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Conducted by  
James Gardiner

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**IN view of our claim to "speak where the scriptures speak" why do we not carry out the practices enjoined as to (1) washing of each others' feet (John 13:14; 1 Tim. 5:10); (2) greeting each other with a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16) and (3) enrolling and supporting widows in the church who do the services enjoined in 1 Tim. 5:3-16)?**

This month we deal with parts 2 and 3 of the question and, of course, limited space will necessitate rather brief answers.

(2) A "holy kiss," or "kiss of charity," is a phrase occurring several times in the N.T. It appears to have been a custom in eastern countries, and to some extent still is today, for one to greet or salute a friend with a kiss. In much the same way, we in our segment of the globe normally greet one another with a handshake. Falling on one's neck and kissing him was also common in bible times and countries. It was merely a method of salutation and, like feet-washing, was never an item of worship.

The Lord, however, in the N.T., did regulate the quality of this act of greeting among the disciples and stipulated that when they kissed in greeting the kiss should be a "holy" one. The emphasis is on the word "holy." In other words they were not to greet one another with an unholy kiss, an improper one, or a hypocritical one. Judas gave the Saviour an unholy and hypocritical kiss when he

betrayed Him. Here in the west I suppose we could read Paul's words as being, "Greet one another with a holy handshake" — since it is possible to give a casual, careless, dutiful, indifferent, patronising or hypocritical one.

I know that this eastern custom has, like the washing of feet, been in some quarters exalted into a church observance, regularly performed, and called "The Holy Kiss," but this surely has not the sanction of our Lord.

### (3) Enrolling and supporting widows.

Paul does not specify here into what "number" the widow is to be taken. He does not specify the purpose of the "number" but he apparently speaks as if the whole matter would be easily understood by the recipients of the epistle. Honour was to be given to "widows indeed" and Acts 6:1 refers to widows being "neglected in the daily ministrations." These widows under discussion however, those to be "taken into the number," had to possess qualifications of age, piety and good works before they could qualify for entry to this little band—the widow ministry.

Destitute widows of any age would require to receive pecuniary aid from the church, but only those over 60 years of age, with a record of good works, were to be taken into the number. This "number" could not refer to the church. Obviously a special work is envisaged — a widow ministry or service. Certainly many valuable tasks could and would be performed by such Godly women, and no doubt they tended the sick and aged and gave teaching, guidance and advice to the younger sisters on problems peculiar to women. In my own humble view the "widows' number" was something quite unlike the custom of washing feet or greeting with a kiss, but something valuable to the spiritual growth and well-being of the church. There seems to me to be no reason why such work should not still be valuable. Unlike eastern widows of Paul's day, our widows are perhaps seldom truly destitute, but if and when such widows exist in the churches — destitute widows of the required age and character qualifications—they can perform a valuable work for the Lord and should, therefore, be taken "into the number."

[Questions, please, to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland].

## THE MANHATTAN TEMPLE

FOR several years the Manhattan, New York church, and their preacher, Burton Coffman, have been trying to raise money by brotherhood solicitation to build a meeting house. Recently several of the religious journals have carried additional notices about their latest efforts to raise money.

Reuel Lemmons, "Firm Foundation" editor, recently said, "Burton Coffman and the Manhattan church is (sic) out raising money" (February 7th, 1967). This announcement was not particularly surprising, since Burton Coffman and the Manhattan church have been out raising money nearly as long as some of us can remember.

The building project of the Manhattan church has been underway for more than a decade. As I remember they paid \$330,000.00 for a building site. That action alone should have raised a few eyebrows. A \$100,000.00 building is considered adequate and super-adequate by most churches. A \$200,000.00 building by most churches is considered an expendable luxury. And a \$300,000.00 building by nearly any church would be considered a virtual temple.

But Manhattan put more than \$300,000.00 in a building lot alone. Though the sectarian churches for a score of years have considered property on Manhattan Island too expensive to attempt to erect a building thereon, our brethren considered it absolutely essential. Manhattan embraces an area less than five miles square. There are a good many of us who have to drive more than five miles to worship, and many in the New York area who drive four or five times that far. But we had to impress the world, and build right in the middle of Manhattan Island, though real estate there is some of the most expensive in the world.

The brotherhood has already sent this church more than \$100,000.00 with which to build a building. You would think a cool million bucks would build a "fairly suitable" meeting house for the two hundred people who comprise the Manhattan congregation. One also would think that with a \$900.00 a week contribution this church could at least provide itself with a suitable meeting house. Churches usually can build for themselves any meeting house they need; they may not be able to afford any meeting house they want.