

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 64 No. 1

JANUARY, 1996

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

THE MERCIES OF GOD RECALLED AND TRUST EXPRESSED

"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope; the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion' says my soul. therefore I will hope in Him". (Lamentations 3:21-24).

GOD BLESS THY COMING YEAR

THE ROUGH, THE SMOOTH

THY COMING IN, THY GOING OUT

THE BRIGHT, THE DEAR

THY REST, THY TRAVELLING ABOUT

GOD BLESS THY YEAR

PROFITABLE FOR REPROOF & CORRECTION

The Primus of the Episcopalian Church in Scotland, the "Most Reverend" Richard Holloway has been "sounding off" again about the Bible, and perhaps I can do no better than quote a short report from last week's "Daily Mail": viz. "One of Scotland's most senior church-men last night called for the Bible's moral code to be re-written. Episcopalian Bishop Holloway described the Bible as a 'male-centred, patriarchal creature of its time' and said that it should be revised for every generation. He criticised calls to return to so-called Biblical morality and said society faced moral challenges unthinkable a generation ago. Speaking at Strathclyde University in Glasgow, he said that there was a need for a constant debate on the best moral system. 'The Bible is still a useful guide' he said, 'But we have to recognise it as a creature of its time. This is particularly true of its moral systems. We need to engage in debates about the best moral systems, need to identify where changes can be made, where things can be abandoned, where we should overturn old ways'. (The Bishop raised eyebrows this year when he was quoted as saying God gave humans promiscuous genes and it would be wrong to condemn people who followed their instincts)". (Unquote).

Readers may remember that I have mentioned this Bishop previously in connection with similar disparaging utterances on the Bible: e.g. that the Bible "is the book that keeps women in chains"; that the Bible is "the big problem" in society: that the Bible "gives good advice but also bad advice": that the Bible "contains statements "that can't be true": that the Bible contains "as much dross as gold": that the Bible contains "as much out-of-date nonsense as enduring wisdom": and that "we must have the courage to reject the bits of the Bible that are not of God". Earlier this year the Bishop was accused of condoning adultery (arising from a statement he made to a journalist that since "God had given us our

promiscuous genes it would be wrong for the Church to condemn people who have followed their instincts".) One man at one of the Bishop's lectures, rightly quoted Paul as saying that fornicators and adulterers would not enter the K of H but the Bishop replied that "this passage was a Pauline fit and part of the kind of Christianity that sought to bully people into righteousness, compassion and charity.

Needless to say these accommodating remarks are going down very well with the general public and the Bishop is acquiring a certain popularity in some quarters. However, the situation probably reminds us of the conditions prevailing in the time of Jeremiah where "the prophets prophesied falsely" and "the people loved to have it so". (Jer. 5:31).

BISHOP'S SENTIMENTS NOT SHARED BY JESUS

There is nothing new in these criticisms, of course, and it is par-for-the-course these days for clergymen to belittle the book they are paid to uphold. The Bible, however, is an impregnable rock, and has survived the many assaults and storms that have assailed it, or (to change the figure), is an anvil that has worn out countless hammers of atheism, secularism, Higher Criticism, etc. Nobody needs to defend the Bible: it can well defend itself. As the little boy remarked when he saw the armed security guard posted at the door of the lion's cage, "Why don't they let it out: it would soon protect itself"; and this just as true of the Bible. True Bible students repudiate all these derogatory remarks from the Bishop on the grounds that every word of scripture was dictated by the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit can not be guilty of stating facts "that can not be true", nor of producing dross and much out-of-date nonsense. When we cast reproach upon the Bible we cast it at the Holy Spirit and that is a very serious and dangerous thing to do. By contrast, we find that although Jesus referred continuously to "the scriptures" (the O.T.) He never ever uttered one syllable of criticism of the scriptures; but rather endorsed every word as being true, wholesome and accurate. Never did Jesus even make a veiled hint that the scriptures might contain untruths, or give bad counsel or deal in nonsense: rather the reverse. On one occasion Jesus said to the Sadducees, "Ye do err not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God". (Matt. 22:29). Like the Bishop, the Sadducees thought that some things in the Bible "could not be true" (in their case they could not believe in the resurrection) and so they plied Jesus with the teaser about the seven brothers who had the same wife. His reply showed they erred on two counts (1) They failed to know that the O.T. acknowledged the resurrection, and (2) They failed to take into account "the power of God". According to Jesus, their ignorance of the scriptures caused them to err. According to the Bishop, the scriptures could cause us to err. Surely we, too, limit the power of God if we regard God incapable of conveying His word infallibly to mankind, and thereafter preserving it.

THE O.T. SCRIPTURES

The Bible is composed of an Old Testament and a New: let us look, first of all, at the Old. The apostle Peter tells us that "in old time" (in O.T. times) prophecy came not by the will of man "but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). The words penned did not originate with the human writers but were dictated by the Spirit of God. Space does not allow many illustrations of this but one example would be Jer. 36:2. "Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day". Another might be Ezek. 1:3 "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him". Other examples of verbal inspiration of the O.T. might be 2 Sam. 23:2 "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and His word was in my tongue". Isaiah says (1:2) "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken". Jer. 1:7 "Whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak . . . Behold I have put My words in thy mouth". Ezek. 2:7 "Thou shalt speak My words unto them". Luke 1:7 He (the Lord

God) spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began". Acts 1:16 "The Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spoke concerning Judas" These few random examples could be greatly multiplied and could include the writings of Daniel, Amos, Ezra, Nehemiah, and indeed all other prophets. As Peter says, their words came not by the will of man, but **God moved them** (breathed upon them) to write what they wrote, by His Spirit. The tablets of stone containing the Law chiseled by Moses, were, we are told "**written with the finger of God**". (Ex. 31:18). In the following chapter we read, "**And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God graven upon the tables**". (Ex. 32:16). Moses' writings were actually God's writings and Moses wrote as we know, the first five books of the O.T. Jesus regarded the words of Moses as "the words of God". In His controversy with the Pharisees over their attempts to nullify the Mosaic Law by their own traditions, Jesus accused them of "**laying aside the commandment of God**" that they might hold the traditions of men. In giving an example of what He meant, Jesus described how they tried to avoid the force of the fifth commandment and, in consequence, "**making the word of God of none effect**". Thus Jesus equates the writings of Moses as the word of God. It is of interest to note that when Aaron and Miriam (Num. 12) despised Moses for marrying an Ethiopian woman, they were taken aside by God and severely rebuked for daring to speak ill of God's faithful servant Moses. God informed them that He thought so highly of Moses that He did not speak to him, (as He did to other prophets) in visions and in dreams, but "**directly, mouth to mouth, and face to face**".

My purpose in emphasising the fact that the O.T. scriptures consist of God's **own and actual words**, (and that the human pen men were merely the instruments of God in producing His word) is to show that, this being so, there is no possibility of the O.T. containing the dross, bad counsel and nonsense charged by the Bible's critics. "**Thus saith the Lord**" occurs some 2,000 times in the O.T.

THE N.T. SCRIPTURES

The N.T., as an integral part of the scriptures and complementary to the O.T., is also a product of the inspirational work of the Holy Spirit.

The writer to the Hebrews says, (1:1) "**God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son**". This coincides with what we have stated so far, i.e. that GOD did speak to mankind in times past through His prophets, but has in these recent days spoken to us by His Son, Jesus Christ. Even the most simple, unlettered, person can understand what Jesus says, and there must be few indeed in the world who could accuse Jesus of giving bad advice, or indulging in untruths or out-of-date nonsense. However, Jesus had apostles and delegated part of His total authority to them, instructing them to "**Go therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . .**" (Matt. 28:19). These instructions were carried out and the things taught by Christ and the apostles were eventually committed permanently to print: now forming the contents of the N.T. Naturally, Jesus did and said much more than is recorded, but John says ". . . these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name".

And so, according to Paul, it is GOD, who spake in times past through the prophets, who speaks to us today through His Son, Jesus, Himself acknowledged this and confessed, "**I have many things to say and to judge of you but He that sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him**", and ". . . I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak those things". (John 8:26). Thus even Jesus followed the long tradition of prophets and spoke only the words given to Him by God. In sending out the apostles Jesus confirmed the authority He vested in them, as God's

spokesmen, and declared, "He that heareth you heareth Me: and he that despiseth you despiseth Me: and He that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." (Luke 10:16). To hear the apostles was equal to hearing Christ.

The question for us hear, however, is whether these same apostles, and other writers of the N.T. scriptures, were (like the writers of the O.T.) inspired by the Holy Spirit in their writings, and thus qualified to claim inerrancy and infallibility in their work. In short, is the N.T. infallible?

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

When the time came for Jesus to return to heaven He assured His apostles that He would not leave them bereft of comfort and guidance, but would send the Holy Spirit unto them. **"But the Advocate, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you ALL THINGS, and bring ALL THINGS to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"** (John 14:26) and also (in Chap 16:13) Jesus said, **"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into ALL TRUTH for He will not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come"**. Acts 2 describes how the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles at Pentecost and how they were able to preach the glad tidings in languages they had never learned. The apostles had not only to preach to make disciples, but had to teach those disciples the things God required of them in the Churches, beginning with the sincere milk of the word and progressing to the strong meat. These preachings and teachings were eventually set in concrete; not only the four gospels but also all the apostolic and other epistles. Thus was Christ's promise fulfilled and the apostles equipped with ALL TRUTH and reminded of ALL THINGS spoken by their Master. Anything that their natural memory could not retain over the ensuing years would be provided by the Spirit of God. Even when in a tight situation with authorities, Jesus assured the apostles that they need not **"be anxious beforehand what ye shall speak: but whatsoever shall be given ye in that hour that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit"**. If words mean anything at all, the apostles, in all their teachings and writings, were under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit; and that amounts to infallibility. They were not just given spiritual ideas by the Spirit but actual words. They employed not their own words but the Spirit's. Paul could say, **"But we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us by God. Which things also we speak, not in WORDS which man's wisdom teacheth BUT WHICH THE SPIRIT TEACHETH"**. (1 Cor. 2:9). And Paul could also say to the Thessalonians (2:13) **For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is IN TRUTH the WORD OF GOD"**.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion I have tried to reach is that the Bible (O.T. & N.T.) is indeed the product of the Holy Spirit and therefore does not contain flaws, much less the possibility of bad advice, misinformation or out-of-date nonsense. Paul said, **"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work"**. (2 Tim. 3:16) (RSV). Surely this says it all. If all sacred scripture is "inspired of God" it is difficult to see what the Bishop's proposed "debates on better forms of morality" would accomplish, or whose ideas of morality the public would be likely to favour. As it is, the world is presently following its own version of morality: and the outcome is there for all to see. Paul says **"All scripture inspired of God IS PROFITABLE for TEACHING, for REPROOF: for CORRECTION and for TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, so that moral man might be COMPLETE and thoroughly furnished unto EVERY GOOD WORK"**. How could such a situation be improved upon, (even by Episcopalian Bishops)?

Jesus said "My words shall never pass away " and these same words will judge us all on the last day. Jude says faith was "once and for all delivered" to the world and it certainly is not going to be up-dated. God is the Author of His own Word, and "God is not the Author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:23); neither is God the author of error or nonsense. The Psalmist, unlike the Bishop, 'seemed' to have nothing but praise for the scriptures. He said, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them is great reward". How true, and no mention of dross.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

COATS OFF

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might".

Ecclesiastes 9:10

THE BIBLE SPEAKS

THE KING'S BUSINESS REQUIRED HASTE

1 Samuel 21:8

DAVID ENCOURAGED HIMSELF IN THE LORD

1 Samuel 30:6

I DELIGHT TO DO THY WILL, O MY GOD

Psalm 40:8

I MADE HASTE AND DELAYED NOT

Psalm 119:60

SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD

Mark 14:8

QUIT YOU LIKE MEN, BE STRONG

1 Corinthians 16:13

FOR OUR LEARNING

"I have put off my coat"

Song of Solomon 5:3

"Now then do it"

2 Samuel 3:18

"Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour

For we are labourers together with God"

1 Corinthians 3:8,9

"Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst,

and labour, working with our own hands"

1 Corinthians 4:11,12

"Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord".

1 Corinthians 15:58

"Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have

2 Corinthians 8:11

"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily".

Colossians 1:29

GLEANINGS

"Fight the good fight with all thy might,
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right;
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally".

"Form good habits. They are as hard to break as bad ones".

TALES WORTH TELLING

"The world generally does not know that Melbalwe, the native who was with Livingstone at Mabotsa, and who saved his life by diverting the lion when his paw was on his head, was a teacher whom Mrs. McRoberts' sixty dollars enabled him to employ. Little did the good woman think that this offering would indirectly be the means of preserving the life of Livingstone for the wonderful work of the next thirty years".

LET ME GO

"A voice is raging in my ears;
Let mountains rise, let oceans flow;
It matters not. Away with fears
If God doth send me, let me go".

T. C. UPHAM

WE QUOTE LOVELL

"There is always work,
And tools to work withal, for those who will".

THE SLAVERY OF LOVE

"We need to watch against a "grudging service". The enemy is always trying to get in the word "duty", instead of the word "delight"; he says a stern "you must", instead of a loving "you may". There is no slavery like the slavery of love, but its chains are sweet. It knows nothing of "sacrifice", no matter what may be given up. It delights to do the will of the beloved One".

SMITH

WISE WORDS

"He was only a workman at Fletcher's, and a very ignorant workman, too; but in mind and spirit he was a partner. Some power had got a hold of him and changed him, and he marvelled at it. The old life - it hadn't been life. THIS was life: good, hard work - work for the hands and work for the brain".

W. RILEY

TELL IT OUT

Tell it out among the heathens, Jesus reigns above!
Tell it out! Tell it out!
Tell it out among the nations, that His reign is love!
Tell it out! Tell it out
Tell it out among the highways and the lanes at home;
Tell it out across the mountains and the ocean foam!
Like the sound of many waters let our glad shout be,
Till it echo and re-echo from the islands of the sea!

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL

Selected by Leonard Morgan

DIRECT OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT

The Roman Catholic Church of the 1500's taught work salvation pure and simple. Luther and the other reformers entered battle with them and were pushed to the other extreme, that man could do nothing to save himself. Since man could do nothing, the strange notion of irresistible grace arose, and to explain how God forced grace on an individual regardless of that person's will, the theory of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit was spawned. The Holy Spirit, it was said, in a way "better felt than told", operated in some mysterious way, producing faith in the heart of that select individual.

The terror of such a doctrine is that it denies free will, minimizes the importance of the word, crushes evangelistic zeal, and causes some to wait for an act of God rather than exercise their own human obedience. The design of this article is to give some scriptural reasons why the doctrine is false. Our proposition is this:

IN CONVICTION, CONVERSION, AND SANCTIFICATION THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH THE WORD

To prove a direct operation, some use Philippians 2:13: "for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure". "See", they exclaim, "God works in you!" But the passage never says He works in us with a direct operation, separate and apart from means. Notice Psalm 29:5,8:

(5) The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars; yea, Jehovah breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. (8) The voice of Jehovah shaketh the wilderness; Jehovah shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

See! What God's voice does, God does! True, we are told God works in us, but we see God is often active in His voice. Paul says, "when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). God works in us through His word.

IN SANCTIFICATION

Now let us make an important illustration. Suppose you are standing by a fallen tree. A passerby asked what happened, and a man said it was done by a chain saw. Later, another passerby asks what happened, and the same man replies that a man named Cerinthus did it. What would you think - that chain saw did it by itself, and that Cerinthus, somehow by himself, did it again? No, we would assume Cerinthus did it with the chain saw. With that in mind, notice two passages:

God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit . . . (2 Thess. 2:13).

Sanctify them in the truth: Thy word is truth (John 17:17).

How does the Spirit sanctify us? Well, as in the case above, when the Bible says the Spirit does it, and then says the word does it, must we not conclude that the Spirit does it through the word, just as Cerinthus cut down the tree with the saw? Notice:

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17).

In sanctification the Spirit uses an implement, a tool, a weapon - the word of God. There is no direct operation of the Spirit.

IN CONVICTION

Webster says that conviction is "the act of convincing a person of error . . ." In the New Testament we should think of words such as convict, confute, convince, correct, or reprove. But the question is, "How does God do it?" Does he use a direct operation, or does He use the medium of truth? Notice a couple of pertinent passages:

All scripture is inspired of God, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

How does God reprove and correct? The Holy Spirit says it is accomplished through scripture. But notice further. An elder is told to hold on to the faithful WORD:

. . . that he may be able to both exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayer (Titus 1:9).

Yes, the faithful word is used to convict. We cannot reprove without it (2 Tim. 4:2). That's what Jesus meant when He said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin" (John 15:22). No, God uses persuasive power rather than mechanical or raw spiritual power. We simply will not find an example in the Bible of anyone convicted by a direct operation of the Spirit. But let us see more.

IN CONVERSION

Are people converted by some mysterious, inscrutable, point-blank, immediate application of the Holy Spirit on the human heart? Or does the Holy Spirit mediate a

conversion of the heart through the agency of the word? Again, is there an intervening cause between the human heart and the Holy Spirit in the conversion of that individual? Or does the Spirit contact the heart directly? Hear the word of God:

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul (Psa. 19:7)

How clear God's word is. And as we view scripture, we find over and over, that converting faith comes through the word of God. Notice:

But many of them that heard the word believed (Acts 4:4).

... that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe (Acts 17:7b).

... these are written, that ye may believe ... (John 20:31).

So the Christian religion is a religion which is **heard, taught, and learned** (John 6:45). Faith comes by "**hearing**", and hearing comes by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). And it always takes the word to get that converting faith (Rom. 10:14; John 4:39; John 4:42; Luke 8:12; Acts 18:8; Rom. 10:8).

So what shall we do with the notion of a direct operation of the Spirit? Let us firmly consign it to the world of pixies and elves, fays and fairies, gnomes and trolls, and all those other mysterious things which don't exist.

J. MOFFIT

CONSCIENCE

Lord Byron was wrong in saying - "It is that still small voice within; your conscience is the oracle of God". Though man is the only living being with a conscience and though God did create within us the quality or capability of our developing conscience, the conscience is not sacred in every sense or else the conscience could never be wrong and man could be left to direct his own steps.

A Christian must obey the laws of the land not only for fear of punishment but also for the sake of his conscience. Rom. 13:5. Here is a good statement. "Stringent laws and powerful police forces never control the lives and habits of people. Only good consciences can".

The danger, serious indeed, of violating your conscience is that you by continually doing so can destroy the conscience. Read 1 Timothy 4:2 and Ephesians 4:19 and note that a Christian can sear his with a hot iron and arrive at the place where he has lost all sensitivity or is past feeling. His scruples are gone. No conscience left. Sad.

BIBLE FACTS ABOUT YOUR CONSCIENCE

You may follow your conscience and be wrong and be lost finally. Consider again Paul, Acts 23:1, how he persecuted and endorsed the killing of Christians. Recall Jesus' prayer on the cross for those killing Him there. Jesus thus said they were conscientious in doing so but no one would think they were right. Remember the prayer of Stephen for the very ones stoning him on the spot. They conscientiously believed Stephen was sinning against God and was worthy of death that day. But, they were really wrong. Yes, there is a way that does seem right to man but death is at the end of such a conscientious way - the Bible says this. Follow your conscience yet do not believe that alone makes you right. Read 1 Corinthians 4:4 from NIV - "**My conscience is clear but that does not make me innocent; it is the Lord who judges me**". That ought to settle it.

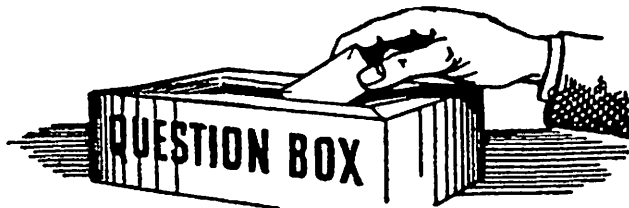
But, you can not violate your conscience without sinning. That is really what Romans 14:23 teaches. Faith is here used to mean conscientious approval of what you are about to do. And, when in verse 5 Paul says "**Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind**" he is but saying not to violate your conscience. Read carefully Romans 14 and 1

Corinthians 8 and 10 - great chapters revealing more about man's conscience than anywhere else in the Bible. If you esteem meat to be unclean - conscientiously can not eat it - then that makes it unclean to you - you can not and should not eat of it for that would be in violation of your conscience. Plainly the Bible teaches for us to follow our conscience in every act remembering that our conscience might lead us astray. The distinctions between 1 and 2 in this study are fine but Biblical.

WEAKER BRETHREN

Never in any circumstance by your actions encourage a weak brother to take a step which to him at that moment is wrong, for in doing so you can destroy that brother. How? By influencing him to violate his conscience and thus causing him to stumble which just might lead to his falling away. Christians must consider the conscience of every brother when in that brother's company. Consider again these chapters from Paul. If my weak brother - weak in that he at that point can not eat meat at all or meat bought in the market of pagan temples - is in the assembly where we are eating together. I should refrain for his sake lest my example leads him to eat in violation of his own conscience. Brethren are wrong in thinking I should refrain just because someone may criticise me. That is not in the least what Paul is teaching in these chapters and the Bible no where teaches such. "Offend" in the KIV means to cause to stumble. The critic may not be influenced at all by my act for which he criticises me. You can't refuse to act many times in life just because of criticism from another. Paul's principle is not whether the weak brother may criticise me but whether he might be led to violate his conscience in eating what to him is wrong. We truly need to make this vital distinction. The hypocrite is in every Church and generally should be ignored but, sadly so, he has blocked many great works and projects by criticising. Paul knew that to eat meat or not to eat meat was not sinful but for the sake of the weak brother's "conscience" he under some circumstances would not eat meat as long as the world stands. Influence is what the apostle is considering and not the opportunity for another to criticise me.

H. L. JACKSON



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"What should the Christian's attitude be towards participation in the National Lottery?"

I have been asked this question quite a lot recently, and I have invariably replied that it should be re-named the 'National Disaster'. However, in view of the concerns expressed, perhaps a more detailed answer would be in order.

CASTING OF LOTS

The settling of doubtful issues by the casting of lots is not new; it was very much in vogue among the nations of antiquity. When the Children of Israel occupied Canaan, the distribution of the conquered territory among the tribes was by the casting of lots. This was conducted by Eleazer the priest, Joshua, and ten heads of fathers' houses. According to rabbinical records, the method was to use two urns: One contained the names of the tribes, the other contained the names of the districts. The name of a tribe was drawn and the district which that tribe should possess. The size of the district was determined by the numerical strength of the tribe. (For a more complete record read Josh 14:1,2,6; 18:1,2; 17:4). The act was commonly preceded by prayer, and was an appeal to God to decide the

matter. (I wonder whether this is why we see the obscene advert on television of an unidentifiable deity and a sepulchral voice saying, "It's you"). There is a weighty statement made in Prov. 16:33 which says, "**The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord**".

We also remember, of course, that lots were thrown to determine the fate of Jonah, and by the casting of lots after prayer the question was decided whether Joseph Barsabbas or Matthias should be the successor to Judas Iscariot for apostleship. (Acts 1:15-26). There is no evidence in the N.T. that after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles that they ever decided anything again by the casting of lots. That is rather significant, I think.

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

It hasn't taken long for this idea to 'catch on', with the British public; after all, the idea, in some shape or form, has been almost part of our heritage for many years. We can no doubt all recall that such things as raffles, competitions, draws, etc., have all been decided by some form of lottery. Sometimes we at Longshoot on one or two of our Fellowship Days, have arranged a bowling tournament on the adjacent bowling greens; the pairings have been determined by drawing names out of a hat. So you see, this sort of thing is almost endemic in our society. We Christians, however, insist that the National Lottery is detrimental to the nation because of its inherent dangers. What are those dangers?

The first of these dangers is that wholesale gambling is encouraged. To gamble means to play games of chance for money, especially for high stakes. The element of chance - and therefore of risk - is greatly enhanced. Risk because if the 'dice don't fall our way', then dire consequences could ensue; people have been known to commit suicide because of gambling debts. The message of the Bible is, "**Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'**" Heb. 13:5. God will remain when the Lottery and suchlike devices, have long perished. Any thing by which you have to stake money in order to win more money is gambling.

When I was young one of the great events was known as The Irish Sweepstake; this was concerned with some horse-race or other. People had to buy sweepstake tickets; I've forgotten the criteria on which winnings were based, but a lot of money could be won. The trouble was that poor people trying to drag themselves out of the cesspit of incessant penury, spent money on tickets which they could ill afford, and which they could have spent on better things. And aren't we seeing the same problem relative to the National Lottery, but on a much wider scale? People are reaching out for some financial Shangri-la and are only receiving handfuls of sand from the arid desert of chance. Perhaps the money could be spent on food; or work on the home, but the tantalising prospect of a Ritz-style life, and a mansion in the country, overshadow reality.

It was Karl Marx who said the 'religion is the opiate of the masses'; I wonder what the co-author of 'Das Capital' would have thought about the National Lottery? If ever the masses were being drugged intellectually then surely it is today. Religion has out-lived Marx and many other sceptics before him, and will continue to do so. Surely anyone who invests hard-earned money on odds which are millions to one must live in some sort of induced dream-world. However, the whole concept is not without its attendant social evils. We are all aware that some drugs can be very addictive to the person who takes them regularly; in like manner, I believe that gambling, on the scale which we now see it, can become just as addictive. Crimes have been committed in order to furnish the almost incessant needs of addicts; could we see the same sort of anti-social behaviour relative to the needs of the gambler? 'Oh, no', say the pundits, 'the National Lottery is merely a light-hearted diversion from people's everyday hum-drum existence'. I wonder, paradoxically, many of the people who buy Lottery tickets would accuse the Christian of looking for 'pie in the sky'; at odds of an estimated 20 million to one, what is the Lottery punter looking for? The faithful

Christian hits the 'jackpot' every time. The Pauline injunction, "**Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others**", has been taken quite literally by many people today, but not in the way that Paul intended it to be taken.

GOOD CAUSES

Much has been made of the 'good causes' which have benefited from money engendered by the Lottery. It appears that the first 'good cause' is that of the organisers who take quite a substantial slice of the proceeds; this might be dubbed as 'the cause of self-interest'. The question, however, which poses itself to me is this, "Would people who now spend millions on the Lottery give the same millions, if asked, to real worthy causes which are crying out for help"? Based on past experience the answer to that would be 'No they wouldn't'. Amid all the welter of advice for the nation's good, I can name one good cause, namely, the promotion of the Gospel of Christ. It remains the only cure for the world's ills, yet politicians, and those whom they purport to lead, ignore it completely. Millions of people throughout the world are engaged in the greatest game of chance that one can imagine; they are staking their lives on the presumption that in the final analysis God will relent and open to them the gates of a Heaven which, in the main, they steadfastly refuse to accept as real. There is no scriptural evidence, however, that God will change His declared Will for mankind.

So we are back where we started. I said at the beginning that the National Lottery should be re-named the National Disaster. I see no reason to change that view. It is not a pastime for Christians.

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

WORD STUDY (Using K.J.V.)

of "happiness" / "joy"

Happy: used 20 times in O.T. - random examples: Deut 33:29, Ps. 144:15, Mal. 3:15.

used seven times in N.T. - random examples: 1st Cor. 7:40, John 13:17, Jas, 5:11.

The Hebrew word translated in the Old Testament as "happy" is "eshher" -eh-sheer and this is used only in masculine plural construction as an interjection - how happy, blessed The name "Asher" is derived from this - a son of Jacob (Gen. 30:12-13).

The Greek word is "makarios" - mak-ar-ee-os: a prolonged form of the poetical "makar" meaning the same thing - supremely blessed - by extension; meaning fortunate, well off, blessed happy.

The world view of the meanings of these words are: (Webster's Dict.) "favoured by circumstances feeling of great pleasure, contentment, **lucky**, fortunate". (the world relies on **luck**).

Joy: Hebrew O.T. word is "sameach" - saw-may-akh - from a prime root "samach" - saw-makh - to brighten up, be blithe or gleesome, cheer up, glad, to have or make joy (ful), be merry, cause to make or to rejoice.

Three times only in the N.T. we find the Greek word "agalliasis" - ag-al-lee-as-is exultation, welcome gladness, exceeding joy - from a root word again (much) and from a prime word (verb) meaning to jump - figuratively - to gush, leap - spring up - in other words "to leap for joy" (Luke 1:44, 1st Peter 4:13, Jude 24).

The other great number of times the Greek word is "chara" - khar-ah from chairo - khah-ee-ro a prime verb meaning **calm delight**, calmly happy or well off, which when used as a salutation is - be well - God speed. (75 times) random examples are: Gal. 5:22, Rom. 15:, 1st Thess. 1:6, Heb. 13:17, 2nd Cor. 7:4, Col. 1:11, Note: endurance & patience - joy. The dictionary meaning: a very glad feeling, happiness, great pleasure, delight, **anything**

causing this feeling, to make joyful, gladden (anything - winning a lottery?)

However: For those who positively "know" (God's reliability; and not only His power to do so, but the fulfilment of all His promises in Jesus Christ) the blessings that are in Jesus Christ the conclusion of all this is that we have a "calm delight"; a measureable and knowledgeable sense of well-being under all circumstances, and regardless of all events, whether they are pleasureable or not. (Eph. 3:20-21).

Compare this to the world's view of "joy" or "happiness" - to them the result of an event or substance that gives a brief unreliable moment of a feeling of excitement, euphoria, and stimulation (founded upon things that do not last). For those who believe they are following Christ; some of these things are: the use of big bands in worship service, the sound of great pipe-organs, choirs, charismatic speakers and "experiences", ornate buildings and wearers of special clothing designed to impress and awe the viewers.

For those who do not believe; their "joy" and "happiness" is derived from stimulants of another kind - sex, drugs, alcohol and lately we see that there are those who get their pleasure out of murder and rape. Not a pretty picture but nevertheless true.

We should be sure of our Joy in Christ, and not in the pleasures of this world. It is only in Him that we can have that calm peaceful assurance that is the true Joy of knowing that no matter what happens to us here on this earth; we have a hope that surpasses human - worldly- understanding. A hope that is revealed; to all those who love and obey Him; through the Holy Spirit. (Ephs. 3:14-19. Heb. 10:34).

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SCRIPTURE READINGS

Feb. 4	Psalm 16:	John 20:1-18
Feb. 11	Gen. 45:1-15	John 20:19-31
Feb. 18	Gen. 1:9-23	John 21:1-14
Feb. 25	Ezek. 34:1-16	John 21:15-25

THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead is not some sort of theological doctrine, but a fact of history. Personally I love reading about Jesus' triumph over the grave because herein lies my hope of glory. John recorded these words of our Lord: **"I am he that lives and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of Hades and of death"** (Rev. 1:18). We now need not fear death because Jesus holds the keys of Hades (the region for departed spirits) and death. Jesus overcame death and we can too, if we remain faithful to Him.

Jesus had prophesied of His resurrection. For example, **"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up"** (John 2:19). **For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the great fish's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"** (Matt. 12:40). From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. 16:21). His prophetic utterances had come true.

Jesus was raised in the same body in which He was crucified. A lot of people do not believe this and many of them are in the cults. They quote John 20:17 in support of their position. They teach that Jesus was in some sort of mystical body and this is why He should not be touched. However, as the word *touch* is used in this verse, Thayer explains it, "Do not handle me to see whether I am still clothed with a

body: there is no need of such an examination". E. M. Zerr has commented: "Therefore, instead of spending time with unnecessary handling of His body, Mary should go to His brethren and tell the good news to them".

Jesus, when He later visited His disciples, said to them: "**Peace be unto you**" (20:19). (These might well be the first words He would say if He visited one of His congregations today.) I like the fact that He showed them his hands and His side (20:20). Here was the absolute proof that He was the resurrected Lord. No wonder they were glad when they saw Him.

DOUBTING THOMAS

The disciple Thomas was not present at the first meeting. When he heard that they had seen the Lord, he questioned the matter. "**Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe**" (20:25). Later, on seeing Jesus, he declared: "**My Lord and my God**" (20:28). Jesus then said: "**Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed**" (20:29). I am so glad that today I am numbered with the "blessed". I have never seen Jesus with my own eyes, but I believe all that has been written about Him in the Bible. I like what John went on to say in his gospel record: "**And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and believing you might have life through His name**" (20:30-31).

Belief in Jesus leads to life! Once I was dead in trespasses and sins. In the waters of baptism I identified myself with His death, burial and resurrection. Now I "**walk in newness of life**" (Rom. 6:4). Jesus spells LIFE.

THE MIRACULOUS CATCH OF FISH

The Sea of Galilee (John calls it the Sea of Tiberias) is a beautiful inland lake

in the north of Israel famous for its fishing. It is a fresh water lake, fed by the river Jordan and is thirteen miles long and seven miles broad. Personally, it is one of the most impressive places I have ever visited.

We read that the disciples had caught nothing on a particular night (21:3), but, on Jesus' advice early the next morning, had found a rich haul on the right hand side of the boat. John, in fact, gives the exact number of fish caught - one hundred and fifty three. (I suppose this detail from a fisherman should be no surprise to the reader. At first, they had not realised that it was Jesus who spoke to them from the shore, but the disciple whom Jesus loved (John?) was soon aware that it was He. Peter, on hearing the news, jumped into the water to be first ashore (an action typical of his character). The disciples then enjoyed a breakfast prepared by the Lord.

Why did Jesus have this encounter with the seven disciples? Albert Barnes wrote: "The design of this interview seems to have been to convince them that He had truly risen from the dead. Hence He performed a miracle before they suspected that it was He, that there might be no room to say that they had ascribed to Him the power of the miracle through friendship and collusion with Him. The miracle was such as to satisfy them of its truth, and was, in accordance with all His works, not for mere display, but for utility. He remained with them, was with them at their meal, conversed with them, and thus convinced them that He was the same Friend who had died".

PETER AND JOHN

Jesus said to Simon Peter: "**Simon, son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?**" (21:15 N.I.V.). What was the Master referring to here? I agree with Alexander Campbell when he once said "Peter had erred. He had become discontented - had forgotten his duty to His Master and had betaken himself to his former occupation of fishing and induced the rest to join him. Christ asks him solemnly, 'Do you love me more than

these fish, these boats, nets, apparatus, or these victuals, this worldly employment? If so, cease to spend your time in providing food for yourself; but feed my sheep and lambs and I will provide for you'. Besides, he having caught nothing till the Master appeared, was a very striking lesson, which I presume Peter never forgot". It is interesting to note that Jesus asked Peter the same question three times. We recall that earlier Peter had denied his Lord three times (John 18:15-27).

Jesus also prophesied of Peter's death. There is a strong tradition that Peter met his end by being crucified head downward, but the Bible gives no details of this. Suffice to say, that the Lord spoke of a violent end because of Peter's devotion to God (21:18-19).

Many commentators are of the view that John himself was the disciple "**whom Jesus loved**" (21:20). Peter wondered about John's future, but it was firmly in God's hands. God would guide both of these great apostles in their service to Him. Barclay has written: "To each Jesus had given His function. It was Peter's to shepherd the sheep of Christ, and in the end to die for him. It was John's to witness to the story of Christ, and to live to a great old age and to come to the end in peace. That did not make them rivals in honour and prestige, nor make the one greater or less than the other; it made them both servants of Christ".

The last verse of John's reads: "**And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.**" (21:25). As one commentator has put it: "The entire Bible is very brief and the Lord has placed before mankind enough only to make the necessary preparation for usefulness in this life, and happiness in the next".

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

- 1) Who ordered Doeg to kill all the priests of Nob?
- 2) How many times did God call the boy Samuel?
- 3) Where did Joshua erect a memorial of twelve stones?
- 4) How many eyes did the stone in Zechariah's vision have?
- 5) Which book of the Bible is a love song?
- 6) How many loaves were displayed on the table of shewbread?
- 7) Who in the book of Revelation rides a white horse?
- 8) Paul directed Titus to appoint..... in every city. Fill in the missing word.
- 9) Who baptised the Ethiopian eunuch?
- 10) Name the synagogue official whose daughter was raised from the dead by Jesus?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place on Saturday, 2nd December, 1995, at the Church Meeting-House at Tranent, when the subject discussed was "How do we bear fruit as Christians (John 15:18): Furthermore, How do we bear much fruit, thus proving our discipleship?" In the chair was Bro. David Chalmers, New Cumnock, and the speakers were Ian Davidson, Motherwell and Peter Sneddon, Dennyloanhead. As always an interesting and productive discussion followed the speakers and an enjoyable time was had by all.

The next meeting proposed, God willing, will be on 9th March, 1996 at Dennyloanhead, at 4.00 p.m. when the subject will be "Is the principle of Mutual Ministry taught in the scriptures?". In the chair will be John Kneller, Tranent, and the speakers will be Jim McGinn, New Cumnock and David Chalmers, New

Cumnock.

Again we thank the sisters at Tranent for the excellent refreshments.

H. MCGINN (Sec.)

Easthouses, Midlothian: It is with sadness that we announce that, after 25 years the Easthouses congregation has ceased to meet. It was a difficult decision to make but with us down to three members and our building being plagued by vandalism we felt it was a necessary move. David Ferguson, his mother Winnie and Jeanette Finlay are now meeting with the Church in Newtongrange.

DAVID FERGUSON

Bramhall Green, Stockport,

Manchester: Please rejoice with us over the baptism into Christ of Sarah Dabrowski Jusko on Thursday, the 30th of November, 1995. Sarah began attending Bible studies through looking in the telephone book for a church to attend and seeing our number listed under Church of Christ. She deeply loves the Lord for what he has done for her and being convinced of the significance of being baptised asked to be baptised. We are grateful to the brothers and sisters at Hindley for making their baptistry available and providing refreshments.

We are also encouraged by Kenneth George Wilkinson's request to be accepted into fellowship at Bramhall on Sunday the 19th of November, 1995. He had been baptised for the remission of sins elsewhere but came to the conclusion that the group he was meeting with had serious doctrinal problems. He came to know about the church at Bramhall Green through a correspondence course advertised on Ceefax. He is firmly committed to following the Lord through the teaching of the Word of God.

Please pray for these young Christians as they face the difficulties ahead and for us as we try to help them, by example and teaching, in their walk with the Lord.

ALLAN ASHURST (Sec.)

COMPENDIUM ON ISLAM

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

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

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ALLAN ASHURST

COMING EVENTS

(A note for your diary)

TRANENT ANNUAL SOCIAL

16th March, 1996
at Loch Centre

KIRKCALDY SOCIAL

20th April, 1996

KIRKCALDY LADIES DAY

18th May, 1996

OBITUARY

Dennyloanhead: It is with deep regret that the church here records the passing of our beloved sister Margaret (Bess) Hamilton in her 89th year. Sister Bess fell asleep in Jesus on 29th November, 1995, at Rannoch Lodge Nursing Home. She was in regular attendance at the Breaking of Bread up to the time of her death and indeed, prior to her admission to the Nursing Home was able to attend all church meetings.

Sister Bess was a lovable and caring person who always greeted everyone with a warm smile and a handshake, Having given her life to Jesus as a young woman

she and her family met with the church at Whiteinch. After living in the U.S.A. for many years Bess returned to Scotland about eight years ago and has been in fellowship with the Church here, along with sisters Chris and Ina Brown. We thank God for her faithfulness and for the hope and rest that remaineth to the children of God.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Margaret (daughter) and with Douglas (son) and with her sisters here, in Canada and U.S.A. and pray that they will find comfort and consolation in God's word and from the life she has lived. She was laid to rest at Eastfield Cemetery on 2nd December, the writer officiating at the funeral, assisted by Brother P. Sneddon.

JOE MALCOLM (SEC.)

Potiphar bought Joseph and made him steward over all he had. Stewards cross social and racial barriers. The serpent on the rock, the eagle in the air, the man with a maid, the steward with his Lord, faithfulness and efficiency! The faithful and wise steward is made ruler over the household to apportion meat in due season.

During the dark ages the Bible was on earth but stewards were not translating and teaching it. Stewards play a responsible and important role.

The bishop is a steward in God's house (Titus 1:7). The state of the church discloses his wisdom and faithfulness. The care of all the churches came upon Paul. He gave the Colossian congregation a stewardship exceeding congregational bounds (Col. 4:16).

J. W. PEGG

STEWARDSHIP

Jesus said a certain rich man had a steward. Rich men need stewards. The boy who acquires skills and builds integrity prepares himself for stewardship with rich men and with God. This is in part the potential of Christian education.

Adam had and lost the stewardship of paradise. Abraham's steward negotiated Isaac's marriage. In gospel stewardship Paul espoused men to Christ. We, too, have a great stewardship.

ANSWERS

1. Saul (1 Samuel 22:18).
2. Four (1 Samuel 3:8,10).
3. Gilead (Joshua 4:20).
4. Seven (Zechariah 3:9).
5. Song of Solomon.
6. Twelve (Leviticus 24:5,6).
7. Jesus (19:11-16).
8. Elders (Titus 1:5).
9. Phillip the Evangelist (Acts 8:38).
10. Jairus (Luke 8:41).

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER YEAR — POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL.

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

AIR MAIL, please add £2.00 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates

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Telephone: Longniddry (01875) 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

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Scotland. ML1 2RJ. Telephone: (01698) 252694

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by
Lothian Printers, 109 High Street, Dunbar. East Lothian. EH42 1ES. Tel: (01368) 863785