

Scenario: *Christian, called as a witness in a trial, refuses to swear on the Bible – Jesus said not to take an oath. Has to explain to the judge what an oath is & why it is so important, in order to avoid being held in contempt of court. Goes on to explain the Gospel in courtroom terms*

Characters: The witness – Timothy Hope
Judge – a bit of a bumbling character, but wise
Clerk of Court
Prosecution lawyer
The Accused – Mr (or Mrs) Pemberton-Jones

Clerk: All rise. This court is now in session, the Honourable Justice Makepeace presiding.

Judge: Please be seated. Now, what is our first case this morning?

Clerk: If it please m'lud, case number 3442 – the Crown versus Pemberton-Jones.

Judge: Ah, yes. A fraud trial – I like nothing more than getting my teeth into a juicy, complex trial of intrigue, dodgy-dealings and legal wranglings. Proceed.

Clerk: Of course, m'lud. Would the accused rise and confirm your name and address.

Accused: *(stands)* Frank *(or Francis)* Pemberton-Jones, 34 Gamekeeper Row, Littlehampton; and I'm innocent, I tell you, innocent

Judge: I will decide on whether you are innocent or guilty after I have heard all the evidence. *(aside)* If I had a pound for every time an accused has protested their innocence in this court, I would have enough to buy that 42" plasma television set I quite fancy...

Clerk: *(interrupting the judge before his rantings continue)* Thank-you, Mr Pemberton-Jones. You may be seated. You are accused of tax evasion over a period of 5 years, from 1999 to 2004, thus defrauding the public purse of £380,000. How do you wish to plead? *(aside)* as if we didn't know

Accused: *(to Clerk)* Not guilty, your honour

Clerk: No. I'm the Clerk of the Court – He's the Judge. You address him as "Your honour".

Accused: Oh. So what do I call you, then?

Clerk: You can call me what you jolly-well like. Now can we continue?

Accused: Whatever you say, Mr Jolly-well-like

Clerk: *(spluttering)* I object!

Judge: On what grounds?

Prosecution: I object to his objection

Judge: *(confused)* On what grounds?

Prosecution: He's the Clerk of the Court. Only the Defence or Prosecution can object.

Judge: Objection sustained

Clerk: Thank-you, m'lud

Judge: Not your objection; (*pointing to Prosecution*) his objection. Now, can we please get on with it.

Prosecution: We would like to call the first witness for the prosecution, Mr Timothy Hope.

Clerk: The Crown calls Mr Timothy Hope to the witness box

Timothy: Thank-you, Mr Jolly-well-like

Clerk: I object!

Judge: Don't start that again

Clerk: Please place your left hand on the Bible, raise your right hand and repeat after me, "I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God"

Timothy: I'm sorry. I can't do that

Clerk: (*spluttering*) What?... You can't ... I ... I object

Judge: Oh, give it a rest. Now, Mr Hope would you like to explain to my court why you refuse to swear to tell the whole truth

Prosecution: Have you changed your mind about giving evidence against the accused? If so, we can arrange a witness protection programme

Timothy: No. It's nothing like that. I just can't do it because I'm a Christian

Prosecution: So why does that prevent you from telling the truth. I thought Christians were supposed to tell the truth.

Judge: Yes. Please explain yourself, Mr Hope, and it had better be good or I will have to hold you in contempt of court

Timothy: Contempt of court? But I haven't done anything wrong

Clerk: Nothing wrong?! Threatening to commit perjury in open court and he says he's done nothing wrong

Timothy: I did not say I would commit perjury. I did not say I was going to lie. All I said was I could not *swear*

Prosecution: Oh, I see. Sorry – we didn't mean that you had to say *naughty words*

Judge: When you are asked to swear, we're asking you to take an oath

Timothy: Yes, I know. That's exactly why I can't do it.

Prosecution: I don't understand

Clerk: I object

Judge: I give up

Timothy: Please may I have the Bible.

(Clerk hands him the Bible)

Timothy: I'm perfectly happy to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; but what I'm unwilling to do is swear an oath. *(Turning to Matthew 5)* Look, Jesus said "Swear not at all ... but let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no". You see?

Prosecution: Yes, no, I don't know

& Clerk: No, yes, I don't know

Judge: I object!

Prosecution

& Clerk: Sustained

Prosecution: I fail to see how what Jesus said can be of relevance to this court.

Timothy: What Jesus said is of relevance to every court

Prosecution: *(to Judge)* Your Honour, can we get on with the case?

Accused: Actually, I'm finding this all very interesting

Clerk: You be quiet.

Judge: Mr Hope, I'm keen to proceed with this trial; but I will allow you to continue – as long as you keep it brief.

Timothy: Thank-you, your Honour. Mr Pemberton-Jones here is representative of all of us. He's as guilty as sin, but he won't admit it.

Accused: I object!

Judge, Clerk & Prosecution: Shut your noise

Timothy: The Bible says that all of us have broken God's laws – jealousy, greed, pride, hatred, bitterness, lying, stealing

Accused: I did all that this morning

Timothy: Because we are all guilty, we deserve the punishment that is laid down. The Bible says that the punishment is death

Clerk: I'm a sinner and I'm still breathing

Judge: I don't think it means death in the literal, physical sense

Timothy: That's right. God is holy & so cannot abide to be where there is sin. Anyone who dies with their sin is condemned to an eternity separated

from God and all that is good. Just as Mr Pemberton-Jones is guilty and will go to prison ...

Accused: I object

Judge, Clerk & Prosecution: Shut your noise!

Timothy: Just as Mr Pemberton-Jones will go to prison, those who die in the guilt of their sin are condemned to a prison much worse than the ones we know. The Bible calls it hell.

Prosecution: This does not sound good

Timothy: God loves mankind, though; and wanted to provide a way for us to avoid the terrors of hell

Clerk: How did He do that, then?

Timothy: He sent Jesus. He lived a perfect life, free from sin. But he chose to take the punishment due to us by dying on the cross.

Judge: Fascinating. But how does that actually help us?

Timothy: Let's say you find Mr Pemberton-Jones guilty and sentence him to 5 years

Accused: I object

Judge, Clerk & Prosecution: Shut your noise

Timothy: If I volunteered to serve his sentence for him

Accused: Jolly decent of you, old chap

Judge: Then he wouldn't have to – the price has already been paid.

Timothy: Exactly. And that is what Jesus has done for us. All we need to do is put our trust in Him.

Accused: I'd be eternally grateful.

Clerk: What?

Accused: If Mr Hope here served my sentence for me, I'd be eternally grateful. There's nothing I wouldn't do for him.

Judge: I suppose that should be our attitude towards Jesus.

Accused: So am I free to go?

Prosecution: Free to go? What are you talking about?

Accused: Well, if Mr Hope is going to do the time for my crime then I'm free to go

Judge: I interpret that as an admission of guilt, and hereby sentence you to ...
death

Accused, Clerk, Prosecution: Death?

Judge: Sorry. A bit carried away there. All this talk about sin and death and hell.
5 years should be enough for you.

(Accused sits passively)

Prosecution: *(to Accused)* What? You don't object?

Accused: *(Shrugs)* He's a fair judge

Clerk: And so, it would seem, is God. Let's make sure we're prepared to face His
judgment with Jesus as our defence lawyer

Judge: Case closed.

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