

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 58 No. 1

JANUARY, 1990

May 1990 be a Year of Blessing
for all our Readers

God Bless Thy Year
Thy Coming In, Thy Going Out:
Thy Rest, Thy Travelling About:
The Rough, The Smooth,
The Bright, The Drear,
God Bless Thy Year.

BARRIERS AND BARRICADES

The recent demolition of the Berlin Wall must surely rank as the most momentous event, not only of 1989, but of the whole decade. Indeed it may well prove to be one of the most significant and joyful events of the entire century. Who could have imagined a year ago, that, by November of this year, the iron fisted political tyranny exerted over the entire Eastern Bloc in Europe, would disappear within three weeks, and be replaced within days by democratic government, never a shot being fired. It has all been accomplished by 'People-power', encouraged and accelerated by the remarkable Mikhail Gorbachev. The true will of the people has at last asserted itself, and the handful of politicians who, for half a century, have held captive miserable millions, have been swept aside. 'Communist' countries like the Soviet Union, and all its satellite nations, now freely admit ~~that~~ that no form of socialism does not work, and they look now to the west for help: to the west with its previously hated resources of Capitalism.

The bloodstained and tear-swept Berlin Wall, built to keep their own people in rather than to keep others out, has essentially gone and is unlikely ever to be restored. The genie of Freedom has been let out of the bottle and it will never go back in again. Was it not a most moving sight to see the vast nation of East-Germany dancing for joy in the streets, dragging down the barb-wire and chiselling away at the dreaded wall? Did the sight not inspire us to believe that if that wall could come down, there was great hope that other lesser walls could also come down? That sordid structure in Berlin was probably the best-known barrier, but there are hosts of others. Places like Northern Ireland, the Lebanon, South Africa, the Philipines, Ethiopia, Iran etc. etc., spring immediately to mind, but some of these barriers are much more intangible than a literal wall. Many of these barriers are much less simplistic than the concrete

blocks in Berlin, and infinitely more complicated than mere political strategy. These racial and religious barriers with deep-rooted origins, having for centuries fermented in a climate of suspicion, injustice, mutual-hatred, bitterness, violence and bloodshed. As we watch the natural outworkings of all these deeply ingrained and long-established hatreds, and see the maimings, bombings, and vicious acts of terrorism at various flashpoints throughout the world, the cynic would suggest that these barriers will never come down; and this may well be true. Indeed the only hope for the world is in Jesus Christ and only when men come to Christ in very large numbers will we see some of these barriers come down. Jesus came into the world to destroy barriers.

BARRIERS AND BOUNDARIES

Barriers are not to be confused with boundaries. As we all like to know exactly where we stand in all aspects of life, man is constantly marking out boundaries. These boundaries create restrictions and are described variously: as rules, agreements, laws, compacts and contracts. Lawyers spend much of their time defending men's boundary lines, and the Courts and Prisons are full of men and women who have over stepped social, marital and legal boundaries. There are also at least a dozen minor wars currently going on in various theatres of the world associated with land demarcation lines. The I.R.A. commit horrible crimes on an on-going basis ostensibly because of an arbitrary line drawn between Ulster and Eire some years ago. Normally friendly neighbours can soon become feuding enemies when a little garden fence is set up and its position is challenged.

Boundary lines are not only important but often historically sacrosanct and many inhabitants of British towns and villages make an annual trek around the parish boundaries to re-establish them and emphasise their exact location. In England "Beating the Bounds" is still kept up in many towns when the residents, clergy and Town Hall Officials traverse the boundaries and little boys place willow wands here and there on the actual line and are "whipped" at intervals to make them remember these boundaries. In Scotland there is similar pageantry especially in the border country with "The Riding of the Marches" when huge numbers go round the 'Marches' (boundaries) on horseback (because the distances are so considerable) and it is claimed that these events produce the largest number of simultaneously mounted horsemen in the whole of Europe - (it should be said, of course, that the 'boundaries' are not the only attraction of that day to bring out such crowds).

God was the first to make boundaries. The Genesis tells us that it was the violation of these boundaries which led to man's downfall, and his expulsion from Eden. Stepping over God's boundaries is to 'trespass' and can likewise be described as 'sin' (missing God's mark). Obviously without distinct boundary lines (or laws) there can be no trespass. Without law there can be no offence. The line, or law, is impassive and merely informative. The writer to the Hebrews says that even Moses' law could not excuse: it could only accuse. Also in Rom. 7, he says that without law sin dies, but our enlightenment revives it. Indeed it is only the restraints of law which highlight our sinful natures. **"What shall I say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay I had not known sin, but by law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."** So then rules, laws and boundaries are, in themselves, neutral, impartial and merely informative. God's laws are as neutral as a looking glass, and if we do not like what we see, do we accuse the mirror? God's laws bring knowledge and that knowledge brings accountability. In any case law is only a terror to those who break it, but docile and mute to those who keep it. God's laws and boundaries are for our present good and future blessing. He takes them seriously and so should we. By contrast, the Devil sets no boundaries. Few can claim never to have strayed across God's boundaries and all we, like sheep have gone astray, but John reminds us that **"if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us**

from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:19).

Thus, man’s barriers must be distinguished from God’s boundaries.

THE GREAT DIVIDE

Jesus came into the world to demolish barriers: to bring peace and freedom to all mankind. However, the peace that Jesus gives is not exemption from hardships and persecutions, but peace with God and with men of goodwill. The ‘freedom’ Jesus gives is not freedom from tyranny or even menial servitude, but freedom from bondage to sin and Satan. Indeed Paul advised slaves, who had just become Christians, to accept freedom when given but, meanwhile, to be content to remain as slaves with their masters; because even as slaves they were Christ’s free-men (just as their masters, if converted, would become Christ’s slaves): (I Cor. 7:22). Many masters, on becoming Christians, liberated their slaves immediately, but some slaves elected to remain: half the population at that time being in slavery. Alexander Campbell, in his one visit to Britain, was hounded by banner-carriers and lampooned as a ‘man-stealer’ by hostile mobs, especially in Edinburgh, and as a result of such persecution was jailed for over a week in Bridewell Prison in Glasgow: when, in fact, Campbell was fully opposed to slavery and had long previously released the slaves he had fallen heir to.

The greatest human divide of all time was that between Jew and Gentile. The open conflict and smouldering animosity, which had festered and broken out over many centuries, certainly appeared to be completely irreconcilable, yet Jesus removed this great barrier at a stroke. The Law (Mosaic) which was the very embodiment of the division, was nailed to Christ’s cross and Jesus took it out of the way when He died. Paul says, **“For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us. Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make Himself of twain, one new man, so making peace.”** (Eph. 2:14). And thus the vast gulf which separated both Jew and Gentile, the very magnitude of which makes the wall in Berlin look a trifle, was bridged instantaneously by Jesus. The best that men could have done would have been to have set up Councils and Committees with endless wrangling amongst delegates but Jesus, in His Death, reconciled the seemingly irreconcilable and bridged the unbridgeable. Predictably there were Jews subsequent to the time of Christ’s death who were insisting that Gentile Christians be circumcised but Jesus had short-circuited all that by abrogating all previous forms of national and religious identity, and starting from scratch with entirely new rules and fresh religious concepts: all applicable to Jews and Gentiles alike. Those coming to Christ and finding themselves at the foot of the cross would find that everyone else was there: and that would be the kind of ‘oneness’ that would exist. We are reminded that Christ’s peace comes not from a Pact; nor a programme; nor a promise; nor even a profession, but from a PERSON and that if we are all reconciled to Christ, we shall, at the same time, be reconciled to one another. We notice from Paul’s words (quoted above) that **it was Christ** “who has made both one, and it was Christ” “who broke down the middle wall of partition:” all outwith and beyond man’s own agency.

INTO THE 1990’s

We can but hope and pray that this European outburst of freedom and joy, seen in the late 1980’s, will continue into the 1990’s, and become infectious in other parts of the globe. Few of us can even guess at how miserable it must be to live like a prisoner in political thralldom; but the intensity of the rejoicing may give us some idea. We can but hope, too, that many of the religious barriers will also come down. Is it not ironic that Jesus came to destroy barriers whereas ‘Christians’ have put them all back up again? Jesus intended that His followers would be “all one in Christ” but He had hardly left this earth before the divisive spirit was manifested, and leaders in His church were “speaking perverse things and drawing disciples away after themselves”

not sparing the flock. Today, after centuries of Roman Catholicism, and a Reformation, and a Restoration, we can see, now that the dust has settled, that "nothing changes here" and that not only are there many hues amongst the various denominations but there are also many brands amongst the "Churches of Christ."

In a world where religious division is rife and rampant we can but hope and certainly pray that in the 1990's the 'Cold War' amongst Christians might thaw and that "peace might break out." Surely, when Jesus prayed for unity amongst believers He did not conceive it the impossibility that perhaps we do. At Christ's crucifixion the veil in the Temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, (signifying that God had ripped it, not man) and this indicated that the portals of heaven are now accessible to anyone, and to everyone. Hopefully in 1990 we shall see the tearing down of many other veils amongst the churches and the blinkers from our eyes. Although the Jews would never have admitted it, and perhaps were never really aware of it, they read their scriptures with a veil over their eyes. Paul said that he used great plainness of speech, **"And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart."** (2 Cor. 3:13,14). And so there were many kinds of veils "done away in Christ" but obviously many remain and it is a great mistake, I think, for the churches to think that they don't have any, or for us to dismiss the possibility that we, too, can read the scriptures with a veil before our eyes. Veils are no respectors of persons and come in many forms: ranging from the veil of smug complacency (which is perhaps commonest); to the veils of misunderstanding, ignorance, bigotry, misconception, self-righteousness, prejudice, partiality, unfairness and preconception, etc., etc.

Jesus came to demolish all barriers and barricades. Men in every sphere of life are quick to 'put the shutters up' and isolate themselves, and certainly in the religious realm men have re-erected many of the barriers that Jesus destroyed. In the denominations and elsewhere the bulk of the ordinary members are under the control of a handful of clergy, or 'leaders,' and generally whole congregations are held in religious thralldom by a few men. In the political context we have seen what "People-power" can do and how changes can be wrought when the will is present. Is it 'pie in the sky' to think that some of the religious barriers could disappear in the next decade if only 'People-power' could be motivated? Many of us never thought we would live to see the demise of the 'Iron Curtain' which kept eastern Europe in such miserable darkness for all these years; but it has gone. Let us then work and pray for the demolition of all religious barriers, whether in other churches or in our own, and for the removal of all veils, whether before our eyes or the eyes of others. These initiatives must begin with ourselves; they depend upon us; for "People-power," after all, is made up of **individuals**.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

A NEW YEAR REMINDER AND INVITATION

"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." (Numbers 10:29).

"The business of the Church of Christ on earth is to continually and faithfully sound out the invitation, "Come thou with us," to the world, which still lieth in the arms of the wicked one. The early church made this very prominent; all who found

Christ spoke to others about Him. All who received “the word of life” passed that word along to others.

“GO” “COME”

The magic and all-inspiring “go” of the Master ever sounded in their ears and turned in their hearts, and under the mighty impulse of its constraining force they went forward on their mission of conquest and incorporation, sounding out both in word and action to all with whom they came in contact, the cheering and powerfully inviting word, “come.”

“COME THOU WITH US”

So should it be now. This invitation should mark the attitude of the church towards the world. The church’s word to the world should ever be, “Come thou with us.” Alas! too often it is the other way. The world says to the church, “Come,” and the church is too ready to respond to the invitation. It adopts the world’s principles, it pursues the world’s pleasures, and, to a great extent, walks hand in hand with the world.

“SHORN OF HIS LOCKS”

No wonder at its weakness, no wonder that men laugh at it and treat it with scorn. The church thus is like Samson, shorn of his locks. The church’s strength is in its faithful allegiance to Christ and His truth. Its power to overcome sin is in proportion to its purity of life. Its missionary success depends largely upon its missionary zeal.

“AWAKE, AWAKE, PUT ON THY STRENGTH

The Lord’s cry to the church is “Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem.” Under the spell of this call to duty and privilege the church responds, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake.” With the arm of the Lord in full and free operation, and the church fully arrayed in her beautiful garments, many will give heed, and multitudes will heartily respond to the invitation, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.”

Bartley Ellis.

SAIL SHIP — PLANT THE SEED

“A small ship launched upon unknown sea,
A small seed planted upon an unknown tree,
Such is this strange New Year to you and me:
Whither the vessel goeth,
And how the tree up-groweth,
God only knoweth:
But sail the ship, and plant the seed;
What is done in faith is done indeed.”

CHRIST’S RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS

Jesus said, “If you know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them.” Is it a hardship to have the sure ground of happiness thus pointed out? Again, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit.” There is no “perhaps” here. If a man abides in Christ, he will bear much fruit. We know he will. Once more “If ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit, ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” There is no mystery, no uncertainty about the future in these inspired utterances. God only can give us life and peace and joy. But He does this according to a revealed way. These results can be depended on, the operations of nature. We have Christ’s recipe for happiness, the only happiness worthy of the name. We do absolutely know the future this far, they who hear Christ’s words and do them shall be blessed . . .”

Lancelot Oliver.

WE QUOTE DAVID LIVINGSTONE

David Livingstone, the great pioneer missionary to Africa, who once went five years without seeing the face of another white man, said, "Shall I tell you what sustained me amidst the toils, the hardships, the loneliness of my yielded life? It was the promise: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end'."

C.G.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

THE DANGER OF LEGALISM

Seemingly, the temptation to label and classify is so strong that most of us cannot resist it. On every hand, in so many phases of our lives we find this to be true. Sadly, it is no less true in the church. Such pejoratives as "anti," "progressive," "legalist," and "liberal" are thrown around far too loosely. Rarely do we find that one is attempting to build another's reputation or image when he uses such words, in common usage such terms are hazily defined, if indeed they are defined at all.

Liberalism is a real danger to the cause of Christ. So is legalism! Yet the vast majority of those who are labelled as liberals are really not liberals at all. Likewise, many are labelled by their detractors as legalists when they are not legalists in any sense of the true meaning of that term.

Legalism as it is used in this study refers to one who seeks to justify himself before God by law or rule keeping. One is not a legalist because he seeks to obey every command of God. Nor is one a legalist because he believes in the validity of law. Jesus said, "**If ye love me, keep my commandments.**" Surely, no one would seek to prohibit that which is described by Jesus as a necessary result of loving him. An individual can stand firmly for God's will, even strictly interpret the word, do all in his power to be always obedient to the commands of our Lord and still not be a legalist. It is when he falls into the trap of thinking that his rule keeping will result in his salvation that he begins to think as a legalist. It is when one forgets or rejects the fact that "**by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast**" that he becomes a legalist.

This is the danger being spoken of when it is affirmed here that legalism is a grave danger to the church today, even as it was in the first century.

In the first generation of Christianity, legalism made a concentrated effort to take over the faith, in the Roman province of Galatia legalists had told the Gentile Christians that one could not be a Christian unless he kept the ceremonial law exemplified in circumcision. Paul warned these people, "**Standfast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.**"

LEGALISM OF O.T.

The allure of legalism is the temptation to believe that one can simplify the problems of living, it leads one to think he can accept an external standard or a set of rules made by someone else and avoid the responsibility for making decisions.

Legalistic thinking is dangerous because it does not put priority on the good of man. Every rule God has ever made for man was designed for his good. Sometimes changing circumstances have changed the conditions the original instruction had been given to correct. The legalist seems never to be able to realize this. The law of the Old Testament had served its day and purpose well, but Christ had come in fulfilment of that law. The teachers who would have brought the Galatians again under bondage could not grasp that fact.

Christ had problems with the Pharisees over this very weakness in their thinking. Legalism was by no means the only problem Christ had with the Pharisees, but it was one that caused much conflict between the Lord and this religious party. The Pharisees

put a great deal of emphasis on the Sabbath and had developed many meticulous interpretations of the laws regarding its observance, Jesus knew and taught that the Sabbath law had been made to guarantee man and beast a day of rest against the oppression of his master. He said **“The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath,”** Christ realized the purpose of the sabbath, knowing that it was not an end within itself, but was intended for the good of man. Then Pharisees were so literal in their zeal for the law, they put the letter of the law above the good of man. That is the danger of legalism.

As good as it was, the Old Testament law was pre-Christian. It was designed to prepare its followers for the freedom and responsibility that were to come with faith. Paul had preached freedom and liberty to those to whom he carried the gospel. Since the beginning there have been those who just cannot abide freedom. As soon as one set of rules has been cast off some are tempted to make new sets of rules for people to obey. Christianity is not a set of rules. It is a mature faith that does not need rules because it is governed by love. Legalism is sub-Christian because it focuses on laws and ignores the person for whom Christ died.

NOT ALWAYS SPECIFIC

A third danger of legalism is its tendency to make the gospel a new law. The gospel is the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Let it be clear that Christianity has the highest ethical standard of any system ever developed. It is not a question of whether we are to obey the will of God. Certainly, the Christian will live at the highest level of which he is capable. But it is not response to a system of law. Rather it is in response to a system of faith.

Many have wondered why the New Testament has not been more specific about a lot of matters. The fact that it has not means that every age can be trusted to deal with the problem of its own day rather than being hampered by regulations drawn for an earlier day that no longer are adequate. Man, especially the one who tends to legalistic thinking, would have done it differently. God knew better, as always. Legalism offers a comfortable way for people to coerce unity for a while. But then it breaks apart because people have consciences and the ability to think for themselves. This is the reason creeds have never worked. Surely, we who have always disdained creeds should understand this principle.

Letting tradition, which is not of itself bad, become legalism is always a danger, in religion, the past has always been important. From the past we have our traditions, whether it be oral or written, which point us to the way God or his people have operated in the past. By these traditions we are called to faithfulness and obedience to God. However, there is always a subtle temptation to allow our traditions to become laws. It is when tradition becomes a man-made law, unrecognized as such, that tradition becomes legalism and a danger to the very cause of Christ.

Care should be taken not to conclude that everyone who fails to agree with some new idea we have is a legalist. As in other areas, it is not our province to judge who is or is not a legalist. Let God take care of that! In our own thinking and judgment, however, let us not fall into the trap of legalism. It is a lethal danger!

D. Cook.

PUT THE EMPHASIS WHERE IT BELONGS

In the religion of Jesus Christ, his death, burial and resurrection are the essential ingredients. In other words, in Christianity Jesus Christ is the emphasis. Jesus just didn't give us a message to share, he is the message. Any teaching or activity which would take away from the pre-eminence of Jesus is wrong and sinful. Paul told the Corinthians not to glory in men, for all Christians are servants and all belong to Christ the Head of the church. And as servants of Jesus we all exalt him.

Part of the good news about Jesus is teaching concerning baptism. Baptism is a part of a total response on the part of man to Jesus Christ. We must not, however, stress baptism to such a degree that we take our eyes off Christ and his work and place them upon the water. Are we trusting in our baptism to save us rather than the blood of Christ? To think that baptism has no part in the gospel of Christ is certainly wrong. But it is equally as wrong to emphasize baptism over and above every other response of man. Our salvation from sin is in Christ; not the water! Whenever and wherever we speak and teach the gospel of Christ, Christ and his work is central not the action of baptism.

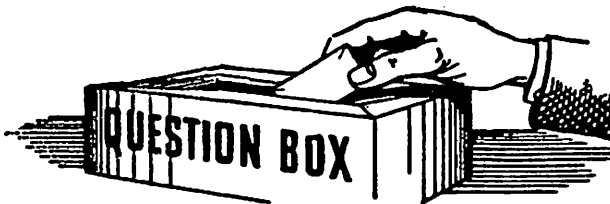
The gospel of Christ is so important that Paul pronounces the curse of heaven upon anyone who would preach another gospel. What is this different gospel? Many feel that this different gospel is simply not teaching the entire gospel of Christ. We often accuse denominations of being guilty of preaching a different gospel; partial truth. But in context, this is not what Paul had in mind. In verse 6 Paul uses the word "removing." A good translation of that word would be desertion. The Galatians were deserting Christ for something else.

The word gospel means good news, and for Christians the gospel is how we are justified in the sight of God. The Galatians were leaving the gospel of Christ (and their justification), for another means (they thought) of justification. What was that other way? Salvation by law-keeping; Judaism. The entire book of Galatians is an argument against salvation by law-keeping. Paul argues that law-keeping can never save you. Only Christ is capable of that. In fact, trusting in anything else other than the grace of God and the blood of Christ to save you, is to be guilty of believing a different gospel. The proper emphasis in Christianity must always be upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. He's number one! He's everything He's our Lord and Saviour! To place emphasis upon anything you have done including baptism, is to take away the emphasis which rightly belongs to Jesus.

Beloved let's always remember that as Christians we serve and exalt Jesus. This is not to imply we have no responsibility, but we must never forget that our good works are designed to draw attention to Jesus. A Christian is like a beautiful painting; and in any beautiful painting the artist is the one who receives the appreciation. Christ has made us what we are.

"But be it far from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ..."

D. Boswell.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Considering the number of individual Churches of Christ in the world, is it possible for them all to speak and practise the same things?"

When I was young in the faith I used to think, "How wonderful it would be if one could walk into any Church of Christ in the world and find all the same things being practised, and precisely all the same teaching being given." Since then, of course, I have come to realise the social, cultural and environmental problems which make this idea extremely improbable, if not impossible. In addition to this, the seemingly intractable problem of interpretation of the scriptures compounds the difficulty.

An examination of other religious groups reveals an equally confusing picture. The edicts of the Roman Catholic Church are not followed by some members of their

own priesthood; the Anglican Church is threatened with a serious split because of the problem of women priests; there are 'high' churches and 'low' churches; evangelical and non-evangelical; and having said all of that, we have not even started to look at the problems associated with the Eastern religions. So what is a realistic approach to this problem, and can there be a sensible resolution of it?

Introductory Arguments

Those who believe that all Churches of Christ should say and do the same things advance their arguments something like this: "God is not the Author of confusion so His revelation would not be designed to confuse His own creation." This is perfectly true, and the fact that it is true ought to teach us that it must be we ourselves who cause and have caused the confusion. So let us look in the right place and we may find the answers.

Also advanced is the argument that the words of the Bible are 'God-breathed,' and that the people who spoke and wrote the words, the "inspired ones," were only the vehicles of the authoritative words of God. That is also perfectly true, but we must understand that there are no inspired **interpreters** of that authoritative Word, although some act as if they **think** they are. We **must** understand that the one who speaks, and has spoken, the Word in the post-Apostolic era is not speaking definitive truth but, in most cases, **his** beliefs **about** the truth. The only speaker who will not err is the one who quotes verbatim from the Word without offering any explanation or opinion of **his own** as to what the Word means. It is a fact, however, that the listener, who may have read the Bible and not understood it, is looking for words of explanation from the speaker. Rather trustingly, our dependence on scholastic ability has made us look to those who have been theologically trained, and therein lies the greatest tragedy. The speaker has probably taught from a hierarchical position in life which he wants to **maintain**, and the listener has believed because it is something which he or she **wants** to believe relative to their own position in life. Well might the cynical Pilate say, "What is truth?"

Paul's Teaching

It is the Greek word DIATASSO which we must consider in order to understand what is meant by the Apostle, and the word means, "to arrange throughout or thoroughly.' The verb 'to order' is also the same Greek word. The passages of scripture which we need to look at are 1 Cor. 7:17; 9:14; Gal. 3:19; 1 Cor. 16:1; 1 Cor. 11:34.

An examination of 1 Cor. 7:17 in its context teaches us that the Apostle is referring to the married state and the call of God through the Gospel relative to that state. The unbelieving wife or husband can stay with the believing partner or depart; either course seems to be acceptable so far as Paul is concerned. The real thrust of the teaching is that people will be called by the Gospel in whatever circumstances they happen to be; what Paul is arranging in all the Churches is that confusion and chaos should not reign by wholesale separations with the consequent upheaval of family life; as he says. "But as God has distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all Churches." So what the Apostle was arranging in this particular instance was that the Churches should not be thrown into confusion because of the Gospel call that, and nothing else.

In 1 Cor. 9:14 we read of the Lord ordaining that those who minister the Gospel have a right to live off the Gospel. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live off the Gospel." This seemingly was not an irrevocable **command** because Paul chose to ignore it in his ministry. "But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me." (v15).

1 Cor. 11:34 in its context is a well-known passage of scripture referring to the Lord's Table. The unspiritual nature of some of the Corinthian Christians was charac-

terised by the forms of gluttony which they seemingly engaged themselves in. They were so intent on their natural food that they were failing to discern the Lord's body in the Breaking of the Bread; consequently, the arrangement which Paul wanted to make is summed up in v34, "And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come." The arrangement was evidently an interim measure and applied particularly to the Corinthian Church.

In 1 Cor. 16:1 we have a reference to the collection for the saints. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye." The arrangement as given to the Galatian saints was to be extended to the Corinthian saints. The object of this arrangement was that there should be no gathering when Paul came to them (v3).

These arrangements by Paul were for particular problems in particular circumstances. It is inconceivable that we, with our knowledge of the scriptures, should be faced with the problem of eating and drinking at the Lord's Table as were the Corinthian brethren. It ought to be equally obvious that local Churches today have not to wait for some Apostolic emissary to take their collections to some central point and authority. So what we are saying is this; if the arrangements made by Paul and other Apostles to counter specific problems in the Churches of the first century are applicable today then they should be carried out; if not applicable, they are nonetheless historically and scripturally true and remain as standard teaching for the Church should similar problems arise in the future.

Areas of Agreement

It has never ceased to amaze me whenever we have conflict on doctrine that we tend to inflate it out of all proportion, and we tend to forget the broad areas of agreement which exist. We agree that there is a God and that His Christ has revealed him to us; on the Gospel and the necessity of obedience to it; on the remembrance of the Lord on the first day of the week (although it is acknowledged that some differences of practice exist); on collections for the saints; on the care and love for the saints and for our neighbours; on appreciation of our Heavenly Father and His care for us; on the Coming of the Lord again to claim His own; on Heaven and our hope of it; and so we could go on at length. Brethren, why are we so intent on destroying ourselves and the Church for which Jesus shed His precious blood? Surely we should go on reading and studying the Word, teaching as well as we are able to from it, and talking about the differences which we may experience from time to time, and doing it in such a way that we shall be always showing love for each other and offering comments which seek to build rather than to destroy. We can do it, and we ought to for the sake of our own children and the continuity of the Gospel and the Church. As regards every Church of Christ in the world speaking and practising exactly the same things, I believe that this will never happen this side of Heaven.

(All questions, please to

Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan, Lancs. WN3 6LE.)

ARE WE DRIFTING?

From Commodore Peary's expedition to the North Pole has come this story:

Peary relates that on his Polar trip he travelled one whole day toward the north, making his sleigh dogs run briskly. At night he checked his bearings to determine his latitude and noticed with great surprise that he was much further south than in the morning. He had been toiling all day toward the north on an immense iceberg drawn southward by an ocean current.

(P. 104, Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Quixote*.)

Many of us, no doubt, have experienced this same problem. We tackle a problem with all our strength, only to discover the harder we work, the behinder we get. Some days, it just doesn't even pay to get out of bed.

Much the same is often true in our religious lives. We struggle on, attempting to keep our bearings, taking seriously God's will for the church and our own personal lives, only to discover, with almost heart-breaking sorrow and despair, that we are not growing as we should, that our spiritual strength is almost non-existent, that our hopes and courage are vapours dispelled by the slightest breeze. As hard as we try, we just can't seem to gain any ground. We indeed find ourselves slipping further and further behind. Then we sink into our chairs and wonder whether it is really worth all the trouble and pain. Aren't God's promises worth anything.?

The story makes a helpful suggestion to us who know this feeling. When we find ourselves constantly losing ground in spite of our best efforts, perhaps it is time to check our foundations. After all, if we are on an iceberg moving in the wrong direction, we will never get anywhere.

Christian living demands careful attention to basics. If we have tied into a faulty set of presuppositions, if we have tried to make God over in our own images, if we have tried to follow our own private ideas, we may surely find ourselves on shifting ground.

Scripture points to only one sure foundation: the gracious act of God in Jesus Christ. Unless our faith is grounded there, not in ourselves, nor in doctrines and traditions of men, we will forever be doomed to drift with the currents of our own private histories, never able to find solid footing for purposeful Christian living.

If we will constantly check our bearings in the light of knowing that we live by the power of God's love alone, we may fortified against life's hazards and disappointments. But woe to those who never check their footing, for they are destined to drift forever, thinking how much progress they making, but never knowing the truth about themselves. Even the right longitude and latitude won't guarantee our salvation.

S. Spidel.

WATCH OUT FOR BIRDS !

"He who has ears, let him hear" (Matt. 13:9). We place all the blame and responsibility on the teacher. Jesus placed an equal responsibility on the soil.

"I didn't get much out of it" is one way of burdening the teacher and absolving ourselves from any obligation in the teaching transaction. We are "taken" with certain teachers and enthralled with gifted speakers. We are ready to be zombies in the hands of some suave speakers who are more pleasant and entertaining, but are impatient with the less charming. Our Lord intersects our "grandstand religion" by admonishing us to "hear." We are just as responsible to listen and accept the message from a lisping, stuttering, rambling messenger as we are to succumb to a brilliant oratory of the golden-throated.

In Matthew 13, Jesus describes four kinds of people who go to church. One kind of person who fills a seat has wayside soil in his soul. **"Behold, a sower went out to sow; And as he sowed some seeds fell beside the roadside, and the birds came and devoured them"**(Matt. 13:3,4).

Wayside soil, the beaten down and smooth asphalt heart. This person is always too busy – too absorbed in other things. This hardened saint never allows himself even 15 minutes a day with God. He never allows himself to be plowed and opened up and never waits for God to drop seed into the furrow. He has already lost the game at the crucial point.

Watch out for birds! There are too many forces in our lives that destroy the seed and prevent it from germinating. There are too many other thoughts and desires – fun,

money, power, prestige and recognition. When we listen to God's word and let other thoughts crowd truth out, we have already blown our supersonic whistle and summoned a whole flock of birds. The fowls just keep flying in and pecking away.

When brethren sit in church like so many spiritual connoisseurs and evaluate speakers as "Good" – "better" – or "best," then it's a dead give away that boredom has already infected the ranks. When folks talk of the preacher's dryness, slowness, softness, hardness, or fanaticism, then pinions are flapping overhead.

Watch out for the birds! When we refuse to listen, be assured that it's no dove of peace that makes the assault – but rather the vulture of selfishness and indifference.

Let's not shoot at the birds overhead but refuse them hunting ground in our hearts!
H. G. Taylor.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Feb. 4	Lev. 19:1-18	1 Cor. 13:
Feb. 11	Neh. 8:5-18	1 Cor. 14:1-20
Feb. 18	Isa. 28:1-13	1 Cor. 14:21-40
Feb. 25	Psa. 16:	1 Cor. 15:1-19

LOVE

1 Corinthians 13 is arguably the best known chapter of the Bible. Most people have heard it read from the Authorised Version. Paul led up to it by writing: **"But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way"** (12:31). Love is the more excellent way.

The Greek word for charity or love-here is **agape**. When one thoroughly examines the history of this word, one sees that the Holy Spirit captured it for the use of God and invested it with new value and gave it a depth of meaning which it did not have before. William Barclay, an outstanding Scottish Greek scholar, once wrote: **"Agape** has to do with the mind: it is not simply an emotion which rises unbidden in our hearts: it is a principle by which we deliberately live. **Agape** has supremely to do with the will. It is a conquest, a victory and an achievement. No one ever naturally loved his enemies. To love one's enemies is a conquest of all our natural inclinations and emotions. Let a man be a saint or let a man be a sinner, God's only desire is for that man's highest good. Now that is what **agape** is. **Agape** is the spirit which says: "No matter what any man does to me, I will never seek to do harm to him; I will never set out

for revenge; I will always seek nothing but his highest good'."

Christian love is tough — that is one thing I draw from chapter 13. It is not a wishy-washy love, but a love that "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (13:7, N.I.V.). It is a love that "never fails" (8); and it is contrasted with the special gifts of the Spirit — prophecy, tongues, knowledge — which would one day cease, be stilled or pass away (8).

Paul wrote: **"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love"** (13). May I quote Barclay again: "Great as faith and hope are, love is still greater. Faith without love is cold, and hope without love is grim. Love is the fire which kindles faith. And it is the light which turns hope into certainty."

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

In Mark 16:17-20 we read: **"And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out demons: they shall speak with new tongues (languages): they shall take up serpents: and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven and sat down on the right hand of God. And they (the apostles) went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."** Please note that the signs were for **confirming the word**. Someone once said: "All truth must be made credible before the human mind

can accept it. One cannot accept that which is incredible. Natural truths must be validated by natural phenomena. Supernatural truths must be validated by supernatural phenomena."

I believe that truth once confirmed need never be confirmed again. I also believe that God confirmed 'His word of truth two thousand years ago. All this talk today, therefore, of speaking in tongues is really a declaration that God failed back then in His work of confirmation. Who would want to bring such a charge to the Almighty?

The church in Corinth came behind in no gift (1:7). That was not said of the church in Rome: "**For I, (Paul) long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established . . .**" (Romans 1:11). One of the gifts of the Spirit was, of course, speaking in tongues (languages). Paul said: "**Wherefore tongues are for a sign (recall Mark 16), not to them that believe, but to them that believe not . . .**" (14:22). Paul as an apostle possessed this gift (14:18), but to him it was far from the be-all and end-all of his life. In fact, he regarded prophesying as a greater gift (14:5).

One of the best books on this subject, I think, is Victor Budgen's "**The Charismatics and the Word of God.**" It's a great read. In it he points out that tongues were real languages and that the tongue speaker in that day understood the language. For example, he deals with verse 14: "**For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays but my understanding is unfruitful.**" He writes: "If, then, the spirit is supremely a knowing faculty, this fully supports the view that the speaker in other languages knew what he was saying . . . 'but my mind is unfruitful' must be understood to mean, 'my understanding produces no fruit i.e. it does not benefit others'." So called Charismatics today in no way emulate those gifted speakers of the past. I am reminded here of the words of John: "**Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God:**

because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

WOMEN

I have just spent over a year studying the subject: "Women's Place in Society and the Church." Alexander Campbell wrote: "Woman, with me, is to society what the spirit is to the body; for as the body without the spirit is dead, society without woman is dead also . . . Woman, I believe, is destined to be the great agent in the grandest of all human enterprises — an effort to advance society to the acme of its most glorious destiny on earth . . . She sows the seed, she plants the germs of human goodness and human greatness. She infixes the generous purpose, the salutary and noble principles in the youthful heart. She makes the men and women of future times, and shapes the character and destinies of posterity even to the third, and fourth and sometimes the tenth generation.

Women are restricted by God in the public ministry of the word. This is clear from this passage (14:34-35) and, indeed, others. However, this is but a small matter in the light of all the labours in which they can be involved for the cause of Christ. (See, for example, Romans 16:3-4,6,12; Philipians 4:3; Titus 2:3-5.)

Women constitute the back-bone of many of the congregations I know. Because of the lack of men, it might come to a time where in some meetings they will have to read the lessons, distribute the elements, start the singing, act as secretaries or treasurers, chair business meetings, etc. Out of necessity, David and his men one day ate the shewbread (1 Samuel 21:3-6, Matthew 12:3-4), which was not lawful for them to touch. Could that act as a parallel one day for the above scenario on the sisters of the church?

THE RESURRECTION

Some of the Corinthians were saying that there was no resurrection from the dead (15:12). Paul answered them clearly and plainly. Christ's resurrection

inferred the necessity of the resurrection of the saints. Jesus overcame sin, Satan and the grave and we can too if we put our trust in the risen Lord.

The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the central truth of the gospel. Paul wrote to Timothy: “. . . Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). What is the gospel anyway? **“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received and wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that he was buried and that he rose again on the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas . . . the twelve . . . above five hundred brethren . . . James . . . and last of all he was seen of me also”** 15:1-8). Really, the gospel consists of seven facts: the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the burial of Jesus, the Resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus, the coronation of Jesus and the glorification of Jesus. If all Christians everywhere had a real belief in these facts and emphasised them all the time, then the church would be much stronger in the world.

Jesus' resurrection was prophesied during the history of the Jews. Jesus Himself foretold the great event on a number of occasions. The resurrection was at the heart of apostles' message. It brought opposition, of course, as it still does today. The reaction of the ancient Athenians is a good example (Acts 17:32).

My brethren, our hope lies in the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. What a hope! I like what one preacher once said: “Life with Jesus is an endless hope; without Him, it is a hopeless end.”

Ian S. Davidson
Motherwell

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

During the days of the infamous American Civil War, a humourist named Artemus Ward boasted. “I have already given two cousins to the war, and I stand ready to sacrifice my wife's brother.” Needless to say that Ward's name is not remembered alongside the names of Grant and Lee as a major figure in that conflict.

Jestingly Ward admitted the same lack of commitment which characterizes so many of us in the church. We are willing to go anywhere, do anything, give all – just so long as no effort, no expense, no sacrifice is required. We talk much and do little, which brings us shamefully close to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who said and did not.

The world is dying without Christ, yet we stand ready to sacrifice our brothers-in-law, our cousins, the elders, the preachers – anyone but ourselves – to the cause of evangelism. The philosophy which says “Let George do it” suits us just fine, so long as our name is not George. We rationalise, we make excuse, procrastinate – and all too often, that's all we do. Knowing what is right and doing what is right are two different things.

Try as we might, we can't serve the Lord by proxy. We can't excuse our lethargy by hiring men to do the Christian works for us that we ought to be doing ourselves. To save the souls of men, God saw the need to become personally involved with them through the incarnation, life, and death of His Son. If we, through Christ, hope to help to save the souls of men, we too must involve ourselves personally.

Your next door neighbour may not listen to a preacher, but he just might listen to you. You can't teach? I think you can. But even if you can't, you can at least invite your neighbour, your friend, your classmate, your loved one to come with you to worship services where teaching takes place.

The question is not, “Can you?” but “Will you?” You see, it all depends upon the level of our commitment.

D. Keyes

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slammanan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting was held on the 2nd December, 1989, in the Tranent Meeting-house, when a goodly number assembled to discuss the subject: viz. "How can we explain 1 John 3:9 and 1 John 5:18 in the light of 1 Cor. 8:12-13"

The subject was introduced by the two speakers for the day, Jack Nisbet of Haddington and John Colgan from Tranent. After the introductory talk on the subject there was an hour's general discussion ably chaired by Mark Plain, Tranent. A profitable and enjoyable time of fellowship was enjoyed by all.

The next meeting will be held in the Haddington Meeting-house on March 3rd, 1990, when the subject to be considered will be "What is the irremissable sin against the Holy Spirit, as per Matt. 12:31,22" when the speakers will be Ian Davidson, Motherwell, John Kneller, Tranent and the chairman will be James R. Gardiner, Haddington.

Ian S. Davidson.

COMING EVENTS

ANNUAL SOCIAL

Hayfield Road, Kirckaldy.
April 21st, 1990 at 3.30 p.m.
(Tea 4.45 p.m.)

Speaker: Mike Heinemeir
R. Moyes (Sec.)

NEW YEAR SOCIAL

Held at Slammanan on Monday, 1st January, 1990 at 12 noon.

Chairman: Ian Davidson
Speakers: David Chalmers
John Wilson (Jnr.)
David Ferguson

OBITUARY

On 24th November, in her 87th year, Edna Gillet passed from this life to await that great day. Two years previously she went to live in Hartley House, Cranbrook, Kent, to be cared for in her growing infirmity. Until the 8th of October this year she had been able to meet with us to remember her

Lord. This was made possible by someone driving down to collect her and later take her back, (a round trip of 30 miles). Edna greatly appreciated this and eating lunch with us before going back. Edna was the youngest of nine children, and served her Lord faithfully. Since the passing of her sister Dorothy in 1982, with whom she shared a home, Edna had been increasingly lonely and less able to care for herself. This writer took a short service in our building, 30th October, for her family, friends and brethren. Edna is now at rest with her Lord.

Derek L. Daniell

GHANA APPEAL - CORRECTION

A very important word was missed out in the printing of the December issue re. the Ghana Appeal.

Obviously page 191, line 17, should have read, "Please do NOT send Versions or Commentaries that you are not using because they are unreliable."

GHANA REPORT

It was with a definite lack of faith that I approached the editor of the Scripture Standard in April 1989 to ask his opinion on my chances of raising enough money from an appeal to send Brother Bill and Sister Ann Cook to Africa to assess the needs of our Brethren. The response continues to overwhelm me.

As we begin a New Year, I felt that it would be good to let everyone who contributed, know how much was raised, and how it was distributed.

Please bear in mind, that this report will be out of date by the time you read this article. It was compiled at the end of November.

I am happy to report that today we reached £9000 collected.

Condensed Financial Report

Cost of the initial trip for Bill and Ann to go to Ghana for a period of one month	£1524.16
Money left in Ghana	£ 619.37
Money sent for registration	£4600.00
Money sent for medical needs	£ 525.00
Money sent for tracts to be printed in Ghana	£ 400.00
Money to Brethren for specific purposes stated	£ 962.00

Money sent for benevolence	£ 100.00
Money sent for schooling of children	£ 40.00
Money in Royal Bank Acc. No. 439399	£ 237.42
TOTAL	£9007.95

The Brethren in Ghana have been greatly encouraged by this support.

Five congregations now have land and are hoping to build this year.

Four areas in Ghana now have a small amount of medical aid.

The gospel is being distributed in written form to those in darkness.

To those who have made this possible, may I thank you once again.

To those who did not contribute, I hope that you may be encouraged by the response so far, to become part of this effort in the year into which we have now entered.

May I reiterate my promise, to send 100% of money collected to Ghana. Postage, Bank Charges etc., will be met by the team.

Enquiries and further information welcome.

P.S. Thank you IMB for the Cheque received on 21/11/89.

Thank you Anon for the £50 received on 24/11/89.

GHANA APPEAL

This month I am appealing to my brethren who wish to pay a few pounds every month for the setting up of a long term commitment to EYECARE.

To have good eyesight is a precious gift, yet it is surprising how many people in Britain put off having their eyes tested because of the cost. In Ghana the problem is tenfold. The country is in debt, the people are poor, their health therefore suffers. 95% of all blindness in the world is caused by diseases of the eye. There are brethren in Ghana who have failing eyesight and need new glasses, but food has a higher priority.

For example, there is David Arku-Mensah, known to many, Abraham Mante, a preacher in Koforidua whose glasses are very badly scratched as they are old and in need of replacing, Agnes Mante who cannot read her Bible because she is short-sighted and Clement, at Huhunya who is in the same situation.

I know we cannot help in every area of need, but as you can see from what has been collected to date, it is amazing how donations add up.

I am also collecting old glasses to send out to Ghana. I can collect these at Social Gatherings or Mutual Benefit Meetings. Anyone living further away and wishing to send glasses directly to Ghana can contact me for an address.

Cheques should be made out to:- Graeme Pearson, (Ghana Appeal).

Graeme Pearson,
13 Fairways, Dunfermline,
Fife. KY12 0DU.
(0383) 728624.

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.

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
Lothian Printers, 109 High Street, Dunbar, East Lothian. Tel: (0368) 63785