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Conducted by  
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"I am a young brother in Christ, and I am a little concerned by your answer to a question in the November issue (1977) of the S.S. You said, "We must understand, of course, that conversion goes before pardon". I find this arrangement of words to be misleading; would it not have been clearer to say, "one cannot be converted until he has received forgiveness?" Furthermore, the essence of the question was are we saved now. You merely demonstrated that a man can be lost after having been saved".

I believe it is absolutely necessary that we should all understand each other, particularly when we are dealing with salvation. That is why I would like to examine the points which have been raised, in a little more detail.

I do hope that I have not confused anyone by the statement "We must understand, of course, that conversion goes before pardon". Let us analyse this statement. Conversion is man's part of the salvation process - pardon is God's part. All I have said is that before God will remove the burden of the guilt of sin I must be converted. Conversion means, on man's part, turning from something to something else. In the christian sense it means turning from sin to the true and living God. How am I converted? Paul explains this in his Roman letter, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form (standard) of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17,28). What is it that I obey from the heart? Well, the gospel, of course. When am I converted? When I have obeyed the gospel. When am I made free from sin? When I have been converted. On the Day of Pentecost Peter told the people, "Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). So if conversion means obedience to the gospel,

which it undoubtedly does, and pardon means God remitting my sins, which it surely does, then all I am doing in making the statement, "conversion goes before pardon", is agreeing with Paul and Peter who both teach precisely that. On the basis of that reasoning, it would not be clearer to say that one cannot be converted until he has received forgiveness, nor would it be true.

My young brother then goes on, "Furthermore, the essence of the question was are we saved now. You merely demonstrated that a man can be lost after having been saved". Well, let's state the question as it was originally put to me". "Men today in the church are discussing whether it is correct (and scriptural) to say that we are already saved, yet many scriptures indicate differently and that he who thinks he stands should beware lest he fall. What comments could you make on the matter?" So far as I understood (and still understand) the question, two points are being put forward, (i) are we saved now, and (ii) can we be lost.

If the reader will look at the top of page 129, I said, and I quote, "But if the Bible is the revealed will of God, which it undoubtedly is, then when a believer does things in accordance with God's will (as revealed in the Bible) then pardon and salvation are assured. What the Bible does not teach is that salvation is assured for all time in spite of what we may do subsequent to our obedience of the gospel". What I said there was that man could be assured of salvation now. I hold to that. What I will not subscribe to is the doctrine 'once saved, always saved'.

Furthermore, in my conclusion I listed these points:-

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

I thank our brother for his interest and concern. It is vitally necessary that we should all speak the same things. But I hope that I may have convinced him, and possible others, that I am not merely demonstrating that a man can be lost after having been saved. I believe that we have the assurance of salvation now, when we have obeyed the gospel. I also believe that the assurance will remain so long as we continue to grow in Christ. But I also understand that Satan is always striving to subvert the gospel and destroy the child of God. May we see to it that so far as we are concerned, he never succeeds.

**"The scriptures talk about a unicorn. Was there such a creature? It also talks of a 'leviathan' in Job, and a 'Behemoth'. Are these extinct?"**

It is always interesting to be asked questions which demand a fair amount of research in order to supply the answer. This helps both the reader and also the one who answers the question; This question is such a one and I would like to thank the questioner for asking it.

#### The Unicorn

In the annals of expressive art, the unicorn is depicted as a fabulous animal resembling a horse, and is characterised by a straight horn on its brow, the hide being now represented as white and smooth, though earlier bestiaries show it partly coloured and shaggy. Biblical references may derive from the use in the Septuagint version of the word which may have meant the rhinoceros or wild ox. Ancient writers allude to their swiftness and strength. In the book of Numbers, in an allusion to the Divine Leader, we read, "God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn" (Num.23:22). The same expression is also used in Num. 24:8. So according to these scriptures the unicorn was a beast of great strength.

The horn was said to serve as a preventative to poison. It is reported that in the Middle Ages the unicorn represented virginity and was frequently used in artistic depictions.

The unicorn appears also in heraldry: here the horn is always twisted like a spiral. Originally two unicorns supported the royal arms of Scotland, one of which was transferred by James I to the arms of Great Britain as supporter sinisters. So it appears that there was such an animal as the unicorn, but in its original form unlike the artistic expression of today. Originally, it would have been in the form of the buffalo or wild ox.

### **The Behemoth**

This is probably from the Hebrew behemah, which means 'beast'. It has also been suggested that the name is a derivation from the Egyptian p-ehemau, which means 'hippopotamus' or 'water-ox'. It is mentioned in Job 40:15 as follows, "Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox". Certainly the word means 'a large beast', and if it is the hippopotamus which is referred to, which seems most likely, then it is not extinct.

### **Leviathan**

This is mentioned in the same context in Job 41:1 ff. where the scripture reads, 'Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?' The word itself means 'a great water animal' and in the margin of the A.V. the word 'crocodile' is printed. Some mythological sources refer to leviathan as a many-headed sea dragon (or Latán, as it is sometimes called), but if we read Ps.41 carefully I think we shall agree that a large water animal such as a crocodile is referred to. If this is the case, then I think we must conclude that this also is not extinct.