

# *The* **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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## **OUTWARD APPEARANCES**

Here in Britain we have been watching the astonishing developments in the USA as the world awaits the outcome of the presidential election. After the casting of millions of votes only a handful of votes separate the two candidates and the eventual outcome could rest upon a single vote. How utterly incredible, and what a lesson to all those of us who live in a democracy on the importance of casting our vote. The eighteen-month long campaign has, as usual, been blunt and bruising, and we can but admire the stamina of all those concerned. Now that all the hand-shaking, baby-kissing and posturing is over, we can but offer our very best wishes to the eventual President, as he embarks upon his awesome responsibility. May he make a great country even greater, and may his decisions be of lasting benefit to such a friendly and generous people.

To mere observers on this side of the Atlantic, what has again emerged from these elections is the overriding importance of the candidates looking good in the media, particularly on TV. Again it seems as if the actual policies of the candidates were less important than the personal "image" of the person himself. Al Gore had to try to compensate for the allegation that he was "stiff and starchy" by trying to be witty and "folksy" and his passionate kiss of his wife on TV, was reckoned to be one of the highlights of his entire campaign. George Bush, on the other hand, tried strongly to portray himself as devoutly religious (perhaps to please the Bible Belt) and had to work hard to soothe any worries on his drink-driving conviction some years back. And so, while policies were mentioned, the electorate were encouraged to be influenced more by appearances, and how the candidates came over on "chat shows". For instance they were asked about their favourite breakfast cereal, their most favourite film, junk-food, pop-group, etc. George Bush had difficulty in naming his favourite book, and the opposition suggested that this was because he had never read any. However, George was thought to be nice to have a few beers with, and a man who would lend you his lawnmower. The height of the candidates was also argued over, presumably on the basis that tall men make better presidents; and statistics were produced to prove it. Certainly all candidates want to look young and fit. One previous President used to put boot-black on his hair to hide the grey, whereas another collapsed while out jogging. One wonders however, if President Abe Lincoln would ever had dyed his hair to please a precocious public; or if Sir Winston Churchill would ever have been seen out jogging. Must a man be tall, handsome, witty and folksy to have the ability to run the country?

This is, of course, a sad reflection upon us, the general public, for it shows that we

are shallow enough to respond to this. We are more interested by appearances than by actualities. We seem to prefer that which is artificial and fun; to that which is real but sombre. The human animal much prefers a pleasant illusion to a dull reality. The gullible public, have, in every generation, fallen for the charming rogue and are prepared to accept a man of dubious character provided he is handsome, witty and amusing. We might not be prepared to buy a second-hand car from him; but he is 'very popular'. This flaw in the human make-up extends even into the Church.

#### OUTWARD APPEARANCES

James could say, **"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect to persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment: and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing and you say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place: and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit thou under my footstool. Are ye not therefore partial in yourselves, and are becoming judges of evil thoughts"** (2:1). These brethren fawned upon the rich and influential, and despised the poor man. They were impressed with the gold ring and expensive clothes. We might think nothing much has changed. We are still impressed by the man who steps out of the Rolls Royce and speaks with a cultured ('Prince Charles') accent. But this should have no place in the Church. **"Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?"** asks Paul. This he asked the Christians at Corinth for they not only challenged his apostleship but, it seems, despised him on account of his 'image' - his personal appearance. They said that his letters **"are powerful and weighty; but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible"** (2 Cor. 10:10). Paul goes on to add that he was not in the business of making personal comparisons, or to contrast himself with any of the brethren, for that was what the Corinthians were doing ("comparing themselves among themselves" v.12) and that was "most unwise". Thus the rebuke: **"Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's"** (v.7). This was something for the Corinthians to chew upon, and something for us as well.

Quite apart from the 'top preacher' syndrome in some parts of the world, we have the serious problem that some personalities are bigger than the message: and their words carry more weight than the scriptures. Over the years almost every religious denomination has had its champion, past or present; and we can perhaps, think immediately of names ranging from Calvin to Wesley; Luther to Spurgeon, even Charles T. Russell to Dr. Billy Graham. The writings and speeches of some of these men carry far more weight, in certain quarters, than does God's word itself: such is this personality cult in religion. It is not the first time, in discussion, that someone has said, "Yes, that's what the Bible says, but I will have to wait and see what my minister says". Paul in his controversy with the Corinthians over their evident tendency to be entirely influenced by personal appearance (mentioned above) urged these Christians that they **"Might learn not to think of men above that which is written that no man be puffed up for one against another"** (1 Cor. 4:6). No man's words are ever to be considered superior to **"that which is written"**. No man is ever to be unduly extolled by his brethren; and certainly not to the extent that any one be 'puffed up', or that some be 'for' and others be 'against' another. Paul goes on (v. 9-14) to show that if any group of men deserved human accolade it could probably be the apostles, but the very opposite was the case. God had sent the apostles into the world **last** (or least)

'Appointed to death' and 'made a spectacle of the world' not only to men but to the very angels. The apostles were "fools for Christ's sake, weak, despised, in hunger, in thirst, buffeted, in nakedness, with no certain dwelling-place, labouring with their own hands, reviled, made to be as the filth of the world and an offscouring of all things". This was how Paul and the other apostles saw themselves and, in many cases, how they were treated by their fellowmen, and even by some in the Church. A striking contrast to the honour, awe and reverence bestowed upon personalities in the religious world today, and particularly upon men like the Pope.

The lesson for the Corinthians (and for us) ever needs to be re-learned, for no man whatsoever is ever 'above that which is written'. Paul, we remember, also withstood the apostle Peter "to the face" for he "was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11) and lightly dismissed the brethren "of reputation" domiciled in Jerusalem. That they were considered highly, and held in some reputation, cut no ice with the apostle. Similarly, Paul was quite unmoved by those "who seemed to be somewhat" in the Jerusalem church, or those thought to be important "in conference". And to those "privily brought in" Paul gave no ground whatever "no, not for an hour" (v. 5). Why? - "For God accepteth no man's person" (v. 6). Strong personalities, and men of powerful charisma, in the Church, will come and go but God's word remains unimpaired and quite impervious to change. Indeed Jesus said that even heaven and earth would pass away, but His words would outlive all that, and remain eternal and indestructible. Thus we do not require to be very bright to realise that Paul had very little time for personality cults in the Church. Paul said (earlier in the same epistle) that even if angels came down from heaven and preached a gospel that differed in any way from the one he had preached, that the angel should not be listened to, but rather accursed. The gospel, and God's words, were sacrosanct. "For," says the apostle, "do I persuade (please) men or God?" "If I pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ". Paul was no respecter of persons, in the Church or out of it.

### GOD IS IMPARTIAL

In his own time the apostle Peter had also to embrace this truth, although in his case, it required divine intervention and a miraculous vision. Acts Chapter 10 describes in detail the intriguing circumstances which befell the apostle and, which eventually wrung from his lips that wonderful (and to him, incredible) truth. "That God is no respecter of persons, but in EVERY NATION he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him".

Gentiles, especially, have cause to rejoice at this wonderful news. God is entirely impartial and anyone, in any nation, can please God by fearing Him and working out in their lives, God's righteousness.

- (1) God is impartial in that He has accounted all men to be under sin. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray". "There is none righteous, no not one". This is the true state of affairs, but in man's world those who were rich and influential would pay to have this truth covered up. But God is quite impartial. He states the bare truth, and includes Monarchs, Presidents, Dictators as well as the humble ploughboy.
- (2) God is impartial in providing just One Saviour. If we are to be saved from our sins it must be through the paschal Lamb supplied by God. Jesus said, "No man cometh to the Father but by Me". There are no 'special dispensations' afforded to the academics and intellectuals of this world. There are no ways of getting into heaven by the 'back door' or by 'pulling strings' or any other of the

privileges in man's world. **"But those who come to Jesus, God will no wise cast out".**

- (3) God is impartial in providing just **one plan** of salvation. The gospel is God's power unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Jesus' parting words to His disciples were, **"go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved . . ."** (Mark 16:15). In man's world when benefits are being given out, the poor and weak are usually jostled aside and pushed to the end of the queue, by the rich and the strong. In God's world the common people are more likely to hear God gladly and certainly the gospel is for all, alike.
- (4) God is impartial in many other ways. He has provided just **one book**, the Bible, by which **all men** might be enlightened and to which **all men** must conform. He has provided just **one Church** into which **all men** must come to be saved. Just as He is **ONE God** so He sent into the world just **one Spirit**, even as we are called in **one** hope of our calling, **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**, for God is above us all, through us all, and in us all (Eph. 4:5). He has also provided just **one bar** of justice and has appointed **one Righteous Judge**, to whom we shall **all** give account. There shall be no special tribunals held in camera or 'rigged' juries, but all will have righteous judgement. The picture many have of the Judgement is an austere God on a lofty throne sending most to hell and a few to heaven, whereas the truth is that God will merely be giving us what we have chosen. What we, in effect, have asked Him to give us. We chose to live as we did. We chose to ignore God's warnings or to joke about them. God will give us what, by our lives, we have asked for.

### CONCLUSION

God is impartial: so should we try to be. God is no respecter of persons: neither should we be. The world is entirely given over to being influenced by appearances. Even if a person applies for work, he, or she must reach certain personality standards and have "an attractive appearance"; or "an outgoing personality"; or "requisite experience" or be "smart and intelligent".

The world puts us all into classes, brackets and categories depending upon our background, our old school, our occupation, our IQ, our model of car (last year's or 'old banger'), our social circle or clubs, where we go on holidays, our accent, etc., etc. With God these considerations are of no consequence whatever. God looks upon the inside and cares little for our human, artificial and whimsical values. Thanks be to God that He is no respecter of persons and welcomes into His presence the lowest of the low, the dregs of humanity, the halt, the lame and the blind. God sent His Son into the world to save sinners and placed no limits on the depth of those sins. Christ promises that truly repentant sinners can leave their burdens of sin behind in the watery grave, or baptism, and they can emerge to walk in newness of life, as innocent as the new born babe. Praise be to God.

In all the wonderful, and not so wonderful, discourses of Mr. Bush and Mr. Gore, we were treated (by the media) to many little 'sound-bites' of these speeches, highlighting the many promises they were prepared to make. Let's close with an even better 'sound-bite' from Isaiah and an even bigger promise, **'Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool'** (1-18).

## JUDAS, THE BETRAYER

Of all the characters who march across the stage of Bible history there is none so tragic nor so despicable as that of Judas Iscariot. A poet described him as "The base Judean who flung a pearl away, Richer than all his tribe."

There is something horrible about the way he betrayed Christ with a kiss. One preacher described it as "the hiss of a kiss". Not the least of all the dark aspects of his life is the way he died. There is a mystery of horror about the character which makes him typical of all the dastardly traitors of all ages. Even Jesus said of him, It would have been good had he never been born.

### THE CHARACTER OF JUDAS

We know nothing of Judas prior to his call by Jesus. To have been called as an apostle implies that he had previously declared himself a disciple. It is thought that he was drawn, as were the other eleven, by the preaching of John. Perhaps he had never been a disciple of John, but had heard the gracious words of the Teacher as Jesus travelled through Judea with His followers (see John 3:22). In any case it is probable Judas was among those who received the call to Apostleship at the sea of Tiberias (Matt. 4:18-22).

There should be no doubt for the astute student of God's word about the character of Judas at the time of his call. Jesus being able to read the hearts of men (John 2:25) selected His apostles with care. Judas had talents and gifts comparable to the other eleven and, due to that supposed fact, his call was not a matter of surprise to them, nor did they think it strange.

Let us be tempted, as others have, to believe that Jesus selected Judas, knowing that He would be betrayed by him to fulfill the prophecies, we need to remember some facts about God's foreknowledge - facts that are uncontested by serious students. The foreknowledge of God amounts to an immutable decree that whatever is known will come about. If Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him, when Judas himself did not know it, then Judas was no free moral agent and as such would not have been accountable for his actions. Judas would have been treated as a mere instrument, as a means and not an end in the hands of a higher power. It would render meaningless the appeals and reproaches made to him by Jesus and deny any real existence of that personal responsibility, and sense of guilt, which was our Lord's purpose to awaken and stimulate in the hearts of hearers.

It is felt by most authorities the germs of the evil unfolded themselves gradually. The rules of which the twelve were subject in the first journey (Matt. 10:9,10) sheltered him from the temptation that later engulfed him. We find traces of evil in his life as early as Luke 8:13.

**"They on the rock are they, which, when they hear receive the word with joy: and these have no root, which for a while, believe, and in time of temptation fall away".**

It would be hard to prove that this principle did not have a direct application to Judas.

From a strict biblical perspective we must refer to John for any reference to Judas between his call and the events immediately preceding the betrayal. John makes these allusions with the manifest purpose of making known the nefarious character of Judas. In the sequence of allusions there is a gradual development and growing clearness in the manner in which Jesus makes prophecy regarding His future betrayal. In John 6:79 Jesus said, **"Did I not choose you, the twelve? And one of you is a devil".** John

writing after the betrayal tells his readers that Jesus was speaking about Judas (v. 71). Why this warning, and others similar to it, did not cause a cessation of the betraying spirit, or initiate a break of their relationship with Judas is hard to fathom. Perhaps the fact that Jesus never mentioned His future betrayer by name caused Judas to stay with Him to the end.

We know that the gradual inception of evil into his character was brought about by personal motives for gain (see John 12:6). The gain must have been great enough to induce him to remain in spite of the warnings of Jesus.

**"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt.6:19,20).**

**"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed" (Luke 12:1,2).**

#### WHY SELECT ONE WHO WOULD BE A BETRAYER

Some, on the ground of God's absolute foreknowledge, content themselves with saying, with Calvin, that the judgments of God are as a great deep, and with others, that Judas was chosen in order that the divine purpose might be accomplished through him.

We may be sure that a dear friend of Jesus would betray Him (Ps. 41:9), but to remove the possibility of that one exercising his freedom of choice and having God make the choice of betrayal for Him places God in the role of manipulator and man in the role of puppet. Surely none of us are ready for that. Some see room for this supposed attribute of God in John 6:64, but the meaning, clearly, is that Jesus knew from the inception of the sin of betrayal in Judas' heart that he would betray Him.

We may be sure that the presence of such a false friend in the company of Jesus' immediate friends was needed to complete the circle of Christ's trials and tribulations. Jesus could not have been in **"all points tempted as we are"** without a Judas present, that is, a Judas who had himself chosen to be what he was.

I would suppose also that the appearance of such a person as Judas among the immediate attendants of Jesus was needed as an example of the strength of human depravity - how it can lurk under the most sacred professions.

Naturally we must also include the reason that the scriptures must be fulfilled. However, let us always remember that God's word was given for man's salvation and not man for fulfilling God's word. That God's foreknowledge would be brought to pass none would dare deny it. Also remember with but few exceptions God's foreknowledge covers only events and things. When it covered people it was normally those people who were His obedient servants (cf. Jer. 1:5). Let us make certain that we never assign to God the role of human manipulator in the process.

#### MOTIVES OF JUDAS IN THE BETRAYAL

Some believe that Judas was a strong patriot who saw in Jesus the foe of his race and betrayed Him in the interests of his country. This view is irreconcilable with his rejection by the chief priest (Matt. 27:3-10).

Others believe that Judas felt the throne belonged to Jesus, but realised that some act would have to be committed to compel Him to accept it. Having Him arrested would incite the people, who loved Him, to act. They would overthrow the authority of the priests and the Roman authorities and forcefully place Jesus on the throne. Jesus would then reward Judas with a high seat in government for his part in the chain of events. However, this falls short of reason. Nothing in the life of Judas indicates an

intelligence of this nature.

There is no way to say with certainty what the motive of Judas was in betraying Christ, but we may be sure that the gradual change of his character brought out the wordliness in him and since all hope of a new reign of David seemed to be lost he attempted to take whatever spoils of the game he could. He undoubtedly hoped for more, but took what he could get.

### THE DEATH OF JUDAS

Only Matthew of all the gospels mentions the death of Judas and this account differs in detail from the accounts in Acts. Acts says that instead of throwing the money into the temple he bought a field with it. Perhaps the explanation is that what was bought with his money is spoken of as bought by him.

Acts also says, that instead of hanging himself, "**falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, all his bowels gushed out**" It is a reasonable supposition that, the rope breaking, he fell with such violence that his abdomen burst with the fall.

### THE JUDGEMENT OF JUDAS

The idea that Origen suggests as that reason for his suicide is foolish. He suggests that Judas, despairing of pardon in his life, would rush on into the world of the dead, meet the Lord, confess his guilt, and ask for pardon. Foolish, true, but 700 million people today believe in the same principle - purgatory.

The apostles said, ". . . **he went to his own place**" (Acts 1:25). Most authorities agree that this meant some dark region of Hades reserved for the wicked.

In view of his self-murder I would have to agree with the idea of his going to torment, since murderers are included in that number (Rev. 21:18).

Today the name of Judas is a synonym of scorn and loathing. No mother ever names her child Judas. We think of Judas as being the archtraitor. Today a goat used to lure sheep to their destruction in the slaughter house is known as a Judas goat. A plant which grows in the East which looks attractive, but which is bitter to taste, is called a Judas tree.

The name today stands for all that is false - so be it.

B. WILLIAMS.

## IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

The last Passover meal Jesus ate with His disciples was a particularly important one. Jesus knew that before that very night was finished He would be betrayed by one of His apostles, denied by another one, and abandoned by the others.

He knew that within hours a train of events would result in arrest, trials, abuse and mistreatment, and finally scourging and crucifixion. So it was that to Jesus this Passover meal, which we usually call the Last Supper, was not just the usual annual Jewish feast remembering the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery by Moses - it was rather a time to prepare Himself and His apostles for the events soon to occur.

One part of that last meal together was especially important, although not fully understood nor appreciated by the Apostles at the time. This incident is given in Matthew 26:26-29: "**Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body'. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it,**

*all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* After His death, His resurrection, and His ascension back to heaven, this simple feast of which Jesus asked His followers to partake would become one of the vital elements of the Christian faith - the Lord's Supper.

### BIBLICAL DESIGNATIONS

"The Lord's Supper" is one way of referring to this commemorative meal, as indicating that it is of divine origin. (I Corinthians 11:20) The New Testament writers also refer to it as "The Lord's table" or "the table of the Lord". (I Corinthians 10:21; Luke 22:29,30) Sometimes it is simply called "the breaking of bread", which was the common expression for a meal.

### ON THE LORD'S DAY

The evidence is strong that the New Testament Church, under the direction of the Apostles, observed the Lord's Supper on the **first day of every week** (the day we call Sunday) as a part of the Lord's Day worship. Acts 2:42 tells us that the early Christians at Jerusalem "**devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**" Some years later, although he was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem (Acts 20:16), the Apostle Paul waited a week at Troas so that he might be at the regular assembly of the Christians to "break bread" on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Commenting on this passage, A.C. Hervey points out that "This also is an important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians" (**Pulpit Commentary**). Other commentators, such as Thomas Scott and Phillip Doddridge, recognize the same practice in the passage. The New Testament evidence for a weekly Lord's Day observance is confirmed by the writings of Justin Martyr (150 A.D.) and **Didache** (early second century).

Although most denominations do not practice weekly observance of the supper, from time to time voices are heard pointing to its divine origin and value. Such a case is mentioned by Carl Henry: "In discussing the bankruptcy of our worship. Reformed scholars in Continental Europe such as J.J. von Allmen . . . reserve their strongest judgement for the removal of the Lord's Supper from the regular pattern of Sunday worship. They protest the denial of it to Christians as they assemble every Lord's Day . . . They ask, not for crypto-sacramentarianism, but for an acknowledgement that certain patterns of worship were dominically instituted and are neglected or treated as appendages at our peril" ("**A Hard Look at American Worship**", *Christianity Today*, Dec. 8, 1967, p. 29).

### WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER?

What is the Lord's Supper? The Scriptures picture it as several things.

- 1. The Lord's Supper is a memorial.** It is a means of remembering Christ, what He did for us and what He means to us. Paul states that Jesus specifically asked us to remember Him in eating of the bread and drinking of the cup (1 Corinthians 11:23-25). The bread was the unleavened bread of the Passover meal, and was a memorial of His body sacrificed on the cross. The cup contained the "fruit of the vine" or the juice of the grape, and was a memorial of the blood He shed in dying for mankind, making a new relationship with God possible for us sinners. The Lord's Supper is partaken by Christians, then, as a means of remembering Jesus and the salvation He has provided.
- 2. The Lord's Supper is also a proclamation.** Paul wrote, in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "**For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's**



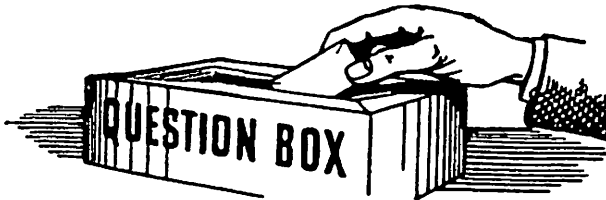
death until he comes." The Christian, in partaking of the supper, proclaims to the world his belief in the life, death, resurrection and second coming of Jesus Christ! The Lord's Supper declares that Jesus was dead, but lives' again - indeed, is alive for evermore (Revelation 1:18)!

3. **The Lord's Supper is a reminder of the communion, sharing or fellowship of God's people.** Thus it is often referred to as "the communion". We read in 1 Corinthians 10:16,17: "**The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.**" In the Lord's Supper, Christians are reminded of their rich fellowship in the blessings of Christ's death and life, and of their vital association with Him and with one another. The supper represents the common commitment Christians have to Jesus and their common hope of salvation in Him, and serves to draw them together in love and service.

4. **The Lord's Supper is a declaration of allegiance to Christ.** One who remembers Jesus in the supper must intend to be true to Him. As the Apostle Paul wrote; "**You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons**" (1 Corinthians 10:21). The Christian who partakes of the bread and the cup is affirming a sincere desire to live a life pleasing to Christ.

Properly understood, the Lord's Supper is a remembrance, a proclamation, a communion, and a declaration of allegiance. Properly observed, the Lord's Table will assist us in not forgetting our salvation, its cost, or our real place and purpose in life.

W. HART.




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Conducted by  
Frank Worgan

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*"Please explain 1st Corinthians 7:14, 'For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her (believing) husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy'".*

To understand 1 Cor. 7:14, one must first look at the entire 7th chapter. In other words, the verse needs to be seen in proper context. That 7th chapter of 1st Corinthians presents us with a concise summary of Christian teaching on marriage, especially as it applied to the various groups which existed within the Church at Corinth.

It is evident that the Corinthians themselves had raised the subject of marriage in their communication with Paul and had asked, not one question, but a series of questions. Now, we all know what happens when a topic is raised in group-discussion! The consideration of one aspect of the subject leads to another, and, quite quickly, other issues rise to the surface! This is what happens in this chapter.

In this case, however, Paul does not attempt to give exhaustive answers to the queries posed by his brethren in Corinth. As we see when we read the entire chapter, his replies are relatively concise and, for convenience, made by summaries in the following sections.

1. In vv. 1-7, he lays down the principle that **marriage is both right and proper**, and

that it brings **mutual responsibilities**.

2. In vv. 8-9, he turns his attention to the situation of the **unmarried believers and the widows in the Church**.
3. Then, in vv. 10-11, he addresses **married believers** - (i.e., believers who are married to believers) - on the matter of **divorce and separation**,
4. In vv. 12-16, he turns his attention "to others" who are faced with **the problem of being married to pagans, or 'unbelievers'**.
5. Next, in vv. 17-24, he lays down a principle which amounts to this; "**Live the life of a Christian in whatever circumstances you find yourself, and in whatever circumstances God found you!**" (And notice that he says that this is the rule in *all* the Churches.)
6. There follows, in vv. 25-28, a long section for "**unmarried ones**"; i.e. **single believers**.
7. Finally, in vv. 39-40 we have a concluding statement in which he **re-emphasises the permanent nature of the married relationship**.

**Look at the verse 14.**

In verses 10-11, Paul refers his readers to teaching already given by the Lord Himself, found in Matt. 5:31-32 and Mark 10:2-12, etc. This means that he does not deal with the general and fundamental grounds for divorce. Instead, in verses 12-16, he deals with a problem which *could not have arisen* during the Lord's earthly ministry, but only after the Christian dispensation had begun, and he deals with it on the basis of his apostolic authority; that is, his authority to speak in the name of Christ and for Christ.

He discusses the case of **one who has become a Christian, but now finds himself/herself married to someone who is still a pagan**. (Remember we are discussing the contents of a letter sent to the Church surrounded by the pagan city of Corinth.)

The question which has evidently been put to the apostle is this; **Ought a person - a Christian - to divorce the non-Christian partner?**

The verse to which we refer gives Paul's inspired, apostolic answer.

Speaking on behalf of the Lord and, remember, with apostolic authority, he says that the believing partner should *not* forsake the unbelieving partner. He realises that, if a Christian had the right to 'leave' - i.e., 'divorce' - a marriage-partner, solely on the grounds that he or she is *not* a Christian, there could well be a tremendous influx of unconverted people into the Church because of this possibility of easy divorce! Therefore, the principle he lays down is, that if anyone leaves, it must not be the believer! If the relationship is broken and the marriage abandoned, the break must come from the pagan - not from the Christian (v13).

Furthermore, Paul obviously realises that there is always the possibility that the *pagan* may not wish to remain married to the Christian and decide to leave, and in such circumstances there is little that the Christian can do (v.15).

However, if the two are able to live together, they should by all means do so, because, as Paul implies, the situation is never completely hopeless. There is always the possibility that the unbelieving partner may be won for Christ by the Christian's behaviour (v.16).

This is precisely what Peter says in 1st Peter 3:1-3.

Now let's take a closer look at the verse which has caused problems; v. 14, and notice two things which Paul is *not* teaching!

1. **He does not say that the unbelieving husband is saved because of the faith of**

his wife. He says that the husband is 'consecrated', which means 'is made acceptable', and is referring to the Old Testament principle, laid down in Exodus 29:37, of 'consecration by association', which states that "*Whatever touches the altar shall become holy*".

Such was the sanctity of the altar that if anything came into contact with it, that thing was deemed acceptable and fit for service.

Paul makes this point because it is evident that there were those in Corinth who were arguing that, for a Christian wife to remain married to a partner who was still a pagan, affected her holiness; claiming that she was, in some way, contaminated by the relationship.

He declares, therefore, that the Christian wife is not defiled, or made unclean, by her association with her unbelieving husband, because to think that would be to say that uncleanness is more powerful than holiness. It would imply that the husband's paganism is more powerful than the wife's holy Christian life. And that cannot be true. On the contrary, their relationship will benefit from the grace of God which the wife has experienced and which is revealed in her manner of life.

2. **Nor does the relationship between a partner who has become a Christian and a pagan partner affect the legitimacy of their offspring**, as would be the case if the marriage was considered invalid (v. 14). In the eyes of God, any child born to that marriage will be perfectly legitimate.
3. Notice, again, that he is *not* saying that the child is saved, or regarded as a Christian, because of the faith of the mother. **The passage says nothing about the salvation of either father or child**, for that is not the issue here. The question is merely one of **legitimacy**.
4. And, remember, also, that **this is the case of one who has become a Christian, but whose partner is a pagan**.

It does *not* justify a Christian deliberately choosing to marry 'an unbeliever'. We see that, when writing about the widows here in Corinth, Paul makes it plain that a Christian widow is free to marry again, '*but only in the Lord*' (v. 39).

According to the teaching of this passage, therefore, it is clearly wrong, for a Christian to *choose deliberately and wilfully* to become "*yoked together with an unbeliever*" in marriage.

Of course, it may be reasonably argued that this applies to *more* than the marriage relationship - a fact which is frequently ignored. But it certainly does apply to marriage. Read 2nd Corinthians 6:14-18.

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

## NO ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

In one of the largest Australian newspapers we read this interesting item recently:

*"The End - My attention has been drawn to this advertisement by a car manufacturer: 'The car I now bring out is pretty close to finality. I do not believe that a car materially better will ever be built.' The year of the advertisement was 1912!"*

It is rather sad when any person, company or society bogs down in the decaying grasp of complacency. When anyone thinks he has "arrived" most of the best things of

life begin to elude him. There is always room for improvement within our lives. The irony of this truth is that often the more talented person continues to advance, while those who really need to improve couldn't care less. Sooner or later the favourite hobby of lazy folk - who see no need for improvement - is to sit back and criticise the very people who are humbly pressing on.

One of the enigmas of our earthly sojourn is the failure by many to grasp the opportunities that each new day affords. For those of us who believe the Bible, this sin is inexcusable. Call it indifference, delay, procrastination, or whatever you will - it simply means that we are wasting the very substance of life itself.

In Psalms 89:47 the writer exclaimed: "Remember how short my time is." It would be well for each of us to ponder that expression in our hearts. It is of the utmost importance how we spend our time. We dare not squander it on lesser things and certainly not on matters that quench our spirituality. What are we doing for God? Will the result of our days upon the earth reverberate into ever-widening circles of influence? Or, will we be so useless that no ripple is made by us upon the stream of time?

In relation to the centuries that are past and eternity beyond, each of us has "just a few more days" to magnify Christ in our temporal bodies (Phil. 1:20). The greatest single deterrent to the advancement of New Testament Christianity is the "no room for improvement" complex.

#### TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

Far too many churches, elders, preachers and other members of the Lord's army have allowed Satan to convince them that they have arrived at the apex of achievement. Standing on the shining summit of their subtle egotism such foolish people bask in the fading glory of yesterday, and in the nebulous fancies which only day-dreams bring. But, reality and today haunt them.

One of the worst points involved in misusing time is the fact that we can repent concerning it but we cannot recall those moments that are gone for ever (Rom. 6:21). There is scarcely an adult who does not wish he could live again certain periods of his life. If such were in the realm of possibility, many of us would diligently strive to be more useful to Christ "the second time around."

Time is fleeting; the moments are passing. There is so much to do for Jesus and our time is so limited. As the years rush swiftly by, let us be wise enough, by God's grace, to make every second count for Eternity. It is wonderful to know that Christians can "still bring forth fruit in old age" (Psalm 92:14).

How long we live is an inferior consideration when compared with how well we live. Just compare the longevity of Methuselah with the 33 short years of the Lord!

There is room for improvement in all of our lives. May we redeem the time by growing in the grace and knowledge of the Saviour (Eph. 5:16; 2 Peter 3:18).

May this be the very day that we begin to improve as Bible teachers, gospel preachers, overseers, husbands, wives and children.

An unknown poet left these words for our serious consideration:

"The life that counts must aim to rise  
Above the earth to sunlit skies;  
Must fix its gaze on Paradise -  
That is the life that counts."

Do not live or die in vain. Make your days glow for God!

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jan 7	Exodus 21:12-25	Matthew 5:27-48
Jan 14	1 Kings 8:46-61	Matthew 6:1-18
Jan 21	1 Kings 10:14-29	Matthew 6:19-34
Jan 28	Psalms 91	Matthew 7:1-14

### DIVORCE AND SWEARING

The Jews, in Jesus' time, were divided over divorce. Some took a liberal position; others, a conservative stance. Those of the school of Hillel were the liberals and those of the school of Shammai were the conservatives. The debate between them centred upon the interpretation of the phrase "some uncleanness" found in Deuteronomy 24:1. Did the phrase simply mean unchastity or did it include many other things such as a loss of beauty, poor cooking, a quarrelsome spirit, etc? There is no doubt that divorce had become easier in Jesus' day and was as common as marriage itself. Family life was under attack and society was feeling the pressure (much like today). Jesus' words are clear: **"Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her who is divorced commits adultery"** (5:32). "The early Church understood Christ's exception in Matthew in light of the clear teaching of Mark and Luke: that every divorce followed by remarriage is adulterous. Hence the exception in Matthew must apply only to divorce, not to the issue of remarriage" (W. Heth & G. Wenham).

The taking of oaths was a common practice amongst the Jews in Jesus' day. The practice, however, had become corrupted. For example, an oath which avoided the name of God was held not to be binding. The use of God's name made it absolutely binding. This is why

Jesus referred to heaven, the earth, Jerusalem and one's head (5:34-36). "So long as they kept from swearing by the name Jehovah, and so long as they observed the oaths publicly taken, they seemed to consider all others allowable, and allowedly broken. This is the abuse which Christ wished to correct. It was the practice of swearing in common conversation, and especially swearing by created things . . . to swear by these things, therefore was to treat irreverently objects created by God, and could not be without guilt" (Albert Barnes). But what should our attitude be to oath-taking today? In the past, Adam Clarke gave good advice: "The best way is to have as little to do as possible with oaths. An oath will not bind a knave nor a liar; and an honest man needs none, for his character and conduct swear for him". I like the fact that one can now affirm in a court of law rather than take an oath. In any event, a Christian's word should always be his bond.

### "BUT I SAY . . ."

Jesus places His teaching here against what was said in the past. The Old Law is fulfilled by a new spirit. The importance of the heart or the inner man is emphasised. **"You have heard that it was said by them of old time: You shall not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart"** (5:27-28). Jesus gets to the heart of the matter and a human heart, right with God, is what matters. A lot of people think they can deceive God by doing one thing, but thinking another. They forget that God hears and sees everything - even our thoughts! **" . . . but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"** (Hebrew 4:13). This is why Paul talked about **"bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of**

**Christ**" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

It was said of Jesus: **"For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"** (Matthew 7:29, Mark 1:22). His authority is all over this so-called Sermon on the Mount. "The prophets of old said 'Thus says the Lord'; the Rabbis were never happier than when they could quote a legal ruling in the name of some illustrious teacher of the past, but Jesus appeals to no authority higher than His own when He brings out the inward sense of the Divine law" (F.F. Bruce).

#### **PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PIETY**

Piety covers almsgiving (6:2-4), prayers (5-15) and fasting (16-18). Jesus' followers had to be so unlike hypocrites in His day. Remember, the word *hypocrites* means literally *play-actor*, who, as one commentator has said, are "people who go through the motions of almsgiving and prayer 'that they may be seen of men', without any inward sense of charity or devotion, are simply acting a part which does not express their attitude of heart". Those who are genuine in the sight of God in these areas will be rewarded openly, although they do much in secret (4,6,18). One thing I get out of this section of Scripture is that people back then wanted to appear more religious than they really were - the complete opposite of all that is happening today.

Fasting is a subject that is not mentioned very much in our meetings. Recently, I have been studying in detail Alexander Campbell's book *The Christian System*. In it, he has an interesting point to make on this very subject. "What, then, under the present administration of the Kingdom of Heaven, are the ordinances which contain the grace of God? They are preaching the gospel - immersion in the name of Jesus into the name of the

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit - the reading and teaching the Living Oracles - the Lord's day - the Lord's supper - fasting - prayer - confession of sins - and praise." Moses, Elijah, Ezra, Daniel, Jesus, Paul and Barnabas all fasted. Should we not follow their example?

#### **THE CAREFREE MIND**

Worry and anxiety are strong features of our modern society. They eat away at the soul and can cause illness and premature death. Chapter 6:19-34 "inculcates a freedom from anxiety, rising from implicit confidence in a heavenly Father's love and care" (Bruce). I like the comparison in the margin of my Bible: *Worldly Care Divine Providence*. The key verse is 33: **"But seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you."** I think of two other passages here: **"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"** (Philippians 4:6, N.I.V.). **"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you"** (1 Peter 5:6-7). God is a caring God. We should never forget this. He truly can give to us a carefree mind in a troubled world.

#### **THE GOLDEN RULE AND ITS COROLLARIES**

The golden rule is found in verse 12: **"therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."** In this portion (7:1-14), we also have the exhortation against judgement (1-5); the proper use of discernment (6); the encouragement to prayer (7-11); and the two gates, the two ways, the two destinies (13,14). Sum-

ming up can usually be helpful; and I like the fact that Jesus in verse 12 summed up the law and the prophets.

The broad way, of which Jesus speaks, is broad, not because God so designed it, but because so many are walking in it. It leads to destruction or hell or everlasting punishment. The narrow way is narrow, not because God so designed it, but simply because so few choose to walk therein. It leads to life or heaven or everlasting glory. Please note that the narrow way has to be found. The Hebrew writer put it this way: **"But without faith it is impossible to please God: for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him"** (11:6). Also, no one will ever stumble into it (Isaiah 35:8). Jesus said: **"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me"** (John 8:6).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

## TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. This plant grew in the Plain of Sharon.
2. To which city did Lot flee?
3. Who was Abraham's father?
4. Where was Joshua buried?
5. Who sacrificed his daughter to keep a vow?
6. Which king had his eyes put out by the Babylonians?
7. In which city did Paul preach by a riverside?
8. Who, according to Acts, was the second martyr?
9. With whom did Peter lodge in Joppa?
10. She was the wife of Herod's steward.

## GHANA APPEAL

The Church of Christ Ghana Fund has changed management and is now being dealt with by the brothers and sisters meeting in Dennyloanhead, please note the following changes:

For all financially related enquiries and sending financial support please contact the fund Treasurer (any cheques should be made out to Dennyloanhead (Church of Christ) Ghana Fund):

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

For all other enquiries please contact the fund Secretary:

Mr. Peter Sneddon,  
Ochil View,  
Keir Street,  
Dunblane,  
Perthshire FK15 9BP.  
Tel. 01786 823946.

The support of our brothers and sisters in Ghana continues and letters are received every week enlightening us of their need for our help and support. In return we continue to witness their humble example. may God grant us strength and wisdom in ministering to His children who are in need.

Matthew 25:40 The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me."

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The new address  
of Jenny and Bobby Kirk is:  
Inchview, 49 Bowmont Street, KELSO.  
TD5 7DZ. Tel.: 01573 228047

## APPEAL FROM BELFAST

I am writing on behalf of the newly established Newtownards Church of Christ.

We have been meeting since April 1999 at Newtownards Orange Hall but have had to vacate the premises from July because of building work and the political unrest. We then moved to Brother Sam Stirling's home and within a very short period of time have outgrown the room available. From the off-set it has always been our goal to purchase a building of our own. Unfortunately we could not find anything that was suitable or affordable.

After months of searching for a building to no avail, we eventually acquired a building site on the Newtownards peninsula. We currently have a bank balance of £5,000 but unfortunately need another £60,000 to erect a suitable church building.

We are currently making an appeal to other Churches of Christ to help us in any way financially that they possibly can. We would be most grateful for your help no matter how little and look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

*In Christian Love,*  
 SAM STIRLING,  
 5 Abbeydale Avenue,  
 Newtonards, Co. Down,  
 Northern Ireland.  
 Tel: (02891) 820662

**QUOTES ON RELIGION**

"Men will wrangle for religion, write for it, fight for it, die for it, anything but live for it."

C. C. Colton.

"We Jews have a secret weapon in our struggle with the Arabs - we have no place to go."

Golda Meir.

"Mystic: a person who is puzzled by the obvious, but who understands the non-existent.

E. Hubbard.

"The various modes of religion which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the Magistrate as equally useful."

Edward Gibbon.

1. Rose (Song of Solomon 2:1).
2. Zoar (Genesis 19:17-22).
3. Terah (Genesis 11:27).
4. Ephraim (Judges 2:9).
5. Jephthah (Judges 11:29-40).
6. Zedekiah (Jeremiah 52:11).
7. Phillipi (Acts 16:12-13)
8. James, the brother of John (Acts 12:2).
9. Simon the Tanner (Acts 9:43).
10. Joanna (Luke 8:3).

**ANSWERS**

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