

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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EARS TO HEAR

According to this morning's newspaper William Hague, leader of the Conservative Party, has come up to the north of Scotland to "listen to the people." It sounds like a good idea but perhaps a little late in the day. In actual fact his "listening tour" started off in Inverness where he made a grand speech but did not have time to answer any questions: i.e. he had time to talk but no time to listen. This, of course, is precisely why the Conservatives are no longer in power. As a government they completely ignored the feelings of the country and, in due time, paid the price by being heavily defeated at the last General Election. Mrs. Thatcher was an extremely able woman but, as Prime Minister, she succumbed to the basic fault of all leaders who enjoy power for a long time, by refusing to listen to any advice and by going her own way regardless. There comes a time, it seems, when those in power become so arrogant, and dismissive of the feelings of underlings, that they quite often fail to read the signs of their own impending undoing. Surely history abounds with the countless number of kings, queens, princes, presidents, politicians, statesmen and military men who, by virtue of their refusal to listen to the voice of the people, or to good advice even from subordinates, have plunged their country into wars, revolutions, coups, uprisings, assassinations and executions. Happily, Mr. Hague has no longer any worries about the guillotine, the garrotte, the chopping block, the noose or the firing-squad, but he is very wise if he is sincere in his wish to LISTEN to the people. Listening is said to be an art, few have been able to really master.

GOOD LISTENERS

ANY incorrigible bore will tell you that good listeners are hard to come by these days and perhaps this is true. To be a good listener calls for as much skill and effort as does being a good speaker. We hear people described as '*good speakers*' but nobody seems to worry about whether the hearers will be '*good hearers*' and yet, when we come to think of it, there is little point in the speaker being '*good*' if the hearers are of indifferent quality. I think it was Spurgeon (or was it Henry Ward Beecher, or neither) who said that all the baldy old men who sat snoring through his sermons were bald because of his sermons bouncing over their heads. Again, some say that there is a definite correlation between the speaker and the hearer and the better the speaker the more attentive the hearer. Certainly it seems true that Alexander Campbell could preach for two or three hours at a time without undue flagging of attention amongst his hearers, but, on the other hand, we remember that a certain young man named Eutychus "**being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead**" (Acts 20:9).

Comparisons are odious and it is certainly not my intention to draw comparisons involving Christ's apostles, but I am, in any case, convinced that there are many hearers who are alive with interest in what is said *regardless* of the identity of the speaker. Many of us are not good listeners - we constantly interrupt those speaking with us, and we are so busy thinking about what *we* are going to say next that we are *not really listening*.

GOD HAS SPOKEN

It is conceivable that the Creator of the world could have remained mute and watched the activities of His creature, man, with silent interest. But not so, God conversed with the first man, Adam, and has in all ages (virtually all) communed, and even reasoned, with successive generations of sinful men. The writer to the Hebrews sums it up very well (Heb. 1:1-2) when he says, "**God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.**" Truly God has spoken and it is man's duty to listen; to truly *hear*. God is the Creator; man is but the creature. God is the potter; man is just the clay. Thus when God speaks *man must listen* (and as our American cousins would say) "Listen good." God's words must not be allowed to fall to the ground or descend upon deaf ears - if they do, someone somewhere will be sorry for it. At one time God spoke directly to man but man was so terrified by the experience that he asked God to speak through a human intermediary and God has done so ever since. They said to Moses, "**Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee and we shall hear it and do it.**" (Deut 5:27). These were very fine words on the part of the Jews, of course, but history shows that if they did *hear* the words of God through Moses, they certainly didn't often *do them*. Thus as requested God has spoken to man through human intermediaries and man, having accomplished this, has shown much less respect for the human intermediary than the healthy respect he had for the fire and God's voice. Indeed man soon latched on to the simple expedient of physically stopping the mouth of God's spokesmen, so that the martyr Stephen could ask his Jewish audience, "**Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; Who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it.**" In keeping with Jewish reaction to God's prophets the Jews fell also upon Stephen, because of his word, gnashing their teeth and *stopping their ears* - and they stoned him to death. Only occasionally today do those who bear God's word die violently - man nowadays has to content himself with either avoiding opportunities of hearing God's word, or with decrying the integrity of those who bring it. The Jews have not therefore been able lately to pursue their traditional practice of killing those who bring unpalatable messages from God, for God has not been sending any. Indeed God will not be sending any further prophecy or prophets - "**He has spoken**" (past tense) in these last days unto us by His Son. He will not be speaking again. God has spoken - man must listen, and 'Listen good.'

THE HARD-OF-HEARING

Much of what we hear from day to day is eminently forgettable, it goes in one ear and out of the other and that is how it should be. Much of what we hear is fit only to be quickly forgotten, and much of what we hear (on TV, etc.) serves only to corrupt the mind. We should readily hear God, however, for all that God says is very wholesome and for our eternal good. "**Incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live.**" (Isa. 55:3). To "*incline our ear*" to God is a very descriptive term and depicts one (apparently intent on hearing) with his hand cupped behind his ear in case

he should miss anything - rather like the slightly deaf (or those in bygone days with a ear-trumpet). This then is the degree of attention we should give when God speaks - with the cupped hand behind the ear lest we should miss any syllable. We must 'incline our ears' - let God 'bend our ear' for our good. Whereas the blind rightly receive help and compassion from their fellowmen, the deaf will vouch for the fact that they receive scant sympathy; indeed a great deal of impatience from others, notwithstanding that they struggle to hear, 'inclining their ear' and even trying to lip-read. That represents *the effort* that man should take to hear God.

WHAT WE HEAR

There are those who listen to us out of politeness, idle curiosity, or of academic interest only, but we must pursue a *purpose* in listening to God.

(1) Firstly, we should hear (or listen) with a desire to understand what we hear. There is such a thing as hearing *with understanding*. We read, "And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding" (Neh. 8:2). Elihu urged the wise men to "Hear my words, O wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat." (Job 34:2). Solomon advocated that we "incline our ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding." (Prov. 2:2). Just as the mouth recognises the taste of the various foods, so the ear tries (or proves) the words it hears. We do not believe everything told us by men but our ear filters the words and we make the effort to understand. We must make even better efforts to understand the words of God. Jesus said, "If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear. Take heed *what ye hear* . . ." (Mark 4:24). Jesus warned against the leaven (or doctrine) of the Pharisees and of Herod - and said "Take heed *what ye hear*" or give greater care to the *source* of what you hear, whether it be from men or from God. We must evaluate what we hear and seek to understand it aright. Such understanding may come to us quickly or relatively slowly and Jesus, we read, in the case of His very own disciples could only speak "the word unto them, as they were *able to hear it*," (Mark 4:33).

HOW WE HEAR

(2) Secondly, we ought not only hear it to understand it, but should hear it so that *we might do it*. In addition to warning us about *what* we should hear, Jesus after explaining the parable of the sower, said, "Take heed therefore *how ye hear* . . ." Just as He uttered these words some in the crowd told Him that His mother and brothers wanted to talk to Him. His answer was, "My mother and My brethren are these which *hear the word of God, and do it*." Thus the onus on us to hear the word must consummate itself only in our obedience to it. "Take heed *how ye hear*" said Jesus. All those in the parable of the sower 'heard' the word of God, one as well as the other, yet some ended up being choked by the cares, riches and pleasures of this life and only a few "having heard the word, kept it, and brought forth fruit with patience." (Luke 8:15). A lot, therefore, depends on *how* we hear - indeed it, *all* depends on *how* we hear.

WHY WE HEAR - DOERS

The only valid kind of hearing is that which leads to our obedience - which motivates continued service to God. "Whosoever therefore heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." The only proper outcome of hearing aright is action and obedience. James explains the converse "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves; for if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." No matter how many times in the day we look in a mirror and see all our blemishes, spots, scars, wrinkles and warts

(I am speaking for myself, of course) we straight away forget what we look like. When the word of God is preached to us, say in a gospel meeting, it is as if a spiritual mirror is held up in front of us and we see our spiritual condition, with all the soul's blemishes, warts, scars, wrinkles, etc., and we are greatly saddened and convicted. But if we rush out of such meeting, and do nothing about it, we shall soon get over the shock and eventually become quite hardened to any call to repentance. We shall indeed "forget what manner of man we are." "But" continues James, "Who so looketh into the perfect law of liberty, AND CONTINUETH THEREIN, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25). That phrase 'looketh into' means to *stoop down* to examine something closely on the ground, and means *earnest enquiry* and investigation. The apostle Peter says that these things preached unto us through the gospel are things which the very angels desired to 'look into' (same word as in James 1:25). We should, therefore, treat God's word with an intensity of interest commensurate with the kind of interest which would cause us to stoop down to examine something. The kind of riveting interest, for instance, shown by Peter when he "ran unto the sepulchre: and *stooping down*, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." ('Look into' and 'Stoop down' are both from the Greek *parakupto*) Hearers of God's word must therefore have the time and inclination to *stoop down* and *look into* the perfect law of liberty, and *continue therein*, being not forgetful hearers, but doers of the work - that shall be blessed in their deeds. We are all, I suppose, to some extent, to be numbered with the thousands of 'Forgetful hearers' in the world. "Take heed *how ye hear*" said Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Clearly there are various levels in our capacity to hear; ranging from excited enthusiasm to emphatic disinterest. Often we are too full of what we have to say to have time to listen. This, doubtless, is why James exhorts Christians to be "slow to speak but swift to hear." (James 1:19). We are all capable of turning a deaf ear (as well as a blind eye) to that which is inconvenient, as illustrated by the Jews "stopping their ears" at the unpalatable words uttered by Stephen. There also comes a time when we are keen to hear something new and indeed Paul discovered philosophers in Athens who liked nothing better: viz. "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing." (Acts 17:21). This type of desire has more serious consequences for Christ's disciples and Paul warned Timothy that the time would come when some "will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn their ears away from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. 4:3).

Our quality of hearing is sometimes little better than superficial and we need the advice that Jesus gave to His disciples when He said, "Let these sayings of mine sink down into your ears." (Luke 9:44). Should not we listen with breathless attention to what God has to say to us in His last Will and Testament, for, after all, we are to be the beneficiaries?

Edinburgh has some very fine art galleries, and there is, in the National Gallery, a truly wonderful painting entitled "The Reading of the Will." The picture is Robert Burns vintage and shows an old Scottish lawyer sitting in the midst of all the interested parties; all the beneficiaries of the deceased. The artist has skilfully captured the undisguised interest on every face, the hushed silence, all agog with suspense; all waiting with scarcely controlled anticipation to hear what the Will may hold for them. (Where a deceased is rich, and has a lot to leave, there is little likelihood of anyone dozing off during the reading of the Will). This then is the *kind of interest* we should

bring to the hearing of God's word - this is the *measure of the enthusiasm* we should have in "looking into the perfect law of liberty." After all, when we sit listening to the preaching of God's word, we are, in effect, privileged to be hearing "The Reading of the Will" - the *last Will and Testament of our Lord and Saviour*, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Take heed *what* ye hear" (there are many false prophets) and "Take heed *how* ye hear (indifference and boredom is commonplace).

God said, "**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Hear ye Him.**" Are we good listeners?

EDITOR.

THE "IFS" IN YOUR LIFE

IF you are not a Christian, you can be saved by accepting and obeying the Lord (Heb. 5:9), for He is the Saviour of the body, the Church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). You can be added to the Church (Acts 2:47). IF you will believe ("**Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him**" (Heb. 11:6). IF you will repent and turn away from your sins ("**The time of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent**" Acts 17:30). IF you will confess your faith in Jesus ("**I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God**" Acts 8:37), and IF you will be baptised ("**He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned**" Mark 16:16).

IF you are *already* a Christian, there are still some IFS to your eternal life. Yes, there are those who try to make John 5:24; John 10:28-29; and John 3:16,36 teach that there are no IFS to one's salvation after he has become a Christian, but by considering those verses prayerfully and then comparing them with the following verses, you will see that there are some IFS to eternal life. All of these verses teach, "**Ye shall never perish if . . .**"

IF YE CONTINUE -

"**Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my work, then are ye My disciples indeed**" (John 8:31).

IF A MAN KEEP MY SAYINGS -

"**Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my sayings, he shall, never see death**" (John 8:51).

IF YE LOVE ME -

"**If ye love me, keep my commandments**" (John 14:15).

IF A MAN LOVE ME -

"**Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him**" (John 14:23).

IF A MAN ABIDE NOT -

"**If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned**" (John 15:6). See verse seven also.

IF YE KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS -

"**If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love**" (John 15:10).

YE ARE MY FRIENDS IF -

"**Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you**" (John 15:14).

IF GOD SPARED NOT -

"**If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee**" (Romans 11:21).

IF THOU CONTINUE -

"Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Romans 11:22).

IF YE KEEP IN MEMORY -

"By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you unless ye have believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:2).

IF WE HAVE BEEN PLANTED -

"If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:5).

WE SHALL REAP IF -

"Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

HOLY and UNBLAMABLE and UNREPROVABLE IF -

"And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouable in His sight; if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Col. 1:21-23).

FOR NOW WE LIVE IF -

"For now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thess. 3:8).

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF -

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let slip. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . .?" (Heb. 2:1-3).

WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE IF -

"But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6).

PARTAKERS OF CHRIST IF -

"For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14).

IF ANY MAN DRAW BACK -

"Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38). "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17).

WE KNOW HIM IF -

"And hereby we do know that we know Him; if we keep His commandments. He that saith I know Him and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4).

IF THAT WHICH YE HAVE HEARD SHALL REMAIN -

"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye shall also continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1 John 2:24).

IF ANY MAN TAKE AWAY -

"And if any man take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:19).

L. GREEN.

PUBLIC READING OF SCRIPTURE

READING

The first component of the ministry of the Word is the *public reading* of the Bible. Paul's instruction to Timothy was clear, "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture . . ." (1 Timothy 4:13).

We take pride in our tradition of being a people of the Book. Our insistence on using

the Bible, and the Bible only, as the source of teaching in our churches is to be commended and should continue. It is certain, however, that Paul had something else in mind when he exhorted Timothy's devotion to the public reading of Scripture. By taking a fresh look at what Paul is suggesting, we will become convicted of the need to heed this command in our own Bible-based churches.

The worship of the first Christians grew directly out of the Jewish synagogue, and the worship of the synagogue was grounded in instruction. Even though praise and prayer were also standard fare for a synagogue meeting, the focus of instruction is noted in that the Jews called the synagogue "the house of Instruction" (see Ralph P. Martin, **Worship in the Early Church**, p.26). After the praise and prayers, portions of the Hebrew Bible were read and then a sermon was given based on what was read. (See examples of synagogue worship in Luke 4:16ff and Acts 13:14ff).

ORDERED READING

The readings were not randomly selected. Instead, the Law and the Prophets were divided so that all of God's revealed Word would be read in the synagogue service. So, when Paul instructed Timothy to be diligent with the public reading of Scripture, he undoubtedly had in mind a regular, planned, comprehensive system of reading God's Word.

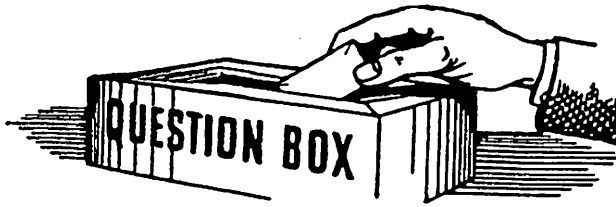
In some of our congregations we never have Scripture readings, for this there is no excuse. In many congregations we have "scattered" readings: there is no plan for the whole Bible to read in the assembly. Few of our churches have maintained the early Church's practice of using a lectionary.

A lectionary is simply a list of readings. It divides the Bible into passages of Scripture assigned to be read on specific days. One common lectionary is designed for a three-year period, having three readings for each Sunday (usually a reading from the Old Testament, from the Gospels, and from somewhere else in the New Testament). In the course of the three years virtually the whole Bible is read in the public meetings of the Church. If some object to the design of the common lectionary we should not let this be an excuse for not following a lectionary. What would prohibit individual congregations from designing their own plan for assuring that the Bible is consistently and comprehensively read in our churches? This follows the practice of Jesus, Paul, and the early Church.

READING AS LESSON

An interesting feature of lectionaries is the term "lesson". Instead of using the label "New Testament Reading," the most commonly used is "New Testament Lesson." The difference in terminology may explain the reason for the lack of emphasis on public Bible *reading* in our Churches. The readings should not be seen merely as readings, for once we leave pre-school, we are not trained or accustomed to listen to something being merely read. However, God's Word is intended to be instruction for His people (Psalm 119 and 2 Timothy 3:16). Sermons and classes about God's Word are helpful. **But God's Word is the fundamental need of God's people.** Of this we are clearly reminded when we have "Scripture Lessons" instead of readings. If we truly believe God's Word is of value we will begin to follow more fully Paul's instructions of devotion to the public reading of Scripture.

More attention can be given in our services to the reading of God's Word by using introductory and concluding phrases which remind the congregation that this is God's Word. These are some suitable phrases: "Hear the Word of the Lord," "The Word of the Lord according to . . ." "Thanks be to God for His Word," or "May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word." These need not become trite, just pointers to focus our mind.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Bearing in mind the Anglican Church's recent ambiguous pronouncement on the subject, what do the Scriptures teach concerning Homosexuality?"

This is a question, which today is highly relevant, in view of the vigorous efforts being exerted by a very vocal group, to compel society to accept the practice as normal. Christians should be aware of what the Bible teaches on the subject, and the church-leaders ought to know how to deal, in scriptural and proper manner, with those who practise it.

The question recognises that the Scriptures *do* have something to say on the subject, and further recognises that, for Christians, at any rate, the Word of God should be accepted as authoritative. Let us consider:-

1st THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

We are frequently being reminded that homosexual behaviour is not new - as though the antiquity of the practice in some way justifies it. Indeed, it is just as old as murder, drunkenness, lying and prostitution. But the fact that homosexuality has been practised for thousands of years does not justify it or make it right.

a) It was one of the sins for which God destroyed Sodom. **Gen. 19:5.**

b) The same sin is recorded in **Judges 19:22-23.** (Note that v.23 describes it as 'this vile thing,' and condemns such conduct as 'wickedness.')

c) Male prostitution - (men practising homosexuality) - was one of the sins, which Israel copied from Canaanite religion, **1st Kings 14:22-24.** It is a practice which, in the biblical record was always associated with paganism and consistently branded an offence against God. Notice in this passage the terms, which are used to describe it: '*evil in the sight of the LORD,*' '*sins,*' '*the abomination of the nations.*'

d) Homosexuality is plainly declared in God's Law to be a sin, **Lev. 18:22-30,** regardless of what concessions secular governments and weak religious leaders may make.

Again, notice in this passage the use of such words as, '*it is an abomination,*' '*perversion,*' '*do not defile yourselves with any of these things,*' etc.

e) Under the Mosaic Law, (which, remember, was God's Law), the sentence imposed on those guilty of committing homosexuality was death. **Lev. 20:13.**

Conclusion:

The teaching of the Old Testament on this matter is so plain and positive that there could be no possible excuse for it among the ancient people of God, and no one could fail to understand God's attitude towards it. They either accepted the teaching of the scriptures which rejects homosexuality, or, practised this evil and rejected the will and word of God, and suffered the penalty. Acceptance of the authority of the sacred scriptures and homosexuality cannot be reconciled, regardless of what religious 'liberals' may say.

2nd THE NEW TESTAMENT. The teaching in the N.T. is just as plain.

a) In **Rom. 1:24-32,** Paul describes the wickedness of the heathen world of his time.

The passage tells us that Roman society and the Hellenistic world generally, had

become utterly depraved; a fact to which even secular historians of that period testify.

Paul tells us that it was because:-

i) They rejected the evidence of the existence of God, displayed in the world, which He Created, and having persuaded themselves that God does not exist, they gave themselves license to commit all kinds of sexual obscenities.

ii) Their conscience was 'perverted.'

When he uses the expression '*reprobate mind*,' he uses the word '*nous*,' which indicates 'conscience.' It means that, in their depravity, they no longer distinguished between right and wrong. Indeed, in their view right and wrong no longer existed.

b) Notice the words '*dishonourable passions*,' or '*unnatural relations*.' The words '*para phusin*,' rendered '*unnatural relations*' in verse 26, means '*that which is against nature's law*.' Today, it is often claimed that homosexuality is 'natural.' The scriptures consistently deny this, and in this passage, (Rom. 1:24-32), the inspired apostle declared that it is a perversion of that which is natural.

c) The next downward step from homosexuality is 'sodomy' - sexual behaviour involving animals. The advocates of a permissive society do not accept this fact and even ridicule assertion, but it is a fact, none-the-less. In former times the two practices often went together and were certainly related.

Once the conscience loses its ability to distinguish right from wrong; the pure from the impure, there is no point at which unnatural conduct will stop. This is proved most graphically in accounts of behaviour in ancient Roman and Greek society. C.H. Dodd commenting on this passage (Rom. 1:24-32), states: '*Ancient literature is full of evidence to corroborate Paul's statement*.'

I suggest that the teaching of vv. 26-27 is so plain and so emphatic that no one who practises homosexuality has the right to claim that he is a follower of Christ.

d) Note that in 1 Cor. 5:9, the word '*pornois*,' which is rendered 'fornicators' in the K.J.V., and '*immoral men*' in the R.S.V. and other versions, covers promiscuous behaviour of all kinds, and includes homosexuals.

e) And the verdict declared in Gal. 5:19-20 surely cannot be misunderstood by any intelligent person. "*Those who practise these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*." The reason for this verdict is revealed in 1st Tim.1:10, where v.9 describes those who behave in this manner as being among the '*lawless, and disobedient*,' '*the ungodly and sinner*,' '*the unholy and profane*'.

f) Nature itself, when abused, produced its own punishment, Rom. 1:27.

The scriptures warn that those who practise homosexual perversions '*receive in their own persons (bodies) the due penalty for their error*.'

The word 'error' used here, does not refer to a 'mistake' or misjudgement.' It is the word '*planee*,' and means 'a deviation.'

Hence, homosexuality is not only condemned as 'perverted' conduct, it is also 'deviant' behaviour, that is '*behaviour which turns aside from the truth or the rule*.'

Conclusion

It becomes clear, therefore, that if such behaviour is found within the Body of Christ, the Church, it must be dealt with, for the sake of the purity of the entire Body.

Anyone found guilty of such conduct must either repent and abandon it, or must be placed outside of the fellowship of the Church until he comes to repentance.

It must be borne in mind that the Church is the Body of Christ, and, so far as lies within our power, we must endeavour to make sure that purity of the Body is maintained.

The statement in 1st Cor. 3:16-17 should be 'the final word' on the matter, where Christians are concerned, **Please read!**

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THE LORD'S SUPPER (4) - THE BREAD

"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE"

These words of Jesus in John 6:48 so impressed Tyndale that he recommended chapter 6 of John's gospel be read each time the Lord's Supper was held. But these expressions need explaining, especially when many hold, as the Lutherans, that the bread becomes different when it is blessed. Jesus said when the disciples found it difficult to understand Him, *"These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father"* (John 16:25). In Matthew it is said that Jesus only spoke in parables (Matt. 13:34). We need, therefore, to look at what Jesus said in that light and seek to understand what Jesus was really saying. From the context of Corinthians 11 it is natural to immediately think that the bread is just a picture of the body that hung on Calvary's cross. But when we look back to the tenth chapter verse 17 we see that *"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body."* This then should focus our attention on the need to also reflect on the spiritual body of Christ as given in Ephesians 5:23 *"Christ is the head of the Church, His body, of which He is the Saviour."* The importance of reconciliation taking place within the members of the Church before the bread is broken is set out in 1 Col. 12:25 *"there should be no division in the body"* because we need, as the Colossians were enjoined to *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace"* (3:15). Proper attention to this aspect of the Lord's Supper will *"prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"* (Eph. 4:12). The importance then of realising that *"in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others"* (Rom.12:5). This will ensure that *"The bread which we break, is the communion of the body of Christ"* (1 Cor. 10:16). The bread then is to remind us not only of the scourging and crucifixion of the physical body of Jesus, but also of His spiritual body, the Church and our responsibilities to it. We also have the picture that He is the living bread who provides us spiritual sustenance for eternal life (John 6:51). These thoughts are brought together in the use of a single loaf as a symbolism of unity which is enjoined time and again in the New Testament 1 Col. 10:17 *"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."* It also requires us to be of one accord, heart, hope, mind and mouth by accepting the one faith through the one baptism by which we have entered one fold and body and have been given one Spirit because we have been made perfect in one of one soul through the one Lord, Shepherd, and Mediator of the one God (Phil. 1:2; Acts 4:32; Eph. 4:4,5; Rom. 15:6; John 15:16; 1 Cor. 10:17; John 17:23; 1 Ti. 2:5; John 10:16). The writings of the Ante-Nicene fathers including Ignatius, Justin Martyr and the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Didache) all support the use of one loaf at the Lord's table.

WHAT TYPE OF BREAD?

Whether we believe that the last supper was that of the unleavened bread on the 14 Nissan or that of the Passover Feast on the 15 Nissan; in both cases the Jews would have used unleavened bread. In addition our Lord's symbolisation of the fruit of the vine as His blood would also require the adherence to Exodus 23:18 *"Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread."* The law of Moses was very strict to those who did not follow the requirement of the use of unleavened bread *"Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leaven, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land."* (Ex.12:19). Seven hundred years later the prophet Amos ridiculed Israel; (just before that well-known text "Prepare to meet thy God)

saying "Enter Bethel and transgress . . . offer a thank offering with leavened bread" . . . "you have not returned to me" (Amos 4:4-12). Jesus explained why there was so much concern to keep things of God away from leaven in the Old Testament. He told His disciples that leaven was a picture of the false doctrine of the Jews (Matt. 16:12) and of the world (Matt. 8:15). He related it also to hypocrisy (Luke 12:1) which Paul called arrogance (1 Cor. 5:2) which can so easily spread (1 Cor. 5:6). Paul likens leaven to malice and wickedness and asks us to keep the feast "*with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*" (1 Cor. 5:8). The Jews remembered that by having unleavened bread on the night they came out of Egypt they "*came out of the house of bondage*" (Ex. 13:3). Justin Martyr relates (Tryph 41) how that the type-bread of the eucharist is the same as (i.e. unleavened) that offered on behalf of those cleansed from leprosy (Lev. 2:3;14:2) because we have been "cleansed in soul from all evil." In spite of this support for the early use of unleavened bread, apart from the Roman church, most orthodox churches use leavened bread. We need then to try and understand where this tradition came from in order to establish what is the requirement placed on us today.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

God in His wisdom chose the New Testament to be written in a different language to the old. The language of the Old Testament was centred around a rural life and the meaning of words were highly coloured from development of the Mosaic Law. The Hebrew language is very rich in the number of words it has for bread, including colloquialisms such as "put your bread on waters" there are 42 expressions which include, breads of - pollution, wickedness, deceit, idleness, adversity, affliction, heaven. Then there are the breads that are- hallowed, sanctified, common, light, continual, seen, on top of this there are flat thin wafers, circular wafers, perforated, fried, baked in a pot, baked on a stone, cooked with oil, cooked in ashes. To bring in a **better** covenant based on **better** promises (Heb. 8:6), through a **better** sacrifice (Heb. 9:23) which has given us a **better** hope (Heb. 7:19) to look forward to a heaven which will have a **better** enduring substance (Heb. 10:34) perhaps a new language was required to get away from this clutter of symbolism and tradition.

The debate on whether leavened or unleavened bread should be used on the Lord's table has been around since the second century. The difficulty in establishing what the history is, is made difficult as Greek has only 1 word for bread - "*artos*" There are words for leaven, leavened, unleavened, but these did not attract the degree of attention to the Greek as it did to the Jew. However, this one word has a wide range of social meanings e.g. "the bread of the children" = "food destined for children" (Mark 7:27), "eat bread" = eat a meal (Luke 14:1), "who eats bread with me" = who is a familiar friend (John 13:18), to eat the bread of someone (2 Thess. 3:8) = to be supported, to eat one's bread (2 Thess. 3:12) = to support oneself. The great culture gap between the Jews and the Greeks then becomes evident in just this word "Bread." The whole tone in which bread fits into the language of each culture is completely different.

VARIOUS TYPES IN USE

It is said that modern Greek is nearer to the classical Greek of Homer (circa 970 BC) than modern English is to Chaucer (circa 1380 AD). The use of Greek in the New Testament scriptures then, has stood the test of time so ensuring we can establish what Jesus taught. The New Testament was written in the language of the street trader that was used right across the Mediterranean. This meant that Gospel was given an immediate understanding audience, to learn Christ's teaching unfettered from Jewish traditions. Greek also serves as a good foundation to proclaim the gospel around the

world to different cultures as it holds a wide range of nuances. For example a glance through Vines word dictionary shows that we get 'go' in the AV from 30 different Greek words, 'live' from 9, 'light' from 13, 'know' from 15. The subtleties then of translating the original into another language may be lost to those readers but are preserved to those in another time or place. Apart from knowing what the disciples would have used we are only told that we are to break '*artos*' and are not advised specifically on which form it should take. Is this the reason why there is a wide range of breads in use today? The Armenians, Catholic Syro-Malbar, and Marionites are alone of the eastern churches who use unleavened bread, the others use leaven. The breads range from thin individual wafers to large Cob type loaves but are always round. It is disturbing to note that many of the orthodox practices align themselves with the practice of ancient Babylon, that used round bread placed on round plates as an image of the sun; and also inscribe the letters IHS on the loaf to symbolise their trinity of Isis, Horus, Seb (mother, child, father). This is exactly the same as the Roman and Orthodox practice of imprinting IHS on their bread to symbolise Iesus Hominum Salvator (Jesus Saviour of men). Although the items we use at the Lord's table are only emblems we need to be sure they are in line with what is set out in the New Testament for us. I trust the above will provide food for thought and for us to realise that maybe there are more things to consider than as first thought.

In the next article we will (DV) explore the history of the Cup.

BRIAN BOLAND.

APATHY

Brethren, one of the modern day problems affecting mankind is something called APATHY. It creates a total indifference to order and stability. A "couldn't-care-less" attitude is recognised as the order of the day. Now it's a sad affair as it appears to be prevalent, in all age groups. Three characteristics are prominent; indifference insensibility and mental indolence. Now these must be avoided.

As Christians, we must needs be aware of these harmful tendencies. They certainly can harm our spiritual well-being, if allowed to infiltrate our lives. You see it so easy to settle down in the Christian way of life, with a tendency to forget the wonderful experiences when we first met Christ Jesus: (Well to some of us, it was a long time ago!). We tend to imagine that nothing new can arise from our fellowship with the Saviour.

Some sadly don't look for anything new to happen. They have become set in their ways. Could this be APATHY perhaps.

Christians beware! Like the bad apple in the barrel apathy can pollute all around it. When the first love is forgotten, and our present love is not daily cherished (or has just become functional) it's so easy for love itself, to be lost. This can damage our spiritual welfare, leading some to be lost eternally. Remember the Devil is still at work, so beware!

We need to wake up to reality, and realise that **apathy is a disease!** Nevertheless, beloved, it can be cured. Take time to be Holy, more often; wait upon the Lord and listen to the word. In this you will be blessed.

ANDREW P. SHARP.

Newtongrange.

(Yes apathy hits us all at some time. Years ago, in my days at the office, our union NALGO called an urgent meeting to discuss the apathy in the workplace: the meeting was cancelled. Only two turned up. Ed.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Oct. 4	Proverbs 4:1-17	Titus 2
Oct 11	Micah 6:1-8	Titus 3
Oct.18	Daniel 8:15-27	Luke 1:1-25
Oct. 25	Isaiah 7:1-14	Luke 1:26-38

TITUS CHAPTER TWO

Paul gives Titus instructions in this chapter regarding older and younger men, older and younger women, and slaves. He had to teach what was in accordance with sound doctrine (2:1). Not only that, but he had to set a good example (2:7). I am sure Titus lived up to what was expected of him. He was one of God's great men in N.T. times.

The following is one of my personal favourites from God's Word: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people of His own possession, zealous of good works" (2:11-14). Sobriety has to do with personal holiness: righteousness has to do with justice to our neighbour: and godliness has to do with piety towards God. "So then the outline of Character is embraced in what we owe to ourselves, to our neighbour and to our God" (Walter Scott).

Many commentators have pointed out that "our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" are words that refer not to two of the personalities of the Godhead, but only to Jesus Himself. Albert Barnes has written: "The names above referred to are abundant proof that no violation is done to the rules of the Greek language by this interpretation, but rather that the

fair construction of the original demands it. If this be so, then this furnishes an important proof of the divinity of Christ."

TITUS CHAPTER THREE

Paul in this chapter speaks of citizen's duties; good works; and avoidance of unprofitable discussions. But these words are especially striking: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit . . ." (3:5). "Regeneration" has, of course, to do with the new birth. We recall Jesus' words to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3,5). I believe water here is literal water and Spirit is literal Spirit. You cannot have one symbolical and one literal. Sound interpretation does not permit such treatment of God's Word.

The word translated "washing" in Titus 3:5 is the Greek term *loutron*, which literally means "a bath or a laver." Adam Clarke, a presbyterian, wrote: "Undoubtedly the apostle here means baptism . . ." Many agree with him, including myself. Actually, Paul here is simply endorsing Jesus's statement to Nicodemus. Both are telling us that we are begotten by the Spirit and born of water; just as we are begotten of our father and born of our mother. "Being born of water, in the Saviour's style, and the bath of regeneration, in the Apostles' style, in the judgment of all writers and critics of eminence, refer to one and the same act - viz.: Christian baptism" (Campbell).

LUKE'S GOSPEL RECORD

Writer: Luke, who was the only N.T. writer not a Jew. He is mentioned three times in Paul's letters: Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24. Luke was a

doctor by profession and his use of Greek medical terms gives proof of his vocation. There is so much we should like to know about him on which the Scriptures are silent.

Date and Place: unknown.

To whom written: Theophilus, perhaps a high-government official. "Theophilus may well have been a representative of the intelligent reading public of Rome, who would be interested to have a trustworthy account of a sect that was "everywhere spoken against" (Bruce).

Descriptions of Luke's Gospel: "gospel of women"; "gospel of the underdog"; "gospel of the poor"; "gospel of prayer"; "gospel of joy."

Comments: "The gospel is really part one of a two-volumed work." "It tells us that Jesus is the Saviour of the World." "It is concerned with what Jesus said." "Luke was a man of culture and education and he writes as a historian. He is an artist with words. He is one who could tell a story to perfection." "The we 'passages' in Acts reveal the times he was actually with the apostle Paul in his journeyings." "Luke was the most learned in the Greek language of all the evangelists." "Luke writes principally for non-Jews, using Greek titles and quoting from the Septuagint."

Research by Luke: "Luke's two-year sojourn in Ceasarea, A.D. 58-60, afforded him abundant opportunity to get, firsthand, from original companions of Jesus, and first founders of the Church, accurate information concerning all details" (Halley's Bible Handbook).

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST FORETOLD

I like how Luke places events within their historical setting. For example he writes: "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zechariah . . ." (1:5). (Actually, I have just obtained a copy of Michael Grant's book on Herod the

Great, which I hope to study in detail in the future. There is a lot of information on him, but, of course, he is not as interesting as John himself, who was a true servant of God and a man much to be admired). Zechariah and Elizabeth were the parents of John. What a different world it would be today if this could be written of all parents everywhere: "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (1:6).

John's coming into the world was the answer to prayer. Zechariah was told what name to give the child and what he would be like: "He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord" (1:14-15, N.I.V.). His task was clear: "And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous - to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (1:17, N.I.V.). It was the angel Gabriel whom Zechariah encountered in the temple and who struck him dumb (1:19,20). We also read of this famous angel in the book of Daniel.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS IS FORETOLD

Gabriel is again involved in the foretelling of a wonderful event: the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Those who have problems with the virgin birth (or better - the virgin conception) should carefully read Luke's account, ever remembering his medical background. A ripened ovum in Mary was impregnated, not by human sperm, but by Divine seed, prepared in such manner that the eternal Word could become flesh. This made Jesus uniquely the Son of God. Dear readers, we came into the world by procreation, but Jesus came by incarnation. Who can deny the power of

the Almighty? "For nothing is impossible with God" (1:37).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who was David's father?
2. What queen threatened to take Elijah's life?
3. This person allowed the Jews to return to their own land?
4. Who was Dinah?
5. Who was Maher-shalal-hash-baz?
6. Isaac's bride rode upon this animal?
7. For whom did Luke write his gospel?
8. Where was the house of Simon the tanner?
9. Name a prominent silversmith in Ephesus?
10. Complete the following: "The tongue is a, a world of"

EMERGENCY APPEAL TIDAL DISASTER - P.N.G.

Dear Friends,

Today is day 7 of the disaster relief effort, and we are very glad that the door has been opened for you and for us here in Madang to be able to help these people in a very tangible way.

The most effective way to send help at this time is to go through a network that the government relief committee has established. What is being done is this: a collection depot has been established, and individuals or groups are bringing their donations to the depot located here in Madang. There is a listing made as to what is brought, who brought it, and this list is attached to the items, so that the recipient is informed as to who donated these items.

What we are doing is assembling boxes, each box containing either 1) pots and pans, cooking utensils, eating and drinking utensils, and miscellaneous

household goods, or 2) garden and basic carpentry tools (axe, hoe, spade, hammer, saw). Each of these boxes can be put together for around 35-40 US Dollars. If any of you as a family or as a Sunday School Class, contribute this amount, we can not only put that it was from the Church of Christ here in Madang, we can also put forth that the funds were received from this family, or from this class or congregation, with the appropriate addresses supplied, should this be desired.

In addition to this effort, there is also available to us the ability to send bales of used clothing and used bedding to these areas. These bales (110 lbs. each) cost around \$140,00 US Dollars and are already here in Madang.

One distinct advantage of going this route is that there is no concern over shipping details or costs. Also, the ability to go directly into this area is virtually closed down, due to health hazards from the unburied dead. Thus we feel that this is the best way to channel these relief funds. This window for sending help will only be open for one to two weeks, so a prompt response will assure proper distribution of your help to those in need of this help.

For the Master,

(All donations, please, to, Phil and Nansi Lifsey, P.O. Box 2144, Madang, Papua New Guinea).

ANOTHER REPRINT FROM SISTER PAYNE

Now available, a reprint of "History of the British Churches of Christ" by A.C. Watters, first published 1947, 107 pp. - £5.00 including p&p.

Miss R. M. Payne, 1 Kenilworth Avenue, Reading. RG3 3DL.

COMING EVENTS

ANNUAL SOCIAL NEWTONGRANGE on 3rd October, 1998

(a note for your diary) at 4.00 p.m.

Speaker: Ian Davidson, Motherwell

Chairman: Joe Currie

A Warm Welcome Is Extended To All

127th ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Kentish Town, London

Saturday, 10th October at 3.30 p.m.

Tea at 4.45 p.m. followed by the

Evening Meeting at 6.30 p.m.

Speaker: Bob Eckman

(Also on the Sunday)

ALL WELCOME

GHANA Thank You!

The Churches in the north of Ghana have written to me to say thank you for the gifts sent during their famine this year. The money was distributed by Brother Fred Tamatey who took the gifts from Accra and made the 450 mile journey north.

The "Where there is no Doctor" books I recently appealed for have also been purchased and sent along with a limited amount of the book . . . "Where Women have no Doctor." All clothes received

have also been sent. Glasses will always be collected. This month I am not appealing but gifts are always welcomed. Please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel. (01383) 728624

P.S. Thank you IMB for your cheque for £100. Receipt No. 1027 received 15/7/98.

In the old Testament it was God for His people. That was wonderful. In the Gospels, it was Emmanuel, God with His people. But in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistle it is best of all, God in His people. God the Father for His people; God the Son with His people; and God the Holy Spirit in His people. What an amazing truth!

1. Jesse (1 Samuel 16:11)
2. Jezebel (1 Kings 19:21)
3. Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4)
4. Jacob's daughter (Genesis 30:21)
5. Isatah's son (Isatah 8:3)
6. Camel (Genesis 24:64)
7. Theophilus (Luke 1:3)
8. Joppa (Acts 9:43)
9. Demetrius (Acts 9:24)
10. "The tongue is fire, a world of iniquity" (James 3:6)

ANSWERS

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