similar standards. 'The Westminster Confession' is not Scottish but an English document. The Westminster Assembly was summoned by Parliament and met in 1643. It consisted of English Divines with a very few Irish and Scottish members. It was intended for the governing of the National Church in England, Scotland and Ireland. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had appointed commissioners to attend, but few of them were able to do so. But in 1647 the General Assembly adopted 'The Westminster Confession', and it became the standard of faith and doctrine for the Scottish Church. The Scottish Church also accepts the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, together with 'The Directory of Publick Worship.' The Bible is, of course, the standard faith and doctrine, as the Confession itself declares, but the other documents are **subsidiary** standards. It was for denying certain theological statements in 'The Westminster Confession' that John Glas, Minister of Teeling, was deposed in 1730. Formerly all Ministers had to give **particular** assent to all the doctrines of the Confession. Now they give no more than **general** assent. Formerly, too, all children were rigidly instructed in 'The Shorter Catechism', but in many places this has fallen into disuse. The Presbyterian Church of England has a Commission at work on the revising of the Church Standards. But it is not likely that Presbyterian Churches will abandon standards.

Church Government

In all Presbyterian Churches, whether established by law or not, Church government is closely organised. At the bottom is the Kirk Session, presided over by the Parish Minister. Then comes in each district or township, the Presbytery, composed of the Ministers and representative lay Elders from each congregation. Above that there may be larger district Synods, and finally there is the General Assembly, which is the highest legislative court. All Church courts consist of ministerial and lay representatives. Where the Church is established, the Government of the country is represented at the General Assembly, as the Queen is at that of Scotland. In fact when the Queen crosses the border into Scotland she is a Presbyterian and has her own Presbyterian chaplains. When residing at Balmoral she worships in the Crathie Parish Church and ceases for the time being to be an Anglican. In every Parish Church there is a body of Elders, to which in some countries, as in England for example, women may now be admitted, who assist the minister in the pastoral care of the flock. But no one but an ordained Minister can celebrate the Lord's Supper or baptize. Indeed, so far as

baptism is concerned, the Presbyterian Church is more rigid than the Roman Catholic, but more logical; for, if a layman may on occasion baptize, it is difficult to see why he may not with equal appropriateness celebrate the Lord's Supper !

Worship

Originally the Church of Scotland used 'Knox's Genevan Liturgy' as its guide to worship, but in 1645 'The Directory of Publick Worship', which on February the 6th had been ratified by the English Parliament for use in the three kingdoms, was adopted. Under both of these forms the Sunday morning worship was designed as a kind of 'dry mass', i.e., the Lord's Supper without the actual elements being there. This had been a compromise on the part of Knox and Calvin, who had wanted a full celebration every Sunday. Now in some Churches, Communion is celebrated only twice a year, in others quarterly, and some monthly. But it is never an 'after service', as it is in most English Free Churches. The Directory has largely fallen into disuse. In 1940 the General Assembly issued **The Book of Common Order**, which is an excellent Service Book, but which has not yet come into widespread use. Its use is no more than permissive. In many Churches worship is little different from what it is in most English Free Churches, though generally speaking the minister will be vested in cassock, gown and bands. There is a movement amongst a good number of Ministers, in which George MacLeod, of the Iona Community, is a strong advocate, to restore the Lord's Supper as the central act of worship each Sunday. Baptism is of infants and by affusion, and it would be true to say that greater attention is given to it than would be the case in, say, Congregational Churches in England.

W. Robinson

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sept. 6	Gen. 21:1-13	Rom. 9:1-8
Sept. 13	Hosea 1:	Rom. 9:19-33
Sept. 20	Psa. 19:	Rom. 10:
Sept. 27	1 Kings 19:1-18	Rom. 11:1-21

THE JEWS

In chapters 9-11 Paul deals with the problem of the Jews. It was a problem very close to his heart as he himself had been an ardent Jew at one time (Philippians 3:4-6). Jesus had changed his life, but he still had a deep love and concern for his own people. Hear him in his own words: **"I have a great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself was cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own race, the people of Israel"** (9:2-4, N.I.V.).

Paul pointed out the special privileges the Jews had: **"Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law,**

the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen" (9:4-5, N.I.V.). Their history was a notable one, to say the least. The plans and purposes of Almighty God had been worked out through them, the chosen people.

GOD'S SOVEREIGN CHOICE

Many have questioned the decision of God in history. Indeed, some have turned their backs on Him because they disagreed with His judgements. However, in the final analysis, one can only accept all that the Almighty has said and done. To Moses He declared: **"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion"** (Exodus 33:19). Paul in this Epistle gave the illustration of the potter and the clay, which was a powerful argument to any critic (9:21).

Paul referred to the "remnant" in his quotation from the book of Isaiah (10:22,23). God has always been in the remnant business and as H. Moule has written: "While an outer circle of benefits might affect the nation, the inner circle, the light and life of God indeed, embraced 'a remnant only'; even from the day when Isaac not Ishmael was made heir of Abraham." One hymn writer has spoken of the people of God as "a remnant weak and small." Have they ever been anything else?

ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF

Paul went on to discuss Israel's unbelief, which is one of the great tragedies of history. God had given them the law as the pedagogue to bring them to Christ (Galatians 3:24,25), but when Christ came, on the whole, they rejected Him. The foundation stone had become a stumbling stone (9:32). Of course, God had foreseen this and the quotation by Paul from Isaiah (8:14; 28:16) is very striking: **"See I lay in Zion on a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame"** (9:33, N.I.V.). I think a better translation of the last sentence is: ". . . and the one who trusts in Him will never be disappointed."

The law was not an end, but a means to an end. **"Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes"** (10:4, N.I.V.). Paul desired and prayed that the Israelites might be saved (10:1), not through their own righteousness, but through the righteousness which was in Christ Jesus. We read: **"But the righteousness that is by faith says: 'Do not say in your heart. Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down) 'or who will descend into the deep?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and**

in your heart . . .'"(10:6-8). What are these words all about? Moses E. Lard has commented: "What justification by belief is here represented as saying is most probably what the Infidel Jews of the time were accustomed to say on the Christian assumption of the ascension. 'Go up into heaven, if Christ be there and bring Him down, and we will believe on Him'. But the thing demanded was not necessary, in the first place; nor was it possible, in the second . . . Verse seven is the same effect as the preceding . . . They did not believe Christ to be risen from the dead. To the Christian, therefore, their reply would be "Go down into the deep (Abode of spirits) where Christ is, and bring Him up, and we will believe on Him'. But this amounted to a virtual declaration, on their part, of perpetual unbelief; for they knew that the disciples had no power to go down into the deep and bring up anyone. It was as much as to say, 'We will not believe unless you do what we know you cannot do.' Great as was such folly, it was yet folly of the Jews. But justification by belief requires no such difficulties to be surmounted as are here named. What it requires, all can do by the proper effort of will."

THE REMNANT

Israel were without excuse as far as Paul was concerned because God's message had gone out to them. Isaiah had prophesied of this fact (Isaiah 52:7) and also the Psalmist (19:4). But an objection was: What if the message was so difficult to grasp that, even when Israel did hear, they were unable to grasp its significance? Paul answered: **"Israel may have failed to understand, but the Gentiles did not. They grasped the meaning of this offer all right when it came to them unexpectedly and unsought."** To prove the point two passages are quoted: Deuteronomy 32:21 (10:19) and Isaiah 65:1 (10:20). (We should note that chapters 9 to 11 are full of O.T. quotations from Genesis to Malachi. In fact, I have

counted thirty-six altogether).

Again, Paul referred to the remnant chosen through grace (11:5). Elijah in his day thought he was the only one left, but Jehovah had said to him: "**I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal**" (11:3-5). It was a lesson for all time. One writer has said: "The prophets began to see that there never was a time, and never would be, when the whole nation was true to God; nevertheless, always within the nation a remnant was left who had never forsaken their loyalty or compromised their faith. Prophet after prophet came to see this. Amos (9:8-10) thought of God sifting men as corn in a sieve until only the good is left. Micah (2:12, 5:3) had a vision of God gathering the remnant of Israel. Zephaniah had the same idea . . . also Jeremiah (23:3) and Ezekiel (14:14,20,22). Above all, this idea dominated the thought of Isaiah. He called his son **Shear-Jashub**; which means "The Salvation of the Remnant." Again and again he returns to this idea of the faithful who will be saved by God."

THE GENTILES

Paul now addressed himself to the Gentiles among his readers. This led to his using the parable of the olive tree. Sir William Ramsay in one of his own works once pointed out that it was still customary in Palestine at the beginning of the twentieth century to re-invigorate an olive tree which was ceasing to bear fruit by grafting it with a shoot of the wild olive so that the sap of the tree ennobled the wild shoot, and the tree once again began to bear fruit. That a similar process was not unknown in Roman times is evident from Paul's contemporary Columella. F. F. Bruce has commented: "The cultivated olive is Israel . . . the wild olive is the Gentile world . . . The graft from the wild olive is the sum-total of Gentile believers, now incorporated into the people of God; the old branches which were cut away are those Jews who declined to accept the gospel."

Ian S. Davidson.
Motherwell.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Eastwood : In March we were pleased to welcome into our fellowship, Peter and Jean Hart, their daughter Dawn and son Lee. Formerly of the local Pentecostal group, the Harts asked to meet with us, following much careful Bible Study, and attendance at several meetings over the past year or so. Since meeting with us their youngest son, Matthew, has been baptised, and the whole family have become willing and active servants in the Lord's vineyard, and we thank God for them, praying for His blessing on their continued endeavours. We would also like to report an excellent response to Correspondence Courses and now we have about 12 students enrolled. We are grateful to Paddy Boyns of Nottingham for his help with the courses, and his leading of the mid-week studies in Eastwood, to which, again, there has been a good response with some non-members attending. We wish to thank the Nottingham congregation for continued support as together we try to spread the gospel in this area.

Steven Limb

Kentish Town : We are happy to report the baptism of Angela Kumordzie and Viola Prescod on May 24th, 1992. We give thanks to God for the power of His gospel and pray that they may grow with us spiritually, and in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

We plan to hold our 121st Anniversary Meeting on Saturday and Sunday, 3rd and 4th October, 1992, with Brother Ian Davidson, Motherwell, doing the speaking for us. Meetings (D.V.) on the Saturday, are 3.00 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. Tea at 4.45 p.m. On the Sunday the Meetings are 11.00 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.

All will be welcome.

Mrs. Dorothy Proud (Sec.)

GHANA APPEAL

In the past month we have received £1,100 for Ghana and this was sent out on the 25th June. This was divided as requested and allocated for Gospel work, Building, Medical, Bibles and Eyecare.

This morning (8th July, 1992) I received a letter from the Church at Nobowam. They had purchased 3000 concrete blocks for building a meeting place and 1100 have been stolen. The police are investigating this and a man is helping them in their enquiries. Medical Aid is particularly needed in Ghana among the Brethren, the costs are beyond their means. The Church at Nobowam however continues to grow with another two baptisms.

Kumasi is the second largest city in Ghana with its own University. There is a faithful brother there who wishes to build a meeting place for the saints in that city. He has seen an ideal site which he can have providing he can raise £4,500 within a year. He has written to me asking me to add this to the general appeal. The land is near the University and the chief who owns the land is willing to sell it to the Church. I know this is a big request, but I am not going to ask for a special donation for this project. I would simply ask those who have been donating to continue at the present level.

Your gifts have exceeded £32,000 in three years. Kumasi could have this land before the end of this year. The Church in Ghana very much appreciate your generosity to date. Cheques should be made out to :- Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal) and sent to : 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. Tel. (0383) 728624.

COMING EVENTS

Motherwell: Special Saturday Evening Meetings:

Featuring a slide show of the Holy Land
Dates: Aug. 22nd & 29th, time 6.30 p.m.

Speaker: Ian S. Davidson
Plan to Attend.

ANNUAL SOCIAL

(A note for your Diary)

The Newtongrange Annual Social
will be held (God willing)

On Saturday, 10th October, 1992
(Details later)

CORRECTION

In the Zimbabwe Appeal published last month, Bro. Short's Box No. is 1831 not 1832.

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