

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL.53 No.10

OCTOBER 1985

THE LAW OF CHRIST

The Prime Minister has just made another 'reshuffle' of her Cabinet. Mrs. Thatcher does not, of course, consult me in these matters otherwise I could have recommended some additional changes. Doubtless so could many readers. The term 'reshuffle' just means, of course, that inept Ministers, having been identified, are given some lesser post or, indeed, spirited away altogether. It is a common fact, is it not, that no matter how substantial the chain, each link varies in strength, and the chain is, in effect, no stronger than its weakest link. In the Nationalised Industries; the Civil Service; in big Corporations; in Limited Companies; the Armed Services etc.; where great reliance is placed in the scalar chains of command, weak links must be discovered and replaced. Any person not fitted for the post they hold is ruthlessly replaced. This is generally true although no doubt we can all mention exceptions to the rule. With unemployment being what it is there is sharp competition for jobs and one advertisement for even a porter's job can fetch several hundred applications, including some from University graduates. In short, life is becoming more and more a 'Survival of the fittest'. It seems our society is less caring - the strong can survive but the weak 'go to the wall'. It is not uncommon to hear of, even professional people, opting out of 'The rat race' and retiring to the simple life in the tranquility of The Outer Hebrides. Thus in the cold hard world of politics, or big business, the rule is the same as the one which operates in the animal world, only the fittest will survive. In the church it is not so (or should not be so). God acknowledges that, in the church, some members will be stronger than others, and, that some conversely, will be the weaker links of the chain). Some members will have a stronger conviction than others; a deeper faith than others; a more ardent love than others; a greater sense of responsibility than others; a keener intelligence than others; wider natural ability than others; greater opportunities than others; a greater knowledge than others; a more placid nature than others; more considerate and thoughtful than others; less selfish than others. If God acknowledges this state of affairs, so must we. We must make allowances for these differences, in coming to conclusions, and in passing judgement upon others. Indeed, the apostle Paul goes farther and instructs us not only to make allowances for the weak *but to support them*. Not only will the church contain 'the weak' but would also manifest 'the unruly' and also 'the feeble-minded'. Paul exhorted the church at Thessalonica, inter alia, to "*warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men*". (1 Thess. 5:14).

Family Characteristics

I suppose it is natural enough, when we begin to think about it, that there will be all temperaments in the church. After all, the church is the *family of God* and in every

family we have children, all precious, but all very different. In some families some are sickly at birth and struggle through the remainder of their lives, some spend a lot of time in hospitals, some are asthmatic; some are anaemic; some can run and wrestle; some must take notes to school excusing them from any robust activity. I suppose a few of these natural traits must have their counterpart, to some degree, in the spiritual world, and that in the family of God we will have the strong and active and we will have the weakly and sickly - even the occasional 'black sheep' in the family. What is our attitude to the weak - is it one of impatience (assuming that we do not classify ourselves as amongst the weak)? Do we feel that there should be no such thing as weak and feeble Christians? Do we feel that (apart from physical weakness) there should be no such thing as spiritual weakness - that the scriptures are the same for everybody and that there are no real excuses for weakness or ignorance? Doubtless in many cases our ignorance is due to lack of study (requiring a diet of baby's milk rather than of strong meat) but there must be some who have difficulty in learning anything (let alone, the scriptures). If, we ourselves are enthusiastic, and zealous, and well informed, should not we try to understand why others are not so, and make the necessary allowances? Our quotation (1 Thess. 5:14) comes from a chapter containing over a dozen different exhortations and includes this wonderful acknowledgement that in the church, especially a young congregation like Thessalonica, we shall have the unruly, the feeble-minded and the weak. 'Unruly' is a word, the sense of which envisages soldiers breaking ranks and becoming disorderly, insubordinate and neglectful. *The church should admonish and warn* all such, says Paul. 'The feeble-minded' includes all those who seem perpetually bewildered by all that is going on around them, fearful, easily downcast and disheartened. Such, says Paul, *should be comforted*. 'The weak' (of whatever circumstance such weakness should be composed) should receive support and patience. Indeed, we should be *patient* (forbearing) *toward all men*. Truly Paul mentions 'the weak' on more than one occasion and includes in the term all those labouring under lowly circumstances, the sickly and feeble, and for such he, personally, laboured with his hands that he might have the means to give help. To the elders at Ephesus he said, "I have showed you all things how that so labouring *ye ought to support the weak*, and to remember the words of the Lord, how He said, It is more blessed to give than receive" (Acts 20:35).

Support The Weak

In view of Paul's exhortation we can safely assume that there will always be weak members as well as strong ones. 'Weakness' is, of course, a relative term and we all might be stronger than we think, or weaker. He that thinks he stands should always beware, lest he fall. We are certainly safe in saying that few of us have ever seen a congregation that did not have its share of weak members. Can there be congregations *with more* weak members than strong ones - is it possible? The letters to the seven churches (in the Rev.) seems to infer that some congregations, thought to be strong, were very weak indeed. What are the manifestations of weakness? Absenteeism at the Lord's table? Disinterest in meetings for Bible Study? Niggardly giving towards the Lord's work - small collections? Old in membership but a novice in knowledge? Lack of enthusiasm for missionary work, or indeed for any project to be pursued by the church? Lack of support of our regular gospel meetings? Little regard for the difficulties of others or of visiting the sick? Careless approach to God's word and coming to meetings without a Bible, or bringing it but never opening it? Giving preference to earthly appointments and personal friends than to gatherings of the church? Reluctance to be involved in serving the church in any way (as Secretary or Treasurer, Doorkeeper etc.)? Seldom being in our places when needed? Too preoccupied with ourselves, and our plans, to care or to know about the problems our brethren have? These are just a very few of the pointers which give a rough guide to

ourselves, and to others, the state of our spiritual health. There is also the evidence of how we conduct our affairs *outwith the church*, as to whether we are a credit to the Lord, or an embarrassment. There are also those in the church who might be termed 'lapsed' members, who have not been in fellowship for some years. How should we regard them and what caused them to discontinue with us? Could they be termed the weakest of all? Did they grow weary in well-doing — did they grow cold from inactivity — were they treated insensibly by other members? Certainly the cinder that falls from the fire soon grows cold in isolation, and it is sad to reflect that if all lapsed members were to return current memberships would double or treble themselves in number. Some readers may feel that these 'evidences of weakness' mentioned above are not the results of weakness at all, but are merely the symptoms of laziness, disinterest and carelessness, and I would be the first to admit that the distinction is sometimes difficult to draw. When, indeed, is our indifferent performance due to lack of native ability, or want of real effort? Who can say; and I suppose we must give everyone the benefit of any doubt on the matter, and help them in their weakness (whatever that weakness might be). I always see the Christian journey as a 'Great Trek' (something like the streams of refugees we see regularly on T.V.) with some on foot; some pushing hand-carts containing all their worldly goods; some struggling along on crutches; some even being carried on a stretcher by friends; some bearing great burdens on their heads; the better-off nosing their way through the crowds in a large car; some carrying others on their backs; some well dressed; some in rags; some in great old-age; others very young and all helping one-another along, giving drinks to those who have fainted by the road-side; bandaging the sores of the wounded and comforting the frightened cries of the women and children. Then there are the lonely stragglers. It was surely with such a scenario in mind that the apostle Paul urged "We then that are strong *ought to bear the infirmities of the weak*, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good, to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself, But, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on Me." (Rom. 15:1). Jesus is referred to here as our Great Exemplar in that He bore the infirmities of the weak. He did not seek out His own comfort and enjoyment but was always to be found where the need was greatest; amongst suffering, reproach and shame.

The Law Of Christ

Picturing the Christian journey as a form of 'Great Trek' we can see that some church members have a much easier journey than others. Some are in fairly large, and comparatively wealthy, congregations and have a relatively care-free passage. Others are in small congregations (sometimes of two) and struggle to keep the flag of Christ flying in their community. Then there are isolated members, and members married to non-Christian partners who have problems others know nothing about. Within the congregations there are members who have been severely treated by life, either by physical disability or by personal circumstances, who require the help and support of others. I can never forget our late sister Jones, at Haddington, baptised in her old-age and who had had eleven children none of whom survived her. Think of the blows that she had sustained by life? All other members should try to help and uphold those who have a difficult journey. We should all rally to help carry the load, or bear the burden, for others. This is the law of Jesus. Paul said, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). It is said that the truly happy people are those who bring comfort and a little joy to others. That quote from Gal. 6 is part of a larger statement where Paul not only recommends the support of the weak but also *the restoration of those who go astray*. He says, "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so*

fulfil the law of Christ." This wonderful 'law of Christ' was distinguishable from Moses' law, or any other law, by this unique feature that *brotherly-kindness* was always to prevail - completely regardless of the circumstances. We must help with the burdens of all others. This responsibility is not for some duly appointed committee (?) but for each and every one of us. Yes! we are our brother's keeper. We fulfil the law of Christ by bearing the burdens of others.

Conclusion

There is a school of thought which exhibits great impatience with the 'weaker' brethren and reckons that if they 'lapse' from the church they must not have been genuine members in the first place. Some serious reflection on this point of view will demonstrate how foolish it is, and that it is possible for even the 'strongest' member to fall from grace. Even Paul always entertained the possibility of him, having preached to others, himself becoming a castaway. There is another point of view which avers that we 'are better off' without some members. Sometimes we hear that one brother has 'given up' trying to rationalise the behaviour and attitude of another brother. We have all doubtless had that feeling, but if we want Christ to be very patient with us, obviously we must, in turn, be very patient with every-one else. "So-and-so goes to Socials but avoids Bible Studies." "So-and-so only comes to the meeting if I go and fetch him". "So-and-so never seems to seek the company of other members, I can't understand it". "So-and-so never says a word in our Business Meeting". "So-and-so always comes late in case he gets a job to do". "We would be as well without so-and-so for all the help they give". These are but a few samples of what is occasionally heard, (and some might be factually true) but surely we can never be "better off" without any member. All are children of God and precious in His sight. All members of God's great family may differ widely in all kinds of ways, but each is precious to our Heavenly Father, and He mourns the loss of any one of them. The duty of the church is to warn the unruly; comfort the feeble-minded, sustain the weak, and be patient toward all men. Indeed Paul said that he would abstain from meat rather than that a weaker brother should fall, and this attitude pervaded Paul's entire life generally. To the weak he became as the weak that he might gain the weak. (1 Cor. 9:22).

It is a hard world in which we live, (and life is much harder in some other countries than it is in this one), but the general rule is that only the fittest will ultimately survive. Thanks be to God that such a rule, or law, does not operate in the kingdom of God, but that the Law of Christ operates there. That Law declares, "Bear ye one another's burdens." Support the weak. The smouldering embers of faith and love may be fanned into a flame, but if we stamp on them they perish for ever. Let us sustain the weak with whatever it takes; with patience, understanding, forbearance, sympathy, longsuffering, encouragement and brotherly-love.

EDITOR

BREAKING THE BREAD

I printed Jimmy Grant's belated article on the above subject, in the last issue, to be scrupulously fair. I had intended to say no more on the subject but feel a responsibility to correct some of brother Grant's statements which, if I may say so, are highly misleading.

(1) Brother Grant says that '*klaos*' (Greek for 'break') "*is not confined to one meaning or action*" and "*that there is a good degree of elasticity in the word*". *This is simply not so, and grossly misleading.* It certainly would be very convenient if we

could just make Greek words mean what suits us at a given time, but surely we want to reach the truth on the matter. One might as well say that the Greek for 'baptism' has "a good degree of elasticity in it" but it hasn't. Young's Concordance (as stated in earlier articles) lists *Klao* as appearing only 14 times and *always meaning* to "break or break off pieces". Certainly there are about another half-dozen Greek words used to convey various other uses of 'break' *but when 'klao' is used* (and it is always used where *bread* is being broken) it always means "to break or to break off pieces" (See vine, for Vine agrees with Young.) Neither Vine nor Young hint at any 'elasticity' of meaning. *Klao* is employed in Matt. 14:19; 15:36; 26:26; Mark 8:6; 8:19; 14:22; Luke 22:19; 24:30; Acts 2:46; 20:7; 20:11; 27:35; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24. Where, I ask, in these 13 instances, does *klao* mean something other than to "Break or break off pieces". *Where, is this 'good degree of elasticity'?* It is just not so. Indeed there is only one instance (1 Cor. 11:24) where the word was used in a figurative sense but this verse is, of course, in dispute and the Revised Version omits 'broken'. I hereby call upon Bro. Grant either to prove his words or to be good enough to withdraw them. Will he please tell us in which of these 13 instances (where *Klao* is employed) does the word mean other than "to break or to break off pieces". Obviously Jimmy is not trying to mislead anyone, but such rash statements could well mislead. *I repeat again* that (according to Young and Vine at the very least) *Klao* in each of the 13 verses *always means* "to break or to break off pieces". Thus it means the same in Matt. 14:19 (the feeding of the 5,000) as it does in Matt. 15:36 (the feeding of the 4,000) as it does in Matt. 26:26 (the institute of the Lord's Supper). Thus it is used these 3 times in Matthew's gospel and always means the same. Similarly in all the other 10 instances. I invite brother Grant (or anyone else) to show otherwise.

(2) Then Jimmy states that "Breaking implies the eating" and prints it in capital letters. This is another very loose and misleading claim, quite unfounded. In *only 2* of the 13 instances (where *klao* is used) can it be said that breaking implies eating and these two instances refer to a meal where *drinking* is just as much implied, as is the *giving of thanks*. Where breaking implies eating, it therefore also implies *drinking* and much more. In fairness Jimmy should have said "Breaking implies eating and drinking, and the giving of thanks." In Acts 27:35 (a meal) Paul *broke (klao)* his bread *before* he *ate* it. Quite clearly breaking *did not* imply eating in Acts 27:35. In 1 Cor. 10:16 Paul uses three separate phrases "we bless" (the bread) "we *break*" (the bread) and "we partake" (the bread). Clearly Paul does not assume here that *breaking* implies *partaking* (for he employs *both* terms). Brother Grant, before printing "Breaking implies Eating" in capital letters, should also inform readers of these important qualifications to such a claim.

(3) Few students of God's word could get the impression from Matt. 14:19 that breaking implied eating, when we consider that Jesus *broke (klao)* 5 loaves without eating at all. Surely breaking here does not imply eating? Indeed if we look carefully at the construction of the verses in Matt. 14:19 we shall see a striking similarity to the wording of Matt. 26:26 (where Jesus instituted the Lord's Table.) In *both* cases Jesus, in the presence of His disciples, took the bread, blessed it, break it, and gave it to the disciples. *Klao* is used in *both instances* and we know that in Matt. 14 it meant to take the bread in the hands and physically break it into fragments. Thus we have a practical demonstration of the meaning of *klao* and don't have to worry too much about Thayer. Bro. Grant obviously can't deny that *klao* means *to break into fragments* in this account of the feeding of the 5,000 but denies that *klao* means the same in Matt. 26 (the institution of the Lord's table). He says that the context of Matt. 14 'is quite different' from that of Matt. 26. The *location* was certainly different (a desert as against an upper room) the *day and time* differed, the *number* (to receive the bread) certainly differed (5,000 as against a handful of disciples), the *purpose* differed (a

common meal as against 'the spiritual feast of the Lord's table) but the *modus operandi* was *absolutely identical* in both cases. In the same way, baptisms were sometimes carried out in deserts, or in towns; sometimes in rivers, sometimes in pools; sometimes of Jews, sometimes of Gentiles but the *modus operandi remained constant*. There was no 'elasticity' *in the method*. There is absolutely nothing 'in the context' to suggest that *klao* does not mean the same in Matt. 14: as Matt. 26. No-one has been able to demonstrate any reason for believing the *modus operandi* in the feeding of the 5,000 differed from Jesus' breaking of the loaf at the institution of the Lord's table, and therefore we must believe (as I most assuredly do) that at the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus, as He did at the feeding of the 5,000, took a loaf, blessed it in thanks to God, broke it into pieces with His hands and handed it to His disciples with the invitation (or instruction) to eat of it. (Macknight, E. M. Zerr, David King, William Barclay, J. W. McGarvey and Alexander Campbell, to name but a few, all shared this view). Those who believe that *klao* changes meaning between those two appearances of the word have certainly been invited to show evidence of the change but it has not been forthcoming.

(4) I have, several times, asked for evidence that Jesus (when He broke the bread) also *ate of it*. In his article, Jimmy produces 'evidence', but not, unfortunately, from the N.T. Instead, Bro. Grant offers us the opinions of, first of all, the Director of The Charleston Gazette (who says that he thinks that if Jesus broke the bread it would *naturally follow* that Jesus would also eat it). Then Jimmy quoted a Mr. Carl Kraeling, of Yale University (*who "thought that the N.T. implied" that Jesus ate it*). Then he quoted a Robt. Ffeiffer, of Harvard University (*who thought that Jesus ate the bread" although it is not expressly stated" in the N.T.*). Then the Talmud was referred to; then the Palestinian Tosephta; then Rabbi Winkler and then Rabbi Seigel. Rabbi Seigel said that "under Rabbinic and Talmudic law no person should pronounce 'a blessing' and 'break bread' with his guests unless he also partakes". This Rabbi did not, however, explain how Jesus was able to pronounce 'the blessing' and break bread with his guests at the feeding of the 5,000 *without eating it*. These views are all very interesting but merely show how unable brother Grant is to prove that Jesus ate the bread at the institution of the Lord's Supper. *If the N.T. contained proof* brother Grant would not have to resort to Rabbis and the Palestinian Tosephta, or to Yale or Harvard, but would quote the scripture. If the N.T. is silent on the matter (and it is) then *we* should remain silent. Churches of Christ are supposed to remain silent where the Bible is silent. Then, finally, Jimmy produced a quote from Sophecles, and some reasoning from Jewish law and tradition. As for 'Jewish law' Jesus was always changing Jewish law, was He not? and dismantled it (the Sabbath, eye for an eye etc.) and as for Jewish tradition Jesus roundly condemned it and showed that human tradition frustrated God's word. Surely brother Grant does not suppose that when Jesus instituted the Lord's Table (a 'Christian' observance) that He was, in the least, likely to influenced either by Jewish Law or Jewish tradition? Is this, then, the 'evidence' that Jesus ate the bread at the institution of the Lord's Supper. Are we to be convinced by the opinions of the Director of The Charleston Gazetter, a member of Harvard and Yale Universities (who between them would only say that they thought it was implied but not expressly stated that Jesus ate the bread) two or three Jewish Rabbis and a quote from the Palestinian Tosephta. Is this the evidence we are being asked to accept that Jesus ate the bread? Would brethren divide, and disfellowship one another on the strength of this? Surely this 'evidence' merely illustrates the poverty of Bro. Grant's contentions. One ounce of scripture would have been worth ten cartloads of quotations from Harvard, Yale or the Palestinian Tosephta. Where the Bible is silent we should be silent.

(5) There were some other sundry matters which I found disappointing. For instance Bro Grant tries to draw a distinction between breaking bread *in pieces* and breaking *off pieces*. It amounts to the same thing. All I would ask is whether Jesus, when He fed the 5,000 broke the 5 loaves *into pieces* or broke *pieces off the loaves*? Surely a strained distinction, is it not? Some time ago I said that by Jimmy's method of presiding, every member breaks bread *already broken* except the Presiding Brother. Jimmy says that he cannot figure this out. I am happy to repeat it. When Jimmy presides at the Table he takes in his hands *an unbroken loaf* and *breaks* from it. The other members, by contrast, all break bread from a loaf already broken. Thus he breaks from an *unbroken* loaf - the others break from a loaf *already broken*. By the other method *all* break from a loaf already broken. Think of all the rules that Jimmy applies to Presiding Brothers. The Presiding Brother must break the bread but not near the middle (it's symbolically wrong to break it near the middle); he must *not* break it into *more than two* pieces, one of which he must eat (presumably the *smaller* of the two pieces) he must insist upon each member not breaking off more than one piece; and he must insist on the bread being preserved 'whole' or intact. Jesus, or the apostles, never imposed such rules. Thus we have men making rules where Jesus never made them. Jimmy's worry about the Presiding Brother 'breaking twice' is quite unnecessary. By the time the bread reaches the Presiding Brother there are ample small fragments available and so the P.B. (if worried about it) need only break once and eat once. If the P.B. does what Jesus did I hardly see any cause for worry (rather the reverse). And what did Jesus do? Jesus took a loaf, and gave thanks to God for it; then He broke it and gave it to the disciples with an invitation to them to eat of it. Jesus said "This do". If a P.B. does this he has little to worry about. If a P.B. adds to this and makes his own rules, then perhaps he should be worried.

EDITOR

GLEANINGS

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

BROKEN FENCES Ezekiel 22:29-30

"God has never left Himself without a witness. Every now and then, throughout the centuries, a great-souled man or woman stands out from the crowd and declares, 'Thus saith the Lord'. One of these witnesses was Ezekiel. He was daring enough to quote God: "I sought for a man to make up the fence, and stand in the gap, but I found none". Ezekiel felt keenly the fact that the nation had almost lost its conception of God. To-day the world's fences are broken down. We see lawlessness and organized cupidity on every hand. The brute forces that war breeds are still rampant. Fear, like a mist, has enveloped the souls of multitudes. God is not indifferent. He works through human personality. He is calling for men and women to repair the broken fences and to call the nations to their senses. And I believe His call is being answered here and there throughout the world. Great movements are afoot and the ramparts of evil are being shaken. What a wonderful honour to be known as the 'repairer of the breach'. Each of us can be that in our own circle. Do I know someone whose life is like a broken fence? Lord, give me the urge to stand in the gap."

Gardner Miller.

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES

"Unsearchable riches, - unfailing, unending,
Exhaustless and boundless - for thee and for me;
Unsearchable wealth, - undiminished by spending, -
Our riches in Christ - evermore ours to be."

J. Danson Smith

HE WENT BY THE WAY OF THE CROSS

"In a lonely valley in Switzerland a small band of patriots once marched against an invading force ten times their strength. They found themselves one day at the head of a narrow pass, confronted by a solid wall of spears. They made assault after assault but that bristling line remained unbroken. Time after time they were driven back decimated with hopeless slaughter. The forlorn hope rallied for the last time. As they charged, their leader suddenly advanced before them with outstretched arms, and every spear for three or four yards of the line was buried in his body. He fell dead. But he prepared a place for his followers. Through the open breach, over his dead body, they rushed to victory and won the freedom of their country. So the Lord Jesus went before His people, the Captain of our salvation, sheathing the weapons of death and judgment in Himself, and preparing a place for us with His dead body. Well for us not only that He went away, but that He went by way of the cross." Henry Drummond.

WALK VERSUS TALK

"Three lads were pushing a hand-cart up Renfield Street, Glasgow. The two behind got into a discussion and forgot to "push". The lad in the shafts turned round and tartly exclaimed, "Less talk and more shove." T.W.T.

NO ONE IN CHARGE

"Some one wrote to John Parker, of New York: "Will you kindly inform me under whose auspices the entertainments of your church are given, and when and where I can best see those having the same in Charge?" The preacher responded as follows:- "Yours asking names of committee on entertainments is received. We have none, thank God. We are trying to save the people, not to amuse them. Lost men have more serious business than to laugh at so much an hour. And pastors who will soon have to answer at the bar of God have too grave a responsibility to look on such a grinning ghastliness with approving consent. Please believe that God has a few churches that will not go down in the terrible drift that is upon us. Come and help us to be and to do good, and you will be welcome. - Yours, John Parker, Pastor." H. L. Hastings. B.A. 1903

THE FOOTPATH TO PEACE

"To be glad of life, because it gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look up at the stars; to be satisfied with your possessions, but not contented with yourself until you have made the best of them; to despise nothing in the world except falsehood and meanness, and to fear nothing except cowardice; to be governed by your admirations rather than by your disgusts; to covet nothing that is your neighbour's except his kindness of heart and gentleness of manner; to think seldom of your enemies, often of your friends, and every day of Christ; and to spend as much time as you can, with body and with spirit, in God's out of doors - these are little guideposts on the footpath to peace."

Dr. Henry Van Dyke. B.A. 1903

SELECTED BY LEONARD MORGAN

THE STAMP

For good ye are, and bad, and like the
coins,

Some true, some light, but everyone
of you

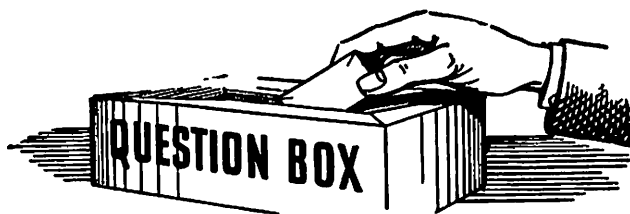
Stamped with the image of the King.

We should remember the wrongs done
us—only, that we may forgive them.

To have too much forethought is the
part of a wretch; to have too little is
the part of a fool.

A fool can no more see his own folly
than he can see his ears

Do not talk about disgrace from a
thing being known, when the disgrace is
that the thing should exist.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Could you please tell us what the Bible teaches about the subject of Fasting, and should it be practiced in the Church in these days?”

I suppose that any discussion on the subject of Fasting should also include the further ideas of abstinence and indulgence; it seems to me that all of these overlap to some extent. We know that the idea of fasting has been prevalent down through the ages, and the reasons for practicing it have been varied, but since our question refers to the practice of it in the N.T. Church of today, then we need to examine the scriptural warrant for it, if any, in the Bible.

What is Fasting?

A short, literal definition is quite simply ‘not eating’. I think we all understand that fasting can be either voluntary or involuntary, but since we are asking should it be practiced by Christians today, I suppose we are talking about voluntary fasting.

An example of voluntary fasting is recorded in Acts 14:23 where it is said that Paul and Barnabas fasted, “And when they had ordained them Elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed”. It is worthy of note that voluntary fasting is in many recorded instances accompanied by prayer.

Examples of involuntary fasting are to be found in Paul’s second letter to Corinth. Defending the Christian witness of both himself and his co-workers he says, “But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings”. (2 Cor. 6:4,5). Later in the same letter he writes, “In weariness, in painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (11:27,28). Paul’s references to fasting here could possibly also include that done voluntarily, but it rather seems that in the situations which Paul catalogues that the trying circumstances which he endured would often of necessity deprive him of food.

The Historical Setting

It would seem from incidents recorded in the O.T. that fasting was associated with expressions of grief, with the objective, perhaps, of influencing God. We read in Judges 20 of how Benjamin went forth against the children of Israel and slew some 40000 of them; it is recorded that “all the people went up, and came into the house of God, and wept, and sat before the Lord, and fasted that day until even” (20:26). Could it be that they were trying to change the righteous judgment of God? We also read that when Saul was killed, “they mourned, and wept, and fasted till even, for Saul, and for Jonathon his son” (2 Sam. 1:12). Later, after Joab had killed Abner, we read that David lamented over Abner and would not eat, “And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down” (2 Sam. 3:35).

It also seems that the people observed feasts during the Exile. In Zechariah 7:4,5 we read, “Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying, speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth

and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast to me, even to me? Zechariah then indicates that added to the fasts in the fifth and seventh months there were also fasts in the fourth and the tenth months (read 8:19). We know from the prophecy of Jeremiah that in the fourth month, and the ninth day of the month, in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, came with his army and broke up Jerusalem (Jer. 39:1,2). We also know (see Jer. 52:4) that Nebuchadnezzar *laid siege* to Jerusalem in the tenth month, and the tenth day, in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign; two years *before* the city was finally broken.

Now it seems that in all of these Jewish Festivals of remembrance, fasting took place. They were sorrowful occasions in the nation's history, but whether the *motives* of fasting were genuine or not is another matter. It is quite evident that ascetics - and fasting has long been associated with asceticism - were seeking to influence their *fellow-men* by this form of so-called piety, and you will recall that Jesus roundly condemned this (Read Matt. 6:16-18). It is quite clear from a study of this teaching that the Lord did not *condemn* fasting, but He seemed to be stressing the need for purity of motive from those who practiced it. We also are aware that even today fasting is used as a weapon by some in order to gain public sympathy, and to try to change or modify social and political decisions.

The New Testament Examples.

It would appear that appointed fasts became more frequent in later Judaism, but there is not much scriptural evidence of fasting as a moral and spiritual discipline for Christians. Undoubtedly, we have examples of fasting among the early Christian groups (See Acts 13:2; 27:9; 2 Cor. 6:5,6. The fast referred to in Acts 27:9 is probably the fast associated with the Day of Atonement), but there is certainly no scriptural warrant for the ascetic practices which characterised religious ascetics of later times; this association of fasting with religious asceticism is very damaging to the Church, and we can understand why it was so sternly condemned by the Lord in His teaching.

Perhaps Daniel sets the pattern for what should be the N.T. idea of fasting. It is recorded that in Daniel 9:3, and Daniel gives us some idea, perhaps, as to how *we* should approach God, "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fastings, and sackcloth and ashes". I would hasten to add, of course, that I am not advocating sackcloth and ashes, but the scripture does seem to indicate the right devotional frame of mind when approaching God, and evidently along with prayer and supplications, Daniel considered fasting also to be a help. I am persuaded that the intensity of spiritual feeling toward God can even obviate the desires of the flesh.

The incident with the disciples of John and the Pharisees serves to illustrate the purpose and character which He expected from His disciples. You will recall that the disciples of John came to Jesus and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" Jesus replied, "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast" (Matt. 9:14, 15). It seems here that Jesus is making a direct claim to Messiahship, and He is saying that because of His advent, joy, love, truth, and peace had been restored to Israel in place of mournful remembrance (Refer to Zech. 8:19). He was also aware, of course, that after His crucifixion His disciples would mourn Him, hence the reference to fasting. Jesus evidently sees His mission as Israel's wedding festival, and consequently it was no time for fasting, but again, He does not exclude its use under certain circumstances. No doubt Jesus, along with His disciples, observed the Fast associated with the Day of Atonement, but He seems not to have imposed any frequent fasts in addition.

There are references to fasting in Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29; and in 1 Cor. 7:5, but these seem not to have been included in the most authentic manuscripts.

Conclusions

It is very clear that indulgence, and certainly over-indulgence, in food induces a soporific state in people. Before I retired, when I was lecturing regularly, we always used to dread the period immediately after lunch; it was referred to as 'the graveyard period' because, due to the food people had eaten, they tended to 'nod off'. From this we draw the obvious conclusion that the gastronomically-induced lethargy is not conducive to alert thought process. Relating this idea to Christian experience, we can readily understand that abstaining from food will heighten the intensity of our spiritual perception. It is a startling paradox that many Christians who, so they say, desire a closer, more intense, walk with God do, by their gross excesses and panderings to the flesh, forbid the very thing which they are striving to obtain. Even though asceticism in any shape or form is to be deplored, it must be said that a heightened spiritual perception is much to be desired.

Therefore, even though our study leads us to the view that appointed Fasts are not commanded for the Church of the N.T., we are inclined to the view that if abstaining from food for short periods of time in certain circumstances of life can help individual Christians to sharpen their spiritual perceptions, then I believe that the N.T. evidence suggests that neither the Lord nor the Apostles forbade this.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

NOVEMBER 1985

3—Ex. 12:1-20	Matt. 26:1-25
10—Zech. 13	Matt. 26:26-46
17—Jer. 37	Matt. 26:47-58
24—Deut. 19:7-21	Matt. 26:59-75

DAYS OF SUPREME MASTERY AND DEEPEST STRESS

Our readings cover Tuesday to early morning of Friday. What a few days of vital importance for world history! The greatest battles and conquests fade into insignificance beside a Saviour crucified by His own choice and the will of the Father! Jesus arrived at Bethany six days before He was crucified. The next day He rode in triumph into Jerusalem, being hailed as King. The next He cleansed His Father's House of "robbers", and mastered its ruling authorities. The fig tree withered at its roots. The children sang His praises. The people rejoiced in His healing powers, and were astonished at His answers to the doubters and false teachers. There is a short program of the days by Luke (21, 37 & 38) possibly

including visits to the house of welcome at Bethany. Outstanding bravery and fearless denunciation of sin, particularly hypocrisy. All this leading to increasing hatred and bitter enmity. He the embodiment of love and righteousness. His enemies infuriated and plotting to murder by hook or by crook but in fear of the people. Judas with eye on the money fills their need with thirty pieces of silver, and provides their opportunity. Jesus understood the weakness of His closest disciples and warns both His betrayer and His deny-er. How sad the heart of love must have been - "That bitter cup love drank it up".

AN HONOURED GUEST

Luke gave us the first glimpse of a household where Jesus was loved, Matthew passes us the sequel, which John has already provided in the raising of Lazarus. The incontestable evidence of this miracle so near to Jerusalem has driven the Jewish Sanhedrin to desperation.

In this home there is the welcome and the understanding that Jesus is going to crucifixion. Simon is the host, Lazarus is at the table, Martha serves and Mary comes in to make her sacrifice of love, adoration and worship. Some of those present, in particular Judas see only

waste in the loving offering, and it may well be that the rebuke administered by Jesus moved him to be the traitor... Jesus understood and appreciated the action and the motive.

THE LAST SUPPER

These last hours of our Saviour's earthly companionship with His disciples are very precious for us as for them. We go over them in thought very often for our special weekly reminder by His instruction and the apostles' appointment of practice involves constant reading of His words, and seeing the extent of misunderstanding those closest to Him experienced at the time. We do so with warm sympathy because of our own consciousness of weaknesses, and deeply thankful for the lessons we thus receive.

TWO SORROWFUL PREDICTIONS

Gloom fell upon the apostles already astonished at the loss Jesus promised them relating to His own departure from them. Never could they think it possible that He could be taken and slain. The Master of disease and death, the demons of hell and the elements of the heavens could never be overcome by earthly powers, or allowed to suffer and die. Is it still a hard lesson for man to learn the dreadful power of sin, and the greatness of the sacrifice required to cleanse from it? So of course they could not think to desert, betray or deny Him. They heard the warnings again and again and refused to think it possible. However it must have been a great sorrow to Jesus but He understood their fleshly weakness as He does ours. He must also have understood a reliance upon God which would enable them to fulfill the designs He had for their recovery for which also He prayed (Luke 22:28-32). so betrayal and denial did take place where, if anywhere, it should not.

"GETHSEMANE"

May the Lord help us with the weak-

nesses of the flesh and human shortness of vision to gain some comprehension of the height and depth of agony endured by our Saviour for us! I take my thought and try to measure the awful consequences of sin made visible in human society, for instance, the conditions existing now in the little country of Lebanon, or perhaps more immediately for us in Handsworth or Liverpool. There is the overwhelming measure of human grief of thousands. One human soul is weighed down by loss and ruin. Jesus came to bear the burden of the sins of the world. No sin once committed can be undone. The material loss is irreplaceable but what of the spiritual loss in the eyes of a holy God and creator. Jesus has lived and laboured among sinners. He has tasted life among sinners. "He came unto His own and they received Him not". The place of His birth, upbringing and physical labour rejected Him for envy. Now as He walked with His disciples over the Kidron into the garden, it is to be betrayed by one who was brought to know truth and loveliness of character by seeing it almost daily, is gathering a force of armed men to seize with violence. The religious leaders with hearts full of the same sin of envy are working out their method not simply of murder but of bringing to the worst form of torment and death, plotting the political accusation to bring this about against every law of truth and righteousness. This to appear as application of justice to a criminal. But Jesus is facing this with full and holy consciousness of his own righteousness. The master of the universe, the God of absolute holiness is offering His body, soul and spirit as a sacrifice for sinners to give opportunity of eternal life of bliss. He is presenting the only possible means of forgiveness. So awful is the price that the human frame is weighed down "even to death" to face the horrors of, yes! is it indeed? separation from God. There was no sleep for Jesus. From the moments of His agony, He bore all that was put upon Him in full consciousness and perfect composure. The thrice repeated decision was filled with power.

TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE

Matthew gives us a short account of a small part of the several "trials" of Jesus, apparently only a summary of the hearing by Caiaphas. Two witnesses agreed apparently, excusing failure to find any proper evidence, Caiaphas challenged Jesus for a confession of the truth, which Caiaphas called blasphemy, asked a verdict by those present and took the case as proved. Members of that body will face God on the judgement day unless there was repentance through subsequent acceptance of the gospel. Violence to the person was and is against any practice of justice. Jesus did make a justified and dignified protest (John 19:23). The maximum spite was exercised against Jesus — revealing there was no real Justice.

THE SADDEST FAILURES

Peter found himself amidst foes of Jesus, and failed to speak up or acknowledge His master. Judas was stricken with remorse after actually betraying His master with a kiss. He did acknowledge to the wrong folk and was treated with worse than contempt. The first went out and wept with bitter shame, the second killed himself in hopeless misery.

R. B. SCOTT

'I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH'

UNIQUE CLAIMS

'And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church'.

To every informed Catholic this verse is the answer to all questions about the teaching and authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

This is so because of what Matthew 16:18 means to them.

It means, that Peter was made the first Pope, Vicar of Christ, foundation and head of the Catholic Church. It means, that Peter has all Christ's authority on earth. It means, that Peter passed this authority to his successors the Bishops

of Rome even to the present-day Pope.

It means, that every tradition sanctioned by the Popes is equal in authority to the Sacred Scriptures.

Little wonder that the cumulative effect is faith in the Catholic Church as the one true church, infallibly right in all its teaching.

In the light of such claims it will be the purpose of this article to find out if the Bible supports these unique privileges.

THE ARGUMENT IN THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Would you not agree, that the teaching which makes Peter the foundation of the church and Christ's Vicar on earth *is of such consequence* that one would naturally expect to see it mentioned - directly or indirectly - in almost every book of the New Testament? Well, you may be surprised to learn that it is not mentioned in any of these Epistles. That means that the supremacy of Peter is not corroborated by the 27 books of the New Testament. On the contrary the weight of evidence is against Peter being the foundation and head of the church.

To illustrate, in Luke 22:24-26 Jesus teaches that no Apostle would ever dominate or be officially recognized as head. He said, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors'. But not so among you". Surely Jesus knew that Peter was the head of the church since He appointed him such sometime earlier at Caesarea Philippi. As head, Peter of necessity must lord it over all and be seen as a benefactor in bestowing God's gifts and favours.

In truth Popes are the ecclesiastical replica of the gentile kings. How come Jesus says, "BUT NOT SO AMONG YOU"? The only legitimate answer is that in the Church of Christ no Apostle would ever dominate or be officially recognized as head. The Peter-Pope belief contradicts this teaching of Jesus.

No! Peter is not the head of the church and neither is he the foundation. In 1 Cor. 3:11 we read, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is

laid, which is Jesus Christ”.

This affirmation is too clear to misunderstand. Since it is so simple it becomes useful in the application of this fail-safe principle of biblical interpretation, i.e. that difficult scriptures be understood in the light of simple ones. By this means we will let 1 Cor. 3:11 explain Matt. 16:18. Undoubtedly then, the rock foundation refers to none other than Jesus Christ, in Matthew 16:18.

Moving along we will now consider the position of Chief Shepherd in the context of the New Testament. Interestingly, the title Chief Shepherd is used only once and that by Peter himself. In his first epistle chapter five and verse four, he says, “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory”. The Holy Spirit through Peter makes it known who the Chief Shepherd is, it is Jesus Christ. In His own life-time Jesus prophesied, “And they shall become one flock WITH ONE SHEPHERD”, (Jn. 10:16). Therefore it is unscriptural to speak of Peter as another Chief Shepherd.

The whole theory of the supremacy of Peter crumbles under the weight of such revelations. Even the Apostle Paul could assert his equality with the Twelve, “For in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles”, (2 Cor. 12:11). Peter was content to call himself, “an apostle of Jesus Christ”, nothing more. All the apostles were equal in rank and authority with each other, as the following two points will also show.

(A) Peter shared in common the power of “Binding and loosing” given to him by Jesus in Matt. 16:19 with the rest of the apostles who were given the same promise (in Matt. 18:18).

(B) When the apostles heard that Samaria had received the word of God they sent them Peter and John, (Acts 8:14). Jesus tells us “...neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him” (Jn. 13:16). For this reason Peter, who was sent, could not be greater than the others who sent him.

The Peter-Pope idea is unsupported in the greater context of the New Testa-

ment revelation. Moreover it is positively refuted by the scriptures we have just considered.

THE BIBLE, ASSUMPTIONS, AND FACT.

The primary assumption made by those of the above persuasion is that Jesus made Peter a Pope. The verse does not mention Pope, nor could it without creating a contradiction with another passage of Scripture. The reason being Pope means “Father” and as a religious title father was forbidden by Jesus. “And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in Heaven” (Matt. 23:9). Here Jesus is teaching, that no one ON EARTH *is your father* (spiritually). That no one ON EARTH *is to be called your father* (Spiritually). Obviously then Peter was not made our Holy Father by Jesus in Matt. 16:18 otherwise there would be two Holy Fathers, one in heaven and one on earth. Jesus cannot contradict Himself, He said, “For One is your Father, He who is in heaven”.

Another thing that is taken for granted is that the church mentioned is the Roman Catholic Church. Jesus did not say, “I will build the Roman Catholic Church”, He said, “I will build My church”. In 1 Cor. 1:1 the Holy Spirit refers to what Jesus built as “the church of God”. In Col. 1:18 He calls it simply “the church”. In Heb. 12:23, “the general assembly and church of the first-born”. Not one verse in the Bible mentions the Roman Catholic Church, it is conspicuous by its absence. Not only is the name not there but neither is its organization, worship nor doctrine. Those who claim it is must first prove it is before they take it for granted that the church in Matt. 16:18 is synonymous with the Roman Catholic Church.

There are so many assumptions made about the Peter-rock passages that it would be impossible to review them all. What follows is a short list of assumptions in Matt. 16:18-19.

(a) That Peter was made a Catholic Priest.

- (b) That Peter was appointed Bishop of Rome.
 - (c) That he was given infallibility.
 - (d) That he would have successors.
- All of these "facts" need to be proved before it can be established that Peter was made Pope.

For too long people have been allowed to assume what cannot be proved by these verses.

THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT AND RELATED MATTER

Please read carefully the immediate context of the Peter-rock comparison which is Matthew 16:13-20. Here the Holy Spirit is disclosing the most marvellous news about the man Jesus, which was expressed so accurately in the words of Peter, "THOU ART THE CHRIST THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD". That this is the focal point of the Caesarea Philippi story is easy to see by checking the accounts in Mark and Luke. Both climax with Peter's confession, which goes to prove that Jesus is the central figure not Peter.

Undoubtedly then, Jesus being the Christ the Son of the living God is the main structure of these verses. What is said to Peter is only an extension of that superstructure. Jesus said, "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build My church". "This rock" is not a new building, enshrining Peter. It is, as was stated, an extension of the main building which is Christ the Son of the living God. This will be better understood when we draw a comparison between the words *Peter* and *rock* as used in Matt. 16:18. The name "Peter" is translated from the Greek word *PETROS*. *Petros* is masculine gender, and is defined in W.E. Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words, as "A detached stone or boulder". On the other hand, the word "rock" is translated from the Greek word *PETRA*. *Petra* is feminine gender, and is defined in W.E. Vine as, "A mass of rock".

The difference should be plain as we read this information back into Matthew 16:18 as follows, "You are *PETROS* and upon this *PETRA* I will build My church". Evidently Peter is not the rock foundation and the only other thing that could be is that "mass of rock" in the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God".

It is interesting to note that most of the early Fathers agree with this interpretation. Here is Dr. Kendrick's breakdown of what the early Fathers believed about the rock in Matthew 16:18.

- (a) 17 Fathers designated *Peter* as the rock.
- (b) 8 Fathers taught that the *whole apostolic college* is the rock.
- (c) 44 Fathers designated *Peter's confession* of Christ's divine Sonship as the rock.
- (d) 16 Fathers taught that *Christ Himself* was the rock.

All the evidence in the immediate context, in the Greek and from the early Fathers points to Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God" as the rock-foundation on which the church of Christ was built.

This conclusion harmonizes with the rest of the New Testament.

"Other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ". Peter is not the foundation of the Church, but Popes certainly can be regarded as Supreme Head of the Great Apostacy.

Readers can, no doubt, work out all the other implications for themselves.

Steve Kearney

140, Woodlawn Park Grove, Firhouse,
Dublin 24.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Stretford, Manchester: Please join with us and our sister Rosalind Phang in thanksgiving for the baptism into Christ of her sister Lucy Phang on Monday 19th August, 1985, at Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan.

They are from a strong Roman Catholic family in Singapore.

We request your prayers that the strength of their faith will enable them to be examples of the love of Jesus in the face of adversity, winning even more to Christ.

Again we are grateful to the brethren at Scholes for their ready assistance.

Allan Ashurst

ANNUAL SOCIAL

The church at Newtongrange intend (D.V.) holding their ANNUAL SOCIAL on Saturday 19th October, 1985, at 4 p.m. The Speakers will be:-

Bro. Chalmers (Dalmellington)
Bro. Brown (Dennyloanhead)
Chairman Bro. R. Hunter

Join us for a wonderful time of fellowship.

A.P. Sharp, Sec.

GOSPEL MISSION

The church here at New Cumnock, Scotland, intends holding a short Gospel Mission, on 4th, 5th and 6th of October.

Some young Christians have promised to lend a hand and come to help with leaflet distribution etc. Above all, we ask the brethren to pray for this endeavour that souls may be won for Christ. The meetings are at 6 p.m. each evening - all welcome.

Harry McGinn
(New Tel. No. is New Cumnock 32988)

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH £5.50
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.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian,
Scotland EH37 5PT. Telephone: Ford 320 527

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd.,
Langley Mill, Nottm. Tel. Langley Mill (0773) 712266