

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

Vol. 69 No. 5

MAY, 2002

REVENGE AND REPRISAL

Palestinian suicide bombers continue, on a daily basis, to wreak death and destruction in that country, and the soldiers of Israel reply in kind. In this morning's newspaper, President George W. Bush has, in no uncertain terms, called for an end to the bloodshed. This call has been heard before, of course, and the countless agreements for a "ceasefire" between Jew and Arab, have become a bit of a joke. Indeed, there has been a gradual escalation in the carnage, and all-out war seems just around the corner. Each outrage in slaughter from the one side is met by a similar outrage from the other side, on the "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" basis, and there is, of course, no end in sight on that basis. Thus, President Bush is probably voicing the feelings of the civilized parts of the world, when he says, "Enough is enough - stop the slaughter". "Tit-for tat" killings accomplish nothing but pain and heartbreak, of course, and grow and grow in intensity. Ariel Sharon, President in Israel says that the waves of suicide bombings cannot be tolerated and justifies him in sending in the tanks, and so it goes on.

Much nearer to home, "tit-for-tat" killings have been going on in Ireland for many years: certainly since I was a small boy in the 1930's, and has accomplished nothing but pain and anguish. There appears to be no true political solution to this long-standing impasse, and although there is an uncertain "ceasefire" for the moment, the "peace process" is not based upon anything solid and violence still occurs. Just a few months ago, one of the worst riots in Belfast for a long time was caused by two women (one Catholic and one Protestant) meeting on a street pavement, and neither being prepared to stand aside for the other. Each succeeding generation has been weaned on hatred for the other side and little toddlers have been seen making petrol-bombs even before they have the physical strength to throw them. Reprisals and revenge have been the order of the day, and each atrocity carried out by the IRA has been matched by the Protestant Volunteer Forces. One can but hope that, some day soon, men will see the sheer futility of this "tit-for-tat" policy and that, as Jesus proposed, men should not only love their neighbours, but even do good to their enemies.

This spirit of retaliation is not, of course, confined, to Ireland and Palestine but we see it taking place every day in one country or another, between Pakistan and India; in Mozambique; in Soweto; with the Tamil guerrillas in Sri Lanka etc. On a lesser, non-violent and general level, we see the spirit of retaliation in nearly every form of human intercourse; business, social or religious. We hear people say, "He cheated on me, just wait; I'll get him back". "He did the dirty' on me: so I'll do the same to him". "She's

been telling lies about me: I'll tell some things about her". "Two can play at that game: I'll get him back".

Indeed, in the competitive business world they have a rather cynical maxim: "let's do it to them before they can do it to us". We have all heard examples of this generally common attitude, and have no doubt, said such things ourselves, more than once. Indeed most parents introduce their offspring into this mentality very early in life; even at the kindergarten stage, and when little Johnny runs up to Mummy complaining that some boy has belted him with a stick, Mummy usually replied, "Well go and belt him back". And so it is hardly surprising that the urge to "get even" is a strong human emotion which affects us all. We see it as **unfair** that one side should behave in a totally anti-social manner and get away with it. Some would even say that the spirit of retaliation is not un-natural, and is in fact quite normal. Others suggest that it is just **human-nature**, not unlike the drive for self-preservation, and "You can't change human nature."

WHAT ELIJAH DID

As we can imagine Jesus encountered this human tendency for reprisals, and I would like us to observe His attitude to it, but first, we must have regard to an incident which involved King Ahaziah and the prophet Elijah (2 Kings Chapter 1).

Historically this event took place just before the 10 Tribes of Israel (Northern Kingdom) were taken away into captivity. Ahaziah, king of Israel, had fallen down through the lattice of a window in his house, and suffered considerable injury. Indeed his injury seemed so severe that it made him wonder if he would ever recover from it, for we find him sending messengers to "consult the oracle" on the matter. Being like nearly all the other kings of Israel, an evil man, he did not bother to consult God, or God's prophet on the question, but sent his messengers to Baalzebub, the god of Ekron (a local idol). God was so displeased by this slight that He sent His angel to instruct the prophet Elijah to intercept the messengers, and to say to them. "**Is it because there is not a God in Israel that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shall surely die.**" Elijah did as he was instructed. Naturally the king was amazed at the soon return of the messengers and was even more surprised to hear of their confrontation by Elijah. Upon questioning the messengers and gaining a description of the man who had intercepted them, Ahaziah realised that the man was Elijah (for he wore a distinctive garment of haircloth and a girdle of leather about his loins). A batch of fifty soldiers was dispatched to apprehend Elijah and bring him to the king. Elijah was seated on a hill when approached by the soldiers, and on being commanded in the name of the king to come down and give himself up, Elijah brought fire down from heaven and consumed them all. The king, undeterred, sent another fifty soldiers (and an officer) on an exactly similar mission, and they suffered an exactly similar fate; a consuming fire was again brought down from heaven. A third group of fifty soldiers were dispatched to secure Elijah, but this time the officer pleaded on his knees with Elijah that he and his men might be spared, and that Elijah would come quietly. God's angel interposed again and suggested that Elijah should go with the soldiers and see the king, without fear. All of this made no difference to the outcome of events, for Elijah, when he stood before the king, merely repeated what he had already said to the messengers, i.e. that Ahaziah had greatly erred in ignoring God, and His prophet, by sending for a consultation with the god of Ekron; and that, in any event, he would die of his injuries and not recover. "**And so Ahaziah died according to the**

word of the Lord, which Elijah had spoken.” (v.17). This is the incident to which James and John refer as justification for the spirit of retaliation, in Luke Chap. 9., as follows.

WHAT JESUS SAID

Luke (in 9:51) describes how, that **“...when the time came for Jesus to be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”** Jesus was in Galilee at the time, of course, and as a glance at any Bible map will show, going from Galilee to Jerusalem involved passing through Samaria. No Jew liked to pass through Samaria because of the mutual hostility. The perfect hatred between Jew and Samaritan was deeply rooted historically and was based mainly upon the fact that when the 10 Tribes of Israel were taken into captivity by the Assyrians they were, quite literally, replaced by heathenish men from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hameth and Sepharvaim. **“These were placed in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.”** (2 Kings 17:24). Thus the ‘Samaritans’ could never be Israelites, or true Jews, and were regarded with such utter contempt by the Jews that they could never even be accepted as proselytes to the Jewish faith. In John 4 we read **“that Jesus must needs go through Samaria”** which implies, I think, a certain reluctance.

Apart from anything else, the Jews hated to have to buy food from Samaritans, and the Samaritans only sold it to Jews to exploit them with enhanced prices. On this, His last sojourn in Samaria, Jesus sent His disciples ahead into a village to arrange a stop-over but got a cold reception, and was not received. They would not have Him. **“And when His disciples James and John saw this they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did? But He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”** (v. 54). We don’t know if all the disciples were equally indignant at the Lord being snubbed by the contemptible Samaritans but certainly James and John (Sons of Thunder) were living up to that description, and insisting that drastic retribution was called for. It must seem to us quite incredible that the twelve disciples, constantly in the presence of the Prince of Peace, hearing His conversations, listening to His preaching, watching His benevolence and compassion, observing His miracles and mighty works, could seriously imagine that Jesus would have given His consent to the bringing down of fire to incinerate the Samaritans. And so Jesus rebuked the Sons of Thunder, saying, **“ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.”** Clearly the spirit of Christ had nothing in common with the spirit of retaliation or reprisal.

SOME LESSONS FOR US

I suppose there are, at least, three lessons to be gleaned from the rebuke from Jesus: there are probably more.

(1) First of all we learn that events of the O.T. are **no guide** as to how we should proceed in the Kingdom of Heaven. These things aforetime in the O.T. were written for our admonition and our learning, but when James and John tried to justify their proposal by referring to the fact that the great man of God, Elijah, had brought fire down upon his enemies, the justification was not acceptable to Jesus. What Elijah had done may have been appropriate to his day, time and circumstances but was wholly incompatible with the new spirit: the spirit of Christ. Indeed there were many other facets and aspects of the old law, perfectly proper and relevant in O.T. times, which

were no longer applicable in the Kingdom of God. In Matt. 5 Jesus announced some examples of the changes when He said, **“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you. That ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also. And if a man sue thee at law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.”** Matt. 5 is full of similar changes. The law had said that a man should love his neighbour and hate his enemy but Jesus taught, **“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.”** Such words certainly kill stone-dead any spirit of reprisal or revenge. Thus, the actions and examples of O.T. worthies are not always to be followed by those in the Kingdom of Heaven.

(2) Christ's rebuff also shows, I think, that nothing should be done in the name of Christ which is itself incompatible with the teaching of Christ. This may seem self-evident but the pages of history abound with examples to the contrary. Opponents of Christianity relish pointing out the multitudes of crimes carried out in its name, failing to realise that what passes for 'Christianity' has very often little in common with the teachings of Jesus. Only God Himself can have any idea of the enormity and quantity of human suffering, deprivation, torture and death inflicted by man upon his fellow men all in the name of God. I suppose the man who operated the rack, tightened the thumb-screws or heated the poker down in the dark dungeons during the Holy Inquisitions (Spanish and elsewhere) fondly imagined that he was “about the master's business” and was doing God's will. There are no shortages of greatly mistaken men and women who think that they do God's will. Doubtless the chivalry of Europe who crossed the world to the Crusades, “in defence of the Christian faith” and fought the Turks and Saracens thought that they were wielding the sword for Christ. These Crusades lasted about 400 years: long enough for huge stone castles, forts and walls to be built in the deserts, and for great slaughter on both sides: it was a serious business and those involved regarded themselves as soldiers of the Lord. Time would fail to describe similar situations: the slaughter of the Innocents: the deaths of the Christian martyrs; the killing of the Waldensians, and Huguenots; Cardinal Beaton, Cromwell's 'Ironsides' etc, and the men who willingly took life, maimed and tortured in the name of God, and “to His Glory”. To many, the words of Christ are appropriate, **“ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.”** It was Jesus, Himself, who predicted, **“Yea the time cometh, when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”** Even when promoting the aims of Christianity, nothing incompatible with the spirit of Christ must be done, **“For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.”**

(3) Human nature can be changed: and must be changed. If the spirit of retaliation is human nature (and it may well be) then human nature must be made subservient to the spirit of Christ. Jesus, in condemning any form of vengeance in any situation, no matter how seemingly justified, was not asking of us something He was not prepared to do Himself: for although subjected to immeasurable provocation He never ever retaliated. This option not to seek revenge was often construed as weakness: but was, of course, a great strength. Even in Ireland many are beginning to see the utter futility of a tit-for-tat philosophy; and are calling for “no retaliation”. The perpetrators of these crimes will not go scotfree: but vengeance belongs to God. Solomon's advice was **“Say not I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work. Say not I will recompense evil, but wait on the Lord, and He shall save thee.”** And so, whatever the provocation, whatever the dirty deed done to us, whatever

the justification, we must not enter into the tit-for-tat fraternity. We must not repay evil in kind, but in kindness. Paul said, **“Recompense no man evil for evil...Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord.”** (Rom. 12:19). **“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”**

EDITOR.

THE BIBLE (Part 4)

The Bible is alive because its author is alive. To quote the Hebrew writer: **“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”** (4:12, N.I.V.).

Many years ago, I undertook an exercise as I read my way through my N.I.V. Bible. Every time I came across words such as: **“This is what the Lord says”**; **“...declares the Lord”**; **“The word of the Lord came to him, saying...”**; **“Hear the word of the Lord”**; etc. then I underlined them in green ink. It proved to be a profitable exercise. In an old magazine I used to publish, I took the book of Haggai as an example. It begins: **“In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest: This is what the Lord Almighty says...”** As one reads through the book, it is clear that, in it, we have a message from God given through the instrumentality of his prophet, Haggai. Of course, Haggai wrote in his own style. As Alexander Campbell has written: **“But while this inspiration precluded the selection of incorrect or unsuitable words and sentences, the inspired men delivered supernatural communications in their own peculiar modes of expressing themselves”**. In other words, each writer was not simply an automaton for the Holy Spirit. I also agree with Robert Milligan when he wrote: **“It is evident that the Holy Spirit exercised a very special providential and miraculous influence over both the words and the thoughts of the Old and New Testament writers. But as God never employs unnecessary means in any case; as He never exercises His power providentially when existing natural means are adequate to the end proposed; nor miraculously when natural and providential means are sufficient for His purpose, it follows in the second place, that in making the Bible what it ought to be, He used all the learning and talents of the several writers that composed it, so far as these natural means could be available; just as He used the forces of nature in producing the Noahic deluge, and as Christ used the five loaves and two fishes in feeding five thousand men. And hence we see that in one sense, every word and every thought of the entire Bible is of God; and in another and subordinate sense, that every word and every thought of the Bible is also of man; and consequently, that the Divine and the human elements coexist in all parts of the Sacred Scriptures”**.

INSPIRATION OF O.T. BOOKS

Personally, I hold to the view that an equal degree of inspiration was not necessary in all of the writers of the Bible. For example, surely a much higher degree of Divine influence was required to qualify Paul to reveal the future or to develop either in type or in fact the mysteries of redemption than to enable him to record unerringly those facts that fell under his own immediate observation? But I must emphasise that I hold the position that the miraculous influence of the Holy Spirit was absolutely necessary in

all cases and in all circumstances.

It is clear to me that the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are inspired by God. The sayings of Jesus contain over forty actual quotations from these books; the letters of Paul nearly one hundred; and the total for the New Testament as a whole reaches something like two hundred and fifty. One writer has said: "But these verbatim quotations are only the beginning. There are far more allusions which are so clear that none could reasonably deny that they are intentional (about seventy in the sayings of Jesus and up to one thousand in the whole of the New Testament)". I once undertook a study of Matthew's gospel record, and Paul's epistle to the Romans, to see what references to the Old Testament Scriptures were contained in them. Dear reader, why not do this yourself? It will prove to be an enlightening and profitable exercise, as it was for me. In Matthew, Jesus refers to the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, I Samuel, I Kings, Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, Zechariah and Malachi. He also mentions, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, etc. To him, they were all historical figures. How Jesus viewed the Old Testament Scriptures is how I must view them. The disciple cannot have a different view from the Master.

INSPIRATION OF N.T. BOOKS

It is also clear that the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are inspired of God. Robert Milligan has been a great guide in this area.

First, this is proved from the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. These two volumes are not separate and independent works. They stand together because they develop and illustrate one great system.

Second, this is proved by the promises of Christ to His apostles, that they and other should possess the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:16-20; Mark 13:11; Luke 21:12-15; John 16:12-15; Acts 1:5,8; Mark 16:15-18). Milligan has commented: "It is scarcely necessary to pause here with the view of proving that these promises of supernatural aid to the apostles had not reference merely to their verbal instructions and extemporaneous addresses, but also to their writings, as the appointed legislators and plenipotentiaries of the Kingdom of Heaven. The latter, indeed, are even more important than the former. The effect of their addresses was temporary; but the influence of their writings will endure for ever".

Third, the inspiration of the entire New Testament may also be legitimately inferred from the miraculous gifts that were bestowed on the apostles and others for the conversion of the world and the edification of the Church until Christianity be fully established; the canon of the New Testament completed and the evidence of its Divine authenticity perfected. That these gifts were actually bestowed on the apostles and many of their fellow labourers is proved by the following passages: Acts 2:1-4; Acts 8:5-8; Acts 8:14-17; Acts 10:44-46 and I Corinthians 12:7-11.

Fourth, the inspiration of the New Testament may also be proved from the direct testimony of its own inspired writers. See Romans 9:1-3; I Corinthians 2:4-16; I Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:11,12; Ephesians 2:20; Ephesians 3:1-7; I Thessalonians 2:13; I Thessalonians 4:2-15; I Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 3:1,2; I John 5:6-9; Revelation 1:1,10,11; Revelation 2:1,7; Revelation 22:6,7,18,19.

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

I now turn to the subject of the *Sacred Canon*. The Greek word *kanon* means, literally, a straight rod used for a rule or measure. We still use the word "ruler" to designate a piece of wood or metal with which to measure length. The idea of

straightness can still be discerned in such words as cane and canal. The word *kanon* occurs only twice in the New Covenant Scriptures - in 2 Corinthians 10:16, where it is translated "line", and in Galatians 6:16, where it is rendered "rule". But how are we using the term in our study? The term "canon" has long been used to denote the entire catalogue or list of inspired books which God has Himself given to the Church as the only proper and authoritative rule of both faith and our practice.

I have two outstanding books on my numerous bookshelves, which have assisted me greatly in my study in this aspect of the Bible. They are: *The Canon of Scripture* by F.F. Bruce (I think that was last book he ever wrote) and *The Canon of the New Testament Its Origin, Development, and Significance* by Bruce M. Metzger, who, at one time, was George L. Collard Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Princeton Theological Seminary, U.S.A. Their books are detailed and profound, but worthy of continuous analysis. They give answers to these important questions: Is the Bible an authorised collection of books or a collection of authorised books? Are the scriptures holy because they were selected for the canon or were they selected for the canon because they are holy scriptures?

(TO BE CONTINUED)

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

PEACE COVENANT MEALS

The Bible speaks of some instances where peace was made between man and his fellow-man, or between God and man. In each of the following cases where peace was established, the events ended with a meal.

Man with Man

In Genesis 26:17-31, the Philistines strove with Isaac over wells that his father dug and those that he dug himself. They hated him and sent him away from their territory. Later Abimelech king of the Philistines saw that God was with Isaac so he broke the enmity that was between them. He visited him and made a peace covenant with Isaac. Verses 30 and 31 reads "**Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way and they left him in peace**".

Genesis 31:22-55 records a trouble that was between Laban and Jacob. When they made peace, a pillar was set up that no one was to cross to harm the other (v.52). A meal was then prepared and they ate together (v.54), signifying the time of enmity was over.

God with Man

When Israel with one voice agreed to obey the laws of God that Moses pronounced to them, there was peace between them and Jehovah. Next there was a peace meal (Ex. 24:3-11). Verses 5 and 11 reads "**Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offering to the LORD. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank**". (Some translations have peace-offering in place of fellowship-offering).

CHRIST OUR PEACE

During the period when we knew not God and walked in our own ways, we were counted as enemies of God. James wrote, "**You adulterous people, don't you know**

that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (4:4). However God pitied us and showed much love by initiating a peaceful reconciliation in Christ. **"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"** (Rom 5:10). When one accepts this move by God through faith, he has peace with God (Rom 5:1). It was not by chance therefore that the Lord instituted a covenant meal with us. **"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins".** (Mt. 26:26-28).

A further expression of our peace with God and one to another is to maintain the symbol of unity in the communion when dining. Let us hear Paul: **"is not the cup of thanks-giving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf"** (1 Cor. 10:16-17). What the Lord did, and the use of the words cup not cups as well as loaf not loaves by Paul indicates the Lord has the portrayal of our oneness in mind when it is observed. The symbol of unity is the figure one (Eph. 4:2-6). God had commanded the Israelites to eat one lamb in one house at the Passover (Ex. 12:1-46). Every autonomous house, one lamb. But Christ is our Passover (1 Cor. 5-7). We should dine maintaining the unity symbolism.

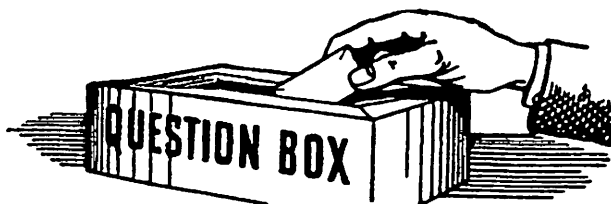
PEACE AND UNITY

In the show-bread meal God commanded 12 loaves for Israel and (Ex. 24:4) 12 pillars were erected according to the 12 tribes. One loaf was for one tribe (Lev. 24:5-9). The Corinthians were rebuked for their observance of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-22). Even though they felt it was the Lord's Supper, Paul said it wasn't (v.20). Instead of peace and unity, everywhere there was division. The unfaithful were noted. **"These men are blemishes at your love-feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm..."** (Jude v.12).

We are to dine with love and a pure heart. It would be painful for anyone dining in Christ to harbour hatred for his fellow. It would not be walking in the light (1 Jn. 1:7). Thus the lamentation in Psalm 41:9 **"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me"**, sad indeed. Even socially the early Church demonstrated their peace, love and unity. They extended their fellowship beyond the worship assembly by sharing in love meals. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46).

The lesson for us is that as we dine every week at worship, we should do all that is possible to live in peace with one another (Rom. 12:18). Abraham, the greater of the two, could say to Lot, **"let us not quarrel for we are brethren"** (Gen. 13:8-9). Even if our brother could not see the wrong he caused us, let us still forgive and work for peace; for it was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8), not that we were righteous.

Fred T. Tamatey,
P.O. Box KN. 290,
Kaneshie-Accra,
Ghana.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

I have been asked to comment on a passage of scripture about which, during Bible study in a certain congregation, there has arisen some disagreement.

The passage, which I suggest you might first care to read, is **Exodus 21 vv. 21-25** in the 'King James Version', used by the questioner, and the questions that have arisen are, in essence, as follows:-

1. What is meant by '*her fruit depart from her*'?
2. Does '*mischief follow*' refer to the child, or to illness after the loss of the child?
3. What is the significance of '*an eye for an eye...*' etc.

A General Observation.

It is in this section of the book of Exodus that we see how immeasurably kinder was the Law of Moses, than any other moral code that existed in ancient times. Critics of the Bible are fond of pointing out that there were other legal codes that controlled social life in the ancient world, long before the Law was presented to Israel. Indeed, we know that such laws existed in many cultures. But they were never as consistently just and compassionate as those laid down in the Mosaic Law.

The 'Code of Hammurabi'

The best known of these ancient legal-codes is that known as the Code of Hammurabi, who is regarded by some scholars as the 'Amraphel, King of Shinar', mentioned in Ex. 14:1,

If that is correct, this man lived in the days of Abraham. Certainly, Hammurabi was King of Babylon, or 'Shinar', and numerous copies of this Code have been found in the Middle East.

The point to bear in mind is that Hammurabi did not devise the 300 or so, laws of which the Code consists. He only 'codified' them, because they existed before this time, and, whilst they constituted a useful standard with which communal life could be regulated, that standard fell short of the generous and compassionate laws that operated among the Israelites.

Look, now, at Exodus 21:22-25.

The law laid down in Ex.21 is what is known as '*lex talionis*' - the law of '*like for like*'.

It is a law that was intended to control retaliation or revenge, and to ensure that any reaction to injury or loss that an individual might have suffered through the action of another person was not excessive, but was equal in both kind and degree to the damage that had been incurred.

1st. It seems clear that what is envisaged in these verses is a fight between two men, during which the pregnant wife of one of them is injured and suffers a miscarriage. She loses the baby. This is what is meant by '*her fruit departs from her*'.

2nd. It must also be obvious that the abortion is caused through the action of the husband's protagonist, because, when the *husband* demands compensation for the loss

of the baby, the man responsible must pay compensation as set by the judges.

3rd. The phrase, which follows; '*and yet no mischief (ie. harm) follow*', means that the woman suffers no injury beyond the loss of the child. In other words, no *further* harm follows.

4th. The expression '*And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life*', refers to the possible death of the woman herself. It cannot relate to the loss of the baby, because that matter has already been covered by the words, '*her fruit depart from her*'.

It means that, if the woman dies, the man who caused her death must be held accountable for her death, according to the law laid down in both the Mosaic Law and in the more ancient law, recorded in Gen. 9:6. The penalty would be the death-sentence.

5th. We are all aware that we live today in a 'compensation-driven' society, in which '*an eye for an eye*' is often quoted, not simply as an excuse for exacting retribution or revenge, but as justification for seeking to extract as high a compensation as possible, from the person responsible for the pain, inconvenience or loss, that another may have suffered.

But this is a flagrant abuse of the passage.

The purpose of the law which said '*an eye for an eye*' was to control excessive demands of that kind. It meant that, if an eye had been lost, *the most* that could be required of the person responsible was an eye; if a tooth, *only* a tooth could be demanded. (The loss of an eye was regarded as the greatest possible loss and the loss of a tooth, the least).

Not Applies Literally.

What is more, we should understand that this principle was never intended to be taken literally. And, of course, the people understood this. Had it been literally applied, it might have created a society of one-eyed, one-armed, one legged people!

In practice, the rule meant that, if a person were responsible for causing the loss of an eye, the most that would be expected from him, would be compensation *to the equivalent value* of the eye.

Furthermore, regardless of any desire for revenge that an injured party might feel, he could never, under any circumstances, be allowed to put out both eyes of the guilty person!

His demands could not be permitted to be disproportionate.

Possible Complications.

Notice, also that whilst this law in Exodus 21 is quite simply stated, its application was fraught with complications, and there were exceptional circumstances in which it had to be modified. Verse 26 presents one of these special circumstances. Here were are told what should happen if a master was responsible for an injury to his servant (slave).

The very real difference in their social status would make the strict application of '*an eye for an eye*'; extremely difficult and most unlikely because society would never regard a slave as being as important as his master.

How must the slave be recompensed for the loss of an eye?

Since this loss was, as I have already stated, regarded as the most serious physical injury that one could possibly suffer, short of the loss of life itself, the Law said that, as compensation, the slave must be given his freedom, and his master must lose all rights over him.

Here we see the superiority of the Mosaic Code over the Code of Hammurabi.

The Babylonian code said that, if a slave caused his master to lose an eye, that slave should be put to death. But if the master caused his slave to lose an eye, the slave should be given a sum of money as compensation!

'One law for the rich and one for the poor' have been in the world for a very long time.

It is worth bearing in mind that the most humane and equitable laws in today's world have come down to us from these ancient laws, presented by God to Israel. They were laws which were designed to discourage the spirit of vengeance and to promote justice and right-conduct.

(All questions please, to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire, PA6 7NZ, Scotland)

NIGERIA APPEAL

I refer to the appeal by our brother from Nigeria in last month's issue and feel that it would be appropriate to explain the work currently being carried out and the reasons for it.

Nigeria is a very difficult country to deal with, as corruption is endemic from the government down. On one occasion we sent a cheque for £50 to one appeal for financial assistance. As bank transfer charges are around £15 this seemed to be reasonable. The cheque was submitted to our bank for payment altered to £50,000. The bank advised us that all transactions with Nigeria are scrutinised carefully due to problems there.

Even direct bank transfers can have problems with the Nigerian bank denying it has arrived until we send copies of transfer documents.

It would appear that some of the people who appeal are also supported from America.

It was for this reason that we decided to concentrate on sending Bibles and other literature on the premise that even if they did not reach the right people whoever read them would benefit.

We did try to send Bibles locally through the Nigeria Bible Society but this was not successful.

The work of sending Bibles is continuing.

With regard to financial assistance, if it is the wish of the brethren that we do this, we will try as best we can to obtain references and to find out what other assistance is being received before we transfer any money. We currently have several appeals for assistance with church buildings, roofs, evangelistic support, campaign support, etc.

Any assistance that you can give us would be much appreciated. Any cheques should be made out to Church of Christ Stretford.

We hope this sets the record straight in that Nigeria is not being ignored and that we are trying in a small way to give what assistance we can.

John and Margery Purcell,
3 Dale Avenue,
Bramhall,
Stockport,
SK7 2JP.

A THIEF OF TIME AND SOULS

A sober-minded person will not befriend a thief knowingly. We all want friends whom we can trust in every situation and at all times. He who is a thief of material values is looked upon with scorn and dis-favour. We avoid such and warn others about them. A thief is an outcast of society. Sooner or later if he does not repent he is imprisoned. Society refuses to tolerate or deal kindly with a thief.

Unfortunately there is a thief who dwells among brethren who not only is tolerated, but dealt kindly with. This thief is far worse than he who steals material values. He is a thief whom the law cannot touch. Not once has he been arrested, and I am certain that he never will. He has befriended good moral people. His thievery goes unnoticed by most because of those with whom he associates. He exerts a tremendous influence for evil, but still remains free to plague every believer in Christ. He is the devil's number one man. He is held in the highest esteem by the adversary of this world. He is a thief of time and souls! Children of God love him for providing them with excuses for not doing the Lord's will, but later hate him because he leaves them with a guilty conscience and a fruitless life.

At times this thief is a guest in every Christian's home. He is a frequent travelling companion of the saints. Whether we are at work or play, he is with us. Who is he? His name is "procrastination!" He has prevented more personal evangelism, Bible study and worship, and transformity of life than all other ministers of Satan combined. He who befriends him will be cast into outer darkness! (Heb. 3:12,13; John 9:4).

Selected.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

June 2	Deut. 31:1-13	Hebrews 13
June 9	Psalms 69:13-28	Acts 1
June 16	Joel 2:18-32	Acts 2:1-21
June 23	Psalms 16	Acts 2:22-47
June 30	Deut. 18:15-22	Acts 3

HEBREW'S CHAPTER 13

This chapter contains the concluding exhortation and prayer. We can subdivide it thus: *Ethical Injunctions (1-6); Examples to Follow (7-8); The True Christian Sacrifices (9-16); Submission to Guides (17); Request for Prayer (18-19); Prayer and Doxology (20-21)*.

This is a wonderful chapter and contains many memorable statements, including: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (8). I have also highlighted the follow-

ing in my Bible: "Let brotherly love continue" (1); "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (2); "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (4); "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (14); "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (16).

Under the Old Covenant there were sacrifices of animals. Under the New Covenant there are spiritual sacrifices. These include the sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving and benevolence or doing good (15,16). I recall the words of Paul to the Romans: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"

(Romans 12:1).

The Jews had an altar, but we have a better altar (10). The Christian altar is "the Christian sacrifice, which is Christ Jesus, with all the benefits of His passion and death" (Adam Clarke).

THE BOOK OF ACTS

AUTHOR: Luke, "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14) and companion of the apostle Paul. He was a Gentile. He is the only non-Jewish writer in the New Testament. The book of Acts is a sequel to the gospel record that bears his name. Both works contain many medical terms unique to Luke.

TO WHOM WRITTEN: Theophilus, who is also mentioned in the introduction to the gospel record (Luke 1:3). There he is addressed as "most excellent Theophilus". Who was he? "He was Luke's literary patron, doubtless a Roman or Greek of high rank, as his title, 'most excellent' indicates" (The Hodder Bible Handbook).

DATE: "...as the book of Acts is continued to the end of the second year of Paul's imprisonment, it could not have been written before the year 63; and, as the death of that apostle is not mentioned, it is probable that the book was composed before that event, which is supposed to have happened A.D. 65" (Thomas Hartwell Horne).

CONTENTS: the book deals with the progress of Christianity and covers a period in excess of thirty years (A.D. 30 to 61). Since about the middle of the second century A.D. it has been called "The Acts of the Apostles". A better title is: "The Acts of the Holy Spirit".

CHAPTER ONE

We read in this chapter of Jesus' ascension to heaven. Prior to this great event, He spent forty days "**speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God**" (1:3). He also told His apostles to remain in Jerusalem, where they

would receive power from on high (4). In other words, the Holy Spirit would come upon them (8). The Spirit would enable them to conquer the world. It is an exciting story; it is a true story; it is the greatest story ever told. I'm glad that, two thousand years later, I am part of it.

Jesus went "**up into heaven**" (11). The disciples witnessed the ascension from the Mount of Olives. I myself once stood at the foot of it and thought about these very words from Acts 1. Of course, I never saw Jesus' departure, but I shall witness His return. So will everyone else. "**...this same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven**" (11b). "**Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him**" (Revelation 1:7). His return will result in a universal judgement (Revelation 20:11-15).

Judas Iscariot had betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. In the end he had taken his own life because he realised that he had condemned innocent blood (Matthew 27:3-5). I think he is one of the most tragic figures in history. He was replaced by one Matthias, following an election (26). The election involved the casting of lots. "The mode of election in this case was quite popular... The whole congregation of one hundred and twenty persons... probably represented by Barsabas and Matthias by two pebbles, as the ancient custom was, put into an urn on which either name or sign was inscribed. Some person being appointed, after prayer drew out one of these *calculi*, and from it *calculated* the Divine will, for, indeed, the word *calculate* is derived from *calculus*, a *pebble*, by which doubtful matters were anciently

decided. The lot fell on Matthias and he was added to the eleven". (Alexander Campbell).

CHAPTER TWO

Jesus had said to Peter: **"And I will give unto the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"** (Matthew 16:19). Keys are for opening doors. Peter was given the task of opening the door of the kingdom to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles.

So in Acts chapter two we have the first recorded gospel address. I believe the gospel was preached fully on this occasion. The message led to the salvation of **"about three thousand souls"** (41). These Jews responded to the message as commanded by Peter: **"Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"** (38). This must be the same answer we give today to any sinners who asks: **"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"** (37b).

The multitude that Peter addressed (probably in the Hebrew tongue) was from all over the then-known world (9-11). His quotes from Joel and David reflect a Jewish audience. The whole thrust of his message is summed up in verse 36: **"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"**. Once He was dead, now He is alive. The fact of Jesus' resurrection is powerfully presented by Peter. David was great, but Jesus, the risen Lord, is greater in every respect for He is the promised Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

I like verse 42: **"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in break-**

ing of bread and in prayers". J.W. McGarvey has written: "The apostles were as yet the only teachers, and in teaching the disciples they were executing the part of their commission which required them to teach those whom they baptised all things which Jesus had commanded. The command which made it their duty to teach made it also the duty of the disciples to learn from them, and to abide by their teaching..."

CHAPTER THREE

Peter and John feature in this chapter. A miracle is recorded as well as another outstanding address by Peter. The apostles, of course, could perform miracles. Here was positive proof that they had been empowered by the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had promised (Acts 1:8). I recall too the words of the Hebrew writer: **"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"** (2:3-4).

Let us compare Acts 2:38 with Acts 3:19. Acts 2:38 contains (1) repentance; (2) baptism; (3) remission; (4) the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 3:19 contains (1) repentance; (2) conversion; (3) the blotting out of sins; (4) times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Alexander Brown has commented: "When Peter was speaking to inquirers who in agony were asking guidance, he gave definite commands, and definite promises were appended; but his hearers in Solomon's porch had not reached that point of anxiety, and were consequently addressed in general terms". However, I personally see no conflict here. I think he virtually said the same thing in Acts 3 as he did in Acts 2. For example, con-

version is a turning and baptism is an action in which the turning takes place. To quote Alexander Brown again: "While then conversion and baptism are not equivalent terms, they may, nevertheless, in some cases be exchanged, and the purposes of truth be served thereby".

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Where did Micah live?
2. How many camels did Job have before tragedy struck him?
3. On which day of the month were the Israelites to begin the Passover celebration?
4. With what did Samuel anoint David?
5. Who was the father of Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar?
6. To whom did God say: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit"?
7. In which city did Apollos begin his ministry?
8. Who said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness"?
9. At which city did Mark leave Paul and Barnabas?
10. Which is the longest book of the New Testament?

FIELD REPORT FROM NIGERIA

The work at Ganme Owode Badagry has continued well in spite of economic hardship and social crises/ethnic clashes, although towards the close of 2001 our attendance dwindled due to struggling for survival and lukewarmness of some members; and this has affected our contributions too. Because of this downward trend, our building project has

suffered a temporary delay in making bricks in mould. We had three baptisms during the year, the last to the number being brother Niyi Oguntuase baptized on 9-12-2001. One member backslided and we have not been able to regain him.

My personal schedule for the year did not suffer any set-back. My preachings on the Lord's Day, teaching of Bible Classes, and evangelistic work. It is my desire to continue to promote and encourage positively and aggressively the spread of the pure gospel wherever men are lost in sin, and to build up and strengthen the brethren in our most holy faith.

With our January 2002, Church Business Meeting, our resolve is an active pursuit and execution of our programmes. There is prospect of growth and all members are being urged and encouraged talk to their denominational friends to study the scriptures with us. To lovers of truth everywhere we appeal for your prayers and your continued help and support.

In His Service, Emmanuel H. Hokon,
P.O. Box 159,
Badagry, Lagos State,
Nigeria.

COMING EVENTS

KIRKCALDY LADIES DAY

18th May, 2002

Lunch at 12 noon

Speakers: Susan Heinemeier

Hyvot's Bank, Edinburgh.

Kathy Langdon,

Glenrothes.

Theme: A Friend For Life.

BUCKIE

Annual Social

Saturday, 11th May, 2002

Speaker: Michael Gaunt

Also Guest Speaker
on Sunday, 12th May

**PETERHEAD
Gospel Mission**

from Sunday 16th June to Sunday 23rd
with no meeting on Monday 17th
Speaker: Bert Ritchie (Coleraine, N.I.)
assisted by the Harding Students

GHANA APPEAL

As we receive news from Ghana of sickness being treated and lives saved through medical aid, as well as gospel outreach to other areas, we continue to appreciate donors who make this possible. Brethren experiencing extreme hardships continue to be helped, particularly where illness is involved and this is more prevalent in tropical countries than in more temperate climates. A typical example just now is a family with two children which is not only suffering deprivation, but also serious illness.

Brethren from different congregations sometimes travel to preach and teach the gospel together for about a week and results have been encouraging. They do this as economically as possible, but essential expenses have been paid through this appeal. A similar out-

reach has just taken place.

Individual brethren are ready to discuss the gospel with people they meet and they generally receive a ready response. One brother who has successfully established new churches in nearby villages has been given a second hand bicycle to help him continue this work, as well as to teach and encourage these new infant congregations.

Those wishing to contribute please make cheques payable to: Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer:

Mrs. Janet Macdonald,
12 Charles Drive, Larbert,
Falkirk, Stirlingshire.
FK5 3HB
Tel: 01324 562480.

1. Moreseth (Micah 1:1).
2. 3000 (Job 1:3).
3. 14th (Exodus 12:18).
4. Oil (1 Samuel 16:13).
5. Aaron (Numbers 3:2).
6. Zerubbabel (Zechariah 4:6).
7. Ephesus (Acts 18:24).
8. John the Baptist (John 1:23).
9. Perga (Acts 13:13).
10. Luke's gospel record.

ANSWERS

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY— POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

UNITED KINGDOM.....	£10.00	
OVERSEAS BY SURFACE MAIL.....	£10.00	(\$16.00US or \$20.00Can)
OVERSEAS BY AIR MAIL.....	£14.00	(\$22.00US or \$28.00Can)

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian. EH32 0NY.

E-mail: john@kkneller.freerve.co.uk

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

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 70 Avon Street, Motherwell, Lanarkshire,
Scotland. ML1 3AB. Telephone: (01698) 264064