

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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PREPARING TO MEET OUR MAKER

Another Royal Garden Party at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh has come and gone, and once again I was not invited. Naturally to be specifically invited by Her Majesty the Queen to such a function is deemed a great honour and highly prized among the "upper crust" and more especially to those aspiring to such ranks. What a flutter of excitement is caused in the more lowly households on the occasion of such an invitation, and what a flurry of preparation is set in motion — the expensive suit with grey tile hat on the male side, and the exclusive dress creation from Paris on the other side. Perhaps also a new car for the pompous entry — it would never do to roll up in the old Volkswagen.

Think of the excitement *you* might experience by a personal invitation from the Queen and the expensive preparations in which *you* might engage. Yet God invites us into His heavenly kingdom and in many quarters it doesn't even ruffle a hair but might cause a yawn.

When we come to consider the matter I suppose the bulk of our lifetime is spent making preparations. The process starts early in life when as children we prepare at school for the time when we shall leave school and will have to have qualifications for a job. In adulthood we prepare for old age with pension funds. We prepare for the possibility of sickness and death with insurance policies. In summer we prepare for winter and vice versa; the farmer prepares his land; the fishermen his nets; the surgeon prepares his theatre; the builder prepares his site; the captain prepares his ship; the lawyer prepares his brief and so on, and so on.

Men are continually preparing, sometimes for journeys and quite often preparing for meetings and interviews. Nonetheless, men seem to give scant attention to preparing for the greatest journey of all time and the greatest interview they will ever experience — the journey into eternity and the meeting with their Maker.

Why prepare?

(1) The reason *why* we should prepare to meet our Maker and prepare for our journey into eternity is because such a meeting and such a journey is *inevitable*.

No matter how important we may be, or how rich we might be, we shall all assuredly stand before the Judgement Seat of God. The rich (like the late Howard Hughes) can escape meeting those they wish to avoid, or pay others to meet them, but "As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:11).

(2) Upon the account we give to God will depend our eternal destiny. Upon it will depend where we spend eternity — whether with Christ in Heaven or with the devil and his angels in Hell. When God drew back the curtain a little from the prophecy of the Book of Revelation, John the apostle said that he saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works . . . "And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

To the unbiassed reader of average intelligence these should be extremely compelling reasons for preparing to meet God.

When should we prepare?

We should be preparing now for there shall be no second opportunities in the world to come. The greatest device of Satan has been to convince mankind of the "Second Chance" syndrome. Life has always seemed, to me, to be a testing ground or like an examination paper. Once we have completed an examination paper and handed it in to the examiner it is too late to change it. I remember leaving an examination hall in Edinburgh with a colleague after sitting, what was to me, a fairly important examination, and as we conversed about the difficulties of the question paper my colleague realised that he had completely misinterpreted one of the questions and had given entirely the wrong answer. I assured him it was too late to do anything about it but he was by now so upset and worried that he insisted on running back and explaining his error to the invigilator. Predictably, the invigilator smiled good humouredly but steered him out of the room assuring him that it was much "too late" now. After this life is over it will be too late to prepare to meet God. If we have blotted our copy book (or botched our examination paper) now is the time to get a clean sheet and to start again. *Now* is the day of salvation; *Now* is the accepted time.

The scriptures, which form our sole source of knowledge of God do not even hint at the possibility of a "second chance" — (rather the reverse). By the time we die all opportunity for preparations will have completely gone.

"It is appointed unto man once to die; then the judgement" — so says the inspired writer of Hebrews (9:27). The educationalists may be thinking of doing away with examinations but God isn't, and an examination would be little short of a farce if the "second chance" doctrine had any substance. We must prepare now or not at all.

How should we prepare?

For many this might be the "crunch" question. The genuine seeker after truth would seem to derive little help from the religious world. If one was to consult a dozen of the places of worship to be found on any High Street of any town here one would receive as many differing answers. Some might even advise the enquirer that no preparations at all are required because Jesus "did it all" on the cross. Where are we to find the answer? How can we be sure? May I suggest to any enquirer that the only safe guide is the New Testament. The New Testament has no traditions to maintain and has no vested interest of its own: it contains only the writings of God's holy Son and His inspired apostles. "To the law and to the

testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Is. 8:20).

Few, however, would deny that in preparing to meet God we should endeavour to be reconciled unto God now. Nor would any deny that we require to be reconciled to God because our sins have separated us from God. We must enter into fellowship with God now. We must be reconciled to God now. God sent His Son into the world to bring us back (reconcile) to God. Indeed *God was in Christ* reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). In preparing to meet God we cannot therefore afford to ignore the Saviour, Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul averred that "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief." (1 Tim. 1:15). If we all, like Paul, consider ourselves to be *chief of sinners*, we shall do well. If we believe, like Paul, that Christ came into the world to save sinners (like us) we shall do even better.

Albeit our sins have separated us from God we must be reconciled to Him again, and we must enter into a fellowship with God. We must also remember always that God is the potter; we are but the clay — we must, therefore, be reconciled on God's terms. So many insist on coming to God on their own terms. To enter into fellowship with God, and remain in it, surely we must *obey* God, *worship* God, and *serve* God. He that cometh to God must believe that He is God and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). We must therefore diligently seek God — *diligently*; as we would for a lost child. In His relationships with man, God has delegated all authority to Christ, both in heaven and in the earth and thus we can come to God only through Christ. There is absolutely no other way; no other schemes; no other systems; whether by good works or personal sacrifices. "No man cometh to the Father but by Me," said Jesus. With this God concurred when He said "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, *hear Ye Him*." If we truly hear Jesus we shall hear His final instructions to His chosen apostles before He left this world to go to His heavenly Father, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15). You and I are the creatures to whom Jesus charged that the gospel be preached. To be saved, or reconciled, we must believe that gospel and be baptised.

"Baptism" has various meanings today but what Jesus meant by the term was immersion in water for the remission of our sins (see Acts 2:38 and Acts 8:38). Obeying the gospel, believing in Jesus Christ, and having our sins washed away in baptism (Acts 22:16) ensures that we now have that clean sheet with which to start our lives all over again. In our cleansed condition we are now indeed in a fit and prepared state to meet our maker. We can now with great confidence make the journey into eternity when called upon. By reading the exhortations and teachings of the New Testament we shall remain faithful to God, through Christ, and if we fall we can always get up again. John reminds us that if any man sins he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1st John). Indeed, John says that if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Thus we can continue in a state of ever preparedness to meet God. The same apostle (John) said: "And now little children, abide in Him, that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

Jesus is also preparing

In being asked to prepare to meet God we should recall that Jesus is also busily engaged in preparations. Before leaving the earth did Jesus not say, "I go to

prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3)? And so Jesus is preparing a place for His disciples. But another place is also being prepared. At the Great Assize, when Jesus will judge mankind, and shall separate the sheep from the goats, "Then shall He say unto those on his left hand, depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, *prepared* for the devil and his angels." Sadly *two* places are under preparation, indicating that heaven is only for those who feared God sufficiently to prepare to meet Him — for "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" (Pr. 9:10).

Let us therefore resolve to prepare to meet our God — to obey His Son, serve and honour Him, worship and adore Him; praise and spread abroad His name. Let us do it now, knowing that if we fail now there shall be no further opportunities. "Today, if ye hear His voice, harden not your hearts." If you would be thrilled by an invitation from your Queen would you spurn an entreaty from your Maker?

EDITOR.

HEAD COVERING OF THE WOMAN

Introduction

To be free of problems is not necessarily a blessed state. Some churches have no problems because they are doing practically nothing. They close their eyes to everything and no one bothers to interfere about what is right and what is wrong. A congregation dedicated to maintaining the status quo (the existing position) may boast of having no problems, but it may be spiritually dead or asleep that it is tragically blind to its real state, e.g. Rev. 3:1, 2, 17. No issue could loom larger in man's relationship with God than that of divine authority. Man is saved or lost by his acceptance or rejection of divine authority. That which constitutes divine authority consists of what God has authorised. What God has authorised for the most part also implies what He has not authorised.

To go beyond the bounds of God's law is as much flagrant violation of His will as is a stubborn refusal to comply with it (1 John 3:4). God's law is what God allows, and when one goes beyond the boundaries described by God's law he is guilty of transgression. When a person in religion goes beyond the framework and limits of God's law, he commits that act which is "unscriptural."

"Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Let us do, as these Jews did, examine the Scriptures to see if, according to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, that is, 1 Cor. 11:1-16, a woman of the 20th century is under obligation to cover her head while at worship with the assembly or if she is not under this obligation. Divine Inspiration says: "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5:17). He who closes his eyes and ears to the truth is unwise.

Some questions that I like to answer, which are brought against the covering of the woman's head are these: (1) Is the covering of the woman's head that is mentioned by the inspired Apostle in 1 Cor. 11:1-16 a CUSTOM of the time or a command from God? (2) Is this covering of the head applicable for the women of the 20th century or was only for that time, for the women at Corinth? (3) Was the inspired Paul giving instructions to the church at Corinth ONLY or to the WHOLE body, the CHURCH? These are three questions which constitute the whole division that exists among the body of Christians today. I believe, that if

these can be answered "Scripturally" then this problem that is causing much division among Christians will be solved.

Question Number 1. "Is the covering of the woman's head that is mentioned by the inspired Apostle in 1 Cor. 11:1-16 a CUSTOM of the time or a command from God?"

Answer: In 1 Cor. 11:1-16 we find two words that are mentioned by the inspired Apostle, the first one is mentioned in verse 2, that is, "traditions," and the second one is mentioned in verse 16, that is, "custom."

These two words have the key to our understanding the answer of this question.

(1) The Greek word for the word "traditions" that we find in 1 Cor. 11:2 is "PARADOSIS," which means, "a handing down or on (akin to paradidomi, to hand over, deliver), denotes a tradition, and hence, by metonymy, (a) the teachings of the Rabbis, interpretations of the Law, which was thereby made void in practice, Matt. 15:2, 3, 6; Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13; Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8 (b) or apostolic teaching, 1 Cor. 11:2, R.V., "traditions" (A.V. "ordinances"), of instructions concerning the gatherings of believers (instructions of wider scope than ordinances in the limited sense); in 2 Thess. 2:15, of Christian doctrine in general, where the Apostle's use of the word constitutes a denial that what he preached originated with himself, and a claim for its divine authority (cp. paralambano, to receive, 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3); in 2 Thess. 3:6, it is used of instructions concerning everyday conduct." (W.E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of N.T. words, p. 221, 222).

(2) The Greek word for the word "custom" that we find in 1 Cor. 11:16, is, "SUNETHEIA," sun, with ethos (see No 1), denotes (a) an intercourse, intimacy, a meaning not found in the N.T.; (b) a custom, customary usage, John 18:39; 1 Cor. 11:16; or force of habit, 1 Cor. 8:7, R.V. "being used to" (some mss. here have sunudesis, conscience; whence A.V., "with conscience of," Vine, p. 263).

Now, that we have the original of both words, we can understand better our difficulty and unlock that which is causing a lot of misunderstanding.

In 1 Cor. 11:2, the inspired Apostle says, "I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you." He does not say, "... and maintain the customs even as I have delivered them to you." I am sure that all agree with this.

In 1 Cor. 11:16, the inspired Apostle says, "If any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." Here, too, he does not say, "If any ..., we have no such traditions."

So, if the word "custom" of verse 16 applies to everything else, surely it does not apply for the head covering mentioned in these verses. Some interpret this verse, that the word custom refers to women attending to worship unveiled and some say it refers to being contentious is not a custom with the apostles. Whatever it refers to it is referring to something new and not to an already established practice. The inspired Paul had given to them three reasons why women ought to cover their heads, not only the three reasons should be sufficient to show them and us that the head covering is a command from God, but he also showed to them that the settled and established practice, that is, that a woman at worship ought to have her head covered, and from the beginning followed the course outlined by him, which showed that all the other apostles had established it by rule. My question here is this: "If the head covering is not one of those traditions that are mentioned in verse 2 and is a custom, then why it is not mentioned as a "custom" as we find the word in verse 16?"

Truth is truth and remains exactly what it is without regard as to the number who accept it or reject it. The important question is: "What does the Bible teach about it."

The inspired Apostle was commending them for remembering him in everything and MAINTAINING the TRADITIONS (PARADOSIS) even as I have delivered them to you." We can interpret this in other words which means the same thing: "... and maintaining the "instructions concerning the gatherings of believers (instructions of wider scope than ordinances in the limited sense), EVEN as I have delivered them to you." Another question that I like to make is this: "What does the Holy Spirit teach in His word about women attending for worship with their head uncovered, today? Are we living in the SAME Christian Age as were those women that were praised by the Holy Spirit for covering their heads? Is not the account that is written for us in God's Word, written as an example for all the women of the Christian Age, so that they will know exactly what is their duty about the head covering?" (1 Cor. 11:1-16).

In Hebrews 10:25 we find an example which mentions the word "custom" (ethos) too. "Not forsaking the coming together of (our) selves, as custom with some (is), but exhorting, and by so much more as ye see drawing near the day." The Greek word "ethos" means a habit, custom or manner. Question: "What is the custom mentioned in Heb. 10:25?" Surely it is NOT the "attending" or the "coming together." It is the "forsaking" of the assembly together. The "attending" is a command by God but the "forsaking" is a custom that some were getting as a habit. The custom was not something already established by God (in this case, "the coming together of ourselves") but something that deviated from the will of God (in this case, "the forsaking of the assembly together"). The same applies to the covering of the woman's head. The "custom" mentioned in 1 Cor. 11:16 is not the head covering but the deviation from the God-given order.

So, if the Holy Spirit is NOT referring to the head covering as a "custom," why we, mere men, refer to it as a "custom"? Is the Holy Spirit commending a custom in 1 Cor. 11:2 or the traditions delivered? NO ONE can prove from the Bible that the head covering was a custom of the time but it can be proved that women attending for worship unveiled was a custom (1 Cor. 11:16).

Question number 2: "Is this covering of the head applicable for the women of the 20th century or was only for that time, for the women at Corinth?"

Answer: Verse 5, of 1 Corinthian 11, gives us the answer to this question, it reads: "But every women that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head..."

If one studies carefully the meaning of this verse he will understand that the inspired Apostle's stress was not for the women of Corinth only but for all the women of the Christian Age. Let us see what this verse really says. Here, in this verse, we have the answer to our question.

The key word here is the word "EVERY." This word is the word that shows if the head covering of the woman was only for the Corinthian women or not. Look it up in your dictionary and see its definition. The Odhams Concise English Dictionary gives this definition: "EVERY-each one, all, each of a number, singly or one by one." As we can see, this word has some different applications and this should be of great help to us to understand better if the covering of the woman's head is or was applicable for the women of Corinth only or for ALL the women throughout the whole Christian Age.

1. EVERY — each one, "heis hekastos." — Acts 2:6, "Every man heard them speak in his own language."

This shows to us that the word "EVERY" here applies only for those present.

2. EVERY — all, "pas." — Matt. 4:4, "... but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This show to us that all the words of God are important for the Christian life, not some of them only.

1 Cor. 1:2, "Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

Here we have one of the clearest applications about the universality of what we find written about the head covering. The words 'ALL' and "EVERY" in this passage of Scripture means the same thing, that is, the ENTIRE church, the whole body, the ONE BODY, and not a part of it, a congregation in some place, but that one church, UNIVERSAL. The same Greek word is used here (PAS) that is used about the covering of the woman's head, of "EVERY WOMAN" in 1 Cor. 11:5. There must be no doubt about the phrase "EVERY WOMAN" that this applies for ALL the women of the world and not the women of Corinth only, because if this was so, then we should have the Greek word "HEKASTOS" and not the Greek word "PAS." (See Vine's Dict., and Young's Analytical Conc. to the Bible).

3. EVERY — each of a number, "hekastos." — 1 Cor. 12:18, "But now hath God set members every one of them in the body, as it pleased him."

Here, although we find the word "every," this do not have the same meaning as that of 1 Cor. 11:5, "Every woman..." This is referring to the individual and that of 1 Cor. 11:5 is referring to the woman in a universal sense (PAS and not HEKASTOS).

4. EVERY — singly or one by one, "kath hen." — Rom. 12:4-5, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

Here, we have another clear explanation of the meaning of the word "EVERY" that we find in 1 Cor. 11:5.

So, from these four meanings of the word "EVERY," we see that: (1) Acts 2:6 — "EVERY one" (heis hekastos), but not "EVERY woman" (pas, that means, "every one of the class denoted by the noun connected with it." Vine', e.g. Matt. 3:10).

(2) Matt 4:4 — "EVERY" (pas) ALL women, but not "heis hekastos" or "hekastos" or "kath hen."

(3) 1 Cor. 12:18 — "EACH of a number" (hekastos), but not "pas" or "heis hekastos" or "kath hen."

(4) Rom. 12:4-5 — "EVERY" singly or one by one (kath hen), but not "heis hekastos" or "pas" or "hekastos."

From this, that we have just read, we see, that the covering of the woman's head while with the assembly for worhsip is compulsory for ALL (pas) the women of all ages, the Christian Age. We have also seen, that the covering of the woman's head is written down in God's word, not as a "CUSTOM" but as one of the "instructions concerning the gatherings of believers."

An important question that deserves a Scriptural answer is this: "For a woman to cover her head while with the assembly for worship, is this a "matter of faith" or not?"

It is our studied and firm conviction that everything we do in religious matters must be authorised by the word of God. Whatever is done without "chapter or verse" is not "in the name of the Lord," is not involved in "walking by faith," and will not please God. We must have Bible authority for all that we do. Everything which God has revealed, we are to defend as true. We are to surrender no part of it

whatever, for every part of it is of value to mankind, if not, then it is not written in God's word. (John 20:30,31). This is given to ALL the saints, once and for ALL. (Jude 3).

Question: "Who determines which words in the Bible are/are not from God? WHO?" If one discards a part of the Bible (in our case, 1 Cor. 11:2-16), does not every other person have the same right to do this too? The decisions made on the small problems govern subsequent decisions on larger issues.

Scripture is a seamless garment, and when the threads are unraveled at one place, soon the entire fabric gives way.

Question: The covering of the woman's head while with the assembly for worship, is this a part of this garment, from that that the Holy Spirit revealed in that "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints?" If it is, then without any difficulty it is our duty to defend it as true. If we discard the covering of the head of the woman at worship, do not all the existing denominations have the right to discard whatever part they want?

We often speak of "necessary inference." The word "necessary" isn't necessary. If it is an "inference" it is necessary, and if it is not necessary it is not an inference. There is a vast difference between "inference" and "assumption." Many things are called inference which are not inferences.

When an action, fact, or teaching is absolutely demanded by the Biblical information at hand, then that action, fact, or teaching is inference, and this should be obeyed and done.

Question: Why the covering of the woman's head is "necessary" and therefore an "inference"? Why?

Answer: First of all, because this is a part of God's revelation, and not man's. Secondly, because "it is not proper for a woman to pray to God uncovered." (I Cor. 11:13). Third, "because of the angels." (I Cor. 11:10). Fourth, because "ALL the Apostles and ALL the churches of God recognised no other practice, except that women ought to cover their heads at worship." (I Cor. 11:16). Fifth, because by the covering of her head at worship, the woman is showing her place in the Divine order. (I Cor. 11:3-5). And sixth, because by this, the woman is showing obedience to God's Word. (James 2:10).

The New Testament plainly teaches that in order for us to be pleasing to God we must "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). It likewise declares that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Obviously, where there is no word there can be no faith. The Bible says, "and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him ..." (Heb. 11:6).

Question: Is the divine order that we find in 1 Cor. 11:3, which is about the divine order as to headship and dominion of the woman, man, Christ, and God a MATTER OF FAITH? I personally believe it is. Does not verses 4 and 16 (and here one must try to understand perfectly) show HOW that order should be respected and HOW it may be disregarded?

"It is a basic principle of Biblical hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) that if and when and to the extent that God does specify the HOW in connection with the carrying out of any obligation that the HOW becomes just as binding as the obligation itself; but if and when and to the extent that God does NOT SPECIFY THE HOW, the manner and method is left to the realm of human judgement, the realm of expediency." (The Spiritual Sword, 1973, Vol. 5, No. 1 p. 24).

Question: Does God show the HOW in connection with the carrying out of the obligation (in our case, the head covering), when HE, in HIS WORD tells us that "it is not proper for a woman to pray to HIM with her head UNCOVERED? (I Cor. 11:13). HOW that obligation can be honoured and respected? The answer is simple, "by the covering of the woman's head at worship with the Christians.

We have clearly the HOW shown to us by God Himself in His Word in connection with the obligation of the woman toward the divine order as to the headship and dominion of the woman, man, Christ and God, and as I have already said, GOD, and not mere man shows the HOW of how that divine order should be respected and HOW it can be discarded. (I Cor. 11:4-16).

Where there is no word there can be no faith, and God says, "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him ..." (Heb. 11:6).

Question: Do we have the WORD OF GOD regarding the covering of the woman's head? Can any one deny that we do not have it? Then, if we have it, and we DO have it (I Cor. 11:1-16), is this not a MATTER OF FAITH?

I like to end this study by the Apostle Paul's question: "Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?" (I Cor. 11:13).

The Holy Spirit wrote this question for all the CHRISTIAN AGE, for those who find themselves in some difficulty about the head covering. Here, one can explain this verse in this manner: "Now, after explaining why a woman should cover her head while at worship, after giving to EVERY (pas) woman and to EVERY (pas) man (verses 4,5) the reasons as far as creation (verses 7-9,12), now that you know all this, the responsibility is upon you, judge for yourselves, tell me yourselves, decide yourselves, it is your responsibility because you know all the reasons, "IS IT PROPER for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?"

"Judge for yourselves (I Cor. 11:13). Here the inspired Apostle puts the question up to the good judgment of his readers. Most people who understand the divine arrangement will gladly agree with it. This is not the only place that we find this question being put to the inquirers. We find this question being put to the same church in Corinth. In I Cor. 10:15, Paul laid down the same question, "Judge for yourselves what I say." Here, the Greek word for the word "judge" is the same as that in I Cor. 11:13, that is, "krino" which means, according to Vine, "primarily denotes to separate, select, choose; hence, to determine, and so to judge, pronounce judgment." (p. 280).

Question: What is there that one has to separate, select, choose, determine, to judge or to pronounce judgment in these verses of the Letter to the Corinthians? Does this mean, that because the word "Judge" means to make a choice, we are at liberty to choose what we think is best for us?

Let us see properly what is the meaning of this word from the context of these passages, that is, 1 Kor. 10:15; 11:13.

The subject of 1 Kor. 10:15 is about idolatry. Paul says, "I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say." I am sure that no one understands that by these words we can choose idolatry. I am sure that all understand that these words means that "now, that we have all that is necessary about what is right and what is wrong about idolatry, the responsibility is upon us, and as sensible men and women properly informed, we must make a good choice, separate that which is bad from that which is good, decide to walk in the path that we find in God's word, pronounce judgment on everything that is unscriptural, and pronounce our obedience to everything that is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The subject of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 is the covering of the woman's head while with the assembly for worship that shows that by this covering, the woman is showing her

place in the Divine order that we find in verses 3-5. What is the meaning of this phrase, "Judge for yourselves" that we find in verse 13? Does this mean that the woman is at liberty to choose whether she covers her head at worship or not?

Certainly not! This means, that as sensible, matured men and women we must be able to use our minds, our senses that were given to us by God, we must be capable of using the minds God have given to us. The inspired Apostle appeals to us to do so in this matter of idolatry and the head covering. He, by inspiration, gives us in both cases, concrete facts dealing with the subjects that will help us, as thinking men and women, to make the right decision. We have a great responsibility to "JUDGE OURSELVES" by walking in the steps that All the Apostles and ALL the churches of God walked in. (I Cor. 11:16).
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GLEANINGS

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

IN THE BANQUETING HOUSE

"He brought me into the banquetting house and His banner over me was love." The words gather about them many scenes that may well hang as fair tapestries in the royal chamber. We think of whence He hath fetched us. To some it is from the horrible pit and miry clay — the dark and noisome dungeon, where tied and bound by sin we lay condemned and afraid. He hath burst the bars of brass; He hath broken the fetters of iron; He hath opened the prison door to them that were bound, and hath brought us into His banquetting chamber. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities . . . Who crowneth thee with loving kindness."

We see again the picture of Joseph of old in all the anguish of his grief, as he sits in the dreary prison. In upon the lonely darkness burst the messengers of Pharaoh. And in haste they strip from him the course rags, and loose the prisoner's chains, and anoint him with fragrant oils; they set upon him fair robes and bring him in haste before the king. And ere the day dawns he stands arrayed with richest tokens of the king's favour, and invested with authority over all the land. But nearer, infinitely nearer and dearer than he could ever be to Pharaoh are we to our Lord and King. Rather is it as when the lowly orphan maiden was uplifted from her poor home to the favour of the monarch, and in all the stateliness of queen was set beside him, and he brought her within the banquetting chamber and stretched forth the golden sceptre, and she was bidden to ask what she would and it should be hers.

And yet even that is but a poor and empty scene to tell of what He is to us, and what we are to Him. Another picture sets forth more perfectly the greatness of this love. It is when Jesus sat at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee. And at the door there crept one red-eyed and trembling, from whom all shrank ashamed. But lo, as Jesus lifted up His face and looked it was all full of pity. Then heedless of those eyes that stoned her with their indignation she hurried to His side and fell down at His feet, and sobbed out all her guilt before Him. And with her hair she wiped the sacred feet that she had bathed with tears, and kissed them reverently, and broke upon them the precious box of ointment. And lo, His outstretched hand was laid upon her head. he was her Champion. And beneath that blessed shelter, and secured thus from her accusers by the shadow of that blessed Presence, she might well have sung within herself, "He, He brought me into the banquetting house and His banner over me was love." Mark Guy Pearse.

WE QUOTE — JOHN EDWARDS

"Dr. Parker has an intense and inspiring belief in the importance of preaching; and in the power of the preacher's great theme — the cross of Christ. A lady is said to have asked him once, "What is your hobby, Dr. Parker?" And the reply came instantly, "Preaching." "But I mean in addition to preaching?" "Preaching, nothing but preaching, everything with me ministers to preaching." In one of his latest books he has given us his mature opinion as to the great themes of the preacher. "The apostle Paul has laid down the subjects of his ministry, and I do not see why I should change them. They are great subjects. They are at once historical and prophetic. Let me slowly repeat them: Christ died, Christ was buried, Christ rose again, Christ was seen, Christ was seen in me. This is the true modernness. The element of personal experience and testimony is essential to true preaching. No matter who else has seen Christ, if I have not seen Him myself I cannot preach Him."

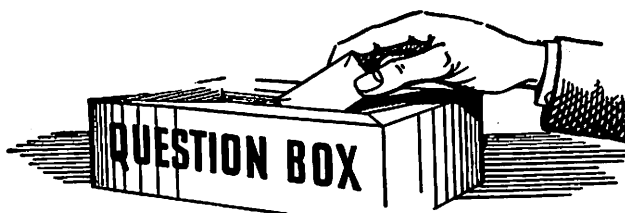
WHEN THE MASTER IS ABSENT

"The importance of watching and waiting, Jesus illustrated by two parables, *the Absent Goodman* and *the Wise and Foolish Virgins*. Both parables depict the diverse conduct of the professed servants of God during the period of delay. The effect on some, we are taught, is to make them negligent, they being eye-servants and fitful workers who need oversight and the stimulus of extraordinary events. Others, again, are steady, equal, habitually faithful, working as well when the master is absent as when they are under his eye."

THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE

"There is something in an olive-garden, on a hill-side, which makes it most suitable for prayer and meditation. The shade is solemn, the terraces divide better than distance, the ground is suitable for kneeling upon, and the surroundings are all in accord with holy thoughts. I can hardly tell why it is, but often as I have sat in an olive-garden, I have never been without the sense that it was the place and the hour of prayer.

C. H. Spurgeon. Selected by Leonard Morgan.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"In 1 Cor. 7:20-22 it is indicated that men should abide in the same state as at their calling (or baptism). If a man comes as a soldier should he not thereafter leave the army? Did not Jesus tell soldiers simply to be satisfied with their wages? If a divorced person comes (who has perhaps married again and has children of this marriage) do they have to renounce their present spouse and children before being fit (repentant) for baptism? Your comments would be appreciated."

When attempting to answer questions like this one I always try to visualise what my reaction would be as an Elder of the Albert St. assembly if we were confronted with the same problems. Obviously, in a live situation we would have to come up with a satisfactory answer which the community of Christians here

feel they could accept. It is equally certain that leaders of other assemblies might come up with a different interpretation and hence form a different judgment. But nothing is decided in isolation. When a judge in a court of law examines a case he usually refers himself to what the law says, and then he seeks any judicial precedent which may have been set in similar cases. Well, we as Christians refer ourselves to the Bible, and we seek any judicial precedent which may have been set, even if that was in the apostolic era.

The Context of 1 Cor. 7

The main thrust of this part of Paul's letter seems to be concerned with the maintenance of the status quo. Evidently the Corinthian Christians had written to Paul and had posed certain questions to him:

- (i) Is it right to remain single?
- (ii) Is it right to marry?
- (iii) Is it right to remain unmarried (widows)?
- (iv) Should we put away our partners when we become Christians?
- (v) What should I do being a virgin?
- (vi) Is it right to give away a daughter in marriage?

Paul answers these questions having two predominant thoughts in mind, namely, the 'shortened time' (v29), and the 'present distress' (v26). We must also be crystal clear in our minds as to what Paul means when he says, "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord)", and when he uses the expression, "To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord)", that he is in no wise saying that his judgment is in any way a mere reflection of his own opinion; at the very end of the chapter he says, "And I think also that I have the Spirit of God." He simply means that the Lord hadn't commented on some of the questions which he, Paul, was now being asked, but his replies are nonetheless inspired of God.

In a brief resume of the context we can only pick out the most important parts of Paul's teaching, but it is important that we do so. He does not say that celibacy is right, only that it is good; nor is marriage wrong; it is better to marry than to burn with passion. The believing wife is not at liberty to leave her unbelieving husband and vice versa, otherwise the children would be unclean, i.e., not the product of a right relationship. We ought to understand here that when Paul talks about the unbelieving partner being sanctified by the believing partner he is not teaching that the unbeliever is in any way to look upon this as a saving relationship, far from it. If, however the unbelieving partner wants to leave, then let him (or her) go. The slave is not to leave his master, but if he can gain his freedom, then he is at liberty to take it. The Christian widow may remarry, but only 'in the Lord.' The man who allows his daughter to marry does right, but the man who does not allow her to marry does even better.

It seems to me that what the Apostle is indicating is that each individual case ought to be judged relative to the situation obtaining at the particular time. Amidst all of this teaching and, I believe, in order to avoid chaos and confusion from reigning in the Church, Paul had to say, "Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him" (through the Gospel, of course). However, a close examination of the text will reveal to us that Paul made allowance for the situation to change if the conditions were right for it to do so, e.g., if the master chose to release the slave then the situation could change from slave to freedman; if the unbelieving partner chose to leave the believing partner then even though that situation would change the result would still be right. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that Paul and others expected the quick return of the Lord; the 'time is short,' he said, and we must ask

ourselves the question, "Would we, expecting some cataclysmic event which would transport us in the immediate future from earth to heaven, make far-reaching plans for the future"? I guess not. In addition to that, there is what Paul terms 'the present crisis;' he does not say what it is and it is idle for us to speculate on it, but it must have had a marked influence on his thinking.

Specific Answers.

The questioner asks specific questions one of which is this, "If a man comes (to Christ) as a soldier should he not thereafter leave the army?" Luke records that soldiers came to John the Baptist (not Jesus) and asked, "And what shall WE do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14). I think the answer lies in what John said, "And do no violence to no man." The soldier who becomes a Christian might ask of himself, "Well how can I do violence to no man in time of war when I am commanded to kill"? The answer is self-evident; he cannot do violence as a Christian, and must not. However, it is not easy to get out of the army if one has entered it for a fixed period of time. As a Christian he cannot desert because this would mean breaking the law; nor can he flagrantly disobey orders. There seems to be only one sensible way to approach this problem. On becoming a Christian he should present his case as a matter of conscience in his new situation and with the backing of the Church seek to present an unanswerable case for release. Obviously, the military situation obtaining in his particular country would influence whatever decision was reached, and if his request was refused then a new situation would exist which he would have to tackle relative to the parameters of that situation. To my mind one thing is clear; in seeking to be a Christian we must at all times and in all circumstances act like a Christian.

As to the second question concerning the renunciation of spouse and children when one becomes a Christian, there must be several variations of this question which are not explicit but which are certainly implied. For instance, was the divorced person a Christian before the remarriage? Were they both non-Christians? Was the unbelieving partner being obstructive and oppressive?

If one was a Christian before re-marriage then the teaching of Paul should have been applied, i.e., "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord" (v39 N.I.V.).

The same would obviously be true in reverse. If, however, they were both non-Christians, the Church would have had no say in the original union, whether a previously divorced person was involved or not. The new situation, i.e. when one becomes a Christian, would seem to fall within the confines of the teaching given by Paul in 1 Cor. 7; there would be a mixed marriage. In those circumstances the teaching of Paul is unmistakable. The believing partner is not at liberty to leave the unbelieving partner, but if the unbelieving partner wants to leave then the other should let him (or her) go.

In matters of this kind, which are usually very emotive, my counsel would be, 'Search the Word deeply to see what it teaches, but when applying it use love and prayer, compassion and understanding, realising at all times that black and white 'off the cuff' answers can wreak havoc in the Church and probably in the surrounding community. "An interesting point which intrigues me in this complex question of divorce and re-marriage is that Jesus seemed to leave a loophole (Matt. 19:9) which Paul doesn't. Jesus seemed to imply that the 'putting away' because of fornication by the guilty party would exclude the sin of adultery at re-marriage.

As regards the renunciation of family before immersion into Christ, then this

would be tantamount to saying that the union had been unholy and that the children of this union were illigitmate. In any case who would be the Solomon who would decide that the neophyte had made a complete renunciation of the world prior to immersion into Christ? This particular path is strewn with too many obstacles. No, let them come to Christ, and then resolve any problems which may occur.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SEPTEMBER 1982

5 Psalm 119, 33-48 II Tim. 3
 12I Kings 2, 1-12 II Tim. 4
 19 Ezek. 33, 1-20 Titus 1
 26 Ezek. 33,21-33 Titus 2

What a prospect!

We had occasion before to draw attention to "That dreadful catalogue" of evil things (P.91 S.S.) and here we are given a list of evil-doers to be expected by Timothy "in the last times." It seems he will meet some of them for he is instructed "to turn away from them" (3, 5). Our profane history records them as being present in the days of heathen ascendancy into which the gospel was then entering. A most astonishing change was beginning in human society. It came with appalling results for those who embraced its teaching as witness the records of martyrdom over the years to and even after 300 A.D.

The might of an empire ruled by tyrants and administered largely by the very characters named here in our list, waged war against the church in its infancy, but utterly failed to extinguish faith in Christ's resurrection, and humble but persistent practice of His teachings. We have to grant that His teachings became mixed with wordly philosophy and fulfilled the description "having a form of godliness but denied the power thereof." This however, was a later development when it actually became popular to make a show of it in offices, forms of worship, ceremonies

and a priesthood.

While the reformation broke down the worst of the hypocritical powers, it set up imitations of it in differing forms and teachings. The big business of "pardons" was in large measure replaced by honest efforts to bring the practical works of enlightenment and relief to the masses by making it possible for the ploughboy to know the Bible as well as the Pope (so well expressed by that hero of the reformation, Tyndale).

Christianity bids up absolutely to turn away from all wickedness, not just in action but in thought. It is a life-long struggle to "seek the things which are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col. 3, 1). How many of us can say that evil thoughts, worldly ambitions, unkindness, pride and even covetousness do not at times occupy our minds? "The things of earth have filled our thought and trifles of the passing hour."

What a contrast!

But (3, 10) Timothy had not just heard the teaching of the gospel, he had seen it in a holy life devoted to the following of God's example in a human form. Jesus, our Saviour, was being exhibited in the changed lives of christians. The list of different phases of the new kind of life is here. Is it manifest in us now because if it is not we are failing in our profession of the faith once and for all delivered? Do we exhibit "doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long suffering, love, perseverance"? This was the challenge which Timothy was facing. He was seeing the results also upon his leader, now in prison awaiting further trial — a trial which undoubtedly brought

death in a hideous form. Some professing christians are suffering now the persecution which ingenuity of godless rulers is permitting, if not fostering while professing to allow "liberty of religion," Marxist-Leninist philosophy applied in some parts of the earth. One cannot help wondering whether the return to loose morals and unscrupulous dictatorship in the name of "freedom fighters," etc., is a continued fulfilment of our readings.

But we can learn with Timothy the fulfilment of the work of the Holy Spirit in godly living. "The beauty of holiness" shines through humble submission to Christ, and continued preaching AND practice of good works, watchful against everything false and hypocritical, "the form of godliness and denying the power." We have to face the ridicule and contempt of the world if we are faithful to the commands and example of our Saviour. They said "If you are the Son of God come down from the cross and prove it."

He had already proved it by the life He had lived. That is how we must prove it.

"The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5, 22, 23).

We can get a very good knowledge of the scriptures, but do we produce this most wonderful and beautiful fruit? The church of Christ must shine with the beauty of its individual members. "Lord be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Titus

He first meets us in Acts 15, 2 as an unnamed member of the deputation from Antioch (in Syria). We learn this from Gal. 1, 2. He was one of those Gentiles who had heard the word of God preached and practised by fugitives from the persecution in Judaea. So effective had this been that here the name CHRISTIAN was attached to them — what an honour!!

For the fact that the gospel was for all the world, was under dispute in the "Mother Church" (if we dare use the

expression). Some had only partially appreciated the greatness of the grace of God (Titus 2, 11). Perhaps they thought outward obedience could satisfy divine justice. Whereas nothing but the blood of Jesus can do that anyway, and Titus had fully conformed to that by faith and obedience. So circumcision, however, beneficial that might be to the flesh, could make no difference in the sight of God and the conditions of the gospel message. He was a true son of the ageing apostle, and it will do us good to look at the titles he won from his master: brother (II Cor. 2, 13), partner and fellow-worker (II Cor. 8, 23), equal in spirit (II Cor. 12, 18).

He was indeed a tireless worker in the special work of uniting Jew and Gentile in one body by his part, a very prominent part, in the collection for the "poor saints" in Judaea. Their material wants were as much his concern as the apostle's, and he was utterly trustworthy. Hence came the heavy and responsible service in the churches. It appears that Paul had laboured successfully in Crete so that churches had formed in several places, and the duty of appointing suitable men as bishops in them fell to Titus. His task was made difficult as always by the rate of development of christ-like members in those early days, out of those who initially accepted the gospel.

It is clear that some were already making merchandise, earning an easy living, by use of the word of truth (Titus 1, 10-15). In a community where education was unknown except among the elite (a microscopic minority in Crete) how easy it might be to get money by misuse of the law and playing upon superstition as illustrated by the case of Sceva (Acts 19, 14).

Titus would need a high degree of tact and spiritual wisdom to deal with offenders. The term "slow bellies" is "gluttons" in modern language, but it appears that an evil reputation had been earned by the folk among whom Titus was working. He needed to rebuke them sharply and the bishop

must be capable of this by purity of life and "not greedy for money" — a Cretan weakness but, alas very common. How essential was the highest standard of character required for watching over the smallest community of christians to provide for increase and development. The last glimpse we get of Titus indicates he was with Paul in Rome, leaving for Dalmatia doubtless on a work as Paul's representative.

Personal service

The letter concludes with instructions relating to four other workers. Messengers are to come from Paul, Artemas and Tychicus, to enable Titus to join him at Nicopolis for the winter. We do not know what further journey Paul had in view, but it seems he was arrested and taken to prison in Rome, and Titus joined him or found him there before the final trial.

The conclusion of the letter to Timothy which we safely conclude was later gives news of closer service by Luke and calls for more urgent association.

R. B. Scott.

PLEASE NOTE

The Church Meeting House at Tranent is under threat of Compulsory Purchase by the local council for purposes of environmental development.

Although this will take some time to finalise itself anyone proposing to come from a distance to visit the Tranent Church should first check with brother John Colgan, tel. no. Tranent 612445.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Newtongrange, Scotland: The annual summer picnic of the church here took place on Saturday 19th June. Once again the destination was the beautiful village of West Linton, Peebleshire. A number of brethren, in excess of forty, gathered for a day of fellowship and enjoyment. In the afternoon, after tea, games were held to the pleasure of young and old alike. A good day was had by all.

A. P. Sharp, Secretary.

Zambia: Chester Woodhall made a pioneer missionary journey for the churches of Christ to the island of Reunion (in the Indian Ocean) which is French-speaking. Discussions were held with various interested parties throughout the island. Reunion is predominantly Roman Catholic. Further information is obtainable from Chester Woodhall, Church of Christ, P.O. Box 22297, Kitwe, Zambia.

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