

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

VOL. 56 No. 2

FEBRUARY, 1988

THE MIDAS TOUCH

It was reported on the radio this morning that the government is to support a scheme described as a 'Crime Stopper'. A large fund will be built up, assisted by donations from 'big business' to provide Community Action Trusts: from which will be distributed rewards (ranging from £50 to £500) to anonymous informants who can help to solve violent crimes. Some are asking why any rewards should be paid to citizens performing merely their civil duty, but it has been found, apparently, that the **offer of money** is highly effective in getting informants to come forward with vital information, and even in some cases, getting one criminal to betray an accomplice. So, once again, money talks: and indeed, in this case, makes others talk. Yes, money seems to talk.

I suppose it is almost impossible to think of anything, or any sphere, which has not seriously suffered by the introduction of money, or monetary reward. The bible, a very long time ago, assured us that "the love of money is the root of all manner of evil." Clearly there is nothing wrong with the coin of realm: it is the **love of money** that has driven men and women, in all ages to all manner of heinous crime and murder.

Most of us would admit, for instance, that the injection of money has ruined most sporting activity. Men, and women, at one time would train to run, swim, jump or whatever else for the sheer joy of it, or for the honour of their club or country, but that free spirit has virtually now gone and is replaced by cold professionalism. The 'amateur status' in sport is now not only difficult to define but almost impossible to ascertain and there are many 'concealed rewards' available. Even at the Olympic Games the old traditional ethic (not the winning but the taking part being important) has worn rather thin and we had the recent spectacle of some Russian athletes being sent home in disgrace for blatant cheating. 'Win at any cost' is the new maxim: drug taking is commonplace and prizes are so high that some participants (tennis and snooker players) can become millionaires in two or three years. The game of football (soccer) used to be a fairly harmless Saturday afternoon pastime for the working-man watching some local lads turn out for a game, but now it is a highly complex business enterprise with some players costing over £1m, and supporters fighting each other to the death. The 'sporting' ideal has virtually gone and the best team is ultimately the one with the most money and able to buy the most skilful players. Even the calm and dignified game of cricket seems in danger of rapid deterioration and that would be a great pity. However, it is unnecessary to labour the point: as money and commercialism have come into sport: honour and chivalry have correspondingly gone out.

Some British nurses have been on strike this week, and that must be the first time in history. Traditionally, nurses have been very badly paid, and it is said that a

British nurse could earn, in the U.S.A., in five weeks what it takes her a year to earn in Britain. The argument from the government is, of course, that the injection of more money might ruin the nursing profession, and that high salaries would militate against the 'vocational aspect' of nursing and would attract the wrong kind of girl. The government would say this, of course, and meantime nurses remain badly underpaid. Would money ruin the nursing profession?

And is it possible that ordinary family life has been adversely affected by the Midas touch, and that much of what is valuable in family relationships is sacrificed on the altar of 'keeping up with the Jones'? It seems that even young children today are not likely to run simple errands for their parents unless some tangible inducement is offered. Fifty years ago, or less, a child would have got the toe of father's boot for even a moment's delay in running an errand, far less for wanting to negotiate over terms. Yes money talks, and is talking.

Religion and Money

And how has money affected the religious world? Has religion been immune from the profit motive?: has it come out unscathed from the desire to run it on 'business lines'? Talking about the profit motive reminds me that we are just recovering (financially) from another 'Christmas' and I understand that the tills have been jingling much louder than the bells. Most of the large commercial enterprises have been recording massive increases in sales (which seems to be what Christmas is all about) and saying that all previous sales records have been smashed and profits have been 'going through the roof'. Indeed some firms (card printers etc.) depend almost entirely on the business done at Christmas and therefore, find Christianity very gainful to them. Thus all those Jews (and Gentiles) who own and run these vast financial empires, and Commercial Banks, may not acknowledge the fact that Jesus is the Saviour, but they are not shy about making a small fortune every year on the celebrations.

There are, in the world today, several hundred different religious sects and cults and some (if not most) have been vast money-making ventures, so much so that they refuse to publish Balance Sheets. Groups like the 'Moonies' and 'Scientists' immediately come to mind but there are a great many others. The Roman Catholic Church is said to be the richest organisation on God's earth, and the Church of England is not far behind it: many of these bodies pleading poverty and taking the small-change from starving paupers notwithstanding. Undoubtedly 'religion' is very big business and we must shun it like the plague.

Surely Christ's disciples are supposed to feel a great debt to Him, and be so obligated by their love for Him, that they will accomplish all that He asks of them with readiness, and even alacrity, but certainly with never a thought of wordly gain.

I know full well, of course, that Paul (in I Cor. 9) teaches that those who preach the gospel can live off the gospel. In that chapter Paul shows that, had he had a wife and family (like Peter and others) he could have taken them with him on his travels and expected them to have been looked after by those among whom he went. He teaches that those who are full-time preaching the gospel can expect to be supported materially, although (for the reasons he gives) he, personally, declined such support and plied his trade as a tent-maker that he might sustain himself in food and lodging. This principle, he says, was first enunciated in Deuteronomy in the words, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn" but since then, of course, it has been a tenet well publicised. Did Paul ever envisage, however, that his words would give rise to the great network of clergymen throughout the 'Christian' world, or the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church? Located pastors who flit from manse to manse; preaching to the converted a couple of cosy sermons on a Sunday and officiating at the occasional funeral? I know there are exceptions, but that is the general rule. Was Paul endorsing that? A workmate of mine used to make the cynical (but usually

accurate) remark that most 'ministers' when called to another congregation were usually 'called' to a higher salary or better conditions. It also appears fairly common that those 'evangelists' competing for the vacant charge are usually asked to give a 'trial sermon' and send a recent photograph. I recall reading of one applicant who was rejected because his eyes were 'too prominent'. Can we really imagine what Paul would have had to say about such capers? Yet I Cor. 9 is used to justify it all. Has money had an affect on 'Christianity'? — I think it certainly has.

Not Greedy of Filthy Lucre

On the other hand, when Paul did refer specifically to the care and growth of congregations of the church: he seems to have committed their care into the hands of elders; and we hear surprisingly little today about elders. It is my humble view that the trouble in the churches is a lack of scriptural elders. I think history will describe this century as the age of 'the preacher', and will record our disastrous failure to give the elder his rightful and necessary place in the churches. When last did we hear anybody get excited about lack of elders? We hear a great deal about the 'preacher' and the 'evangelist', and each congregation is urged to be able to afford a permanent one on the premises, but scant mention is ever made of elders being required. Of all 'the things that are wanting' in the churches it surely must be 'the ordaining of elders in every city'.

The qualifications of elders are, likewise, given in much more detail than for 'the preacher' and both Paul, and Peter, exhort in the very strongest terms that the elders should fulfil their God-given function — to 'oversee' and 'to feed' the congregations of Christ. Paul says that the elders should 'take heed' unto themselves and 'all the flock', over which the Holy Spirit had made them 'overseers'; to feed the church of God. (Acts 20:28). Peter also, who himself was an elder (as well as being an apostle), exhorts all elders to "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." (1 Peter 5:2). The eldership was ordained by the Holy Spirit: how can we neglect it?

There seems to be no hint at all from Paul, or Peter, that elders could abdicate their responsibilities to feed the flock by importing 'a preacher' and paying him to do it. It seems that elders were to do the work personally and had to have the requisite qualifications to do it. An elder has to be 'apt (or able) to teach' (1 Tim. 3:2) and was expected to be "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convict the gainsayers." It appears to me, therefore, that instead of established congregations striving to be able to afford a resident preacher, they should be trying to have qualified elders to feed the flock, and thus be able to send the evangelist out to evangelise. This may not be the popular view these days, but it appears to be the scriptural one. Our worry should not be, "where are the preachers" but "where are the elders". Certainly it would be only in exceptional circumstances that the position of elder would attract a salary, and indeed one of the qualifications of an elder is that any thought of monetary reward, or payment, would be completely foreign to his personality. An elder must not be 'greedy of filthy lucre' says Paul; and Peter reiterates this and adds that an elder must do his duty, "without constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind". Surely this is how we should approach all aspects of the Lord's work. It should be done willingly; with a ready mind, and with never even the suspicion of a thought of financial reward. Indeed the question of payment for service rendered to Jesus must be the very antithesis of the spirit of humble and ready service (of bond-slaves to the One who has brought about their emancipation.)

There is nothing new under the sun, however, and we can read the sad words of Malachi, in the closing verses of the O.T., when he describes the deplorable condition of God's chosen people, and says that not one of them would do the most simple

task, or close the temple doors, or even light the fire under the altar without payment. (Mal. 1:10). This, it is said; together with the other recorded signs of spiritual corruption, greatly displeased God. To the Jews in Malachi's day money talked, but what did it say: it merely spoke of their spiritual bankruptcy. Many, then and since, have fallen foul of the filthy lucre and we can think perhaps of Achan, Balaam, Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira and many more. The Governor Felix communed with Paul the oftener because, "he hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him," and so money leads to all kinds of ulterior motives. Yes money talks, and indeed has done a lot of talking down through the years. And what does it say? It confirms what the bible said a long time ago, "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil: which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (I Tim. 6:10).

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

WHAT IS TRUTH?

"The truth cannot be compressed into a sermon. The reply to Pilate's question cannot be contained in any verbal form. Think you; that if Christ Himself could have answered that question in a certain number of sentences, He would have spent thirty years of life in witnessing to it? Some men would compress into the limits of one reply, or one discourse the Truth which it took Christ thirty years to teach, and which He left unfinished for the Spirit to complete.

One word more. The Truth is infinite as the firmament above you. In childhood, both seem near and measurable: but with years they grow and grow; and seem further off, and further and grander, and deeper and vaster, as God Himself; till you smile to remember how you thought you could touch the sky, and blush to recollect the proud and self-sufficient way in which you used to talk of knowing or preaching "The Truth."

And once again: the Truth is made up of principles: an inward Life, not any mere formula of words: God's Character: Spiritual worship: the Divine Life in the Soul. How shall I put that into sentences ten or ten thousand? "The words which I speak unto you, they are Truth, and they are Life." How could Pilate's question be answered except by a Life? The Truth then, which Pilate wanted — which you want, and I want — is not the boundless verities, but truth of inward life. Truth for me: Truth enough to guide me in this darkling world: enough to teach me how to live and how to die."

F.W. Roberston.

WE QUOTE — W. RILEY

"It's nice to feel that your Inner Self likes you too well to lead you astray."

"My Inner Self put on her defensive armour in readiness for the battle."

"I am a good deal richer than some very wealthy people I have met."

"Truth is often attended with danger."

"Am no longer 'tossed by storm and flood.' My Inner Self and I are on the best of terms."

"To brood over wrongs we cannot put right is morbid and unhealthy; it saps our vitality and makes us unfit for the conflicts we have to wage."

"It is a mistake to anticipate, and to dread what lies behind the veil is folly."

"I wonder why one should feel so warm and virtuous for having done one's duty. I had put my heart into the work, as I always do — for who would be a mere mechanic whom God meant for a craftsman?"

WHY FRET OR FEAR ?

"If there is one grain of truth in our belief that there is a living God who holds us un-utterably dear, who is seeking in all things to lead us to the highest, to the fullest, to the best, what room is there for us to fret and to fear?"

Mark Guy Pearce.

THE ART OF LIVING

"A famous sculptor once said that there is nothing to his art except, cutting away marble he doesn't want. This philosophy might also be applied to the art of living."

Shaws.

PRaise GOD

"There are some, who say the Gospel is out-of-date. My dear sir, it is the only thing that is up-to-date! Find me anything else that can touch the deepest needs of man. Find me anything else that can quench the fiery conscience, transform the nature, turn selfish men into loving servants of their fellows. Find me anything else that can draw the sting of death for a man and make him feel it is but the dawn of everlasting life. I am not ashamed of the Gospel. I have been preaching it for sixty years, and I have nothing else to preach now. I never shall have! They say we who are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ are old-fashioned. The sunshine that brightens us to-day is old fashioned. This Gospel can plumb the very depths of our nature (Praise God!). Let every pulpit and every Church ring out this heroic avowal!"

Dinsdale Young.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE WORK OF CHRISTIAN WOMAN

Final part**Scripture Restrictions**

1. **Silence in the Church is enjoined.** I Cor. 14: 34-35 is so explicit that woman should not speak in the Churches, that it is difficult to imagine a more clearly expressed prohibition. (1) There is the simplicity of the words employed - 'keeps silence,' 'not permitted to speak.' (2) There is reiteration: let them keep silence; it is not permitted them to speak; it is a shame for them to speak. (3) There is a marked difference between the directions to the prophets and to the women. The prophets might speak two or three; all indeed might prophesy; but the women were not to speak. Absolute silence on their part, as respects any communication to the Church is commanded. Wherever the Church, as such, is assembled, there must the women be silent, if they will be obedient.

The silence of women in the Church, as commanded in the fourteenth chapter, equally restricts the prophesying by woman mentioned in the eleventh chapter. The prophets were encouraged to speak: the women were forbidden to speak. They could not prophesy and yet keep silence in the same place. They could keep silence in the Church and prophecy elsewhere, just as they were to ask no questions in the Church but make inquiry at home. Silence and prophecy are incompatible; silence in the Church was enforced; therefore prophecy by women did not take place in the Church. The verses in I Cor. II, which speak of women praying and prophesying, do not speak of doing so in the Church. Scores of persons may pray and speak who never either pray or speak in the Church. There was a sphere for woman praying and prophesying, as there is still a proper sphere for her praying and teaching; but it is not in the Church.

2. **Teaching men is prohibited.** I Tim. 2: 11-15, like I Cor. 14 contains clearly couched limitations. (1) A woman has to learn in silence. (2) She is to do so with all

subjection. (3) She is not to teach man. (4) She is not to have dominion over him. (5) Arguing between woman and man is even precluded; 'but to be in silence,' being presented as the course to be adopted instead of teaching and dominating.

Woman and man are put in contrast throughout the verses; each has clearly defined duty. Man speaks, woman is silent; man teaches, woman learns; man rules, woman is in subjection; and the subjection is silent and complete.

This teachable, silent, and submissive position of woman Paul accounts for by her action in introducing sin into the world. Woman was first in sin; she is on that account not permitted to be first under Christianity. She was deceived by the tempted, man was not; she must not therefore under Christ; be so placed as again to be duped, and at the same time lead man astray.

While I Cor. 14 prohibits woman speaking in the Church, I Tim. 2 forbids her teaching man, and enjoins silent learning. Silence in the Church, preclusion from teaching man, and quiet learning, together entirely debar her from addressing promiscuous audiences. There is not left a single vestige of warrant for her speaking at all in any public meeting where man is.

Is it possible that there exists a single Christian woman who, after such plain teaching is pointed out as given by Paul, ever will seek to speak in the Church, or teach in any meeting where men are? If so, I fear there is something far worse the matter with her than dyspepsia. Personally, I have no fear about our sisters generally. They are wishful to know the truth, and to abide by it. The exception to that among our sisters is so rare that we might pass it without notice, were it not that it is disobedience of Scripture precept.

3. Woman is not permitted the liberty in prayer that man has. I Tim. 2: 8-11 expresses Paul's desires that the men pray everywhere, that the women have seemly dress and seemly behaviour, and that they be silent, etc. It is not said in so many words that the women are not to pray everywhere, but that is the natural implication. Why say that the men should pray everywhere, and that the women should do something else, unless that there was a difference between man and woman in this matter? It is legitimately involved that there are places where women may not pray. What places are they? Scripture does not say, hence we can only infer. I reason on it thus. There is no example of a woman ever praying in the Church, or in any public meeting where men were; and as there are places where men may pray and women may not, it is natural to think of those places where the men have leave to speak and the women have not. In the Church, and where men are present in public meeting, women should not teach, nor ask questions, nor speak; in the same meetings. I judge, they should not pray. Wherever they may teach or speak, there let them pray. Thus acting, we are on certain Scripture ground. Laying either the prayer meeting, or any Church meeting, open to the sisters praying, is without precept, without example, and without any Scripture naturally supporting it. If I were a sister, I would therefore never pray in the presence of men.

I am not overlooking what is said in I Cor. II of woman praying. But, as already pointed out in connection with prophesying, the praying is not said to have been in the Church; nor is there anything implying that women ever prayed where men were. The instruction about covering their heads no more implies the presence of men than the instruction to men to uncover their heads implies the presence of women. Men in prayer uncover their heads, although no woman be present; women in prayer should have their heads covered, though no man be there. The presence or absence of the other sex does not interfere with the regulations to either sex.

Some things not found in our induction of what is said of woman in the New Testament may now be named.

1. A woman apostle. The twelve apostles chosen by Christ were men, and we

do not read of a woman among the seventy.

2. **A woman evangelist.** All the evangelists named were men.

3. **A woman pastor.** The pastors were to be husbands and fathers not wives and mothers.

4. **A New Testament writer from the women.** The writers of the New Testament were all men.

5. **A woman addressing a public meeting** composed partly of men.

6. **A woman praying** when men were present.

Is it not passing strange that woman were thus invariably omitted, if they were designed to do such work, and act as men? On the supposition that woman's sphere is different from that of man, all is plain.

In conclusion, I am wishful to make an appeal on behalf of the sisters, I have long felt that we fail to do them justice, and that our lack of suitable arrangements for them deprives the Churches of a potent agency for good. If that be so, ought we not forthwith to remedy the defect? In some instances we might arrange for sisters' meetings, where they might pray, read the Scriptures, and speak to one another thereon. In other instances we might only require to make it possible that the sisters make their own arrangements for their meetings. In addition to sisters teaching sisters, might there not be women's evangelistic meetings? Meetings conducted solely by women, and with only women present, would be on New Testament lines. Systematic visitation of women by women, both within Church membership and beyond it, is equally desirable. And 'widows indeed' could be employed in such useful service as visiting and conducting women's meetings. The value of such service would be incalculable. Women would then find openings for every desirable aspiration to serve their Lord, work would be overtaken that man cannot do, and the wild extreme of pushing some women into the place of men would be eschewed. While we take an unflinching stand against women being made men, let us be correspondingly thoughtful and watchful to employ women in every service sanctioned by Scripture; to make them, within their own sphere, co-labourers in the Gospel, and ministers in the Lord's work.

Alexander Brown.

IF ANY MAN SPEAKETH (I Peter 4.11)

After having spent an evening with brother Leonard Morgan reminiscing over old times he looked through some old issues of the Scripture Standard. In the 1952 February issue he came across Harry Davenport's report of my immersion into Christ on Lord's day the 25th of November, 1951, and kindly sent me a photocopy. Curiously the Editorial was entitled "Paul's Plea for Unity".

Although until then I had met mostly with the Independent Methodists, I had deliberately abstained from becoming a member of any denomination. My beloved father had taught me from the scriptures that denominationalism was wrong because the Lord Jesus wanted us all to be one. I had come to understand that believers ought to be immersed but I did not want to be immersed into a sect.

In those days, on Sunday evenings, Wigan Market Square was like a miniature Hyde Park speakers's corner. Methodists, Elim Four Square Gospel people, Assemblies of God, Communists, Socialists, Catholic Evidence Guild and sometimes even myself alone, trying to make ourselves heard above each other and the Salvation Army Band.

The evening of November the 18th was very very frosty. My great uncle had just delivered a social gospel sermon on how the world was evolving towards a perfect

kingdom of heaven; so obviously contrary to the evidence around us. Despondent, I decided to go home via the market wondering if there might be anyone who had ventured out in that bitter cold, to speak in the open air. I needed lifting up.

A seemingly simple-minded, poor unemployed epileptic, whom I had confronted several times for preaching a strange doctrine (He that believeth AND IS BAPTISED shall be saved), was coming towards me. I didn't expect any uplifting from him. Anyway I asked him "Has anyone been preaching, Joe?". "Yes, they've just finished". "Who?" "I don't know". "What were they preaching about?" "Baptism!". "Get away, I don't believe you". He took my sleeve and towed me towards the Market. A larger than normal meeting was breaking up. He took me straight up to ... Frank Worgan, Harry Davenport and Len Channing. "This man does not believe in baptism" he said "That's not true." I responded "I don't believe it is for the remission of sins". The three of them soon put me right.

Joe was not a member of a church of Christ. At some time he had been invited by the Assemblies of God to be baptised. In response to his question "Why?" they had shown him Mark 16.16 and so he was baptised. From that time onwards he preached it faithfully in the open air, the Assemblies of God people trying to persuade him that Mark 16.16 did not really mean what it says. Oh for a simple faith like Joe's. He had heard the oracle of God and he refused to be deterred either by religious sophistry, or the ridicule and practical jokes of the irreligious, from boldly speaking as the oracle of God. He was derisively referred to, by numerous Wiganer's, as "Cold Water Joe". To me he was an angel of light.

He has long since fallen asleep in Jesus. Brethren, there are tears rolling down my face as I say "Thank God for Joe!" Here was a somewhat self-opinionated A-level student being led by an apparent simpleton. God chose "the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: That no flesh should glory before God." Romans 1. 28-29. Do not underestimate the power of "the foolishness of the message (Gr. thing preached)" Romans 1.21 God does not need graduates. Would I have ever known the assurance of salvation if it had not been for Joe?

Till then I knew nothing of "churches of Christ". When I said to them "If I am baptised I don't want to become a member of your Denomination" for the first time I was presented with the idea of having the Bible only as our rule of faith in order to attain to non-sectarian unity. (I was only 18 but I felt so adult).

In a recent brotherhood magazine there is an article establishing the importance of Biblical authority, in which it is stated "It has been postulated that there are three ways in which Biblical authority may be deduced: by direct command, by necessary inference, and by approved example." I wonder who first postulated these rules? It wasn't long before I was introduced to them and taking up the cudgels, banging the rostrum and damning everything that dared move. I learned how to link the bible statement: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" onto "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" in order to dogmatise that any practice not covered by scriptural precedent is sin. One brother warned me against "scripture scrap doctrine", taking a quotation from here and a quotation from there to form a doctrine, illustrating his remarks with "Judas went out and hanged himself" ... "Jesus turned to his disciples and said; Go thou and do likewise". I looked on it as a joke in bad taste, failing to realise that what I was doing was equally ridiculous, and much more dangerous.

When I promulgated those three rules, was I really speaking as the oracles of God? The distinct difference between the legislative books of the Old Covenant and the books of the New Covenant should make us cautious in treating the New Testament like a legal document.

We are anxious that some would use liberty as an excuse to introduce all kinds of novelties. The danger of being swamped with excesses of, or similar to, those of the

Roman and Greek Churches is unnerving. It would seem so much more straightforward to have a precisely worded comprehensive legislative book so that we could say for example: Stained glass windows and candles are sin because thus saith the Lord "Thou shalt not, until the end of the world have stained glass windows, or burn candles in your places of worship" but we have no such document. Has our anxiety forced us to compile for the brotherhood, rules of interpretation? In churches of Christ, volumes abound on HERMENEUTICS. Get your dictionaries out, Lads!

Last time we concluded with this summary of what we have covered so far with regard to religious ordinances:

1. Teaching human ordinances is futile piety.
2. Practising human traditions which contradict God's word is sin
3. God requires the actions of worship to be carried out in truth, i.e. according to His word.
4. The Word teaches that those who choose to perform innovations unto the Lord (which do not conflict with God's word) must not judge others or be judged by others.

Does this mean then, that provided what we want to do does not directly conflict with the word of God, we can throw inhibition to the wind and do whatever we want?

We noted in Romans 14 verses 5 and 6 those who regarded one day unto the Lord more than another day were not to be judged, even so Paul expresses anxiety over the brethren who revealed a desire to be in bondage "to the weak and beggarly rudiments" by their voluntary observance of "days, months seasons and years" Galatians 4. 9-11.

Judging has two aspects. That of deciding how a person should be rewarded or punished and that of making a valued assessment. With regard to the former, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, ... The Lord shall judge His People" Heb. 10.30 God, not man, has the prerogative to decide how a person ought to be punished. With regard to the latter; "Judge righteous judgement" John 7.24. Evidently in Romans 14 brethren are being advised not to pass sentence on each other ("set at nought" v.1), in matters where there was no clear directive, "doubtful disputations" v.1.

However Paul was not precluded from expressing His anxiety concerning behaviour symptomatic of a fall from grace, in Galatians 4. 11. It follows then that wise counsel ought to be given to those whose desire to innovate might be a symptom of a spiritual defect that could endanger their eternal welfare, without condemning them. On the one hand let us not condemn where we are not authorised to condemn. On the other hand let us not shout "Liberty! Don't make laws where there are none" when what we really mean is "I am going to do what I like, regardless". We should always examine our motives. "Let each man be fully assured in his own mind" v. 5. On the Day of judgement "Each one of us will give account of himself to God" v. 12.

An older brother once related to me how when he was a young man several of them asked one of the elders could they hold boxing classes in the meeting house. After deliberation one elder said "Yes, you can. providing you pray before each session, Lord bless each blow we successfully land on our opponent." The young men decided not to have boxing leasons.

Another thing that has got to be taken into account before we embark on taking advantage of liberty is; that it does not have adverse side effects. Read on in Romans 14. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling." v. 13. In every situation we must seriously consider the implications of what we intend to do. Jesus considered those who caused even the most insignificant of his little ones to stumble to be fit for drowning, Matthew 18.6 Liberty or not, we can not shrug this one off. We must neither cause anyone to stumble nor must we let our good be evil

spoken of, v. 16 "Take thought for things honourable in the sight of all men," Romans 12. 17.

We should also ask ourselves; Is it edifying? Does it build up, both you and also your neighbour? Spiritually that is. Please read 1 Corinthians 10. 14-33. and Romans 15. 1-3, noting verse 3, "For Christ Pleas'd not himself".

We can extend the previous summaries as follows:—

4a. The Word teaches that those who choose to perform innovations unto the Lord (which do not conflict with God's Word) must not condemn others nor be condemned by others.

4b. Wise guidance must be given lest the desire to innovate be a symptom of spiritual defect.

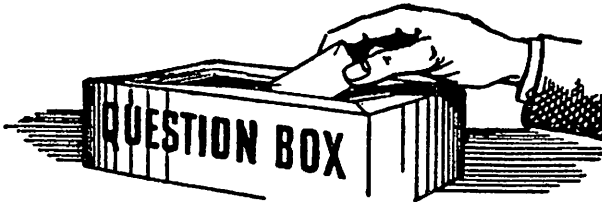
4c. We must examine our motives.

4d. What we do must not have adverse side effects.

4e. What we do must be spiritually upbuilding.

Please examine the contexts of the scriptures I've referred to and see if these things are so. Next month I would like to consider New Testament Traditions.

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Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Whenever I talk to most people about the Gospel I find that they tend to smile when I say that I believe in Heaven, and Hell, and God, and Satan, and Jesus. Do you think that the Church should be more liberal in its teaching in order to accommodate 20th century views?"

This question reflects the substance of a conversation I had recently with a young Christian. I think we can all understand, and sympathise with, the reaction our questioner gets when talking to people today about the Gospel; many of us have experienced the same reaction from friends, colleagues, and acquaintances when we have done the same. I suppose the same question may have crossed other minds when we see charismatic groups filling their buildings to overflowing, so it is useless to shrug away the problem as if it did not exist; there is a genuine dilemma in some Christians' minds.

There is no disguising the fact that we, through the Gospel, are attempting to convert late 20th century people. It is possibly also true to say that people are products of the society to which they belong, and there is no denying that the liberalising influence in our society at present is very strong indeed. It is extremely difficult to find a novel without numerous swear-words and detailed descriptions of sexual adventures; nudity on our stages and beaches is said to be the sign of a 'mature' and 'progressive' age; sexual promiscuity with its attendant tragedy of abortion is rife; indiscipline and a lack of parental guidance is leading to the near-collapse of the nuclear family, and forcing many of our young people towards the twin evils of drug and alcohol abuse; and we must be reaching the nadir of our so-called Christian experience when it is argued that people should submit themselves to leadership by practising homo-sexual clergymen. To compound all of this, we are told that it is no

longer fashionable to believe in a Creator God, and that large portions of the Bible can be laid aside as stories of imagination or ramblings of unstable minds. Seeing this, the argument of liberalisers in the Church is that we should get down to the level of such a society in order to try to save some, and if along the way we have to jettison some so-called 'sacred cows' in order to do it, well so be it.

Not Now

Most of us might tend to believe that the situation I have described is exclusively a product of the 1980's, but it would be wrong to think like that. At the turn of the century many evangelicals believed that they had to defend the Gospel and the fundamentals of Christianity as laid down in the Bible. The Higher Critics were attacking such beliefs as the authenticity of the Bible, its verbal inspiration, the deity of Christ, the Second Coming of Christ, etc., and the most urgent task of many evangelicals was to refute the heresies which were being voiced. For a period of a year or two each side of the year 1911, a small book with the title "The Fundamentals" was produced in the U.S.A.; it was to run to twelve volumes. The Foreword called for earnest study and prayer, "so that the truth may 'run and be glorified' and the needed world-wide revival of true religion may come". Unquote. This was the origin of the term 'fundamentalism' to describe the strict adherence to traditional orthodox beliefs which were said to be fundamental to Christianity, e.g., the literal inerrancy of Scripture. Thus, the ones who defended the 'fundamentals' became known as 'fundamentalists'. It seems to me that those who today hold fundamental views regarding the Bible and its teaching have their backs to the wall also.

Accommodation

The questioner asks, "should the Church be more liberal in its teaching in order to accommodate 20th century views"? The real flaw in this statement is that it calls on the Church to accommodate views and practices with which it may not necessarily agree. The verb 'to accommodate' means to adapt, to adjust, to make a convenient arrangement with; so if 20th century views regarding the truth do not coincide with the truth as expressed in the Bible, then the Church has to make a 'convenient arrangement' with the world. This is not possible, for reasons which we shall state later; but perhaps we should examine 20th century views before we go any further.

Modern Views

I read the comments of one Minister of Religion just recently who said that it was 'marching backwards' to believe that (a) creation as described in Genesis was true; (b) that evil was personified in Satan; (c) that the Christian life was started by conversion as a result of preaching from the Bible; and (d) that being subjected to teaching from the literal text of the Bible would warp children's minds later in their lives. The writer went on to say that modern teaching should be that Creation is as described by science, that evil is rooted in ourselves and consequently can be lessened by self-examination and concern for others, the implication being that we can, in fact, relieve ourselves of sin.

Other views are just as alarming. It is asserted that God will not separate the saved and the unsaved, consequently, a person need not become a Christian in order to be saved. Furthermore, it is taken to be indicative of an infantile mind to believe that every word in the Bible is to be taken as God's Word, and that God is not a person but some kind of Force which is all-pervading, and that this Force pervades all the different religious groups in the world.

Now if this is the way that some so-called believers would accommodate 20th century views, then it would seem to me that the Church of Christ is well out of this, and ought not at any time to countenance such teaching.

Why Fundamentalism?

We have said that fundamentalism is based on the literal inerrancy of Scripture.

How can such a claim be made and sustained? First and foremost, a person who believes in God must believe that God cannot lie. Of the Jewish nation God said through Paul, "For what if some did not believe; shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Rom. 3:3,4). Isn't this also true of many people today? They say, in effect, "Well, we don't believe in God, therefore your faith must be an illusion." The sheer affrontery of such people! They are in fact saying that the claims about God are lies, and that they are the only ones telling the truth. The wise and prudent man will ask, "Why should I put my trust in fallible men rather than in God?" and his question will be perfectly valid. John the Baptist, heralding Jesus, said to the people, "And what he (Jesus) hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John 3:32,33).

When we have accepted that God is God, and that He is true and cannot lie, then we should have no difficulty in accepting the Bible as His Word. With reference to the Old and new Testament Scriptures, Peter teaches, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Furthermore, the Lord Himself testified to the importance of the recorded word when he prayed to His Father, "For I have given unto them (the Disciples, later to be the Apostles) the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them (the words) and have known surely that I came out from thee" (John 17:8). Later in verse 14 it is recorded, "I have given them thy word." This is why, of course, the Apostolic teaching should be taken for what it is, the very Word of God Himself.

Inspiration as applied to the Scriptures means 'God-breathed', and this means that every word in what we know as the Bible is the absolute declaration of God. As Peter again teaches, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20,21). Furthermore, the same Apostle tells us that this Word is not going to lose its eternal power, and therein is both a warning and an opportunity for each one of us; as Peter again says, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:24,25). Let the scoffers take note; the Word of God will be there longer than they will, and they can either accept it or reject it. It will not change in any century because the One who gave it is Himself unchanging and eternal. Let believers take hope; because God is true and unchanging; He can never reject His children unless they reject Him.

Take heart, Christians, in your unremitting struggle against sin. Fundamentalism is not a disease, nor is it a creed to be preached, but if it means my continued acceptance of the literal inerrancy of God's Word then I shall not be distressed if I am dubbed fundamentalist. Should we liberalise the Scriptures to accommodate 20th century views. NO!

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

The study of God's word for the purpose of discovering God's will, is the secret discipline which has formed the greatest characters.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

March 6 Isaiah 28, 1-22 I Peter 2

March 13 Psalm 34 I Peter 3

March 20 Prov. 11, 1-20 I Peter 4

March 27 Prov. 3, 21-35 I Peter 5

A Spiritual Temple

Peter has given special thought to the fundamental truth and power of the word of God, its **permanence!** Now he turns our thoughts to its outcome in behaviour in normal and spiritual worship. The absolute purity of the soul is required if His people are to be acceptable to Him. They must offer Him worship as an essential function of the human being. There is **ONE GOD** and He must be offered worship and **HIM ONLY**. It is not surprising that **THE TEMPLE** offers instruction in the form of a building, that He should choose Peter for a Foundation stone of the church, now the temple as a physical picture of a spiritual reality. There is of course similarity and contrast between material and spiritual truth. Your entitlement written years ago (Isa. 28:16). The supreme skill and art spent upon one of the seven wonders of the world, are totally lost before the loveliest description of the elect race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people for God's own possession. All the material splendour, so impressive yet to perish, and to be replaced by what the world despises but which is of heavenly origin. In place of the material splendour we have a foundation-stone of divine nature, and stones of the same kind and value to be built into a spiritual house, with stones of spiritual value, to form the building in accordance with the virtues of righteousness. The very cornerstone is of supreme worth, and the parts of the building of the same value. The cornerstone, in fact, was rejected by those who should have chosen and loved Him, and are therefore rejected themselves and will suffer degradation accordingly. But those seeking the highest honours must be of the finest quality

and will be required to show themselves to be of finest quality, an example of goodness.

Duties of True Citizens

Christians are expected to show honour and virtue among their heathen neighbours in behaving with complete honesty and specially never to get angry or manifest unkindly feelings. They must take rebuke or unkind treatment with kindness; in fact show their faith by their behaviour. But they have another citizenship, and have become "strangers and pilgrims" by the new birth, so their duties (while the same in some respects) have a special claim, making them likely to suffer wrong treatment. They have undertaken sacred obligations which will sometimes involve disfavour seeing their "cornerstone" has been met with rejection. They may meet with rejection and disfavour. They will suffer wrongfully! How will they meet that! They will meet it as their Lord and Master has already done with acceptance returning good for evil. They will regard it as an honour to bear! This point has to be borne as part of their glad obedience to Jesus. He has Himself borne it already.

New Priorities In Behaviour

Here are the instructions. Bear the burden of humble service with complete non-resistance and added responsibility towards husbands with a view to their eternal welfare, and the special care in speech and loveliness, including even the way we dress ourselves, but the duty of the husbands is equally to be controlled with loving, responsive and humble effort. "Away with all malice and deceit, away with all pretence and jealousy and recrimination"! This whole letter faces persecution with the same forbearance and courage as Jesus showed upon his arrest in Gethsemane. His perfect self-control throughout His supreme trial. His "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!" This is surely Peter's requirement of us, his followers "returning good for evil; turning the other cheek". This is the victory of goodwill

"leaving vengeance to Him Who has the whole right to exercise it" – "THE CROSS"!

Christ's Triumph

Christ arose! Quickened in the spirit He announced His victory to those awaiting judgement presumably on the resurrection morning before ascending to heaven itself, but all the saints triumph with Him on the great day. "The Son of God goes forth to war" (see 524 Christian Hymnary). When we practise the forgiving spirit, and give up every sign and motive of ill-will and keep longing for the "sincere milk of the word", we triumph too! Baptism provides an illustration of the change from this old world to the new. The extent to which we are changed controls the extent of blessings we receive, blessings as shown in Psalm 34, which should be studied lest we be discouraged by our suffering. That those to whom Peter writes are passing through times of special trial – or likely to experience it, but the reward of faithfulness is priceless. The life is one of self-denial and should be of unselfish generosity. The life is to be under continuous watch. Viewing the history of the early years of the new faith: it is only in parts of the world where there is serious unrest, poverty, trouble or war that conditions are really comparable to those early days when the "powers that be" were determined to destroy the new faith at its birth. The whole of society could be described in the verses 2 to 4 in ch. 4. Most of us have comparatively easy and quiet lives. Our own society seems to be drifting into ungodliness quite different to the times of the late Victorians and early twentieth century.

Constant Renewal

We were as sheep going astray but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. We have turned away from the old life to something quite different therefore we must arm ourselves with the new mind. We have to take up the new armour, changing into new kinds of persons. Instead of living for

ourselves we have to live for others. Our natural man is easily moved to indignation and resentment, a negative attitude to others. Now we have to be always looking out for opportunities of showing goodwill and doing things which require effort on behalf of others. We are looking towards Jesus with His most wonderful self-sacrifice. We need to be ready with the answers which answer and ease the troubled soul, and that with MEEKNESS and FEAR. We gladly accept chastening for our sins for we know that to be our need, and accept hardship when called upon because we know it brings blessing and renewal. What a glorious fellowship is the church built with living stones to house the saints. Happy the share we have in christian love (3,10-14).

The Wider Ever Community

Internal and external fellowship beginning at home with the elders who rule well with the shepherd's tenderness, not the bosses' overbearing, nor for reward "but of a ready mind". Looking to the chief SHEPHERD for example and guidance. There is glory in His humility, and it is all shared service which is communal and with all at Babylon – it may be in the midst of foes – time and place of no importance – all from Peter one of many faithful shepherds.

R. B. Scott.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The Annual New Year Social took place again this year at Slamannan when a goodly number of brethren gathered together for a wonderful time of meeting and fellowship. We had some wonderful exhortations in song and in verse and some very uplifting congregational singing. Mark Plain made a very good Chairman and we had three very good speakers: Jimmy Grant (Wallacestone): Andrew Sharp (Newtongrange): and John Colgan (Tranent). Thanks are due to the Slamannan brethren for the wonderful

hospitality and for the lovely teas at the beginning and end of the meeting. All in all it was once again a grand occasion: and what better way to spend New Year's Day.

OBITUARIES

Tranent: The church in Tranent is sad to report the passing of sister Janet Ross. Sister Ross died, after a short illness, on 13th October 1987. She was always a very faithful member from her youth, up through the Sunday Schools, and although unable to attend recently at the meetings through illness was always present at worship with her brethren. Bro. Mark Plain officiated at the funeral service. We are glad that she died 'in the Lord' and would commend her family, and all who mourn her passing, to our Heavenly Father.

J. Colgan.

Buckie: It is with sorrow that we record the passing of our dear brother William Strachan, on 29th December, 1987 (aged 69 years.) Our brother was called home very suddenly and the church was shocked in that he had presided at both meetings the Sunday (two days previously).

"Bill" as he was known, was a very active brother in the church and took over as treasurer in December 1986. He was an able preacher of the gospel and in the ministering of God's word. He also liked to welcome all the brethren at the hall door.

Our loss now that he is gone, is surely heaven's gain. He is now at home with his Lord. Our deepest sympathy goes out to his dear wife, Margaret; to Maimie, his daughter, and to Jim Sinclair (Jnr.) his son-in-law. Also to Moray and Hannah his grandchildren.

We commend them all to the care of our Heavenly Father. The funeral, which was well attended, was conducted by brother William Pirie, and brother William Mair at the graveside.

John Geddes.

COMING EVENTS

The church at **Buckie**, will, God willing, hold their ANNUAL SOCIAL on May 28th in the Meetinghouse: 3.30 p.m. Speaker: John Kneller (Tranent). A warm welcome awaits all who can join us in happy Christian fellowship. Singing items greatly appreciated. Please contact John Geddes, 'Elmbank', Ianstown, Buckie. Tel. No. 0542-33793.

TRANENT SOCIAL

The church at Tranent (D.V.) intends holding its ANNUAL SOCIAL on Saturday, 19th March at 4 p.m. in Loch Centre (as before). Speakers John Morgan, Hindley, and Graham Pearson, Motherwell. Chairman not appointed meantime.

THANKS

The Editor would like to thank all those, who during the course of last year, expressed their thanks and appreciation for the 'Scripture Standard' and all those who write the articles, and to the Knelers for its distribution. Many of these expressions came from our overseas readers and we are very grateful to you all.

Editor.

I would very much like to thank brother Stephen Woodcock for his statement in the January issue of the 'S.S.'

I greatly appreciated his comments and indeed it did my heart good to read them; as I am sure it did others. May the Lord bless and use him mightily in His service. Once again, thank you Stephen.

Ivor Carey,

40 Stoneleigh Crescent,
Knowle, Bristol.

He that defers his charity until he is dead is, if a man weighs it rightly, rather liberal of another man's than his.

Sir Francis Bacon.

BIRTHS

BOTH AT TRANENT

To Sister Elizabeth Paterson (and husband Angus) congratulations on the birth of a son - Andrew Ross.

To Sister Aileen Fallon (and husband Peter) on the birth of a son - Christopher.

J. Colgan (Sec.)

STEVEN MASOOD

Readers will be pleased to know that Steven, Margaret and Oscar have been granted an indefinite stay by the Immigration Authorities. This is a great relief to us all and we thank God, and also all those who have been praying for this decision.

Allan Ashurst.

COLD WEATHER ADVICE

Many people, particularly the old and infirm, suffer from hypothermia. One point that may be overlooked in the advice given is that sprung mattresses are poor insulants and allow heat to escape downwards. If you wake up feeling cold no matter how much warm bedding you put on the cold is most likely striking from below.

Put warm blankets or quilt **underneath** you and **underneath** the electric

blanket if you use one. Don't forget to switch the blanket off when you get in bed.

Also remember that weight does not mean warmth. Light and airy blankets/quilts/duvets are much warmer than tightly woven heavy ones. Heavy ones only add to your discomfort.

Check that your elderly and infirm relatives and friends have warm bedding. You could be saving their life.

Allan Ashurst.

QUOTES — on CHARITY

Be charitable before wealth makes thee covetous, and lose not the glory of the mite.

Sir Thomas Browne.

No sound ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity.

Edmund Burke.

Never to judge rashly; never to interpret the actions of others in an ill sense; but to compassionate their infirmities; bear their burdens; excuse their weaknesses; and to make up for their defects; to hate their imperfection but love them nevertheless — this is the true spirit of charity.

Nicholas Caussin.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER YEAR — POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH	£ 6.00
CANADA & U.S.A.	\$10.00
AIR MAIL please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates	

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Telephone: Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

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Scotland EH37 5PT. Telephone: Ford 320 527

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by
Lothian Printers, 109 High Street, Dunbar, East Lothian. Tel: (0368) 63785