

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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THE BOOK OF MORMON TRUE OR FALSE

IN the May issue of the "S.S." I wrote an article entitled 'The Book Of Mormon' which was intended to provide a general gist of what the B. of M. contained and which, hopefully, would be of interest to those previously completely unacquainted with that book. Mormon missionaries are still very active in the country and it behoves us to be able to meet them in discussion. I know of one person in this area interested in the Mormon church, who was previously a member of the Lord's church, and so you will understand why we should take the matter seriously. Personally, when dealing with Mormon missionaries, I would not spend time discussing doctrines which are fairly confined to the Mormon faith, such as polygamy, apostolic succession etc., because I believe that the true and basic issue is related to the origins of the B. of M. itself - i.e. is it from God or is it the invention of man? If the B. of M. can not be shown to be from God (but indeed can be shown to be a fraudulent invention of man) then, when it falls all of its attendant doctrines fall with it. Mormons, when asked to supply proof that their book is from God, reply, 'Pray to God about it and He will reveal to you that it is true'. It should be noted that this method of differentiating truth from error is not advocated in the scriptures but is recommended by the B. of M. itself. When one asks Mormons just how God will reveal this important information to us, the suggestion is that it will take the form of a 'warm glow in the chest'. This method of deciding the truth of a matter must surely rank as unique in the annals of sacred history, and must certainly be fraught with uncertainty, especially if one is a regular sufferer from indigestion. In last month's 'S.S.' some facts were given regarding the kind of men who were the witnesses to the alleged divine origin of the B. of M. and how all three left the Mormon Church. The following is the first instalment of some notes on the coming into being of the B. of M. and how difficult it is to accept it as having come from God. There is every reason to believe that the New Testament was God's last revelation to man and so we are expecting or requiring any further revelation from God. Thus, when someone claims further revelation we are well to be critical in our examination of such a claim, and must give the claim the most careful scrutiny. In 1830, when the B. of M. was published, the publisher Joseph Smith had, in order to have the book accepted by members of the public, to be liberal, if not extravagant, in his claims for the infallibility of the book. It was 'the most perfect book' whereas the Bible was acceptable to Mormons only as far as it was correctly translated. Joseph Smith claimed that he was under the inspiration of God and by 'the power of God' gave the world God's latest revelation (and that angels had visited the world many times during the production of the B. of M. to make sure that it would be faultless). The Bible is a translation and subject to the problems of translation from one language to another - but the claims for the B. of M. is that it was a revelation (directly from God to Joseph Smith in the English language) and during the writing of it Joseph Smith was not allowed to proceed

except at a few words at a time (one sentence not being written until the previous sentence divinely approved as being exactly correct). These claims were made at the time by 'God's Prophet and Seer' Joseph Smith but the claim has been his own undoing owing to the vast number of mistakes and glaring inaccuracies of the book, and nowadays Mormons like to 'play-down' the claimed infallibility of the book and to say that the mistakes are due to the lack of schooling on the part of Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith claimed complete infallibility for the book and if he lied on this score can anyone believe the product of the lie - the B. of M? If there is just one inaccurate or erroneous statement in the B. of M. then is Joseph Smith a fraud and the B. of M. a tissue of lies. If we miss this point, then we miss all.

When Joseph Smith dictated the B. of M. under the power and inspiration of God', as claimed by Mormons, he did so with his face plunged into his hat with the brim pulled tight up to his ears. In the hat was the two stones set in the silver bow (termed by the biblical 'Urim and Thummim) which elsewhere is described as a large pair of spectacles. The breadth of the spectacles were too broad for the head of Joseph Smith and so he looked through just one eye of the spectacles. The spectacles were necessary for the reading of the golden plates although when the revelation of the B. of M. was actually made Smith had a hat on his face and one wonders how he could see the plates or if he saw the plates. Smith himself said that he dictated the B. of M. to a scribe (Oliver Cowdery) through a curtain (why the curtain was necessary we are not told, but can perhaps guess) and that one or two words came before his eyes (in English) and he dictated them to the scribe; The scribe was then required to repeat the words he had written, to ensure that no mistakes were made, and that the new words would not appear before him until the present ones had been correctly transferred to paper. This is of course, not a translation, but a revelation - (verbal inspiration). In view of the fact that the B. of M. was allegedly given to man in this careful fashion (so that there might not be any fault or mistake in it) why is it full of mistakes, bad punctuation and faulty grammar? Mormons should also explain why the present edition of the B. of M. bears no resemblance to the original edition printed by Joseph Smith in 1830. Orson Pratt (a Mormon apostle) said in the "Divine Authenticity of the B. of M." that "...the nature of the message of the B. of M. is such that if it is true no one can possibly be saved by rejecting it. If false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it" Joseph Smith himself said that "it was the most correct book" in existence. An angel is said to have made fifteen visits to earth to make sure that the B. of M. was perfectly produced. Yet countless mistakes exist in the B. of M. and countless changes have been made since the original edition was published. It is said that there are over fifty mistakes in grammar and punctuation on one page alone. The original golden plates alleged to have been the B. of M., written in "Reformed Egyptian", are not to be found. Neither are the original pages upon which Oliver Cowdery wrote the B. of M. from the dictation of Joseph Smith. We have no evidence at all therefore that the plates ever existed or that the language was "Reformed Egyptian" apart from the say-so of the witnesses - men who were not known for their integrity. Why should the plates be written in "Reformed Egyptian" if Joseph Smith was to be given the big spectacles with which to read the writing? Why also, should the plates be written in "Reformed Egyptian" if, by virtue of the Urim and Thummim and by the direct revelation of God, Joseph Smith was given a vision of the text - in English? Everything about the B. of M. speaks of a giant hoax. Regarding the absence of the plates - Mormons say that these were taken back by the angel. This must, (if it took place) have taken place a long time after (years in fact) from the time of the 'translation' of the plates. So we have no plates; but what happened to the copies of the plates that Joseph took? Where are they? Joseph Smith took copies and sent them to experts in languages. Where are these copies today? Surely they should have survived the passage of 135 years or so. The New Testament is about 2,000 years old and there are some 4,000 pieces of manuscript evidence of the Greek books. In any case, what was "Reformed Egyptian". What documents exist today written in that language? Egyptologists assure us that Egyptian hieroglyphics remained unchanged from the fifth century B.C. until the fourth century A.D. Moreover the experts themselves were unable to decipher ordinary Egyptian inscriptions until the discovery until the discovery of the Rosetta stone. Witness Martin Harris was approached by Joseph Smith for money with which to publish the B. of M. and, to put his

mind at ease, Joseph Smith gave him the copies of the writing on the plates to take to a language expert, just to confirm that it was not a hoax. Martin Harris went to a Dr. Mitchell, who apparently could make nothing of the hieroglyphics (probably understandably and Dr. Mitchell sent Him to Professor Anthon of Columbia University. Joseph Smith said that Professor Anthon declared that the language was genuine and that Smith's 'translation' was accurate. Professor Anthon says that this is quite untrue and that he did not in any sense approve the manuscripts. The professor said in a letter, which can still be seen today, addressed to Mr. E. D. Howe of Painesville, Ohio, dated 17th February, 1834, "The whole story of my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be 'Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics' is perfectly false. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick, perhaps a hoax ... crooked characters disposed in columns, evidently prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets, Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arrayed in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calendar given by Humboldt..." Martin Harris went on to explain to professor Anthon how he had come by the manuscripts, the gold plates and the spectacles with which Joseph Smith had 'translated' the writing and how that he had been asked to contribute money to the printing of these pages and that he intended selling his farm to pay for it. Professor Anthon states "On hearing this odd story, I changed my opinion about the paper, and instead of viewing it any longer as a hoax upon the learned, I began to regard it as a scheme to cheat the farmer of his money and I communicated my suspicions to him, warning him to beware of rogues..." So much for the "Reformed Egyptian". Was professor Anthon lying? It is worth remembering that his letter was written only three years or so after the publication of the Book of Mormon and his evidence clearly removes the very foundations of the Mormon faith and shows that the whole religion, like many others, is built upon a false premise. The Mormons say that the professor approved the hieroglyphics but he certainly does not do so in this letter - and the Mormon Church have never challenged the evidence of this letter in an American Court of Law, and clearly would not dare to do so.

(To Be Continued) Editor.

THE FORGOTTEN PLEA

(An appeal to the Association Churches of Christ (from the words of Thomas Campbell).

2 Christian Unity.

UNION in truth has been, and ever must be, the desire and prayer of all such; "Union in Truth" is our motto. The Divine word is our standard; in the Lord's name do we display our banners. Our eyes are upon the promises, "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west and his glory from the rising of the sun". "When the enemy shall come in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him". Our humble desire is to be his standard-bearers, to fight under his banner, and with his weapons, that all speak, practice the very same things that on the page of the New Testament Scripture, as spoken and done by the Divine appointment and approbation, that this be extended to every possible instance of uniformity without addition or diminution, without introducing anything of private opinion or doubtful disputation into the public profession or practice of the Church. Thus and thus have we over-tured to all intents and purposes.

You are all, dear brethren, equally included as the objects of our love and esteem. With you all we desire to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity - Christ alone being the head, the center, his word the rule; an explicit belief of, and manifest conformity to it, in all things - the terms. More than this, you will not require of us; and less we cannot require of you; nor, indeed, can we reasonably suppose any would desire it, for what good purpose would it serve? We dare neither assume nor propose the trite indefinite distinction between essentials and non-essentials, in matters of revealed truth and duty; firmly persuaded, that, whatever may be their comparative importance, simply considered, the high obligation of the

Divine authority revealing, or enjoining them, renders the belief or performance of them absolutely essential to us, in so far as we know them. And to be ignorant of anything God has revealed, can neither be our duty nor our privilege. We humbly presume, then, dear brethren, you can have no relevant objection to meet us upon this ground.

On the contrary, every effort toward a permanent Scriptural unity among the Churches upon the solid basis of universally acknowledged and self-evident truths, must have the happiest tendency to enlighten and conciliate, by thus manifesting to each other their mutual charity and zeal for the truth: We would therefore, with all due deference and submission, call the attention of our brethren to the obvious and important duty of association. Unite with us in the common cause of simple evangelical Christianity; in this glorious cause we are ready to unite with you. United we shall prevail. It is the cause of Christ, and of our brethren throughout all the churches, of catholic unity, peace, and purity; a cause that must finally prosper in spite of all opposition. Let us unite to promote it. Come forward, then, dear brethren, and help with us. To prepare the way for a permanent Scriptural unity among christians, by calling up to their consideration fundamental truths, directing their attention to first principles, clearing the way before them by removing the stumbling blocks — the rubbish of ages, which has been thrown upon it, and fencing it on each side, that in advancing toward the desired object they may not miss the way through mistake or inadvertency, by turning aside to the right hand or to the left, is, at least, the sincere intention of the above propositions. It remains with our brethren now to say, how far they go toward answering this intention. DO they exhibit truths demonstrably evident in the light of Scripture and right reason, so that to deny any part of them the contrary assertion would be manifestly absurd and inadmissible?

Let none imagine that the subjoined propositions are at all intended as an overture toward a new creed or standard for the Church, or as in any wise designed to be made a term of communion; nothing can be further from our intention. They are merely designed for opening up the way, that we may come fairly and firmly to original ground upon clear and certain premises and take up things just as the apostles left them; that thus disentangled from the accruing embarrassments of intervening ages, we may stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the Church stood at the beginning.

3 That in order to do this, nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted, as of Divine obligation, in their Church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles upon the New Testament Church; either in express terms or by approved precedent.

That although the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the church, and therefore in that respect cannot be separated; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament Church, and the particular duties of its members.

5 That with respect to the commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the Scriptures are silent as to the express time or manner of performance, if any such there be no human authority has power to interfere, in order to supply the supposed deficiency by making laws for the Church; nor can anything more be required of Christians in such cases, but only that they so observe these commands and ordinances as will evidently answer the declared and obvious end of their institution. Much less has any human authority power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the Church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the Church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.

Let it here be carefully observed that the question before us is about human standards designed to be subscribed, or otherwise solemnly acknowledged, for the preservation of ecclesiastical unity and purity, and therefore, of course, by no means applies to the many excellent performances, for the Scriptural elucidation and defense of Divinely revealed truths and other instructive purposes.

To you therefore, it peculiarly belongs, as the professed and acknowledged leaders of the people, to go before them in this good work, to remove human opinions and the inventions of men out of the way, by carefully separating this chaff from the pure wheat of primary and authentic revelation; casting out the assumed authority, that enacting and decreeing power by which those things have been imposed and established.

We take no step that might prove now, or at any future period, a barrier to prevent the accomplishment of that most desirable object, either by joining to support a party, or by patronizing anything as articles of faith or duty not expressly enjoined in the Divine standard;

We fairly understand and consider them as human expedients, or as certain doctrinal declarations of the sense in which the compilers understood the Scriptures, designed and embraced for the purpose of promoting and securing that desirable unity and purity which the Bible alone, without those helps, would be insufficient to maintain and secure. If this be not the sense of those that receive and hold them, for the aforesaid purpose, we should be glad to know what it is. It is however, in this very sense that we take them up when we complain of them, as not only unsuccessful, but also as un'appy expedients, producing the very contrary effects. To Be Continued.

Brian J. Boland.

ASK

We Kneel — how weak!

We rise — how full of power!

Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,

Or others — that we are not always strong,

That we are ever overborne with care,

That we should ever weak or worthless be,

Anxious or troubled; when with us is prayer,

And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Ephesians 3:20.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? DO I ASK FOR POWER? “NO”

Simon the sorcerer, asked for power, and for so doing he received a severe rebuke from the Apostle Peter, in Acts chapter 8. “Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, “Give me also this power, that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit”. But Peter said to him, “Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity”. And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me” Verses 18-24 (RSV).

J. W. McGarvey wrote “In order to account for the infamous proposal of Simon, we must remember his former mode of life, and consider the mental habits which it generated. As a soccerer, it had been his business to increase his stock in trade by purchasing from other soccerers the secret of tricks which he could not himself perform, and watching for opportunities to make such purchases. When he saw the apostles impart to men the power to work real miracles, he at once perceived that here was a chance for profit far beyond that which he had

abandoned. His overruling avarice, mingled with a passion for popular applause, a passion which his former habits had also cultivated, prompted him to make the offer; and the blinding effect of these passions prevented him from seeing the wickedness of either offering money for this power, or of intending to sell it to others". In our asking, our hearts must be right before God, and ask, according to His will.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? DO I ASK FOR POWER? "YES"

May I quote Handley Moule:— "IT IS POSSIBLE, for those who are willing to reckon on the power of the Lord, to lead a life in which His promises are taken as they stand, and are found to be true; to cast all our care upon Him daily, and to enjoy deep peace in doing it; to see the will of God in everything, and receive it not with sighing, but with singing; in the inner life to lay aside all bitterness and wrath and anger and evil speaking, every hour and every day; by taking complete refuge in divine power, to become strong through and through".

DIVINE POWER

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Wherby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust". 2 Peter 1:3,4.

ETERNAL POWER

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" Romans 1:20.

Al! Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: Thou shewest loving kindness unto thousands, and recompenseth the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name. Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" Jeremiah 32:17-19.

MIGHTY POWER

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" Ephesians 1:17-20.

GLORIOUS POWER

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" Colossians 1:9-14.

THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comfortable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" Philippians 3:10-14.

KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To and inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" 1 Peter 1:3-7.

CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" 1 Corinthians 1:23-29.

HE GIVETH POWER TO THE FAINT

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding, He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint". Isaiah 40:28-31.

THAT THE POWER OF CHRIST MAY REST UPON ME

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong" 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? LORD! LET ME FEEL THY POWER

"Lord. let me feel thy power,

Possess me, let me be

A channel only in Thy hand,

Kept to be used by Thee."

May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN

CHRIST, YET TO COME

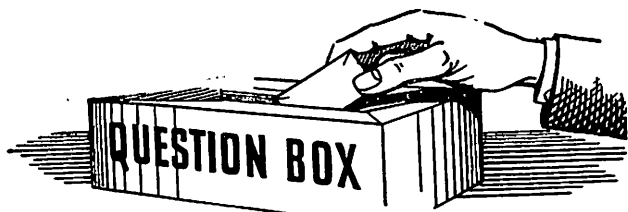
THE article under the above title in the September issue of the 'S.S.' was sent to a Rabbi in the Synagogue, Edinburgh, and he was invited to comment on the general theme of the article i.e. if Jesus is still to come is it likely that all the scriptures in the O.T. relative to His coming can now be fulfilled? The following was his reply:—

"It was kind of you to send me the article on "Christ Yet To Come" and to ask for my comments. Time does not permit me to comment on every quotation from the Old Testament used by the author to prove the coming of Christ, but let me assure you that not one of them refers to the Messiah as understood by Christianity. In the Old Testament the term Messiah is applied to anyone anointed with oil, e.g. the king, The High Priest, etc. and the prophet Isaiah applies the term 'Messiah' to King Cyrus, a non-Jewish king (Isaiah 45:1).

With regard to Isaiah 7:14 "Behold a virgin shall conceive..." the original text reads, "Behold a young woman (married) shall conceive..." and I was pleased to note that all modern translations of the O.T. have corrected that mistake. At any rate, according to the text, it could only refer to the birth of King Hezekiah, who seems to have been the favourite of the Prophet Isaiah.

However, the Prophets Isaiah and Micah speak of a Messianic era of Universal Peace "When nation shall not lift up sword against nation" and post-Biblical Rabbis connected this prophecy with the coming of the Messiah, who will establish an era of universal peace. It is for this era that we Jews are still praying and waiting".

Rabbi Dr. J. Weinberg.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Men today in the church are discussing whether it is correct (and scriptural) to say that we are already saved yet many scriptures indicate differently and that he who thinks he stands should beware lest he fall. What comments could you make on the matter".

BEFORE we can begin to say if we are already saved we must understand quite clearly what is meant by salvation. We must also understand how that salvation, if it exists, can be continued in our lives. And we must also explore the possibility of salvation being lost and under what circumstances this undesirable state of affairs could be brought about. There is only one place where we can find answers to these questions, so let us turn our minds to God's word, the Bible,

Salvation

The dictionary defines this as 'the fact or state of being saved from sin and its consequences'. Sin implies the fall of man from his true state with God his creator; salvation implies the progressive work involved in man's return to God. Jesus lays down the law under which this is to be done in his last commission to his apostles, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16).

Therefore, it is possible for us to be saved, and this salvation is to be achieved in the following way:-

- 1 The gospel must be preached, and obeyed by the hearer.
- 2 The hearer must believe, or have faith in, the gospel.
- 3 He must repent - cease to love sin, and desire peace and reunion with God.
- 4 He must confess Christ before men (see Rom. 10:9).
- 5 He must submit to the positive command of God - obedience to God's command regarding baptism.

This leads us to the inescapable conclusion that it is, at some period in time, possible to be in a saved condition, and that according to the word of God it is quite scriptural for us to say so. We must understand, of course, that conversion goes before pardon. Pardon takes

place in the mind of God. But if the Bible is the revealed will of God, which it undoubtedly is, then when a believer does things in accordance with God's will (as revealed in the Bible) then pardon and salvation are assured. What the Bible does not teach is that salvation is assured for all time in spite of what we may do subsequent to our obedience to the gospel.

Work and Assurance

It is quite evident to me that when we have obeyed the Lord in baptism and have been cleansed from sin that this is only the beginning of that journey to eternal bliss. Matthew records Jesus having a discourse with the Pharisees (Matt. 12:43-45) concerning an unclean spirit leaving a man. The unclean spirit wandered about seeking rest but finding none so he decided to return to his former abode. Taking up the scripture at this point we read, "Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation".

It seems to me that when we are cleansed from sin that our lives are swept clean of evil. But the restless spirits of evil are always seeking re-entry and if they return to that life and find the place empty then they will undoubtedly try to take possession again, and more often than not they will succeed. We need help to keep our lives pure and free from sin, and that help we cannot produce ourselves. It is the gift of God in the personal in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. If we do not allow Him to take control of our lives then we have no hope of success in the christian life. Heaven will elude us.

But having said that, we cannot live our lives in hopeful indolence in the mistaken belief that the Holy Spirit will do everything for us. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, "Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). There is a sense in which our salvation has been worked out for us already. A more correct rendering of the phrase 'work out' would be 'work at' your own salvation. Our continued well-being in the Lord demands effort on our part as well as the help of the Holy Spirit. We can live the overcoming life and maintain our salvation with Him.

It is Peter who gives us teaching on how we should work continuously for our salvation, and I believe that the scripture here is so important that it ought to be quoted at length. Peter says, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". (2 Peter 1:3-11).

It seems to me that these scriptures say all that needs to be said. But this idea of striving is well attested to by Paul also. In 1 Cor. 9:26,27 he says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway".

Conclusion

In the light of the scriptures we have considered, how can we then summarise this question. I believe in the following way.

- 1 It is possible for us to be saved in a condition and we ought to have the assurance that this knowledge brings in saying that we are saved.
- 2 As long as we work at our salvation with the help of the holy Spirit, and in accordance with God's word, then we shall never fall.
- 3 If, on the other hand, we forsake God, then our salvation is in jeopardy. If we put our hands to the plough, and look back, then we are not worthy of the kingdom of heaven.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

DECEMBER 1977

4—Deut. 5:22-33	Romans 7
11—Psalm 44:1 & 9-26	Romans 8:1-17
18—Isaiah 50	Romans 8:18-39
25—Genesis 21:1-13	Romans 9:1-18

RELEASE FROM LAW

JEWS at least would feel that it remained an obligation to keep observing the Mosaic law because it came from God, so they must be taught to realise that the new life unto which they have entered is not one of observance of certain rules and ceremonies, but one of behaviour based upon spiritual inclination of the heart. Thus Paul using the contract of marriage as an example which would be readily understood, points to the death of the body of Christ (7:4) as releasing His people from the law's requirements. In accepting death, the penalty of sin, although having lived the life of perfect obedience to the law, Jesus fulfilled its requirements, and all who accept that sacrifice in baptism share death with Him (6:3 & 4). So as death releases the partners in marriage, those united to Christ are released from obligation towards the law. It is a new kind of service, an obligation of love - the response to divine love. What a supreme wonder is the incarnation - the body of our Saviour.

The Function of Law

If it is so wonderful to be released from the rule of law, if it required that greatest sacrifice of all to obtain that release, the law must be bad! God forbid! It is not the law that is bad but the sin which it reveals - its fatal nature. There has to be a standard of righteousness, or there cannot be right and wrong, and then human nature is no better than the birds and beasts. We cannot sin nor be good.

There is a sense in which a command incites to disobedience because the possibility of choice is there. In the case of Eve there was a law "Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil!" so Satan took advantage of the commandment to tempt Eve to disobedience. Our human nature has a proneness to sin. Paul's own personal experience is undoubtedly expressed in chapter 7 from verse 7. There is in us all regardless of our conversion to God the flesh and the spirit at war (Gal. 5:17). Paul's struggle against sinful inclinations is a picture of every christian's battle. We are relieved to have this expression of so noble a soul in relation to the weakness of the flesh, and of course we appreciate the righteousness of the law, whether the law of Moses, or one of our own consciousness - a God-given law like that of Moses exposes human nature and emphasises the 'exceeding sinfulness of sin'. That is its function enabling it to be our tutor to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

Condemnation Averted

We see that under the law there were continuous sacrifices requiring the death of animals, indicating that the penalty of sin is death and requiring that redemption can only be obtained by substitution of life for life - in that case a firstborn animal for a firstborn man. While these as it were put back condemnation they could only put away sin in anticipation of some sacrifice of spiritual value. Thus God himself had to make it because it was utterly impossible for man to atone for his own sin. So God Himself did in fact supply the Lamb in the Person of His Son. In doing so He imposed upon all who accept the sacrifice by faith a law of the spirit of life, making possible the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. We are released from legal requirements at physical birth, and brought into humble subservience through birth of water and spirit a conscious spiritual experience, to a law of loving obedience to a Saviour Who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20). So the

gospel wins heart and mind into the relationship of children to a loving and all-wise Father Who can be completely trusted for time and eternity. The change is set forth in the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah (31:33 & 34) repeated in Hebrews (10:16 & 17). Let us be sure we are indeed in the spirit (8:9) by assuring ourselves that by grace we think and talk and act in the way Jesus Did, that we are really His - He possesses us, we belong to Him. Condemnation is averted because He died for us not because we render complete obedience, the flesh being still with us, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body (8:23).

The Help of the Spirit

Have we realised how greatly we need the mediation of Son and Spirit. We cannot claim to understand all that is involved in 'subjection to vanity', or 'the creation groaning and travailing in pain' but we see a dark picture out of which is to come wonderful glory in which we are to share by the grace of God. It is clear that the human race is doomed to futile effort to put itself right - that it must be by act of God or by submission to His will that good can come out of evil. A world governed by selfish men and women cannot be rid of strife and sin. We know that we deceive ourselves if we think we do not sin, and therefore are saved by hope, believing that God will put all to right in His own time. Meanwhile we humbly leave our needs and cause in the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit interceding to convert as it were our defective strivings into good sense for presentation before a pure and holy God Who cannot tolerate sin, and yet regards with love His erring creatures. His design is expressed in the words 'to be conformed to the image of His Son' (8:29). The scheme of redemption to call through the gospel into appointment, justification and glorification fills Paul's heart and surely likewise ours with joyful triumph. Sinful though we remain while in the flesh, God has acted for us so that nothing can ever separate us from His love.

Privileges rejected but not finally lost.

A Hebrew of Hebrews (2 Cor. 11:22) looks upon his own race so largely rejecting all for which they had been called by God through the fathers, through Moses, through the prophets and through the centuries in which God had shown His forbearance, and

taught them by blessing and by cursing, by prosperity and by persecution, by destroying and by restoring, and finally by fulfilling His promises in the person of His Son. He remembered so well his own rejection as the law-abiding Pharisee, of the Son of God. He yearns for their salvation and knows that God's purposes will be fulfilled in some way, as in fact they are being fulfilled in his own life (11:1 & 5). He sees also his own commission as the apostle to the Gentiles as a factor in their future welfare though his love for them at this juncture breaks his loving heart (9:2). Jews are still turning to Christ now. R. B. SCOTT

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Bristol (Lower Knowle): We rejoice to report that two young men made the good confession, and were baptised on Lord's Day, October 2nd, at Kirkby in Ashfield, Notts. They are Mark Carey, youngest son of Sis. Sylvia and Bro. Ivor Carey. Also Mr Alan Henson, the husband of their daughter Sis. Susan. We thank God for these young souls and pray that he will bless them and keep them faithful in the service of Him who died for them. I. CAREY.

Capetown, South Africa: "To the Glory and Honour of God, as a family I have fully decided, again after much earnest and prayerful consideration, to take up the status of a 'Travelling Evangelist' for the time being, in visiting, encouraging and assisting local congregations when called upon to do so; even to conduct gospel campaigns Lord willing. But above it all my main focus and emphasis is to possibly start a complete New Testament church somewhere, sometime, as God shall lead the way, and open up the needed door, for lost souls! I know it was very hard to make the decision to place in my resignation as such, but the Lord knows, I considered it best for my future and my health. Yes, it has been 45 years of hard effort evangelistically - from the time I had made contact with the church, then in Cape Town in 1932; then moving to Woodstock in 1940. It was during my Full-time ministry, (moreso plus ... since a Christian) my interests were for the welfare, and growth of the church to the Glory of God!

Now, since may '77, I have been doing "Personal Evangelism" in various homes and among individuals who have so requested; media being tape cassette lessons & Biblical visual aids. To the Glory of God, I have, thus far, been labouring in 6 homes, and up to date the interest is exhibiting one of an 'prospective future'. More and more families are opening up their doors to see these Biblical series Patr. Age, Mosaic Age, C/Age, God's Plan for redeeming Man'. and 'How We Got The Bible', and I would thus ask you, one and all, to share in your prayers to the intent that the 'harvest might be a fruitful one'. This 'Personal Evangelism pursuance has been augmented by one of the local congregations, in one of our suburbs, asking me to conduct a series of Gospel meetings, but waiting for the dates! Many thought that Bro. Tom was retiring completely from the gospel ministry, but you can see that he is quite busy" end of news item, thank you! THOMAS W. HARTLE

Haddington, East Lothian: It was with great joy that the church at Haddington, witnessed two young people accepting their Lord. On Wednesday 28th September, 1977, Elizabeth Scott (15 years) and Angela Lorimer (12 years) put on their Lord in baptism.

Both girls are pupils in the Sunday School and Angela is the grand-daughter of our brother and sister Blair. We give thanks to God. We are grateful to the brethren at Tran-

ent for the use of their meeting place and aptistry. MARY MURDIE. (Sec.)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Bro. L. Daniell has changed his address from 59 Enfield Road, Fishponds, Bristol to:-
71 Furber Road,
St George, BRISTOL, 5.

CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

ACTS 13:42-52; 14.

- 1 Why did the Jews oppose Paul and Barnabas (verse 45).
- 2 Explain the words 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed' (verse 48).
- 3 Where is Iconium?
- 4 Describe the experiences of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium.
- 5 Where is Lycaonia?
- 6 Explain the words 'Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways'.
- 7 'When they had ordained them elders in every church' verse 23. What does this statement suggest to you?
- 8 Give other scripture references to the 'Open Door'.

Answers, which should be written on one side of the paper only, should be returned to:- Edward Jess, 34 Charles Street, Penicuik, Midlothian, Scotland.

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JOHN K. KNEILLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
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EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

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